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Nation, armed forces on same page to defend motherland

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Showcasing of KP culture at Romanian event

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Maryam Salutes all martyrs of Marka-e-Haq

Detailed News On Page-01



Marka-e-Haq

'Any future aggression will have severe consequences'

Today, Pakistan's defence has become impregnable against external aggression, says Field Marshal at GHQ special ceremony

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir warned that any future aggression against Pakistan would have "far-reaching and painful consequences" as the country marked one year since Marka-e-Haq. "Pakistan, its people, and armed forces achieved a remarkable success in Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos with divine help, while the enemy suffered defeat and humiliation," he said while addressing a special ceremony held at the General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi, to commemorate the first anniversary of the May war against India, in which Islamabad humiliated New Delhi. CDF Munir, Air Chief Marshal Sidhu, and Admiral Ashraf laid floral wreaths at the Yadgar-e-Shuhada (Martyrs' Monument), while contingents from the three armed forces presented a ceremonial salute. On May 6-7 last year, India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan, following an attack on tourists in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan, during the 87-hour conflict, downed eight Indian

fighter jets, including French-made Rafale, and dozens of drones. The war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the US. Addressing the special ceremony, CDF Munir said the day was a matter of pride for the entire nation, adding that the success demonstrated the country's strength, unity, and resolve in the face of challenges. He pointed out that Marka-e-Haq was not merely a war between two countries but a decisive battle between "two ideologies" in which truth ultimately prevailed. The army chief said the confrontation from the night of May 6-7 until May 10 was an unsuccessful attempt by the enemy to test Pakistan's national resolve and dignity. Field Marshal Munir said Pakistan, its people, and the armed forces achieved an unparalleled victory in Marka-e-Haq and Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos with the blessings of Allah. He said that falsehood faced defeat in the battle, while Pakistan emerged successful with unity, resolve, and professional capability. "India's dream was to subject Pakistan to military aggression and diplomatic isolation," he said,

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Zaheer Babar Sidhu, Naval Chief Naveed Ashraf and others attending the Marka-e-Haq celebrations. - DNA

FIA offloads two Afghan nationals

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Immigration offloaded two Afghan nationals at Islamabad International Airport for allegedly using fake immigration stamps on their passports while travelling to Afghanistan. An official told APP on Sunday that the accused, identified as Noor Muhammad and Aamna Siraj, were travelling to Afghanistan through Kam Air flight RQ-928 when they were referred for secondary profiling at the immigration counter. He said detailed scrutiny of their travel documents revealed that Pakistani departure and arrival immigration stamps affixed on the passports were fake and suspicious.

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PTCL users may face internet problem

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) said on Sunday that consumers may face internet disruptions due to maintenance work on a submarine cable between May 11 and 18. In a post on X, PTCL said: "A maintenance activity is planned on one of our submarine cables to repair a fault by the International Cable Consortium," adding that the work will begin on May 11 and may continue until May 18.

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Tehran sticks to stand

Iran sends response to US proposal to end war via Pakistan

Supreme Leader Briefs Military Chief on New Guiding Measures for Operations: Report

DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian state media reported on Sunday that Tehran has delivered its official response to the latest US proposal aimed at ending the ongoing war in the region, using Pakistan as a mediator. According to the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), "The Islamic Republic of Iran sent through Pakistani mediators its response to the latest text proposed by the United States to end the war." Details of Iran's position were not disclosed, but the framework reportedly focuses on negotiations to halt the conflict that began in late February 2026. Pakistan has confirmed receipt of the Iranian response, according to reports from Islamabad. Parallel Military Posture In a separate development reported by semi-official Fars News Agency, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei met with Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters (the unified command of Iran's armed forces).

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Trump: US would need two weeks to hit Iran again

DNA

WASHINGTON: 'US President Donald Trump stated that American forces could complete strikes on remaining Iranian targets within approximately two weeks if military operations resume. Speaking in recent interviews, Trump indicated that while significant progress has already been made, "another two weeks, maybe three weeks" would be needed to fully achieve US objectives against Iran. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the war with Iran is "not over," emphasizing that Iran's highly enriched uranium stockpile must still be removed.

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President, Prime Minister say nation united

The prime minister praised Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir for his leadership role in the conflict with India

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that Pakistan's strong response to Indian aggression in May last year forced it to seek a ceasefire, while praising the armed forces for their swift

response during the conflict. The prime minister made the remarks during a special ceremony marking the first anniversary of the Marka-e-Haq victory at the Pakistan Monument in Islamabad. Participants of the event included President Asif Ali Zardari, services chief, and the political leadership of the country. Marka-e-Haq (battle of truth) refers to the 19-day military conflict with India, spanning from April 22 to May 10, 2025. Before beginning his address, PM Shehbaz observed a one-minute silence in

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Briefs

Maryam salutes all martyrs

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif attended as a chief guest a grand ceremony at Wagah Border to mark the completion of one year of "Maar-ka-e-Haq" (The Battle of Truth). She congratulated all of them, and the entire Pakistani nation once again on the success given by Allah Almighty on the day of operation 'Bunyan-um-Marsoos' (lead-molten wall). She said that today they stand on the threshold where Pakistan's borders begin. She added, "We are proud of our martyrs. I salute all martyrs of Pakistan Army, and their mothers." She highlighted that no compromise will be made on national security. Chief Minister Punjab said that Muhammad Nawaz Sharif made the country a nuclear power with the grace of Allah Almighty, by ignoring the world around.

China, US to hold talks in South Korea

DNA

BEIJING: Senior Chinese and US officials will hold talks in South Korea in the coming days, Beijing's commerce ministry and Washington's treasury secretary said Sunday, ahead of an expected summit between leaders Xi Jinping and Donald Trump. The Chinese commerce ministry said in a statement that Vice Premier He Lifeng, Beijing's top economic official, will attend "consultations on mutual economic and trade issues" in South Korea on Tuesday and Wednesday. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a post on X: "On Wednesday, I will stop in Seoul for a discussion with Vice Premier He Lifeng of China, before continuing on to Beijing for the Leaders' Summit between President Trump and President Xi."

15 cops martyred in Bannu terror attack

Following the explosion, terrorists opened heavy fire and attacked the post from multiple directions. President, PM, Interior Minister condemn attack

SHAMIM SHAHID

BANNU: A terrorists attack on police post have left 15 policemen martyred and three others injured on late Saturday night. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sajjad Khan told media that 15 police personnel were martyred and three others injured after a suicide attack on the Fateh Khel police post late Saturday night here. He said the terrorists launched their assault on the post by ramming a vehicle laden with explosives. The RPO said that 18 police personnel were present at the post at the time of the attack, of whom 15 were martyred and three sustained injuries. Following the explosion, terrorists opened heavy fire and attacked the post from multiple directions. Multiple blasts were heard in the area, causing fear and panic among local residents.

