



Islamabad POST

Friday, May 08, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Pak forces gave matching response to India, says Dar

Detailed News On Page-08

Marco Rubio meets Pope to mend ties

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KP Governor for addressing CNG problems

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DG ISPR presser

No space for war between N. neighbors

ISPR says any hostile design against Pakistan will be countered with "greater strength, resolve"; says armed forces have nothing to do with politics; Afghan operation was part of the national plan; Pakistan Kashmir policy can never be changed



ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's military said there was "no space for war" between two nuclear neighbours as the country marked the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, while reaffirming its commitment to peace, regional stability and national defence. The remarks were made by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry as he addressed a press conference along with Rear Admiral Shifaat Ali Khan and

Air Vice Marshal Tariq Ghazi. On May 6-7 last year, India — after levelling baseless and unfounded allegations against Pakistan for an attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir — launched an attack on Islamabad, which was responded to with full force, humiliating New Delhi. The more than 80-hour war eventually stopped on May 10 after intervention from the United States, which saw multiple Indian jets and drones being downed, and bolstering Pakistan's image as a "net security stabiliser". "We welcome you to ISPR on this happy day," Lt Gen Chaudhry said at the outset of the press conference. He noted that Pakistan's military had defeated an enemy "five times larger than itself," and further described India as a "terrorist state". "Today, we are not going to dwell a lot on what happened ... We are going to spend more time from May 2025 to May 2026," he said, adding that they would put in front of the nation "10 strategic consequences" of the conflict. First of the strategic consequences is, the ISPR DG said, the Indian narrative of painting Pakistan as a source of terrorism stood buried forever. "International community, as a consequence of Marka-e-Haq, came to know and now fully understand that Pakistan as alleged by Indians over

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Briefs

OMCs barred from importing diesel

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has restricted private oil marketing companies (OMCs) from importing high-speed diesel (HSD), permitting only Pakistan State Oil (PSO) to handle its procurement, in a move intended to strengthen control over fuel imports and reduce pressure on the external account. The decision, taken at a recent meeting of the National Coordination and Management Council (NCMC), effectively centralises diesel imports under the state-run entity, media reported. Officials say the restriction will remain in place until the situation in the Middle East stabilises, a factor that has contributed to volatility in global oil markets.

Oil slides, dollar slips

COMMERCE DESK

SINGAPORE: Asian stocks soared to record highs on Thursday while the US dollar slipped and oil nursed steep losses on the prospects of a US-Iran peace deal, even as the fate of the critical Strait of Hormuz appeared unresolved. Japan's Nikkei returned from a long holiday to cross 62,000 for the first time, catching up on a blistering A-led rally after robust earnings that also catapulted South Korean and Taiwan stocks to records. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 1%, hitting a record high. European stock futures pointed to a subdued open after the pan-European STOXX 600 rose 2% on Wednesday. An Iran deal would be a breakthrough, so the sparking market reaction on Thursday was justified, Kyle Rodda, senior financial analyst at Capital.com, said.

Trump reversed Hormuz ship escort plan after Saudi blocks US base

NBC reports Gulf allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, were caught off guard by operation

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump abruptly halted a naval operation, which he called "Project Freedom", aimed at escorting ships through the Strait of Hormuz after Saudi Arabia suspended Washington's access to key military bases and airspace needed for the mission, NBC News reported, citing two US officials. According to the report, Trump announced the operation over the weekend as part of efforts to break Iran's blockade of the strategic waterway, but the move reportedly angered Gulf allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, which was reportedly not consulted beforehand. NBC News reported that Riyadh responded by informing Washington it would no longer permit US military aircraft to operate from Prince Sultan Airbase or transit through Saudi airspace in support of the mission. The restrictions reportedly forced the White House to pause the operation to restore military access to the region.

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Iran tensions escalate as Hormuz crisis continues

DNA

PARIS: France has firmly ruled out any lifting of sanctions on Iran until the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened to international shipping, amid ongoing disruptions in the critical waterway. French officials stated that the security of global maritime routes must be guaranteed before any sanctions relief can be considered. The position aligns with broader Western concerns over freedom of navigation in the Gulf region following recent incidents. In a related development, Iranian authorities announced that government ministries in Tehran will resume full operations on May 9. The move signals a gradual return to administrative normalcy

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PTI demands shifting Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi to hospital

Barrister Gohar expresses grave concern over ex-PM, former first lady's health conditions

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Thursday demanded that PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi be shifted to a hospital for treatment and medical tests under the supervision of their doctors. In a statement, Barrister Gohar said he had been informed that Bushra Bibi was taken to the hospital last night for eye laser treatment before being shifted back. "I have requested for family meeting today. Awaiting that - we have grave concerns about Khan [sahib] and Bushra Bibi's health," he said. The PTI chairman demanded that both Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi be moved to the hospital "for treatment and medical tests in the presence of their family members under the supervision of their doctors". "It is time to change this seek and hide approach to their health issues. Concern is growing. Immediate attention is required," Barrister Gohar added. It may be noted that the wife of the former PM had reportedly been shifted back to Adiala jail on Wednesday after undergoing a medical examination at the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Rawalpindi. Sources last night said that the former first lady was moved

to the hospital under tight security arrangements for a scheduled follow-up examination of her eye, previously operated on April 17 at the same facility. They said that the former first lady was moved to the hospital under tight security arrangements for a scheduled follow-up examination of her eye, previously operated on April 17 at the same facility. According to sources, periodic follow-up examinations had also been conducted inside Adiala jail since the surgery. The former first lady underwent eye surgery at the hospital last month after she complained of impaired vision in her right eye, prompting jail administration to arrange an immediate examination by ophthalmology specialists. Bushra was moved to the healthcare facility on April 16 after doctors confirmed retinal detachment and advised urgent surgery. After having her consent, the procedure was carried out by Dr Nadeem Qureshi along with a medical panel, sources said at the time. Following the surgery and an overnight stay at the hospital, Bushra was discharged and transferred back to the Adiala jail. The former first lady is serving a seven-year sentence in the £190 million corruption case. In December 2025, she was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in Toshakhana-2 case involving under-priced purchase of luxury state gifts.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributes solar panels under PM's Free Solar Scheme among the beneficiaries from GB. Gilgit, 7 May 2026. — DNA

3 children killed in Waziristan

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Two separate attacks in South Waziristan on Thursday killed three children and injured several people, security sources said. According to reports, an explosion occurred near a civilian settlement in the Gawa Khwa area of South Waziristan, while mortar shells were also fired at civilians by Afghan Taliban forces in the border tehsil of Angoor Adda. The explosion, they said, was caused after "Fitna al Khawarij hid cylinders filled with explosives near a house in a nearby settlement". Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan. "Three innocent children of a family were martyred and several

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Pak assures IMF of 'ending Power subsidy'

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has assured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it will phase out the existing electricity subsidy for consumers using up to 200 units per month and introduce a targeted support mechanism through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) from January 2027 as part of broader power sector reforms. This change of subsidy mechanism will be a difficult decision for the politically elected regime, as currently there are households in the country who have installed two to three meters to

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Shehbaz Sharif says

Govt committed to development of Gilgit-Baltistan

GB governor, chief minister meet Prime Minister; development projects, law and order discussed

DNA

GILGIT: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met with Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah and Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Yar Muhammad, as he arrived here on a day-long visit to inaugurate multiple development projects. In the separate meetings with the prime minister, the governor and chief minister discussed the progress of ongoing development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan, the law and order situation, and other administrative matters. Earlier, as the prime minister arrived here, he was received by Governor Syed Mehdi Shah and Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Yar Muhammad. Prime Minister Shehbaz is accompanied by federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari, Attaullah Tarar, Engineer Amir Muqam, Abdul Aleem Khan,

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PM Shehbaz, Qatari counterpart exchange views

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has received a telephone call, from Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani. "During their warm and cordial conversation, the two leaders held a productive exchange of views on the current regional situation. Both sides reaffirmed their strong commitment to facilitating ongoing efforts to ensure lasting peace in the region," says a press release from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Continued on Page 06

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United in humanity

PRCS reaffirms commitment to vulnerable communities

Speaking on the occasion, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Mohamed Yahya appreciated the humanitarian services of PRCS and paid tribute to its volunteers for their dedication and commitment

Brother, sister killed in Paharpur house attack

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Two siblings were killed while their father sustained injuries after unidentified armed men stormed a house and opened fire in Mitrhabad village of Paharpur tehsil, the police said on Thursday. According to police, the assailants entered the house and opened indiscriminate firing at the family for reasons yet to be determined. As a result, 28-year-old Umar and his 25-year-old sister died on the spot, while their 57-year-old father, Ghulam Muhammad Umar, suffered injuries. Soon after receiving information about the incident, the police rushed to the scene and shifted the bodies and the injured man to hospital.—APP

Further investigation was underway

PESHAWAR: Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Thursday issued a heatwave alert across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, warning that temperatures may rise up to 47°C in several districts of the province.

According to the advisory, intense heat is expected in the plain areas of the province from May 8 to May 10. District administrations throughout the province have been directed to remain on high alert.

The PDMA stated that temperatures in Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Bannu, Karak and Lakki Marwat may reach 47°C during daytime hours. Meanwhile, temperatures between 39°C and 43°C are forecast for Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Haripur and Kohat.

The authority warned that the ongoing extreme heat in southern and central districts could increase the risk of heatstroke and dehydration. Relevant departments have been instructed to immediately activate heatstroke centers, cooling points and mobile cooling units. Emergency services, including Rescue 1122 and fire brigades, have also been directed to stay prepared for any emergency situation. Hospitals across the province have been asked to ensure the availability of medical staff and facilities.

The PDMA advised citizens to avoid unnecessary exposure to sunlight, increase water intake and keep children and elderly people away from direct sunlight between 10 AM and 5 PM. Farmers have also been urged to take precautionary measures during crop harvesting and ensure proper care for livestock.—APP

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naeem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum suit for dissolution of marriage etc
Case title: Nabila Banaras vs Muhammad Zulqarnain, son of Muhammad Arif, residing in Mughal abad, Tehsil Dina District Jhelum, (currently residing in Cyprus). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 12.05.2026 at 08:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) organized a Humanitarian Forum at its National Headquarters in Islamabad on Thursday in connection with World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day being observed globally under the theme "United in Humanity." The event brought together humanitarian leaders, diplomats, government officials, Movement partners, representatives of national and international organizations, PRCS staff and volunteers to reaffirm collective commitment towards serving vulnerable communities and strengthening humanitarian cooperation in Pakistan. The

forum was attended by Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan Mr. Mohamed Yahya as Chief Guest, PRCS Managing Body members, provincial branch leadership, Heads of Delegations and representatives from ICRC, IFRC, German Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross and Turkish Red Crescent (Kizilay), along with representatives from NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, NDMA, PDMA and other humanitarian organizations. An interactive dialogue session titled "Partnerships for Humanity" was moderated by Secretary PRCS Sindh Mr. Kanwar Waseem and Deputy Director PMER Mr. Javed Mazhar, focusing on strengthening collaboration and

collective humanitarian action to address growing challenges including climate-induced disasters, emergencies and displacement. Speaking on the occasion, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Mohamed Yahya appreciated the humanitarian services of PRCS and paid tribute to its volunteers for their dedication and commitment. He said the world is facing unprecedented humanitarian challenges driven by climate change, disasters, conflicts and funding constraints, making stronger cooperation, localization and early action more important than ever. He termed PRCS a true example of "localization in action" due to its strong community trust and volunteer network, calling volunteers the "first to arrive

and last to leave" during emergencies. Addressing the forum, Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek highlighted PRCS initiatives and community-based programs aimed at reducing the suffering of vulnerable communities across Pakistan. She emphasized the vital role of volunteers and stressed that partnerships and collaboration remain central to PRCS humanitarian efforts under the spirit of "United in Humanity." In a special video message, IFRC Regional Director for Asia Pacific Mr. Alexander Matheou highlighted growing humanitarian and climate challenges worldwide and appreciated the long-standing partnership between IFRC and PRCS. He acknowledged the progress being made by PRCS under the leadership

of Chairperson Mrs. Farzana Naek in transforming the National Society into a vibrant humanitarian institution. IFRC Head of Delegation in Pakistan Mr. Andreas von Weissenberg also paid tribute to PRCS volunteers and reaffirmed IFRC's continued support and partnership with PRCS. Head of Delegation ICRC in Pakistan Mr. Christoph Sutter spoke about increasing humanitarian crises and conflict situations globally, particularly in the Middle East and the wider region, resulting in displacement and human suffering. He highlighted ICRC's humanitarian work in Pakistan in collaboration with PRCS and praised the dedication of volunteers serving communities in difficult circumstances. Earlier, PRCS Secretary General Mr.

