



Islamabad POST

Monday, May 04, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Turkish envoy marks national sovereignty and children's day

Detailed News On Page-08

Sarmad calls for Support for Legacy media

Detailed News On Page-06

Nation will never forget sacrifices

Detailed News On Page-01



President Trump says

US not likely to accept new Iran peace proposal

Tehran says US must choose diplomacy or continued confrontation amid "possibility of renewed conflict"

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Saturday he will review a new Iranian peace proposal, but cast doubt over its prospects as he left open the possibility of future attacks on Iran. Negotiations between the two countries have been deadlocked since a ceasefire came into effect on April 8, with one round of peace talks to end the more than two-month war having failed in Pakistan. The dour outlook came after Iran's Tasnim and Fars news agencies reported Tehran submitted a 14-point proposal to mediator Islamabad. Details included ending the conflict on all fronts and enacting a new framework for the crucial Strait of Hormuz, Tasnim said. "I will soon be reviewing the plan that Iran has just sent to us, but can't imagine that it would be acceptable, in that they have not yet paid a big enough price for what they have done to Humanity and the World, over the last 47 years," Trump said on his Truth Social platform. In a brief interview with reporters in West Palm Beach, Florida, he declined to specify what could trigger new military action against the Islamic republic. "If they misbehave, if they do something bad, but right now, we'll see," he said. "But it's a possibility that could happen, certainly." On Saturday, Mohammad Jafar Asadi, a senior figure in the Iranian military's central command, said "a renewed conflict between Iran and the United States is likely." "Evidence has shown that the United States is not committed to any promises or agreements," he added, according to Fars news agency. Deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi told diplomats in Tehran "the ball is in the United States"

Continued on Page 06

Mending fences: Rubio to visit Vatican

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit Rome and the Vatican this week, an Italian government source said on Sunday, just weeks after a clash between Donald Trump and Pope Leo. Rubio, who is a Catholic, is expected to meet Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, the source told AFP. Italian media reported that he would also meet Defence Minister Guido Crosetto during the Thursday-Friday visit. The meetings come several weeks after US President Trump's extraordinary criticism of Pope Leo XIV over the Catholic leader's anti-war rhetoric. Trump also dismissed Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni — one of his closest European allies — as lacking courage after she defended the US pontiff. Italian media on Sunday presented Rubio's visit as a meeting to "thaw" relations. Since taking over as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics on May 8, 2025,

Continued on Page 06



LAHORE: PM Shehbaz Sharif meets with the players of Peshawar Zalmi. Peshawar Zalmi won the PSL 11's Final by defeating the Hyderabad Kings. — DNA

Cop gunned down near his house

BUREAU REPORT

LAKKI MARWAT: A police official was martyred in a gun attack in the Kaichi Kamar area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district on Sunday. Lakki Marwat district police officer's (DPO) spokesman Qudratullah Khan confirmed that terrorists targeted Constable Irfanullah near his house in the trans-river belt known as Kurrum Par area.

The incident occurred within the limits of Dadiwala police station. Qudratullah said that the policeman received critical bullet injuries and died on the way to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in the Serai Naurang town. The police official said that the martyred cop was posted in Peshawar and had come to his native village on leave.

Continued on Page 06

Imran X closure case hearing today

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has fixed for hearing on Monday a petition regarding the closure of the X (formerly Twitter) account of incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir will preside over the hearing. The Adiala Jail authorities have already submitted their response, while the court has directed other parties to file their replies as well. Senior lawyer Salman Akram Raja is representing Imran Khan in the case.

Continued on Page 06

Iran says ready for war

Araghchi criticizes Europe as US Military build-up intensifies

The criticism comes at a time when diplomatic efforts to revive or renegotiate a nuclear deal appear stalled, with deep divisions persisting over uranium enrichment and verification mechanisms. Iran has consistently rejected demands for "zero enrichment," while Western powers continue to push for stricter limitations

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON/TEL AVIV: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has sharply criticized European countries, accusing them of adopting an "irresponsible" approach toward Iran's nuclear ambitions amid escalating regional tensions and increasing military activity by the United States. In strongly worded remarks, Araghchi signaled Tehran's growing frustration with European powers, particularly over what Iran perceives as their failure to uphold commitments under past nuclear agreements and their alignment with Washington's hardline stance. The Iranian top diplomat maintained that Iran's nuclear programme remains within its sovereign rights and insisted

Continued on Page 06

Iran hangs man over killing of security forces volunteer

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran hanged a man on Sunday who had been convicted of involvement in the killing of a security forces volunteer during anti-government protests, the judiciary said. "Mehrab Abdollahzadeh's death sentence was carried out this morning after completing

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

PML N leaders meet in Lahore

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Jati Umra in Lahore today and met Pakistan Muslim League-N Quaid Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. He briefed Mian Nawaz Sharif on the prevailing situation in the country. The Prime Minister also informed him about the situation in the Middle East and Pakistan's efforts for the restoration of peace. He also took Mian Nawaz Sharif into confidence regarding oil prices in the international market and the government's measures for public relief. The overall political situation of the country was also discussed during the meeting. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was also present on the occasion.

Nation will never forget sacrifices

NEWS DESK

SIALKOT: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal visited the residence of Shaheed Muhammad Qadir, a martyr of Marka-e-Haq, in Pasrur. Speaking on the occasion, he said the nation will never forget the sacrifices rendered by those who embraced martyrdom in Marka-e-Haq. He said the entire nation is proud of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the beloved homeland, adding that the government salutes all those who sacrificed their lives in this battle. Ahsan Iqbal said the Pakistan Army has made the country's defence capabilities a global phenomenon. Later, the Minister also visited the residence of 19-year-old martyr Farhan Sohail in Pasrur and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families.

Middle East stand-off

German FM demands Hormuz reopening

"As a close US ally, we share the same goal: Iran must completely and verifiably renounce nuclear weapons and immediately open the Strait of Hormuz, as also demanded" by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Wadephul said

DNA

BERLIN: German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul on Sunday demanded that Iran reopen the Strait of Hormuz and give up its nuclear weapons program in a telephone call with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. "I emphasized that Germany supports a negotiated solution," Wadephul said in a post on X about the call. "As a close US ally, we share the same goal: Iran must completely and verifiably renounce nuclear weapons and immediately open the Strait of Hormuz, as also demanded" by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Wadephul said. In recent days, Wadephul and other German officials have been trying to ease a spat between US President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Merz said on April 27 that Iran was "humiliating" Washington at the negotiating table, which provoked a series of angry responses

from Washington. The US announced that 5,000 troops would be moved from US military bases in Germany, and Trump also announced that US tariffs on cars and trucks from the European Union would jump from 15 percent to 25 percent in coming days. Trump accused the entire EU bloc of failing to comply with a trade deal signed last summer, even as the pact went through the bloc's legislative process. The new tariffs announced would hit Germany's large car industry particularly hard. Efforts to end the US-Israeli war on Iran have made little apparent progress since a ceasefire came into effect in early April, and there are growing concerns over renewed escalation. US President Donald Trump said he would review a new plan submitted by Tehran, but stated that he "can't imagine that it would be acceptable." He added that, in his view, Iran has "not yet paid a big enough price."

Continued on Page 06

Iranian envoy reaffirms Pakistan's 'central role'

New negotiation plan conveyed through Islamabad to Washington, says Ambassador Moghadam



SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam on Sunday said Islamabad continues to serve as a central mediator in Iran's negotiations with the United States. "Pakistan remains a mediator, and no decision has been made to alter this," the envoy said in an interview with an Iranian news agency, adding that progress in talks depends on a shift in Washington's approach.

His comments came a day after US President Donald Trump cast doubt over the prospects of a new Iranian peace proposal. Ambassador Moghadam confirmed the same in today's interview, saying Iran had conveyed a new negotiation plan to Washington via Pakistan. He described Islamabad's efforts in the negotiations process as "valuable" and central to the current diplomatic outreach. Ambassador Moghadam maintained that Tehran was "transparent in its position and demands", saying any meaningful progress was conditional on a change in US behaviour. He stressed that Tehran would not compromise on its national interests or defence. Talks between Iran and the US have remained stalled since the April 8 ceasefire, after a round of peace negotiations, held in Islamabad, failed to resolve the conflict. The Pakistani government helped broker the ceasefire in the six-week conflict, which erupted after US and Israeli forces launched joint attacks on Iran on February 28. The Middle East war has had a severe impact on the global economy after Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy shipping route. Tehran briefly reopened

Continued on Page 06

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Sarmad calls for stronger support for legacy media

Ali noted that while technology has transformed the media landscape, it has also accelerated the spread of misinformation and disinformation, making editorial standards, verification, and accountability more essential than ever

KARACHI: Dr Sarmad Ali, PPP Senator and President of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society has stressed the critical importance of credible journalism, warning that the role of legacy media is more vital than ever in an era dominated by misinformation. In a message shared on social media ahead of World Press Freedom Day, Ali said a free, responsible, and independent press is not just a pillar of democracy but its "conscience." He highlighted that established media institutions remain a key line of defense against

the rapid spread of false information across digital platforms. Ali noted that while technology has transformed the media landscape, it has also accelerated the spread of misinformation and disinformation, making editorial standards, verification, and accountability more essential than ever. "Supporting legacy media is not about resisting change; it is about preserving truth," he said, emphasizing that journalism must continue to be guided by ethics, professionalism, and public interest rather than algorithms and virality.

He further stressed that societies that value facts over falsehoods must invest in and protect credible media institutions, adding that press freedom must go hand in hand with a responsibility to safeguard the integrity of public discourse. Ali called for a renewed collective commitment to strengthening independent journalism, warning that without credible media, the foundation of informed decision-making and democratic accountability could be at risk.—Sarmad calls for stronger support for legacy media

AJK PM opens Rs 231m water supply project

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Saturday inaugurated a major water supply project worth Rs 231 million in the remote town of Kharak during his first official visit to Mirpur. The project, launched in the Kharak area located on the outskirts of the Mangla Dam lake region, is aimed at improving access to clean drinking water for local residents and addressing long-standing shortages in the area. According to officials, the scheme will provide water connections to around 19,000 households in Kharak, significantly improving public health and basic living conditions in the remote settlement. Local residents welcomed the initiative and expressed gratitude to the AJK government, praising efforts to deliver essential services to underserved communities and improve infrastructure in the region. The inauguration ceremony was attended by a large number of people, workers, and government representatives, including ministers Chaudhry Arshad Hussain, Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Chaudhry Ali Shan Soni, and Adviser Sardar Fahad Yaqoob, who accompanied the prime minister during the visit.—APP

Pakistan plays pivotal role in regional peace

LAHORE: Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Sunday said Pakistan has played a "pivotal and constructive role" in promoting regional peace and contributing to the peaceful resolution of international disputes with its diplomatic efforts being acknowledged by the global community.

