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Italian PM irked by fake images, threatens action

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Interior Minister inaugurates road project in Capital

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'Full solidarity'

Pakistan strongly condemns missile, drone attacks on UAE

PM Shehbaz reaffirms strong support for UAE during "difficult time", urges respect for ceasefire

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday strongly condemned missile and drone attacks on civilian infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), expressing complete solidarity with the country's President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan. "Pakistan stands firmly with our Emirati brothers and sisters as well as with the government of the UAE at this difficult time," PM Shehbaz said in a social media post on X. "It is absolutely essential that the ceasefire be upheld and respected, to allow necessary diplomatic space for dialogue leading to enduring peace and stability in the region," he said. On Monday, the UAE said it was targeted by Iranian strikes, including one on its vital Fujairah energy hub that wounded three Indians. Fujairah lies beyond the Strait of Hormuz, making it one of few export routes for Middle East oil that does not require passing through it. "These attacks represent a dangerous escalation and an unacceptable transgression," the UAE's foreign ministry said, adding that the country reserves the "right to respond". Iran's state television network said military officials had confirmed they attacked the UAE in response to the "US military's adventurism". The attacks shattered a period of relative calm in the UAE since a Pakistani-mediated ceasefire between Washington and Tehran took effect on April 8, pausing more than a month of intense fighting in the Gulf region. Monday's strike was not the first time Fujairah's energy infrastructure had been in the crosshairs. A drone attack on March 14 had previously hit the Port of Fujairah, triggering fires and the suspension of some oil-loading operations. Meanwhile, India on Tuesday condemned the incident, urging uninterrupted access to the Strait of Hormuz, the foreign ministry said. "We call for immediate cessation of these hostilities and the targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement.

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UAE calls Iran aggressor

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: Iran launched missiles and drones targeting the UAE, with a drone strike causing a fire at the Fujairah Oil Industry Zone (a key oil storage and export hub outside the Strait of Hormuz). UAE air defenses intercepted most of the threats (reports cite around 15 missiles and 4 drones), but the Fujairah attack injured three Indian nationals. UAE officials strongly condemned the strikes as "treacherous aggression" violating sovereignty and international law. Anwar Gargash, UAE Presidential Adviser, explicitly called Iran the "aggressor party" responsible for escalating the crisis in the Arabian Gulf and a "source of danger and threat to its security and stability." Multiple countries (including Canada, India, and others) echoed condemnations. This fits a pattern of Iranian actions against Gulf infrastructure, especially amid broader conflicts involving the Strait of Hormuz and fragile ceasefires. Saudi Arabia's Position Saudi Arabia strongly condemned the Iranian attacks on UAE civilian/economic sites and an ADNOC-linked vessel. The Saudi Foreign Ministry expressed full solidarity with the UAE and called on Iran to stop such actions and respect international law and good neighborliness. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed to reaffirm support.

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POLISH NATIONAL DAY



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Mussadaq Malik, State Minister for Water Resources, Aysha Ali Additional Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador of Poland Maciej Pisanski in a group photo on the occasion of the Polish National Day reception. - DNA

Middle East imbroglio

Polish envoy lauds Pak mediatory role

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a poignant and personal address on the occasion of Polish National Day, the Ambassador of Poland, Maciej Pisanski reflected on an eventful four-and-a-half-year diplomatic tenure in Pakistan, highlighting deepening bilateral relations, mediation efforts in the Middle East, and a shared commitment to international law. Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the Third May Constitution of 1791, the Ambassador—who noted this would likely be his last formal address in the role—struck a tone of gratitude and reflection, steering away from a traditional farewell speech to offer a "personal and retrospective" account of his family's journey in Pakistan. The Ambassador painted a sobering picture of a "rapidly changing international environment," marked by turmoil and human suffering. He recalled the embassy's regular commemorations of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, and the victims of terrorism in Pakistan. "We have kept reminding ourselves that human suffering, especially of the civilian population, in one place should not, could not, make us numb to the sufferings of others," he stated, adding that "there cannot be peace without justice; without self-determination and freedom to choose one's future in a sovereign homeland."

A notable highlight of the speech was the Ambassador's praise for Pakistan's recent role as a mediator in Middle Eastern conflicts. He referred to "The Islamabad Process," stating that Pakistan has "stepped in as a mediator, working with the concerned parties to find a solution to the conflict through diplomacy and dialog," and confirmed that the process "has already contributed to the de-escalation." Despite global instability, the Ambassador declared that Poland-Pakistan relations have "reached a higher level," culminating in the successful October 2025 visit of Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, to Islamabad. High-level talks with Pakistani leadership, including President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, have opened "a new chapter" in cooperation, focused on upholding the UN Charter and international law. Economic ties are also strengthening. Bilateral trade has exceeded 1.3 billion USD, he added. On a personal note, the Ambassador said the "lasting legacy" of his tenure would be the people-to-people connections fostered by the embassy. He cited educational projects in Islamabad and Chapursan Valley, vocational training for underprivileged children, and collaboration with women activists in Hunza to advance empowerment and safe spaces.

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Italian PM irked by fake images

NEWS DESK

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on Tuesday that fake images of her generated by artificial intelligence were circulating online, warning that such false photos could deceive the public and target people unable to defend themselves. Meloni said in a statement that several fake photos of her had been created with AI and passed off as real by political opponents. She posted one such image appearing to show her sitting on a bed wearing underwear. The original post included outraged comment that the photo

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KP CM announces pen-down strike

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Tuesday announced a province-wide pen-down strike for May 6 (tomorrow) over the federal government's alleged "discrimination" against the province. In a statement, the PTI-backed chief minister said that his province faces deliberate discrimination in the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award and in the electricity and gas sectors. The chief minister said that emergency services would be exempt from the pen-down strike.

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Briefs

Renowned cleric gunned down in Charsadda

BUREAU REPORT

CHARSADDA: Renowned cleric and former provincial lawmaker Maulana Muhammad Idrees was killed on Tuesday after unidentified assailants opened fire on him, police said. Police Personal Relations Officer Safiullah told Dawn that Idrees left for Darul Uloom Noumania from his home in Tarangzai. He said that shortly before he arrived at his destination, armed assailants fired at the vehicle in the Tariqabad Utmanzai area. He said that two officials were also injured in the incident, adding that police had obtained CCTV footage of the incident. The cleric's body was subsequently shifted to the District Headquarter Hospital.

Limited scale war 'imminent'

Pentagon Chief says ceasefire with Iran is not over

Hegseth said the US had successfully secured a path through the critical waterway and that hundreds of commercial ships were lining up to pass through

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday that the ceasefire with Iran was not over, even as the US and Iran exchanged fire in the Gulf as they wrestled for control of the Strait of Hormuz. Hegseth said the US had successfully secured a path through the critical waterway and that hundreds of commercial ships were lining up to pass through, as Washington seeks to break a chokehold Iran has asserted on the Strait of Hormuz since the conflict began on February 28. "We know the Iranians are embarrassed by this fact. They said they control the strait. They do not," Hegseth told a Pentagon news conference. The US military says it sank six Iranian small boats and intercepted Iranian cruise missiles and drones, after

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US-Iran talks progressing with Pakistan's efforts

Iranian foreign minister calls US President Trump's Project Freedom a "Project Deadlock"

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHEAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi night said talks with the United States were making progress with Pakistan's "gracious effort," while cautioning Washington against being drawn into further escalation amid a

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Rejects Afghan govt claims

Armed forces, people stand together, says Field Marshal

The COAS & CDF expressed satisfaction over the high standards of operational preparedness, professionalism, and combat readiness of the Pakistan Armed Forces

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, presided over the 275th Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC)

at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi. The Forum paid rich tribute to the Shuhada of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies, and innocent civilians who laid down their lives in defence of the motherland. Paying profound tribute to their

unmatched sacrifices, the Forum reaffirmed that the enduring legacy of the martyrs continues to serve as the bedrock of Pakistan's national security, unity, and resilience.

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Bunyan-al-Marsoos historic milestone in national unity

LAHORE Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Tuesday termed the Pakistan's success in Operation "Bunyan-al-Marsoos" a historic milestone. Addressing a press conference at the Punjab Assembly, he said the operation not only crushed the adversary's arrogance but also demonstrated unprecedented national unity and cohesion. The speaker announced that a special session of the Punjab Assembly would be convened to pay tribute to this achievement, during which a unanimous resolution would also be adopted. He said that India, using the Pahalgam incident as a pretext, leveled allegations against Pakistan without presenting any credible evidence and attempted to escalate tension in the region. However, Pakistan, through a measured and responsible approach, effectively projected its position on the diplomatic front and presented the truth before the international community. He emphasized that Pakistan consistently offered transparent investigations and impartial mediation, reflecting its commitment as a responsible and peace-loving state. He further remarked that in times of conflict, truth was often the first casualty, however, Pakistani media demonstrated professional integrity by conveying facts accurately to both the public and the global audience. He reiterated that while Pakistan possesses full defensive capability and the capacity to respond to any aggression, its foremost priority remains the establishment of sustainable peace and stability in the region.—APP

Safe City to boost law, order in Peshawar

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Information, Shafi Jan on Tuesday visited the Command and Control Center of the Safe City Project at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines Secretary Information Matiullah Khan accompanied him, while senior police officials briefed the delegation on various components of the project. During the visit, the Special Assistant was given a detailed tour of the Wireless Control System, Crisis Management System and other operational sections of the facility. The officials informed that the Peshawar Safe City Project had been completed at an estimated cost of around Rs 2 billion. Under the project, as many as 711 modern surveillance cameras have been installed at 133 key and sensitive locations across the city. The Command and Control Center integrates surveillance and emergency response mechanisms on a unified platform, enabling real-time monitoring and improved coordination, they added. It was further informed that work was in progress to introduce an e-challan system for effective traffic management under the project. Speaking on the occasion, Shafi Jan said that the Safe City Project was a comprehensive security system equipped with modern technology and would play a key role in maintaining law and order in Peshawar.—APP

Project launched to link Margalla road directly to motorway



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday visited the site of the Margalla Road-Motorway extension project and inspected ongoing construction activities. During the visit, he was given a detailed briefing on various components of the project. Work has officially begun on a major infrastructure project aimed at providing citizens with a faster and more convenient route, as Margalla Road is set to be directly linked to the Motorway under a new mega development initiative. According to officials, the 2.7-kilometre-long project will feature a three-lane

road on both sides, along with a two-lane service road. The plan also includes an interchange on GT Road, two underpasses, and a bridge to ensure smooth traffic flow. Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed authorities to ensure that the Sangani Interchange on GT Road—part of the project—is completed by July 31. He emphasised that the new link will provide an alternative, faster, and more accessible route between Islamabad and the Motorway, significantly reducing traffic congestion and travel time. "All resources must be utilized to complete the project within the stipulated time,"

the Interior Minister instructed, adding that quality, transparency, and speed are being ensured in every government project. Providing citizens with improved and faster travel facilities, he said, is the government's top priority. During the briefing, it was revealed that the project is expected to be completed by December 2026, while the remaining 2.5-kilometre section will be executed by the Punjab government. Chairman CDA, IG Islamabad Police, DC Islamabad, and other relevant officials were also present during the visit.—DNA

KP CM chairs 35th meeting of ETEA's BoG

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi chaired the 35th meeting of the Board of Governors of the Education Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar. The meeting was attended by board members and senior officials, and included a comprehensive briefing on the agency's overall performance and ongoing reforms in its testing systems. Expressing satisfaction with the progress achieved, the Chief Minister reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to strengthening ETEA as a credible and autonomous institution. The Board was informed that ETEA has successfully transitioned from a paper-based

examination system to a computer-based testing (CBT) model.