Muhammad Abaidullah Khan presented a detailed overview titled "From Response to Resilience," highlighting PRCS humanitarian operations, disaster response, climate action, health services and community resilience initiatives across the country. A documentary showcasing the humanitarian journey of PRCS, historic relief operations and testimonials from beneficiaries was screened during the event. Commemorative shields and mementos were also presented to distinguished guests, partner organizations, provincial branches and dedicated volunteers in recognition of their humanitarian services. The event concluded with a photo exhibition "PRCS Humanitarian Journey" showcasing the history of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and PRCS humanitarian operations since its inception.

Kundi assures resolution of KP CNG issues with federation

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday said the rights and issues of the province should be addressed collectively, emphasizing that political point scoring must be avoided in matters concerning public welfare and provincial interests. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the All Pakistan CNG Association KP led by its president Pervaiz Khan Khattak at Governor House. The delegation informed the Governor about the ongoing concerns of the CNG sector and ongoing protests related to gas supply issues. They said the CNG sector contributes around Rs6 billion to the federal government while nearly 95 percent of public transport in the province runs on CNG. The delegation also pointed out that despite increase in petrol and diesel prices, CNG prices had remained unchanged, creating difficulties for the sector and transporters. They urged the Governor to take up the matter with the federal government for

an early resolution. "Around 600 CNG stations in the province are closed, and thousands of people have become unemployed". They said that at present, the CNG sector is saving up to 1.5 million liters of petroleum products, and by keeping CNG stations closed, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the CNG sector are being economically devastated. They said that after the repair of the Spin Wam, Shewa-1 North Waziristan, and other pipelines, CNG supply should have been restored. However, despite this, CNG has still not been resumed for the stations. Governor Kundi said the Pakistan Peoples Party had always played a vital role in the welfare of the people and recalled that the 18th Constitutional Amendment had strengthened provincial autonomy and transferred significant powers to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other provinces. He said despite the production of oil, gas and electricity in KP, the province was still facing shortages of these resources.—APP

Overseas playing vital role in strengthening economy: Nehal

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi has said that Overseas Pakistanis are the true ambassadors of the country who are not only contributing significantly to strengthening Pakistan's economy but are also projecting a positive image of the country across the world. He expressed these views while addressing a special meeting hosted by the Consul General of Pakistan in Houston during his visit to the United States. During the visit, the Governor met Overseas Pakistanis, community leaders, and representatives of various organizations in Houston and Dallas, where detailed discussions were held on Pakistan-US relations, national development, the role of Overseas Pakistanis, the achievements of Marka-e-Haq, and the vision of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. According to a statement issued by the Governor House spokesperson, Governor Sindh said that the government is committed to providing Overseas Pakistanis with a more active role in the national development process.—APP

Provincial steering body meeting held in Quetta to review rule of law progress

Key achievements have included the enactment of various Acts in the area of criminal justice that will modernize legal processes, strengthen accountability and ultimately create more modern and accessible services for citizens

DNA

QUETTA: The government of Balochistan, the European Union Delegation and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration with the rule of law stakeholders, convened the 9th and the final Provincial Steering Committee (PSC) on the implementation of the Rule of Law Roadmap of the province which has been supported in-part, through the European Union (EU) funded 'Deliver Justice Project' and with technical assistance from UNODC, UNDP and UN Women. The aim of the project has been to enhance the central government-led, evidence-based framework for justice sector reforms. The Deliver Justice Project also focused on improving institutional performance, enhancing citizen access to justice, and reinforcing accountability mechanisms across the province. Chaired by Ad-


ditional Chief Secretary (ACS) of the Home and Tribal Affairs Department, Mr. Hamza Shafqaat, the meeting brought together representatives from EU, provincial stakeholders, and implementing partners. Participants reviewed progress achieved since the 8th PSC meeting and agreed on coordinated priorities to strengthen institutional capacity across the province for citizen-centric justice delivery. Key achievements have included the enactment of various Acts in the area of criminal justice that will modernize legal processes, strengthen accountability and ultimately create more modern and accessible services for citizens. UNODC presented progress highlights, including the operationalization of Prison Management Information System (PMIS), Smart Police Stations across Quetta and other districts of Balochistan along with establishment of Court Annexed Mediation Centers. Participants appreciated how these reforms are im-

proving public confidence in policing and prison services. In addition, the meeting discussed strengthened case management systems and digital tools to improve efficiency across the justice chain. Capacity-building initiatives for prosecutors, judges, prison officials, and police personnel were highlighted, alongside ongoing initiatives to integrate human rights standards into institutional practices. The meeting appreciated and emphasized continued support from the EU for the rule of law reforms as a foundation for stability, accountability, and good governance in Balochistan. Provincial stakeholders welcomed the sustained technical and financial support to ensure long-term reform sustainability. Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Pakistan, welcomed the significant progress achieved through the five-year programme in strengthening justice sector institutions in the province to enable more people-centred services.


Rs 35 billion for livestock sector uplift in Punjab

BAHAWALPUR: Member of the National Assembly Malik Muhammad Iqbal Channar has said that the initiatives introduced under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the development of the livestock sector and the prosperity of farmers are a promising sign for a brighter future. He expressed these views while addressing a seminar held in Bahawalpur on the improvement and modernisation of the

livestock sector. He stated that the Punjab government has approved development schemes worth Rs35 billion for the growth of the livestock industry, focusing on modern farming techniques and improved animal care systems. The seminar was attended by Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Fuad Hashim Rabbani, Special Secretary Livestock South Punjab Asad Naem, Additional Secretary (Technical) Livestock Punjab Dr. Usman Tahir, Deputy Secretary (Technical) Livestock South Punjab Dr. Sohail Azmat, Director General Extension Lahore Dr. Syed Nadeem Badr, Director General Production Lahore Dr. Kanwar Naeem, Member Provincial Assembly Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood Jajja, and a large number of progressive farmers. Addressing the seminar, Additional Secretary (Technical) Livestock Punjab Dr. Usman Tahir said that the Punjab government is actively working to modernize the livestock sector with the aim of increasing farmers' incomes and strengthening the industry on modern lines.—APP



Government of Pakistan
National Archives of Pakistan
(Cabinet Division) N Block, Pak Secretariat



F. No.1-9/25-26/Acts. Islamabad, May 7th, 2026

REQUEST FOR BIDS
PROCUREMENT OF CIVIL WORKS

1. The National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) (National Archives of Pakistan (NAP)) has reserved Funds for the procurement planned for FY 2025-26. The National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) (National Archives of Pakistan (NAP)) intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Fund to cover eligible payments under the contract for the "Tender for the Repair & Maintenance Works of Building of NAP in Islamabad and Karachi".
2. The National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) (National Archives of Pakistan (NAP)) invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for procurement of Works (Tender for the Repair & Maintenance Works of Building of NAP in Islamabad and Karachi) described in the bidding documents on EPADS v2.0.
3. **Single Stage-One Envelope** will be used by adopting **Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)** Technique for the subject procurement, in line with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority from time to time.
4. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security amounting described in Bid Security Section in Bidding Document in the form of **Pay Order**. Or all bids must be accompanied by bid securing declaration in the format specified in the Bidding documents
5. E-Bidding documents, containing detailed terms & conditions, specifications and requirements etc. are available on **e-Pak Acquisition and Disposal System (EPADS)** at <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/> for all the interested bidders registered on EPADS v2.0. Bidders are required to get themselves registered on EPADS v2.0 to participate in Bidding process.
6. The e-bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the e-Bidding documents, must be submitted through EPADS v2.0 on or before **Monday, May 25, 2026 02:00 PM**. E-bids will be opened by using EPADS v2.0 on the same day at **Monday, May 25, 2026 02:30 PM**. Manual submission of Bids shall not be entertained. Those vendors who have not yet registered on the new version of EPADS v2.0, may register themselves on <https://pa.epads.gov.pk/>. A tutorial to explain the registration process is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNW6T38v7tc>. In terms of Rules 48 of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) is notified for the subject procurement and notification copy is available on the procuring agency's website and on Authority's website at (www.ppra.org.pk).

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PID/I/9011/25

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
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Timely info helps to counter fake news during Marka-e-Haq: Tarar

Tarar termed accurate and timely communication “absolutely crucial and important,” particularly during conflicts and rapidly evolving situations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar has said close coordination between civil and military leadership, timely dissemination of verified information, and responsible conduct by the media enabled Pakistan to effectively counter fake news and strengthen its narrative during Marka-e-Haq (The Battle of Truth) with India, last year. Addressing a webinar titled “Truth Beyond Borders,” organized by the External Publicity Wing of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the minister said the government had deployed all available resources to ensure that accurate and verified information reached the right audience at the right time during the conflict situation last year. “There was a lot going on and so much information was coming up that we had to deploy all our resources in order to not only verify information, but make sure that the right information is going to the right audience at the right time,” he said. Tarar termed accurate and timely communication “absolutely crucial and important,” particularly during conflicts and rapidly evolving situations. Referring to the tensions on the border last year, with India the minister said all divisions and departments of the Ministry of Information and Broadcast-

ing were mobilized to respond effectively and maintain a smooth flow of credible information. He said one of the key factors behind Pakistan’s success in combating misinformation and fake news was the strong cohesion between the civil and military leadership, as well as close coordination between the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). “We had a very smooth flow of information and very accurate, which we gave out very timely to the media,” he added. The minister also appreciated Pakistan’s media and social media users for demonstrating responsibility and unity during the conflict situation. “I must also compliment Pakistan’s media, which played a very responsible role during that time. The social media users too,” he remarked. Tarar said there was unity of thought and action among all stakeholders, including citizens, who stood firmly behind the armed forces and the government. He said the collective national response enabled Pakistan to strengthen its narrative both domestically and internationally. “We saw an exemplary display of unity which enabled us to give our narrative strength at the local and the global level,” he noted. Highlighting another factor that strengthened Pakistan’s position, the minister said the adversary lacked effective spokespersons and sufficient outreach in the international media to project its narrative effectively. He said Pakistan emerged stronger

because the information being shared was verified, accurate and based on truth. “The main reason being that we knew that whatever information we were giving out was 100 per cent accurate, was verified, and was the truth. And the truth always prevails,” he added. Tarar said success in conflict situations depended on creating complete cohesion and synergy among stakeholders while ensuring the dissemination of accurate information through the appropriate forums. Recalling the events of May 6 and 7 last year, he said that when India attacked Pakistan, he addressed the international media within half an hour, while live feeds were simultaneously provided to local television channels and social media platforms. He said timely information sharing was made possible through effective institutional coordination and support from the ISPR. The minister said Pakistan had also established fact-checking forums and verification mechanisms that played a significant role in combating misinformation and fake news. He noted that the creation of Pakistan’s first digital communication department had significantly strengthened the country’s ability to respond to disinformation challenges. “Because we had the right kind of resources and systems in place, when we deployed those systems and put them to the test, we passed with flying colours,” he added.

VC calls Marka-e-Haq’ golden chapter in history

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Professor Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz), called Operation Marka-e-Haq a golden chapter in the history of Pakistan, emphasizing that the successful defense of the country by Pakistan’s Army, Pakistan Air Force, and the entire nation together will always be remembered in history. Talking to APP, in his message on the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, Dr Shinwari said that Pakistan is a great nation. Whenever anyone tried to cast an evil eye on the country, the people of Pakistan stood side by side with the armed forces and defeated the enemy’s evil intentions. He said that the response given to the enemy during the war imposed in May 2025 is a rare example in the modern world. Today, while celebrating the anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, the whole nation feels proud. “We are proud of the professional performance and defense capabilities of our Army, Navy, and Air Force,” he said. Dr Shinwari further said that Marka-e-Haq proved that Pakistan’s defense capabilities are strong and unbeatable. —APP

CJP holds session with Bar Council representatives

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi on Thursday held an interactive and consultative meeting with the vice chairmen and chairmen of the executive committees of the Pakistan Bar Council and provincial bar councils at the Supreme Court of Pakistan as part of ongoing stakeholder engagement aimed at improving the justice sector. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Pakistan Bar Council, Punjab Bar Council, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, Sindh Bar Council, Balochistan Bar Council, AJ&K Bar Council and Islamabad Bar Council, along with officials from the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan and the Federal Judicial Academy. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Dr. Musadik Malik participates in plantation drive under “Clean and Green Islamabad” Initiative.

Road to Makkah initiative continues successfully

Interior minister reviews arrangements at Islamabad airport

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a surprise visit to Islamabad Airport. During the visit, he reviewed the immigration process for Hajj pilgrims and other passengers. The Interior Minister inspected the counters established for Saudi immigration of Pakistani passengers under the “Road to Makkah” initiative and interacted with the staff.