He was addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of the Ready-Made Garments Association, Shah Alam Market. The speaker said Pakistan's diplomatic engagement and facilitation efforts in relation to the ceasefire between the United States and Iran carried significant strategic importance. He added that under the leadership of Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan had actively contributed to peace building initiatives and regional stability. He said the nation remained supportive of the leadership's efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability. Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan said Pakistan had emerged as a resilient and responsible state, demonstrating strength in both diplomacy and defence. He noted that the armed forces responded in a timely and effective manner to safeguard national sovereignty, which he said had strengthened public confidence and enhanced the country's international standing. Referring to May 10, he said the date marked a significant chapter in national history when Pakistan delivered a "decisive and proportionate response" to hostile aggression. He stressed that the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity remained inviolable and non-negotiable.—APP

UN urged to halt crackdown on Kashmir's institutions

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations, Altaf Hussain Wani has sought the UN Special Rapporteur's urgent attention towards the "systematic and selective targeting" of educational and religious institutions in Indian occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir. In a detailed communication submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Nazila Ghanea, Wani expressed serious concern over the designation of Jamia Siraj-ul-Uloom as an "unlawful" institution under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). He termed the move "arbitrary and disproportionate," noting that it has abruptly disrupted the education of nearly 1,000 students enrolled in the sem-

inary, who were forced to vacate and quit their studies mid-session. Jamia Siraj-ul-Uloom, he mentioned, has for decades served as a reputable institution, producing doctors, scholars and IT professionals who continue to contribute meaningfully to society. The communication underscored that the closure is part of a broader and recurring pattern of actions targeting institutions that have been serving poor and marginalized communities. He said that since 2019 hundreds of schools and colleges affiliated to Falah e Aam Trust have been closed by occupation authorities under the guise of UAPA. These actions, he underscored, have disproportionately affected institutions serving economically dis-

advantaged communities. The communication also points to structural changes in the region's education system following the adoption of the National Council of Educational Research and Training-aligned curriculum. Citing international covenants under which the right to religious education is protected under, the KIIR Chairman urged the UN Special Rapporteur to: Call on Indian authorities to cease the selective targeting of institutions in Kashmir, ensure adherence to constitutional and international human rights obligations, safeguard the rights to freedom of religion, belief, and education and reverse measures that adversely affect students and educational continuity.—APP

Call for 'Color-Blind' journalism on 'World Press Freedom Day'

"Balanced reporting requires the courage to admit complexity. On this World Press Freedom Day, let us recommit to a media landscape that prioritizes the humanity of the story over the hostility of the headline

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor (VC), Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Professor Zabta Khan Shinwari, on Sunday called for "Color-Blind" journalism, emphasizing that freedom without responsibility is a catalyst for chaos. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day being observed on May 3, he issued message addressing the deteriorating state of global discourse and the vital necessity of a "color-blind" approach to modern journalism. "The pen remains mightier than the sword, but in the digital age," he said, adding, "True press freedom is not the liberty to amplify personal biases; it is the protected right to seek the truth. Journalists today carry the weight of social cohesion on their shoulders." "To achieve true equity in information, reporting must be color-blind. Whether covering conflict, scientific breakthroughs, or economic crises, the integrity of the fact must transcend the race, religion, or nationality of the individuals involved," he underscored. Prof. Shinwari identified three major threats confronting modern journalism, including the "AI information paradox," where the rise of generative artificial intelligence has made fabrication of content easier, necessitating strict ethical frameworks to safeguard credibility. He also pointed to algorithmic polarization, saying social media platforms prioritise engagement over accuracy, creating echo chambers that reward sensationalism and sideline balanced reporting, as well as growing safety risks that endanger investigative journalists. He reiterated the need for balanced reporting. Prof. Shinwari concluded his statement with a call for a return to nuanced moderation. "The world is rarely black and white," Shinwari noted. "Balanced reporting requires the courage to admit complexity. On this World Press Freedom Day, let us recommit to a media landscape that prioritizes the humanity of the story over the hostility of the headline.—APP

PFUJ workers reaffirm its commitments to workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (Workers) reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the rights, safety, and economic security of media workers across the country. Today, the profession of journalism in Pakistan faces an unprecedented siege, burdened by an engineered economic crisis, restrictive legislation, and mounting pressures on truth and professional ethics. The media fraternity continues to bear the brunt of explicit and implicit pressures, particu-

larly through legislative measures designed to suppress free expression and limit constitutionally guaranteed rights. The implementation of the Punjab Defamation Act and amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) have created a suffocating environment for truth-tellers. The PFUJ (Workers), and other representative bodies, have formally challenged these draconian measures in the Lahore High Court and the Islamabad High Court. While court proceedings have provided temporary relief against coercive actions, we remain hopeful that the judiciary will uphold fundamental rights

and strike down laws that criminalize journalistic inquiry. Furthermore, a critical crisis exists in the economic exploitation of media workers by media house owners. Despite an increase in corporate and government advertising revenues, media organizations are utilizing these funds to maximize profits while denying basic salaries and laying off senior staff. Organizations are deliberately adopting "minimal manpower" models, leaving operational and field staff without financial security or protection. We strongly demand that all government and corporate advertising quotas

be tied directly to the mandatory, timely clearance of employee salaries and job security. At the same time, professional journalism is being undermined by the unchecked proliferation of untrained individuals on digital platforms. Operating without formal training, these voices often disregard verification processes, media ethics, and defamation laws, creating an uneven playing field where sensationalism eclipses nuanced reporting. This creates an environment of misinformation that harms the credibility of real, investigative journalists. In the face of these monumental challenges, the



ISLAMABAD: A family buying water cooler in a Sunday weekly bazaar, in the Federal Capital.

Faisalabad mass transit system reviewed

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chairing a special meeting here on Sunday, reviewed the progress of the Faisalabad Mass Transit System. The CM was given a detailed briefing on the ongoing planning and execution of the project. During the meeting, the chief minister assessed the overall development work and directed the authorities concerned to further accelerate the pace of construction to ensure timely completion of the project. She emphasized that modern urban transport facilities are a priority of the provincial government. CM Maryam Nawaz also instructed that high-quality and spacious elevators be installed at all stations of the mass transit system to facilitate commuters, particularly senior citizens, women, and differently-abled persons. The CM ordered that urban forestry and green belts be developed at all open spaces along the mass transit route, underscoring the importance of environmental sustainability and beautification in urban development projects. The meeting was briefed that the Faisalabad Mass Transit System will span a total length of 20.5 kilometers and will include 21 stations. Out of the total route, 11.3 kilometers will be elevated, comprising 11 elevated stations designed to ensure smooth and uninterrupted traffic flow. It was also informed that dedicated depots for the mass transit system will be established at Faisal Town and Airport Chowk to support operations and maintenance.—APP

FIA nabs 13 POs in anti trafficking crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone has arrested 13 proclaimed offenders (POs) during a week-long crackdown against human trafficking networks, including eight from Rawalpindi and five from Islamabad, tightening the noose around traffickers exploiting citizens. An official told on Sunday that the operations were conducted under the supervision of Director FIA Islamabad Zone by the Anti

Human Trafficking Circle. He said that several dangerous accused were among those arrested who had been involved in defrauding innocent and poor citizens of millions of rupees on the pretext of sending them abroad. The official said that the crackdown reflected FIA's continued efforts to dismantle organized human trafficking networks, adding that the FIA had also accelerated efforts through INTERPOL for

the arrest of proclaimed offenders residing abroad, who would soon be brought back to face the law. The official said that FIA remained committed to eliminating human trafficking and would continue indiscriminate operations against all those involved in the heinous crime. He said that strict legal action would be ensured against human smugglers to protect citizens from exploitation and financial loss.—APP

CM Bugti highlights responsible journalism

Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has emphasized that responsible journalism was the cornerstone of true press freedom

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has emphasized that responsible journalism was the cornerstone of true press freedom. In his message on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on Sunday, he praised the resilience of Balochistan's journalists who continue to perform their duties under difficult circumstances. Sarfraz Bugti announced that the provincial government is introducing its first-ever social media policy to counter negative propaganda. He stressed that

constructive criticism is always welcomed as an effective tool for governance reform. The chief minister urged national media outlets not to restrict their coverage to crime-related stories but to also highlight Balochistan's social issues and positive developments. He criticized media houses for closing bureau offices and laying off staff, calling such actions violations of PEMRA agreements. Highlighting the challenges of the digital era, Bugti underscored that verifying news was an

essential ethical responsibility of journalists. He paid tribute to journalists who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of truth, declaring them the pride of the state and assuring that their sacrifices will not be forgotten. CM Sarfraz Bugti further directed all private TV channels to activate their bureau offices in Balochistan, promising full security support from the government. He added that press freedom and truth-based reporting are indispensable for stability of the country.—APP

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Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92-51) 2825132, 2274227.
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Karachi
Room No 14 B-15, 3rd Floor, Kalkandah Mall,
Main Tariq Road, 172-1 Block-2, P.E.C.H.S,
Karachi. Tel: (+92-21) 3403068,34034979.
Fax: (+92-21) 34031747.
E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

Lahore
F.A. Gallery Centre,
Main Boulevard, Lahore.
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Peshawar
Office No. C-8, 3rd Floor, Zameer Plaza,
Lafiq Abad, Ring Road, Peshawar.
Tel: (+92-91) 2562778.
Fax: (+92-91) 2562099.
E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

Katol
House #4, Street #4,
Chowki Anwar Road, Shahr-e-Ahm,
Katol - Afghanistan.
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E-mail: katol@freelinemovers.com

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi...5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

K-wave chaos: Korean embassy event triggers security scare in Red Zone

Authorities are reportedly reviewing the situation and may seek an explanation from the embassy to prevent such occurrences in the future. The incident has underscored the importance of strict adherence to security protocols, particularly in areas as sensitive as Islamabad's Red Zone

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serious security concerns have emerged following a large-scale public gathering organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the federal capital, which led to unprecedented crowds entering sensitive areas of the city, including the Red Zone. According to eyewitness accounts and officials, the embassy hosted the "2026 K-WAVE Festa," a cultural event intended to promote Korean culture, music, and entertainment. However, instead of issuing limited or targeted invitations, the embassy allegedly circulated open invitations across multiple social media platforms, drawing an overwhelming response from the public. As a result, tens of thousands of people from Islamabad as well as other cities flocked to the venue, many arriving with families. The unexpected turnout triggered severe traffic congestion across key arteries of the capital, particularly in and around the highly sensitive Red Zone, which houses key government buildings and foreign missions. Sources indicated that the number of attendees far exceeded the capacity of the designated venue, leading to chaotic scenes outside the premises. Hundreds of individuals who had traveled long distances to attend the event were left stranded outside, unable to gain entry. The situation quickly escalated into a security challenge for law enforcement agencies. Officials from the Islamabad Police were forced to intervene as the crowd swelled beyond manageable limits. Police personnel reportedly began questioning individuals and dispersing large groups in an effort to regain control of the situation and prevent any potential breach of security protocols. The incident occurred in close proximity to the Diplomatic Enclave, one of the most heavily guarded zones in the capital. The sudden influx of people raised alarm bells among diplomatic circles, with some diplomats reportedly fearing that the gathering could be a form of protest or an attempted intrusion into the enclave. Adding to the gravity of the situation was the already heightened security environ-



ment in Islamabad due to ongoing geopolitical developments, including sensitive discussions linked to the United States-Iran talks. Security in the capital had been tightened in anticipation of any unforeseen developments, making the large, uncontrolled gathering even more concerning for authorities. Despite strict security measures in place, the sheer volume of attendees reportedly allowed many individuals to make their way into restricted areas of the Red Zone, raising questions about lapses in access control and coordination between event organizers and security agencies. Residents of the area have expressed strong concern over the incident, criticizing what they describe as a lack of planning and coordination on the

part of the Korean embassy. Many have called upon relevant authorities to seek a formal explanation from the Korean mission regarding the circumstances that led to such a large and unmanaged gathering. "There should have been proper planning and coordination with local authorities, especially given the sensitivity of the area," said a resident of the nearby sector. "Inviting such a large number of people without ensuring adequate arrangements posed a serious risk not just to attendees but also to the entire diplomatic community." Security analysts have also pointed out that events held in high-security zones require meticulous planning, including controlled access, pre-registration of attendees, and close coordination with



law enforcement agencies. The apparent absence of such measures in this case has raised concerns about potential vulnerabilities in the city's security framework. As of now, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea has not issued any official clarification regarding the incident. Questions remain unanswered about why an open invitation strategy was adopted and why the number of expected attendees was not aligned with the venue's capacity. Authorities are reportedly reviewing the situation and may seek an explanation from the embassy to prevent such occurrences in the future. The incident has underscored the importance of strict adherence to security protocols, particularly in areas as sensitive as Islamabad's Red Zone.