This shift has significantly enhanced operational efficiency, minimized the risk of malpractice, and effectively eliminated instances of paper leakage. Additional measures such as live streaming of examinations and real-time result processing have further strengthened transparency and public trust. The briefing highlighted that the adoption of digital testing has eliminated paper usage entirely, contributing to environmental sustainability. ETEA completed 37 projects in the previous year, while the number of projects in the current year has increased substantially to 166, reflecting a sharp rise

in institutional capacity and demand for services. To further safeguard the integrity of examinations, ETEA has implemented advanced anti-cheating mechanisms, including facial recognition technology, rigorous quality assurance protocols, source-based countering, and a strict enforcement regime for violations. The Board was also informed that work is underway to replace the traditional roll number system with a facial login mechanism for candidates, aimed at further enhancing system security and authenticity. In addition, a comprehensive financial and administrative manual has been developed to strengthen governance, standardize procedures, and ensure institutional resilience.—DNA

281,000 kids enrolled in Balochistan educational institutions

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan said the provincial government has enrolled 281,000 children this year in educational institutions to improve education of the province as quality knowledge was key source of the progress of any nation. He said this while chairing a meeting of Deputy Commissioners here Monday. The conference reviewed Balochistan Special Development Initiative (BSDI) development projects, admission campaign for out-of-school children, and improvement in the quality of life of the people. As 70 percent of BSDI projects have been completed.—APP

Sacrificial animals offal disposal plan reviewed

KARACHI: Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review the arrangements for collecting and disposing of offal of sacrificial animals at landfill sites during the upcoming Eid al-Adha. The meeting was attended, among others, by the Deputy Commissioner South Javed Nabi Khoso, including other Deputy Commissioners via video link, Managing Director Solid Waste Management Board Tariq Nizamani, Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Rabia Syed, senior officers of all Town Municipal Administrations and Municipal Commissioners, officers from Police, Rangers, Health Department, and others. The MD Solid Waste Management Board informed the meeting that the Board has prepared a contingency plan for collecting and disposing of sacrificial animal offal. He briefed the meeting on the details of the contingency plan, stating that 97 collection points will be established in all districts and the points have been identified. It was decided that the Solid Waste Management Board, KMC, Town Administrations, and Cantonment Boards will make coordinated efforts for collecting and disposing of offal with the support of Solid Waste Management Board. It was decided that the Solid Waste Management Board will finalize arrangements in consultation with Town Administrations and present a coordinated contingency plan in a meeting to be held next week under the chairmanship of Commissioner Karachi, detailing the planning and arrangements for door-to-door collection of offal, transportation to collection points (GTS) with the cooperation of Town Administrations, and onward transfer to the land fill sites including Jam Chakro landfill site. The meeting also discussed the issue of dumping of offal and garbage in the nullah /drains and decided that action will be taken against those dumping offal in drains, and Section 144 will be enforced to prevent dumping of offal in drains.—APP

Upto 369,000 people were living with HIV in Pakistan

Besides informing the current estimated figures of patients suffering from HIV, the ministry also informed the Committee that in 2025 alone, 14,000 new cases were reported

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination informed the National Assembly (NA) panel that an estimated of 369,000 people were living with HIV in Pakistan, while only 84,000 cases were currently registered, highlighting a significant detection gap. The Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, chaired by Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani, MNA, took strong notice of the rising trend of HIV/AIDS cases in Pakistan, said a press release on Tuesday. The Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the country's HIV situation, terming the issue "urgent, sensitive and requiring coordinated national action." Besides informing the current estimated figures of patients suffering from HIV, the ministry also informed the Committee that in 2025 alone, 14,000 new cases were reported. While screening capacity had expanded dramati-

ly from 37,000 tests in 2020 to over 374,000 in 2025 members expressed concern that increased detection must not be mistaken for control. In a critical revelation, the Committee was informed that out of 84,000 registered cases, nearly 20,000 patients who initiated treatment at ART centres were now "missing," raising serious concerns about follow-up, counselling and patient retention. The Ministry stated that a comprehensive master plan was being developed to address these gaps. The Committee noted that Pakistan's HIV prevalence stood at 0.2% compared to the global average of 0.5%, yet localized outbreaks such as in Taunsa, Kot Momin and parts of South Punjab point to serious failures in infection prevention and control (IPC), unsafe medical practices and weak enforcement. Highlighting a major cause of transmission, the Ministry informed that the Walika outbreak in Karachi was linked to the use of 10cc syringes, which were not previously banned. It was stated that all reusable syringes, including 10cc variants, would be phased out and brought under strict regulatory control. Mem-

bers raised alarm over the continued availability of banned syringes in the market despite regulatory prohibitions since 2021, weak monitoring of blood banks and transfusion camps, lack of sustained public awareness campaigns, persistent stigma discouraging testing and treatment and the growing number of "missing patients" who drop out after initial diagnosis. The Committee also took note of cross-border health risks, observing that individuals deported from other countries often remained unchecked, as host countries avoid reporting such cases to protect their image. The Ministry informed that a mechanism was being developed to ensure screening through exit-entry data integration so that individuals were tested and monitored before re-entry. The Ministry maintained that expanded screening reflected program progress, but the Committee stressed that "the real success lies in reducing new infections, not merely identifying them." Members further highlighted that lack of sustained awareness campaigns was creating misconceptions, undermining ongoing efforts to control the disease.

URBAN PAKISTAN

Cantonment Board Rawalpindi (Show Cause Notice)

Mr. Arshad Masih, son of Samuel Masih, serving as a Service Man in the Sanitation Branch of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, has been continuously absent from duty since 01/08/2025.

You were issued an explanation notice vide letter No.PF/RCB/SM/25/2281 dated 07/10/2025, followed by a charge sheet vide letter No. PF/RCB/Arshad Samuel/SM/25/2423 dated 15/10/2025, requiring you to provide a reasonable explanation for your absence. However, no response has been received from your side, nor have you reported back to duty.

Therefore, through this public notice, you, Mr. Arshad Masih (son of Samuel Masih), Service Man, are hereby warned to report back to duty within 07 days of the publication of this notice and provide a satisfactory explanation for your absence. Failing which, ex-parte proceedings will be initiated against you, which may result in termination of your service.

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Rawalpindi Cantonment**

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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

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
Dant Hospital.....9270907-11
CHQ.....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

PMYP brings UN agencies on board digital youth hub

Rana Mashhood added that hub's three pillars include a youth supply registry, an opportunity demand registry for governments, NGOs and employers, and a real time analytics engine spotting skills shortages and regional divides



ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) on Tuesday brought United Nations agencies onto its Digital Youth Hub platform during a high level meeting at the Prime Minister's Office. Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, UN Resident Coordinator Mohamed Yahya and UN Youth Task Force members discussed expanding access to jobs, skills training, internships, scholarships and entrepreneurial opportunities for Pakistan's 100 million youth aged 10 to 29. The meeting, chaired by Rana Mashhood, focused on consolidating the Digital Youth Hub as Pakistan's central platform for youth development, integrating verified profiles, opportunity listings and analytics to bridge supply and demand gaps across sectors. Rana Mashhood de-

scribed Pakistan's youth as the nation's most vital demographic force, urging the government and UN system to channel that energy into jobs, education and enterprise through accelerated collaboration. Mr Khan credited UNICEF's Generation Unlimited for technical support in building the hub, alongside UNFPA, UNDP, ILO and UNESCO for contributions to skills, employment and social programmes. PMYP, he said, has already channelled over PKR 305 billion into youth financing and trained hundreds of thousands, but the scale demands urgent, unified action. Rana Mashhood added that hub's three pillars include a youth supply registry, an opportunity demand registry for governments, NGOs and employers, and a real time analytics engine spotting skills shortages

and regional divides. It will be enshrined under the PAYDA Act 2026, mandating federal ministries to list youth initiatives. Mohamed Yahya onboarded UNHCR during the session, a key step toward UN alignment with national goals. He was tasked with leading all UN agencies' registration within 60 days. The platform is live, drawing youth registrations nationwide. Rana Mashhood pressed UN bodies to post internships, fellowships and scholarships, while calling on private employers to tap young talent. The government pledged facilitation under PAYDA. Participants highlighted the hub's fit with AI and sustainable development trends, positioning it as Pakistan's data-smart response. Both sides committed to wider outreach, especially for marginalised youth.—DNA

Maarka-e-Haq picture-book launched

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in collaboration with ISPR, on Tuesday launched the picture-book "Maarka-e-Haq" (The Battle of Truth) at the Pakistan China Friendship Centre, depicting the visual narrative of Pakistan's history, resilience, and defence milestones. Jointly produced by DEMP and ISPR, the book chronicles the nation's journey from creation through subsequent conflicts, highlighting the challenges being overcome and key defence achievements. It particularly emphasizes Maarka-e-Haq, highlighting the resilience and unity, demonstrated by the Pakistani nation and its Armed Forces. During the event, a video review of the book was screened, showcasing highlights from all chapters. The presentation traced Pakistan's journey from independence to recent success of Maarka-e-Haq, emphasizing national achievements and resilience. Speaking on the occasion, Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz, HI(M) (Retd) said the gathering was aimed to commemorate Pakistan's achievements and reflect on milestones that have shaped its national journey. He termed the publication a "commendable and timely initiative" and appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and ISPR. He noted that the book presents a comprehensive narrative of Pakistan's history and sug-

gested that its digital version should be made widely accessible for audiences within the country and abroad to better understand Pakistan's perspective, particularly in the context of South Asia. Highlighting historical roots, Lt Gen (rtd) Riaz traced Pakistan's ideological foundation to key events such as the 1857 War of Independence, the creation of the All-India Muslim League, and the vision of Allama Muhammad Iqbal for a separate homeland for Muslims of the Subcontinent. He said this struggle culminated in the creation of Pakistan in 1947 after a prolonged political movement. He added that the partition of the Subcontinent led to unprecedented migration and violence and was one of the largest human displacements in modern history. Despite severe economic and administrative challenges at its inception, Pakistan emerged as a stable and resilient state, he said. Lt Gen (rtd) Riaz also referred to the longstanding dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, describing it as a core issue between Pakistan and India. He expressed concern over the rise of extremist ideologies in India, particularly the growing influence of organizations advocating Hindu supremacy, stating that such trends have impacted the country's political and governance landscape over the past decade. He reiterated that Pa-

kistan has consistently supported the Kashmir cause through political and diplomatic means. He also highlighted the Indian interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, particularly in regions such as Balochistan. Concluding his remarks, Lt Gen (rtd) Aamer Riaz stressed, "It is not over yet. We cannot take chances; we have to remain prepared." Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Nafisa Shah said Pakistan has continued to play a significant role on major global platforms, citing the facilitation of a ceasefire between the United States and Iran as a notable diplomatic achievement. She said that during the 1980s, Pakistan stood as a front-line ally in global geopolitical contests, hosting millions of Afghan refugees and contributing to shaping the regional and global order. In the 1990s and beyond, she added, Pakistan again emerged as a front-line state in the war against terrorism, enduring immense sacrifices and suffering deep national wounds. She noted that Pakistan has endured immense sacrifices, particularly during the war against terrorism, and continues to demonstrate resilience. Nafisa Shah said that the nation is now reflecting on a defining moment that has reshaped its collective consciousness, referring to Maarka-e-Haq, which she described as an enduring part of Pakistan's national narrative.—DNA

ISCE expo held with focus on academic-industry integration

ISLAMABAD: The 6th International Students Convention and Expo (ISCE) 2026 concluded in Islamabad after a vibrant four-day series of academic, industrial, and cultural activities, bringing together students, scholars, and industry leaders from across Pakistan and abroad. The mega event featured a wide range of student competitions, workshops, indoor games, and a large-scale industrial expo, offering participants valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and innovation. The integration ceremony of the educational and industrial expo was held at the FAST National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Islamabad, and was attended by prominent figures from academia and industry. Coordinator General of COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chaudhary, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Among other distinguished attendees were Vice Chancellors of leading public and private universities, including Prof. Dr. Raufi-Azam, former Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Javid Laghari, and Rector FAST Islamabad, Prof. Dr. Aftab Ahmed, along with senior officials, academicians, industrialists, and entrepreneurs. On the occasion, Executive Director HEC, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, formally inaugurated the industrial and educational expo. Speaking at the ceremony, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chaudhary congratulated Muhammad Murtaza Noor, Founder and CEO of the International Students Convention, for successfully organizing the event. He emphasized that such initiatives serve as a vital platform for learning, cultural exchange, and exploring new avenues in education and industry. A panel discussion was also held during the event, where renowned academicians and industrialists shared their insights on positioning Pakistan as an emerging international destination for higher education.—DNA