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Iranian envoy slams Bannu terror attack

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Reza Amiri Moghadam has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Fateh Khel police post in Bannu, which resulted in the martyrdom of 15 police personnel and injuries to several others. In a statement issued on social media, the Iranian envoy expressed deep sorrow over the tragic incident and conveyed solidarity with the government and people of Pakistan. He termed the attack "hideous and awkward," emphasizing

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Why Pakistan must rethink its national priorities

OPINION

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



INTERESTINGLY, Pakistan has consistently found itself at a critical crossroads, regardless of which government is in power. The country continues to grapple with political uncertainty, economic instability, institutional weaknesses, rising poverty, and growing public frustration. Yet amid all these crises, very few people are addressing the real causes behind Pakistan's decline. Public debate revolves around roads, motorways, underpasses, transport systems, and infrastructure projects. No doubt such developments are important for a modern state, but nations are not built merely with highways and concrete structures. Nations are built on justice, rule of law, constitutional supremacy, honesty, and equal opportunities for all citizens. Unfortunately, these foundational principles have long been neglected in Pakistan. The Constitution, which should serve as the guiding document for governance and national direction, is often interpreted according to political convenience. Institutions that should protect justice and accountability remain under pressure, while ordinary citizens continue to suffer without relief. The absence of rule of law has created a dangerous environment where influence and wealth often matter more than merit and fairness. Pakistan's economic condition reflects the same

structural weaknesses. The country survives largely on loans, aid packages, and financial assistance from friendly nations. Every new IMF agreement is celebrated as a diplomatic or economic victory, when in reality it should be a matter of national concern and introspection. A self-respecting nation cannot continue surviving indefinitely on borrowed money. Loans may temporarily stabilize the economy, but they cannot create sustainable growth without reforms, productivity, and transparent governance. The comparison with India is uncomfortable but necessary. Pakistan recently demonstrated courage and capability in defending itself against a much larger adversary. Militarily and strategically, Pakistan proved that size alone does not determine strength. However, economic realities present a different picture altogether. India, despite its own challenges, has transformed itself into a global economic force. It no longer seeks bailouts from international financial institutions; rather, it contributes financially to them. This contrast raises an important question: when will Pakistan shift from dependency to self-reliance? The answer lies not in slogans but in reforms. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are often sustained through deposits and support from friendly countries rather than through strong exports and industrial growth. Exports remain stagnant, industries struggle, and investors hesitate because of inconsistent policies and political uncertainty. Pakistan received the European Union's GSP Plus trade status, which offered enormous opportunities to expand exports and strengthen the economy. Yet the stakeholders were not able to fully capitalize on this facility. Now even the continuation of this status faces uncertainty, though it may still survive due to geopolitical considerations rather than mer-

it-based performance.

This is another harsh reality Pakistan must understand. Whether it is IMF assistance or international trade concessions, many such decisions are influenced by global politics and strategic interests. They are not always rewards for good governance or economic excellence. Relying on political considerations instead of strengthening internal capacity is a dangerous strategy for the future. Among all the challenges facing Pakistan, corruption remains perhaps the biggest and most destructive. Yet strangely, corruption is no longer discussed with seriousness or urgency. It has become normalized within society. From small offices to major institutions, the system often rewards connections and money instead of honesty and competence. In Pakistan, it increasingly appears that money can make almost anything possible. This culture destroys merit, discourages hardworking citizens, and weakens national institutions. As a result, whatever Pakistan earns or receives through loans fails to benefit the common people. Resources are consumed by inefficiency, misuse, corruption, and elite capture. The burden eventually falls on ordinary citizens through inflation, unemployment, higher taxes, and declining public services and these days inflated fuel bills. The social consequences are alarming. A significant portion of the population now lives below the poverty line. Millions struggle daily to secure food, shelter, and basic necessities. Education, which should be the backbone of national progress, remains inaccessible for many children. Countless young Pakistanis are deprived of quality schooling, limiting their ability to compete in the modern world. Healthcare has become another privilege reserved largely for the wealthy, while the poor are left helpless in overcrowded hospitals with limited facilities.

Those who hold power whether political leaders, policymakers, or influential stakeholders must remember one fundamental truth: power without moral authority has little meaning. Authority imposed without justice, transparency, and public trust cannot provide lasting stability. History repeatedly shows that nations survive not merely through force or political control, but through legitimacy, fairness, and the confidence of their people. Pakistan still possesses enormous potential. It has talented youth, strategic importance, natural resources, and resilient citizens who continue to endure hardship with remarkable patience. But patience alone cannot guarantee a better future. The country urgently needs institutional reforms, economic discipline, accountability, and a renewed commitment to constitutional governance. Pakistan cannot continue moving from one crisis to another while ignoring the root causes of its problems. Cosmetic development projects and temporary financial arrangements cannot substitute for structural reform. If corruption continues unchecked, if justice remains weak, if education and healthcare stay neglected, and if economic dependency deepens further, then the future will become increasingly uncertain. Pakistan must decide what kind of nation it wants to become. A country permanently dependent on loans and political compromises, or a confident and self-reliant state built on merit, justice, and the rule of law. The choices made today will determine whether future generations inherit stability and hope or more crises and disappointment. If the country continues on its current path without meaningful change, Pakistan risks losing not only economic opportunities but also the trust and aspirations of its own people.

- The writer is the newspaper editor.

Kundi, PTI delegation discuss KP rights

PESHAWAR: Former Speaker National Assembly and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House here on Sunday. PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Junaid Akbar Khan, MNA Mehboob Shah, MNA Saleem Rehman and former MNA Saeedullah Shah also accompanied him. During the meeting, Fateha was offered for the martyrs of the Bannu tragedy and prayers were made for the departed souls. The two sides discussed the rights and issues of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while expressing serious concern over the closure of CNG stations in the province by the provincial government. The leaders also termed the federal government's attitude regarding the wheat crisis in the province as unfortunate. Matters relating to the NFC Award and issues being faced by the merged districts also came under discussion. The meeting urged the federal government to play its role in addressing the sense of deprivation among the trader community, political leadership and the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said the federation should listen to the stance of representatives from all sectors and resolve the problems relating to taxation in erstwhile FATA and PATA, closure of CNG stations, provincial rights and difficulties being faced by the trader community. He said the matter had also been discussed with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who had assured full cooperation in resolving the issues.—APP

Online, traditional livestock markets getting momentum

ISLAMABAD: Cattle markets across Pakistan are slowly picking up activity for Eid-ul-Adha 2026, as traders, traditional mandis and online platforms activate and build momentum day by day in anticipation of the upcoming grand religious festival, attracting growing numbers of visitors. Major cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi and Peshawar are witnessing increasing activity in cattle markets, with traders and buyers gathering in large numbers as preparations for Eid-ul-Adha 2026 continue to gain momentum. Markets remain active throughout the day, reflecting growing public interest. A report shared with local media outlets indicates heavy visitor turnout from morning till late evening, as people flock to livestock markets for purchase and selection, highlighting the rising festive enthusiasm across the country. Authorities in Karachi have also approved the setup of additional cattle markets to better facilitate citizens during the upcoming Eid season. According to buyers in Karachi cattle markets, prices are showing a notable upward trend this season, largely influenced by higher fuel rates, increased transport costs and rising animal feed expenses.—APP



ISLAMABAD: CDA Chairman Suhail Ashraf meeting with Uzbekistan's delegation led by ambassador Alisher Tukhtayev at CDA Headquarter

CM opens Maarka-e-Haq Square in Rawalpindi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has inaugurated the "Maarka-e-Haq Square" under the "Signal-Free Rawalpindi" project, which has been completed in a record 179 days instead of the scheduled 190 days. According to a handout issued here on Sunday, the project includes five underpasses, two overhead bridges and a pedestrian bridge, making it Pakistan's first unique signal-free corridor project completed ahead of schedule. Kachehri Chowk of Rawalpindi has been officially renamed 'Maarka-e-Haq Square. After unveiling

the milestone plaque of the project, special prayers were offered for the country's progress and prosperity. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif later visited the signal-free corridor and inspected the overhead bridge and adjoining roads. She also reviewed the signal-free project from Annexi Chowk to GPO Chowk. During the visit, Minister for Communication and Works (C&W) Malik Sohaib Ahmad Bharath gave a detailed briefing on the project. Officials informed the chief minister that more than 200,000 vehicles would pass daily through the signal-free corridor in Rawalpindi's busiest areas. The project also features the first state-of-the-art pedestri-

an bridge at Maarka-e-Haq Square. Authorities said two phases of the Rawat-to-Motorway signal-free corridor had been completed, while the third phase would also be completed soon. Under the broader plan, underpasses will also be constructed at Race Course, Charing Cross and AFIC Chowk. The 25-kilometre-long corridor from Rawat to the motorway will comprise a total of nine underpasses and three flyovers. On the occasion, CM Maryam Nawaz said the signal-free corridor would transform the urban culture of Rawalpindi and significantly improve traffic flow and public convenience.