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ITP rolls out facilitation van plan

The official said the initiative would provide multiple services in one place for public convenience

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced its facilitation plan from May 4 to May 10, 2026, under which Police Station on Wheels (PS on Wheels) and ITP facilitation vans will provide police and licensing services at citizens' doorsteps across the federal capital. An ITP official told APP on Sunday that the initiative, launched in line with the vision of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, aims to enhance public service delivery by taking services to various areas. He said PS on Wheels (SI Asim Zaidi) will provide services, including missing reports, character certificates, and registration of tenants and domestic workers. The official said ITP facilitation vans will offer services including

learner permits, renewal, duplicate licences, and test sheets through Van-I (GAC-709 Abdul Qadeer), Van-II (GAC-656 Yasir Idrees), and Van-III (GD-896 Aqib Khan). According to the schedule, on Monday (May 4), PS on Wheels will be at I-8 Markaz, Van-I at Bahria Phase-II, Van-II at Media Town, and Van-III at Women Welfare Development Centre G-7. On Tuesday (May 5), PS on Wheels will be stationed at Tarlai Kalan, Van-I at G-11 Save Mart, Van-II at Aabpara Market, and Van-III at ZABIST University G-7. On Wednesday (May 6), PS on Wheels will operate at Centaurus Mall, Van-I at Foreign Office, Van-II at I-10 Sabzi & Fruit Mandi, and Van-III at Urdu University Shahzad Town. On Thursday (May 7), PS on Wheels will be at

G-12, Van-I at DHA Phase-V, Van-II at G-11 District Administration Office, and Van-III at FAST University H-11. On Friday (May 8), PS on Wheels will be available at G-10, Van-I at Faisal Masjid, Van-II at Golra Darbar, and Van-III at Traffic Office Faizabad. On Saturday (May 9), PS on Wheels will operate at Razaq Valley, Van-I at G-8 Markaz, Van-II at Site Office D-17, and Van-III at Murree Road checkpoint near Adventure Inn. On Sunday (May 10), PS on Wheels will be stationed at E-11 Markaz, Van-I at Police Lines H-11, Van-II at Traffic Office Rawal Town, and Van-III at Traffic Office Faizabad. The official said the initiative would provide multiple services in one place for public convenience. —APP

VC issues urgent call for 'Color-Blind' journalism

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor (VC), Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Professor Zabta Khan Shinwari, on Sunday called for "Color-Blind" journalism, emphasizing that freedom without responsibility is a catalyst for chaos. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day being observed on May 3, he issued message addressing the deteriorating state of global discourse and the vital necessity of a "color-blind" approach to modern journalism. "The pen remains mightier than the sword, but in the digital age," he said, adding, "True press freedom is not the liberty to amplify personal biases; it is the protected right to seek the truth.—APP

Driving licenses now easy to get

ISLAMABAD: Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk revealed on Sunday that Islamabad Police has launched a one-window, fully paperless driving license facility, simplifying the entire process from medical verification to issuance with minimal requirements, as citizens now only need to present their CNIC for a fast, efficient and hassle-free service experience. In an exclusive conversation, he hailed the initiative of the Interior Minister and the Inspector General Islamabad, saying the introduction of the one-window system marks a major step towards modernizing public service delivery in the capital. He said the new system is set to revolutionize driving license services by making the entire process faster, simpler, and fully streamlined under a single platform. He further urged citizens to take full advantage of the facility, explaining that applicants now only need to bring their CNIC, while medical and other requirements have also been integrated into the one-window, paperless system. He stressed the importance of public awareness regarding the new service, saying it has been designed to eliminate unnecessary delays, reduce paperwork, and ensure maximum convenience for applicants. He added that the initiative reflects a broader commitment to digital governance and citizen facilitation, calling it a significant reform in improving service efficiency in Islamabad. He also urged motorists to strictly abide by traffic rules, saying responsible driving is essential to ensure safety on the roads and support the effectiveness of improved service systems in the capital.—DNA

Pakistan mediating role as genuine reflection of Bandung spirit

The event brought together distinguished diplomats, scholars, strategic thinkers, and students from different universities including Quaid-e-Azam, NUST, Bahria, and NUML to reflect on Pakistan's evolving role in fostering dialogue, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution in an increasingly dynamic global order

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in collaboration with the International Institute for Regional and International Studies (IIRIS), successfully convened a discussion on "Pakistan's Current Mediating Role as a Genuine Reflection of the Bandung Spirit," held in hybrid, 29 April 2026, at the Indonesian Corner, National Library of Pakistan (NLP). The event brought together distinguished diplomats, scholars, strategic thinkers, and students from different universities including Quaid-e-Azam, NUST, Bahria, and NUML to reflect on Pakistan's evolving role in fostering dialogue, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution in an increasingly dynamic global order. In his welcoming remarks, Shafiqat Rasool, President of IIRIS, underscored the enduring relevance of the Bandung Spirit as a guiding framework for inclusive diplomacy, mutual respect, and South-South cooperation. The forum was enriched by the insightful perspectives of General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, Former Defence Secretary of Pakistan, who emphasized strategic balance and pragmatic diplomacy in contemporary conflicts. Abdullah Gul, Director General of MEASAC Research Center, offered a nuanced analysis of geopolitical dynamics, while Dr. Sarwat Rauf, Head of the Department of International Relations at NUML Islamabad, underscored the Bandung framework remained a living reference for Pakistan's credible mediating role. In his turn, Professor Tahir Malik of NUML Islamabad further contributed by contextualizing these developments within evolving international relations paradigms. Representatives of the Embassy of Indonesia connected Pakistan's mediating role with the historical legacy of the Bandung Spirit, reaffirming the importance of solidarity, sovereignty, and non-alignment in today's world. "One of the essences of the Bandung Spirit is the resolution of all international disputes through peaceful means,"

commented Mr. Donny Ardiwidha, First Secretary of Political Affairs on Pakistan's mediating role. "Pakistan alongside Indonesia and other key co-sponsors played a foundational role in the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference which subsequently adopted the Bandung Spirit. For Indonesia and some other countries that uphold peace, Bandung Spirit has inspired their 'fitrah' or nature of foreign policy," explained Minister Counsellor Rahmat Hindiarta, Coordinator for Information, Social and Cultural Affairs of the Indonesian Embassy. Concluding his presentation, Mr. Rah-

mat Hindiarta conveyed high appreciation from Ambassador Chandra W. Sukotjo to distinguished speakers and all participants for their presence at the Indonesian Corner which has been dedicated as a hub for people-to-people relations. At the same time, Ambassador of Indonesia was in Lahore for ASEAN-Pakistan engagement along with other ASEAN Head of Missions. The event concluded with a thoughtful vote of thanks by Dr. Munawar Hussain, Chairman of the IIRIS Board of Directors, who acknowledged the valuable contributions of all speakers and participants.



Briefs

Tara felicitates newly elected CPNE office-bearers

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tara on Sunday felicitated the newly elected office-bearers of the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), expressing the hope that the new leadership would play an active role in addressing challenges faced by the media industry. In a statement, the minister congratulated CPNE President Kazim Khan, Secretary General Ghulam Nabi Chandio, Senior Vice President Ayaz Khan, Vice Presidents Shakeel Ahmed Turabi and Anwar Sajidi, Secretary Information Munazza Seham, and other newly elected members. Tara said journalism remained a key pillar of a democratic society, adding that responsible journalism played a vital role in raising public awareness. He said the government would continue to work with the media industry to promote responsible journalism and strengthen journalistic institutions. The minister also stressed the need for improved coordination between the media and state institutions, terming it essential for safeguarding national interests.—APP

Mushaal decries media repression in held Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of jailed Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik and chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, said that Kashmiri journalists are "paying the real price of press freedom" in Indian held Kashmir, urging the international community on World Press Freedom Day to take urgent notice of systematic curbs on media and freedom of expression in the region. In her message, Mullick said Kashmiri journalists had continued to keep the "flame of truth alive" despite facing arrests, torture, and intimidation by Indian authorities. She paid tribute to media workers who, she said, had been subjected to imprisonment and abuse for performing their professional duties. She paid tribute to journalists who had endured detention and violence at the hands of occupying forces, calling their resilience a testament to their commitment to truth and justice. She also praised international journalists for amplifying the voices of Kashmiris, describing them as "true ambassadors of humanity" for highlighting human rights concerns on global platforms. Criticising restrictions in the region, she said India could not suppress facts through internet shutdowns and press curbs, adding that such measures had failed to silence the truth emerging from the valley. She called on the international community to press for the release of detained journalists, including Asif Sultan, and others who remain behind bars. Highlighting the role of writers and reporters, Mullick said the struggle of Hurriyat leaders had reached the world through the sacrifices of courageous journalists, while those documenting the stories of Kashmiri women as mothers, sisters, and daughters deserved recognition and tribute. She further urged the United Nations to take notice of "draconian laws" imposed on the media in occupied Kashmir.



ISLAMABAD: Workers repairing a section of Srinagar Highway by laying asphalt during ongoing road maintenance work.

Minister for structural reforms to boost dairy sector

Rana Tanveer noted that reducing General Sales Tax (GST) on milk was not difficult, thus proposals like pilot projects for pasteurization and the establishment of "safe milk cities" are under consideration. He said improving milk quality and formalizing the sector would be key priorities going forward

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has underscored the need for rationalizing taxes and bringing about structural reforms in the dairy sector to improve affordability, ensure safe nutrition, and support farmers in the country. He was speaking at a pre-budget consultation jointly organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Pakistan Dairy Association, said a press release issued here Sunday. The minister said livestock accounts for nearly 60 percent of the agriculture sector and holds significant potential for both domestic nutrition and exports. He acknowledged that taxation policies, particularly sales tax on dairy products, had affected production and growth. "Softening of tax regime can help increase both production and revenue," he suggested. Rana Tanveer noted that reducing General Sales Tax (GST) on milk was not difficult, thus proposals like pilot projects for pasteurization and the establishment of "safe

milk cities" are under consideration. He said improving milk quality and formalizing the sector would be key priorities going forward. In his welcome remarks, SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri suggested multiple taxation scenarios and called for placing processed milk in a third schedule. He warned that rural milk collection centres were shutting down, since pricing of processed milk directly hits loose milk markets. Usman Zaheer Ahmad, Chairman of Pakistan Dairy Association, highlighted that 40 percent children in Pakistan suffered from stunting due to malnutrition, despite milk being the most widely consumed animal protein. He said the sector remains 98 per cent informal, with limited quality controls. He warned that 18 percent GST in 2024 caused 27 per cent decline in formal dairy sector. He proposed reducing GST to 10 percent and bringing part of the informal economy into the tax net, which could generate up to Rs 250 billion in revenue. Earlier, SDPI Head of Ecological Sustainability and Circular Econo-

my Unit, Zainab Naeem, said the consultation aimed to bring together government, private sector and civil society to address food insecurity and link the dairy sector with nutrition. She emphasized that milk should be treated as a basic nutritional necessity rather than a luxury item. She called for strategies to enhance affordability and accessibility for low- and middle-income households. Country Director of Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Farrah Naz said malnutrition costs Pakistan around 03 percent of GDP annually, with over 40 percent of children under five stunted. She stressed that safe milk is essential for child development and advocated reducing GST on milk from 18 percent to 05 percent. She also stressed the need for strengthening formal dairy systems, expand processing capacity, and utilize by-products such as whey. Azeem Hassan, the Director of Business Taxation Office, Ministry of Finance, said the recommendations shared by SDPI and the Pakistan Dairy Association are prudent and workable. Additional Secretary, Special Investment Facilitation

Council (SIFC) Sajid Mehmood Qazi, pointing out structural weaknesses in the tax system, said that over-reliance on documented sectors was discouraging formal businesses and contributing to declining tax revenues in the dairy industry. Eman Fatima from the Prime Minister's Office Board of Investment, highlighting regulatory complexities that hinder new entrants in dairy farming, reiterated that 18 per cent GST had slowed sectoral growth. Dr Ihtesham Khan of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) raised concerns over public health, stating that loose milk often contains harmful micro-toxins due to poor feed quality and lack of testing, increasing the health burden. Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director (Research), SDPI, emphasized a long-term, integrated policy framework combining fiscal, health, and rural development strategies. He called for incentivizing private sector investment and developing cooperative models to connect small farmers with markets.