Language key to AI uplift, eco growth: Shaza

Highlighting Pakistan's linguistic diversity, she called for the urgent digitization of regional languages, including Sindhi, Pashto, Punjabi, Balochi, Seraiki, and Hindko

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Tuesday underscored the critical role of language in shaping the future of artificial intelligence (AI), stressing that it is essential for technological development, national identity, and economic growth. Addressing an event, the minister said that while digital connectivity and AI dominate current discourse, language remains the fundamental building block of emerging technologies. She said that systems such as Large Language Models (LLMs) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) rely heavily on corpus linguistics, making language central to machine learning and AI development. She added that the strength of linguistic datasets directly influences the quality of AI systems. "A foreign language can never be fully neutral to local culture,

religion, and social values," she said, warning that failure to develop local language datasets could lead to the marginalization—and eventual disappearance—of those languages. Highlighting Pakistan's linguistic diversity, she called for the urgent digitization of regional languages, including Sindhi, Pashto, Punjabi, Balochi, Seraiki, and Hindko. She described these "low-resource languages" as the "lowest-hanging fruit," where improvements in datasets could yield significant gains in AI development. The minister said the government is working to strengthen Urdu datasets and incorporate indigenous perspectives into machine learning models. She also announced plans to form a consortium of linguists and AI experts to develop Urdu terminology for modern technological concepts, addressing a critical gap that limits access-

ibility for non-English speakers. "Without vocabulary in their own language, many children cannot even imagine or aspire to modern technological roles," she observed. Discussing employment trends, Shaza Fatima Khawaja said AI and technology are rapidly reshaping job markets, making it essential to integrate technological tools across all disciplines rather than treating IT as a standalone field. Referring to initiatives announced during Indus AI Week, she highlighted a \$1 billion investment package, one million AI training opportunities, and 10,000 PhD scholarships aimed at building a future-ready workforce. She stressed that productivity per capita remains a major challenge for Pakistan and that leveraging AI could significantly boost economic output. "The goal is not to replace skills but to amplify them through technology," she said.—DNA

ICCI eyes long-term Chinese partnerships for eco growth

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has termed China's remarkable industrial development as a "beacon of light" for emerging economies, urging Pakistan to adopt consistent policies and create a more conducive investment climate to attract foreign investors and accelerate economic growth. He expressed these views while talking to different visiting delegations of business leaders at the Chamber House here on Monday after returning from a week-long official visit to Guangzhou, China, said a release issued here on Tuesday. During the visit, he held a series of high-level meetings with Chinese counterparts and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Guangzhou International Cooperation Center to strengthen institutional linkages and promote bilateral trade. Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted China's rapid industrialization, driven by long-term planning, policy continuity, and strong infrastructure development. He noted that Chinese enterprises are increasingly looking towards Pakistan for investment opportunities, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, technology, infrastructure development and construction and real estate. "Chinese businessmen have shown strong interest in entering into joint ventures with Pakistani counterparts, especially in Islamabad," he said, adding that Pakistan holds significant potential due to its strategic location, growing market, and improving connectivity under regional initiatives. The ICCI President emphasized that to fully capitalize on this interest, Pakistan must ensure a stable and business-friendly environment. "Policy consistency, ease of doing business, and investor confidence are key prerequisites to attracting sustainable foreign direct investment," he remarked. He further stated that the MoU with GCC would serve as a practical platform for facilitating direct business-to-business (B2B) matchmaking, exchange of trade delegations, and promotion of investment partnerships between the two countries. Members of the visiting delegation appreciated the ICCI's proactive role in fostering international business linkages and expressed optimism that enhanced cooperation with Chinese institutions would open new avenues for trade and industrial collaboration. On this occasion Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, Council member Chaudhry Masood, Executive Members Imran Minhas, Aftab Gujar, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Ishaq Sial, Zulqurnain Abbasi, former SVPs Khalid Chaudhry, Naveed Malik, ICCI senior member Israr Mishwani, Shaikh Haroon Hayat, and other were also present.—DNA

Transshipment cargo vessel reaches Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: The first transshipment cargo vessel of May 2026, MV Show Long, has anchored at Gwadar Port, marking the first major ship to arrive at the port this month. A GPA official told Gwadar Pro, the vessel is carrying 16,077 metric tons of transshipment cargo, including over 13,000 packages of Chinese-manufactured industrial equipment and pipes. The shipment was originally destined for Kuwait, but due to the ongoing maritime situation in the Strait of Hormuz, it was diverted to Gwadar. According to the Chairman of Gwadar Port, Noorul-Haq Baloch, the transshipment vessels' arrival at Gwadar Port highlights the port's growing importance as alternative trade routes are being explored across the region. He further stated that berthing, cargo handling, and documentation processes for diverted vessels are being carried out efficiently, strengthening the port's operational readiness and enhancing its credibility in global trade. This development is positioning Gwadar Port as a key transshipment hub in the Arabian Sea, providing a safe and efficient alternative route for the Gulf and regional markets.—APP

Sehrai's martyrdom symbol of freedom movement

ISLAMABAD: Mushaaf Hussein Mulick, wife of jailed Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik and chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, on Tuesday said that May 5 symbolises resolve and sacrifice as she paid tribute to martyred Hurriyat leader Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai on his death anniversary, recalling his lifelong struggle for the freedom of Kashmir and vowing to carry forward the mission of the martyrs. In her statement, Mushaaf Mulick said that Sehrai had dedicated his entire life to the Kashmir cause, standing firm for truth in the face of oppression. She noted that despite enduring imprisonment and severe hardships, he never wavered from his principled stance. She described his martyrdom as a "shining symbol" of the ongoing freedom movement, adding that the sacrifices of other leaders, including Javed Ahmed Mir, remained an integral chapter of the struggle. "Today is not just a day of remembrance but a day of renewed commitment," she said, reiterating that the mission of the martyrs would be kept alive. Praying for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks, Ms Mulick expressed confidence that Kashmir would ultimately achieve freedom.—APP

Briefs

Services' exports up by 17.05% to Rs 7.3b

ISLAMABAD: The export of various services witnessed 17.05 percent increase during the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. According to the latest PBS data, Pakistan earned \$7.345 billion from the export of services during July-March 2025-26 as compared to services' export of \$6.275 billion in July-March 2024-25. The services' imports also witnessed an increase of 10.65 percent during the months under review and were recorded at \$9.496 billion as compared to the imports of \$8.582 billion in July-March 2024-25. Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit decreased by 6.74 percent during the months under review as compared to the corresponding months of previous year. The services trade deficit was recorded at \$2.151 billion during current months against the deficit of \$2.306 billion during same months of last year. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of services in March 2026 increased by 16.17 percent to \$902.91 million from \$777.22 million in March 2025. On the other hand, the imports also rose by 3.17 percent by going up from \$897.34 million to \$925.80 million, according to PBS data. On month-on-month basis, the export of services increased by 12.83 percent in March 2026 when compared to the exports of \$800.21 million in February 2026. The imports of services also witnessed a nominal increase of 0.36 percent in March 2026 compared to imports of \$922.50 million in February 2026, PBS reported.—APP

Pakistani researchers shine at Nanjing Forum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Researchers shined at China's Nanjing Forum on AI and green sustainability, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. Pakistani researchers and scholars joined over 100 experts from China, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan in late April at the Jiangsu Talent Port Mansion in Nanjing for an international forum exploring how artificial intelligence can drive global sustainability. The Center for Research Innovation and Development (CRID) International Symposium & Experts Forum, themed "Fostering Global Synergies through AI Innovation and Sustainability," highlighted the growing role of cross-border cooperation in addressing climate change and advancing green development. Discussions centered on how information technology and environmental science can work together to support green transformation, translate research into practical solutions and strengthen international collaboration. The forum also contributed to global carbon neutrality efforts and the shared vision of building a community of life for humanity and nature — a goal that resonates across Asia and beyond. Engr. Muhammad Waqas, M.Sc. in Water Resources Engineering from the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, joined online to share his research on compound climate risk. He noted that climate risk in Peshawar is increasing due to the nonlinear interaction of heat and moisture deficit, making extreme weather events more frequent and complex. His presentation highlighted how international platforms enable researchers from Pakistan to access advanced tools and share local climate challenges with a global audience. Pakistani scholar Ms Ruqia Khaliq Dad Akbar, a master in English Language and Literature from Southeast University in Nanjing, explained how semantics can bridge linguistic structure and cultural meaning across different contexts.—APP

Murree anti-encroachment operation intensified: DC

During the visit, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Umar Awais Kayani and Assistant Commissioner Murree Arshad Iqbal accompanied him

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi on Monday reviewed the ongoing anti-encroachment and rehabilitation operation on Mall Road and directed officials to accelerate the pace of work. Officials concerned briefed the deputy commissioner on progress, challenges and the future course of action. The deputy commissioner stressed that the operation should be carried out in a transparent, effective and swift manner in line with the vision

of the Punjab government. He said restoring the beauty and historical significance of Mall Road was the need of the hour. He directed the staff to ensure that alongside removal of encroachments, maximum facilitation was provided to citizens and tourists. During the inspection, special focus was given to safety protocols. The deputy commissioner reviewed measures related to workers' safety, safe use of machinery and availability of alternate routes for the public. He instructed officers to ensure strict implementation of safety SOPs, adding that no negligence would be tolerated.

He said protection of human lives must remain the top priority during development and rehabilitation work. Later, the deputy commissioner also met hotel owners and representatives of the traders' association on Mall Road. Traders apprised him of concerns regarding the impact of the operation on business activities. Responding to their concerns, he assured that legitimate issues would be addressed on a priority basis and effective strategies were being adopted to minimise disruption to businesses. He said Murree was an important tourist destination of Pakistan and maintaining its beauty was

a key responsibility of the administration. He added that restoration of Mall Road to its original state, removal of encroachments and improvement of infrastructure were essential to develop Murree as an international standard tourist destination. The deputy commissioner urged citizens, traders and tourists to cooperate with the administration to ensure timely completion of the operation and help make Murree a clean, organised and attractive city. During the visit, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Umar Awais Kayani and Assistant Commissioner Murree Arshad Iqbal accompanied him.