Torch-bearing rally for the battle of truth

LARKANA: The Pakistan Peoples Party Larkana organized a torch-bearing rally regarding the Battle of Truth, held from Zulfiqar Bagh to Jinnah Bagh Chowk to celebrate the grand success of the Battle of Truth. The rally was specially attended by MPAs Larkana Jameel Ahmed Soomro So-hail Anwar Khan Siyal, District Council Chairman Larkana Ijaz Ahmed Laghari, Special Assistant CM Sindh Khair Muhammad Shaikh, and Mayor Larkana Anwar Ali Luhur. Also participating were officials of Pakistan Peoples Party District Larkana and party workers. The speakers addressed the rally, stating that while the cowardly enemy attacked in the darkness of night, the Pakistan Army gave a terrifying response in the daylight. The professional expertise and spirit of faith of the Pakistan Army humiliated India's multi-billion dollar defense system. The resonance of Pakistan's Operation Banyan-un-Marsous against Indian aggression was heard across global media.—APP

Efforts afoot to improve immunization in KP

PESHAWAR: A strategic partnership between community outreach workers and private healthcare providers has demonstrated how local alliances can help reach underserved populations and improve immunization coverage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The initiative aimed to align private sector healthcare providers with efforts to increase routine immunization coverage and engage them as active partners in identifying and referring missed and zero-dose children. The collaboration was reached between outreach workers of MERF, a non-governmental organization working to improve access to quality healthcare services, and private healthcare providers serving in different parts of the province. The partnership proved crucial when a child from a recently settled nomadic family was brought to Dr Haroon Afridi's clinic in Union Council Umar Bala, on the outskirts of Peshawar. During consultation, Dr. Haroon discovered that the child, along with many others from the nomadic community, had never re-

ceived routine immunization services. This was not just one missed child; it was an entirely missed community," observed Dr Haroon Afridi. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Dr. Haroon immediately informed MERF Outreach Worker Hazrat Umar, who promptly visited the remote settlement in Ghari Gula Khan. During the visit, around 30 unvaccinated children from the nomadic population were identified. "When I reached the site, I realized these children had been invisible to the system," said Hazrat Umar. Reaching the nomadic community, often excluded due to constant mobility and geographic barriers, remained one of the most significant achievements of the intervention, he added. Despite logistical difficulties and challenging terrain, an outreach immunization session was swiftly organized. Alongside vaccination services, awareness sessions were conducted to educate caregivers about the importance of routine immunization and protection against vaccine-preventable diseases. Local

influencers and community elders were also engaged to build trust and encourage community participation in future vaccination activities. The proactive efforts of the outreach team ensured that children who had never received vaccines were finally brought into the immunization network. During a single outreach session, a total of 30 children were vaccinated, including seven identified as zero-dose children. Defaulter children were also successfully covered during the activity. The intervention resulted in first-time vaccination coverage in the remote nomadic settlement, improved community awareness regarding essential immunization, strengthened collaboration with private healthcare providers, and enhanced trust and acceptance among the hard-to-reach population. A community elder from the nomadic settlement said, "No one had ever come to our area for vaccination before. We felt forgotten. Today, we feel seen and cared for. Our children are safer because of this effort.—APP

Marka-e-Haq proved nation's invincible defence: Nehal

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi said that "Marka-e-Haq-Bunyan-um-Marsoos" is a shining chapter in Pakistan's military history in which the Armed Forces demonstrated exceptional unity, courage, professionalism, and sacrifice, crushing the enemy's malicious designs. Addressing a dignified ceremony to mark the one year of "Marka-e-Haq-Bunyan-um-Marsoos" held at Governor House, The Governor said that today's ceremony is dedicated to the martyrs, veterans, and their noble mothers who raised heroes that did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the honor and dignity of the homeland. He warned that if anyone in the future attempts aggression, conspiracy, or adventurism against Pakistan, it will be met with a far stronger, more resolute, and decisive response. The event was attended by Corps Commander Karachi, Commander Karachi Pakistan Navy, Commander Coastal Area, DG Rangers Sindh, President Air War College, IG Sindh Police Javed Alam Odho, Additional IG Karachi Azad Khan, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, senior civil and military officials, consuls general of various countries, business community members, political and social figures, and dignitaries from the city. Governor Nehal Hashmi said that during last year's regional tensions, the Pakistan Army, Air Force, and Navy demonstrated exemplary strategy and extraordinary bravery across land, air, and sea fronts. He said the Armed Forces made it clear to the world that Pakistan's defence is invincible and the entire nation stands firmly with its military He paid tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, and officers and soldiers of all three services for their courage, resolve, and coordinated strategy that exposed the enemy on the global stage. Governor Sindh also appreciated the role of the Pakistani media in safeguarding national interests and countering propaganda, and lauded the services of Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar and DG ISPR Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry. The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran followed by the national anthem. Special documentaries and an ISPR national song honoring the sacrifices of martyrs and veterans were also screened and highly appreciated by the audience.—DNA

Nation stands shoulder to shoulder with armed forces in Marka-e-Haq: Khurshid

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Senior Vice President of Pak UK Trade Forum, Khurshid Ahmad Hashmi, said that Pakistan is currently passing through an important phase of "Marka-e-Haq," and the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its brave armed forces. He stated that the enemy's malicious intentions would be defeated through unity, faith, and national solidarity. In his statement, Khurshid Ahmad Hashmi said that the Pakistan Army has always rendered unforgettable sacrifices for the defense, security, and stability of the homeland, and the nation pays tribute to its martyrs and veterans. He added that the professionalism and sacrifices of the Armed Forces of Pakistan are a source of pride for the nation. He further said that



under the leadership of Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistan Armed Forces demonstrated remarkable bravery, courage, and professional excellence, leading the nation to victory. He said the entire nation pays tribute to its armed forces for their outstanding performance and sacrifices. He further said that under the present circumstances, the entire nation must demonstrate unity and harmony while playing its role for the country's progress, security, and stability. He remarked that the Pakistani nation has always stood by its armed forces in every difficult hour and will continue to foil every conspiracy of the enemy in the future as well. He also offered special prayers for the country's security, stability, the elevated ranks of the martyrs, and the success of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MAY

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

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Ahsan hails Marka-e-Haq, Bunyan-un-Marsoos as symbol of national unity

He said that the Pakistan Armed Forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, timely strategy, and unmatched bravery, successfully crushing the enemy's malicious intentions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Patron-in-Chief of the Azerbaijan Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, said that "Marka-e-Haq - Bunyan-un-Marsoos" is not only a golden chapter in Pakistan's military history but also a shining example of national unity, courage, and unwavering determination. He stated that during this critical period, the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with its brave armed forces and sent a clear message to the enemy that no compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty is possible.



