



Islamabad POST

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Turkish cuisine week in Islamabad begins, says Ambassador Irfan

Detailed News On Page-08

A celebration of culture thru cuisine: Aziz

Detailed News On Page-08



Azhar excluded from coaching Staff for BD

Detailed News On Page-06



Four-nation tour

Shehbaz Sharif thanks Erdogan for full support

PM's four-nation trip is part of efforts to acknowledge friendly countries support to Pakistan during recent clashes with India

CENTRELINE REPORT / DNA

ANKARA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Istanbul, Türkiye, on Sunday evening, on the first leg of his four-nation regional tour aimed at thanking Pakistan's allies for their support during the recent standoff with India. Türkiye's Minister for National Defence Yasar Guler welcomed PM Shehbaz upon his arrival at the Istanbul airport. Meanwhile, the premier held an important meeting with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. Earlier, taking to X, Erdogan's head of communications Fahrettin Altun said: "During the meeting, bilateral relations, regional and international issues, including the fight against terrorism, will be discussed," The two leaders discussed further expanding cooperation between Türkiye and Pakistan in diverse fields, including defence, economy, tourism, and culture. The premier is accompanied by a delegation that includes Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi. Besides Türkiye, PM Shehbaz would also visit Azerbaijan, Iran and Tajikistan. This multi-nation tour is expected to focus on strengthening bilateral ties and discussing regional issues. "During the visit, the prime minister will have wide-ranging discussions with the leaders of these countries on an entire range of issues covering bilateral relations and matters of regional and international importance," said the PM Office Media Wing in a press release. The premier, during his visit to these countries, will have the opportunity to express the deepest appreciation and acknowledgement for the support extended to Pakistan by the friendly countries during the recent standoff with India.

Ishaq Dar, Uzbek FM discuss bilateral ties

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ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Saidov Bakhtiyor Odilovich Sunday discussed existing bilateral relations, particularly the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Line Project. The DPM/FM held a telephone conversation with the Uzbek foreign minister, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. The two leaders expressed the hope that the framework agreement for the regional connectivity project would be finalized soon. Views were also exchanged on the current regional situation.

He will also attend the International Conference on Glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to be held on 29-30 May. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had reaffirmed his country's unwavering support for Pakistan, assuring Islamabad that Turkey would, God willing, stand by Pakistan in both good times and bad. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan announced full support and strong solidarity with Pakistani government and people, despite boycotts by India,

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DNA



ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed by Türkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. – DNA

Nation and army have always stood united: ISPR

Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry says Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir decided to respond at 26 Indian locations

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said the Pakistani nation and its armed forces have always been united and will remain so in the future as well. Addressing students of various Khyber Pakhtunkhwa universities, the military top spokesperson said: "They [India] thought we would attack and Pakistan wouldn't respond. You saw how all of you stood behind your country. The entire Pakistan stood united and, by the grace of Allah, this iron wall was erected."

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Israeli forces control 77 pc of Gaza area

DNA

GAZA: The Israeli military now in effect controls 77 per cent of the total geographical area of the Gaza Strip, Al Jazeera quotes the enclave's Government Media Office as saying. "This is achieved through direct ground incursions and the deployment of occupation forces within residential and civilian areas, through heavy fire control that prevents Palestinian citizens from accessing their homes, areas, lands, and property, or through unjust forced eviction policies," it said in a statement.

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Briefs

Bangladesh Court begins Hasina trial

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Sunday began the first trial at a special court prosecuting former senior figures connected to the ousted government of Sheikh Hasina, the chief prosecutor said. The court in the capital Dhaka accepted a formal charge against eight police officials in connection with the killing of six protesters on August 5 last year, the day Hasina fled the country as the protesters stormed her palace. The eight men are charged with crimes against humanity. Four are in custody and four are being tried in absentia. "The formal trial has begun," Tajul Islam, chief prosecutor of Bangladesh's domestic International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), told reporters. "The prosecution believes that this prosecution will be able to prove the crimes done by the accused."

Mir Ali protest continues

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Locals in North Waziristan's Mir Ali district continued their sit-in on Sunday for the seventh day, protesting against a suspected drone strike in the district – that they say is responsible for the death of four children – vowing to launch a long march to Islamabad if their demands were not met. The suspected strike took place in Mir Ali's Hurmuz village on May 19 during the daytime, leaving four children of the same family dead and injuring five others, including a woman. The police have held talks with tribal elders, which have so far remained inconclusive. Earlier this week, the military's media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR),

War on terror

Nine Indian sponsored terrorists killed in KP

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed Indian sponsored khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in these areas



DNA

RAWALPINDI: On 24-25 May 2025, nine Indian Sponsored Khwarij were killed in three separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. An intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in Dera Ismail Khan District, on reported presence of Indian sponsored khwarij.

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Khuzdar blast death toll rises to eight

Seven female, one male students lost their lives in the bus blast

DNA

QUETTA: The death toll in the Khuzdar bus blast rose to eight after two more female students succumbed to their injuries in a hospital on Sunday. According to security sources, two students – Shema Ibrahim and Muskan – died at the hospital after battling for life for almost four days. As per the latest update, those lost their lives in the terrorist attack include seven female and one male students. On May 21, at least five people, including three female students, were killed on

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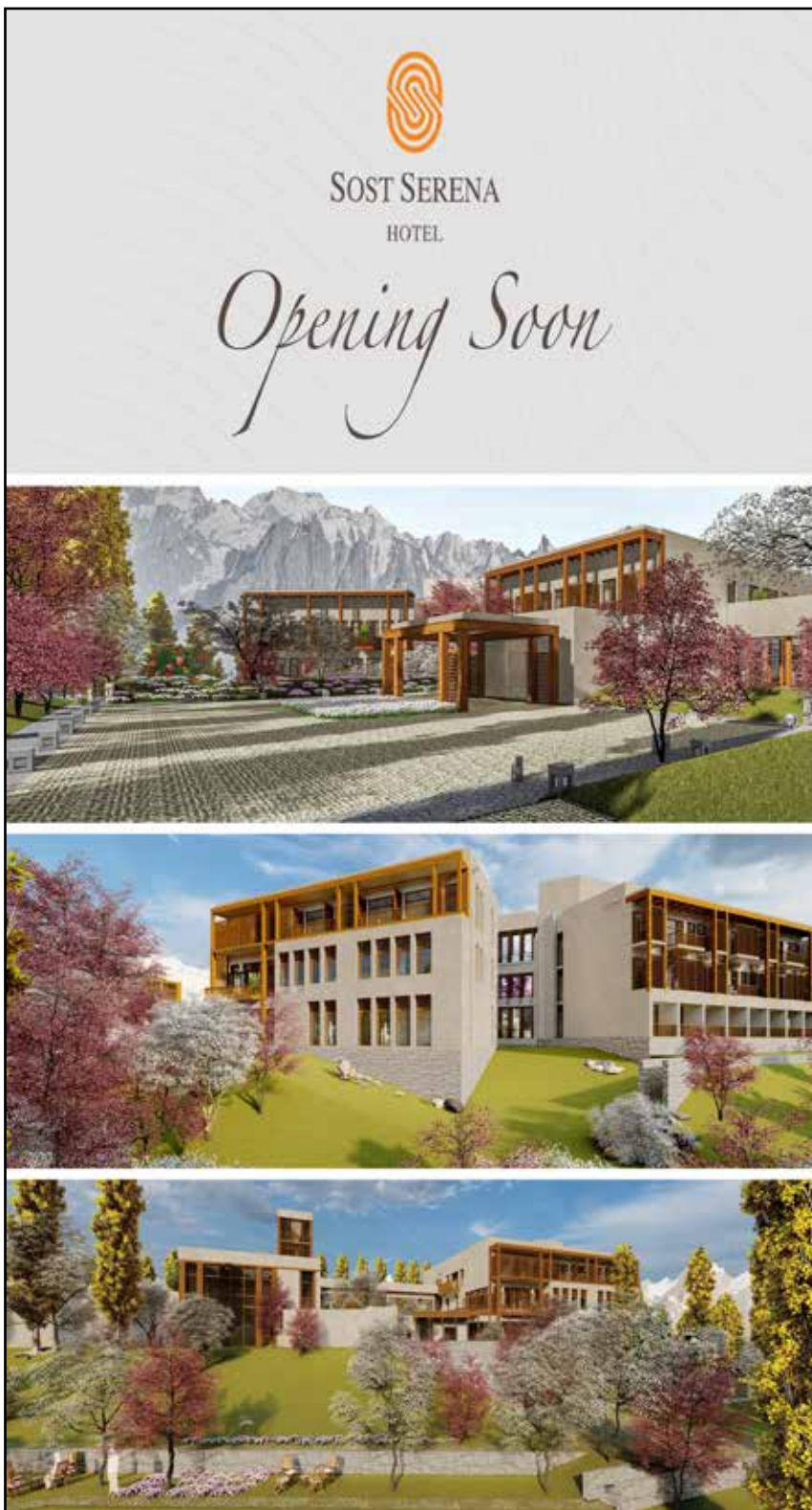
The unending tragedy of Afghan refugees: a collective moral failure

ABDUL WAHEED WAHEED

THE roots of the Afghan refugee crisis lie within Afghanistan itself. Despite transitions in leadership—from monarchy to communism, from interim governments to Taliban rule—no regime has succeeded in building a system where Afghans feel secure, included, or respected. Afghanistan has yet to become a nation of return. It continues, tragically, to reject its own people. The result is not just a political failure, but a deeper betrayal of the very notion of nationhood. Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for over four decades, and during this time, has received substantial international aid to support its humanitarian role. Yet despite this history, Pakistan has consistently failed to offer Afghan refugees legal protection, clear status, or long-term integration opportunities. What should have been a legacy of generosity has often turned into a policy of exclusion and neglect. Today, Afghan refugees in Pakistan live under increasing legal uncertainty. They face police harassment, arbitrary arrests, forced deportations, and a climate of fear. Even those born and raised on Pakistani soil are treated as foreigners—denied basic rights, dignity, and hope. The international community shares this burden of failure. While billions have been spent on short-term humanitarian relief, donor nations have largely ignored the structural causes of displacement: insecurity, poor governance, lack of economic opportunity, and the failure to rebuild Afghanistan sustainably. Statelessness has been allowed to fester, and durable solutions—such as third-country resettlement,

voluntary repatriation with dignity, or legal integration in host countries—remain elusive. For many Afghan refugees, exile has inflicted wounds deeper than those caused by the wars they fled. The tragedy lies not only in their forced displacement but in the world's refusal to let them live with dignity—either in exile or upon return. They are trapped in a cruel dilemma: face daily humiliation in foreign lands or return to a homeland still marred by insecurity and economic collapse. Returning is not a joyful homecoming; it is a desperate calculation between two forms of suffering. And yet, Afghan refugees have shown remarkable resilience. Despite decades of marginalization, many have built businesses, educated their children, and contributed to the societies that too often deny them a place. Their struggle is not only for survival, but for recognition, identity, and justice. The time has come for a reckoning. Afghan refugees are no longer just a humanitarian issue; their plight reveals a collective failure of political will, international solidarity, and moral responsibility. Afghan governments, Pakistani authorities, international donors, and global institutions have all played a part in perpetuating this crisis. So too, at times, has the refugee leadership failed to organize, speak up, and demand rights. We must confront the hard questions: Who belongs? Who deserves to be seen, protected, and included? The Afghan refugee crisis is no longer just about numbers or borders. It is a test of our humanity. Until the world finds the courage to answer these questions honestly, Afghan refugees will continue to live in limbo—stateless, voiceless, and forgotten.

– The views expressed in the article are writer's own.



MEE fund to provide scholarships to coastal communities' talented kids

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has announced the launch of the Maritime Educational Endowment Fund (MEEF) to provide scholarships to coastal communities' deserving and talented children.

In a statement on Sunday, the minister stated that the MEEF aims to promote inclusive development by enabling access to quality education for youth from over 70 coastal and fishing communities, particularly in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. "This initiative will help cultivate a skilled maritime workforce essential for the country's future," he noted.

He said the creation of the fund is based on recommendations of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs, reflects the government's broader commitment to education-driven empowerment in coastal regions.

"The Maritime Educational Endowment Fund underscores our dedication to sustainable human capital development," said Junaid Anwar Chaudhry. "By investing in coastal youth today, we are laying the foundation for a resilient and prosperous maritime sector tomorrow." To finance the MEEF, the Ministry will restructure Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions from organizations operating under its jurisdiction. This redirection of CSR resources aims to create a centralized and sustainable funding mechanism to support long-term educational opportunities.

The Minister also announced the formation of a dedicated oversight committee, responsible for ensuring transparency, equitable scholarship distribution, and strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

In its initial phase, the MEEF will target students of coastal regions, with plans to expand nationally, enabling more students across the country to benefit from the initiative. "This initiative represents our vision of an educated, empowered, and thriving maritime community," the Minister added. Highlighting the urgent need for intervention, Minister Chaudhry cited data from recent education surveys showing school dropout rates exceeding 40 percent among children in coastal regions—particularly in remote districts of Sindh and Balochistan due to financial constraints and inadequate educational infrastructure. "The MEEF is more than just a scholarship programme; it is a strategic investment in the future of Pakistan's maritime sector," the Minister said. "It symbolizes our enduring commitment to ensuring that no capable student is left behind due to economic hardship." The launch of the MEEF marks a crucial milestone in the Ministry's broader strategy to uplift coastal populations, enhance educational outcomes, and strengthen Pakistan's maritime potential through targeted investment and opportunity, he added.—APP

Interior Minister orders crackdown on Illegal constructions in Islamabad

He emphasized that zero-tolerance policy must to be enforced by the concerned officers in this regard. He stated that satellite mapping through the Land Information and Management System (LIMS) should be utilized to prevent all types of illegal constructions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting in Islamabad, which was attended by field officers of the federal capital. Chief Commissioner Islamabad, IG Islamabad Police, Deputy Commissioner, DIGs, SPs, and ACs attended the meeting. Minister of State for

Interior Tallal Chaudhry and Federal Secretary Interior were also present on the occasion. During the meeting, it was decided to launch an immediate operation against illegal constructions in Islamabad, including action against unauthorized houses. The Interior Minister also ordered a crackdown against illegal housing societies. He emphasized that zero-tolerance policy must

to be enforced by the concerned officers in this regard. He stated that satellite mapping through the Land Information and Management System (LIMS) should be utilized to prevent all types of illegal constructions. Mohsin Naqvi further stressed that providing world-class facilities to the residents of Islamabad should be the top priority for all officials. He added that no effort should be

spared in ensuring the safety of life and property. He instructed all the concerned SPs and ACs to perform their duties actively and said that the image of the police and administration in the capital must be improved. This, he added, would only be possible when citizens have trust in the system. He encouraged officers to introduce new initiatives for public service, assuring full support in

the implementation. The Interior Minister emphasized the need to carry forward this process with full commitment and a national spirit in order to achieve the desired results. He also directed to ensure effective control over the prices of essential commodities in Islamabad. He further stressed that special steps must be taken to ensure the cleanliness of the city during Eid-ul-Adha.