ISLAMABAD: PIPS and UN Women Pakistan signed a MoU at PIPS. The ceremony was graced by Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, PIPS, and Mr. Jamshed M. Kazi, UN Women Pakistan, along with senior management from both organizations. —DNA

PHAF Residencia Peshawar development work in progress

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF), in collaboration with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has advanced its flagship development project, PHAF Residencia Peshawar, into the implementation phase. Currently, around 885 housing units are under construction, work on the main boulevard is underway, and the police station is nearing completion, with approximately 80% of the work finished. In this context, the approved 10-kilometre dual carriageway from Kohat Road along the Zangali Canal up to the project site holds critical importance. Although the project was approved and awarded nearly three years ago, substantial progress has yet to be achieved. The timely execution of this corridor requires focused attention from the provincial government, as it serves as the lifeline not only for PHAF Residencia but also for the broader Peshawar Valley development scheme. The completion of this corridor will facilitate planned urban expansion, help preserve the heritage and character of the old city of Peshawar, and improve connectivity with southern districts through the D.I. Khan Expressway, which passes through the same region. The project comprises approximately 7,786 housing units and 5,632 apartments, along with a dedicated commercial component expected to attract investment and stimulate economic activity. Over time, the area is envisioned to evolve into a vibrant residential and commercial hub. Originally conceived by the provincial government in 2019, the project experienced delays due to land-related issues. However, through coordinated efforts, PHAF, in collaboration with the provincial government, successfully reached a consensus with local stakeholders in February 2023. This development resolved longstanding disputes and ensured land availability for construction. Subsequently, detailed surveys and planning were carried out by NESPAK, the PCJ was prepared, and construction contracts were awarded. Strategically located along a key future urban growth corridor and in close proximity to the proposed Peshawar Valley development, the project is designed to guide the city's expansion in a planned and sustainable manner. This approach is essential to prevent uncontrolled and unregulated growth, which often results in unplanned settlements and increased pressure on infrastructure. In an interview with APP, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF), Muhammad Shahid Hussain stated that PHAF Residencia Peshawar is a major planned housing initiative in Surzai, aimed at promoting organized urban development and addressing the growing demand for housing.—APP

Road safety awareness session held

RAWALPINDI: An awareness session of Hamdard Naunehal Assembly held at Hamdard Markaz Rawalpindi emphasized the importance of road safety and responsible behaviour among young citizens. Addressing the participants, Incharge Education Wing of Traffic Police Faisal Gilani spoke on the topic "Adopt road sense, save lives" and said lack of road sense causes around 1.3 million deaths globally each year, while 40,000 to 45,000 people lose their lives in Pakistan due to traffic accidents. He said road safety was not only the responsibility of traffic police but also of every citizen. He urged the students to follow traffic rules, avoid one-wheeling, use helmets while riding motorcycles and seat belts while driving. He added that improper parking, reckless overtaking and violation of traffic signals were major causes of accidents. He stressed that awareness and understanding of traffic signs could help save lives. A large number of students from schools of Rawalpindi and Islamabad attended the session. On the occasion, a message of President Hamdard Naunehal Assembly Sadia Rashid was read out, in which she highlighted that improving roads and vehicles alone was not enough, rather awareness of traffic laws among citizens was equally important.—APP

Govt advances auto policy thru stakeholder consultations

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday chaired a consultative meeting with key auto sector stakeholders to advance the formulation of the upcoming auto policy and budget proposals. The meeting was held with representatives of the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) and the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA), said a news release. During the meeting, extensive consultations were held with auto parts manufacturers regarding proposed duties on automotive parts and the broader contours of the upcoming auto policy. The SAPM emphasized that all budget proposals would be finalized on the basis of consensus, ensuring that stakeholders' input is fully incorporated into the policymaking process. He highlighted

that the Secretary for Industries and Production and the Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board (EDB) are working in close coordination with the auto sector to prepare comprehensive and well-informed budget proposals. According to an official statement, proposals are under consideration to provide protection to auto parts currently being manufactured locally. In addition, parts that have the potential to be manufactured domestically within the next five years are also being considered for similar protection measures. The SAPM reiterated that the core objective of the policy is to strengthen local industry and empower domestic manufacturers, thereby enhancing Pakistan's industrial base and reducing reliance on imports. The meeting was attended by the Secretary for Industries and Production, CEO EDB, Additional Secretary, and other senior officials.—APP

World Press Freedom Day: Safeguarding journalists, safeguarding democracy

AYSAL ELHAM

Every year on May 3, the world pauses to mark World Press Freedom Day, a solemn reminder of the indispensable role journalism plays in defending democracy, human rights, and accountability. It is a day to honor those who risk their lives to tell the truth, and to reflect on the urgent need to protect press freedom in an era of censorship, disinformation, and economic fragility. The origins of this day lie in the Windhoek Declaration of 1991, when African journalists affirmed the principles of a free and independent press. Since then, the United Nations has recognized May 3 as a global occasion to remind governments of their duty to uphold freedom of expression under international law. But beyond symbolism, it is a call to action: press freedom is not a privilege, it is a right, and its erosion threatens the very foundations of democracy. Globally, journalists face mounting challenges. UNESCO reports that press freedom

has declined to levels comparable to wartime conditions, with harassment, judicial intimidation, and violence against reporters on the rise. Independent media outlets struggle financially, leaving them vulnerable to political and corporate pressures. At the same time, disinformation and the misuse of artificial intelligence undermine trust in journalism and weaken democratic institutions. In Pakistan, these global challenges take on a sharper edge. Journalists here often work under immense pressure, facing threats to their safety, restrictions on reporting, and economic insecurity. The welfare and protection of Pakistani journalists must therefore be treated as a national priority. Ensuring their safety through stronger legal safeguards, independent watchdogs, and institutional support is not only about protecting individuals it is about protecting the public's right to know. A society that silences its journalists silences its conscience. World Press Freedom Day is also a moment to honor those who have paid the ultimate

price for truth. UNESCO's Guillermo Cano Prize, named after a Colombian journalist assassinated in 1986, reminds us of the courage required to defend press freedom. In Pakistan, too, the sacrifices of journalists who have faced violence or persecution must be remembered as part of our collective struggle for transparency and justice. This year's global conference in Lusaka, Zambia, highlights the intersection of journalism, technology, and human rights. For Pakistan, the lesson is clear: protecting journalists means strengthening democracy, resisting disinformation, and building resilience against climate, political, and social upheavals. Press freedom is not just about media it is about the survival of truth in times of uncertainty. On this Journalist Day, we must reaffirm that every attack on journalism is an attack on truth, and every defense of press freedom is a defense of justice. For Pakistan, safeguarding journalists is safeguarding democracy itself.

IRSA releases 138,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 138,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 131,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1461.27 feet which was 61.27 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 42,400 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1161.25 feet, which was 111.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 36,000 cusecs each. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 95,000, 65,900, 50,100, and 12,800 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 12,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Railway line project from Gwadar to Jacobabad begins

ISLAMABAD: The land acquisition phase for the railway line project from Gwadar to Jacobabad (connecting Gwadar, Turbat, Panjgur, Basima, Khuzdar, and Jacobabad) has officially begun, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. This development is being viewed in the context of Pakistan's efforts to open six land routes for the transportation of goods to Iran, including the Gwadar-Gabd route, which is the shortest and expected to reduce transit time by up to 87%. The move aims to provide a secure alternative for third-country goods to reach Iran, especially during times when maritime trade is disrupted. Under the federal government's Uraan Pakistan Vision, the railway line project from Gwadar to Jacobabad also aims to link Balochistan with inner Sindh through a modern transport network. Passing through Gwadar, Turbat, Panjgur, Basima, and Khuzdar, the project is expected to play a significant role in the national economy. According to railway authorities, the project will cost approximately Rs15.5 billion and was approved in November 2024.—APP

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Only a win-win formula can break US-Iran gridlock

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

THE US-Iran standoff over the dual blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has become the fulcrum of a global crisis unlike anything seen in modern times – at least not since the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis is human-made, triggered by the start of joint American-Israeli military strikes on Iran in late February. What was intended to be a swift campaign with vague strategic objectives has since hardened into geopolitical gridlock, with cascading consequences for regional and global economies. The ceasefire that President Donald Trump announced on April 7 has largely held. But Washington's original aim – forcing Iran into submission over its nuclear program – has given way to a more urgent objective: reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Iran blocked the strait in a move to upset the balance of power stacked against it and raise the stakes both regionally and globally. Its asymmetric response prompted Trump to impose his own naval blockade of the same waterway, creating a stranglehold that neither side has yet found the political will to release.

The two sides have exchanged proposals and counterproposals since the ceasefire took effect. Trump has rejected all Iranian overtures, dismissing them as unacceptable. While the full details remain undisclosed, it is understood that Tehran is using the Strait of Hormuz card as a bargaining chip for a comprehensive settlement – one that ends the war, reopens the strait, resolves the nuclear file, including enrichment rights, determines the fate of existing highly enriched stockpiles, allows international inspections, provides reparations, lifts sanctions, and unfreezes foreign assets. It is understood that Tehran is using the Strait of Hormuz card as a bargaining chip for a comprehensive settlement. Washington's conditions, by contrast, remain as maximalist as they were on the eve of the war: the denial of Iran's enrichment rights, dismantlement of nuclear facilities, surrender of approximately 450 kg of highly enriched uranium, limitations on Iran's ballistic missile program, and the severing of ties with regional proxies. These are not American conditions alone – they are, in substance, Benjamin Netanyahu's conditions. The Israeli prime minister is the only foreign leader who has been treated as a full and equal partner in this war. And it is here that Washington is committing a grave strategic error. America's Gulf allies were neither consulted nor informed before the war on Iran was launched. Yet they are the ones who have absorbed multibillion-dollar losses to their energy and civilian infrastructure. Most have been unable to export oil and gas since hostilities began. The Trump administration has shown little regard for this damage, hastily dismissing the Iranian overtures. Washington would do well to consult its Gulf partners before deciding its next

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move. On Sunday, Trump announced an operation to "guide" stranded tankers through the Strait of Hormuz – a plan that analysts in Washington quickly dismissed as both dangerous and futile. Within hours of the so-called operation commencing, multiple vessels in and around the strait were reported hit, damaged or forced to turn back. According to The New York Times, Trump's "Project Freedom" has left shipping firms bewildered about what the initiative entails and how it is supposed to work. Time is running out. Both sides must accept that only a political settlement – one acceptable to both parties and mindful of the broader Gulf region's interests – can break the current deadlock. Short of a return to full-scale military confrontation, the two sides must come to terms with a simple reality: only a formula in which both sides can claim a measure of victory will end this crisis. Time is running out. Both sides must accept that only a political settlement can break the current deadlock. Iran's latest 14-point proposal, delivered through Pakistan and made public by Al Jazeera on Sunday, is instructive in this regard. It takes a far more comprehensive approach than previous overtures, essentially trading an exclusive nuclear deal for a broader regional security bundle. On the nuclear file, it replicates the core parameters of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – capping enrichment at 3.67 percent and addressing stockpile levels – but explicitly rules out dismantling any nuclear infrastructure or destroying any facility. Iran is prepared to freeze activity and transfer or dilute enriched material, but the physical capability remains entirely intact. There are nuanced differences from 2015 on long-term oversight arrangements, though these may well be issues left for negotiators to resolve in a final phase. The new proposal also demands the lifting of the US naval blockade and the release of frozen assets as part of a phased, timetable process – going considerably further than the JCPOA, under which nonnuclear sanctions remained in force. One structural complication is worth noting: unlike the JCPOA, which was negotiated by a multilateral front – the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany – and endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, any new agreement would be bilateral, between Washington and Tehran alone. How it would be enforced without broader international backing remains unclear, though both sides could subsequently seek UN endorsement. What Iran's proposal ultimately signals is a geopolitical deal with nuclear provisions attached. Tehran is offering roughly the same terms on the nuclear file as it agreed to in 2015, with certain omissions, while demanding considerably more in return: regional military withdrawal, ceasefire guarantees, commitments on proxies, and reparations. Most significant for the region is the proposal's third phase, which envisages Iran entering a strategic dialogue with Arab and regional states to build a pan-Gulf security architecture – one that guarantees the sovereign rights and security of all countries sharing the Arabian Gulf basin. This element should not be left to US-Iran bilateral bargaining. And it certainly should not be subject to Israeli veto or influence. A framework that safeguards freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and enshrines nonaggression among littoral states is in the interest of every country bordering the Gulf. Trump has said he remains unsatisfied with Iran's latest proposal, while allowing that Washington is engaged in "very positive discussions" with Tehran. Whether that reflects Iran's strengthened leverage or a weakened hand depends entirely on who is doing the reading – in Washington and in Tel Aviv.

Thunder Over the Horizon

Izmi Herlani

The night it unfolded was thick with tension. A larger adversary advanced with confidence, seeking to bend the balance through sheer weight of force. But what it encountered was not haste, nor hesitation—it met clarity.