Under the Road to Makkah initiative, Hajj pilgrims are being provided fast-track Saudi immigration facilities at Pakistani airports before departure. Hajj pilgrims expressed satisfaction over the excellent arrangements for Saudi immigration

facilities at Islamabad Airport under the program and thanked Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Speaking to the Interior Minister, the pilgrims stated that the process was extremely smooth and hassle-free. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also inquired from passengers about immigration and other facilities. Passengers informed him that the immigration process took only a few minutes and was carried out in a highly efficient manner. All immigration counters for international arrivals were fully operational, ensuring timely immigration clearance. The Interior Minister also reviewed the Joint Search Check

Post and directed authorities to further improve and expedite the search system. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the security system is being upgraded through the use of modern technology. He emphasized ensuring both passenger facilitation and security at the airport simultaneously and directed all relevant institutions to work in close coordination. He stated that providing timely facilities to passengers remains the top priority. DG FIA Dr. Usman Anwar, Director FIA Islamabad Zone Shehzad Bukhari, and other senior officers were also present on the occasion. —DNA

Climate change poses serious threat to human survival: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Thursday said that climate change poses a serious multidimensional threat affecting food security, water resources, agriculture, economic stability, and human survival. Addressing the Breathe Pakistan Conference organized by the Dawn Media Group, he said, “Peace, stability, and international cooperation are essential to ensure meaningful climate action.” The conference was attended by parliamentarians, diplomats, representatives of international organizations, climate experts, academics, media professionals, civil society members, and private-sector stakeholders. The Chairman of the Senate highlighted that the impacts of climate change are already evident in rising temperatures, shrinking water reserves, stressed agricultural systems, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including floods. He underlined that climate security is closely linked with peace and stability, adding that Pakistan is actively strengthening resilience in the energy, agriculture, food, and water

sectors while mobilizing climate finance and enhancing global partnerships. Referring to Pakistan’s role in promoting regional peace, he said the country has consistently demonstrated restraint and responsibility in challenging situations while firmly safeguarding its sovereignty. He added that operations such as Marka-e-Haq and Bunyan-un-Marsoos reflect national unity, discipline, and resolve. He also highlighted Pakistan’s diplomatic efforts in easing tensions during recent global crises. The Chairman of the Senate expressed concern that, despite being among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, Pakistan has received less than one billion dollars in climate financing over the past three decades. He termed current global commitments, including those made under COP29, insufficient and stressed that climate finance must be fair, predictable, and timely. Highlighting Pakistan’s climate initiatives, he referred to the Climate Change Act, afforestation drives, the Living Indus Initiative, the Green Pakistan Programme, and Parliament’s transition to solar energy. He

reaffirmed Pakistan’s strong advocacy for climate justice at international forums, including COP27 and COP29. He said the pledged 300 billion dollars annually by 2035 still falls short of the actual needs of vulnerable countries. He further emphasized that the Loss and Damage Fund should be treated as a matter of justice rather than charity. He also called for enhanced regional cooperation in glacier preservation, water management, and early warning systems. The Chairman Senate stressed that climate resilience efforts must directly benefit farmers and vulnerable communities. He called for stronger coordination among Parliament, government institutions, academia, media, civil society, and the private sector, supported by improved data, effective planning, and increased investment in climate adaptation. He urged all stakeholders to translate conference discussions into concrete legislation, policy reforms, and actionable strategies, reiterating his commitment to strengthening climate governance and oversight. —APP

ISCE concludes with participation of thousands of students

ISLAMABAD: The 6th International Students Convention and Expo (ISCE) 2026 concluded in Islamabad after four days of academic, cultural and industrial activities, attracting participation from thousands of students, universities and industry representatives from across Pakistan and abroad. Organisers said the convention brought together students from more than 40 universities along with participants from various industries and academic institutions. A significant number of international students also attended the event, adding a global dimension to the activities. The convention was organised at multiple institutions in Islamabad and Haripur. The opening ceremony was held at Riphah International University, while the educational and industrial expo took place at FAST National University. Competitions and workshops were hosted by Quaid-i-Azam University and Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute, Haripur. The four-day event featured academic competitions, workshops, indoor games, innovation showcases and a large-scale industrial exhibition aimed at promoting learning, networking and collaboration among students and institutions. Student-led projects, technology demonstrations and food stalls also remained a major attraction during the expo. Organisers said the convention provided young participants with opportunities to showcase their academic abilities, entrepreneurial ideas and creative skills while interacting with experts from academia and industry. Government College University Faisalabad secured the overall team trophy in the competitions, while the University of Sargodha obtained second position. Speaking at the concluding session, founder of the International Students Convention Muhammad Murtaza Noor said the platform had evolved into an important forum for youth engagement, academic interaction and cultural exchange. He said such initiatives help students explore opportunities in higher education, innovation and industry while promoting collaboration among institutions. Former chairman of the Higher Education Commission Dr Javid Laghari highlighted the importance of strengthening collaboration between academia and industry for sustainable development and technological progress. He said academic conventions and expos played a vital role in bridging the gap between education, research and the job market. The event also included panel discussions, interactive sessions and a diplomatic forum where academicians, industry leaders and foreign diplomats exchanged views on promoting Pakistan as a regional hub for higher education and innovation. The convention was organised in collaboration with several educational institutions and partner organisations, including the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and OIC-COMSTEC. —DNA

Water expert urges climate-resilient planning

ISLAMABAD: Dr Mohsin Hafeez, Global Director for Water, Food and Ecosystems at the International Water Management Institute, has called for an urgent shift from ad-hoc water management to evidence-based and climate-resilient planning in Pakistan. He was virtually addressing the second edition of the two-day Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference, organised by Dawn Media, held in Islamabad. “We do not have proper long-term planning. The tools are available that can tell us how much water is available, where the water is, and how it is being used,” he said. Highlighting groundwater as one of the country’s most pressing challenges, he noted that the resource was still not properly accounted for within the existing water management system. According to him, incomplete and scattered information was forcing authorities to depend on short-term planning cycles lasting only a few months. Dr Hafeez stressed the need for scientific planning in the irrigation sector, warning that water-intensive crops such as rice and sugarcane were being cultivated in arid regions where they were not environmentally suitable. “We should stop growing crops in regions that are not suitable for them and instead follow proper agricultural zoning,” he said. He also called for improved management of the irrigation system and urged authorities to update the water accounting and distribution framework in line with actual annual water availability. —DNA

Briefs

FCCP dismisses appeal in deceased employees' quota job case

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) on Thursday dismissed the appeal of clerk Samia Nazir in an important case relating to employment under the quota reserved for children of government employees who die during service. However, the court restrained the government from recovering salaries and benefits received during her period of service. A bench headed by Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan heard the case. During the hearing, counsel for the appellant argued that the Supreme Court had already ruled that appointments made before its judgment would remain protected, adding that his client had been appointed before the quota policy was abolished in Punjab. At this stage, the Additional Advocate General Punjab informed the court that the Supreme Court's ruling did not apply to the petitioner's case because the law relating to employment of children of deceased employees in Punjab had already been repealed. During the proceedings, Justice Baqar Najafi observed that the law providing jobs to children of deceased employees in Punjab had been abolished, while Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan remarked that the Sindh government had also ended the quota in light of the Supreme Court's judgment. —APP

Power Division introduces QR code system

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division on Thursday announced that electricity distribution companies have introduced a new mechanism to ensure transparency and facilitate consumers receiving government electricity subsidies. According to a spokesperson for the Power Division, monthly electricity bills of subsidized consumers will now clearly mention the exact amount of subsidy provided by the government for that month. The ministry said the initiative had been taken to ensure that subsidies continued to reach deserving and eligible consumers in a transparent manner. Under the new system, a QR code will be printed on electricity bills. Consumers will be required to scan the code and complete a registration process through an online link. The spokesperson clarified that the registration process was aimed solely at ensuring continued relief for poor and low electricity-consuming households. The Power Division emphasized that the initiative did not mean the withdrawal of subsidies in any way. "The government remains committed to providing relief to poor and middle-class consumers, and the objective of this exercise is to ensure fair and effective utilization of resources so that taxpayers' money is not wasted," the spokesperson said. Consumers were urged to complete registration through the QR code at the earliest to ensure uninterrupted continuation of subsidy benefits for eligible electricity users. The ministry further said that consumers facing any issue regarding their bills or registration process could contact the helpline of their respective electricity distribution company. The government, the spokesperson added, remained committed to providing relief to poor. —APP

NHMP officer serving in Pakistan Hajj Mission wins praise

The commendable act of Inspector Naveed Ahmad Qazi has further enhanced the reputation, professional integrity, and public trust associated with the Pakistan Hajj Mission and the National Highways and Motorway Police

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Under the Pakistan Hajj Mission in Saudi Arabia, Inspector Naveed Ahmad Qazi of the National Highways and Motorway Police has set a remarkable example of honesty, dedication, and professional responsibility while performing special duties as a Khadim-ul-Hujjaj. According to an NHMP press release issued on Thursday, Inspector Naveed Ahmad Qazi was performing his official duties at a hotel in Saudi Arabia when he found a misplaced handbag. Upon checking, the bag was found to

Abbasi meets Iran envoy, discusses bilateral relations

Regional developments, especially the situation in the Middle East, also came under discussion. Pakistan reiterated its support for peace, dialogue, and diplomatic solutions to regional challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Thursday met with Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam and discussed bilateral relations, railway cooperation and the overall regional situation. During the meeting, the minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iran, said a news release. He said that Pakistan highly values its close historical, cultural and mutually respectful ties with Iran and remains committed to expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The two sides held detailed discussions on enhancing railway connectivity between Pakistan and Iran, particularly focusing on the Taftan-Zahedan railway route and the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train project. Both sides agreed that stronger railway cooperation would play a vital role in promoting regional trade and connectivity. The meeting also reviewed ongoing efforts regarding the repair and rehabilitation of the Quetta-Taftan railway section. The minister emphasized that improved infrastructure and effective security measures are essential for ensuring uninterrupted railway operations. Regional developments, especially the situation in the Middle East, also came under discussion. Pakistan reiterated its support for peace, dialogue, and diplomatic solutions to regional challenges. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam appreciated Pakistan's positive and constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability and acknowledged Pakistan's diplomatic efforts as commendable. Both sides termed the ongoing efforts under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for peace, dialogue and de-escalation in the region as effective and



significant. Hanif Abbasi said that Pakistan has always believed in dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful resolution of disputes

and will continue to support diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring regional peace and stability. The meeting was held in a cordial

atmosphere, with both sides agreeing to further enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly in the railway sector.

Zong reaffirms climate action commitment

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology service enterprise, has partnered with the Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference 2026, bringing together policymakers, corporate leaders, development institutions, and climate experts to address Pakistan's escalating climate challenges. As climate pressures intensify across the country — from recurrent floods and extreme heatwaves to worsening air quality, water scarcity, and food insecurity — the need to transition from awareness to coordinated, large-scale action has become increasingly critical. Despite contributing minimally to global emissions, Pakistan remains among the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, underscoring the need for locally grounded yet globally aligned climate strategies. At Zong, climate action is viewed not only as an environmental responsibility but also as a strategic imperative that drives operational efficiency, strengthens governance, and enables long-term resilience. Through its partnership with this national platform, Zong has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing Pakistan's climate agenda through cross-sector collaboration. The company believes that next-generation technologies must be anchored in environmental stewardship and takes pride in leading the transition toward green and low-carbon operations. The conference brought together key stakeholders to examine the intersection of climate risk, economic stability, and national development. A key highlight of the summit was the panel discussion titled, "From CSR to Climate Leadership: Mobilising Pakistan's Private Sector for Climate Action." The session featured Najeeb Ullah Khan, Deputy Director Network Operations at Zong, alongside other prominent voices from various industries. Najeeb emphasized the critical role of public-private partnerships in advancing climate resilience. Addressing the panel, Najeeb Ullah Khan said, "Climate action is a core business priority for us. As a critical communications and technology service enterprise, our focus is on building resilient, energy-efficient infrastructure capable of withstanding increasing climate pressures while ensuring continuity of services when it matters most. Through investments in renewable energy, intelligent network systems, and operational resilience, we are reducing our environmental footprint while strengthening our ability to support communities, institutions, and emergency response efforts. Platforms like Breathe Pakistan play a vital role in aligning public and private sector efforts toward scalable, long-term climate solutions." Zong's commitment to resilience is embedded within its infrastructure strategy. To date, 85 percent of its network sites have been transitioned to solar and lithium-ion energy solutions, generating 1.43 million kWh of clean energy annually. The shift toward energy diversification and intelligent monitoring has proven critical during climate-induced disruptions, enabling uninterrupted connectivity during floods in Sindh and Balochistan. By ensuring reliable communication for emergency responders and affected communities, Zong has solidified its role as a key partner in national crisis management. Beyond infrastructure, Zong continues to contribute to environmental restoration and operational sustainability. In collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change and Pak-EPA, the company has planted 3,500 indigenous trees in Islamabad, while ongoing emission-reduction efforts remain central to its operations. —DNA

Senator calls Marka-e-Haq turning point of national unity

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt on Thursday termed "Marka-e-Haq" a turning point that reflects the success of national unity and the strong support of the Pakistani nation for its armed forces, saying the nation is admiring this spirit. In an exclusive conversation with a local media outlet, she praised Pakistan's armed forces, saying their professionalism, discipline, and timely response reflect the country's strong defence capability and national resolve. She said "Marka-e-Haq" stands as a clear example of unity, strength and resilience. Bushra Anjum said that Indian propaganda has been com-

pletely exposed, adding that all attempts to create confusion or division within Pakistan through misleading narratives have failed. She added that the nation remained united and firm against external misinformation campaigns. She further stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ensured all political parties were brought onto one platform, turning the situation into a collective national response.