In his statement on the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the Pakistan Armed Forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, timely strategy, and unmatched bravery, successfully crushing the enemy's malicious intentions. He said that the wise leadership and bold decisions of Asim Munir played a decisive role in this battle, while the political vision and efforts of Shehbaz Sharif in promoting national unity provided strong leadership at the state level. Ahsan Bakhtawari further said that during Indian aggression, the spirit of the Pakistani nation was exemplary, with every citizen demonstrating unity and patriotism. He added

that the Pakistan Air Force proved its superiority by targeting advanced enemy aircraft, including Rafale jets, shattering the enemy's arrogance. The enemy received a strong response and was forced to retreat, which clearly reflected its failure. He emphasized that this battle serves as a reminder that Pakistan's defense capabilities are invincible and that its armed forces are fully capable of responding effectively to any form of aggression. He added that while remembering this historic success, the nation must further strengthen unity and continue collective efforts for the country's progress and stability.

Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos a defining moment in:PEC Chief

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Engr Waseem Nazir has said that Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos stands as a defining moment in Pakistan's military history, adding that the nation's engineers and scientists played a vital role in making this historic victory possible. In an exclusive talk with APP, Engr Waseem Nazir said that on the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, PEC proudly honours the courage, professionalism, and unwavering resolve of Pakistan's armed forces in defending the nation's sovereignty. He credited the victory to the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the strategic command of Field Marshal Hafiz Syed Asim Munir, say-

ing Pakistan demonstrated national unity, operational excellence, and an unshakable commitment to its defence during this historic operation. The PEC Chairman extended special appreciation to Air Chief Marshal Zaeer Ahmed Babar Sidhu and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf, saying the valour of the Shaheens of the Air Force has earned admiration both nationally and internationally. Engr. Waseem Nazir highlighted that the remarkable achievement also reflects the tireless contributions of Pakistani engineers and scientists. "Our defence capabilities, precision systems, cyber strength, and indigenous technologies are a testament

to their dedication and patriotism," he said. "As engineers, we take immense pride in our role in strengthening national security, advancing technological innovation, and promoting self-reliance. Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos has reinforced the critical importance of research, innovation, and resilience in safeguarding our homeland," he added. The PEC Chairman paid rich tribute to the martyrs and saluted the ghazis whose bravery continues to elevate Pakistan's honour. "Their sacrifices will inspire generations to come," he said, praying that Allah continues to bless Pakistan with strength, unity, peace, and prosperity.—APP

Azerbaijan Embassy honors national Leader Heydar Aliyev

The event served as a mark of deep respect, remembrance, and gratitude for the late leader's monumental contributions to the Azerbaijani state



ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the 103rd birth anniversary of Azerbaijan's National Leader Heydar Aliyev, a solemn flower-laying ceremony was held at his bust located at the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Islamabad, Pakistan. Islamabad City Guide The event served as a mark of deep respect, remembrance, and gratitude for the late

leader's monumental contributions to the Azerbaijani state. Embassy officials and staff gathered to pay tribute to the architect of modern Azerbaijan, whose political vision and leadership laid the foundation for the country's independence, development, and international standing. As highlighted by Khazar Farhadov Ambassador of

Azerbaijan, Heyda Aliyev's enduring legacy "remains a guiding light for Azerbaijan." The ceremony reaffirmed the strong fraternal ties between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, with participants underscoring that Aliyev's principles continue to inspire bilateral cooperation and mutual support between the two nations.—DNA

PTCL, Ufone partner to bring free mental health support

ISLAMABAD: On Mother's Day 2026, Pakistan's largest integrated telecommunications company, PTCL and Ufone announced the launch of #MoreSupportForMothers: a nationwide initiative that pairs awareness with action, a first-of-its-kind mental health initiative in the telecom industry. In partnership with Oladoc, Pakistan's leading digital health platform, PTCL and Ufone are making free consultations with certified psychiatrists available to mothers across Pakistan accessible today through the UPTCL app, at no cost and with no barriers. CL and Ufone's partnership with Oladoc brings together Pakistan's largest telecom infrastructure and its most trusted digital health platform to deliver something the country's maternal mental health landscape has never had scale. Oladoc connects patients

with thousands of verified healthcare professionals across specialities. Through this partnership, its network of certified psychiatrists is now accessible, for free, to every mother in Pakistan who downloads the UPTCL app. The service is available on iOS and Android, requires no prior diagnosis or referral, and is designed to function in communities far beyond Pakistan's urban centres. This is not a pilot programme for a handful of users in Karachi or Lahore. PTCL and Ufone's reach extends across every province, every district, and every corner of Pakistan. And so, through this initiative, the support, PTCL and Ufone have been part of Pakistani families for decades. Their networks carry calls that have crossed distances, the messages that kept people close, and the connections that made the country feel

smaller. That history comes with a responsibility, and this initiative is an expression of it. Mental health in Pakistan has long been underfunded, understaffed, and overlaid with stigma. The mothers who bear the highest burden of that neglect are often the least visible, new mothers in the exhausting, disorienting weeks after birth, in homes that celebrate the baby and forget to ask how she is doing. #MoreSupportForMothers does not claim to fix the system. It claims something more achievable and more urgent: that for the mothers in Pakistan who are struggling right now, today, there is somewhere to turn. A real resource. A real professional. A real conversation. Available for free, through a screen they already carry in their pocket.—DNA

HEC okays policy on dual degree programmes

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan has approved Policy on Dual, Double and Joint Degree Programmes to facilitate structured academic collaboration between Pakistani higher education institutions and recognised local and foreign partner institutions. The policy has been introduced in view of the growing globalisation of higher education, increasing student mobility, international academic partnerships, and the need to align Pakistani higher education with global standards. It provides a formal regulatory framework for universities seeking to offer collaborative degree programmes at undergraduate and graduate levels. The policy provides for three forms of collaborative academic arrangements, namely Dual Degree programmes leading to the award of two degrees in distinct or closely related fields, Double Degree programmes leading to the award of two degrees in the same discipline by partnering institutions, and Joint Degree programmes involving the issuance of a single degree jointly awarded and signed by collaborating institutions. HEC has revealed that such programmes may only be offered where universities enter into formal collaborative arrangements in accordance with the approved policy. Institutions will be required to obtain necessary statutory approvals, execute a detailed Memorandum of Understanding, ensure credit mapping, define admission and exit requirements, disclose fee structures, provide student protection arrangements, and seek HEC's NOC before launching any such programme. The policy will benefit students by expanding access to international learning opportunities, credit mobility, joint supervision, global academic exposure and improved employability. It will also support Pakistani universities in strengthening international partnerships, improving curriculum relevance, enhancing quality assurance, and increasing the global recognition of Pakistani higher education. Through this policy, HEC aims to promote responsible internationalisation of higher education while safeguarding academic standards, student interests and institutional accountability.—DNA