PML-N leader accuses KP govt of corruption

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Arbab Khaizar Hayat has accused the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government of being a "puppet administration," solely focused on corruption and self-enrichment rather than public welfare. In a statement, he alleged that the provincial government has no intention of securing the release of PTI founder and would prefer he remains incarcerated. The day Imran Khan is freed from jail will be the day Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has to go home," he claimed.—APP



LAHORE: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar visited the holy shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Baksh (RA), offered prayers, and also reviewed the ongoing reconstruction work.

Kundi, emphasizes deepening ties with Africa

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, highlighted Pakistan's "enduring and sincere" friendship with African nations during a keynote address as the chief guest at a prestigious event marking 'Africa Day' here on Saturday. Speaking at the ceremony, which drew a large gathering including UN Resident Coordinator Muhammad Yahya, ambassadors and high commissioners from African nations, members of parliament, diplomats, and other dignitaries, Governor Kundi emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation in trade, education, cultural exchange, and joint development initiatives. "The more we connect with one another, the stronger we become," he said. Extending heartfelt congratulations to the people and nations of Africa on the occasion, the Governor remarked on the significance of this year's Africa Day theme, "Revisiting Our History, Shaping Our Future," saying that it resonates deeply not just with Africa but also with Pakistan. He praised the cultural heritage, unity, and self-reliance efforts of African nations, drawing parallels with values shared by Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, such as sovereignty, cultural diversity, and people-centered development. Governor Kundi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its relationships with African countries and expressed a strong desire to enhance collaboration across various sectors. Senior leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Balochistan and former senator Dr Muhammad Ismail Buledi met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here at the Governor House on Saturday. During the meeting, the two leaders held detailed discussions on the current political situation of the country, the overall conditions in Balochistan, and matters of mutual interest. Both leaders strongly condemned the tragic incident in Khuzdar, likening it to the Army Public School tragedy and declaring it a national calamity. They expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and vowed that the terrorists, backed by Indian support, would soon be brought to justice and made an example. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized that the country currently needs unity, solidarity, and tolerance more than ever.—DNA

Efforts afoot to protect wildlife : Punjab CM

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has emphasized the importance of protecting the Markhor and preserving wildlife across the country in her message on International Day of the Markhor, Pakistan's national animal, she said. "The purpose of observing this day globally is to raise awareness about the conservation of the Markhor and to protect endangered wildlife species." The CM noted that the Markhor, known for its majestic appearance, is native to regions such as Chitral, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kohistan, and Hunza. "The Markhor is not only a symbol of strength and beauty but also represents Pakistan's rich natural heritage," she added. Highlighting the broader significance of conservation efforts, CM Maryam Nawaz said, "Protecting the Markhor is a reflection of our commitment to biodiversity and ecological balance." She reaffirmed the Punjab government's dedication to safeguarding wildlife and called for collective efforts in preserving endangered species. "We pledge to work together to protect not just the Markhor, but all vulnerable species," she said. "Historic steps are being taken in Punjab to ensure the protection and sustainability of our wildlife." Earlier, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the provincial administration and rescue departments to remain on high alert in view of the forecast of heavy rainfall and potential storms. The CM issued urgent instructions following reports of torrential downpours that inundated low-lying areas of Rawalpindi and other cities.—DNA

Sindh CM opens Alumni Arts Festival

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday said, "Art is our weapon of peace, and our youth are its fearless warriors, we have to strengthen them further so that they keep performing for peace, and tranquility."

He said this while inaugurating a three-day Arts Alumni Festival 2025 at the School of Visual & Performing Arts, Sindh, under the patronage of the Arts Council. The festival celebrates five decades of excellence in arts education.

The Chief Minister praised the Arts Council's role in shaping creative minds and dedicated the festival to the martyrs of Pakistan and the valour of the Armed Forces, calling it a symbol of national unity and resilience.

Murad Shah extended his heartfelt congratulations to the students and the organising administration for the successful commencement of the festival. He commended the Arts Council for dedicating the event to Pakistan's martyrs and the heroic successes of the Pakistan Army, calling it a praiseworthy initiative that reflects national unity and pride.

"We are, first and foremost, a nation. Our armed forces

are the pride of Pakistan, standing vigilant over every inch of our homeland," said the CM. He especially acknowledged the leadership of the armed forces for their firm and effective response to recent threats posed by anti-peace elements, which, he said, boosted national morale and strengthened global recognition of the Pakistani armed forces.

Mr Shah went on to say that the sacrifices made by Pakistan's martyrs are the foundation of the country's defense, recalling key moments such as the 1965 war, the 1971 conflict, and the Kargil operation as examples of national resilience and bravery.

The Chief Minister paid tribute to the Arts Council of Karachi for consistently organizing exemplary academic, artistic, and literary events. He noted that the Arts Alumni Festival 2025 would inspire young students to chart new directions in their creative journeys, through activities including panel discussions, theatre, music, painting exhibitions, and informative workshops.

"Every time I visit the Arts Council, I leave with renewed hope. The energy, innovation, and potential of our youth assure me that the future of Pakistan is in

capable hands," he added.

The Chief Minister also addressed the threats posed by anti-peace forces targeting students and youth. He cited recent tragic incidents, including the terrorist attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, which claimed the lives of several innocent students, and an attack on an educational institution in Bahawalpur. He strongly condemned these attacks and affirmed the Sindh government's commitment to bringing those responsible to justice while standing in solidarity with the families of the victims. "The enemies of peace use guns and explosives, but our students wield the power of the pen and the brush. Through education and art, you must defeat their hateful ideologies," the CM urged the audience. Mr Shah highlighted that institutions like the Arts Council are not just nurturing creativity but are also building a peaceful identity for Sindh and Pakistan on the global stage. "We are a nation shaped by art, literature, and culture. Our students are leading in fields like IT and have the skills to disrupt the digital strategies of our enemies," he remarked.

IWT suspension act of war

LAHORE: "Unilaterally holding Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance by India is tantamount to an 'Act of War'. Water is life-line of 250 million people of Pakistan. In order to protect out people's interests we will take water issue to the end-stage," said categorically by Federal Minister for Water Resources Muhammad Moeen Watto. He was speaking in a seminar titled "Indian Imperialism on Pakistan Water; Are new War clouds lurking, Consequences and Way forward" organized by Institute of International Relations and Media Research (IIRMR) at a local hotel here on Saturday. Smelling a rat, he cautioned about India's sinister intention on water manipulation saying in coming days we should be on high alert against Indian's wickedness. However, he

said so far Pakistan has been experiencing normal flow of water from Indian side which is a good omen. Unmasking Indian's pre-planned maliciousness, he said India wrote a letter on 18th April on water issue seeking reply from Pakistan on 8th May. But without awaiting Pakistan stance, India blatantly announced to suspend IWT, he added. He assured that as per law neither IWT can be annulled nor can be suspended unilaterally. Institute of International Relations & Media Research (IIRMR) Chairman Muhammad Mehdi and President Yasir Habib Khan said that India has no capacity to cut off Sindh water because only five percent water flow comes from Indian side. Same is the case with Jelum river, they added. "Rest of mischievous effort will be exerted only at Chanab river. And in such case if it is orchestrated,

it will take many years to materialize," they said. Beside IWT is a test case for world, they said, if it is violated, then none of international treaties will survive," they asserted. They termed China as party in such water management and distribution affairs as entire stream of water descends from south Tibet, territory of China. Secondly because the US came forward as mediator, so it is its responsibility to settle the water issue without any delay of time," they demanded.

Former Indus Water Commissioner Punjab Sheraz Memon said that infringing water treaty, even if India tries to block water flow toward Pakistan, it will be an exercise in futility due to India's insufficient capacity to water maneuverability. "IWT survived in Pak-India two wars and barrage of terrorism's allegations, he revealed and suggested that sagacity demands that treaty should go unaffected in all worst scenarios. He demanded to resolve water issue through diplomatic channels.—APP

Niaz Support and Youth Parliament of Pakistan join hands

The leadership teams also discussed avenues for expanding Niaz Support's presence in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), aiming to create local employment and deliver impact in underserved regions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark step toward inclusive development, Niaz Support and the Youth Parliament of Pakistan have entered into a strategic partnership aimed at delivering customised mobility solutions and educational opportunities to families impacted by disability. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at Hotel Margala, Islamabad, by Air Commodore (R) Syed Amer Raza, Honorary Director of Niaz Support, and Mr. Ubaid Qureshi, President of the Youth Parliament of Pakistan. Also present at the ceremony were Mr. Hussain Odhwani, Global Founder of Niaz Support and award-winning social entrepreneur; Mr. Hamad Malik, General Secretary of the Youth Parliament of Pakistan; and Mr. Zeeshan Saleem, Field Manager for Niaz Support in Islamabad. Through this partnership, the Youth Parliament will function as a

Youth Task Force of Niaz Support - assisting in identifying persons with disabilities for customized mobility solutions and supporting the educational journey of children whose parents live with disabilities. Mr. Ubaid Qureshi, President of the Youth Parliament of Pakistan, stated: "Our youth hold the power to drive meaningful change. By aligning with Niaz Support, we are creating a structure through which young leaders can reach the most underserved and ensure that no one is left behind." Mr. Hussain Odhwani, Founder of Niaz Support, shared: "This collaboration underscores the role of youth in shaping a compassionate, inclusive society. Together, we aim to empower not just individuals, but entire families and communities through mobility and education." The leadership teams also discussed avenues for expanding Niaz Support's presence in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), aiming to create local employment and deliver impact in underserved regions.



Rishte Aur Ferishte staged at PAC

RAWALPINDI: The Regional Drama Festival has started at Punjab Arts Council (PAC) Rawalpindi, featuring a series of different family dramas at the stage by renowned local artists. On the first day, the drama Rishte Aur Ferishte was presented, which was written and directed by Yar Muhammad. Raja Sattar, Anjum Abbasi, Shahid Bhola, Allama Sajjad, Anjum Abbasi, Rizwana Khan, Zahra and Yar Muhammad performed well in the drama theme.

The theme of the play circles around the greed of money, that results in a man becoming arrogant by keeping all the true relations aside. The drama reflects that a time comes when wealth does not work, making him realize that only the passion of love for the homeland is the greatest relationship.

Director PAC, Sajjad Husain on the occasion said that according to the vision of the Punjab government, the Regional Drama Festival is being presented, with the aim to promote and develop fine arts and provide clean and quality entertainment to the people.—APP

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
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- May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day
- May 28/Ethiopia National Day
- May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day



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Africa Day celebrations attract huge audiences in Islamabad

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The rich cultural diversity and heritage of the African continent came alive in Islamabad as diplomats, officials, and guests gathered to celebrate Africa Day at a vibrant reception hosted at the residence of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan, Mr. Mohamed Yahya. The event was co-hosted by Mohamed Karmoun, Dean of the African Group in Islamabad and Ambassador of Morocco, and Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa) from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The celebration marked not just Africa's shared history and achievements, but also its evolving partnership with Pakistan and the international community. Africa Day, observed annually on May 25, commemorates the founding of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963. In Islamabad, it served as a moment of cultural exchange and diplomatic camaraderie. Diplomats from across Africa and friends of the continent joined in a spirited evening that reflected Africa's unity in diversity. The highlight of the evening was the array of



food stalls, set up by various African embassies, offering guests a chance to indulge in authentic African cuisine. From Moroccan tagine to Egyptian koshari to Sudanese stews, the event was a culinary journey across the continent. The colors, aromas, and flavors at each stall told stories of traditions, history, and national pride. In a

unique cultural gesture, the Embassy of Ethiopia established a traditional coffee corner, introducing guests to the centuries-old Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Attendees were treated to freshly brewed Ethiopian coffee, served with customary hospitality. The ritual of roasting, grinding, and brewing was performed live, and many found the aromatic experience both

relaxing and enlightening. Speaking on the occasion, the dean of the African group emphasized the growing importance of Africa in global geopolitics and development. He noted that Africa, with its young population and abundant natural resources, represents both a challenge and an opportunity in the world's pursuit of peace, prosperity, and sustainability. Ambassador



Mohamed Karmoun thanked Pakistan for its continued support and engagement with African nations. He highlighted the historical bonds that unite Africa and Pakistan, rooted in anti-colonial solidarity and enhanced by modern-day cooperation in trade, education, and diplomacy. Hamid Asghar Khan, representing the Foreign Office, reaffirmed

Pakistan's commitment to deepening ties with Africa under its "Engage Africa" policy. He appreciated the role of the African diplomatic corps in Islamabad in fostering people-to-people and government-to-government connections. The evening concluded with music, and an atmosphere of warmth and unity. African diplomats expressed appreciation for Pakistan's hospitality and

the opportunity to showcase their cultures in a spirit of friendship and shared vision. Africa Day 2025 in Islamabad was not just a celebration—it was a reaffirmation of a global commitment to unity, development, and mutual respect. Events like these continue to bridge continents and bring people closer together in a world that increasingly values diversity and cooperation.