She said this unity showed that it was not the achievement of any single group but of the entire country standing together. The Senator added that this is a shared success of the nation and its armed forces, reflecting Pakistan's cohesive political will, strong institutions, and enhanced diplomatic outreach on the global stage. She further stated that Pakistan also played an effective and balanced mediator role, helping to promote understanding and reduce tensions, which once again highlighted its constructive approach and credibility on the international stage. The senator concluded by saying that Pakistan's leadership's consistent commitment to peace, unity, and responsible diplomacy has strengthened its global standing, proving it as a reliable and dignified voice in international affairs. —DNA

Narrative of truth

Media's role in building national resolve

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), in collaboration with the Information Service Academy, hosted a high-level webinar titled "Narrative of Truth: Media's Role in Building National Resolve", marking the first anniversary of the May 2025 Pakistan-India military escalation and its wider strategic and informational implications. The speakers included Gen. (R) Saad Khattak, Chairman of the Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies, Dr. Qamar Cheema, Executive Director of the Sanobar Institute, and former Ambassador Shahid Kayani, who offered his remarks virtually. The speakers noted that the May 2025 crisis marked a defining moment in regional military history, challenging long-standing assumptions about conventional power asymmetries in South Asia. India's unwarranted aggression in May was described as a major escalation that triggered a highly calibrated and successful multi-domain response from Pakistan. Experts highlighted Pakistan's response on 10 May 2025 as a demonstration of operational precision, escalation control, and doctrinal maturity, underscoring effective coordination across air, land, and electronic warfare domains. The conflict was also described as a real-time test of modern military systems, which significantly influenced global assessments of Pakistan's conventional deterrence capability. It was also argued that India's foreign and security policy has increasingly been influenced by domestic electoral considerations, contributing to heightened regional tensions and repeated cycles of crisis. Speakers further emphasized that narratives linking Pakistan to terrorism were not substantiated by credible evidence and failed to gain broad international acceptance. —DNA

SCP joins global dialogue on alternative dispute resolution

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan participated in the Judicial Dispute Resolution Symposium held in Istanbul, Türkiye, where senior judges, legal experts and representatives of judicial academies from different countries discussed ways to strengthen alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms and improve judicial efficiency. The symposium was organized by the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) of the U.S. Department of Commerce in collaboration with the Istanbul Arbitration Centre (ISTAC). Discussions focused on the growing role of the judiciary in promoting ADR systems, judicial support for arbitration and mediation, and harmonization of domestic legal practices with international frameworks. Representing the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb participated in key sessions relating to court-annexed ADR models and the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards. He highlighted Pakistan's evolving approach towards institutionalizing ADR and shared details of recent reforms aimed at reducing case backlog, improving efficiency and enhancing access to justice. —APP

SC confirms bail of Mir Shehryar Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday confirmed the bail of former lawmaker and his son in a murder and attempted murder case. A three-member bench headed by and comprising among others, heard the case. The accused were charged in connection with an alleged attack on a member of the Sindh Assembly. According to the case record, one person was killed and two others injured in the firing incident. The case had been registered in Ubauro tehsil of Ghotki district. During the hearing, counsel for the accused, argued that the complainant had political rivalry with the applicants and that the accused had been targeted for political victimization. During the proceedings, Justice Shahid Waheed remarked that it was surprising that the complainant had not suffered even a scratch, while Justice Musarrat Hilali observed that all details needed to be examined to fully understand the case. —APP

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 07 Issue:180

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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Local elections tsunami to hit UK's leading parties

MOHAMED CHEBARO

THE world is changing and the UK is no exception, with Thursday's local elections set to be bad news for the traditional political parties, Labour and the Conservatives, which have controlled the government in London for more than 100 years. However, it is not just their seats that are under threat, but also the certainty of a political system that has long helped Britain sail through difficult crises. Voters should be careful about voting in a multiparty system instead of the more boring but stable two-party system. Local elections in the UK usually witness a lot of protest and tactical voting, as well as reduced levels of participation, and traditionally are not reflective of the voting direction expressed during general elections. And things are likely to be no different this time, as the clouds seem to be gathering over Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour government. They are set to receive a stern message that the electorate is not happy with what has been commonly dubbed their lack of direction. More than 5,000 local council seats in England are being contested on Thursday, alongside full national elections for the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales. Despite leading the center-left Labour Party to a huge election win in July 2024, opinion polls show Starmer's popularity has plunged since taking office. Following a string of scandals – although nothing as bad as those that plagued the previous Conservative governments – there is a sense that Labour has so far failed to deliver the improvements in living standards that it promised. There is a sense that Labour has so far failed to deliver the improvements in living standards that it promised Mohamed Chebaro. If we believe the polls and the generally gloomy anti-Labour attitude, the party should brace for big losses. The rising far-right Reform UK, the party of colorful pro-Trump, pro-Putin populist Nigel Farage, is likely to outperform Labour in its former industrial heartlands and the Green Party could do the same in major cities. But British voters ought to take a deep breath and be careful what they wish for in a turbulent world that has not spared the UK since its badly costed Brexit adventure. Many of the problems the country is facing are an accumulation of the bad political management of the Conservatives, who ruled for 14 years from 2010, and an increasingly ungovernable and conflictive world that is spilling out discord and uncertainty on all fronts. For nearly two years, Starmer has been trying to deliver on the country's priorities, including stabilizing the public finances, reducing child poverty and cutting hospital waiting lists. He has also faced immense global challenges, from wars



in Europe and the Middle East to tariffs, weaponized immigration and a toxic public debate fueled by trolls and misinformation and disinformation campaigns that have been ripping apart the fabric of society and its tolerant, inclusive approach. British voters, like those in the rest of Europe, are exposed to the adverse winds of whipped-up rhetoric about the distrust and dysfunction of the state. They are wrongly led to believe, through the toxic social media realm, that there are easy fixes to all the challenges and adversities facing their country. The far right across Europe is riding the wave of voters' impatience on migration, an issue that is easily employed to sow hate. In the case of Labour, the figures are positive, as immigration has fallen and the number of legal removals has increased, unlike under its predecessors. This is despite the fact that, since leaving the EU, the UK is being denied the tools that could have helped better share the burden. As a result of its approach, Labour has been accused by its core, left-wing supporters of veering too far to the right. It is also criticized by its new right-of-center voters for abandoning them to pursue policies that are apparently too compassionate toward migrants. The far right is riding the wave of voters' impatience on migration, an issue that is easily employed to sow hate. Despite the government's push to calm the economy and balance the books, growth remains sluggish, compounded by an uncertain world and less-than-accommodating ally across the Atlantic. Against such a backdrop, many are questioning whether Britain's party political fabric is being shredded, leading the country into a multiparty state scenario. As things stand, five parties are polling between 12 percent and 26 percent, which is a historic first, since election battles are usually fought mostly between the two main parties. These fundamentals have rarely been questioned in the past. In England, Labour and the Conservatives are both likely to suffer big losses in the local elections. Reform UK, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens are expected to pick up dissatisfied voters from both major parties. The country could wake up and see Italian-style results, or even a Dutch-style split of votes between five or more parties. The UK might have to get used to polarized politics and the imbalances that could disrupt governance and legitimacy, despite its first-past-the-post electoral system. According to that system, Labour won a huge majority in 2024 despite winning just 34 percent of the votes, while in 2019 it lost heavily despite racking up 32 percent. Many believe the remedy is electoral reform and a shift to proportional representation, which is favored by no less than 40 percent of the electorate. But that has faded from the agendas of the ascending parties. For Starmer and Labour, the challenge will be to spin the local election losses as an opportunity to reboot and promise to deliver, albeit with narrowing political maneuverability. For others, it might be a boost that will be difficult to monetize in the next general election. Three years is a long time in politics and a lot could happen, but one thing is for sure: the world is changing. Voters must take the long view and decide whether they want to ditch a stable political system in favor of a multiparty system, with its many difficult coalitions, in a polarized world.

Yet Again, Pakistan Averted a Global Meltdown

Qamar Bashir



After months of escalating confrontation in and around the Strait of Hormuz, the sudden halt of the U.S.-led naval escort operation reflected a changing geopolitical reality: the battlefield had reached its limits, the global economy was bleeding, and quiet diplomacy—much of it facilitated through Pakistan—had become the only viable path forward. Within hours of the announcement, Brent crude fell sharply to nearly \$108 a barrel while U.S. crude dropped toward \$100. Global stock markets surged in relief

THE temporary suspension of "Project Freedom" by President Donald Trump on May 5-6, 2026, may ultimately be remembered not merely as a tactical military pause, but as an admission that diplomacy had succeeded where overwhelming force had failed. After months of escalating confrontation in and around the Strait of Hormuz, the sudden halt of the U.S.-led naval escort operation reflected a changing geopolitical reality: the battlefield had reached its limits, the global economy was bleeding, and quiet diplomacy—much of it facilitated through Pakistan—had become the only viable path forward. Within hours of the announcement, Brent crude fell sharply to nearly \$108 a barrel while U.S. crude dropped toward \$100. Global stock markets surged in relief. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq reached new highs, Asian markets rallied, and the immediate fear of catastrophic maritime losses eased. The world economy, which had been standing at the edge of another massive inflationary shock, suddenly regained a measure of stability. According to the emerging narrative from regional diplomacy, Pakistan worked continuously behind the scenes to maintain communication channels between Washington and Tehran after the fragile ceasefire that began on April 7, 2026. Islamabad reportedly urged restraint on all sides and advocated a formula that combined de-escalation in Hormuz with renewed negotiations on sanctions, maritime access, and regional security guarantees. Whether acknowledged publicly or not, Pakistan's role appears to have been crucial in preventing the conflict from crossing the point of no return. The irony of the entire episode is impossible to ignore. The war itself began with immense confidence from the United States and Israel. "Epic Fury," the military campaign launched with promises of crushing Iran's strategic capabilities, was presented as a short and decisive operation that would allegedly force Tehran into submission within weeks. Regime change, rollback of nuclear ambitions, destruction of military infrastructure, and strategic surrender were all openly discussed as attainable goals. None of those objectives materialized. Instead, Iran absorbed the pressure, maintained internal cohesion, preserved much of its command structure, and demonstrated a capacity for resilience that surprised even many seasoned observers. What was expected to become a demonstration of overwhelming Western military supremacy gradually evolved into a prolonged strategic stalemate. The same pattern repeated itself with "Project Freedom." The initiative was introduced with great fanfare as a bold U.S.-led naval effort to escort commercial vessels safely through Hormuz and break Iran's effective control over maritime movement. Yet the operation quickly encountered practical realities. Shipping companies hesitated. Insurance providers warned of extreme wartime

risk exposure. Several commercial vessels reportedly complied with Iranian maritime instructions rather than rely entirely on foreign military escorts. What was intended to project dominance instead exposed the limitations of power in a multipolar world. Ultimately, Project Freedom itself was paused without fully achieving its declared objectives. That decision alone speaks volumes. For decades, Washington operated under the assumption that military superiority automatically translated into geopolitical compliance. The Iran conflict has challenged that assumption. A country under sanctions, facing combined pressure from the United States and Israel, managed not only to survive but to negotiate from a position far stronger than many anticipated. Now the balance of leverage has visibly shifted. Even President Trump's own remarks about energy exports inadvertently revealed another dimension of the conflict. During recent comments about upcoming discussions with Xi Jinping, Trump openly spoke about encouraging China and Asian economies to purchase greater quantities of American oil and gas from Alaska, Texas, and Louisiana. He described satellite images showing lines of ships moving toward American energy terminals like "highways at sea." Reading between the lines, many analysts see a broader economic motive behind the prolonged instability in Hormuz. As Middle Eastern exports became constrained by war, insecurity, and naval restrictions, U.S. energy producers gained unprecedented opportunities to capture global market share. Asian consumers who traditionally relied heavily on Gulf oil increasingly turned toward American supplies. In effect, the disruption of Gulf energy routes redirected enormous revenue streams toward the United States. Meanwhile, Gulf economies paid a heavy price. Infrastructure damage, declining investor confidence, soaring insurance premiums, interrupted exports, and prolonged regional insecurity weakened economies that had once depended on stable maritime commerce. Even when some production capacity remained intact, the uncertainty surrounding Hormuz severely constrained the movement of energy resources. Yet another remarkable transformation emerged during this crisis: Washington's rediscovery of international institutions. Only months earlier, senior American officials had openly dismissed the relevance of the United Nations, criticizing multilateral systems as ineffective and outdated. The United States had reduced participation in several international bodies and increasingly emphasized unilateral power. But as the Hormuz crisis intensified, the rhetoric changed dramatically. Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently emphasized the importance of the United Nations and suggested that maritime disputes surrounding Hormuz should be addressed through international mechanisms and peaceful diplomacy.