PSCA introduces Gen Z safety app

ISLAMABAD: Incharge Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) Yusra Sohail, on Sunday, stressed awareness, saying that the newly launched PSCA Next Gen Safety App enables Gen Z users to lodge complaints with full privacy and ensures swift response to cases of harassment, social media blackmailing, and mental health support needs. Speaking to a private media channel, she said under the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has launched a secure safety app for Gen Z users aged between 20 and 25, which has so far received around 2,000 chat-based complaints and nearly 800 video call reports since its inauguration two months ago. She said the platform is actively being used by young people, especially university students, to report issues related to harassment and cyber abuse. She noted that a majority of complaints are being received from young women, particularly involving cases of blackmailing through leaked private data and online threats. Yusra Sohail said the app has been designed to ensure full privacy and gender-sensitive protection so that victims can report incidents without fear or hesitation. She said that many victims, especially girls, hesitate to report such issues due to social pressure, while others are unable to share their problems with families, adding that the platform provides them a safe and confidential space where they can seek immediate help. She stressed that the initiative is not only about reporting complaints but also about timely response and support. She said that with just one click, users can access help in both emergency situations and cases where mental health support is required due to harassment or cyber stress. She also added that FIA and other attached departments are on board 24 hours a day to ensure swift action and coordination, adding that the integrated system allows authorities to respond immediately to complaints, including harassment, and other cyber-related issues affecting youth. She concluded that the objective of the initiative is to build trust among young citizens and ensure their safety in the digital space, adding that awareness is key so that more victims come forward instead of suffering in silence.—DNA

Potato exports hold steady at 248,000 tons

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan exported approximately 248,000 tons of potatoes during the July-January period of FY2025-26, maintaining a stable presence in international markets despite shifting trade conditions. In value terms, exports stood at around \$56 million, according to official data available with Wealth Pakistan, reflecting consistent demand and supply continuity during the period. The United Arab

Emirates emerged as the leading destination, followed by Sri Lanka, while Afghanistan remained an important regional market. Exports to Afghanistan reached 29,411.90 tons in the first half of the fiscal year. The Gulf region — including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman — continued to register stable demand for Pakistani potatoes. Among other markets, Sri Lanka emerged as an important buyer, though its imports fluctuated in line with domestic supply conditions. Smaller destinations such as Somalia also imported limited quantities, pointing to a gradual diversification of Pakistan's export base. A key positive development for the sector has been the reopening of the Russian market, Khawar Nadeem, Manager Agri Products, Pakistan Horticulture Development & Export Company said on Sunday. Pakistan achieved a significant gain in agricultural trade after Russia cleared potato imports from Punjab, providing access to a major overseas destination.—APP

Responsible media key to democracy: Wajih

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajih Qamar, on Sunday underscored the importance of an independent, responsible and informed media, calling it the cornerstone of any democratic society. In her message on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, she said that in today's fast-paced digital era, where access to information has become easier than ever, the need for truth, verification and honesty had grown significantly.—APP

Two rehabilitation projects opened in Gwadar's old town

ISLAMABAD: Member of the Provincial Assembly for Gwadar Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman and Gwadar Development Authority Director General Moin-ur-Rehman Khan inaugurated two completed schemes under the GDA Old Town Rehabilitation Project, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The schemes include the Fageer Colony Bridge and Kitab Chowk near the RCD Council. According to GDA, related work included the construction and expansion of Club Road, drainage improvements and beautification measures. Chief Engineer GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Project Director of the Old Town Rehabilitation Project Mir Doda Khan Marri, former Tehsil Municipal Committee chairman Sharif Mian Dad, political and social figures, and relevant officials were also present. Speaking to the media, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman said the projects were the seventh and eighth schemes inaugurated in recent months under the Old Town Rehabilitation Project. He said the work was aimed at improving infrastructure in Gwadar's old city and providing basic facilities to residents.—APP

Police net 2,924 suspects in 4 months

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 2,924 suspects, including 1,668 proclaimed offenders, during the first four months of 2026 in a major crackdown against criminal elements, recovering large quantities of drugs and illegal weapons. An official told APP on Sunday that 1,256 accused were arrested for illegal arms possession, display of weapons and drug trafficking. He said during indiscriminate operations against narcotics dealers, police arrested 538 drug peddlers. The official said police recovered 94 kilograms of hashish, over 64 kilograms of heroin, 52 kilograms of ice (methamphetamine) and 2,342 bottles of liquor from the arrested suspects. He said in cases related to illegal arms, 718 accused were arrested during the same period. The official said police recovered 608 pistols, 47 rifles/guns, 34 Kalashnikovs, 57 daggers and a large quantity of ammunition from their possession.—APP

AI delivery unit, prioritized economic zones along ring road

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Artificial Intelligence and Special Initiatives, Ali Mustafa Dar, has announced that the establishment of a state-of-the-art AI Delivery Unit and the development of economic and industrial zones along the Rawalpindi Ring Road will be top priorities of the provincial government. He shared these remarks during his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), where he was warmly received by RCCI President Usman Shaukat, Vice President Fahad Barlas, and members of the Executive Committee. Addressing the business community, Ali Mustafa Dar noted that this was his first visit to a chamber of commerce since assuming office. He stressed that Pakistan must capitalize on recent diplomatic gains to attract foreign direct investment and strengthen economic growth. Highlighting the AI Delivery Unit, he stated that the Chief Minister has entrusted him with streamlining governance by

reducing bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring a results-driven approach. The AI Delivery Unit, expected to be launched next month, is a globally unique initiative aimed at transforming governance and accelerating development. With an estimated investment potential of \$5-6 billion, the unit will leverage Pakistan's talent pool to transition Punjab towards an AI-driven governance model. He also announced

the formation of a dedicated working group to ensure effective coordination and implementation. In his welcome address, RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized that the Rawalpindi Ring Road is a mega development project and called for the urgent establishment of economic and industrial zones to transform the region into a hub of trade and economic activity. He appreciated the advisor's support

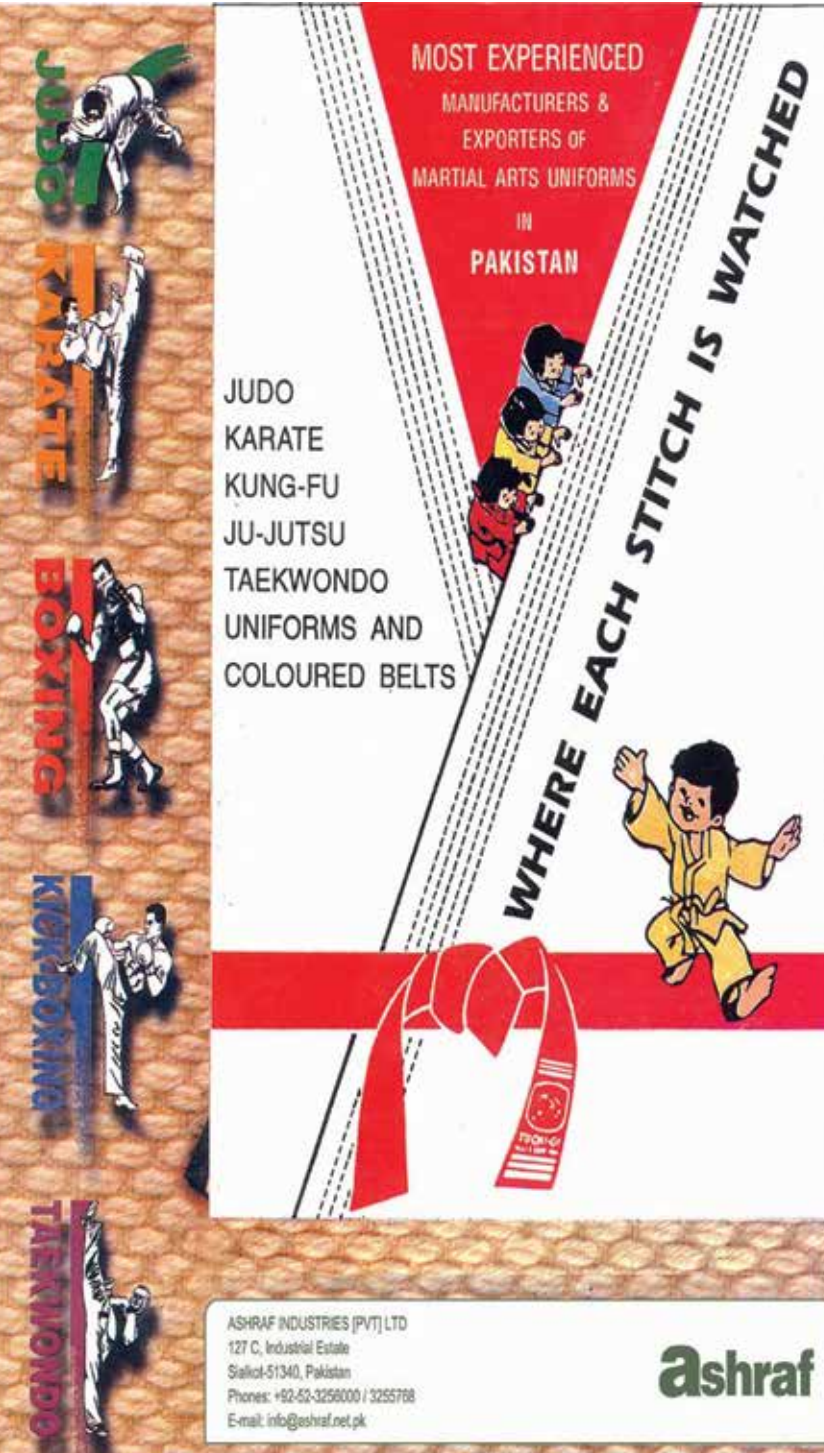
and urged the government to fast-track land acquisition and formally announce these zones during the upcoming inauguration of the Ring Road by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Chairman Ring Road Committee Syed Asad Mashhadi briefed participants on the project, highlighting that these zones would help reduce urban congestion by relocating wholesale markets, transport hubs,



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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 175

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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

The New Cold War Beyond Earth

DR. MUHAMMAD BILAL TAHIR

IN December 1972, when the last human footsteps marked the lunar surface, the world believed the great space race had reached its natural conclusion. The Moon had been conquered, the Cold War had found one of its symbolic endpoints, and space exploration gradually receded into the background of scientific ambition. Half a century later, that assumption is collapsing. Space is no longer a distant scientific frontier—it is once again a theatre of power, competition, and geopolitical signaling. The return to the Moon, led by missions such as Artemis II, marks more than a technological milestone. It represents the re-entry of major powers into a domain that blends science with sovereignty. Unlike the earlier era, which was defined by a binary rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, today's space race is multipolar. The United States, China, Russia, the European Union, and emerging spacefaring nations are all positioning themselves for influence beyond Earth. At first glance, the motivations appear scientific: lunar exploration, Mars missions, asteroid mining, and the search for extraterrestrial life. But beneath this narrative lies a more strategic calculus. The Moon is not just a destination; it is a platform. Control over lunar orbits, landing sites, and future bases could translate into long-term advantages in communication, navigation, and even resource extraction. Water ice on the Moon, for instance, is not merely a scientific curiosity—it is a potential fuel source for deeper space missions. Similarly, asteroid exploration is no longer confined to academic curiosity. Certain asteroids contain rare metals and minerals that are scarce on Earth but critical for advanced technologies. The ability to identify, access, and eventually utilize these resources could reshape global supply chains. In this sense, space is increasingly becoming an economic extension of terrestrial geopolitics. The militarization dimension cannot be ignored either. While space treaties emphasize peaceful use, the reality is that space-based assets are already integral to modern warfare. Satellites underpin communication, surveillance, navigation, and missile guidance systems. As more nations develop anti-satellite capabilities and space defense strategies, the line between civilian and military space activities continues to blur. Space, once romanticized as humanity's shared frontier, is increasingly contested terrain. Yet, the current phase of the space race differs from its predecessor in one critical aspect: the role of the private sector. Companies are no longer peripheral actors; they are central to the ecosystem. Commercial launch providers, satellite networks, and space technology startups are driving innovation at a pace that governments alone could not sustain. This public-private synergy has reduced costs, increased access, and accelerated timelines. However, it has also introduced new complexities in regulation, ownership, and accountability.



For developing countries like Pakistan, the resurgence of space geopolitics presents a nuanced challenge. On one hand, the technological and financial barriers to entry remain high. On the other, the democratization of certain space technologies—particularly in satellite development and data applications—offers opportunities for strategic participation. Pakistan's space program, led by SUPARCO, has achieved notable milestones, including satellite launches and remote sensing capabilities. However, the scale and ambition of global space initiatives highlight significant gaps. Investment in space science and technology remains limited, and institutional coordination between academia, industry, and government is relatively weak. The role of the Higher Education Commission becomes critical in this context. Universities are the primary engines of scientific capacity, yet space science in Pakistan is often confined to isolated departments with limited resources. There is a need to move beyond traditional curricula and develop interdisciplinary programs that integrate aerospace engineering, data science, astrophysics, and materials science. Moreover, research funding mechanisms must evolve to support long-term, high-risk projects. Space research does not yield immediate returns; it requires sustained investment and strategic patience. Without this commitment, Pakistan risks remaining a consumer of space-derived technologies rather than a contributor to their development. Another area of opportunity lies in satellite applications. Space is not only about rockets and planetary missions; it is equally about data. Earth observation satellites can play a transformative role in agriculture, disaster management, urban planning, and climate monitoring. For a country vulnerable to floods, water scarcity, and environmental degradation, the ability to harness space-based data is not a luxury—it is a necessity. However, leveraging these opportunities requires a shift in mindset. Space policy must be integrated into national development strategies rather than treated as a standalone scientific endeavor. This includes fostering partnerships with international space agencies, encouraging private sector participation, and building regulatory frameworks that support innovation while ensuring security. Equally important is the cultivation of human capital. The next generation of scientists and engineers must be equipped not only with technical skills but also with the ability to operate in a global, collaborative environment. Scholarships, exchange programs, and joint research initiatives can help bridge the gap between local capacity and global standards. The resurgence of the space race also raises ethical and governance questions. Who owns space resources? How should access be regulated? What mechanisms can prevent conflict in an increasingly crowded orbital environment? These are not abstract concerns; they are policy challenges that will shape the future of space exploration. For Pakistan, engaging in these discussions is as important as developing technological capabilities. Participation in international forums and treaty negotiations can ensure that the interests of developing nations are represented in shaping the rules of the new space order. Ultimately, the new space age is not just about reaching farther into the cosmos; it is about redefining power on Earth. Scientific achievement, economic potential, and geopolitical influence are converging in ways that make space a critical domain of the 21st century. The question, therefore, is not whether space exploration will continue to accelerate—it will. The real question is who will shape its trajectory, and who will be shaped by it.