Pakistan launches third Polio vaccination drive

The rounds we've held from September 2024 through May 2025 have been designed to strategically close immunity gaps and disrupt virus circulation before high transmission season begins

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a renewed push toward a polio-free Pakistan, the Pakistan Polio Programme has officially launched its third National Immunisation Days (NIDs) campaign. The inauguration ceremony was held at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Islamabad. It was led by the Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ayesha Raza Farooq, along with key partners and officials. Ms. Farooq personally administered oral polio vaccine and Vi-

tamin A drops to children under five, reaffirming the government's steadfast commitment to eradicating the disease from every part of the country. Set to begin on May 26, the week-long campaign aims to immunize over 45 million children under five years of age. This effort is seen as a decisive step in the country's final push to stop poliovirus transmission and achieve eradication by the end of 2025. "Polio eradication is more than a public health goal — it's a national mission," said Ms. Farooq. "This campaign is a pivotal part of our 2-4-6 roadmap. The

rounds we've held from September 2024 through May 2025 have been designed to strategically close immunity gaps and disrupt virus circulation before high transmission season begins." While challenges persist in traditional hotspots such as Karachi, South KP, and the Quetta Block, Ms. Farooq highlighted encouraging progress in reaching underserved communities. She also extended deep gratitude to the 400,000 frontline workers driving this campaign — including 225,000 female vaccinators — and acknowledged the support of civil and

military law enforcement in ensuring secure access to children. Despite major gains, the threat of wild poliovirus remains. So far in 2025, Pakistan has confirmed 10 polio cases. Moreover, environmental surveillance has detected the virus in 272 sewage samples across 68 districts — a clear indication of continued transmission. UNICEF Representative in Pakistan, Abdullah Fadil, praised the programme's direction during his remarks at the launch. As he concludes his tenure in the country, he lauded Pakistan's leadership and Ms. Farooq for their unwavering resolve.

Further investigation is underway. He said, acting on the special directives of DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq, Islamabad Police have intensified a large-scale crackdown against suspects involved in dacoities, robberies, and other heinous crimes across the city. DIG Tariq said strict actions against criminal elements had led to a visible reduction in serious crimes in the federal capital. All officers have been directed to continue operations against those depriving citizens of their valuable assets, he added.—APP

ICT admn nabs four dacoits, seized stolen motorcycles, weapons

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested four members of dangerous gangs involved in dacoities and motorcycle thefts in various areas of the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that teams from Khanna, Sihala and Margalla police stations

apprehended four suspects linked to a series of street crimes and motorcycle theft incidents. The arrested individuals were identified as Usama, Tahir, Sahil, and Muhammad Mustafa. He said police recovered several snatched mobile phones, cash, stolen valuables, six stolen motorcycles, one mo-

torcycle used in the crimes and arms with ammunition from the possession of the accused. He said multiple cases had already been registered against the suspects at different police stations, and during preliminary interrogation, the accused confessed to committing several criminal activities.

Consultative to address challenges faced by minority kids

ISLAMABAD:The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) convened a one-day consultation in Balochistan focused on the rights and challenges of minority children,said in a press release issued here on Sunday. The session brought together government officials, legal experts, civil society representatives, educators, church leaders, and community leaders to foster dialogue and bridge the gap between minority communities and government institutions in Balochistan. Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/ Minorities, NCRC highlighted the purpose of the consultation included the Commission's mandate, progress of two years and purpose of the consultation to tackle challenges of minority children through integrated approach and facilitate stronger engagement between community members and relevant government departments. During his address, Satyani also introduced the NCRC team and formally announced the appointment of Advocate Abdul Hayee as the newly appointed NCRC Member from Balochistan, enhancing the Commission's provincial representation to advocate on child rights across the province. He also thanked Sheezan William, member NCRC working group minority children for helping the Commission to organize this consultation and ensuring representative from all regions and faith background people. Government officials in attendance included representatives from the Social Welfare Department Nasir Baloch, Child Protection Unit Ms. Syeda Manan, Local Government Mr. Sattar, Mr. Muhammad Abdulhoo Director Human Rights Department, and Ms. Huma from Women and Juvenile Facilitation center Police Quetta. These officials discussed community concerns and shared actionable responses, including the exchange of contact information for ongoing coordination. The consultation attracted minority representatives from Loralai, Sanjawi, Sibi, Noshki, and surrounding areas of Quetta Participants included members of the Hindu, Christian, Balmiki, Sikh, and Bahl communities, with Muslim participants also attending in solidarity. Discussions focused around existing legal and policy frameworks affecting minority children, identifying critical implementation gaps and the need for robust protection mechanisms. The dialogue promoted mutual understanding, collaboration, and the sharing of practical experiences. Mr. Satyani, NCRC Member for Minorities, reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to strengthening child rights protections through inclusive policy development, community engagement, and legal advocacy.—DNA

Govt committed to transform PR into passenger-friendly mode of transport

ISLAMABAD:Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Sunday reaffirmed the government's commitment to transforming Pakistan Railways into a modern, reliable and passenger-friendly mode of transport. "Efforts are underway to make the railway a reliable and preferred mode of travel," he said while paying an unannounced visit to Margalla Railway Station. The minister assessed the overall facilities and engage directly with passengers and staff. During his visit, Hanif Abbasi conducted a detailed inspection of cleanliness arrangements across the station premises and expressed satisfaction over the efforts of the staff. He instructed station authorities to ensure that high standards of hygiene and sanitation are consistently maintained. Hanif Abbasi personally inspected each coach of the train stationed at the platform, evaluating onboard conditions and facilities provided to passengers. He also took time to interact with travelers, listening attentively to their complaints and suggestions regarding railway services. The minister held discussions with railway personnel about the quality of service and various operational challenges. He also reviewed the progress of ongoing development projects aimed at upgrading the Margalla Station infrastructure.—APP

Crack down on single-use plastics

ISLAMABAD: Enforcement efforts under a plan have been stepped up to clamp down on use of single-use plastics in the Islamabad and its adjoining areas and punish those violating the ban on single-use plastic items, particularly polythene bags, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination's media spokesperson Mohammad Saleem Shaikh said in a statement on Sunday. Sharing details of the various enforcement crack-downs conducted in various areas of the federal capital city under the plan, he said that the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) in collaboration with the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its enforcement of the Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023 through a series of inspection drives, targeting prominent commercial

areas in the city. Inspection teams visited bakeries, hotels, plastic suppliers, and local vendors across various localities to ensure strict compliance with the ban on single-use plastics. These operations resulted in the confiscation of significant quantities of prohibited items and fines imposed on multiple violators, the climate change and environmental coordination ministry's spokesperson Saleem Shaikh added. The ministry official recalled that on May 23, a Pak-EPA's enforcement team conducted a targeted inspection in Islamabad's upscale G-6 sector, seized over 15 kilograms of banned single-use plastic products. Six shopkeepers were fined and issued warnings for non-compliance. Encouragingly, most shops in the area were found using eco-friendly alternatives for packaging. In a

separate operation on May 22, Pak-EPA teams carried out inspections at key markets, including G-9 Peshawar Morr Market, Safa Gold Mall (F-7 Markaz), and Rana Market (F-7/2). These raids led to the confiscation of over 300 kilograms of banned items and the imposition of Rs. 45,000 in fines on seven violators, the ministry spokesperson Muhammad Saleem said further. The official added that earlier on May 16, inspections in G-7 Markaz and adjacent markets resulted in the seizure of 150 kilograms of single-use plastics and Rs. 10,000 in fines. Lauding the joint crackdowns by Pak-EPA and ICT Administration against those violating the single-use plastics. Pak-EPA Director General Nazia Zeb Al emphasised the agency's firm in its stance against plastic pollution.—APP

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Briefs

Removing encroachments top priority

ISLAMABAD: Director of Enforcement and Vigilance at the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), Colonel (R) Azhar Saeed, emphasized that eliminating encroachments in government residential projects remained a top priority, with a strictly enforced zero-tolerance policy. In an exclusive interview with APP on Sunday, Colonel (R) Azhar Saeed stated that, in line with the vision of FGEHA Director General Captain (R) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, indiscriminate operations against encroachments were actively underway. He emphasized that all officers of the Enforcement and Vigilance Wing had been directed to sustain anti-encroachment efforts without exception. Assistant Director of the Enforcement and Vigilance Wing, Dawood Kakar, informed APP that commercial centers in Sectors G-13 and G-14 have been completely cleared of encroachments. He further stated that a week-long crackdown in these sectors' commercial areas led to the removal of illegally constructed structures, stalls, and encroachments obstructing public pathways and commercial spots. He stated that confiscated items from the anti-encroachment operation would be auctioned. He emphasized that the business community must strictly comply with regulations, warning that any future violations or encroachments would face zero tolerance. He assured that the encroachment removal operation would proceed uninterrupted.—APP

NPF projects reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director (MD) of the National Police Foundation, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, chaired important meetings on Sunday, which were attended by Director IT, Director Finance, Director Education, Deputy Director Housing, and other senior officials. An official told APP that MD Rizvi reviewed ongoing and proposed projects of the Foundation, discussed the organization's financial policies, and instructed officers to improve digital systems for enhanced efficiency. MD Rizvi received a detailed briefing on the current status of NPF projects and directed officers to formulate a comprehensive strategy to ensure timely completion. He emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts to further enhance the organization's performance. MD Rizvi directed that all projects must be monitored transparently, with public convenience prioritized during execution. He noted that such an approach would ensure benefits not only for the general public but also for police officers, officials, and their families. He also reiterated his commitment to strengthening the Foundation's role in improving the quality of life for the police force through the introduction of modern, effective, and welfare-oriented projects.—APP

Businessmen call for enhanced cooperation with Vietnam

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan-ASEAN Friendship Association, led by Chairman Zafar Bakhtawari, visited the Embassy of Vietnam and offered condolences to the Vietnamese Ambassador, Pham Anh Tuan, on the passing of former President Tran Duc Luong. Madam Sadaf Asim Abbasi and Malik Mohsin Khalid also accompanied Zafar Bakhtawari on the occasion. While signing the condolence book, Zafar Bakhtawari wrote that former President Tran Duc Luong was a great political leader who led Vietnam forward with national unity and solidarity. Under his leadership, Vietnam achieved not only internal stability but also gained a prominent position on the global stage. He introduced economic



reforms that have turned Vietnam into a key economic power in the Eastern world today. He further stated that Tran Duc Luong promoted Vietnam's positive role not only in the ASEAN region but also at the international level. Under his leadership, Vietnam embraced the principles of peace, development, and prosperity, which became the solid foundation of the country. On the occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari also held a bilateral discussion with the Vietnamese Ambassador. They discussed the exchange of trade delegations, promotion of cultural ties, and organization of joint events. The Pakistan-ASEAN Friendship Association assured full cooperation and announced that a delegation from the Association would soon visit ASEAN countries, with Vietnam being a top priority.

BMP voices concern over budget delay, slams proposed petroleum levy hike

Anjum calls for business-friendly reforms and inclusive policymaking to address economic pressures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has expressed serious concern over the government's decision to delay the presentation of the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 and the possible imposition of additional levies, including a sharp hike in the petroleum levy. The BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar termed these developments deeply troubling for the al-

ready struggling business community and warned that such decisions would further strain the economy and damage investor confidence. He said that the federal government recently shelved its plan to present the budget on June 2 and is now expected to unveil the fiscal plan on June 10. The delay has been attributed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's foreign tour as well as internal disagreements over the finalisation of expenditures. He said that this postponement creates unnecessary uncertainty at a time when the business environment is already frag-

ile due to inflation, high energy costs, and sluggish growth. Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the delay in the budget presentation sends a negative signal to the market, businesses, and foreign investors who are waiting for policy clarity. He said that businesses plan their fiscal year strategies based on expected policy announcements, and any delay hampers their ability to make timely decisions regarding investment, procurement, and employment. He added that the lack of transparency around budget planning is further eroding trust between the business community and the

government. The BMP is particularly concerned about the government's reported move to increase the petroleum levy, which currently stands at Rs78 per litre. The government is reportedly considering raising this levy further in order to finance a larger Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of Rs1 trillion for the next fiscal year. Mian Anjum Nisar warned that any additional levy on petroleum products would result in a significant increase in the cost of doing business, leading to a rise in inflation and further weakening the purchasing power of consumers.