DIG reviews special branch performance

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Security/Special Branch Rana Umar Farooq conducted a detailed review of the overall performance, security situation and operational matters of the Special Branch Islamabad. An official told APP on Sunday that AIG Special Branch Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider gave a comprehensive briefing regarding the performance of the Special Branch, Bomb Disposal Squad, K-9 Unit and other security-related matters. He said the meeting discussed key issues related to enhancing operational capacity, addressing current security challenges and adopting modern policing strategies. The official said detailed deliberations were also held on improving the professional capabilities of the force in line with modern requirements. DIG Rana Umar issued necessary directions regarding shortage of personnel, ongoing construction projects and further strengthening the capabilities of the Bomb Disposal Squad and K-9 Unit. He emphasized the need for modern training, timely provision of resources and effective coordination to improve operational efficiency so that any emergency situation could be handled effectively. The DIG Rana Umar reaffirmed that Islamabad Police remained fully committed to protecting citizens' lives and property, maintaining law and order and ensuring foolproof security in the federal capital.—APP

Police put 36 outlaws in handcuffs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 36 outlaws, including proclaimed offenders and criminals involved in different illegal activities, recovering a huge cache of drugs, liquor and weapons during ongoing crackdown operations in the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that police teams arrested 20 accused involved in various criminal activities and recovered 2,740 grams of hashish, 1,451 grams of Ice, 570 grams of heroin, 208 bottles of liquor, two rifles, two Kalashnikovs and five pistols along with ammunition from their possession.—Jelly ban

Mother's Day celebrations go digital with heartfelt tributes

ISLAMABAD: Across social media platforms, the Mother's Day has gained momentum as a trending celebration, with citizens sharing emotional tributes, videos and memories, while Gen Z also shows growing interest in online gifts, flowers, cakes and promotional deals. Online platforms are witnessing a surge in activity as citizens share emotional posts, videos, and memories dedicated to their mothers, turning social media into a vibrant space of love, gratitude and celebration. Citizens, including girls and young users are actively engaging in comments, reacting to posts, discussing the latest Mother's Day trends and expressing appreciation for heartfelt tributes circulating across digital platforms. Shop sellers are also actively participating in comments, promoting their latest Mother's Day offers and highlighting discounts on cakes, flowers, and customized gift packages to attract customers. These online interactions have created a strong wave of engagement, with users contributing personal stories and joining broader conversations around motherhood and appreciation. Sellers on e-commerce and social media platforms are rolling out special Mother's Day campaigns, offering attractive discounts and limited-time deals widely shared across online spaces. Gen Z, in particular, is playing a key role in driving this digital trend, actively participating in both emotional tributes and online shopping activities. Overall, the combination of heartfelt celebrations, active social engagement, and festive discount offers has turned Mother's Day into a major online cultural and commercial event. An online seller said, "We are offering a wide range of variety for Mother's Day gifts, and it creates a sense of love, care, and emotional connection among families celebrating the occasion." A flower shop seller commented that prices tend to rise on this day due to the high demand, as Mother's Day celebrations drive a significant increase in orders for flowers and gift arrangements. Various local brands and restaurants are also offering special Mother's Day deals, attracting strong interest from Gen Z with attractive discounts, gift bundles and festive dining offers. Overall, the occasion has evolved into a vibrant blend of emotional celebration and commercial activity across digital and local markets.—APP

Jelly bangles become every girl's latest craving

ISLAMABAD: With flashy reels, influencer promotions and packed Eid-ul-Azha markets, jelly bangles have become this Eid's biggest fashion obsession, as traders and vloggers once again turn a simple accessory into a viral craze chased by young girls across the country. After Kashmiri bangles ruled markets during Eid-ul-Fitr, transparent "jelly bangles" in soft candy-like shades have now taken over markets across Islamabad and Rawalpindi, attracting college students, young girls and women searching for matching colors for their Eid dresses. From Karachi Company Market to Commercial Market and the crowded stalls of Sunday Bazaar Peshawar Mor, rows of pink, purple, blue, green and crystal-clear glass bangles can be seen shining under market lights while customers move from shop to shop with mobile phones in their hands, searching for designs they saved from TikTok, Instagram and fashion vlogs. These bangles look simple, but their colors feel alive, said Fatima, a college student looking for matching bangles in Karachi Company. Talking to APP, she said many metal and fancy bangles became popular over the years, but the real beauty and sound of bangles still belonged to glass bangles. The real khanak comes from glass bangles, she said smiling. When girls wear colorful bangles on Eid, it feels like their dreams are shining in their hands. Laughing with her friends, she added, Sacrifice work is for elders and men. Our job on Eid is to laugh, get ready and enjoy colors. Nearby, Areej and Mona at Sunday Bazaar said they came specially after seeing jelly bangles repeatedly appear in online reels and fashion videos.—APP

Briefs

ANF nabs 8 suspects, seizes narcotics

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Saturday conducted eight operations around educational institutions and in various cities across the country, arrested eight suspects, including a woman, and recovered 44.324 kilograms(kgs) of narcotics worth more than Rs 7.6 million. According to an ANF spokesperson, 7.2 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near a university in Islamabad, and two suspects were arrested. The accused confessed to supplying drugs to students of educational institutions. In international interdiction operations, ANF recovered 2.61 kgs of ice concealed in a sherwani parcel destined for the United Kingdom at a cargo office in Multan. In another operation at a courier office in Rawalpindi, officials seized 1.512 kgs of ice hidden inside hockey balls packed for Australia. At Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, 1.202 kgs of ice were recovered from the trolley bag of a female passenger travelling to Bahrain, leading to her arrest. During domestic operations, ANF recovered 10.8 kgs of hashish from two suspects near a bus terminal in Sukkur. Near Kaak Pul Bus Terminal in Islamabad, four kgs of hashish were seized from two motorcyclists, while two kgs of ice were recovered from a suspect near Old Haji Camp on G.T. Road in Peshawar. In a separate raid near the Shadi Kaur coastal line in Pasi, officials recovered 15 kgs of ice along with 23 pistols and 46 magazines. Cases have been registered against the accused under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997, and further investigations are underway.—DNA

Pak's future lies in tech, youth empowerment: ICCI

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has said that Pakistan's youth possess immense potential to drive the country towards digital transformation, economic stability, and global recognition through innovation and technology. He expressed these views while addressing the "AWS Student Community Day Islamabad" held at the ICCI Auditorium in collaboration with AWS Cloud Clubs and the International Islamic University Islamabad. Addressing students, faculty members, and IT professionals, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said the enthusiasm and talent of the youth reflected a bright future for Pakistan. He emphasized that the world was rapidly moving towards cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and data-driven economies, adding that Pakistan must become a creator and exporter of technology rather than merely a consumer. He stated that ICCI strongly believed in strengthening academia-industry linkages and would continue supporting youth-focused initiatives, startups, and platforms that connect students with practical industry exposure. The ICCI President observed that events like AWS Student Community Day encouraged innovation, entrepreneurship, and skill development among students. He urged the youth to think big, innovate boldly, and play their role in building a digitally empowered Pakistan. Sardar Tahir Mehmood appreciated the efforts of the organizers, including Sardar Huzafa, Captain Students Community at the International Islamic University Islamabad, Chaudhry Javed Iqbal, Vice Chairman Computer Hardware Association of Pakistan, Abrar ul Haque, Executive Director Computer Hardware Association of Pakistan, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Convener ICCI Software Development Committee, and Aizaz Mohammad, Convener ICCI Telecom and Computer Hardware Committee for successfully organizing the event. Earlier, Aizaz thanked the ICCI leadership, especially President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, for extending full support in organizing the youth-focused technology event.—APP

French development agency chief meets Chairman CDA

Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that special attention is being given to adopting modern and sustainable solutions to ensure the uninterrupted supply of clean and safe water to the citizens of Islamabad



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, Sohail Ashraf, met with Marc Antoine, Country Director of French Development Agency (AFD), and his delegation at the CDA Headquarters. The meeting was attended by CDA Member Planning and Design, Muhammad Umair, DG Islamabad Water and relevant senior officers. During the meeting, reforms and

various projects in the water sector were discussed with the AFD delegation. The primary objective of the meeting was to explore avenues for technical assistance in projects aimed at improving water quality in Islamabad. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that special attention is being given to adopting modern and sustainable solutions to ensure the uninterrupted supply of clean and safe water to the citizens of Islamabad. He added that these measures include steps to prevent water wastage, eliminate line losses, and promote water usage and conservation.