The Shaheens rose, not in chaos, but in orchestration. Every movement deliberate, every decision anchored in years of unseen preparation. This was no coincidence. It was the manifestation of a vision—one that reshaped the very soul of the force. Under the bold leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, PAF shed the rigidity of being platform-driven and evolved into a living, breathing ecosystem of integrated power. Fighters no longer flew alone; they were part of an invisible web—linked with surveillance eyes, electronic shields, cyber guardians, and space-enabled sentinels

HERE are moments in history when nations do not merely respond—they rise, sharpened by adversity, defined by resolve. For the Pakistan Air Force, the past few years have not been a gradual ascent but a powerful surge—an awakening that turned constraint into capability, and limitation into lethal precision. No longer confined by the arithmetic of numbers, the Shaheens have carved their presence into the skies of South Asia with a signature that speaks of discipline, foresight, and quiet strength. At the center of this resurgence stands Marka-e-Haq—not just an operation, but a reckoning. A moment when theory met trial, and preparation met purpose. It was here that the PAF did not simply defend airspace; it redefined the very grammar of modern aerial warfare.

The night it unfolded was thick with tension. A larger adversary advanced with confidence, seeking to bend the balance through sheer weight of force. But what it encountered was not haste, nor hesitation—it met clarity. The Shaheens rose, not in chaos, but in orchestration. Every movement deliberate, every decision anchored in years of unseen preparation. This was no coincidence. It was the manifestation of a vision—one that reshaped the very soul of the force. Under the bold leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, PAF shed the rigidity of being platform-driven and evolved into a living, breathing ecosystem of integrated power. Fighters no longer flew alone; they were part of an invisible web—linked with surveillance eyes, electronic shields, cyber guardians, and space-enabled sentinels. Together, they formed a seamless organism of warfighting precision. Marka-e-Haq became the proving ground for this transformation. It was where doctrine stopped being words on paper and became instinct. Where innovation, once nurtured in labs and simulators, roared into life under combat skies. It was here that the philosophy of "quality over quantity" was not just upheld—it was weaponized. For decades,

the Shaheens had lived in the shadow of disparity. A larger foe, deeper pockets, broader inventories. But instead of yielding, the PAF absorbed that reality and forged it into doctrine: if you cannot match numbers, outmatch the mind. And so, they invested where it mattered—in precision, in connectivity, in foresight. Indigenous systems, secure data links, unmanned capabilities, and long-range strike options became the arteries of a force reborn. When the skies darkened with confrontation, what emerged was not just skill—it was synergy. Pilots did not fight alone; they fought as part of a unified consciousness. Sensors whispered, systems responded, commanders decided—all within a heartbeat. The oft-repeated mantra of "first look, first shot, first kill" was no longer aspirational—it was reality, unfolding in real time.

The engagements themselves were swift, sharp, and unforgiving. Beyond Visual Range duels, multi-axis manoeuvres, electronic deception—it



was a symphony of modern warfare. And in that symphony, the illusion of technological supremacy shattered. Systems once hailed as invincible faltered under the weight of cohesion and clarity. It became evident that dominance is not granted by machines alone—but by the minds that wield them. Yet, the true measure of power was revealed not in the clash—but in the calm that followed. With the advantage secured, the Shaheens did not chase destruction. They held the line. They chose restraint. In a region where a single misstep can ignite uncontrollable escalation, this decision spoke louder than any missile ever could. It was a message—clear and unwavering: Pakistan seeks peace, but not at the cost of dignity. Strength, when tempered with wisdom, becomes something far greater than force—it becomes stability.

Behind the headlines and the heroics lay the silent backbone of victory. The engineers who toiled through sleepless nights, the controllers who guided with unshaken focus, the planners who envisioned the unseen—all stood as equal architects of success. The medals that followed were not mere decorations; they were echoes of sacrifice, discipline, and relentless pursuit of excellence. Beyond the confines of bases and command rooms, a nation watched—and believed. The Shaheen once again became more than a symbol of airpower; it became a reflection of national spirit. A reminder that resolve, when guided by purpose, can overcome even the steepest odds.

Today, Marka-e-Haq stands not just as a chapter, but as a compass. It teaches that true strength lies not in aggression, but in control. That superiority must be governed, not flaunted. And above all, that vision at the top can transform an institution from within—turning it into a force that does not just guard the skies, but defines them. In the contested expanse of South Asia, where uncertainty often clouds the horizon, one truth now flies clear—the Shaheens do not merely defend the skies. They command them.

Why peace talks with Israel pose a threat to Hezbollah

Nadim Shehadi

The current bold move by the Lebanese state to initiate direct talks with Israel under US auspices breaks many taboos and challenges Hezbollah's authority. Intense debate surrounds the subject of peace talks with Israel and why they should or should not happen. To understand the significance of this, one has to go back to the last time such direct talks happened, also with US backing, in 1983, which led to what became known as the May 17 Agreement for Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon after its invasion the previous year – an incursion that resulted in the PLO being driven out of the country

LET us be clear, the greatest fallacy is that Hezbollah objects to talks with Israel. What it really opposes is the Lebanese government conducting the talks. Hezbollah needs to be the interlocutor in order to maintain its control over the country. The militant group's declared aim is the liberation of Jerusalem but its real one is the continued occupation of Lebanon. The formula is that Iran negotiates with the US over the region, while its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps proxies each remain in charge of the territory they control.

In fact, Hezbollah itself engaged in talks with Israel to coordinate the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000. This was facilitated by two Swedish mediators. In his recently published memoirs, Magnus Ranstorp described how he was contacted by former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his advisers and asked to mediate with Hezbollah. Ranstorp had written articles describing how Hezbollah could transform itself into a political party after an Israeli withdrawal and had given presentations at a conference in the UK where he predicted that Hezbollah would not continue the war if Israel withdrew.

The fact that Israel withdrew on May 25, 2000 – "without even a slap on anyone's face," as it was then described – was thanks to the efforts of Ranstorp and another Swedish researcher, Magnus Norell. The withdrawal was coordinated through indirect talks between Hezbollah and Israel. Talks are talks, whether direct or indirect; what matters is who talks about what. Maybe one day historians will judge it a mistake for Israel to have empowered Hezbollah and not to have dealt with the Lebanese state. In any case, Israel is making the same mistake now by negotiating with Hamas instead of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The current bold move by the Lebanese state to initiate direct talks with Israel under US auspices breaks many taboos and challenges Hezbollah's authority. Intense debate surrounds the subject of peace talks with Israel and why they should or should not happen

To understand the significance of this, one has to go back to the last time such direct talks happened, also with US backing, in 1983, which led to what became known as the May 17 Agreement for Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon after its invasion the previous year – an incursion that resulted in the PLO being driven out of the country. This led to violent opposition by Syria and the Shiite Amal movement under the leadership of Nabih Berri, now the Lebanese parliamentary speaker, and other elements that were later to emerge as Hezbollah.

The violence included attacks on both the French and US embassies in Beirut in April and a truck bomb blast at a US barracks in October that killed 241 troops. In September 1982, President Bachir Gemayel was assassinated. All this was followed by the occupation of Beirut by Shiite and Druze militias on Feb. 6, 1984. A few months later, the US withdrew. Now, 42 years after what amounted to a takeover, Hezbollah is being challenged openly, with the Lebanese government initiating direct talks with Israel. The last time the group was challenged was when its status as a resistance movement was questioned following the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. This eventually led to a series of assassinations from 2004, a war with Israel in 2006 that helped restore its resistance credentials, an occupation of the capital, government paralysis, a 2011 coup – and so on until Hezbollah achieved almost total control of the country.

Intense debate surrounds the subject of peace talks with Israel and why they should or should not happen. Many hint at previous violence or the threat of civil war if full internal consensus is not achieved for the talks. This is an indirect way of giving Hezbollah the power of veto, though it did not require such a consensus to drag the country into war after war.

Another myth is that the Lebanese delegation to the talks should include a comprehensive representation of all the political parties. This is an

other attempt to give Hezbollah the power to paralyze the Lebanese team. In 1983, the Lebanese negotiating team was composed of professionals who consulted with various parties between sessions of talks. This empowered the negotiators in relation to their Israeli counterparts because they asked for the best concessions, so as to be able to sell it internally to the various parties. There is the argument that any talk of peace with Israel is impossible given the current government and its wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran. In fact, it could be argued that relations between Israel and the Arab world have never been better. There are treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the Abraham Accords with the UAE and four other states.

There is a convoluted story that normalization will be imposed on Lebanon and that this will create a rift with regional countries, since it abandons the Palestinian cause and will result in Israeli hegemony and economic control. These are exaggerations, however, and ignore the Lebanese government's objectives in these talks, which are to achieve Israel's withdrawal to the 1949 armistice line and to resolve border issues, allowing people to go back to their villages in the south and begin rebuilding their lives. Such an achievement would be a threat to Hezbollah's power over the community, which is where the real internal political battle will take place. Finally, there are the claims that the Lebanese state is too weak, that it is going to the talks empty-handed, with no leverage, and will be forced to make concessions. This is all the more reason why these talks should happen now, while there is US and Arab support. The main threat remains from Hezbollah, but it will be at its weakest militarily and politically if the talks can deliver a return for the people of south Lebanon and allow them to live in peace for the first time in more than half a century.

– Nadim Shehadi is an economist and political adviser. X: @Confusezeus

Briefs

Polish envoy
lauds Pak
mediatory...

FROM PAGE 01
He also paid tribute to Pakistan's high-altitude climbing community, noting Poland's historic legacy—highlighting Wanda Rutkiewicz, the first woman to scale K2 in 1986. The Ambassador extended deep thanks to his wife for her support, calling their Pakistani journey “amazing,” and praised the embassy team—without whom, he said, “the ambassador would be just a lone white sail, lost in a vast ocean.” Concluding with a heartfelt “Hamari Pakistani Dostu – Bohot Shukria” (Thank you, our Pakistani friends), he declared: “Pak-Poland Dosti Zindabad” (Long live Pakistan-Poland friendship). He then invited guests to enjoy pierogis, a Polish specialty, as dinner was served.

Armed
forces...

FROM PAGE 01
The COAS & CDF expressed satisfaction over the high standards of operational preparedness, professionalism, and combat readiness of the Pakistan Armed Forces. He commended commanders and formations for their unwavering commitment, vigilance, and success in ongoing intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations across the country. The Forum undertook a comprehensive review of the prevailing internal and external security environment. The Forum resolved to maintain current operational tempo to decisively dismantle terrorist networks, disrupt their support infrastructure, and deny them any operational space within Pakistan. The Forum acknowledged continued degradation of terrorists and their support infrastructure through operation Ghazal Il Haq. It noted that the irrational and perverted policy of Afghan Taliban regime to provide safe havens to Khawarij and other terrorist organisations, with total disregard to interests of Afghan people, is increasingly backfiring and stands fully exposed. It noted recent pattern of ongoing propaganda campaign by Taliban regime to falsely portray Pakistan as targeting civilians inside Afghanistan, terming such misleading narratives as part of a coordinated disinformation strategy by the regime to distract attention from their internal failures and play victim card. The Forum categorically rejected these frivolous allegations and reaffirmed that Pakistan's defensive actions remain focused, precise, and directed solely against infiltrators, terrorist hideouts and support infrastructures.

Pentagon
Chief says...

FROM PAGE 01
President Donald Trump sent the navy to escort stranded tankers through the Strait of Hormuz in a campaign he called “Project Freedom.” Several merchant ships in the Gulf reported explosions or fires on Monday, and an oil port in the United Arab Emirates, which hosts a large US military base, was set ablaze by Iranian missiles. General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that since the ceasefire was announced on April 7, Iran had fired at commercial vessels nine times and seized two container ships. He said Iran has attacked US forces more than 10 times. However, the attacks fell “below the threshold of restarting major combat operations at this point,” Caine told reporters. Asked whether the ceasefire with Iran still held, Hegseth said: “The ceasefire is not over.”

UAE
calls Iran
aggressor

FROM PAGE 01
Separately, Saudi Arabia has expressed support for Pakistan's mediation efforts in regional (including US-Iran) tensions, emphasizing dialogue and restraint to prevent further instability. Pakistan has positioned itself as a facilitator between various parties.