A war won on screens, lost in battlefield

ISLAMABAD: Guns roared, jets started sorties and missiles stormed Indian airspace and installations in an unprecedented and valiant assault inside enemy's territory turning mighty military assets into ashes within hours. For us it was simply a matter of few hours to astonish Indian anchors and people by winning a war in the battlefield in the morning that they had pretended to win on television screens the last night. Seeing the outcome they were not simply taken aback but still in agony and shock for losing to a country that they thought was no match to them. It was wee hours on May 10, when prior to starting a telling reply to a coward enemy, Fajar prayer and Dua was before chanting a slogan of Naara-e-Takbeer – Allah-o-Akbar to unleash an attack that made history and elevated Pakistan to a new pinnacle of reverence amongst the comity of nations. Pakistan Army and Air Force won accolades for the nation by crushing India to a stunning defeat by downing their seven fighter jets, spoiling S-400 missile system, attacking airbases and missile depots and capturing dozens of posts in IOJK. Jamming radars and fighter jets systems, hacking websites, calculated artillery and missile firing remained the hallmark of Pakistan's attack that blinded Indian military personnel and machines to give safe sailing to Pakistan. A new course in cyber warfare had been set, rising eyebrows of many when our JF-17 and J-10C jets and PL-15, Fatah-I and Fatah-II hit French Rafale, Israeli drones, Indian Brahmos missiles and Russian S-400 air defense system, making India to eat dust. Then the ceasefire came obviously on the request of India and attack was put to halt. It was a multi-pronged warfare with electronic and social media also bearing pivotal importance. Live coverage of shows, broadcast, Vlogs and Podcasts were cruelly used by India to build a false narrative. But, the will they tried to propagate in words, we manifested in our deeds standing firm as a nation. The story of hatred against Pakistan dates back to years as Bollywood was continuously busy in an onslaught to propagate scorn against Pakistan and build a narrative that their forces were unbeatable. Although, May 10 turned to be a nightmare for them and their narrative dashed to ground within hours yet it leaves a message for us – a message of building our narrative more vigorously through our diplomacy, curricula, drama and film industry.—APP

COMSTech to advance science and technology in Africa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTech, the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation Sunday extended its heartfelt solidarity and congratulations to African nations on the occasion of African Day and reaffirmed its deep commitment to strengthening science, technology, and innovation across the African continent. Since its establishment, COMSTech has played a pivotal role in promoting scientific collaboration among OIC member states, with Africa as a key focus. Under the leadership of Coordinator General Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, during the last five years, COMSTech has launched a wide array of initiatives aimed at building capacity, supporting research, enhanc-

ing health systems, and empowering youth and women throughout Africa. In his special message for African Day, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary stated, "Africa is not only a continent of vast potential and rich heritage. It is the future of global innovation. At COMSTech, we are committed to harnessing the power of science and technology to enable sustainable development, nurture local talent, and build resilient communities throughout Africa." COMSTech's efforts have included hands-on training workshops in renewable energy, biotechnology, information and communication technologies, and environmental sciences. Through partnerships with institutions like TWAS, the University of Lahore, ICCBS, and HUCM, hundreds of African scholars have been awarded fully funded research fellow-

ships, technical training, and academic degrees in Pakistan. In addition to academic support, COMSTech has strengthened scientific research across Africa by funding collaborative projects that unite African universities with counterparts across the OIC. These projects tackle pressing challenges such as food security, public health, and climate resilience. Scientific conferences and seminars held in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and other countries have facilitated knowledge exchange and fostered long-term institutional partnerships. COMSTech has also taken significant steps to improve health systems in African nations. A comprehensive five-year action plan includes disease surveillance training, health policy workshops, and virtual health networks. In cooperation with the Islamic De-

velopment Bank and LRBT, COMSTech has organized cataract surgery camps in Niger, Chad, and Somalia, trained ophthalmologists in managing diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma, and conducted specialized workshops on topics including leishmaniasis, neurology, and histopathology in cities such as Addis Ababa, Kampala, and Mogadishu. Efforts to support infrastructure development have led to the establishment of centres of excellence and Halal authentication laboratories, most notably at the Islamic University in Uganda and the provision of advanced scientific instruments in Mauritania and Chad. COMSTech's expert missions have also helped restore and operationalize critical laboratory equipment. Women and youth are at the heart of COMSTech's programs.

Pakistan's female students reshaping academic landscape

ISLAMABAD: 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.—APP

PCCR to launch key report

ISLAMABAD: The Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights (PCCR), envisioned by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and led by its Convenor, Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan, MNA, with the support of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, is set to host the closing ceremony of its nationwide initiative. The initiative titled "Pakistan's Education Crisis: Enhancing Parliamentary Engagement on Out-of-School Children," on Monday, May 26, 2025, at the Parliament House, Islamabad. The event will mark the launch of a landmark report titled "Parliamentary Engagement for National Strategy on Education Emergency," outlining actionable, locally rooted solutions to address the crisis of over 26 million out-of-school children in Pakistan. Developed through extensive community consultations across all four provinces, the report reflects Parliament's renewed commitment to educational equity in light of the National Education Emergency declared in 2024.—APP

Chinese delegation visits ICCI to explore investment avenues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from HWO Energy Storage, a leading comprehensive energy solutions provider headquartered in Ningbo, China, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to explore avenues of collaboration and future investments in Pakistan's energy sector. The delegation was led by its President Zhang Feng, accompanied by the Director Sales Ivan Sa Nogueira and Director Marketing Wang Tao of HWO Energy Storage. Upon their arrival at the Chamber House, the delegation was warmly received by ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi and senior members of the Chamber Welcoming the delegation, President



Nasir Mansoor Qureshi briefed them about ICCI's strong advocacy role for its over 12,000 members representing the trade, industry, and service sectors. He emphasized the significance of the longstanding Pakistan-China relationship and highlighted the regional industry's aspiration for developing a modern, export-oriented infrastructure to support value addition, technical training, and

job creation aligned with international standards. President Zhang Feng of HWO Energy Storage provided an overview of the company's innovations and global operations, stressing its commitment to delivering clean, accessible energy solutions. He expressed the company's strong interest in investing in Pakistan's energy sector, which he said would not only strengthen

Pakistan-China ties but also contribute to employment generation and infrastructure development in the country. Also present at the occasion were ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, and Executive Members Waseem Chaudhry, Irfan Chaudhry, Imran Minhas, and Rohail Anwar Butt, who exchanged views with the delegation on potential areas of collaboration.

Naqvi expresses sympathy over loss from Punjab rains

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and property caused by recent torrential rains in Punjab. In his statement, Mohsin Naqvi extended heartfelt condolences to Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the provincial government, and the people of Punjab. He said the federal government stands with the Punjab government during this difficult time. "I am deeply saddened by the loss of precious human lives due to the heavy rains in Punjab," said Naqvi. "We share the grief of the affected families and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured." He also offered condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and assured full support to the provincial authorities in dealing with the aftermath of the natural disaster.—APP

Expert recommends engaging pursuits for kids

ISLAMABAD: As summer vacations approach, an education expert on Sunday advised the parents to consider engaging their kids in meaningful activities like educational travel, creative writing, AI learning and other skill-building pursuits, rather than investing in costly summer camps. During a conversation with a local channel, education expert Sadia Amir emphasized the importance of engaging kids in meaningful activities during summer vacations. She recommended opting for skill-building pursuits like educational travel, creative writing and AI learning instead of investing in expensive summer camps. By doing so, parents can provide their children with valuable learning experiences while also saving on costs, she added. Sadia Amir stressed that while the syllabus can-

not be ignored, travel and skillful activities should also be accommodated during summer vacations, providing a balance between academics and extracurricular pursuits. She suggested that working parents should prioritize spending quality time with their kids and allowing them to relax at home, rather than enrolling them in school or private summer camps, to promote a more relaxed and bonding-filled summer break. Experts also emphasized the importance of fostering close relationships with family and loved ones, suggesting that nurturing these bonds is essential for emotional well-being and a healthy summer experience for kids. Sadia further expressed concern that many parents enroll their kids in summer camps at school or elsewhere as soon as sum-

mer break starts, which she believes can be detrimental to their well-being, depriving them of a much-needed break and relaxation time. She emphasized that kids also need mental relaxation and downtime during summer break, allowing them to recharge and refresh their minds, rather than being overly occupied with structured activities. Education expert suggested that traveling is an excellent option for kids during summer break, allowing them to explore new places, experience different cultures and create lasting memories while taking a break from academics. She lamented that summer camps often come with hefty price tags, which can be a significant burden for many families, making it difficult for them to afford such activities for their children.

China’s open support to Pakistan - A strategic shift with global implications

IN a defining moment of strategic realignment in South Asia, China has emerged from the shadows of subtle diplomacy to openly back Pakistan in its conflict with India. This public endorsement is not merely a gesture of regional alliance; it is a strong, calculated message to New Delhi and the broader global community: Pakistan is not alone, and China is ready to recalibrate the regional balance of power if necessary. China’s support for Pakistan has traditionally remained implicit—economic cooperation, arms transfers, diplomatic cover in international forums, and coordination on multilateral platforms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. However, the latest developments mark a stark shift from quiet diplomacy to visible and vocal alignment. The Chinese military’s cooperation with Pakistan during the recent India-Pakistan conflict has not only fortified Pakistan’s strategic standing but also allowed China to discreetly test and demonstrate its advanced warfare capabilities under real combat-like conditions. This support to Pakistan should not be viewed in isolation. It is intricately linked to China’s broader geopolitical ambitions, especially concerning Taiwan. As tensions escalate across the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese leadership seems intent on drawing lessons from the subcontinental theatre—deploying, assessing, and refining its military technologies and operational readiness. The South Asian war has, in effect, become a proving ground for potential tactics that could be employed in a future confrontation with Taiwan and, by extension, the United States. Furthermore, Beijing is playing a crucial role in stabilizing Pakistan’s western frontier by mediating between Islamabad and the Afghan Taliban. This effort is not rooted in altruism, but in cold strategic calculation. China’s massive investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), cannot flourish in a region mired in instability. Peace on Pakistan’s western border is imperative for uninterrupted economic integration and for the security of Chinese assets and personnel in the region. Thus, China’s involvement in regional diplomacy is as much about securing its economic stakes as it is about bolstering its strategic partner. The messaging to India is unambiguous: any future engagement with Pakistan will also have to account for the potential involvement of a powerful northern neighbor. India now faces a more complex strategic equation—one that demands not only preparedness on its western border but heightened vigilance along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. China’s newfound openness in supporting Pakistan is a watershed moment. For decades, China preferred strategic ambiguity, carefully balancing its ties with India while cultivating Pakistan as a counterweight. That era seems to have ended. Whether this shift is permanent or a temporary posture in the evolving chessboard of global power politics remains to be seen.



THE relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, once defined by deep integration, has undergone a profound transformation in the aftermath of Brexit. Since formally exiting the EU in January 2020, the UK has charted its course as an independent sovereign state, no longer tethered to the EU’s economic, legal, or political structures. Yet despite the formal separation, the fates of Britain and the EU remain inextricably linked—by geography, trade, security, and shared global challenges. Post-Brexit relations have been turbulent. The early years were marked by friction over trade protocols, particularly in Northern Ireland, and regulatory divergence that led to economic and political uncertainty. The Northern Ireland Protocol became a flashpoint, reflecting deeper tensions between preserving the Good Friday Agreement and enforcing the integrity of the EU single market. These early conflicts highlighted the growing pains of a new and more distant relationship between former partners. However, time has also brought a degree of pragmatism. In 2023, the Windsor Framework helped ease tensions over Northern Ireland, offering a more balanced approach to customs and regulatory checks. This agreement was not just a diplomatic achievement—it was a necessary step toward rebuilding trust and cooperation between London and Brussels. On trade, the UK remains one of the EU’s most important partners, despite no longer being part of the single market or customs union. The EU is the UK’s largest trading partner, accounting for nearly half of its exports and imports. Meanwhile, the UK is the EU’s third-largest trading partner. While new bureaucratic hurdles and regulatory differences have emerged, businesses on both sides have adjusted, albeit at a cost. Going forward, there is a growing consensus among UK businesses and some policymakers for more streamlined cooperation, if not closer alignment, in key sectors like financial services, energy, and data protection. In terms of foreign policy and security, the UK and EU face a common set of challenges: Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, cyber threats, and the rise of authoritarianism. These shared concerns have revived conversations about strategic cooperation. Though the UK chose not to be part of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy, it continues to work closely with European allies through NATO and ad hoc coalitions. There is growing momentum for deeper collaboration on intelligence-sharing, counterterrorism, and defence technology. Migration and climate change represent other domains where UK-EU cooperation is crucial. Both sides understand that solutions to transnational issues cannot be addressed in isolation. Recent agreements on channel crossings and energy transition demonstrate that, while divorced institutionally, the UK and EU remain bound by mutual interests and values. In conclusion, UK-EU relations have entered a new phase—not one of integration, but of managed separation and selective cooperation. The challenge now is to shift from reactive diplomacy to a more structured and forward-looking partnership. Brexit may have ended a political union, but it cannot dissolve centuries of interdependence. A mature, constructive relationship is not only possible—it is essential for the future stability and prosperity of both the UK and Europe.