The same system previously dismissed as ineffective suddenly became essential once military escalation failed to deliver decisive outcomes. This reversal illustrates a deeper truth about the emerging global order: even superpowers ultimately require rules, institutions, and diplomacy when raw force reaches its limits. The conflict also exposed extraordinary contradictions in international conduct. Iran was repeatedly described as an aggressor for restricting maritime access in Hormuz, while many across the world pointed to previous unilateral military actions carried out elsewhere without international authorization. Competing narratives dominated global media every day. One day the war was about nuclear weapons, the next day about regional security, then about maritime freedom, and later about protecting commerce. The justifications evolved constantly because the realities on the ground kept changing. Amid this confusion, Pakistan quietly positioned itself not as a military actor but as a stabilizing diplomatic bridge. A country often underestimated in global power calculations emerged as one of the few states capable of communicating credibly with all major stakeholders—Washington, Tehran, Beijing, and the Gulf capitals simultaneously. That achievement carries enormous significance. Had the conflict continued escalating unchecked, the consequences could have become catastrophic. A fully closed Hormuz Strait might have triggered oil prices well beyond previous crisis peaks, devastated global transportation systems, collapsed fragile supply chains, and pushed multiple economies into recession simultaneously. The trillions potentially saved through de-escalation cannot be measured only in stock market rebounds or lower fuel costs; they include avoided unemployment, avoided inflationary spirals, avoided industrial shutdowns, and perhaps even avoidance of a broader regional war. Today, the world stands at a fragile crossroads. The ceasefire remains conditional, mistrust remains deep, and no permanent agreement has yet been finalized. Risks continue to hover over the Gulf, and shipping companies still view the region as dangerous. But for now, diplomacy has temporarily succeeded where confrontation failed. And in that diplomatic success, Pakistan's role has emerged as one of the most consequential and least acknowledged developments of the entire crisis. The world may eventually recognize that while great powers fought for dominance, it was careful diplomacy from an unexpected mediator that helped prevent economic disaster and pulled humanity one step back from the edge of a far wider war.

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Sowing Courage, Reaping Honour

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



He knows that the soil yields not to the idle but to the patient and the persevering. In time, he beholds the fruits of his labour filling his stores. So, it is with individuals and with nations. Where honest toil, unflinching courage, and a steadfast spirit are shown, reward follows as surely as the seasons turn

FROM plowing the stubborn earth to sowing the precious seeds, from carrying water under the burning sun to gathering the golden harvest at last, the farmer pours out his sweat and places his quiet trust in Almighty Allah. He knows that the soil yields not to the idle but to the patient and the persevering. In time, he beholds the fruits of his labour filling his stores. So, it is with individuals and with nations. Where honest toil, unflinching courage, and a steadfast spirit are shown, reward follows as surely as the seasons turn. We reap what we sow—an ancient truth that found vivid expression in Pakistan's journey through trial and triumph in the days of May last year. When India unleashed unprovoked aggression, Pakistan responded with firmness and dignity. It was no reckless rush to conflict but a measured defence of sovereignty rooted in years of discipline and national resolve. The world watched as Pakistani forces displayed professional excellence and strategic restraint. Those with vested interests in Pakistan's isolation were left astonished, while the spirit of truth and justice elevated the nation's name far and wide. Honour came unbidden, successes followed one upon another, and Pakistan secured for itself a place of rare respect upon the global stage. This transformation shone brightest in Washington. In a historic first, Pakistan's Army Chief, Field Marshal General Asim Munir, was hosted at the White House itself—a distinction rarely granted to a serving military leader who is not head of state. President Donald Trump engaged warmly and at length with Pakistani leadership, openly crediting General Asim Munir and the civilian government with preventing the 2025 crisis from escalating into a catastrophe that might have threatened the peace of entire regions, even the spectre of nuclear danger. In characteristic bluntness, the American President spoke of the Prime Minister and the Army Chief as "two fantastic people," praise that carried diplomatic weight and signalled renewed regard for Pakistan's judgment and maturity. Meetings held

in a spirit of mutual respect brought together both civilian and military figures, most notably Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif standing alongside Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. This seamless unity projected a strong and coherent national image, restoring Pakistan's diplomatic credibility. Concrete outcomes emerged: a trade understanding that reduced burdensome US tariffs on Pakistani exports, alongside promising discussions on energy cooperation and fresh avenues for American investment. In a remarkably short period, Pakistan moved from relative diplomatic solitude to the position of a valued strategic partner in the eyes of Washington. Yet Pakistan's rising influence has stretched well beyond any single capital. The country has gracefully assumed the role of a bridge state, trusted by rival powers seeking channels of communication. In the tense standoff between the United States and Iran, Pakistani diplomacy has worked quietly and effectively, helping to open lines of dialogue and supporting efforts toward ceasefire and de-escalation, particularly in the vital waters of the Strait of Hormuz. Such responsibilities demand credibility, neutrality, and wisdom—qualities Pakistan has demonstrated with growing confidence. New lights of cooperation were lit with Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, and other Islamic and European countries. Not only the relevant region but the entire world appreciated Pakistan's policy of reconciliation to reduce tensions in the Gulf. Nations across continents sang anthems and songs in their own languages, paying sincere tribute to Pakistan's mature and peace-loving approach. Traditional bonds have grown deeper and more fruitful. With Saudi Arabia, high-level visits have been marked by genuine warmth and practical vision. Security cooperation has been broadened, while collaboration in energy projects and investment has injected new vitality into a relationship long rooted in shared faith and fraternity. With the People's Republic of China, the strategic partnership has entered a dynamic new phase. The

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor advances with fresh momentum, bringing infrastructure, energy, and connectivity projects ever closer to completion. Beijing has found in Pakistan a reliable and battle-tested ally, whose military resilience and diplomatic poise have only heightened its value amid shifting global alignments. Pakistan has thus skillfully maintained multi-alignment, balancing important relationships without compromising its independence. Friendship with Turkey has likewise flourished. Defence cooperation has expanded through joint exercises and technology sharing, while diplomatic coordination on international forums has grown more effective. Cultural exchanges and trade links have enriched the human dimension of this brotherhood, and Turkey's consistent political support has been a source of strength. The solidarity shown in the wake of last year's conflict has forged these ties even more firmly. Underpinning all these gains stands the enhanced credibility of Pakistan's armed forces. The military response of May 2025 was hailed at home as a shining success that strengthened deterrence and national morale. Internationally, Pakistan earned recognition as a responsible nuclear state, a highly professional military force, and a stabilising actor that prefers restraint to recklessness. Bilateral military exercises with diverse partners have further polished this reputation, turning respect for Pakistan's soldiers into an established global reality. None of these achievements arrived without cost. Like the farmer who endures long days and uncertain skies, Pakistan has laboured through adversity with courage and unity. The harvest is now evident: a stronger voice in world councils, revived friendships, renewed economic hope, and a quiet pride that swells every Pakistani heart. Yet vigilance remains essential. The field of nations demands constant care if future seasons are to prove still more abundant. For in the eternal order of things, what a people sow with sincerity, sacrifice, and faith, they shall surely reap in honour, dignity, and lasting prosperity.

Briefs

No space for war between N. neighbors

FROM PAGE 01
period of time is not a perpetrator but victim of Indian sponsored terrorism," he noted. Chaudhry noted that India attempted to portray, without evidence, that Pakistan had perpetrated terrorism in India. "It had been one year since the Pahalgam incident, yet the questions that Pakistan had asked remain unanswered," he said. "How come an FIR was registered within 15 minutes of the incident... Where is the evidence? The whole world, including sensible Indians, is asking who is behind the attack. Nobody buys this... You are the biggest terrorist. Nobody listens to them, nobody believes them," he added. Moving on the second consequence, he said that Marka-e-Haq consolidate Pakistan as the net security stabiliser in the region "as per the vision of founding father and the vision was 'peace within and without'". He said that Marka-e-Haq showed who was controlling and dominating the escalation, adding that India escalated the conflict based on a "lie and fabricated drama" and how maturely Pakistan and its armed forces handled that. "The biggest ambassador of stability in the region was Pakistan and its leadership," he added. Referring to the third strategic consequence, Lt Gen Chaudhry said it was related to "our eastern neighbour," saying it was the "politicisation of Indian military leadership and militarisation of Indian political leadership." "You heard their air chief marshal a few months after Marka-e-Haq saying 'I got to know today that even we downed some planes' [...] That is politicisation of the military leadership... Why are you trying to make jokers out of your admirals, and generals and marshals? Don't do that." On the other hand, he said: "We have placed the facts as they are." Furthermore, he criticised the Indian politicians for appearing like "war mongers" and giving statements based on hatred. The DG ISPR noted that the politicisation of the military and militarisation of politics was "dangerous". Meanwhile, Chaudhry said that the fourth strategic consequence was the global acknowledgement of Indian efforts to externalise its internal problems and internalise its external problems while using terrorism as a "state tool".

Trump reversed Hormuz...

FROM PAGE 01
Furthermore, the US officials told NBC that a call between Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman did not resolve the issue, forcing the president to pause Project Freedom in order to restore US military access to the critical airspace. The US military maintains fighter aircraft, refuelling tankers and air defences at Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia. Other Gulf allies, including Qatar, were also reportedly surprised by the announcement, with NBC reporting Doha was contacted only after the operation had already begun. A Saudi source told NBC News that Trump and the crown prince "have been in touch regularly." Saudi officials were also in touch with Trump, Vice President JD Vance, US Central Command and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the source added. The source also said Riyadh supported Pakistan's diplomatic efforts aimed at brokering a deal between Iran and the United States to end the conflict. Asked whether the announcement of Project Freedom caught the Saudi leaders by surprise, the Saudi source said: "The problem with that premise is that things are happening quickly in real time." NBC further reported that a White House official rejected suggestions that regional allies were blindsided, insisting they had been informed in advance. A Middle Eastern diplomat also told NBC News that Oman was only consulted after Trump publicly announced the operation, though Muscat was "not upset or angry" over the matter.

PSB Honours Rizwan Aftab for Championing Pakistan's Athletes

The prestigious honour was presented by Director General PSB, Muhammad Yasir Pirzada, who praised Rizwan Aftab Ahmed for his remarkable role in strengthening Pakistan's sporting landscape and supporting athletes at the highest level

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has bestowed its highest honour upon ACTIVIT CEO and Director of National Hospital Lahore, Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, in recognition of his exceptional contributions toward the welfare, rehabilitation, and development of Pakistan's athletes through sustained financial, medical, and performance support. The prestigious honour was presented by Director General PSB, Muhammad Yasir Pirzada, who praised Rizwan Aftab Ahmed for his remarkable role in strengthening Pakistan's sporting landscape and supporting athletes at the highest level. The recognition places Rizwan among a distinguished group of individuals whose efforts go far beyond conventional patronage, reflecting an unwavering commitment to athlete wellness, recovery, and sporting excellence. His contributions have notably benefited Olympic gold medallist Arshad Nadeem, alongside several other elite athletes, through vital medical assistance and financial backing.



Speaking at the ceremony, Muhammad Yasir Pirzada termed Rizwan's efforts a shining example of collaboration between the private sector and national sports institutions. He emphasised that such support is crucial in nurturing talent and enabling Pakistani athletes to compete successfully on the global stage. Expressing his gratitude, Rizwan described the honour as both humbling and inspiring, reaffirming his commitment to serving athletes and contributing to Pakistan's future success in international sports. Rizwan highlighted his family's longstanding legacy of national service. His maternal great-grandfather, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, was a prominent statesman who worked alongside Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and held key ministerial positions in Pakistan. He also served as head of the Pakistan Hockey Federation during his distinguished career. Rizwan further shared that his grandfather, Itukhar Ahmed Shah, represented Pakistan in swimming at the 1948 London Olympics, while his father, Prof Dr. Aftab Ahmed, is regarded as one of the pioneers of orthopaedic surgery in Pakistan.

Pakistan likely to host Korea for four-match series ahead of hockey World Cup

LAHORE: Pakistan will most likely host a four-match series against South Korea in the last week of June soon after the national squad returns from the FIH Pro League tour to Europe, national team's head coach Manzoor-ul-Hasan Senior said here on Tuesday. "The negotiations [for the proposed series] are in final stages between the Pakistan Hockey Federation and its South Korean counterpart. According to the plan, two matches each will be held in Lahore and Islamabad," Manzoor said on the first day of the national training camp set up here at the National Hockey Stadium for the Pro League. Pakistan are scheduled to play the third leg of their Pro

League matches in Belgium (against Belgium and Spain) and England (against England and India) from June 13 to 27. After the Pro League, Pakistan will be featuring in the 16-nation World Cup from Aug 15 to 30 in Belgium and the Netherlands. The Green shirts will be returning to the World Cup after a gap of eight years. While more than 64 players were invited for the initial stage of the Pro League camp, only 34 reported on Tuesday. According to the head coach, 18 probables are currently playing league hockey in different countries, one player is unfit while another one did not report without giving any reason. Manzoor said that the Samiullah Khan-led selection committee

would reduce the number of the probables on May 12-13, adding that the camp would continue till the team's departure for Belgium. It is pertinent to mention here that since the ad-hoc was imposed on the PHF in February, this is the first hockey activity being held in Lahore where the federation's headquarters is located. In the meantime, the PHF had been functioning primarily in Islamabad. The head coach, on the occasion, mentioned the details of the camp. "On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the players will undergo basic practice while Thursday will be the rest day. From Friday to Sunday, practice matches featuring probables will be held," he said.