ISLAMABAD: UNESCO culture & Heritage Expert Dr Cristina Menegazzi inaugurates the art exhibition “The Shape of Home” organized by Satrang Gallery at local hotel in the Federal Capital. – Online

All PFF stakeholders united for stability in Pakistan football

PFF Chief Operating Officer Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar stressed that both FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation have delivered a clear message: stability within the federation is essential for sustainable progress

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan football received a major boost as all stakeholders of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) united on a single platform, while the federation secured strong international backing at the FIFA Congress, signalling a new era of stability and global engagement. The development was highlighted during a press conference at the PFF Headquarters, jointly addressed by PFF Vice President Hafiz Zaka Ullah, Chief Operating Officer Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar, Vice President Naveed Aslam Lodhi, and EXCO members Raja Amer Khan, Mohsin Ali Chaudhry, along with Director Legal Ali Akram. The officials reiterated their collective commitment to rebuilding Pakistan football through unity, institutional stability, and global collaboration. In a message shared at the briefing, PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani said Pakistan has regained the confidence of the international football community,



adding that recent engagements have opened “new doors of cooperation, development, and opportunity” for players, coaches, and officials. He noted that Pakistan is increasingly being recognised as a “positive and unifying force” in global football, strengthening its soft image and ties with leading football nations. PFF Chief Operating Of-

ficer Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar stressed that both FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation have delivered a clear message: stability within the federation is essential for sustainable progress. “We are fully aligned and committed to elevating Pakistan football to new heights through unity and structured development,” he said. PFF Vice President

Hafiz Zaka Ullah echoed the sentiment, warning that no attempts to destabilise the federation would be tolerated. He emphasised the importance of international exchange programmes covering youth, women's football, coaching, and grassroots development. Meanwhile, the PFF delegation, led by President Gilani, concluded a series of impactful meetings on the

sidelines of the FIFA and AFC Congresses in Canada, significantly boosting Pakistan's international football standing. Key football nations, including Canada, Australia, and Saudi Arabia, extended strong support to Pakistan, while engagements with countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan reflected growing global confidence in the federation's vision. Discus-

sions focused on critical areas including grassroots programmes, women's football, coach education, referee training, futsal development, and international exposure pathways for Pakistani players. Pakistan's active participation at one of the world's most influential football platforms marks a significant step toward rebuilding its global image after years of challenges.

PCB unveils PSL 11 Team of the Tournament

Babar named captain after leading Peshawar Zalmi to title victory

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday announced the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 Team of the Tournament, naming Babar Azam skipper after a title-winning campaign. The Team of the Tournament comprises three players each from Peshawar Zalmi and Hyderabad Kingsmen, two apiece from Lahore Qalandars and Islamabad United, and one player each from Multan Sultans and Quetta Gladiators. The selection was made by a five-member panel drawn from the commentary team. The jury also finalised the Emerging Team of the Tournament, recognising the stand-out young performers of the season. A total of 44 matches were played from March 26 to May 3 across Lahore and Karachi. Babar Azam, who lifted his third PSL title as a player and first as captain, finished as the leading run-scorer with 588 runs. Opening the innings, he also claimed the Hanif Mohammad Cap and equalled the record for most runs in a single PSL season, matching Fakhar Zaman's tally from 2022. His campaign featured two centuries in four matches against Quetta Gladiators and Islamabad United. Peshawar Zalmi are further represented by Kusal Mendis and Suyfan Moqim. Mendis scored 550 runs, including

four half-centuries and a century, while also contributing eight dismissals behind the stumps. His century came against Karachi Kings at the National Bank Stadium on April 9. Left-arm wrist-spinner Suyfan Moqim took 22 wickets at an average of 14.40 and an economy rate of 7.20, earning both Player of the Tournament and Best Bowler honours. Hyderabad Kingsmen have three representatives in Usman Khan, Hassan Khan and Hunain Shah. Usman finished fourth among the top run-scorers with 389 runs, including a century and three half-centuries. Hassan contributed 139 runs at a strike rate of 195 alongside six wickets and strong fielding performances. Hunain Shah impressed with 17 wickets in 10 matches, emerging as a key bowler in the latter stages of the competition. Lahore Qalandars' Fakhar Zaman and Shaheen Afridi also feature in the XI. Fakhar scored 401 runs to finish third overall, while Shaheen claimed 16 wickets at an economy rate of 7.86. Multan Sultans' Shan Masood is included after scoring 367 runs at an average of 45.87 and a strike rate of 158.18. Islamabad United captain Shadab Khan also makes the side after a strong all-round season, scoring 173 runs and taking 17 wickets, earning the Best All-Rounder of Tournament award. – DNA

NA body reviews country's HIV situation

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination on Monday conducted a comprehensive review of the HIV situation in the country. The committee meeting which was chaired by Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani, MNA, took strong notice of the rising trend of HIV/AIDS cases in Pakistan. The committee termed the issue urgent, sensitive and requiring coordinated national action. The ministry informed the committee that an estimated 369,000 people were living with HIV in Pakistan, while only 84,000 cases were currently registered, highlighting a significant detection gap. In 2025 alone, 14,000 new cases were reported while screening capacity had expanded dramatically from 37,000 tests in 2020 to over 374,000 in 2025. The committee was informed that out of 84,000 registered cases, nearly 20,000 patients who initiated treatment at ART centres were now missing, raising serious concerns about follow-up. – APP

Albrahim targets statement debut as PFL MENA heads to Dubai

RIYADH: Saudi fighter Ahmed Albrahim is set to make his professional debut later this month when PFL MENA arrives in Dubai, with the welterweight determined to deliver a statement performance on one of the region's biggest stages. Albrahim will face Egypt's Khaled Mahmoud at PFL MENA 9: Pride of Arabia on May 24 at the Coca-Cola Arena. Both fighters enter the bout at the start of their PFL journeys, adding further intrigue to the contest. The event was originally scheduled to take place in Alkhorbar earlier this month under the banner “Rise of the Gulf,” before being relocated to Dubai following a postponement. For Albrahim, however, the changes have had little impact on his mindset. He said: “The change of opponent doesn't make any difference to me. I'm ready for anyone, and my goal is clear: I'm going in to win.” The 29-year-old has spent the last four months preparing across Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, training alongside Bahraini veteran Hamza Kooheji, who is also set to compete on the same card. Albrahim said: “Training alongside Hamza Kooheji has had a big impact on me. He's my role model and one of the main reasons I entered this sport.” Albrahim's journey into mixed martial arts has been anything but conventional. He began his sporting career as a football goalkeeper before moving into combat sports. He said: “I started my journey in football... before moving into combat sports, and that's where I found my true path.” A strong grappling base underpins his style inside the cage. Albrahim is a former MCL Riyadh No-Gi champion and an ADCC Open Middle East silver medalist, credentials he showcased in his last outing at PFL MENA 4 in Alkhorbar in December. – APP

Pakistan strongly condemns missile...

FROM PAGE 01
“We also call for free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in keeping with international law,” Jaiswal added. “India stands ready to support all efforts for a peaceful resolution of issues,” he said.

Italian PM irked by fake images

FROM PAGE 01
was shameful and unworthy of an Italian prime minister. “I must admit that whoever created them, at least in the attached case, has also improved me quite a bit,” Meloni said, adding that the episode showed how “anything at all” was now being used to attack people and spread falsehoods. “The point, however, goes beyond me,” she said. “Deepfakes are a dangerous tool, because they can deceive, manipulate, and strike anyone. I can defend myself. Many others cannot.” Meloni urged people to check the authenticity of online content before accepting or sharing it. “One rule should always apply: verify before believing, and think before sharing,” she said. Meloni launched a libel suit two years ago against a man from Sardinia who is accused of making deepfake pornographic images using her face and posting them online. The case continues.

KP CM announces pen-down strike

FROM PAGE 01
CM Afridi reiterated that incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife are not being allowed treatment under the supervision of their personal physicians. Denying the PTI founder – who has been behind bars since August 2023 in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism after his ouster via an opposition no-trust vote in April 2022 – access to family and lawyers is “inhumane and illegal,” the chief minister added. It is pertinent to mention here that the KP CM has repeatedly accused the Centre of discriminatory behaviour towards his province. On January 10, the KP CM had strongly criticised the federal government's policies, alleging discrimination against the KP, theft of public mandate and political victimisation of the PTI. Addressing a press conference in Hyderabad, CM Afridi had said that KP had not been given its full share under the NFC Award, including the due share for the merged tribal districts, resulting in a loss of nearly Rs300 billion for the province. Referring to the tribal districts, he had said promises made to the erstwhile tribal areas (Fata), including Rs100 billion annually for 10 years, were not fulfilled, as only Rs130 billion had been released in three years.

US-Iran talks progressing with...

FROM PAGE 01
standoff over the Strait of Hormuz. The statement comes after US and Iran launched new attacks in the Gulf on Monday as they wrestled for control over the Strait of Hormuz with duelling maritime blockades, shaking a fragile truce. US President Donald Trump launched a new effort to get stranded tankers and other ships through the strait, the vital energy-trade chokepoint that has been virtually closed since the US and Israel began attacks on Iran in February, a war that has killed thousands of people across the region. Trump gave scant details about his new effort, which he called “Project Freedom,” to help stuck ships travel through the strait when he announced it on social media, two days after a legal deadline under US law had passed for him to get authorisation from Congress for the war. Trump told Congress the war was “terminated” and the deadline was moot, a claim disputed by some lawmakers.

Briefs

Gold prices decline by Rs 2,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Tuesday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 2,100 to settle at Rs 477,862 compared to Rs 479,962 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold declined by Rs 1,801 to Rs 409,689 from Rs 411,490, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 1,651 to Rs 375,561 against Rs 377,212 in the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$21 to \$4,555 per ounce from \$4,576. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 65 to Rs 7,849 from Rs 7,914, while the price of 10 grams of silver also fell by Rs 55 to Rs 6,729 from Rs 6,784. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$0.65 to \$73.65 per ounce from \$74.30.—APP

Israeli strikes kill two Palestinians in Gaza

CAIRO/GAZA: Israeli strikes killed at least two Palestinians and wounded several others in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, health officials said. Medics said a Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded by an Israeli airstrike near the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City, while another was killed and several others were wounded by Israeli tank shelling near the central area of the enclave. There was no immediate Israeli comment on either incident.

Violence in Gaza has persisted despite an October 2025 ceasefire, with Israel conducting almost daily attacks on Palestinians. Israel and Hamas have blamed each other for ceasefire violations. At Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility still partially functional in the enclave, relatives and friends arrived to bid farewell to one of the victims, Mohamed Al-Ghandour. Two girls were crying and being comforted by a woman outside the hospital's morgue. "The Zionist enemy doesn't know anything called truce and does not commit to international treaties or laws or humanitarian laws," said the victim's uncle, Abu Omar Al-Naffar. At least 830 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire deal took effect, according to local medics, while Israel says militants have killed four of its soldiers over the same period. Israel says its strikes are aimed at thwarting attempts by Hamas and other Palestinian militants to stage attacks against its forces. More than 72,500 Palestinians have been killed since the Gaza war started in October 2023, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health authorities.—APP

India condemns drone strike on UAE

NEW DELHI: India condemned a drone strike on an energy facility in Fujairah in which three Indians were injured, urging uninterrupted access to the Strait of Hormuz, the foreign ministry said Tuesday. The United Arab Emirates blamed Iran for the drone attack on an energy installation on Monday. Iranian state TV said the Islamic republic had "no pre-planned program" to attack oil facilities in the UAE. "We call for immediate cessation of these hostilities and the targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement Tuesday. The South Asian nation is heavily dependent on imported energy, which has been disrupted since the Middle East war began in late February. India, the world's third-largest oil buyer, normally sources about half of its crude through the Strait of Hormuz. "We also call for free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in keeping with international law," Jaiswal added. "India stands ready to support all efforts for a peaceful resolution of issues." India's heavy import dependence, combined with modest oil reserves compared with major consumers like China, has prompted analysts to warn that the South Asian nation could be among the most vulnerable to a sudden oil price hike. Ship-tracking and import data show that India has partially plugged the gap by turning to old allies.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in lifting debris at historic Bari Imam Noorpur Shahan area of the Federal Capital after anti encroachment operation.