Sarah adam lifts the veil on India-TTP nexus

Qamar Bashir



Adam describes India’s strategy as a classic case of short-term gain, long-term catastrophe. By weaponizing the Taliban against Pakistani interests, India may have scored a few tactical wins, but it is also creating a monster it cannot control. The second-tier Kashmiri leadership now being cultivated is deeply radical, bound not by nationalism but by jihadist ideology. And while Pakistan may be the immediate target, India will not be immune to their long-term plans

IN a world growing increasingly chaotic, the latest revelations by former CIA operative Sarah Adam could not have come at a more critical moment. Her interview, rich in classified insight and field-sourced intelligence, exposes a sinister and elaborate strategy being orchestrated by India—one that not only seeks to eliminate Pakistan-aligned Kashmiri militants but also aims to destabilize Balochistan and undermine the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Sarah Adam’s whistleblowing reveals a two-pronged covert war being waged by India. On one front, India is reportedly collaborating with Taliban factions to assassinate Kashmiri militants on Pakistani soil, specifically those aligned with Pakistan’s military and intelligence services. On the second front, India is accused of utilizing Afghan soil and TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan) infrastructure to arm and finance Baloch separatists—targeting Pakistan’s territorial integrity and its most vital economic artery: CPEC. According to Sarah Adam, 18 senior Kashmiri figures affiliated with groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, and Al-Badr Mujahideen have been systematically eliminated or targeted in recent months by Taliban-linked operatives. Harakat-ul-Mujahideen remains conspicuously untouched—underscoring a selective strategy likely driven by historical ties between Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and Harakat founder Fazl-ur-Rahman Khalil. Adam argues that India’s use of Taliban infrastructure is not merely tactical—it is strategic. By removing the “old guard” of Kashmiri militants who are loyal to Pakistan’s institutional framework, India and its Taliban collaborators are paving the way for a new generation of militants—fighters indoctrinated in the ideological warfare of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. These emerging actors, shaped in the fires of Afghanistan’s post-occupation resistance, reject diplomacy, borders, and national loyalty. They envision not political autonomy but an Islamic emirate in Kashmir, formed through unrelenting, decentralized jihad. Their loyalties lie not with Rawalpindi or Islamabad, but with global extremist agendas. The geopolitical implications are worsened by the fact that this insurgency is being indirectly financed by Western taxpayers. Since 2021, the U.S. and the UN have funneled over \$11 billion in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Intended for civilian relief, much of this aid is reportedly siphoned off

by the Taliban through taxes, coercion, and diversion tactics—and then repurposed to fund regional militant operations, including those targeting Pakistan. Despite efforts in the U.S. Congress to introduce accountability measures—such as the stalled Protecting Death Act—no meaningful action has been taken to plug these financial leaks. Sarah Adam calls this a case of strategic blindness, warning that Western aid is unintentionally funding the next regional war. Adam describes India’s strategy as a classic case of short-term gain, long-term catastrophe. By weaponizing the Taliban against Pakistani interests, India may have scored a few tactical wins, but it is also creating a monster it cannot control. The second-tier Kashmiri leadership now being cultivated is deeply radical, bound not by nationalism but by jihadist ideology. And while Pakistan may be the immediate target, India will not be immune to their long-term plans. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda-aligned fighters, once fully entrenched, will have no qualms about shifting their attention toward India—particularly in Kashmir. Their transnational agenda doesn’t distinguish between India and Pakistan; both are seen as secular enemies obstructing their vision of Islamic rule. One of the most alarming outcomes Sarah Adam highlights is the increased risk of accidental war. Given the current volatility in India-Pakistan relations, even a small, third-party terrorist strike could ignite a massive military confrontation. With both states on hair-trigger alert, a misattributed attack could spiral into a catastrophic war—not between nations by intent, but orchestrated by extremist groups for mutual destruction. Adam calls this scenario “killing two birds with one stone,” where radical groups manipulate mistrust between India and Pakistan to fuel regional chaos and ideological expansion. Sarah Adam’s revelations extend beyond Kashmir. India is also financing, training, and arming Baloch separatists via TTP networks operating from Afghan soil. These militants, under the guise of “freedom fighters,” have been responsible for killing Pakistani soldiers, police, and civilians, including fellow Baloch who support federal integration and CPEC development. India’s objective is clear: destabilize Balochistan, interrupt CPEC’s infrastructure rollout, and cripple Pakistan’s economic lifeline. Projects like Gwadar Port, Gwadar International Airport, and trans-provincial road links—all essential

components of CPEC—are under constant threat from Indian-backed militants. But this strategy is also on the brink of collapse. With growing Afghan interest in joining CPEC, and the Taliban regime recognizing the economic and geopolitical advantages of aligning with China and Pakistan, there is a strong chance that the Taliban will pivot toward protecting CPEC rather than attacking it. Sarah Adam’s testimony is not just intelligence—it is a strategic roadmap for Pakistan’s next moves. Islamabad must act swiftly to internationalize Adam’s findings by presenting them at the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the European Union, and in key world capitals. It must engage with the Taliban-led government in Kabul to dismantle Indian-backed militant camps and cut off funding channels to the TTP. Domestically, Pakistan should secure all CPEC zones through enhanced surveillance, deploy advanced technology to trace and intercept cross-border infiltration, and intensify efforts to dismantle TTP sleeper cells within the country. Simultaneously, it must expand community engagement, integration, and reconciliation programs to strengthen ideological counter-radicalization efforts, particularly in Kashmir and Balochistan. Development must be accelerated in Balochistan to address root grievances and deny extremist groups local support. Lastly, Pakistan must urgently brief global powers—especially the United States and China—on the long-term threat of a jihadist takeover in Kashmir, which poses a direct risk to regional and global stability. India, in its quest to undercut Pakistan, is playing with fire. It has chosen to collaborate with forces that obey no rules, respect no borders, and recognize no diplomacy. By arming Taliban factions and funding separatists, it may have struck at Pakistan’s heart—but it has also invited peril to its own doorstep. The future of Kashmir—and indeed South Asia—now hangs in the balance. If India and the world fail to recognize the gravity of Sarah Adam’s revelations, then the next war may not be fought by nations, but ignited by stateless militants, waging ideological warfare in the name of empires long dead and doctrines long discredited. India must step back from this brink. Pakistan must rise to the challenge. And the world must understand: the storm is gathering—not between two countries, but within them.

The struggle for technological supremacy

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The broader issue is not simply market competition. It is the fact that Huawei’s infrastructure transmits vast amounts of data, which, under Chinese intelligence laws, can be accessed by Beijing upon request. In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), such data becomes a critical resource. Huawei’s deployment of Smart City services integrating camera surveillance, utility data and even social media analysis has spanned over 200 cities across 40 countries

WHEN Ren Zhengfei founded Huawei in 1987, the company had humble beginnings. With only a few thousand dollars in the bank, Huawei’s early ambition was to reverse engineer foreign technology and develop domestic alternatives for China. Within a few years, by 1994, Huawei had achieved its first major milestone by manufacturing switching equipment critical hardware and software components that enable modern telecommunications. During this time, Ren met with then Chinese Communist Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin, where he stressed that telecommunications infrastructure was a matter of national security. He likened the absence of indigenous switching equipment to a nation lacking its own military. Jiang reportedly agreed with Ren’s assessment, signaling the beginning of a long-standing and strategic partnership between the Chinese government and Huawei, aimed at securing and controlling China’s telecommunications landscape. While Huawei aggressively expanded with the support of the Chinese state, the United States maintained a different approach. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the U.S. was the undisputed leader in global telecommunications. Its companies pioneered technologies such as 2G, 3G and 4G, setting international standards and securing widespread adoption. However, this dominance led to a sense of complacency. Trusting that the free market and innovation would maintain their lead, U.S. policymakers paid little attention to the geopolitical implications of telecom infrastructure. In contrast, China, through massive investments and strategic planning, methodically positioned Huawei and other companies to outpace their Western rivals. By 2012, Huawei had succeeded in deploying telecommunications equipment across vast areas of rural America, including locations housing U.S. nuclear weapons. For Beijing, this represented an intelligence victory, allowing them potential access to critical U.S. infrastructure. Despite increasing scrutiny and eventual bans most notably the exclusion of Huawei from U.S. networks starting in 2016 the company has continued to grow. Today, Huawei is the world’s largest supplier of 5G infrastructure and is already laying the groundwork for dominance in the forthcoming 6G era. Its global expansion is not merely economic; it also carries significant national security concerns. Huawei’s dominance has been achieved, in part, through accusations of intellectual property theft and massive state subsidies. These tactics have allowed Huawei to undercut competitors and drive major Western players like Cisco, Motorola, Lucent, Alcatel, Siemens and Nortel out of the equipment market. Now, only Ericsson (Sweden) and Nokia (Finland) remain as global competitors to Huawei

and even they rely heavily on the U.S. market for survival. The broader issue is not simply market competition. It is the fact that Huawei’s infrastructure transmits vast amounts of data, which, under Chinese intelligence laws, can be accessed by Beijing upon request. In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), such data becomes a critical resource. Huawei’s deployment of Smart City services integrating camera surveillance, utility data and even social media analysis has spanned over 200 cities across 40 countries. These datasets are essential for training AI models and can be funneled directly to China’s military and intelligence services. This could elevate China to not just a leader in telecommunications but a dominant power in AI-driven national security technologies. The recently uncovered “Salt Typhoon” hacking campaign against major U.S. telecom firms underscores the lengths to which China is willing to go to infiltrate foreign networks. Recognizing the threat posed by Huawei and Chinese telecom dominance, both the Trump and Biden administrations have taken action. President Trump initiated a ban on Huawei technology within the U.S., citing national security threats and worked with allies to encourage similar action. President Biden continued this approach, focusing on dismantling existing Huawei infrastructure and finding trusted alternatives. Both administrations have also aimed to tackle Huawei’s cost advantage, which is largely fueled by Chinese subsidies and the company’s ability to sell products below market prices. However, merely excluding Huawei is not sufficient. If the United States and its allies do not develop competitive, cost-effective alternatives, Huawei will maintain its global market lead. To this end, the Biden administration engaged financial institutions like the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the International Development Finance Corporation. These entities have been tasked with funding projects that help countries transition from Huawei networks to trusted Western providers. For example, Costa Rica received support to move from Huawei’s 4G systems to secure 5G networks developed by U.S. allies. Historically, the United States played a leading role in the development of global telecommunications. U.S. government investments in research during the twentieth century led to the creation of revolutionary technologies such as the internet, high-speed networking and GPS. American firms further advanced global communications by innovating the early generations of mobile technology. However, these efforts largely relied on the private sector, with the government playing a supportive but non-intrusive role. In stark contrast, China treated telecommunications as a state-led strategic sector. Its government and military backed firms like Huawei not only to build economic strength but also to further Beijing’s geopolitical interests.

Between 2008 and 2018, Huawei reportedly received over \$75 billion in government support. This allowed the company to rapidly expand, offering equipment at prices Western firms could not match. At the end of the 1990s, Western firms controlled almost 90% of the telecom equipment market. By 2025, Ericsson and Nokia, even after acquiring struggling competitors, are projected to command only 40% of the market. Chinese companies have already claimed an equal share. Today, the telecom landscape continues to shift in China’s favor. Despite U.S.-led sanctions and export restrictions, Huawei’s technological capabilities remain unmatched by its Western counterparts. The company’s research and development budget is more than twice that of Ericsson and Nokia combined, giving it a significant edge in innovation. Moreover, China is aggressively promoting Huawei’s deployments abroad by offering attractive financing and infrastructure deals, especially in developing countries. These efforts further entrench Chinese influence and expand its access to critical global data. In reaction, both Trump and Biden administrations acknowledged the need for a broader strategy. While banning Huawei products in the U.S. was a first step, the ultimate challenge lies in offering a viable global alternative. That includes not only funding research and development but also supporting deployment in key strategic regions. A critical element of this strategy is spectrum management the allocation of the radio frequencies used for wireless communication. Efficient and strategic use of this limited resource is essential to maintaining leadership in future telecom innovations, including 6G. If the United States fails to act decisively, China will continue to extend its lead. The global transition from 5G to 6G presents a pivotal moment. Without coordinated action among Western allies, including shared investments, standard-setting and competitive financing, China will cement its dominance in global telecommunications infrastructure. This poses a significant risk, as sensitive military, intelligence and civilian operations around the world could become increasingly vulnerable to surveillance and manipulation by Beijing. Huawei’s rise is a story of strategic planning, state support and long-term vision. It is also a stark warning to countries that have relied solely on free-market dynamics to maintain technological supremacy. The battle for telecommunications leadership is no longer confined to commercial competition; it is now deeply intertwined with national security, geopolitical influence and the future of global technology standards. The United States and its allies must act with urgency, cooperation and sustained investment to ensure that the world’s communications infrastructure remains open, secure and trustworthy in the decades to come.

Briefs

Shehbaz Sharif thanks Erdogan for full support

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while Iran had extended offer to mediate and de-escalate tensions between Pakistan and India, which spiraled into worst fighting in decades. It is pertinent here to mention that Pakistan has launched a diplomatic campaign to discuss with its friendly countries about India's aggression towards Pakistan on unfounded allegations of the latter's involvement in the Pahalgam attack. At least 26 people were killed in the April 22 attack on tourists in the scenic part of IIOJK, Pahalgam. Following which, India immediately blamed Pakistan for the attack without providing a shred of evidence corroborating the claim, which has been denied by Islamabad, and launched a series of small cross border attacks before launching missile strikes inside the country. This led to a short-lived battle between the nuclear-armed neighbouring countries, which finally stopped through intervention of the United States, as asserted by US President Donald Trump.

Nine Indian sponsored terrorists killed in KP

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During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location, and after an intense fire exchange, four Indian sponsored khwarij were sent to hell. Another intelligence based operation was conducted in Tank District and in ensuing fire exchange, two more Indian sponsored khwarij were sent to hell by the security forces. In third encounter that took place in general area Bagh, Khyber District, own troops successfully neutralized three more Indian sponsored khwarij. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed Indian sponsored khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in these areas. Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of Indian Sponsored Terrorism from the country.

Khuzdar blast death toll rises to eight

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the spot and 43 others injured in a suicide attack on a school 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. Hours after the school bus explosion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir expressed resolve that time has come for Pakistan to show unwavering national resolve, similar to that demonstrated against Indian aggression, to eliminate foreign-sponsored terrorism and bring the fight to a decisive conclusion. "Pakistan's security forces and law enforcement agencies will relentlessly pursue all those involved in this barbaric act," the prime minister was quoted as saying in the official statement during his day-long visit to Quetta to review the law-and-order situation following the terror attack. PM and the army chief also visited Quetta to meet the victims of the terrorist attack. The government said that Indian-backed militants carried out the attack, coming almost two weeks after the two sides settled a ceasefire to end their most serious conflict in decades. According to a press release issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), school bus carrying innocent children was targeted by "Indian-sponsored proxies [Fitna Al Hindustan] which the world has largely come to know as epicentre of instability in the region".

NUML signs MoUs with NADRA and Dream Sports Group

NUML remains committed to expanding its collaborative horizons and providing its students and faculty with new opportunities for growth and engagement through strategic partnerships

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) has signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and Dream Sports Group Pvt Ltd, marking a strong step forward in promoting research, innovation, and youth development through collaborative efforts. The MoU between NUML and NADRA aims to foster cooperation in innovative research projects and the exchange of expertise in areas of mutual interest. Both institutions agreed to jointly determine the scope and subject of collaborative research and development activities, in alignment with their respective objectives. The agreement was signed by Director General NUML, Brigadier Shahzad Munir, and TL



(SID) NADRA, Dr. Qamar Farooq.