Trump's Illusion of Victory in Iran War

Qamar Bashir



This contradiction lies at the heart of what can only be described as an illusion of victory. A war is not judged by declarations but by outcomes. If the adversary's capabilities remain intact and its strategic posture largely unchanged, the claim of success becomes, at best, premature—and at worst, misleading. The absence of measurable achievements raises fundamental questions about the credibility of the victory narrative being presented

THE declaration by Donald Trump that the war with Iran has effectively ended—and that all objectives have been achieved—marks one of the most controversial moments of this conflict. In a formal communication to Congress, he asserted that hostilities had terminated following a ceasefire in early April. Yet, beyond the political optics, a deeper examination reveals a widening gap between declared victory and strategic reality. At the outset, the war was defined by ambitious and far-reaching objectives: dismantling Iran's nuclear program, eliminating its missile and drone capabilities, forcing a rollback of enrichment activities, and ultimately reshaping its political structure. These were not symbolic goals; they were transformational in nature. However, as events have unfolded, it has become increasingly evident that these objectives remain largely unfulfilled. Iran continues to retain core elements of its nuclear infrastructure, its research programs persist, and its missile and drone capabilities remain intact. There has been no verified surrender of fissile material, no comprehensive rollback of its strategic programs, and no political transformation within the Iranian state.

This contradiction lies at the heart of what can only be described as an illusion of victory. A war is not judged by declarations but by outcomes. If the adversary's capabilities remain intact and its strategic posture largely unchanged, the claim of success becomes, at best, premature—and at worst, misleading. The absence of measurable achievements raises fundamental questions about the credibility of the victory narrative being presented. The situation is further complicated by the continued enforcement of a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. Despite the claim that hostilities have ceased, U.S. forces remain actively engaged in restricting maritime movement, intercepting vessels, and maintaining a significant military presence. A blockade, by its very nature, is not a passive measure; it is an active instrument of coercion and widely regarded as an act of war. Its continuation undermines the assertion that the conflict has truly ended and instead suggests that the war has merely transitioned into a different phase. Equally striking is the rhetoric used to describe these operations. President Trump's own characterization of U.S. naval conduct as being "like pirates" introduces a deeply troubling dimension. Such language, rarely used in formal statecraft, blurs the line between lawful enforcement and opportunistic seizure. It reinforces the perception that

the blockade may serve not only strategic objectives but also economic interests, particularly when accompanied by the seizure of vessels and cargo.

The economic dimension of the conflict cannot be overlooked. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most critical energy chokepoints in the world, facilitating a significant portion of global oil and gas flows. Its disruption has triggered price volatility and supply constraints across international markets. In this context, the United States—already a leading energy producer—has seen increased demand for its exports. Whether by design or by consequence, the redirection of global energy dependence toward American supply has fueled speculation that economic leverage plays a role in the continuation of the blockade.

For the Middle East, the consequences have been severe and far-reaching. Regional economies have absorbed massive shocks, with infrastructure damage, disrupted trade, and heightened insecurity compounding the crisis. Countries hosting U.S. military bases have found themselves exposed to retaliatory strikes, not because of independent policy decisions but due to their association with American operations. What were once perceived as protective alliances are increasingly being viewed as strategic liabilities.

This reassessment is not confined to the Middle East. Across Europe, there is growing unease regarding both the rationale for the war and its execution. The absence of a clear exit strategy, combined with the economic fallout, has intensified criticism from key allies. Rising energy costs, supply disruptions, and broader economic instability have placed additional strain on already fragile economies. As a result, European nations are beginning to explore greater strategic autonomy, signaling a potential shift in the long-standing transatlantic relationship. Tensions between the United States and its European allies have also been exacerbated by policy differences and rhetorical confrontations. Discussions around reducing reliance on U.S. military presence and reassessing the role of American bases in Europe are gaining traction. For many European states, this moment represents an opportunity to reclaim sovereignty, reduce external dependency, and chart a more independent geopolitical course.

A similar realization is emerging across parts of the Middle East. The presence of foreign military bases, once seen as a guarantee of security, is now being questioned. If these installations serve as catalysts for conflict rather

than deterrents, their strategic value diminishes significantly. The war has exposed the paradox that instruments of protection can, under certain circumstances, become sources of vulnerability.

Against this backdrop, Iran's position appears notably resilient. Despite sustained military pressure, it has retained its strategic capabilities and maintained control over critical assets. Its continued influence over the Strait of Hormuz, combined with its ability to withstand external pressure, positions it as a formidable actor in the region. Iran's diplomatic signaling—particularly its conditional willingness to restore normal maritime flow—further complicates the narrative, shifting the burden of escalation onto the United States. In practical terms, the war appears to have reached a point of strategic exhaustion for the United States. The absence of a request for renewed congressional authorization suggests a recognition of the limits of further escalation. Advanced weaponry and precision strikes have not yielded the decisive outcomes anticipated, particularly against deeply fortified and technologically adapted targets. Continuing the conflict under such conditions would risk escalating costs without guaranteeing success.

The declaration of victory, therefore, serves a political function. It provides a mechanism to conclude a costly engagement while preserving the appearance of strength. It allows for disengagement without explicit acknowledgment of failure. However, such narratives cannot fully obscure the underlying realities. The blockade continues, Iran's capabilities remain intact, regional instability persists, and global markets continue to feel the impact. In the final analysis, the war's outcome is not defined by official statements but by tangible results. By that measure, the claim of victory appears increasingly tenuous. What has been presented as a decisive conclusion is, in reality, a complex and unresolved situation—one in which strategic objectives remain unmet, consequences continue to unfold, and the true cost of the conflict is still being realized. A war declared "won" without achieving its objectives is not a victory—it is a narrative crafted to conceal an unresolved reality.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan

Veils of Deception: Famous False Flags That Shaped History

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



History, that stern chronicler, offers a grim gallery of such deceptions.

In the autumn of 1939, Nazi Germany orchestrated the Gleiwitz incident with chilling precision. On the night of the thirty-first of August, operatives of the SS, led by Alfred Naujocks and clad in Polish uniforms, assaulted a German radio station in Upper Silesia. They broadcast a fabricated anti-German tirade in the Polish tongue, scattered evidence of sabotage, and left behind the body of a murdered German civilian dressed as a Polish agitator

IT has been heard from the elders that a lie hath no legs to stand upon. Yet there come seasons when falsehoods are woven with such devilish art and patient cunning that truth herself seems but a pale shadow, faltering before the bold countenance of deception. Those lies which are not spun in the heat of passion but forged in the quiet chambers of calculation—to wound an adversary, to dress aggression in the robes of righteous vengeance, or to cast an enemy into the abyss of disgrace—are known in the English tongue as false flag operations. In our own Urdu idiom, it is as though one were throwing dust into the eyes of the beholder, blinding reason whilst the hand of mischief works its will unseen.

A false flag, at its core, is a deliberate act of harm or theatrical spectacle, contrived so that the true author remains veiled in shadow and blame descends upon another—be it a rival state, a restless faction, or some band of supposed fanatics. The purpose is seldom simple malice; rather, it seeks to kindle the fire of public indignation, to draw forth waves of sympathy for the apparent victim, and thereby to fashion a convenient pretext for retaliation, for open war, for the tightening of domestic fetters, or for the seizure of some long-coveted political advantage.

The term traces its lineage to the naval conflicts of the sixteenth century and earlier, when vessels of war would hoist the colours of a neutral nation or even those of their foe, drawing near in deceit before striking with their true identity revealed. In our modern epoch, the expression has broadened to encompass all manner of covert political and military stratagems—some now confessed in declassified archives, others lingering in the realm of fierce dispute, where official narratives collide with the testimonies of survivors, leaked papers, and the stubborn claims of geopolitics.

History, that stern chronicler, offers a grim gallery of such deceptions. In the autumn of 1939, Nazi Germany orchestrated the Gleiwitz incident with chilling precision. On the night of the thirty-first of August, operatives of the SS, led by Alfred Naujocks and clad in Polish uniforms, assaulted a German radio station in Upper Silesia. They broadcast a fabricated anti-German tirade in the Polish tongue, scattered evidence of sabotage, and left behind the body of a murdered German civilian dressed as a Polish agitator. This outrage formed part of the larger "Operation Himmler," a series of staged border provocations. The very next morning, Adolf Hitler brandished it before the world as justification for the invasion of Poland, thereby unleashing the horrors of the Second World War upon Europe. Years later, at the Nuremberg Trials, the architects themselves admitted the plot—one of the most brazen and consequential false flags ever recorded.

A decade earlier, in 1931, officers of Japan's Kwantung Army had employed a similar ruse near Mukden in Manchuria. A small explosion, scarcely damaging a section of the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway, was promptly blamed upon Chinese nationalists. The blast was

trivial, yet it served as the spark for full-scale occupation. Within months, Japan had swallowed Manchuria whole and installed the puppet state of Manchukuo. The League of Nations, through its Lytton Report, discerned the fraud, but Tokyo scorned the verdict, withdrew from the League, and set Asia upon the road to wider conflict.

Nor has the Middle East been spared such shadows. In 1954, during the Lavon Affair—also styled Operation Susannah—Israeli military intelligence recruited Egyptian Jews to plant bombs in cinemas, libraries, and educational centres across Cairo and Alexandria. The design was to attribute the outrages to the Muslim Brotherhood, communists, or local nationalists, thereby undermining Egypt's government and persuading Britain to retain its forces in the Suez Canal zone. The bombs were meant to detonate after closing hours to limit harm, yet one exploded prematurely. The conspiracy unravelled in arrests, executions, and suicides. Israel denied involvement at first, only to acknowledge the truth decades later. It stands today as a textbook case of a false flag that recoiled upon its makers and helped usher in the Suez Crisis of 1956. Even allies have found themselves ensnared in controversy.

On the eighth of June 1967, amid the heat of the Six-Day War, Israeli jets and torpedo boats launched a sustained assault upon the USS Liberty, an American signals intelligence vessel sailing in international waters off the Sinai Peninsula. The attack, lasting some seventy-five to ninety minutes, involved strafing runs with cannons, rockets, and napalm, followed by torpedo strikes that tore a gaping wound in the ship's hull. Thirty-four Americans lost their lives—thirty-one sailors, two Marines, and one civilian—and 171 suffered wounds. Israel spoke swiftly of mistaken identity in the fog of battle; the United States, after several inquiries, accepted this account and received compensation. Yet many survivors and certain officers have long insisted the strike was deliberate, citing the ship's clear markings, prior overflights by Israeli reconnaissance, and the Liberty's mission to monitor Arab rather than Israeli communications. No formal confession of false flag intent has ever emerged, leaving the episode one of the most bitterly contested in American naval annals.

In our own Sub Continent, the pattern repeats with painful familiarity, often deepening the mistrust between neighbours. The Samjhauta Express bombings of February 2007 saw suitcase bombs tear through the coaches of the symbolic Friendship Train linking Delhi and Lahore. Sixty-eight souls perished, the majority Pakistani citizens returning home, with scores more injured. Early suspicion turned toward Pakistan-based militants, but India's National Investigation Agency later traced the outrage to Hindu right-wing extremists associated with Abhinav Bharat. Confessions spoke of a motive of revenge—"bomb for bomb"—and a desire to sabotage peace efforts. Though charges were laid, a special court in 2019 acquitted the principal accused, citing insufficient evidence. Pakistan

has repeatedly called for justice for its slain citizens, while the case lingers as a symbol of how blame may shift and victims may find no final closure.

The dreadful Mumbai attacks of November 2008 according to the Indian media, when allegedly ten Lashkar-e-Taiba gunmen from Pakistani soil wrought havoc across India's commercial capital for nearly three days, killing more than 160 and wounding hundreds, remain etched in collective memory. Pakistan officially condemned the act, yet some voices have persisted in labelling it a false flag.