"Overall, the camp probables are showing their talent; We hope [gradually] they will shape up to become international stuff [in time]. "Though the Pro League matches will be tough, the coaches will try their best to prepare a strong team to win matches," the head coach stated. Pakistan, who are competing in the Pro League for the very first time since its inception in 2019, lost all their eight matches of the 2025-26 edition, first against Argentina and Holland in Argentina, and then against Australia and Germany in Australia. Pakistan, 12th in FIH world team rankings, were made part of this season's Pro League by the FIH after New Zealand, ranked 11th, opted out owing to financial constraints. - APP

UNSC holds emergency talks following attacks on UAE

UNITED NATIONS: As the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz escalates, the United Nations reiterates its commitment to support efforts towards peace, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said on Wednesday during his news briefing in New York. He was speaking shortly after the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, briefed a closed-door Security Council meeting focused on the missile and drone attacks on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday. UAE said that Iran had been responsible for the attacks but Tehran on Tuesday firmly denied involvement. "Ms. DiCarlo underscored that from the start of the conflict on 28 February, the Secretary-General condemned all unlawful attacks in the Middle East and beyond," the spokesperson said. Furthermore, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has also stressed that Security Council resolution 2817 (2026) "must be respected and civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected." The resolution, adopted in March, came in the wake of Iranian attacks on several neighbouring countries following UDS-Israel bombardment of Iran. Dujarric said the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Middle East conflict, Jean Arnault, continues diplomatic consultations in the region and was scheduled to meet with the Turkish foreign minister on Wednesday. He underscored that "the United Nations remains committed to supporting all efforts aimed at a comprehensive and durable resolution of this conflict." The Security Council meeting was requested by Bahrain following attacks on the UAE which struck an oil terminal in Fujairah, causing damage and civilian casualties. - APP

Govt committed to development ...

FROM PAGE 01
Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Advisor to PM Rana Sanaullah, and Special Assistant Talha Burki. During the visit, the prime minister will inaugurate solar power and Safe City projects, the laptop scheme, and the youth business and agriculture loan scheme for Gilgit-Baltistan. He will also lay the foundation stone for four Daanish Schools in the region.

PM Shehbaz, Qatari...

FROM PAGE 01
While recalling a recent visit to Doha on April 16, PM Shehbaz hailed his meeting with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Doha's leadership, saying it was most helpful in forging a consensus for the peace efforts. PM Shehbaz was assured by his Qatari counterpart that Doha would continue to support diplomatic efforts spearheaded by Pakistan to ensure the security and stability of the Middle East, the PMO says. It adds that both leaders agreed to maintain close communication and coordination on all issues of mutual interest.

Iran tensions escalate...

FROM PAGE 01
after weeks of heightened tensions and possible disruptions. Iran has strongly denied involvement in any attack on a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian officials rejected accusations, calling them baseless and urging international investigations to avoid escalation. The denial comes as shipping companies continue to reroute vessels or halt transits through the strait, causing significant delays in global energy and trade flows. The discussions are expected to address potential sporting sanctions and logistical challenges facing Iranian football amid the current geopolitical climate.

Pak assures IMF of 'ending...'

FROM PAGE 01
curtail their power consumption to less than 200 units from each electricity meter. The targeted subsidy will help curb the misuse of this subsidy. The government will also replicate the collection of e-Abiana irrigation service charges (water tax on irrigation) from three provinces, including Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, from the next financial year after implementing it in Punjab. The government is working to develop a mechanism for an electricity subsidy, which will be implemented from January 2027. "This will replace the budgeted tariff differential subsidy and cross-subsidy system with a targeted budgeted subsidy framework for low-income consumers via BISP," said the official.

3 children killed in Waziristan

FROM PAGE 01
people were injured" as a result of the explosion, the security sources said, noting that the victims were a 15-year-old boy and two girls of eight and seven years old. Security sources added that those injured in the attack were immediately taken to the District Headquarters Hospital in Wana. Locals expressed deep grief and anger over the tragic incident and said that the terrorists were once again targeting unarmed and innocent civilians. The security sources noted that "Khawarij elements have been targeting the general population, children and women in South Waziristan and adjacent areas in the past as well". "Khawarij and their facilitators are continuously shedding the blood of innocent civilians to achieve their nefarious goals; however, such cowardly attacks cannot dampen the morale of the people," they added.

Kazakh team triumphs at FIRST World Championship 2026

ASTANA: The OVERTIME team from Shymkent-Karatou Nazarbayev Intellectual School represented Kazakhstan at the FIRST World Championship 2026, which took place in Houston, the U.S., from April 29 to May 2, a Qazinform News Agency correspondent reports. It drew the participation of the world's 336 strongest teams. The students of NIS Shymkent-Karatou won the Reach Award Winner - 1st Place, becoming champions in one of the most significant categories of the global tournament. The FIRST Championship is considered one of the most prestigious international competitions in robotics, engineering, and innovation. It evaluates not only technical preparation, robot quality, and programming solutions, but also project thinking, teamwork, leadership, contributions to STEM education, and societal impact. The Reach Award recognized OVERTIME's systematic work in promoting STEM and robotics, expanding community outreach, and implementing socially significant project-SA distinctive feature of the team is that they do not limit themselves to competitive robotics. They strive to use engineering knowledge to solve real social challenges. Among their initiatives a tactile book in Braille for visually impaired people, distributed worldwide, and Smart Soyle glasses for people with hearing impairments. Besides, they developed educational books for preschool children. - APP

Shaheen backs head coach Sarfraz Ahmed ahead of Bangladesh Tests

DHAKA: Pakistan pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi has put his support behind the team's newly-appointed head coach Sarfraz Ahmed ahead of his first assignment; a two-match Test series against Bangladesh. Sarfraz was handed the role last month after it was left vacant by former head coach Azhar Mahmood, whose contract with the Pakistan Cricket Board ended in March. Sarfraz's appointment had raised eyebrows due to the former skipper's lack of experience as coach at the senior level. He has worked with the Pakistan Shaheens - the country's developmental side - and the national U-19 team as mentor, while also announcing retirement from international cricket in March. Friday will mark Sarfraz's debut as head coach as Pakistan take on Bangladesh in the first Test. The second game will start May 16. "He played with us when he was captain, when we played our first games," Shaheen told reporters on Wednesday. "So those memories are still in our minds and he knows very well how to use all the players and how to use all conditions. "So I think for Pakistan cricket, I feel [this] is the best option right now." Sarfraz's staff also features former Pakistan players Asad Shafiq and Umar Gul. Shaheen said an all-Pakistani coaching unit was helpful for the players. "Having a coaching staff with all Pakistani former players removes the language barrier among the team," noted the left-arm. "That improves communication between the coaches and the players, which I feel is much easier. You understand what the player and the team wants." The Bangladesh games will be Pakistan's first Test series

since October, when they played against South Africa at home, drawing the two-match series 1-1. It was also Pakistan's first series of the World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle. The period in between has been heavily dominated by white-ball cricket. "It's not easy actually," Shaheen said about playing Tests after a long gap. "Our last Test series was against South Africa in Pakistan - that was a long time ago." However, the 26-year-old added that himself and the other Pakistan pacers managed their respective workloads on the sidelines of their Pakistan Super League campaign. "Even in the PSL, as soon as matches would finish, we used to do extra bowling on the side wickets," he said. "Because we were preparing that if we suddenly came into Test cricket, how to manage our bowling load. "And in the four-five days we got [before the series], we tried to bowl 20-25 overs in those days so that we could get used to Test cricket." Pictures coming in from the Shere-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka on Wednesday suggested Bangladesh, known for their spin-friendly conditions, are preparing pitches conducive for fast-bowling as they look to unleash their increasingly exciting pace sensation Nahid Rana alongside Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam. But Pakistan's squad also features some season red-ball campaigners, including Mohammad Abbas and Khurram Shehzad. Test mainstays Sajid Khan and Noman Ali will carry out the spin duties. "Abbas bhai and Khurram have come - they are seamers, so when there are green tracks, your seamers become very effective," Shaheen said. "Such bowlers can help you a lot. - APP

Iranian FA says will meet FIFA to seek World Cup assurances in next few days

Co-host with US and Mexico, Canada says it refused entry to Iran soccer chief last week due to his links to IRGC

IRANIAN soccer chief Mehdi Taj said on Wednesday he will have a meeting with FIFA President Gianni Infantino in the next three or four days at which he would seek assurances that his country will be respected at the World Cup in the United States. Canada, which is co-hosting the June 11 to July 19 World Cup with the US and Mexico, said it refused entry to Taj last week because of his links to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Taj said on Tuesday that Iran would not take part in the tournament if FIFA could not guarantee respect for the country's institutions in the US where the team will be based and play all three of their group matches. "We will tell (FIFA) what our expectations are. If they can address them, we will definitely participate," the

FFIRI president told state broadcaster IRIB in Tehran on Wednesday. "But if there is no guarantee that they will be addressed, then no one has the right to insult us or the pillars of our system. "And if they continue on the path of disrespect, and even ask our players those kinds of questions, we may make a different decision." Both the US and Canada classify the IRGC as a "terrorist entity" and have made it clear they will not admit people with links to the elite military force. Taj, who served as a high-ranking official with the IRGC before moving into soccer administration, received the backing of Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei for his stance on Wednesday. "Look, our national football team is not 'travelling' to the United States, rather

we are going there to take part in the FIFA World Cup," Baghaei told reporters in Tehran. "Therefore, it is FIFA's responsibility to provide all the necessary facilities and conditions. "Host governments also have a very clear obligation under FIFA regulations to provide the necessary arrangements and issue the required visas without taking political considerations or motives into account. "We hope that FIFA, if only for the sake of preserving its own credibility, will certainly take the necessary measures." Iran's participation in the World Cup has been in question since the US and Israel launched air strikes on the Islamic Republic in late February, triggering the war in the region. Taj also said a wider 30-man squad for the tournament would be select-

ed this week before being cut to the final 26 players after a training camp in Turkey. Iran coach Amir Ghalenoi told state media that the squad planned to arrive in the US 14 days before the start of the tournament after the two-week camp. Ghalenoi said he would like the squad to have two or three warm-up matches but attempts to set up friendly internationals had proved tricky with teams pulling out at the last minute. The squad will therefore remain in Tehran for another week before heading to Turkey, where Iran played friendlies against Costa Rica and Nigeria in late March, on May 16. Team Melli are scheduled to get their campaign underway against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15. The team's US base will be at the Kino Sports Complex in Tucson, Arizona. - APP

Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.71 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.72. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.05 and Rs 279.80, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.75 and closed at Rs 327.91 from the previous day's close of Rs 327.16, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.78, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.60 and closed at Rs 379.64 compared to the previous day's Rs 379.04. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 75.88, while the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 paisa and closed at 74.30.—APP

SECP sets historic record new company registrations

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Thursday announced a landmark achievement in corporate registration, having incorporated an unprecedented 4,082 companies in the month of April 2026, the highest number of monthly incorporations ever recorded in Pakistan's corporate history. With this milestone, the total number of registered companies in Pakistan has reached 294,101, said SECP press release issued here. The SECP also set new daily incorporation records within the same period, registering 300 companies in a single day on April 27, 2026, a figure that was surpassed just days later when 340 companies were incorporated on April 30, 2026. This remarkable milestone reflects growing investor confidence in Pakistan's economic outlook, signals a decisive and accelerating transition toward a documented, formal economy, and stands as a testament to transformative improvement in the Commission's operational efficiency and service delivery capacity. The Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to further streamlining regulatory processes, reducing barriers to business formation, and fostering a transparent and digital enabling environment for investors and entrepreneurs across Pakistan, the press release added. Geographically, Punjab remained the hub of business activity, accounting for 2,093 (51%) of new registrations. It was followed by the Islamabad Capital Territory with 719 (18%), Sindh with 600 (15%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 325 (8%), Gilgit-Baltistan with 276 (7%), and Balochistan with 69 (2%).—APP

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a significant increase in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 7,800 to settle at Rs 496,762 compared to Rs 488,962 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the . Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 6,687 to Rs 425,893 from Rs 419,206, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 6,130 to Rs 390,416 against Rs 384,286. In the international market, the price of gold rose by \$78 to \$4,744 per ounce from \$4,666. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 373 to Rs 8,445 from Rs 8,072, while the price of 10 grams of silver climbed by Rs 320 to Rs 7,240 from Rs 6,920. The price of silver in the international market also increased by \$3.73 to \$79.61 per ounce from \$75.88.—APP

Gold price surges by Rs 7,800 per tola

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GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with the beneficiaries of PM'S Youth Laptop Scheme and PM'S Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme hailing from GB.