In another key development, NUML also partnered with Dream Sports Group Pvt Ltd to promote sports and healthy activities among the youth. The MoU, signed by DG NUML Brigadier Shahzad Munir and Ch Qaiser Iqbal Baryar, Chairman Dream Sports Group underscores the importance of engaging students in physical and extracurricular development. Rector NUML, Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani (Retd), graced both signing ceremonies with his presence. He appreciated the initiatives and expressed hope that these collaborations will lead to meaningful outcomes, particularly in the fields of research, innovation, and youth empowerment. NUML remains committed to expanding its collaborative horizons and providing its students and faculty with new opportunities for growth and engagement through strategic partnerships.

Azhar excluded as Pakistan name new coaching staff

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced a revamped management and coaching staff for the upcoming T20 international series against Bangladesh, notably omitting assistant coach Azhar Mahmood from the coaching staff. As per the cricket board, New Zealand's Mike Hesson will assume the responsibilities of head coach. Among the other key appointments, Australia's Ashley Noffke has been named as the bowling coach, while Hanif Malik will serve as the batting coach. Whereas, Naveed Akram Cheema has been appointed as the team manager. The new support staff also includes Mohammad Masroor as the fielding coach, Cliff Deacon as the physiotherapist, and Imranullah as the strength and conditioning coach. The team management will also comprise a team analyst, team doctor, se-

curity manager, masseur, and media manager. This series marks the beginning of Hesson's tenure as the white-ball head coach of Pakistan men's cricket, after he was appointed by the PCB for the said role on May 13, replacing Aqib Javed. Mahmood, who previously held the role of bowling coach, had expressed his interest in taking up the role, stating that he would apply for the post of head coach. "I'm definitely going to apply for the Pakistan team head coach role," Mahmood stated in an interview earlier this month. However, the board did not consider him for the crucial role.

These changes come as Pakistan prepare to face Bangladesh in the T20I series, signalling a significant overhaul in the team's backroom leadership. All three T20Is will be held at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium, starting on May 28 and concluding on June 1. The first T20I will be played on Wednesday, the second on Friday and the final on Sunday. All matches will

begin at 8:00pm local time. Originally, Bangladesh was scheduled to arrive in Pakistan on May 21 in two groups, with a five-match T20I series planned to begin on May 25 in Faisalabad. However, logistical adjustments and security considerations led to a revised three-match series, all to be hosted in Lahore, following the revision of the schedule in the wake of a recent standoff between Pakistan and India.

The first group of the Bangladesh cricket team has arrived in Lahore for the three-match T20 International series against Pakistan. The initial 10-member squad includes players Hasan Mahmud, Mohammad Tanvir Islam, and Parvez Hossain Emon. Tanzim Hasan Sakib and members of the support staff are also part of the first batch to reach the city. Bangladesh players are set to arrive in three groups for the upcoming series. Both teams will train at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on May 26 and 27, ahead

of the opening fixture. Captains of both sides will also hold a pre-match press conference on May 27. The PCB announced a 16-member squad for the T20I series, with Salman Ali Agha named captain and Shadab Khan as vice-captain. The selection is based on performances in the ongoing PSL X. The squad includes Hasan Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Saim Ayub, Faheem Ashraf, Hussain Talat, Sahibzada Farhan, Mohammad Wasim Junior, and Naseem Shah. Notable exclusions are former captain Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi. Abbas Afridi, Abdul Samad, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Ali, Umair bin Yousuf, Sufyan Muqem, and Usman Khan were also left out. Meanwhile, Bangladesh will be led by Litton Das, who was appointed T20I captain earlier this year after Najmul Hossain Shanto stepped down. Off-spinner Mahedi Hasan is the vice-captain for both the UAE and Pakistan tours.

Hajj 2025: Over 2,500 complaints resolved

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH, May 25 (APP):The Lost and Found Cell in Makkah has successfully resolved over 2,539 complaints of intending pilgrims (guests of Allah Almighty) regarding their lost luggage and personal items since its establishment on May 9. Talking to APP here Sunday, In-charge Lost and Found Cell Makkah, Adnan Wazir said that a total of 2,611 complaints had been received from Pakistani pilgrims about their missing luggage and other belongings. Sharing details, he said that only 72 complaints remain unresolved. Of these, 31 each relate to luggage and other personal items besides 10 wheelchairs. Wazir said that the Cell operates round the clock in two shifts. We have a sophisticated mechanism in place to trace and return lost luggage and items to the concerned pilgrims, he said. In cases where no name tag or identifying information is present, the Cell traces luggage through air ticket tags. If items still cannot be identified, pictures are shared via a dedicated WhatsApp group for all sector coordinators and Building Duty Officers (BDOs). The concerned pilgrims are then located through their respective BDOs and coordinators, he said. Adnan Wazir said that a swift response system is operational within all residential buildings to ensure timely handling of complaints. In response to a question, he said that complaints can be lodged through the concerned BDOs or directly via phone at +966-12-5505326. The Cell comprises dedicated, trained teams and has also returned luggage to seven Ethiopian, one each Turkish and Bangladeshi pilgrim, and a crew member of Serene Air. The items were handed over to the relevant authorities at Jeddah and Riyadh airports. Adnan further said that a Wheelchair Desk is also functioning at the facility. So far, 49 wheelchairs have been issued to deserving pilgrims upon a refundable security deposit of 200 Saudi Riyals. - Agencies

Gond Kateera: A natural shield against summer heat

MULTAN: Gond Kateera, known in English as Tragacanth Gum, is emerging as a natural and effective remedy to beat the heat and boost health during the sweltering summer months, said known nutritionist Subhana Noor. She said Gond Kateera is a harmless, plant-derived resin obtained from specific shrubs found mainly in the Middle East and South Asia. It has been used for centuries in Unani, Ayurvedic and traditional healing systems. In an age dominated by synthetic medicines, the shift back to natural remedies has given renewed importance to ingredients like Gond Kateera, she added. Subhana Noor explained the gum helps regulate body temperature, combats dehydration, reduces fatigue and eases skin issues such as prickly heat, itching and excessive sweating. She noted its cooling properties make it an ideal summer supplement for those working in hot environments, especially laborers and people experiencing seasonal weakness. The gum also supports digestion by soothing acidity, easing constipation and calming intestinal inflammation. She said regular use improves gut health by softening the intestines and enhancing digestive function. Women often use it in facial masks for skin hydration and glow, while its benefits also extend to muscle strength, postnatal recovery, and joint pain relief. Subhana Noor pointed out that Gond Kateera is rich in natural minerals and helps restore internal energy by replenishing essential salts. Its use in milk or cold beverages can effectively revitalize the body. It also supports iron levels, making it useful in managing anemia. Moreover, she confirmed, diabetic patients may safely use it as it does not spike blood sugar levels abruptly, though professional consultation is advised before regular use. She recommended soaking gum overnight and consuming it in jelly form with milk, syrup, or desserts like falooda. - Agencies

PCB announces ticket prices for Pakistan-Bangladesh series

Three T20Is will be played on May 28, May 30 and June 1

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday announced ticket prices for the three-match T20I series between Pakistan and Bangladesh to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore from May 28 to June 1. Three T20Is will be played on May 28, May 30 and June 1, with the first ball set to be bowled at 8pm PST. Tickets will be available to fans from May 25 onwards at centres of a private courier company, the cricket board said in a statement. In the first phase, tickets will be available tomorrow at the centres located at Davis Road and Gulberg, Lahore.

Timberwolves silence Thunder to tighten NBA playoff series

Randle was benched late in game two and unhappy about it but responded by taking out his frustrations on the Thunder

WASHINGTON: Anthony Edwards scored 30 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves overwhelmed Oklahoma City 143-101 on Saturday to tighten their NBA playoff series. Edwards added nine rebounds and six assists while shooting 12-of-17 from the floor and 5-of-8 from three-point range as the host T-Wolves pulled a game back to be 2-1 behind in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals. "I was super happy about the physicality and energy we brought," Edwards said. "Being down 2-0, it's all about bringing energy and we brought high energy." Julius Randle added 24 points for Minnesota, which set a club record for points in a playoff game in ripping the NBA regular-season win leaders and NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who managed only 14 points. "We got punched in the mouth," said Gilgeous-Alexander. "You get punched, it's about getting back up. It's about responding. That's what the

next challenge is." The Thunder, who won the first two games at home, face game four on Monday at Minneapolis and game five on Wednesday at Oklahoma City. "I know everyone is happy about this one but we know OKC is going to come out and bring hell-energy and they are going to be ready to go and going to try to win game four and we've got to try and exceed their energy and get a win," Edwards said. "We'll be ready." Minnesota's victory was crucial because no team has ever recovered from a 3-0 deficit to win an NBA playoff series. "We just didn't bring it from an energy and focus standpoint," said Gilgeous-Alexander. "We just didn't have it. They had the sense of urgency knowing if they go down 3-0 it's going to be pretty tough. "They blitzed us pretty early and we were never able to get back. We've got to start coming out with a sense of urgency." The T-Wolves set a club record for points in a playoff game and led by as much as 129-84 late in the fourth quarter. "We do have to look at it and address the things that went awry for us," said Thunder coach Mark Daigneault. "They really took it to us. "They were just much more physical, much sharper, executed better, more forceful on offense. For the score to be what it was, they needed to outplay us in a lot of areas and that's what they did." Randle was benched late in game two and unhappy about it but responded by taking out his frustrations on the Thunder. - APP

Govt set to raise defence budget...

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response to COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's recognition for exemplary leadership has not been positive from Imran Khan. He concluded by stating that the government will not take any step that harms national unity or cohesion. Meanwhile, Pakistan and the IMF continued parleys for finalising the upcoming budget amid FBR's proposal to reduce rates of taxable slabs of salaried income by 2.5%. The IMF staff inquired about the 'alternate measures' only on the income tax side to bridge the gap of Rs56 billion arising due to the proposed relief for the salaried class in the next budget. Although, the IMF did not agree to increase the taxable ceiling from Rs0.6 million to Rs1.2 million but there is a proposal under consideration to decrease the rate of this slab to just a token rate of 1% from the existing rate of 5%. For all remaining slabs up to 35%, the maximum slab is proposed to be reduced to 32.5%. There is a surcharge for income earners of Rs1 million per month at a rate of 10%. There is also a Super Tax on higher income brackets, so it is proposed to be reduced gradually. On the expenditure side, it is under consideration to increase the salaries of defence/military officials, and different proposals are under consideration in this regard. The civilian side salary and pension will also be increased, but it will be in line with the proportion of CPI-based inflation. Keeping in view pressing requirements of the overall defence budget as well as increasing their salaries, the FBR's tax collection target for the next budget might be jacked up from Rs14.05 trillion to Rs14.2 trillion, but the finalised revenue collection figure was still underway because it hinges upon expenditure side requirements of the Ministry of Finance.

Nation and army have always stood united: ISPR

FROM PAGE 01

He remarked while pointing towards unity among Pakistanis amid recent tensions between Pakistan and India that flared after the Pahalgam attack. At least 26 people were killed in the April 22 attack on tourists in the scenic part of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) Pahalgam. Following this, India immediately blamed Pakistan for the attack without providing a shred of evidence corroborating the claim, which has been denied by Islamabad, and launched a series of small cross-border attacks before launching missile strikes inside the country. The ISPR DG said that all the strategies devised by India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were systematically disproven by Pakistan's decisive actions. He recounted Pakistan's retaliatory measures following the May 6-7 incidents. He revealed that Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir decided to respond at 26 Indian locations. Pakistan's armed forces launched a large-scale retaliatory military action after India's persistent attacks on May 10, named "Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos", and targeted several Indian military targets across multiple regions. After at least 87 hours, the war, provoked by India, ended on the same day with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States.

Israeli forces control 77pc of Gaza area

FROM PAGE 01

"The continued genocide, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, aggression, and occupation control over the vast majority of the Gaza Strip reflects an Israeli political will to impose a 'final solution' by force, in blatant defiance of all international laws and norms," the statement said. The office called on the UN and the international community to take action to stop the Israeli expansion.

37th Federal Cup National Tennis Championships 2025

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The curtains fell on the 37th OGDCL Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis Championships with a spectacular and action-packed final day at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad. The event not only celebrated the triumph of Pakistan's tennis elite but also shone a light on a promising new generation of skillful and talented young players, brimming with potential to become the future of professional tennis in the country. The prestigious championship, now in its 37th edition, continues to be organized annually by the Islamabad Tennis Association. This year's tournament featured over 120 players competing across six categories: Men's Singles & Doubles, Ladies' Singles, Boys' U18 Singles, Boys' U14 Singles, and Girls' U12 Singles. A total of PKR 850,000 was distributed among winners and runners-up as prize money and travel allowances.

Weather Delay and a Thrilling Men's Singles Final Due to a thunderstorm and rain in the capital city, the Men's Singles Final—originally scheduled for 4:00 PM—started later than planned. However, the delay did not dampen the intensity or quality of tennis that followed. In a thrilling showdown, 23-year-old top seed Muhammad Shoaib of PAF successfully defended his title against Muzammil Murtaza in an exhilarating three-set battle that lasted over 2 hours and 58 minutes. Shoaib claimed victory with scores of 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-4. Muzammil started strong, breaking Shoaib early and taking a 3-0 lead. However, Shoaib quickly adjusted his strategy, breaking back in the fifth game and forcing a tiebreak after both players held serve. In the tiebreak, Shoaib's early mini-break and consistent pressure earned him a hard-fought 8-6 win in the first set. The second set saw Muzammil bounce back with renewed focus, breaking Shoaib's serve in the 4th and 6th games to level the match with a 6-2 win.