Even earlier, the 1971 hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight Ganga to Lahore by Kashmiri separatists provided India with grounds to ban Pakistani overflights at a moment of grave internal crisis for Pakistan. Later inquiries in Pakistan reportedly suggested Indian intelligence hands behind the episode, though India has always maintained it was a genuine militant action. Such claims and counter-claims have become threads in the enduring tapestry of suspicion. Among these many instances, the tragedy at Pahalgal in April 2025 struck a particularly resonant chord for Pakistan. On the twenty-second of that month, armed gunmen emerged from the pine forests surrounding the serene Baisaran meadow near Pahalgal in Indian-administered Kashmir. The meadow, accessible only by foot or pony and long cherished by visitors as a slice of paradise, became a scene of horror as the attackers, bearing modern weapons and clad partly in military style, opened fire upon tourists enjoying the gentle slopes. Twenty-six civilians fell—twenty-five tourists and one local Kashmiri Muslim pony operator who heroically resisted—while some twenty others bore wounds. The assault, lasting several terrible minutes, shattered the peace of families and sightseers alike.

India attributed the massacre to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba operatives and moved with aggressive measures. Pakistan's leadership denounced the episode as an Indian-orchestrated false flag, crafted to legitimise fresh crackdowns in Kashmir, to escalate disputes over water, or to rally domestic opinion against Pakistan. In firm reply, Pakistan made plain that it had been "smelling a snake" for the past year and declared the incident a decisive turning point—one that sharpened its vigilance and resolve. Whether the veil shall ever be wholly drawn from every such deception remains the verdict of time and honest inquiry. Some lies harden into the semblance of truth; others crumble when exposed to the light of evidence and conscience. Yet the ancient counsel of the elders holds firm; though falsehood may stride for a season upon borrowed legs, truth possesses a quiet, enduring strength. In the high affairs of nations no less than in the lives of ordinary men, wisdom demands that we pierce the dust cast before our eyes and resist the lure of letting passion sanctify deceit. Only thus may justice, however imperfectly, find its path through the shadows that so often cloud our troubled world.

Briefs

US not likely to accept new Iran peace proposal

FROM PAGE 01
court to choose the path of diplomacy or the continuation of a confrontational approach." Iran, he said, was "prepared for both paths." US news site Axios reported earlier in the week that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff had asked for Tehran's nuclear program to be put back on the negotiating table. Iran's mission to the UN pointed to the massive US nuclear arsenal, accusing Washington on Saturday of "hypocritical behavior" towards Iran's own atomic ambitions. There was no legal "restriction on the level of uranium enrichment, so long as it is conducted under the IAEA's supervision, as was the case with Iran," it said, using the abbreviation for the UN nuclear watchdog. Iran has maintained a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz since the war began, choking off major flows of oil, gas and fertiliser to the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade on Iranian ports. Oil prices are about 50 per cent above pre-war levels.

Mending fences: Rubio to visit Vatican

FROM PAGE 01
following the death of Pope Francis, Leo has criticised the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration. But it was his increasing anti-war rhetoric, particularly following the US-Israeli attack on Iran, that triggered Trump's ire. Leo, on April 7, declared Trump's threat to destroy Iran "unacceptable" and urged Americans to demand that US lawmakers "work for peace". The US president subsequently slammed the pontiff in a social media post as "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy". Trump also said he was "not a big fan of Pope Leo" and that he does not "want a pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon". Meloni condemned as "unacceptable" Trump's criticism — prompting the president to turn his fire on her.

German FM demands Hormuz reopening

FROM PAGE 01
In a statement on Sunday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said the United States must choose between "an impossible operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran." Germany's Merz has been critical of the war. Merz and other European leaders have expressed particular concern about the economic fallout from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Roughly a fifth of global oil supplies passed through the crucial waterway before the start of the war.

Iranian envoy reaffirms Pakistan's 'central role'

FROM PAGE 01
the strait for commercial traffic but closed it again, citing US ceasefire violations and the continued naval blockade of Iranian ports. Meanwhile, the Iranian ambassador said that the international community was observing Tehran's "clear and logical stance", while criticising what he described as inconsistency in US policy. Reaffirming Iran's commitment to diplomacy, he said that Washington must abandon its "aggressive posture" and respect Iran's rights for negotiations to move forward. Ambassador Moghadam also highlighted growing political, economic and trade ties between Pakistan and Iran, noting that border crossings between the two nations played a crucial role in bilateral trade and regional connectivity.



KARACHI: President All Pakistan Newspapers Society Senator Sarmad Ali presenting a souvenir to Hameed Haroon former President of the APNS on the occasion of 'APNS TALK' with Hameed Haroon. Senior APNS office-bearers are also seen in the picture. — DNA

PHF announces national training camp for Pro League

The PHF has informed all relevant departments and sports boards via letter to consider the players' and officials' attendance from May 3 to June 30, 2026, as "on duty," and to issue immediate NOCs

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has announced a national senior hockey team training camp in preparation for the crucial matches of the FIH Pro League, scheduled to be played in Belgium and England from June 13 to June 28, 2026. According to details, based on the recommendations of the PHF President, the Professional Development Committee, the National Selection Committee, and Head Coach Manzoor-ul-Hasan, the training camp will be held at the National Hockey

Stadium in Lahore. The camp will run from May 4, 2026, to June 6, 2026. In a statement issued by the PHF, all invited players and officials have been instructed to report to the Head Coach at the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Coaching Centre in Lahore by 5:00 PM on May 4, 2026. Players have been directed to bring a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their respective departments, a passport valid for at least six months, eight passport-sized photographs, and playing kits (colored and white). The PHF has informed all relevant departments and sports boards via letter to consider the players' and officials' attendance

from May 3 to June 30, 2026, as "on duty," and to issue immediate NOCs. Selected players for the training camp: Goalkeepers: Muneeb-ur-Rehman (WAPDA), Ali Raza (Navy), Waqar (WAPDA), Abdullah Ishtiaq Khan (MPCL), Bilal Khan (Quetta), Awn Muhammad (Lahore), Faizan Janjua (Customs), Owais Rashid (Lahore), Zubair (Army). Midfielders: Moeen Shakeel (WAPDA), Ghazanfar Ali (MPCL), Zakariya Hayat (Navy), Umer Sattar (MPCL), Salman Razaq (WAPDA), Junaid Manzoor (NBP), M. Imad (Customs). Strikers: Afraz Khan (MPCL), Ahmed Naideem (MPCL), Hanan Shahid (WAPDA),

Rana Waheed Ashraf (WAPDA), Abdul Rehman (PAF), Hamza Fayyaz (Customs), Abu Zar (Customs), Rana Waleed Ashraf (Navy), Bilal (Chakwal), Bilal Akram (Lahore), Yousuf (Rangers), Adeel Latif (Customs), Ali Murtaza (MPCL), Shahzaib (Karachi), Saad Zahir (Karachi), Akbar (Lahore), Ashraf (Karachi), Abdul Wahab (Karachi), Mohsin Khan (Lahore). Officials: Olympian Manzoor-ul-Hasan (DHA) has been appointed as Head Coach, while Olympian Khawaja Muhammad Junaid and Olympian Shakeel Abbasi will serve as coaches. Sultan Ashraf will perform duties as Video Analyst.

Pakistan, Zimbabwe women ODI series to commence from Monday

KARACHI: Pakistan will face Zimbabwe in a six-match women's white-ball series, commencing from 4 May at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi. The series comprises three ODIs, which are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29, followed by three T20Is. The ODIs will be staged on 4, 6 and 9 May, with the first ball of all matches to be bowled at 3.30 pm PKT. The T20Is will be played on 12, 14 and 15 May, with matches scheduled to begin at 7.30 pm PKT. Pakistan's 15-member ODI squad will be captained by Fatima Sana. The squad features one uncapped player, Momina Riasat. The squad for the T20I series will be announced in due course. Pakistan is currently placed fifth in the ICC Women's Championship standings with two points after featuring in an away ODI series against South Africa earlier this year. The forthcoming T20I series will provide the Pakistan women's team an opportunity to fine-tune preparations ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled to take place in England and Wales from 12 June to 5 July. Prior to the ICC event, Pakistan will participate in a T20I tri-nation tournament in Ireland also featuring Ireland and West Indies, from 28 May to 4 June. Fatima Sana said, "This series is a crucial opportunity for us to start strong in the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29 cycle. Playing at home always gives us added confidence and we are looking to make the most of these conditions. "Our preparations have been thorough and the players are clear about their roles. While our bowling attack has been one of our strengths, we are working hard to ensure more consistency from the batting unit so that we can perform collectively as a team." — APP

Sajid Sadpara summits world's 5th highest mountain



ISLAMABAD: Renowned mountaineer Sajid Ali Sadpara summited the world's fifth-highest peak, Mount Makalu (8,485m) in Nepal, without supplementary oxygen, the expedition's organisers said on Sunday. Sadpara is on a mission to summit all 14 "eight-thousanders" in the world without supplemental oxygen, and this marks his 10th summit of that mission. According to a statement issued by Seven Summit Treks, the expedition team Sadpara was part of, an excellent summit push at 5am on May

2 successfully reached the summit of Makalu. The statement added a team of three members, including Sadpara from Pakistan and Johanns Lau, with seven sherpas, stood on the summit, marking a remarkable achievement on the technically demanding peak. "We wish them a safe and smooth descent back to base camp," Seven Summit Treks added. Sadpara had arrived in Nepal on April 4 for the mission and reached Makalu base camp on April 16. The expedition team completed their summit rotation at Makalu on

April 25. Sadpara is the proud son of the legendary Muhammad Ali Sadpara, who tragically lost his life during a winter ascent of K2 in 2021. Carrying his father's legacy with honour, Sajid has emerged as a powerful symbol of Pakistani mountaineering strength and global excellence. Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) President Irfan Arshad, renowned climbers, and civil society members congratulated Sadpara on his remarkable and successful summit of Makalu. In a statement, Arshad extended heartfelt felicitations to Sajid on achieving the feat, terming it a moment of great pride for the nation. The statement noted that summiting one of the world's most technically challenging peaks reflected Sadpara's courage, determination, and exceptional mountaineering skills. "This outstanding achievement is not only a personal milestone but also a proud moment for the entire Pakistani mountaineering community," it added. The ACP president lauded Sadpara's perseverance and dedication, saying his accomplishment would inspire young climbers across the country and further strengthen Pakistan's presence on the global mountaineering stage. — DNA

Araghchi criticizes Europe as US Military build-up...

FROM PAGE 01
that external pressure would not force Tehran to abandon its strategic objectives. The criticism comes at a time when diplomatic efforts to revive or renegotiate a nuclear deal appear stalled, with deep divisions persisting over uranium enrichment and verification mechanisms. Iran has consistently rejected demands for "zero enrichment," while Western powers continue to push for stricter limitations. Meanwhile, military tensions in the region are visibly rising. Recent satellite imagery and defense reports indicate a significant surge in US military aircraft deployments toward the Middle East, in what analysts describe as one of the largest build-ups in recent years. The United States has moved a wide array of advanced fighter jets, including F-35 and F-15 aircraft, to bases in key regional locations such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The deployment is widely seen as part of a broader strategy to pressure Iran amid faltering nuclear negotiations and heightened fears of confrontation.

Iran hangs man over killing...

FROM PAGE 01
the legal formalities," said the judiciary's Mizan Online website. It said Abdollahzadeh, along with others, was arrested at the scene of street protests in the northwestern city of Urmia, where a farmer "was severely beaten by rioters and tragically martyred." The farmer was attending the protests "as a volunteer force to ensure the security of the people," according to Mizan, which did not say when the incident took place. Mizan published what it said was part of a confession by Abdollahzadeh in which he admitted to "hitting the officer several times in the face." Abdollahzadeh was sentenced to death under the capital offense "corruption on earth," while two other defendants below 18 years of age were sentenced to imprisonment of unspecified terms.

Cop gunned down near his house

FROM PAGE 01
"After the attack, a large police contingent reached the area and launched a search for the assailants," he added. Today's incident comes just a day after unknown terrorists attacked the house of a police official with explosives in the district's Shadikhel area, causing significant damage. Also in the Shadikhel area, a policeman embraced martyrdom in a fierce gunfight with terrorists on Thursday following an attack on a police post. Over the last few months, several areas of KP, including Bannu, Peshawar, Karak, Lakki Marwat and Bajaur, have witnessed a series of terrorist attacks on police personnel. On April 7, at least five policemen, including an officer, were injured in an explosion in the Shabbazkhel town in Lakki Marwat.

Imran X closure case hearing...

FROM PAGE 01
The court had earlier permitted him to meet the former prime minister for consultation; however, the meeting could not take place despite clear court orders. During the previous hearing in February, the court sought final arguments on the petition and adjourned proceedings until the first week of May. Lawyers Zafarullah Khan and Ali Bukhari appeared before the bench. Ali Bukhari informed the court that Salman Akram Raja was unwell and could not attend the hearing. The bench also questioned jail authorities over the failure to arrange a meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan despite court orders. The petitioner's counsel told the court they were ready to present arguments but required access to their client for proper consultation.