The meeting also reviewed the project for the upgrade and rehabilitation of the Simly Water Filtration Plant. Work will be carried out on a main conduction pipeline from Simly Dam to address water shortages and meet the growing demands in Islamabad. Discussions were also held regarding expanding the water storage capacity of Simly Dam. In this regard, AFD will consider providing full technical assistance. The meeting also discussed the progress made on the construction projects of Shahdara and Dotara Dams. The completion of these initiatives will enable an uninter-

rupted water supply and meet the needs of Islamabad City. AFD delegation said that the agency is working to provide technical cooperation for the supply of clean water and to address water scarcity in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. In this context, a comprehensive feasibility study will be conducted to evaluate the technical and financial aspects of various water projects in Islamabad. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf reiterated that addressing water scarcity and ensuring the provision of safe, quality water to the citizens of Islamabad remains their top priority.

GPA incentivizes 30 days free storage for import, export cargoes

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) has started providing up to 30 days of free storage for import and export cargoes docked on Gwadar Port on May 8. Free storage facilities are also being offered in cargo sheds, storage container yards, and repair sheds managed by the Gwadar Port Authority in order to facilitate investors as much as possible. This was revealed by GPA chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch in a meeting with members of the all Pakistan Shipping Association in Karachi, where he gave a detailed briefing on the situation arising after recent regional tensions, the strategic importance of Gwadar Port, and matters related to transit and transshipment trade on May 8. He divulged that all these facilities are connected through a modern six-lane expressway linking the port and free zone with the Coastal Highway. He said that due to the tense situation in the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar could serve as a safe and alternative trade route in the event of any possible war or sanctions. According to him, access from Gwadar to eastern regions of Iran

and Central Asia is several hundred kilometers shorter compared to other cities of Pakistan, significantly reducing logistics costs and transit time. During the meeting, Chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch stated that Gwadar Port is set to become the future hub of regional trade and logistics, and its importance in the region is increasing day by day. He said that Gwadar Port's approach channel is the shortest among the country's ports, measuring approximately four and a half kilometers in length. Chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch further stated that a route exists from Gwadar to Zahedan and onward to Central Asia. He recalled that in 2015, the first convoy of containers arriving from China was successfully transported to Gwadar Port through the route, proving that Gwadar possesses the full potential to connect the region with China and Central Asia. He stated that industrialists and investors in the Gwadar Free Zone enjoy tax exemptions and other special incentives, where machinery and equipment can be imported duty-free. Participants of meeting appreciated the efforts of

Chairman Gwadar Port and expressed keen interest in the available facilities, particularly regarding Iran transit trade. On this occasion, the Gwadar-Rimdan 250 border route was described as an effective multimodal facility for cargo transportation to Iran and Central Asia. GPA Chairman urged shipping companies and traders to turn towards Gwadar Port. He also revealed that a trade delegation from Iran is expected to visit Gwadar soon. The Chairman said that due to its lowest tariffs, modern facilities, and strategic location, Gwadar Port has immense potential to become a major trade corridor for Pakistan's economy. Besides APSA members, former President of the Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Faisal Dashti, and the Director Customs Transit Trade also attended the meeting. Faisal Dashti briefed participants on regional trade activities, including those related to Gwadar, while the Director Customs Transit Trade provided information regarding customs-related matters.—DNA

Water cube cup Chinese song contest makes Pakistan debut

ISLAMABAD: The 2026 "Culture China • Water Cube Cup" Chinese Song Contest concluded its Pakistan leg final in the federal capital, marking the debut of the long-running global cultural event in the country. The competition served as a musical and cultural bridge, allowing attendees to immerse themselves in the charms of Chinese-language music, according to Gwadar Pro. Since the opening of registrations in February, the event drew over 220 applicants from across Pakistan, from which 32 contestants advanced to the final round. The finalists included 10 in the junior group and 22 in the youth group. Each contestant showcased their unique vocal styles, demonstrated their proficiency in the Chinese language and expressed their heartfelt passion for Chinese culture through their performances. The judging panel for the competition was composed of local Pakistani music professionals, Chinese language education experts, seasoned overseas Chinese community leaders and representatives of the cultural sector. The final results awarded gold, silver and bronze medals to six outstanding competitors. Additionally, one contestant received the Chinese New Star Award, and three others were honored with the Cultural Exchange Ambassador Award. A public welfare donation ceremony was also held at the event. Fujian Qixie Construction Development Co., Ltd. donated a special education fund of 1,000,000 Pakistani rupees to the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community to promote cultural and educational exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Pakistani youth.—DNA

University of Gwadar okays AI Lab, AI literacy program

ISLAMABAD: University of Gwadar's Department of Computer Science approved the establishment of a dedicated artificial intelligence research and development laboratory and launched a 10-month AI training program during the sixth meeting of its Board of Studies (BoS). The meeting was held at the Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute under the chairmanship of Hafeezullah, chairperson of the Department of Computer Science at the University of Gwadar, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. Participants included Mohibullah, dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Engineering and Technology; Rabia Aslam, director of the Quality Enhancement Cell at the University of Gwadar; Rashid, lecturer at the University of Turbat; Syed Ahmed Khan, lecturer at the National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (FAST-NUCES Karachi); Shayhaq Ali, lecturer at the University of Gwadar; and Haim Gul Munir, lecturer at the University of Gwadar. The board reviewed and approved 10 agenda items related to academic and technological development. With prior approval from the university's vice chancellor, the board endorsed the establishment of the Artificial Intelligence and Data Innovation Lab (AIDIL), aimed at promoting AI research and innovation at the university. The board also approved the launch of the Gwadar AI Literacy Initiative (GAIL), a 10-month training program designed to enhance AI skills and digital literacy among students and local youth. Other approved agenda items included updated course catalogs and laboratory manuals for undergraduate computing programs, revised guidelines for theory and laboratory evaluations, and new Final Year Project (FYP) guidelines and handbook. Speaking at the conclusion of the meeting, Hafeezullah thanked board members for their contributions and reaffirmed the university's commitment to advancing academic excellence and technological innovation in Gwadar.—DNA

IRS seminar highlights growing food crisis in Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, organized a seminar titled "Harvesting Hunger: A Looming Food Crisis in Pakistan" to assess the growing risks of food insecurity in the country, driven by fertilizer shortages and ongoing geopolitical instability in the region. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, cautioned that the global community is not paying adequate attention to the rapidly intensifying food crisis. He highlighted the strategic importance of the Gulf region, noting that it accounts for 30-35% of global urea trade, while nearly 30% of the world's fertilizer trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a critical chokepoint with far-reaching implications for global food supply chains.