In the deciding set, both players showcased exceptional baseline rallies and strategic cross-court play, reaching 4-4. Shoaib then delivered a clinical performance, breaking Muzammil's serve in the ninth game with powerful down-the-line winners. He maintained his composure while serving for the match, forcing unforced errors from his opponent and sealing the final set 6-4. The enthralling final was officiated by ITF White Badge Umpire Husnain Mehmood, ensuring a high standard of officiating. Earlier in the day, in the Junior 18 & Under Singles Final, Muhammad Salar emerged as the champion, defeating promising Islamabad youngster M. Hazik Aasim in a competitive straight-sets match. The encounter showcased the growing depth of talent in Pakistan's junior tennis ranks, with both players displaying impressive skill and composure. Although Mr. Ahmad Hayat Lak, Managing Director of OGDCL, and Ch. Mu-

hammad Aslam, Managing Director of Air Blue, were unable to attend the final due to urgent official engagements, the prize distribution ceremony was graced by distinguished guests. Mr. Muhammad Shafik, Director Commercial - Air Blue, Mr. Majid Bashir, President of the Islamabad Tennis Association, and Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), attended as Guests of Honor and distributed trophies and prizes to the winners and runners-up. Additionally, Mr. M.T. Cheema, Secretary of the Islamabad Tennis Association, and Mr. Ahsan Raza Zaidi also took part in presenting awards and acknowledging the players' commendable performances. Following are the Results: Men's Singles Final: Muhammad Shoaib beat Muzammil Murtaza 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-4 Junior 18&Under Singles Final Muhammad Salar beat M.Hazik Aasim 7-5 6-3

Briefs

Awareness seminar on IMEI tampering, cloning held

MULTAN: Vice President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Muhammad Azhar Baloch, expressed concerns over the increasing trend of IMEI tampering and cloning in mobile phones, calling it a major challenge not only to consumer rights but also to national security. He expressed these views while addressing an awareness seminar titled "IMEI Tampering & Cloning of Mobile Handsets" held at the MCCI in collaboration with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Multan. The seminar was attended by members of the business community, office-bearers of mobile markets, and traders. Muhammad Azhar Baloch extended special thanks to PTA Multan Zonal Director Waqas Ahmad and his team for organizing such an informative session. He said that initiatives like these were commendable, as they help raise awareness among the business community and the general public. "In today's era, mobile communication has become an integral part of our economy, business, and daily life," he noted. "Unfortunately, the risks associated with it are also on the rise." He emphasized the need for joint efforts from all stakeholders to ensure the safe, transparent, and lawful use of technology. He urged traders and those associated with the mobile device business to take advantage of such sessions and actively participate in future awareness programs. —APP

Kerala on alert as toxic cargo ship sinks in Arabian Sea

NEW DELHI: India's southern state of Kerala was on high alert Sunday after a Liberian-flagged vessel carrying hazardous cargo sank off its coast. The Indian Ministry of Defense said the 184-meter MSC Elsa 3 container ship was en route to Kochi from Vizhinjam on Saturday when it issued a distress call. All 24 members of the vessel's crew — which included nationals of Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Philippines — were rescued by the Coast Guard and the Navy. "The vessel went down with 640 containers, including 13 with hazardous cargo and 12 containing calcium carbide," the ministry said. It did not specify what other hazardous substances were onboard, but calcium carbide becomes dangerous on contact with water, producing acetylene gas, which is flammable and explosive. The vessel was also loaded with more than 84 metric tons of diesel and 367 metric tons of furnace oil. Diesel and furnace oil are both classified as marine pollutants. They are toxic to marine life and can contaminate coastal ecosystems. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority issued a public warning on Saturday, when the ship started losing containers in the Arabian Sea. The authority's secretary told reporters that "there is a chance the cargo, including containers and oil, will wash ashore." —APP

Spain hosts European, Arab nations to pressure Israel on Gaza

MADRID: The international community should look to sanction Israel to stop the war in Gaza, Spain's foreign minister said, ahead of a Madrid meeting of European and Arab nations on Sunday to urge a halt to its offensive. Countries Israel had long counted on as allies have been adding their voices to growing international pressure after it expanded military operations against Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose 2023 attack on Israel sparked the devastating war. A two-month aid blockade has worsened shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine in the Palestinian territory. —APP

“Taste the World” – a celebration of cultures through cuisine

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, and Ms. Dianne Hawkins, President of IFWA, emphasized the significance of cultural exchange in fostering peace, mutual understanding, and global harmony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotel, in collaboration with the Islamabad Foreign Women's Association (IFWA), proudly hosted "Taste the World" on Sunday, May 25, under Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy Initiative. This vibrant event brought together people from across the diplomatic, cultural, and local communities to experience the rich culinary heritage of 28 countries, each showcasing traditional dishes from their homelands. Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, and Ms. Dianne Hawkins, President of IFWA, emphasized the significance of cultural exchange in fostering peace, mutual understanding, and global harmony. "Serena Hotels is proud to host Taste the World, a true celebration of global cultures especially through the universal language of food," said Mr. Boolani. "Events like these build bridges between communities and remind us how diversity enriches us all." Ms. Hawkins added,



"This event not only highlights our cultural diversity but also supports a meaningful cause. The pro-

ceeds from today will go toward charitable initiatives backed by IFWA, making this celebration both joyful

and impactful." The event featured culinary delights from around the world, with embassies and



diplomatic missions offering visitors a taste of their national cuisines in an atmosphere filled with color,

music, and camaraderie. "Taste the World" exemplifies Serena Hotels' ongoing commitment to cultural

diplomacy bringing people together through shared experiences and supporting community-led causes.

Call for strengthening, Pakistan Philippines cultural, economic ties

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Philippines to Pakistan, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez on Sunday said that there is huge potential between Philippines and Pakistan for bilateral cultural, economic and trade cooperation, which will strengthen the ties between the two countries in the future. Significant progress is expected between Philippines and Pakistan for culture, tourism and people-to-people connection, and there is a need for explores new avenues in these areas, Ambassador of Philippine to Pakistan, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez told besides the 'Food Gala' organized by the Islamabad Foreign Women Association here in local hotel The Ambassador said that today, "We present delicious Philippines Cosines, dishes including Adobo, Kare-kare, Sinigang and Pancit to the people and our food is very liked by the local and other countries peoples. He said that Cultural, diplomatic, economic and trade ties have been established between the two countries in many potential spheres, which have wider possibilities of further strengthening bilateral relations in the future, he said. The Philippines is a representative of a strong cultural heritage, which has many similarities with Pakistan's culture and civilization, which can be helpful in bringing the two countries closer. Replying to a question, he said that Pakistan and the Philippines have enriched culture and both sides can promote good people to people contacts as well. The envoy said that there is a great similarity between food and culture in Pakistan and Philippines which also included many common dishes. He said that Pakistan and the Philippines have ample opportunities for cooperation in tourism and the Philippines can play a significant role in providing economic opportunities through tourism to Pakistan. "It will provide connectivity with 623 million of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEANs) potential trade market," he said. He said that this century is called the century of the Asian region and the emerging economies in Asia have great trade and economic opportunities for the world and other economies, including Pakistan, need to be connected to the global supply chain so that they can reap the benefits. Talking on economics and trade, he said that joint trade between Pakistan and ASEAN countries including the Philippines was not in line with its potential Replying to another question, he said that top exports to Pakistan include garments, paper products, cosmetics, dairy products, processed fruits, coconut products, tobacco, electronic components and machineries, iron, steel, cement and chemicals. He said that top imports from Pakistan include house wares, Textiles, processed foods, dairy products, marine products, fresh foods, tobacco, textile yarns and twines, and industrial products. —APP

Govt committed to resolve autoparts industry's problems

LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar said that government is trying to solve the problems faced by the auto parts manufacturing industry. Chairing a meeting with representatives of Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAAPAM) and Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA) here at SMEDA office, he added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is committed to provide facilities to the business community and the industrialists. Federal Secretary Industries and Production Saif Anjum, Engineering Development Board (EDB) Chief Executive Officer Khuda Baksh Ali and other officials concerned also attended the meeting. The meeting emphasized the need to increase the productivity of automotive parts at national level and discussed issues related to energy costs and taxes to increase investment in PAMA automotive parts Addressing the meeting, the SAPM Haroon Akhtar said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's vision is to make the auto industry competitive not only regionally but also globally. Stressing the importance of creating basic guidelines to solve the problems of the automotive parts industry, he said that the government is introducing reforms to bring Pakistan's automotive industry up to world standards, for which local industrialists are being encouraged. The government also wants to solve this vital industry's issues pertaining to taxes and various duties. He reiterated that Ministry of Industries and Production would take effective measures to facilitate the automotive parts industry. "The government and the Ministry of Industries and Production are always there to guide the business community at all times to solve their problems," he remarked. —DNA

Turkiye, PKK must both change for peace

DIYARBAKIR, Turkiye: "When you try and explain peace to people, there is a very serious lack of trust," said Yuksel Genc, a former fighter with the PKK, which recently ended its decades-long armed struggle against the Turkish state. Talking over a glass of tea in a square in Diyarbakir, the biggest city in Turkiye's Kurdish-dominated southeast, this 50-year-old former fighter with long auburn curls is worried about how the nascent rapprochement between Ankara and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) will play out. "The guerrillas are sincere, but they don't think the state is," said Genc, her words briefly interrupted by the roar of a fighter jet flying overhead. "They think the government does not trust them." For years, she was a fighter with the Kurdish rebel group, which on May 12 said it would disarm and disband, ending a four-decade armed struggle against the Turkish state that cost more than 40,000 lives. The historic move came in response to an appeal by its jailed founder Abdullah Ocalan, arrested in 1999 and serving life in solitary ever since on a prison island near Istanbul. Genc herself joined the militants in 1995 when she was a 20-year-old university student in Istanbul. "At that time, many Kurdish villages were being burnt down, and we were constantly hearing about villages being evacuated, people being displaced and unsolved murders," she said. She described it as "a time of terrible repression." "You felt trapped, as if there was no other way than to join the guerrillas," she said. Four years later, after years in exile, Ocalan was snatched by Turkish commandos in a Hollywood-style operation in Nairobi. "Ocalan's capture provoked a deep sense of rage among the guerrillas, who feared it would mean the Kurdish cause would be destroyed," she said. But it was Ocalan himself who called for calm and insisted it was time for the Kurdish question to be resolved democratically. He urged his followers to go to Turkiye, hand over their weapons and seek dialogue. "He thought our arrival would symbolize (the PKK's) goodwill, and persuade the state to negotiate." Genc was part of the first so-called "groups for peace and a democratic solution" — a group of three women and five men who arrived in Turkiye on October 1, 1999 on what they knew would be a "sacrificial" mission. After a long march through the mountains, they arrived in the southeastern village of Semdinli under the watchful eye of "thousands" of Turkish soldiers huddled behind rocks. Handing over their weapons, they were transferred to the city of Van 200 kilometers (140 miles) to the north where they were arrested. Genc spent the next nearly six years behind bars. "For us, these peace groups were a mission," she said. "The solution had to come through dialogue." After getting out, she continued to struggle for Kurdish rights, swapping her gun for a pen to become a journalist and researcher for the Sosyo Politik think tank Even so, her writing earned her another three-and-a-half years behind bars. "Working for peace in Turkiye has a cost," she said with a shrug. When Recep Tayyip Erdogan became prime minister in 2003, there was hope for a new breakthrough. But several attempts to reach an agreement went nowhere — until now. "Like in 1999, the PKK is moving toward a non-violent struggle," she said. "But laying down arms is not the end of the story. It is preparing to become a political organization. Resolving the decades-long conflict requires a change on both sides however, said Genc. "It essentially involves a mutual transformation," she argued. —APP

Syria reboots interior ministry as Damascus seeks to reassure West

DAMASCUS: Syrian authorities on Saturday announced an interior ministry restructuring that includes fighting cross-border drug and people smuggling as they seek to improve ties with Western nations that have lifted sanctions. Keen to reboot and rebuild nearly 14 years after a devastating civil war broke out, the new authorities in Damascus have hailed Washington's lifting of US sanctions. The move was formalized Friday after being announced by President Donald Trump on a Gulf tour this month during which he shook hands with Syria's jihadist-turned-interim President Ahmed Al-Sharaa Spokesman Noureddine Al-Baba said the interior ministry restructuring included reforms and creating "a modern civil security institution that adopts transparency and respects international human rights standards." It includes setting

up a citizens' complaints department and incorporating the police and General Security agency into an Internal Security command, he told a press conference. A border security body for Syria's land and sea frontiers will be tasked with "combating illegal activities, particularly drug and human smuggling networks," Baba said. The restructuring includes "strengthening the role of the anti-drug department and further developing its importance within Syria and abroad" after the country became a major exporter of illicit stimulant captagon, he added. Another department will handle security for government facilities and foreign missions, as embassies reopen in Syria following Bashar Assad's ouster in December. A tourism police body will secure visitors and sites as the war-torn country — home to renowned UNESCO World Heritage sites — seeks to relaunch tourism.