Retaliation Against Arabs Instead of Israel



TANVEER HUSSAIN

OVER the past few years, the ongoing tensions in the Middle East have created serious threats to global peace. After October 2023, Israel's large-scale killing of civilians in Gaza, along with its attacks on southern Lebanon, has given rise to a severe humanitarian crisis in the region. Whatever remained was completed by the joint attacks of the United States and Israel on Iran. Resisting or defending against foreign aggression is the fundamental right of every country, which is also recognized under Article 51 of the United Nations. Accordingly, Iran also exer-

cised its right of defense against American and Israeli aggression. However, surprisingly, instead of targeting its enemy, Iran responded to these attacks by launching missile strikes on its neighboring Arab countries. Many of these countries had nothing to do with this war. Except for a few, most of these countries had not even allowed the United States to use their land or airspace. The most important point is that Iran possesses a large number of missiles capable of reaching Israel. If Iran had directed its missiles toward Israel, it could have caused significant damage. However, in this war, Iran has inflicted more damage on Arab countries than on Israel. The missiles fired at Israel are not even a fraction of those launched at Arab countries. Similarly, although Israel's partner, the United States, is geographically far from Iran, American naval fleets operating in international waters could have been easy targets for Iran. However, instead of directly confronting the United States, Iran found it more appropriate to attack countries like the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan and Oman. This

is because either these countries were not responding adequately to such attacks, or they were being restrained by fellow Muslim nations in order to prevent the war from expanding. If the attacks had been limited only to American bases or military installations, some justification could perhaps have been presented. However, Iran has targeted the infrastructure of Arab countries, including oil and gas reserves and desalination plants built at a cost of billions of dollars. Some analysts justify these attacks by arguing that these countries host American bases. If the presence of American bases in a country is considered justification for attacks, then many Asian countries such as South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, and Japan also host American bases with thousands of U.S. troops stationed there. If this logic were to be accepted, then during the May Pakistan-India war, the defense agreement between India and Iran, along with India's presence in Chabahar, could also have provided justification for expanding the scope of the conflict. The real reason for the United States' lack of enthusiasm toward

a ceasefire agreement is that the damage in this war is being suffered either by Iran or by Arab countries. If even half of the missiles that Iran fired at Arab countries had been directed at Israel, Israel would also have suffered some losses. In that case, the United States and Israel would have been pleading for a ceasefire. It can be said that Iranian attacks are indirectly strengthening Israel. This appears to be an ideal situation for Israel. It bombs Iran in partnership with the United States, targets Iran's military and religious leadership, and in response, Iran rains missiles on the infrastructure of Arab countries. In this way, Israel is successfully weakening both Arab and non-Arab actors within a single conflict. The current war has made one thing clear: the concerns of Arab countries regarding Iran are not unfounded. Since 1979, sectarian conflicts and proxy wars have significantly increased in several Muslim countries. In Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, Arab and non-Arab proxy conflicts have claimed millions of lives and displaced tens of millions. Even in the current war, Iranian missiles have caused more damage to Muslim coun-

tries than to Israel. By destroying Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, Qatar's gas plants, the UAE's airports, and Kuwait's desalination plants, heavy losses have been inflicted on Arab countries. In such a scenario, if Iran acquires nuclear technology, it may pose greater security threats to Arab countries in the region than to Israel. Pakistan is the only country in the region that is sincerely playing a role in stopping this war. As a state, Pakistan has always advocated for Islamic unity. In the past, whether it was Palestine, Kashmir, or Bosnia, Pakistan has raised its voice for Muslims wherever they faced oppression. Pakistan supported Azerbaijan against Armenian aggression. When Russia attacked Afghanistan, Pakistan not only provided practical support to Afghan mujahideen but also hosted millions of Afghan refugees. Whenever disputes arose between Muslim countries, Pakistan consistently promoted peace and reconciliation. Pakistan has also made efforts toward a ceasefire between the United States and Iran and is now striving for a peace agreement so that tensions in the region may decrease and people can live in peace.

Briefs

Drone strike kills 5 near Sudan capital

CAIRO: Sudan's paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) killed at least five people in a drone attack that hit a civilian vehicle on the outskirts of Khartoum, a local Sudanese rights group said. The attack on Saturday morning hit a vehicle that was traveling from the White Nile province to Omdurman, the sister city of the capital, Emergency Lawyers, a rights group tracking violence against civilians, said in a statement. It added that the attack reflects continued targeting of civilians on public roads and in populated areas. Khartoum has largely been spared attacks by the RSF since it was recaptured by the Sudanese Armed Forces last year, but the capital has recently seen sporadic strikes. The Rapid Support Forces, which have been at war with the Sudanese Army for over three years, did not immediately claim the attack. Emergency Lawyers condemned the attack and held the RSF responsible. "What happened was a brazen violation of international humanitarian law," it said.—APP

Egypt finds new gas reserves in Nile Delta

RIYADH: Egypt has announced a new natural gas discovery in the Nile Delta capable of producing around 50 million cubic feet per day, as the country steps up efforts to restore domestic energy output. The Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources said the discovery followed the successful drilling of the Nidoco N-2 exploratory well in the West Abu Madi concession area in Kafr El-Sheikh, operated by Eni in partnership with BP, according to the State Information Service. The latest find also follows a broader push to restore investor confidence in the sector, with Egypt reducing arrears owed to foreign oil and gas partners from \$6.1 billion in June 2024 to \$714 million by the end of April 2026. "Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Karim Badawi said the well was drilled from onshore using advanced directional drilling technology to target offshore reserves in shallow waters, helping reduce costs and improve operational efficiency," the ministry said in a release. The minister noted that the well's proximity to existing infrastructure — less than 2 km from nearby production facilities — will enable swift tie-in and early production within the coming weeks. Badawi said the discovery, together with increased production from existing fields, reflects the sector's progress in settling dues owed to foreign partners, adding that the remaining arrears are expected to be fully settled by the end of June.—APP

Sardar Yasir Ilyas leads Pak delegation at ECO moot

In his keynote address, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan highlighted Pakistan's vast investment potential in the tourism sector, inviting governments and the private sector from ECO member states to explore opportunities across infrastructure, hospitality, and destination development

DNA

SHUSHA, AZERBAIJAN : Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tourism and National Coordinator, led the Pakistani delegation at the high-level ECO Conference in Shusha, commemorating its designation as the Tourism Capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for 2026. The multi-day engagements, held from April 27 to 29, brought together senior representatives from ECO member states including Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, reaffirming a shared commitment to advancing regional tourism cooperation, connectivity, and sustainable development. The opening ceremony and official proceedings were attended by prominent Azerbaijani leadership, including Fuad Naghiyev, Chairman of the State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Aydin Karimov, Mayor of Shusha. In his keynote address, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan highlighted Pakistan's vast investment potential in the tourism sector, inviting governments and the private sector from ECO member states to explore opportunities across infrastructure, hospitality, and destination development. He noted that Pakistan's tourism sector is currently experiencing



annual growth of approximately 10%, employing 4.7 million people, and is poised for significant expansion under a comprehensive 5-10 year tourism plan and policy. This roadmap aims to increase employment to 8 million jobs and enhance tourism's contribution to GDP to \$40 billion. Numerous packages including adventure tourism, medical tourism and religious tourism are being introduced and special discounted packages will be launched for members States to encourage their citizens to visit Pakistan. He also highlighted the importance of establishing a unified visa policy for the region similar to the Schengen visa program. He further emphasized that under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, ma-

for reforms are being undertaken to strengthen tourism as a key pillar of economic growth. He also highlighted Pakistan's strategic role as a regional stabilizer, acknowledging national leadership of the Prime Minister & Field Marshal for ensuring peace and stability critical for tourism development. Infrastructure & Connectivity Outlook Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan underscored Pakistan's strong tourism infrastructure and accessibility, including 5 international airports and 15 domestic airports. Over 12,000 km of motorway network 7,700 km of railway connectivity Presence of five of the world's highest peaks Expanding nationwide 5G connectivity These factors position Pakistan as a well-connected, high-po-

tential destination for international tourists and investors. A key highlight of Pakistan's participation was its cultural and culinary showcase, where authentic Pakistani cuisine was presented to international delegates. Signature dishes including Chicken Biryani, Nihari, Mutton Karahi and Seekh Kebabs along with traditional sweets and nan reflected the country's rich heritage and diversity which was appreciated all the visitors. During this segment, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan was accompanied by Fuad Naghiyev Chairman of the state tourism agency and Aydin Karimov Mayor of the city, symbolizing strong cultural ties and bilateral engagement between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. On

the sidelines of the conference, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan held one-on-one meetings with tourism leadership from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan to discuss: Enhancement of bilateral tourism cooperation Development of hospitality exchange programs Strengthening of academia-industry linkages Organization of joint tourism roadshows He emphasized the importance of increasing inbound tourism to Pakistan, particularly from countries with existing direct flight connectivity, to balance current travel trends. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan was recognized as the youngest representative from Pakistan at the conference, reflecting the country's commitment to empowering youth participation in international tourism

platforms. The forum holds added importance as Pakistan prepares to host ECO events in 2027 in Lahore and Islamabad. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan extended a formal invitation to all member states to participate, positioning Pakistan as a future hub for regional tourism dialogue and collaboration. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan's leadership at the ECO Conference in Shusha underscores Pakistan's commitment to leveraging tourism as a driver of economic growth, regional integration, and cultural diplomacy. His participation has opened new avenues for investment, partnerships, and enhanced connectivity across the ECO region, reinforcing Pakistan's vision for a sustainable and globally competitive tourism sector.

Russia, Ukraine drones kill four, hit oil tankers

KYIV: Russian drone strikes on Ukraine killed three people across the country, while Ukrainian attacks killed one near Moscow and targeted Russia's lucrative oil facilities, according to statements by the warring countries on Sunday. The two neighbors have been firing hundreds of explosive-packed drones at each other on a daily basis throughout the four-year war, as talks to end the conflict have gone nowhere. Russian attacks on Ukraine's southern Odesa region — home to key export terminals — killed two people, including a truck driver at a port, regional governor Oleg Kiper said on social media. "Enemy drones hit three residential buildings, and two more were damaged.... Facilities and equipment for the port infrastructure were also damaged," he said. The emergency services posted photos of firefighters tackling a blaze after the attacks. Russian strikes on the frontline region of Kherson, in southern Ukraine, also killed one person, officials there said. Russia fired 268 drones and one ballistic missile in the overnight attack, Kyiv's air force said. Ukraine's army meanwhile launched at least 334 drones at Russia, Moscow's defense ministry said. The northwestern Leningrad region was heavily targeted Oil export terminals there have been hit several times in recent weeks, knocking out billions of dollars worth of exports, according to Kyiv. Oil and gas revenues — boosted by the war in the Middle East — are critical for Russia's economy and funding its army. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said two of Russia's so-called shadow tankers — aging vessels that ferry its sanctioned oil around the world — were struck off the southern Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. He posted black-and-white night-vision footage of a naval drone approaching one tanker. The damage done was unknown.—APP

Israel strikes South Lebanon, kills one and wounds rescuers

BEIRUT: Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon killed at least one person and wounded four rescuers on Sunday, the Lebanese health ministry said, as Israel maintained its attacks on the country despite a fragile truce in its war with Hezbollah. In separate statements, the ministry said a strike on Arabsalim killed at least one person and wounded three, including a child, and another strike on Srifa wounded five people including four rescuers from the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee, as the strike hit near one of their centers "The Ministry reiterates its condemnation of these repeated attacks and recalls what is included in Article 19 of the Geneva Convention regarding the need to verify that medical facilities are safe from any danger caused by attacks in conflict zones, while what is happening is exactly the opposite." Israel's military on Sunday issued new evacuation warnings in southern Lebanon for villages beyond the area it occupies. The warning covers more than 10 villages and towns including several in the district of Nabatieh, which lies north of the Litani River, south of which Israel has stationed troops. Arabsalim and Srifa were included in the warning. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported a series of Israeli strikes across southern Lebanon, including on towns not mentioned in the evacuation warning. Since April 17 a fragile ceasefire has been in place between Israel and Lebanon, which was aimed at pausing the violence between the Hezbollah militant group and Israel's military. On Wednesday Israel's military chief of staff Eyal Zamir had threatened to strike Hezbollah "beyond the yellow line," which marks the area of Israeli control. "Any threat, anywhere, against our communities or our forces — including beyond the Yellow Line and north of the Litani — will be eliminated," he said during a visit to Israeli troops. The ceasefire text grants Israel the right to act against "planned, imminent or ongoing attacks." In the past week two soldiers and an army contractor have been killed by drone attacks in the area, with dozens of soldiers wounded. Hezbollah has recently begun using cheap drones controlled by fiber-optic cable, making them largely immune to electronic jamming, to conduct daily attacks. These drones have a range of several dozen kilometers, which puts Israeli troops in Lebanon and communities in northern Israel under threat. The group on Monday said it targeted Israeli troops in Bayada, southern Lebanon, with a drone in response to Israel's "violation" of the ceasefire. The United States has called for direct peace negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, but Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on Wednesday for Israel to fully implement the ceasefire before the talks can take place. Hezbollah is strongly opposed to direct talks, with lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah saying on Sunday that the group was "capable of thwarting all the objectives of these negotiations, which increase the sharp division in the country between the factions of our people and within the state itself."—APP