Ms. Isabel Bogorinsky, Welthungerhilfe (WHH) Head of Program in Pakistan, emphasized the vital role of international non-governmental organizations in strengthening food security in Pakistan. She noted that WHH, established in 1962, is one of Germany's largest private non-profit aid organizations and is currently operating in over 22 districts across Pakistan. She outlined the organization's approach, which focuses on enhancing community resilience and transforming food systems rather than relying on short-term interventions. In 2025 alone, WHH reached approximately 4.72 million people through its initiatives. Mr. Omer Bangash, Food and Nutrition Security Advisor at WHH, presented key findings from the Global Hunger Index 2025, under which Pakistan ranks 106th out of 123 countries with a score of 26.0,

indicating a "serious" level of hunger. He further shared that the IPC Technical Working Group assessed that in 2025, around 11 million people in Pakistan faced acute food insecurity, including 1.7 million in IPC Phase 4, representing extreme levels of crisis. Projections for 2026 indicate a sharp escalation, with up to 20 million people expected to face acute food insecurity and malnutrition between April and September. Moderating the session, Mr. Talha Tufail Bhatti, Lead Climate Governance, Policy and Food Security Program at IRS, underscored that Pakistan is entering its 2026 heatwave season, warning that "extreme heat" is emerging as a critical risk multiplier. He stressed the need for a whole-of-society approach to effectively address the intensifying climate crisis and its cascading impacts on food security.

Pak sets target of 95% renewable electricity by 2040

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan aims to generate 95% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2040, while achieving a 60% clean energy share by 2030, according to an official document outlining the country's long-term energy transition strategy. The document, available with Wealth Pakistan, sets out an ambitious roadmap to transform Pakistan into a majority-renewable energy economy by 2050, powering industry, households, and transport with clean and affordable energy. As part of this transition, the country plans to raise renewable electricity generation to 50% by 2035 and phase out or convert 14,000 megawatts of fossil fuel-based power plants by the same year. It also targets a sharp reduction in transmission and distribution losses from 19% to 8%, alongside achieving 100% electricity access across the country. The plan further includes installing rooftop solar systems in all government secondary schools by 2035 and investing in small businesses and entrepreneurs to promote job creation and skill development in solar, wind, and hydrogen technologies. The document highlights that although Pakistan contributes only about 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions and has per-capita emissions of 2.3 tonnes of CO2 equivalent, it continues to face significant economic pressure due to reliance on imported fossil fuels. This dependence has strained foreign exchange reserves, widened the balance of payments gap, and contributed to a circular debt exceeding Rs1.66 trillion in the power sector. It notes that volatile global fuel prices and currency fluctuations have driven up electricity generation costs, resulting in higher consumer tariffs and financial inefficiencies, including payments for underutilised capacity. The shift to indigenous renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro, and biomass is seen as critical to reducing import dependence, lowering power costs, and improving energy security, while also cutting emissions and air pollution. According to the document, investment in large-scale renewable projects, energy storage systems, and grid modernisation will be essential to support this transition and ensure system reliability, particularly as the country moves toward electrification of transport. Citing an April 2025 report, the document notes that Pakistan imported 17 gigawatts of solar power systems in 2024, double the previous year.—DNA

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How Strait of Hormuz crisis is reshaping the global economy

Zaid M. Belbagi

For decades, the global economy has operated on the assumption that oil will always flow, tankers will move across the seas, prices will fluctuate within predictable limits and the arteries of international trade will continue to support the functioning of the world. The 2026 conflict in Iran has fundamentally challenged this assumption. The situation now constitutes the most severe stress test the entire global energy supply system has ever known. At the center of this challenge is the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway that is only 39 km wide at its narrowest point yet through which approximately 20 million barrels of oil and liquefied natural gas usually pass every day. This passage accounts for between 20 percent and 25 percent of all global energy trade. The current crisis is more than geopolitical, as it carries profound economic consequences with implications that extend across the entire world. The geography of the Strait of Hormuz is the first point of vulnerability. Iran understands that it does not need to match the US in terms of conventional military power to pose a serious threat. Instead, it relies on other tactics, such as placing sea mines in narrow shipping lanes – a strategy designed to block or slow access and make passage dangerous and costly. Large commercial tankers, which are slow and difficult to defend, are particularly exposed to these threats. The situation now constitutes the most severe stress test the entire global energy supply system has ever known. The gap between the military capabilities in the region and the vulnerability of the ships carrying the world's energy is striking and Iran has long understood how to exploit it. In this conflict, control over the strait is the most effective instrument of influence. Once the strait was effectively closed, the market reacted immediately and the response was severe. Brent crude surged past \$120 a barrel within weeks, reaching levels not seen since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. There is, however, an important distinction. Unlike previous disruptions caused by a supplier exiting the market, the 2026 crisis involves a strategic chokepoint effectively going dark. This is structurally different and, in many ways, far more difficult to compensate for. OPEC's position shifted almost overnight. The organization that spent much of 2025 managing a surplus and curbing output to prevent a price collapse now faces a shortfall it cannot fully fill. Alternative pipelines, such as the East-West Pipeline in Saudi Arabia and the Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline, have absorbed what they can and production increases from major non-Gulf producers have begun. Still, these measures offset only about half of the lost supply. Nearly 130 million barrels of crude are now stuck in floating storage in the Gulf, loaded onto tankers that cannot deliver,



while Washington and Tehran remain far from reaching any agreement. Energy shocks of this magnitude do not remain confined to oil markets. They ripple outward through fertilizer, freight and food. About a third of global fertilizer trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions to those shipments are already pushing up agricultural input costs. The effects on the next growing cycle are only now beginning to emerge. Analysts project a 16 percent rise in global commodity prices. For economies with deep fiscal buffers and diverse import sources, this may appear manageable. For those without such advantages, the consequences are devastating. Asia has borne the brunt of the crisis. The region receives around 85 percent of all crude shipments from the Gulf and oil imports fell by 30 percent year-on-year in April alone, reaching their lowest level since October 2015. Responses have been improvised and costly. Japan, which relies on the Middle East for 95 percent of its oil, has turned to American crude, purchasing it at spot market prices inflated by a war premium and shouldering the added shipping costs for a journey that takes twice as long. Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy, is seeking alternative suppliers in Africa and Latin America and has committed to purchasing 150 million barrels from Russia by the end of the year. In economies where most household income is spent on food, the link between energy prices and food security is immediate. Vietnam, which depends on the Middle East for at least 85 percent of its crude imports, is among the continent's most-exposed economies. The irony is acute, as the country's export-oriented manufacturing sector relies on affordable energy to remain competitive. Thailand, which usually imports up to 70 percent of its crude from the Middle East, has introduced government-mandated energy-saving measures, including encouraging remote work to reduce fuel consumption. These responses are real indications of a structural realignment in global energy flows. The impact on the Global South goes far beyond energy bills. In South Asia and East Africa, higher import costs and currency depreciation are creating serious fiscal stress. Governments are spending billions on duty waivers and fuel subsidies to shield households from the full impact of the crisis – measures that provide short-term relief but add to long-term debt. In economies where most household income is spent on food, the link between energy prices and food security is immediate. Fertilizer costs rise, food prices follow and purchasing power falls, leaving little margin for error. In 2026, this dilemma between food and fuel is being imposed on governments that neither caused the conflict nor have any ability to resolve it. The Middle East and North Africa region is at the heart of this global energy transformation. Gulf states are the world's leading energy exporters, yet they are also directly exposed to the ripple effects of the crisis, with the UAE alone accounting for 18 percent of vessel traffic through the strait. Their wealth provides resilience that neighbors cannot match, but it does not guarantee immunity. For the broader region, the situation is a defining moment. Some countries, such as Turkey, could seize this opportunity to establish themselves as hubs for international trade. Buyers are diversifying because the route to market has become uncertain. If that uncertainty persists, it will leave a lasting mark on Gulf export relationships. The Strait of Hormuz crisis has reminded the world, and the region itself, that geography may not dictate destiny but, in moments like this, it comes perilously close.