Govt advances auto policy thru consultations

The SAPM emphasized that all budget proposals would be finalized on the basis of consensus, ensuring that stakeholders' input is fully incorporated into the policymaking process

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday chaired a consultative meeting with key auto sector stakeholders to advance the formulation of the upcoming auto policy and budget proposals. The meeting was held with representatives of the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) and the Pakistan Automotive

Manufacturers Association (PAMA), said a news release. During the meeting, extensive consultations were held with auto parts manufacturers regarding proposed duties on automotive parts and the broader contours of the upcoming auto policy. The SAPM emphasized that all budget proposals would be finalized on the basis of consensus, ensuring that stakeholders' input is fully incorporated into the policymaking process. He highlighted that the

Secretary for Industries and Production and the Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board (EDB) are working in close coordination with the auto sector to prepare comprehensive and well-informed budget proposals. According to an official statement, proposals are under consideration to provide protection to auto parts currently being manufactured locally. In addition, parts that have the potential to be manufac-

ture domestically within the next five years are also being considered for similar protection measures. The SAPM reiterated that the core objective of the policy is to strengthen local industry and empower domestic manufacturers, thereby enhancing Pakistan's industrial base and reducing reliance on imports. The meeting was attended by the Secretary for Industries and Production, CEO EDB, Additional Secretary, and other senior officials.—DNA

Gaza flotilla activists' detention extended

ASHKELON: An Israeli court has extended the detention of two foreign activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla until Sunday, a rights group representing them said, as authorities continue to question the pair. Spanish national Saif Abu Keshke and Brazilian national Thiago Avila appeared before a court in the city of Ashkelon for their second hearing on Tuesday, after they were brought to Israel for questioning last week. The two, held in a prison in the southern Israeli city, were among dozens of activists aboard a Gaza-bound flotilla intercepted by Israeli forces off the coast of Greece early on Thursday. At their first hearing on Sunday, the court extended their detention by two days. A second hearing was held on Tuesday, where both appeared with their legs shackled. "The court approved their detention until Sunday morning" at Tuesday's hearing, Miriam Azem, international advocacy coordinator at the Israeli rights group Adalah told AFP. An AFP journalist saw the two activists brought to the courtroom. Adalah said the two activists were on hunger strike, with Tuesday their sixth day of protest. On Monday, the rights group alleged the pair had been subjected to physical and psychological abuse in detention. oth Abu Keshke and Avila are being held in isolation, with "high-intensity lighting" on at all times in their cells, Adalah said, adding that Avila was being held in "extremely cold temperatures." "They are kept blindfolded at all times whenever they are moved outside their cells, including during medical examinations," it said. Israeli authorities have rejected the abuse claims. At Sunday's hearing, Adalah said the state attorney had presented a list of offenses the pair were accused of, including "assisting the enemy during wartime" and "membership in and providing services to a terrorist organization." But Adalah's lawyers challenged the state's jurisdiction, arguing there had been an "unlawful abduction" of the two activists in international waters. Israel's foreign ministry said both individuals were affiliated with the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad (PCPA).—APP

Armenia hosts EU summit as it charts course away from Russia

YEREVAN: Armenia hosts its first bilateral summit with the European Union on Tuesday, a landmark diplomatic moment for the Caucasus Mountains nation that has formally declared its ambition to join the bloc and is cautiously loosening its ties with longtime ally Russia. The EU-Armenia summit in Yerevan follows the eighth gathering of the European Political Community, which brought dozens of European leaders to the Armenian capital. The officials addressed European security issues and the US-Israeli war in Iran in remarks on Monday. The two meetings underscore how Armenia is seeking to turn westward and shed Russia's influence. Armenia's relations with Moscow, its longtime sponsor and ally, have grown increasingly strained since 2023, when neighboring Azerbaijan fully reclaimed the Karabakh region and ended the decades-long rule by ethnic Armenian separatists. Armenian authorities accused Russian peacekeepers who were deployed to the region of failing to stop Azerbaijan's onslaught. Moscow, busy with its war in Ukraine, rejected the accusations, arguing that its troops didn't have a mandate to intervene. The war was "a belated demonstration that Russia is dangerously unreliable as a partner," Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, told The Associated Press. Pursuing ties with Europe since then, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government has pursued closer ties with the West, a move welcomed by the EU. In remarks to the EPC conference on Monday, EU Council President Antonio Costa thanked Pashinyan for "the courageous political decisions he has taken to bring Armenia closer to the European Union." "The direction of travel is unmistakable," Costa said, stressing that it was "vital to strengthen Armenian democracy and fight external interference and misinformation." The opening ceremony of the EU-Armenia summit on Tuesday saw Costa walk the red carpet side-by-side with Pashinyan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, while a military band played against a background of Armenian and EU flags. In her opening statement, von der Leyen said that Europe was ready to aid Armenia in becoming a regional hub for global trade routes, including the building of physical infrastructure. "We're ready to invest in the local energy production and the energy links across the Black Sea, and we are ready to connect your booming digital scene to Europe's digital market and turn Armenia's position at the heart of this region into a motor of growth," she said. Armenia joined the International Criminal Court in 2023, a move Moscow condemned as an "unfriendly step." The court has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. Armenia also froze its participation in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2024. The following year, the Armenian parliament passed a law formally declaring the country's intention to seek EU membership. It is the EU, rather than the United States, that has stepped into the vacuum left by Russia, Giragosian said. "EU engagement is much more prudent and much more productive than the US becoming involved, simply because European engagement is less provocative to Russia over the longer term," he added. However, Armenia remains a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union — a single market allowing the free movement of goods, capital and labor. The organization also includes Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — and Putin has made the trade-offs plain. Speaking at talks with Pashinyan in Moscow earlier this year, Putin warned that Armenia could not simultaneously belong to both the EEU and the EU, noting that Yerevan currently receives Russian natural gas at prices far below European market rates. Pashinyan acknowledged the incompatibility but said Armenia could, for now, combine EEU membership with deepening EU cooperation.—DNA

No Indian state will have left-wing govt

But over the years, these achievements have not been enough to keep the Left Front from losing across the country — and not bouncing back, like in the case of West Bengal, where it ruled for from 1977 to 2011, or Tripura, where it ruled 35 years in total — from 1978 until 1988 and from 1993 until 2018

NEW DELHI: For the first time in five decades, no Indian state will be governed by a left-wing party, following elections including in Kerala, a long-time socialist stronghold and home to the world's first democratically elected communist government. When vote counting in five regional assembly elections concluded on Monday evening, one of the biggest surprises came from the southern state: the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front lost its majority to the Congress-led United Democratic Front, the main national opposition, which won 98 of the 140 seats in the local assembly. The CPI for the first time came into power in Kerala when it won the 1957 election, becoming the first communist party to gain power within a democratic framework — unlike in the case of other early communist governments in the Soviet Union or China, which were established through revolution or one-party systems. Since 1977, at least one Indian state had always been governed by left-wing parties. That is no longer the case, and it reflects a broader decline of leftist parties, even though their ideas remain relevant, according to Prof. Afroz Alam, head of the Department of Political Science at Maulana Azad National Urdu University. "The tragedy

of the left parties is that they have failed to translate their ideas and issues into a living political language that speaks to the young, the aspirational, informal workers, the urban poor and the new middle classes. The recent five assembly election results including, Kerala and West Bengal, show this crisis quite sharply," Alam told. The significance of leftist politics over decades has allowed millions of rural poor to gain more secure livelihoods through land reforms, especially in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura, where they had been in power. Left-led governments have invested heavily in public education and large-scale literacy campaigns. In Kerala, these policies have helped achieve near-universal literacy — the only Indian state to do so. Coupled with a strong public healthcare system, this has contributed to its consistent ranking as the highest Human Development Index state in India. But over the years, these achievements have not been enough to keep the Left Front from losing across the country — and not bouncing back, like in the case of West Bengal, where it ruled for from 1977 to 2011, or Tripura, where it ruled 35 years in total — from 1978 until 1988 and from 1993 until 2018. With the 2026 vote, both states are now ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been the dominant force in national politics in recent years. "BJP has changed the political battlefield in India. It does not only fight elections. It fights for imagination, culture, memory and identity," Alam said. "The future of the left depends on whether it can rebuild itself around new questions like gig workers, unemployment, private education costs, health expenses, urban housing, climate distress, caste injustice, gender security, digital capitalism and the crisis of federalism." "If it changes its language, expands its social base, enters new digital and urban spaces, and builds alliances without losing its ideological spine, it can remain relevant. But if it continues to speak to today's voters in yesterday's vocabulary, it will become a respected footnote." But such an understanding may not yet be mainstream among the communist party's cadres. "That is a battle, an unequal place, unequal battleground that we are in. But otherwise, politically, I don't think the left has weakened. Electorally yes, but not politically," N. Sai Balaji, a prominent CPI activist, told Arab News. "If someone wants to change the nature of a communist party, then philosophically, materially principally that will be another bourgeois party.—DNA

New Syria protest conditions raise concern over freedoms

DAMASCUS: Syrian authorities have announced new conditions for street protests, with an official telling AFP on Monday that the move was purely regulatory, despite concerns over restrictions on freedoms. It is the Islamist authorities' first such move since the ousting of Bashar Assad in December 2024 following nearly 14 years of civil war that erupted with the long-time ruler's brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. The interior ministry announcement last Sunday said the "right to demonstrate and gather peacefully" is guaranteed under Syria's transitional constitution, but must be exercised according to "legal conditions and mechanisms" to ensure security and public order. It said a committee would decide on applications for demonstrations within five days of being lodged, with applicants having the right to appeal. An interior ministry official told AFP on condition of anonymity on Monday that "the decision is purely regulatory and aims to protect demonstrators" from violence.—APP

Turkiye says world should prepare for energy crisis

ANKARA: Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said on Monday that the world should prepare for the energy price and supply crisis stemming from the Iran war to potentially last longer. Speaking to broadcaster tvnet, Bayraktar added that Türkiye did not have any supply issues at the moment, but that certain developments regarding the Strait of Hormuz and the withdrawal of the United Arab Emirates from OPEC last month added to the uncertainties.—APP

Bali immigration arrests 62 foreigners in crackdown

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities have detained 62 foreign nationals in Bali in an ongoing crackdown on violations of local customs and visa rules, officials said on Tuesday. At least 2,600 foreign nationals in Bali were deported between January and July 2025, latest government data showed, while some 2,000 others were detained during the same period. Immigration officers in Bali have been monitoring foreigners visiting the holiday island as part of a special patrol launched last month, following a surge in criminal activity involving tourists. "Bali immigration has detained 62 problematic foreign nationals... These people committed dangerous acts or are suspected of endangering public security.—APP

Briefs

Fmr NADRA chairman gets distinction

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Former NADRA chairman Tariq Malik has been named one of the world's top 25 identity leaders by US-based company Okta. The list, by Okta Ventures, the venture investment arm of Okta, is a "diverse compilation of forward-thinking developers, strategists, business leaders, and public servants". "The honorees are being recognised for their tireless efforts in software creation, standards evolution, and strategic implementation to keep digital transactions safe and seamless. Their work tackles some of the most pressing challenges in the digital age," it said. To mark the honour, Malik has been featured on the Nasdaq billboard in Times Square, New York City, alongside 24 other global leaders. In his featured interview, Malik said: "Digital identity succeeds or fails not on technology, but on whether its governance can withstand political pressure." He argued that identity systems must be treated as core governance infrastructure, supported by institutional independence, legal safeguards, and accountability to sustain public trust.