Jam discusses tobacco reforms with Philip Morris delegation

Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the complexity of the issue, describing it as a "multi-layered challenge" requiring a comprehensive approach from farm-level production to retail enforcement. He emphasized that the core problem lies in weak enforcement rather than absence of policy.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a detailed meeting with a delegation led by Marco Mariotti, President CIS and Central Asia, Philip Morris International, to discuss key challenges facing Pakistan's tobacco sector, including illicit trade, regulatory gaps, and export potential. During the meeting, the delegation briefed the Minister on the growing scale of illicit cigarette trade in Pakistan, noting that a significant portion of the market remains undocumented, resulting in an estimated annual revenue loss of around Rs350 billion, said a release issued here on Thursday. It was highlighted that nearly 45 to 47 billion cigarettes are being sold without payment of taxes, creating an uneven playing field for the formal sector. The discussion focused on structural issues in the tobacco supply chain, particularly the procurement of tobacco leaf, under-reporting of production, and weak traceabil-

ity mechanisms. The delegation pointed out that although registered companies operate under strict regulatory frameworks, undocumented production and misuse of contracts enable informal players to access raw materials and expand illicit manufacturing. Participants emphasized that the issue extends beyond taxation, with concerns relating to undocumented income, money laundering, and broader economic distortions. The Minister was informed that a limited number of actors benefit disproportionately from the undocumented segment, while formal businesses continue to face compliance and cost pressures. A key theme of the meeting was the need for stronger enforcement. The delegation stressed that while laws, tax stamp systems, and regulations are already in place, their implementation remains inconsistent. It was noted that enforcement requires coordinated action by multiple institutions, including federal and provincial authorities. The role of the Pakistan Tobacco Board (PTB) was

also discussed. Participants highlighted that while the Board has regulatory functions such as crop estimation and price setting, its enforcement capacity is limited. The need for restructuring and strengthening the Board to play a more proactive role in documentation and monitoring was emphasized. The meeting also reviewed policy challenges arising from Pakistan's commitments under the International Monetary Fund programme, particularly regarding the gradual removal of import restrictions and equal treatment of commercial and industrial importers. While these reforms aim to liberalize trade, stakeholders noted that they may complicate efforts to control the supply of key inputs used in cigarette manufacturing. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the complexity of the issue, describing it as a "multi-layered challenge" requiring a comprehensive approach from farm-level production to retail enforcement. He emphasized that the core problem lies in weak

enforcement rather than absence of policy. The Minister underscored the importance of aligning federal and provincial efforts, noting that effective regulation of tobacco cultivation and local markets requires active provincial involvement alongside federal agencies such as FBR and FIA. He reiterated the government's commitment to supporting the formal sector, promoting exports, and ensuring a fair and transparent business environment. He further directed that stakeholder proposals be consolidated into actionable recommendations, with a focus on strengthening enforcement mechanisms, improving traceability, and gradually reducing the size of the informal economy. The meeting concluded with both sides agreeing to continue engagement and cooperation to address illicit trade. The Minister emphasized illicit trade controls through enhanced enforcement mechanisms by federal and provincial entities to unlock the sector's export potential, while safeguarding government revenues and farmer incomes through better returns.

PSX continues with bullish trend

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,189.52 points, a positive change of 0.69 per cent, closing at 172,894.28 points against 171,704.76 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 986 million shares with a traded value of Rs 52.705 billion, compared to 1,202 million shares valuing Rs 63.003 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 19,046 trillion from Rs18,889 trillion a day earlier. Out of 490 active companies in the ready market, 290 advanced, 165 declined, and 35 remained unchanged. Bank of Punjab topped the volume chart with 86.327 million shares, followed by F.Nat. Equities with 65.965 million shares and Hascol Petrol with 44.741 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited, which increased by Rs 516.33 to close at Rs 17,517.33, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which gained Rs 184.16 to settle at Rs 26,450.83. On the losing side, Rafhan Maize Products Limited declined by Rs 26.47 to close at Rs 9,472.48, while Khyber Textile Mills Limited fell by Rs 24.38 to close at Rs 1,575.24. In the futures market, 248 companies traded, of which 181 recorded gains and 67 declined, according to PSX data.—APP

Ukraine's top negotiator in Miami for talks

KYIV: Ukraine's top negotiator, Rustem Umerov, has arrived in Miami for a meeting with US representatives, a source said, as peace talks on ending Russia's war in Ukraine have stalled in recent months. Kyiv hoped US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would travel to Ukraine earlier this spring, but the visit never happened. Washington's focus has largely moved away from Ukraine amid the war in Iran. The source did not provide additional details. The US-brokered talks are deadlocked over Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. Moscow demands Kyiv pull troops back from parts of the region it has failed to capture in its four-year full-scale invasion. Ukraine says it will not cede land that it controls. The last round of trilateral Ukraine-Russia talks involving US representatives took place in February. Ukrainian and Russian representatives have only had separate talks with the US team since. US President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin held a call on April 29 discussing a potential ceasefire. Russia announced a ceasefire for May 8 to 9, when it celebrates the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany and holds a military parade in Moscow, an event of high significance for the Kremlin. Ukraine said Russia only wanted a ceasefire to protect its parade, as it worries about Ukrainian drone attacks, and offered an open-ended ceasefire starting on May 6. Neither side agreed to the proposals. Russia threatened to strike central Kyiv if Ukraine attacked Moscow. Kyiv accused Russia of violating the ceasefire, saying it would mirror Russia's actions.—DNA

Pak's exports to US up by 02% to \$4.634b

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to the United States (US) witnessed an increase of 02 per cent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to US were recorded at US \$4.634 billion during July-March (2025-26) against exports of US \$4.543 billion during July-March (2024-25), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, the exports to US came down by 10.27 per cent from \$531.954 million in March 2025, against the exports of \$477.275 million in March 2026. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to US increased by 2.26 per cent during March 2026 as compared to the exports of \$466.724 million in February 2026, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 5.81 per cent in the first nine months.—APP

Mass protests can reignite Israel-Palestine peace process

LONDON: Nonviolent protest worldwide by Palestinians and their supporters should serve as the bedrock of a campaign to reignite peace talks with Israel, the Palestinian ambassador to the UK has said. Husam Zomlot described the protest movement as vital in comments to the "World of Trouble" podcast. "We must find a way that it becomes mass, because when you involve the entire society, you actually have the moral high ground, and you actually can drain your occupier (of its energy)," he said. It comes amid a bipartisan collapse of support for Israel in the West, and as the Israeli settler movement ramps up its campaign of violence in the occupied West Bank. In his interview, Zomlot recalled growing up in a Gaza refugee camp and moving to the UK as an adult. The Palestinian leadership under the late Yasser Arafat made a series of critical mistakes in the 1990s, he said, highlighting the Palestine Liberation Organization's decision to officially end violent resistance against Israel in a bid for peace. "You call it violence. International law has a different (interpretation)," Zomlot told The Independent's podcast. "They call it resistance, and there was a UN General Assembly resolution in 1973 giving the Palestinian people the right to armed resistance, defined very clearly in international law to be targeting the army of the occupation." Arafat's decision, which came as part of the Oslo peace process, revealed "another Israeli trick," Zomlot said, adding that the Palestinians did not demand, nor receive, recognition of a state or its borders as a consequence of recognizing Israel. "The key question is does Israel consider its presence in the Occupied Territories temporary or permanent?" Amid surging violence in the West Bank and a lack of state control on the part of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, questions remain over the future of Palestinian politics. "We need to make sure that we find a way that is not war," Zomlot said. "But that has to be coupled with an international campaign similar to that of South Africa, to suck oxygen out of the settlements, out of the occupation... We cannot do it alone. Fatah understands that the first thing we need to do is the unity of our people and making sure our people remain on our land. Now, the effective mode is nonviolent resistance, but we have to redefine resistance. It's important; resistance is not just armed resistance." Other methods of building international support for Palestinians, and pressure on Israel, are proving fruitful amid sliding support for the latter, he said. According to a recent Pew poll, 60 percent of Americans hold an "unfavorable" view of Israel — a 7 percent annual rise. "All of a sudden the world has discovered that Israel is the root of all the issues in the Middle East and worldwide, and that Israel must be brought into compliance," Zomlot said. "This conversation did not happen before, and it's happening here in Britain. It's happening in Europe, and certainly it's happening now in the US for the first time.—DNA

Israel strikes across S Lebanon despite truce

NABATIEH: Israel pummeled southern Lebanon on Thursday, state media and AFP correspondents said, a day after it targeted a Hezbollah commander in its first strike on Beirut's southern suburbs since a truce sought to end weeks of fighting. The Israeli army said Thursday that the strike on the southern suburbs killed "the Commander of Hezbollah's 'Radwan Force' Unit," an elite unit within the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah. A ceasefire in the war between Hezbollah and Israel began on April 17, but combat has largely not stopped in southern Lebanon. Wednesday's strike near the capital, however, came as a shock in Lebanon. AFP photographs taken in the southern suburbs showed the top floors of a residential building totally destroyed, and rescuers searching through the rubble on Thursday morning. Hezbollah has not retaliated for the attack. Lebanese state media reported Israeli strikes across a number of southern towns and villages, and the Israeli army issued fresh evacuation warnings to three villages north of the Litani River, and outside the area occupied by Israeli troops following their ground invasion of the border area. Some of the Israeli strikes, on the southern city of Nabatieh, targeted a shopping center and residential buildings, state media and an AFP correspondent said.—APP

Countries scramble to track passengers of virus-hit cruise ship

Experts have stressed that contagion is very rare, but the outbreak has put health authorities on high alert. The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Wednesday it was closely monitoring the situation with US travelers on board the ship, adding that the risk to the American public was extremely low at the time

MSTERDAM: Countries worldwide scrambled on Thursday to trace people who had left the cruise ship hit by a hantavirus outbreak before it got marooned off the coast of Cape Verde, in an effort to prevent further spread of the disease. Three people — a Dutch couple and a German national — died in the outbreak on the MV Hondius. Eight people, including a Swiss citizen, are suspected to have contracted the virus, according to the World Health Organization. The Dutch government on Wednesday said around 40 passengers had disembarked the ship in Santa Helena, where the ship made a stop on its way to Cape Verde — before the outbreak was reported. The whereabouts of many of these passengers is as yet unknown. One of those to disembark was the wife of the Dutchman who had died aboard the ship on April 11. She fell sick herself and died before she could

reach the Netherlands. Dutch airline KLM on Wednesday said it had taken the woman off a plane in Johannesburg on April 25 due to her deteriorating medical condition. The virus found in the victims has been confirmed as the Andean strain, which can spread among humans through very close contact. Experts have stressed that contagion is very rare, but the outbreak has put health authorities on high alert. The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Wednesday it was closely monitoring the situation with US travelers on board the ship, adding that the risk to the American public was extremely low at the time. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Thursday said one French citizen had been in contact with a person who had fallen ill but was not currently showing symptoms. Argenti-

na's health ministry has said it will carry out rodent trapping and analysis in the southern city of Ushuaia, the origin point of the cruise ship. The MV Hondius, with nearly 150 people on board, is expected to dock in Spain's Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, by Saturday. Once in Tenerife, if they are still healthy, all non-Spanish citizens will be repatriated to their countries, while 14 Spanish passengers will be quarantined in a military hospital in Madrid. Three patients were evacuated from the ship on Wednesday. One of them has been admitted to a hospital in the Netherlands, while another one was transferred to Germany for medical care. The plane carrying the third patient was set to land in the Netherlands early on Thursday, after facing a delay due to a problem with the patient's life support system.—DNA

Briefs

Taiwan carries out first torpedo test fire

NEWS DESK

TAIPEI: Taiwan has carried out the maiden torpedo test firing for its first domestically developed submarine, a major milestone in a project aimed at strengthening deterrence against the Chinese navy and protecting vital sea lanes in the event of war. Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has made the indigenous submarine programme a key part of an ambitious project to modernise its armed forces as Beijing stages almost daily military exercises to assert its sovereignty claims. The submarine programme has drawn on expertise and technology from several countries, including the United States and Britain, a breakthrough for diplomatically isolated Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's territorial claims. Taiwan's CSBC Corp, which is leading construction of what is eventually planned to be eight submarines, said in a statement on Thursday that the first ship, named the Narwhal, had carried out its first torpedo test the day before. The test verified the combat system's operational capabilities in terms of detection and tracking, fire control, launch, and torpedo guidance, it said. In January, the submarine carried out its first underwater sea trial. Taiwan has said it hopes to deploy at least two such domestically developed submarines by 2027, and possibly equip later models with missiles.