Syria raises vaccination coverage to 81%

DAMASCUS: Vaccination coverage in Syria rose above 81 percent in 2025, as the Ministry of Health expanded nationwide immunization campaigns to reach children in both urban and remote areas, according to health officials. Officials said that about 3.2 million children under the age of five were targeted by the national immunization program in 2025, along with about 699,000 children under one year of age, as part of routine and outreach vaccination efforts. Dr. Turki Daher, director of the National Expanded Immunization Program at the Ministry of Health, said that the program had delivered major public health gains since its launch in 1978, including the eradication of polio and neonatal tetanus and a reduction in infectious diseases such as measles. He added that these efforts had contributed to lower child morbidity and mortality rates across the country.—APP

"Taste of the World" 2026 presented at Serena Hotel

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, stated, "At Serena Hotels, we are committed to creating platforms that celebrate cultural diversity while contributing meaningfully to society. 'Taste of the World' reflects this vision by bringing together international communities and supporting a cause that extends beyond the event itself

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, under its Cultural Diplomacy initiative hosted Taste of the World, a distinguished food festival celebrating international cuisine and cultural diversity. The event featured 24 stalls, including participation from various diplomatic missions, each showcasing an authentic selection of traditional dishes and offering guests a rich, immersive global culinary experience. The festival was inaugurated by the President of IFWA together with the CEO of Serena Hotels, Mr. Aziz Boolani. The occasion underscored the importance of cultural exchange and highlighted the role of such initiatives in strengthening community engagement through shared experiences. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, stated, "At Serena Hotels, we are committed to creating platforms that celebrate cultural



diversity while contributing meaningfully to society. 'Taste of the World' reflects this vision by bringing together international communities and supporting a cause that extends beyond the event itself." This initiative brings together cultures in a truly meaningful way, showcasing the richness of global traditions while reinforcing the spirit of collaboration and compassion. In addition to celebrating global cuisine, the festival was dedicated to giving back to the community. Proceeds from the event were donated to charitable organizations supporting initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of visually impaired individuals. A total amount of PKR 2 million was raised through this initiative, reflecting the collective generosity and commitment of all participating partners and attendees. Serena Hotels remains dedicated to promoting cultural exchange and community engagement through meaningful initiatives, continuing to create platforms that bring people together while contributing positively to society.

Briefs

PM orders review of housing scheme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed authorities to review the government's housing finance scheme following concerns that its structure may conflict with the constitutional timeline for eliminating riba. Sources said the prime minister sought a detailed briefing after a report published on Saturday highlighted that the structure and timeline of the "Apna Ghar Programme" could extend interest-based lending beyond January 1, 2028 — the deadline set under the 26th Constitutional Amendment for transitioning to a riba-free financial system. Officials have been asked to assess whether the scheme's design, featuring a five-year loan disbursement plan and 20-year repayment periods, aligns with constitutional requirements or requires restructuring. Under the programme, loans of up to Rs10 million are being offered with a fixed 5% markup for the first 10 years, followed by market-based rates. The government has allocated Rs321 billion for the first year to finance 50,000 housing units, with total financing projected at Rs3.2 trillion over five years. According to sources, the review will focus on the legal and financial implications of continuing interest-based lending during the transition period leading up to 2028, as well as the feasibility of converting the scheme into a Shari'ah-compliant model.

Opec+ to make first post-UAE production decision

DNA

VIENNA: Seven Opec+ members are meeting Sunday to make their first decision on oil-production quotas since the United Arab Emirates' departure from the cartel, which added to the soaring price pressure unleashed by the Mideast war. The UAE, one of the world's top producers, announced April 28 it was withdrawing from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and the expanded Opec+ group, after chafing at their production quotas. The withdrawal took effect on Friday. Neither group has reacted publicly so far — meaning there will be intense focus on the tone of the statement at the end of Sunday's online meeting by Algeria, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman, Russia and Saudi Arabia. The production decision itself is already priced in by markets. The seven countries are widely expected to increase their quotas by 188,000 barrels per day (bpd), according to Arne Lohmann Rasmussen, chief analyst at Global Risk Management.

China, Philippines trade accusations over South China Sea

DNA

BEIJING: China accused the Philippines of landing personnel on a disputed reef in the South China Sea on Sunday as Manila said it would dispatch ships to drive off Chinese vessels it said were conducting research illegally. The exchange extends a run of heightened tension between China and the Philippines, a US ally, over Sandy Cay, an unoccupied sandbar in the South China Sea. On Sunday, China's Coast Guard said it had identified five Philippine personnel who had landed on Sandy Cay, an action Beijing termed "illegal," according to state-run media outlet Global Times. The report did not specify what — if any — further action China had taken.

Turkish embassy marks national sovereignty and children's day

Ambassador Neziroglu noted that the founder of the Republic of Turkiye, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, dedicated the day not only to Turkish children but to children around the world, reflecting a universal message of peace, unity, and hope for future generations



DNA

ISLAMABAD, Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Irfan Neziroglu highlighted the historical significance of National Sovereignty and Children's Day while underscoring the enduring brotherhood between Turkiye and Pakistan. Addressing a ceremony held here at the Embassy lawns, the ambassador said April 23 is celebrated annually in Turkiye as National Sovereignty and Children's Day, marking

the establishment of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1920 during the Turkish War of Independence. Prominent among those who attended the were Chairperson PEMRA Ms. Ambreen Jan, Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Syria North Cyprus. The ambassador noted that the founder of the Republic of Turkiye, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, dedicated the day not only to Turkish children but to children around the world, reflecting a universal message of peace, unity, and hope for future generations. The ambassador recalled

that in 1979, the United Nations recognized the day as an international event, after which Turkiye began hosting children from across the globe to celebrate the occasion annually. Paying tribute to Ataturk, the heroes of the Turkish War of Liberation, and members of the first National Assembly, he said their sacrifices laid the foundation of modern Turkiye and left a lasting legacy for future generations. Highlighting deep-rooted historical ties, Ambassador Neziroglu expressed gratitude to the people of the subcontinent, particularly

Muslims, for their unwavering support to Turkiye during its War of Independence, stating that these bonds have evolved into an "eternal brotherhood" between the two nations. He also appreciated the contributions of partner organizations, including Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Al-Khidmat Foundation, Pak-Turk Maarif International Schools, and Sweet Homes, for joining the celebrations. The ambassador thanked participants and encouraged them to enjoy the celebrations, emphasizing the importance of nurturing joy, unity, and shared values among children.

President, Prime Minister pay tribute media workers

Both leaders hail media for countering false narratives, maintaining national cohesion during Bunyan-um-Marsoos

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding and promoting press freedom on World Press Freedom Day. The day is being observed under the theme "Shaping a Future at Peace" this year. The president and the prime minister emphasised the role of responsible journalism, truth, and credible information in strengthening democracy, national unity, and creating a conducive environment for media freedom. In his message, President Zardari extended greetings to media workers globally and warned of increasing global threats to press freedom, including misinformation, disinformation, artificial intelligence misuse, algorithmic manipulation, and pressure from powerful tech platforms and social media companies. He said such forces can distort public discourse and weaken democratic values. Reaffirming constitutional commitment under Articles 19 and 19-A, he said a free press is essential for accountability, transparency, and democracy. The president said that this year's theme highlights that peace depends on truth, and truth depends on courageous

journalism. "At the same time, freedom brings responsibility. Accuracy must not be sacrificed for speed and balance must not give way to partisanship. Public trust, the most valuable asset of free press, must be earned, protected and never taken for granted," he added. He also referred to Pakistan's unified response during Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, praising the media for countering false narratives and maintaining national cohesion. The President also paid tribute to journalists who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of truth and called for stronger protections and safer working conditions for media professionals. He also urged citizens to reject falsehood and support credible journalism, and called upon both federal and provincial governments to ensure enabling laws and safe working conditions for journalists across the country. Separately, PM Shehbaz paid tribute to journalists and media professionals worldwide for their services, stating that journalism plays a vital role in building an informed society. He stressed that authentic, unbiased, and verified reporting is the foundation of journalism, while urging media professionals to prevent the spread of propaganda, fake news, and unverified content.

NA to begin FY27 budget session on June 1

The federal budget for FY27 is expected to be presented during the same week

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to convene the National Assembly's budget session on Monday, June 1, with the federal budget for the next fiscal year set to be presented later that week. The Senate session to consider the budget proposals will be summoned in the first week of June, with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb due to present the proposals separately in both houses. Parliamentary sources told Friday that the final National Assembly session of the current fiscal year has been called for May 11, and the summary for convening it has been sent to the Presidency for approval. Sources said four weeks had been allocated for the passage of the budget in the lower house, with the process set to conclude on June 28. The budget proposals would be transmitted to the Senate immediately after their presentation in the NA. The upper house of parliament will have 15 days to finalise its recommendations.

The recommendations would be considered by the government before final approval of the budget, the sources said. Financial experts are of the view that the officials engaged in tabulation of the budget proposals would have to walk a tightrope while shaping proposals since the Middle East war has made the fiscal situation complex. In the meantime, preparations for the budget are underway, with the finance ministry focusing on sustainable growth, climate-sensitive fiscal policies and strengthening the tax base ahead of the planned exit from the IMF programme in 2027. The federal government has intensified consultations with key institutions to finalise the financial plan. The budget call circular (BCC) was issued in January to all ministries, asking for submission of budget proposals, including revised estimates for the outgoing year and budget estimates for the next fiscal year. Sources pointed out that most of the ministries have submitted their budget forms and project details, while the review committee meetings are also underway. The budget strategy paper is in the process of conclusion, while all budget documents will be finalised towards the last week of May. The 2026-27 budget is viewed as a channel, designed to transition the economy from IMF supervision stabilisation to self-sustaining growth, although it would be a hard task, experts believe.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Ambreen Jan, Chairperson of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Chairperson congratulated DPM/FM and MoFA team for their role in the mediation and facilitation efforts in handling the regional conflict for the purpose of peace and security in the region and beyond. DNA

Rat poison in baby food; Austrian man held

The Austrian Press Agency reported that an expert report on the toxicity of the poison was pending. A total of five tampered baby food jars were seized before they could be consumed, APA reported

VIENNA: Police in eastern Austria say a 39-year-old suspect has been arrested after rat poison turned up in some HiPP baby food jars on supermarket shelves in central Europe. HiPP, which recalled some of its baby food jars in Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic after the case came to light last month, said in a statement Saturday it was "greatly relieved" by the arrest, and would provide a further updates as verified details come in. The Burgenland State Criminal Police Office, under the direction of prosecutors, said a probe was launched after poison turned up in a baby food jar purchased at a supermarket in the city of Eisenstadt on April 18. It said the suspect was being questioned, and that no further details would be immediately provided. The Burgenland public prosecutor's office has announced an investigation into suspected "intentional endangerment of the public." The Austrian Press Agency reported that an expert report on the toxicity of the poison was pending. A total of five tampered baby food jars were seized before they could be consumed, APA reported. Authorities said previously they believe the tampering occurred in 190-gram (6.7-ounce) jars of baby food made with carrots and potatoes for 5-month-olds that were sold from SPAR supermarkets in Austria. HiPP responded by recalling all of its baby food jars sold at SPAR supermarkets — which include SPAR, EUROSPAR, INTERSPAR and Maximarkt stores — in Austria as a precaution. Vendors in Slovakia and the Czech Republic also removed all of the brand's baby jars from sale. The company said the recall was not due to any product or quality defect on its part, and said the jars left its facility in "perfect condition." Police said a customer at the time of the discovery had reported that a jar appeared to have been tampered with, but no one had consumed the baby food. — DNA

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