Trade deficit rises 20% to \$32bn

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Official data released on Monday showed that Pakistan's merchandise trade deficit expanded by 20% to \$32 billion during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year. Imports were more than double the value of exports, further heightening concerns about the country's fragile economic outlook. Figures from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed imports during July-April of fiscal year 2026 climbed nearly 7% to \$57.2 billion, while exports slid more than 6% to \$25.2bn, a lopsided gap that economists warn could drain foreign exchange reserves and put pressure on the rupee. The deterioration continued into April 2026, when the monthly trade deficit widened nearly 4% from a year earlier to just over \$4bn. Monthly exports rose 14% to \$2.48bn, but were easily outpaced by imports, which climbed 7.5% to \$6.55bn. Services trade offered little relief. The services trade deficit narrowed 6.7% to \$2.15bn during July-March FY26, as a healthy 17% rise in services exports to \$7.35bn was outrun by a nearly 11% surge in services imports to \$9.5bn.

Marco Rubio expects frank meeting with Pope

DNA

VATICAN CITY: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expects a "frank" meeting with Pope Leo during a visit to the Vatican this week, the US ambassador said on Tuesday, after President Donald Trump took a fresh pot-shot at the pope for criticizing the US war in Iran. "Nations have disagreements, and I think one of the ways that you work through those is ... through fraternity and authentic dialogue," said Brian Burch, the US ambassador to the Holy See. "I think the Secretary is coming here in that spirit," Burch told journalists. "To have a frank conversation about US policy, to engage in dialogue." Trump has repeatedly disparaged the first US-born pope in recent weeks, drawing a backlash from Christian leaders across the political spectrum. In his latest comments, Trump told right-wing radio talk show host Hugh Hewitt that "the Pope would rather talk about the fact that it's okay for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and I don't think that's very good."

Aurangzeb discusses upcoming budget with stakeholders

The Finance Minister welcomed the delegation and appreciated the constructive engagement of the insurance industry in contributing to the budget consultation process

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting at the Finance Division today with a delegation of the Insurance Association of Pakistan (IAP) to discuss matters relating to the insurance sector in the context of the Federal Budget 2026-27. The delegation was led by Mr. Shoab Javed Hussain, Chairman IAP. The Finance Minister welcomed the delegation and appreciated the constructive engagement of the insurance industry in contributing to the budget consultation process. He emphasized the need for sustained dialogue with key sectors to ensure that policy measures remain aligned with economic priorities and contribute to long-term financial stability and growth.

The delegation presented a set of proposals focusing primarily on taxation and regulatory considerations with respect to the insurance sector. Participants discussed various aspects of the existing taxation framework, including the interaction between federal and provincial levies, and their implications for the sector. The need for consistency, coherence, and predictability in the overall tax structure was highlighted in the context of facilitating sectoral development. Discussions also covered the need to ensure clarity in the application of sector-specific laws governing insurance, particularly in relation to the broader taxation framework. The delegation underscored the importance of ensuring that existing legal and regulatory principles remain appropriately aligned with evolving policy and accounting standards. The delegation further proposed measures aimed at promoting savings and expanding insurance penetration, including the possible restoration of tax incentives for policyholders. Facilitating long-term savings instruments and encouraging wider



participation, particularly among salaried individuals, were identified as key areas for consideration. Participants also shared views on strengthening the role of the insurance sector in financial sector development, including through improved alignment of investment frameworks and long-term financial instruments. Continued interaction with regulators and policymakers on sector-specific issues was highlighted as essential. The Finance Minister acknowledged the proposals presented by the delegation and noted that these would be carefully reviewed in the context of the upcoming budget. He reiterated the Government's commitment to advancing the development of the financial sector, while maintaining a balanced and sustainable approach to fiscal policy. The meeting concluded with a shared understanding on the need for ongoing engagement between the Government and the insurance industry to facilitate informed policymaking and enhance the sector's contribution to economic growth. The meeting was attended by Mr. Shoab Javed Hussain, Chairman IAP, Mr. Muhammad Hisham, Senior Vice Chairman IAP, Mr. Omer Farooq, Chairman IAP Tax Committee; Mr. Asim Nagi, Member IAP Tax Committee, and other IAP officials, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Finance, including the Director General, Tax Policy Office, Member (Inland Revenue Operations), amongst others.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in Islamabad on 5 May 2026. — DNA

Blast at fireworks factory in China's Hunan kills 21, Xi calls for probe

Blast happened at Huasheng Fireworks Manufacturing and Display Company in Hunan's capital city of Changsha

HONG KONG: A blast at a fireworks factory in China's Hunan province has killed 21 people and injured 61, prompting President Xi Jinping to call for a thorough investigation, state media reported on Tuesday. The blast in Hunan's capital city of Changsha, home to a hub for fireworks manufacturing, occurred on Monday around 4:40pm (0840 GMT), according to reports by CCTV and Xinhua. Videos on Chinese internet platforms showed thick smoke billowing from a large site with collapsed buildings and debris strewn around the area. Reuters could not verify the footage. Nearly 500 firefighters, rescuers and medical personnel attended the scene, according to the South China Morning Post.

The blast happened at Huasheng Fireworks Manufacturing and Display Company, media said. Reuters could not find a telephone listing for the company to seek comment. Xi called for a speedy investigation to determine the cause of the blast and strict accountability for the incident, Xinhua reported. Last year, China exported \$1.14 billion worth of fireworks, more than two-thirds of global sales, data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity shows.

IMF pushes for full operationalisation of Sovereign Wealth Fund

Under Fund's conditions, SWF will be barred from borrowing, lending, or PPP participation

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to implement a set of stringent legal and financial conditions to make its Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) fully operational, including amendments requiring parliamentary approval. Under these IMF conditions, the SWF will be prohibited from incurring debt, providing guarantees or collateral, lending to public or private entities, and participating in Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects. It also bars the SWF from securing financial assets and getting any contribution from the financial institutions and State Owned Entities (SOEs). The amendments to the SWF will be made part of the law as a Structural Benchmark after the approval of the budget for 2026-27. The government has sent six amendments to SOEs laws to Parliament for approval, to fully align them with SOE Act provisions, and is making progress on the remaining SOEs with dedicated laws by the end of August 2026. Top official sources told The News on Monday that Islamabad assured the Fund that the fiscal safeguards are in place, including by requiring that all revenues from SWF will be provided directly to the government, while the SWF will not retain any of the funds of the public exchequer.

Crude oil jumps 6% as Iran strikes ships

Brent settles at \$114.44 a barrel; WTI climbs to \$106.42 amid sharp rally; global equities fall on energy shocks

COMMERCE DESK

LONDON: Oil prices jumped 6% on Monday while global stocks declined after Iran escalated its military campaign, striking several ships in the Strait of Hormuz and setting a UAE oil port ablaze. Brent crude rose \$6.27, or 5.8%, to settle at \$114.44 a barrel, while West Texas Intermediate gained \$4.48, or 4.4%, to close at \$106.42. The moves followed a weekend pledge by President Donald Trump that the US Navy would force the strait open, triggering the biggest escalation since a ceasefire was declared four weeks ago. The Strait of Hormuz, through which around a fifth of the world's seaborne oil and gas flows, has been severely disrupted for the past two months. Stocks fell across the board. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1.13%, the S&P 500 slipped 0.41%, and the Nasdaq Composite declined 0.19%. "The longer oil prices stay above \$100 a barrel, the more the fiscal stimulus from the 2025 tax cuts shifts from being a boost to acting as a shock absorber," said Brock Weimer, investment strategy analyst at Edward Jones. Global equities also edged lower, with a broad index of shares outside Japan down 0.22%. In Europe, markets were weighed down by German carmakers after Trump said he would raise tariffs on European cars and trucks. The pan-European STOXX 600 index fell 0.99%, while Germa-

ny's 10-year bond yield rose 5 basis points to 3.08%. Markets in London were closed for a public holiday. Central banks turn hawkish as oil fuels inflation concerns. Rising oil prices pushed bond yields higher and clouded the outlook for global monetary policy. Markets no longer expect the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates this year, and are beginning to price in possible rate hikes from the European Central Bank and the Bank of England. Barclays joined other brokerages in forecasting no policy easing by the Fed this year. Friday's April payrolls report could further shift expectations. The yield on benchmark 10-year US Treasury notes rose 6 basis points to 4.438%. Yen volatility unsettles currency markets. Currency markets remained volatile, with traders watching closely for signs of Japanese intervention to support the yen. The dollar fell sharply against the yen in Asian trading before reversing. The yen was last down 0.04% at 157.12 per dollar. Analysts estimate Tokyo may have intervened last week with around \$35 billion. "The case for intervention is strong, given the inflationary impact of a weaker yen via import prices, a US administration broadly comfortable with such action, and Japan's ample foreign exchange reserves," said Roberto Cobo Garcia, head of G10 FX strategy at BBVA. The euro fell 0.24% to \$1.1692, while sterling weakened 0.29% to \$1.3532. The dollar index rose 0.28% to 98.44. In commodities, spot gold dropped 2.13% to \$4,515.27 an ounce.

Shooting s triggers brief White House lockdown

DNA

WASHINGTON: A shooting involving US Secret Service personnel near the National Mall in Washington prompted a brief White House lockdown on Monday afternoon, with officials later confirming an exchange of fire with an armed individual and injuries to multiple people. US Secret Service Deputy Director Matthew Quinn said the incident occurred shortly after a motorcade carrying Vice President JD Vance had passed through the area. He said he did not believe the vice president was an intended target and declined to speculate on any link to recent threats against President Donald Trump. "I'm not going to guess on that," Quinn said. "Whether or not it was directed to the president or not, I don't know, but we will find out." Quinn said Secret Service agents identified a "suspicious individual" believed to be armed. The man fled on foot when approached, then drew a weapon and opened fire. Agents returned fire and struck the suspect, who was taken to hospital. His condition was not immediately known. He added that a juvenile bystander was also slightly wounded in the incident.

Indian pilots demand further probe of last year's Air India crash

DNA

NEW DELHI: An Indian pilot group has submitted a letter to the aviation ministry suggesting that electrical failure, and not pilot action, could have caused the deadly Air India crash last year. The submission by the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), which has more than 5,000 members, comes ahead of the expected final report into the crash of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner that killed 260 people shortly after take-off on June 12, 2025. As required by international law, India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) published a preliminary report on July 12, one month after the disaster, when the plane exploded into flames shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad in western India.

Petroleum sales fall 7% in April

Motor spirit and diesel prices rose sharply year-on-year, weighing on overall fuel offtake

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Petroleum sales in Pakistan declined 7% year-on-year to 1.36 million tonnes in April from 1.45 million tonnes in the same month last fiscal year, as higher fuel prices continued to weigh on demand, The News reported. Oil product sales also fell 6% month-on-month. Excluding furnace oil, the decline was steeper, with volumes dropping 11% year-on-year and 10% month-on-month to 1.22 million tonnes. The drop was largely attributed to a sharp increase in domestic fuel prices following higher international oil prices. The average price of motor spirit rose 54% year-on-year to Rs392.64 per litre, while high-speed diesel increased 67% to Rs431.97 per litre despite the removal of the levy on HSD. HSD sales declined by 12% YoY in April, primarily due to elevated prices and lower tractor sales. MS volumes also dropped by 7.0% under similar pressures. In contrast, FO sales rose by 63% YoY, supported by higher power generation demand and increased reliance on FO-based plants amid disruptions in re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) supplies. On a monthly basis, MS offtake fell by 8.0% to 0.61 million tonnes, while HSD sales decreased by 7.0% to 0.55 million tonnes. FO sales, however, rose by 56% MoM, indicating greater dependence on furnace oil for electricity generation. Despite the monthly decline, cumulative petroleum sales during the first 10 months of FY2026 increased by 4.0% YoY to 13.76 million tonnes, compared with 13.22 million tonnes in the same period last year. Excluding FO, sales rose by 5.0% to 13.23 million tonnes. Product-wise, MS, HSD and FO volumes stood at 6.41 million tonnes, 5.90 million tonnes and 0.53 million tonnes, respectively. Among oil marketing companies, Pakistan State Oil (PSO) reported a 5.0% YoY decline in sales to 0.59 million tonnes in April.

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