Syria's foreign ministry welcomed Washington's lifting of sanctions, calling the move "a positive step in the right direction to reduce humanitarian and economic struggles in the country." Turkish foreign ministry spokesperson Oncu Keceli said the recent US and European Union steps to lift sanctions were "of critical importance in efforts to bring stability and security to Syria." The European Union announced the lifting of its economic sanctions on Syria earlier this month. Sharaa met President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday on his third visit to Turkiye since taking power on a visit to discuss "common issues." Syria's presidency said. Ankara is a major backer of Syria's new authorities, who are negotiating with Kurdish forces that control swathes of the northeast and that Turkiye considers "terrorists." A government delegation made a first visit Satur-

day to the notorious Al-Hol camp in the northeast that hosts families of suspected Islamic State (IS) group jihadists. Trump said he wanted to give Syria's new rulers "a chance at greatness" after their overthrow of Assad. While in Istanbul, Sharaa met with the US ambassador to Turkiye, who doubles as Washington's Syria envoy. In a statement, Tom Barrack said: "President Trump's goal is to enable the new government to create the conditions for the Syrian people to not only survive but thrive." He added that it would aid Washington's "primary objective" of ensuring the "enduring defeat" of IS. US sanctions were first imposed on Syria in 1979 under the rule of Bashar Assad's father Hafez. They were sharply expanded after the bloody repression of anti-government protests in 2011 triggered Syria's civil war. The new administration has been

looking to build relations with the West and roll back sanctions, but some governments expressed reluctance, pointing to the Islamist past of leading figures. The sanctions relief extends to the new government on condition that Syria not provide safe haven for terrorist organizations and ensure security for religious and ethnic minorities, the US Treasury Department said Concurrently, the US State Department issued a 180-day waiver for the Caesar Act to make sure that sanctions do not obstruct foreign investment in Syria. The 2020 legislation severely sanctioned any entity or company cooperating with the now ousted government. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the waiver would "facilitate the provision of electricity, energy, water and sanitation, and enable a more effective humanitarian response across Syria." —APP

Israeli strikes kill 23 in Gaza

CAIRO: Israeli military strikes killed at least 23 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including a local journalist and a senior rescue service official, local health authorities said. The latest deaths in the Israeli campaign resulted from separate Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in the south, Jabalia in the north and Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, medics said In Jabalia, they said local journalist Hassan Majdi Abu Warda and several family members were killed by an airstrike that hit his house earlier on Sunday. Another airstrike in Nuseirat killed Ashraf Abu Nar, a senior official in the territory's civil emergency service, and his wife in their house, medics added. There was no immediate comment by the Israeli military. The Hamas-run Gaza government media office said that Abu Warda's death raised the number of Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023, to 220. In a separate statement, the media office said Israeli forces were in control of 77 percent of the Gaza Strip, either through ground forces or evacuation orders and bombardment that keeps residents away from their homes. —APP

Call for strengthening UK-Pakistan trade, investment ties

LAHORE: Chairman of the UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Sunday said that the United Kingdom, one of Pakistan's largest trading partners in Europe, can play a vital role in driving innovation, enhancing exports, and promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan. Talking to a delegation of foreign investors led by Arbab Khan, President of the Pak-British Friendship Council (North West Chapter, UK), Mian Kashif emphasized that stronger business-to-business linkages, joint ventures, and strategic collaborations can help unlock new economic opportunities. He noted that deepening economic ties with the UK can significantly contribute to Pakistan's socio-economic development. He highlighted the evolving nature of the long-standing bilateral relationship, which is now transitioning into a more dynamic and mutually beneficial economic partnership. There is considerable potential, he said, for growth in sectors such as textiles, information technology, agriculture, and renewable energy. "With renewed interest from both sides in expanding trade relations, a strong foundation is being laid for sustainable economic growth, job creation, and industrial advancement in Pakistan," he stated. —APP

Briefs

Experts discuss challenges to CPEC amid tensions

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) hosted a seminar titled "Assessment of Renewed Security Challenges to CPEC Post-Indo-Pak Escalation." The event brought together prominent practitioners, diplomats, policymakers, experts, academics and intelligentsia who collectively advocated for strategic regional alliances, robust internal reforms, economic resilience, advanced security infrastructure and proactive diplomatic engagements to overcome current and emerging challenges to China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Amb. Naghmana Hashmi, Pakistan's former envoy to China, linked increased terrorism with broader geopolitical tensions, particularly western apprehensions towards China's rise. Analyzing how recent Indo-Pak escalations dispelled myths surrounding India's military dominance, prompting Western powers to reconsider their strategic reliance on India, she urged comprehensive internal reforms, particularly addressing socio-economic grievances in Baluchistan. Major General (Retd) Dr. Samrez Salik, with a PhD on CPEC, emphasized Pakistan's critical transformation from a security-centric to an economically driven state, dependent significantly on CPEC's success.

Bangladesh's Yunus seeks unity

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim leader will meet multiple parties on Sunday in marathon talks as he seeks to build unity and calm intense political power struggles, party leaders and officials said. Muhammad Yunus, the 84-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner who leads the caretaker government as its chief adviser until elections are held, has called for rival parties to give him their full support. The South Asian nation of around 170 million people has been in political turmoil since former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted by a student-led revolt in August 2024, ending her iron-fisted rule of 15 years. The talks come after meetings that stretched late into Saturday evening with major political parties, including those who have protested against the government this month. "Chief adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus will meet the leaders of several parties on Sunday," his press secretary Shafiqul Alam told media. - Agencies

Opposition rebukes Indian FM

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar came under fire from opposition parties and drew significant attention on social media following a tense exchange with a foreign journalist who raised questions about United States' and President Donald Trump's involvement in reducing recent hostilities between India and Pakistan. During the interview, the journalist persistently asked Jaishankar whether Trump had played a role in helping to de-escalate tensions between the two nuclear-armed nations. The questioning became more pointed as the reporter asked, "Have you arrested the killers of the 26 people in Pahalgam? Is an operation underway to apprehend them? What role did the US play in this entire process?" Though Jaishankar acknowledged the US contribution in defusing the situation, his answers were widely perceived as evasive. At one point, he said that the US "was in the United States during the process". The exchange has gone viral on Indian social media, with BJP supporters - often referred to as 'bhakt trolls' - praising Jaishankar's response.

Turkish cuisine week celebrated with flavor and fraternity in Islamabad

This year's celebration focused on classic Turkish dishes—the backbone of its national cuisine. Guests were treated to an array of traditional homemade specialties, prepared by Turkish chefs, reflecting the essence of Turkish hospitality

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The enchanting aromas of Turkish spices and the spirit of camaraderie filled the air at the residence of the Türkiye Ambassador, as Türkiye Cuisine Week was celebrated with a warm gathering of dignitaries, friends, and food enthusiasts. Hosted by Ambassador Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, the event was a heartfelt tribute to the rich culinary heritage of Türkiye and the enduring bond between Türkiye and Pakistan. The event was graced by the presence of State Minister for National Heritage Mr. Huzaifa Rehman, Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Ms. Ambreen Jan, and CEO of Serena Hotels Global, Mr. Aziz Boolani.

In his welcome address, Ambassador Neziroglu highlighted the deep-rooted interest of the Pakistani people in Turkish cuisine, noting the emotional and cultural connections that unite the two brotherly nations. "Sharing is the key word," he said, emphasizing the communal essence of Turkish dining traditions. "We want to share Turkish food with you tonight in a memorable way." This year's celebration focused on classic Turkish dishes—the backbone of its national cuisine. Guests were treated to an array of traditional homemade specialties, prepared by Turkish chefs, reflecting the essence of Turkish hospitality. Recipe booklets were also made available for guests who wished to recreate the dishes at home. The evening culminated with Turkish coffee served in the traditional way under the hot sand, symbolizing not just a beverage, but a cherished ritual of conversation and connection.

Ambassador Neziroglu took the opportunity to reflect on the unique and enduring ties between Türkiye and Pakistan. "Fraternal ties between Turkey and Pakistan have been granted to very few nations in the world," he stated. "We are proud of each other's achieve-



ments and share each other's pain." He expressed deep appreciation for the warmth shown to him in Pakistan, saying, "Here, we never consider ourselves as foreigners." Looking ahead,

he affirmed that collaboration between the two countries in fields such as trade, tourism, culture, media, and education will only continue to flourish. The ambassador also offered special

thanks to his wife for her dedication in organizing the event, and to Deputy Head of Mission and the young Turkish diplomats for guiding guests through their culinary journey. "The evening

concluded on a heartfelt note with a resounding message: 'Türkiye-Pakistan dostu zindabad! Türkiye cuisine paidnabad!' — a celebration of friendship and flavor that united hearts through food."

Govt allocates 2,000 MW for Bitcoin mining, AI data centers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking move to transform Pakistan into a global leader in digital innovation, the Government of Pakistan has announced the allocation of 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity in the first phase of a national initiative to power Bitcoin mining and Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers. This ambitious initiative is spearheaded by the Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC)—a government-backed body under the Ministry of Finance—as part of a broader strategy to monetize surplus electricity, create high-tech jobs, attract billions of dollars in foreign direct investment, and generate billions of dollars for government. Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb stated that this strategic allocation marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's digital transformation journey, unlocking economic potential by turning excess energy into innovation, investment, and international revenue. Pakistan is uniquely positioned—both geographically and economically—to become a global hub for data centers. As a digital bridge between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, Pakistan offers the most strategic location in the world for data flow and digital infrastructure. Since the inception of the Pakistan Crypto Council, there has been tremendous interest from global Bitcoin miners and data infrastructure companies. Several international firms have already visited the country for exploratory discussions,

and following this landmark announcement, more global players are expected to visit in the coming weeks. Pakistan's underutilized power generation capacity is now being repurposed into a high-value digital asset. AI data centers and Bitcoin mining operations, known for their consistent and heavy energy usage, provide an ideal use case for this surplus. Redirecting idle energy, especially from plants operating below capacity, allows Pakistan to convert a long-standing financial liability into a sustainable, revenue-generating opportunity. Bilal Bin Saqib, CEO of the Pakistan Crypto Council, emphasized the transformative nature of this initiative. He explained that with proper regulation, transparency, and international collaboration, Pakistan can become a global crypto and AI powerhouse. He added that this energy-backed digital transformation not only unlocks high-value investment but enables the government to generate foreign exchange in USD through Bitcoin mining. Additionally, as regulations evolve, Pakistan can accumulate Bitcoin directly into a national wallet—marking a monumental shift from selling power in Pakistani Rupees (PKR) to leveraging digital assets for economic stability. By offering stable and affordable energy, Pakistan presents a highly competitive environment compared to regional counterparts like India and Singapore, where rising power costs and land scarcity limit scalability. Pakistan's strategic advantage is further underscored by the global context: while AI data center demand has soared to over 100 GW, global supply remains around 15 GW.

Malaysia slams 'double standards' on Gaza atrocities

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's foreign minister on Sunday condemned "atrocities" in Gaza, saying they reflected "indifference and double standards" on the plight of the Palestinian people. "They are a direct result of the erosion of the sanctity of international law," Mohamad Hasan told his counterparts from the regional ASEAN bloc. Mohamad's comments ahead of an ASEAN summit Monday in Kuala Lumpur come as Israel has stepped up its campaign this month in war-torn Gaza. The bombardment has drawn international criticism, alongside calls to allow in more aid after Israel only partially eased a total blockade imposed on March 2. "The atrocities committed against the Palestinian people continue to reflect indifference and double standards," Mohamad said. "ASEAN cannot remain silent," said Mohamad, whose country holds the rotating

chairmanship of the bloc. Foreign ministers from the 10-member association in February asserted their "longstanding support" for Palestinian rights. Muslim-majority Malaysia has no diplomatic relations with Israel and many in the Southeast Asian country support the Palestinians. Kuala Lumpur has channelled donations and humanitarian aid amounting to more than \$10 million to Palestinians in Gaza since the war erupted in October 2023. The war was triggered by an attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas on Israel which resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Militants also took 251 hostages, 57 of whom remain in Gaza, including 34, the Israeli military says, are dead. Gaza's health ministry said Saturday that 53,901 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the territory during the war. - Agencies

At UNSC: Pakistan warns against India's 'malevolent designs'

Pakistani envoy says attacks on water resources constitute flagrant violation of established norms

CENTRELINE REPORT

UNITED NATIONS: A senior Pakistani diplomat has denounced India's "malevolent designs" to impede the flow of water guaranteed to Pakistan under the 1960 Indus Water Treaty and called on New Delhi to refrain from stopping, diverting or restricting rivers going downstream. "We will never accept any such moves," Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN Ambassador Usman Jadoon told the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)'s Arria Formula Meeting on 'Protecting Water in Armed Conflict', while highlighting India's attempt to weaponise water. Arria Formula meetings are informal that enabling Security Council members to have a frank and private exchange of views on relevant subjects. The meeting of the 15-member Council on 'Protecting Water in Armed Conflict' was convened by Slovenia, in cooperation with Algeria, Panama,

Sierra Leone, and the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts. Opening the debate, Slovenia's State Secretary Melita Gabric emphasised the critical role that protecting water and related infrastructure during armed conflicts plays in safeguarding civilian lives, saying: "Protection of civilians and civilian objects under international humanitarian law is non-negotiable." The UNSC forum held the discussion on protecting water infrastructure in the wake of New Delhi's threats of cutting Islamabad's water flow. Following the deadly April attack on tourists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) Pahalgam that India blames on Islamabad, New Delhi "put in abeyance" its participation in the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. Pakistan has denied involvement in the incident, but the accord has not been revived despite the two nuclear-armed neighbours agreeing on a ceasefire earlier this month following the worst fighting between them in decades.

Karachi swelters as mercury set to hit 40°C today

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As the country endures a scorching heatwave, the port city is bracing for an intense surge in temperatures from today, with the mercury expected to climb to 40°C, according to PMD. Coastal areas may feel even hotter, with the perceived temperature rising up to 45°C due to high humidity and a lack of sea breeze. While, daytime hours are likely to bring strong sunshine with minimal wind activity, this increases discomfort for residents. As per the Met Office, winds from the west are currently blowing at a speed of 17 kilometres per hour, and the humidity level stands at 74%, further contributing to the sweltering conditions. The weather is forecast to remain extremely hot and humid over the next 24 hours. Meteorological ana-

lyst Owais Hyder have noted that a low-pressure system is currently situated over the Indian state of Maharashtra. However, this system is not expected to bring any rainfall to Sindh, including Karachi. As a result, no rain is forecast for the city throughout the week. Temperatures are likely to remain high, with mercury levels hovering between 40°C and 41°C from Wednesday through Friday. Citizens are advised to take necessary precautions against heat-related illnesses and avoid outdoor activities during peak afternoon hours. Health experts have advised the public to take preventive steps to avoid heat-related illnesses. Medical professionals recommend drinking plenty of fluids at regular intervals, including water, lemon water, yoghurt-based drinks, and lassi. They also urge people to wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing to stay cool.

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