Australian women arrested

SYDNEY: A group of women linked to Daesh terrorists face arrest when they land in Australia on Thursday, returning home years after allegedly sneaking into Syria to join the group's self-declared caliphate. Four women and nine children – all Australian citizens – are due to land on Thursday evening after securing passage from Syrian refugee camps where they have languished since the Daesh group's demise. They will land in major cities Melbourne and Sydney after boarding flights from the Qatari capital Doha, local media reported. Police have said some of the returning women will be charged with "terrorism offenses" such as traveling to a banned area and "engaging in slave trading." "For operational reasons, I won't go into who may be arrested but obviously we're working very closely with commonwealth authorities," New South Wales state police commissioner Mal Lanyon said Thursday. "For operational reasons, I don't want to go into specifically who will be arrested," he told Sky News Australia. Hundreds of women from Western nations were lured to the Middle East as the Daesh group gained prominence in the early 2010s, in many cases following husbands who had signed up as jihadist fighters. – APP

Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos Pak clear message for peace

DPM Ishaq Dar said, "On this day, I salute the bravery of our armed forces, our sons and daughters, who rose with discipline and determination to defend our homeland. I also salute the people of Pakistan, whose unity became our greatest strength"

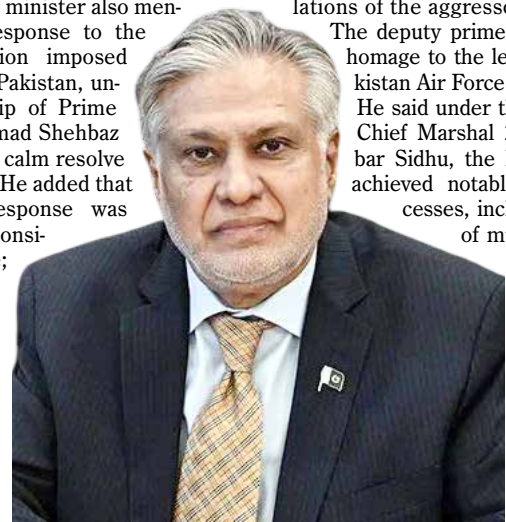
SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, on the First Anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, termed Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos as a calibrated and resolute response through which Pakistan sent a clear and unambiguous message that it stands for peace, but it will never compromise on its dignity, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence. In his message to the nation on the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, the deputy prime minister paid tribute to the valiant armed forces, the resolute and chivalrous sons and daughters of the soil, while marking one year since Marka-e-Haq, a defining moment in the national journey. The DPM underscored that the event was not just a date on the calendar but rather a story of courage, unity, and unwavering resolve. "A story where every soldier stood firm, and every citizen stood behind them," he added. DPM Ishaq Dar said, "On this day, I salute the bravery of our armed forces, our sons

and daughters, who rose with discipline and determination to defend our homeland. I also salute the people of Pakistan, whose unity became our greatest strength. Because when the nation stands as one, no force on earth can shake its foundations." The deputy prime minister also mentioned that in response to the enemy's aggression imposed upon the nation, Pakistan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif, acted with calm resolve and moral clarity. He added that the country's response was measured, responsible, and precise; guided not by emotion, but by principle. He noted that Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos was more than a military success. "Acting in accordance with

the UN Charter, Pakistan exercised its inherent right of self-defence under the then General Asim Munir, now Field Marshal and Chief of Defence Forces; delivering a determined, decisive, and proportionate response directed solely at military installations of the aggressor," he added. The deputy prime minister also paid homage to the leadership of the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy. He said under the command of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu, the Pakistan Air Force achieved notable operational successes, including the downing of multiple Indian fighter jets and the neutralisation of key military targets, adding, "these facts remain well documented and beyond any dispute. Simultaneously, the Pakistan Navy, led by Admiral Naveed

Ashraf, maintained full readiness to counter any aggression in the maritime domain." The DPM also highlighted the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during Marka-e-Haq. He added that during this critical period, he, along with his colleagues in the Foreign Office, undertook an active diplomatic outreach, effectively presenting Pakistan's position on bilateral and global platforms; reinforcing international understanding of Pakistan's lawful and restrained response. DPM Ishaq Dar underscored that the events of last year also remind the nation that lasting peace in South Asia was elusive without addressing the core issues and the foremost among them, the just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Issue, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of its people. Pakistan remains committed to regional peace and stability, he said, adding that the country believes in dialogue, in diplomacy, and in resolving disputes through justice and mutual respect. At the same time, he said the nation reaffirms that any threat to its homeland will be met with national unity, unshakable resolve, and strength through all means available.



Two Russian drones crash in Latvia

WARSAW: Several Russian drones entered Latvian airspace overnight, with two of them crashing and one causing a brief fire at an oil depot, the army said on Thursday. "Several unmanned aerial vehicles entered Latvian airspace" the army of the EU and NATO member bordering Russia said in a statement, adding that two of them "crashed." One of the drones crashed at an oil storage site in Rezekne, in the east of the country, the national police said. A fire broke out but was quickly brought under control by firefighters. "As long as Russian aggression against Ukraine continues, it is possible that such incidents will be repeated, when a foreign unmanned aircraft enters Latvian airspace or approaches it," the army said. Several drones from Russia and Ukraine have crashed in the trio of former Soviet republics in the Baltics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. – APP

India state polls deepen Hindu-Muslim political divide: report

Congress has capitalized on the fear and insecurity felt by many Muslim voters under BJP rule where they feel marginalized and their citizenship questioned, said Badruddin Ajmal, chief of the AIUDF in Assam.

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's main opposition Congress party drew increasingly strong backing from Muslim voters while Hindus overwhelmingly voted for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, results from recent elections in four states have shown. This voter trend highlights hardening religious polarization in the officially secular nation, and the deep-seated ideological division between India's two biggest political parties, analysts and political commentators say. Modi adopted an unabashedly pro-Hindu platform to take power in 2014, and his Bharatiya Janata Party largely follows a Hindu-first ideology called Hindutva. Such voter fragmentation helps expand its dominance across the country because Hindus are nearly 80 percent of India's 1.42 billion people compared with about 14 percent Muslims. "The rise of the BJP has led to a consolidation of Muslim voters behind so-called secular parties, particularly the Congress – a form of reverse polarization is taking place," said political analyst Rasheed Kidwai, visiting fellow with the Observer Research Foundation. Muslim leaders and analysts say voters from that community are

increasingly choosing Congress or other strong regional parties over smaller parties that focus on their interests but have struggled to be part of any governments in recent years. Congress fared poorly in the elections held last month across four states and one federal territory, with results declared this week. Its alliance secured control of only one state, while a BJP-led coalition won three and a new regional outfit took the remaining contest. The Muslim support for Congress was most evident in the BJP-ruled northeastern state of Assam, where 18 of its 19 newly elected lawmakers are from the community, up from roughly 16 in the previous assembly. The party had fielded 20 Muslim candidates and about 80 non-Muslims for the 126-member legislature, in which the BJP won 82 seats. The Assam-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which mainly draws Muslim support, saw its tally collapse to just two seats from 16 five years earlier. In neighboring West Bengal, which the BJP won for the first time with 207 lawmakers in a 294-member assembly, the two Congress legislators elected were Muslims. The BJP did not field any Muslim candidates in either Assam or West Bengal. Party leaders in both states, including the prospective chief minister of Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari, credited the victories to support from Hindu voters. "It was a victory for Hindutva," Adhikari said. "In the future – depending on local political dynamics – if Muslim voters increasingly consolidate behind Congress, dominant Hindu voters may also regroup more strongly around the BJP," said political columnist Radhika Ramaseshan. Congress has capitalized on the fear and insecurity felt by many Muslim voters under BJP rule where they feel marginalized and their citizenship questioned, said Badruddin Ajmal, chief of the AIUDF in Assam. "The argument being made is that only a party with the strength to fight the BJP at the center can ultimately address these concerns. This is not true but voters believe it because they are scared."

FCCP strikes down section 7E of Income Tax Ordinance

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has declared the controversial Section 7E of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, unconstitutional and void in its entirety, while also declaring all actions, notices and proceedings initiated by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Revenue Division under the provision as ineffective and unlawful. A two-member bench comprising Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi heard the case on Thursday. The court issued a written order after announcing its short judgment. During the hearing, the court was informed that Section 7E had been inserted into the Income Tax Ordinance through the Finance Act, 2022. However, conflicting judgments had been delivered by various high courts across the country regarding the provision. The Peshawar High Court and Balochistan High Court had declared Section 7E unconstitutional and struck it down, while the Islamabad High Court had declared subsection 2 of the provision unconstitutional. On the other hand, the Sindh High Court and Lahore High Court had upheld the provision in certain judgments. In appeals filed by taxpayers, it was argued that the provision effectively imposed a tax on deemed income from property ownership without any actual income, and therefore exceeded constitutional authority. Appearing on behalf of the Revenue Division and the FBR, senior lawyer Hafiz Ehsan Ahmad Khokhar argued that Section 7E had been introduced under Parliament's constitutional authority to broaden the tax net and that the concept of deemed income was a recognized principle in tax law. He maintained that the provision fell within the scope of Article 77 of the Constitution and relevant legislative competence. After hearing all arguments, the court ruled that Section 7E, in its true nature and character, amounted to a tax on ownership of property rather than on actual income, and therefore could not be sustained under the Constitution. The judgment declared Section 7E unconstitutional, unauthorized and void, adding that all notices, proceedings and actions initiated by the FBR and other authorities under the provision would also stand terminated. The court further observed that the legal uncertainty arising from conflicting judgments of various high courts had now been settled, while detailed reasons for the decision would be issued later. – APP

Israeli strike kills son of Hamas leader

CAIRO: An Israeli air strike has killed the son of Hamas' chief negotiator in US-mediated talks over Gaza's future, a senior Hamas official said on Thursday, as leaders of the militant group held talks in Cairo aimed at safeguarding their truce with Israel. Azzam Al-Hayya, son of Khalil Al-Hayya, succumbed to his injuries on Thursday after being struck in an Israeli attack on Wednesday night, said senior Hamas official Basim Naim. He is the fourth son of Hamas' exiled Gaza chief to have been killed in Israeli attacks. Hayya, who has seven children, has survived multiple Israeli attempts to kill him. An Israeli strike in Doha last year targeting Hamas leadership killed his son, though Hayya survived. Two other sons were killed in past Israeli attempts on his life, in Gaza strikes in 2008 and 2014. Speaking to Al Jazeera after the attack on Wednesday night, before his son's death was announced, Hayya accused Israel of trying to undermine mediators' efforts to push ahead with US President Donald Trump's Gaza plan, overseen by his so-called "Board of Peace." "These Zionist attacks and violations clearly indicate that the occupation does not want to abide by a ceasefire or by the first phase," said Hayya. The violence comes as leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian factions held talks with regional mediators and the Board of Peace's lead envoy, Nickolay Mladenov. – APP

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Marco Rubio meets Pope Leo in bid to ease tensions

ROME: The top US diplomat, Marco Rubio, went to the Vatican on Thursday for talks with the first US pope, Leo XIV, against the backdrop of sharp tensions between the White House and the Vatican. The US secretary of state's visit comes after Trump's extraordinary criticism of Leo, the head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, over his anti-war stance. AFP reporters saw Rubio's motorcade driving up Via della Conciliazione – the grand avenue leading up to St. Peter's Basilica – before entering the Vatican. Rubio, a devout Catholic, has sought to play down the rift ahead of the private audience, which will be followed by talks with Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin. The US ambassador to the Holy See, Brian Burch, told reporters this week it would likely be a "frank conversation."

For the Vatican's part, "we'll listen to him," Parolin told reporters on Wednesday, noting that Washington initiated the meeting. The Trump administration had celebrated the election one year ago – May 8, 2025 – of Leo, the first US pontiff in history. But its relations with the Holy See have since sharply deteriorated. In an unprecedented attack, Trump last month took to social media to call the pope "WEAK on crime, and terrible for foreign policy." His remarks came after Leo called for peace in the Middle East war launched by Israel and the United States. He condemned a threat by Trump to destroy Iranian civilization as "truly unacceptable." Before leaving, Rubio said the trip had been planned before the clash, "and obviously we had some stuff that happened." "There's a lot to talk about with the Vatican," he told reporters at the White House, noting particularly the issue of religious freedom, on which the Vatican and Washington agree. At a Vatican event on Wednesday, Parolin said: "I imagine we'll talk about everything that's happened in recent days – we can't avoid touching on these topics." But he said they would also discuss international issues, including Latin America, Cuba and Lebanon. The Holy See has long played an active role in Cuban diplomacy, while Rubio – a Cuban-American – has led the US administration's efforts to pressure the communist government. Leo also knows Latin America well, having spent two decades as a missionary in Peru, even acquiring Peruvian citizenship. Despite the peace-making attempt, Trump again criticized the pope in an interview on Monday, alleging that Leo believes it is "OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon." "I think he's endangering a lot of Catholics and a lot of people," Trump said of the pontiff. – APP





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