Courage of Iran, Spineless Muslim World

Qamar Bashir



The recent war transformed many assumptions that had shaped international politics for decades. For the first time in modern history, Iran demonstrated that even the combined military, diplomatic, and economic pressure of the United States and Israel could be resisted. Few analysts imagined that Tehran would withstand months of military confrontation, survive economic pressure, absorb attacks on its infrastructure and leadership, and still emerge politically stronger. Yet that is exactly what happened. Militarily, Iran preserved its command structure, maintained its deterrence capability, and continued projecting power through both direct and indirect means. Diplomatically, Tehran achieved something equally remarkable: it prevented the complete isolation that Washington and Tel Aviv had sought to impose upon it. In the United Nations and other international forums, the United States failed repeatedly to secure the level of consensus it once commanded effortlessly. China and Russia openly resisted Western pressure and challenged American narratives surrounding maritime security, sanctions, and military escalation. Even many countries traditionally aligned with Washington adopted cautious or neutral positions rather than joining a wider anti-Iran coalition. Instead of appearing isolated, Iran suddenly appeared resilient, composed, and increasingly influential. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi embarked on an aggressive diplomatic campaign across the Middle East and beyond, reassuring neighboring countries that Iran did not seek war against Arab states. Tehran repeatedly argued that its attacks on military bases in the region were not aimed at host governments themselves, but at facilities being used by the United States to conduct operations against Iran. From Tehran's perspective, if a country thousands of miles away could claim a "perceived threat" as justification for military action against Iran, then Iran also possessed the right to neutralize launch points and operational hubs being used against it. This argument, controversial as it may be, resonated with many observers who increasingly viewed the conflict through the lens of double standards. Iran's leadership emphasized that collateral damage from its strikes was minimal compared to the widespread destruction caused in Gaza, Lebanon, and elsewhere. Whether one agrees with Tehran or not, the diplomatic effect was undeniable: most Middle Eastern states refused to join the offensive side of the war. They remained defensive, cautious, and unwilling

to openly participate in direct confrontation with Iran. At the same time, the United States suffered a severe erosion of political influence across Europe. Washington's increasingly confrontational posture toward European allies, combined with pressure campaigns and threats of troop withdrawals, accelerated growing resentment inside the European Union. Germany and other European states began openly discussing strategic autonomy and reducing dependency on American military dominance. What was once framed as a protective alliance increasingly started being viewed by many Europeans as an unequal arrangement driven by American interests rather than mutual respect. Yet despite this massive geopolitical shift – despite Iran surviving, despite American prestige declining, despite Israel facing unprecedented military and diplomatic pressure – Israel continued its aggressive posture toward Lebanon and Gaza. This contradiction raises an even deeper question: why did the burden of confronting Israel fall disproportionately upon Iran, a Shia-majority state, while many powerful Sunni-majority countries remained passive? This is the uncomfortable reality that now confronts the Muslim world. Iran, despite sectarian differences and historical rivalries, positioned itself as the most aggressive defender of Palestinians and Lebanese civilians. Meanwhile, many Sunni-majority states possessing enormous wealth, advanced weaponry, and strategic leverage limited themselves largely to statements, summits, condemnations, and symbolic diplomacy. Saudi Arabia, which has long claimed leadership of the Sunni Muslim world, possessed the economic influence to impose severe pressure through oil policy, trade restrictions, and regional coordination. Turkey frequently projects military strength and strategic ambition, yet during the height of the crisis it remained largely rhetorical. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, and other regional powers similarly avoided meaningful confrontation. Even countries with immense populations and military capabilities – including Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and influential African Muslim states – did not collectively mobilize to impose serious economic or diplomatic costs upon Israel. Ironically, some European countries and international institutions appeared more vocal in defending Palestinian rights than many Muslim governments themselves. European public opinion increasingly shifted against Israeli military operations.

Humanitarian agencies, civil society groups, and even segments of Western political establishments openly criticized the scale of destruction in Gaza and Lebanon. The United Nations repeatedly warned about humanitarian catastrophe. Yet the Muslim world, despite possessing the strongest emotional, religious, and historical connection to the issue, remained deeply divided and strategically paralyzed. If Israel justifies its actions in southern Lebanon by claiming it seeks a "buffer zone" for security, then the logic becomes limitless and dangerous. By that reasoning,

any powerful state could justify occupying neighboring territory indefinitely under the pretext of future threats. Security concerns cannot become a permanent license for territorial expansion, demographic displacement, or endless military operations. Critics increasingly argue that what is unfolding reflects not merely defensive policy, but a broader strategic ambition to dominate surrounding regions politically and militarily. The tragedy is that the Muslim world still possesses immense leverage if it chooses to act collectively. It controls critical trade routes, energy supplies, air corridors, ports, and markets. Coordinated restrictions on airspace access, shipping routes, commercial cooperation, and strategic logistics could dramatically alter the regional balance without requiring direct military confrontation. Economic isolation, diplomatic unity, and strategic pressure could impose significant costs while avoiding catastrophic war. Instead, many governments continue offering rhetorical solidarity while avoiding meaningful sacrifice or risk. This gap between public emotion and state policy has created widespread frustration across Muslim societies. The lesson emerging from the Iran confrontation is not necessarily about ideology or sectarianism, but about political will. Iran demonstrated that a nation prepared to absorb pressure, endure hardship, and act with strategic determination can challenge even vastly superior powers. Whether one supports or opposes Tehran's policies, the symbolism of its resilience has transformed regional psychology. It shattered the belief that resistance is impossible. It exposed the limitations of overwhelming military superiority when confronted by national resolve and strategic patience. Most importantly, it revealed the weakness of states that possess wealth and power but lack collective courage and unity. The broader lesson for the Muslim world is stark. Fear of retaliation, dependency, and political caution may preserve short-term stability, but they also perpetuate long-term humiliation and strategic irrelevance. Nations that continuously avoid risk eventually lose both influence and dignity. Courage alone does not guarantee victory, but the absence of courage guarantees submission. The crisis in Gaza and Lebanon has therefore become more than a regional conflict. It has become a mirror reflecting the political fragmentation, contradictions, and moral paralysis of the Muslim world itself. Until Muslim nations move beyond symbolic rhetoric and develop coordinated, principled, and strategic policies, Israel will continue acting with confidence and impunity. The future balance of power in the Middle East will ultimately not be determined only by weapons or technology, but by which nations possess the unity, resilience, and political courage to stand firmly behind their convictions.

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

Short-term frustrations should not drive US policies

Luke Coffey

This is not the first time Trump has threatened to withdraw forces from Europe. He did the same during the final year of his first term but those plans were never implemented after he lost the 2020 election. But Trump is not alone in reducing America's military presence in Europe. In 2013, President Barack Obama also withdrew almost 10,000 troops from Europe, including every American tank, leaving the continent without a single US tank on its soil for the first time

Out of growing frustration with some European countries, in particular Germany, and their perceived unwillingness to support the US in the Middle East, President Donald Trump last week announced that he will remove 5,000 American troops permanently based in Germany over the next six to 12 months. He also warned that this could be the first step in a sizable drawdown of US forces from Europe. This is not the first time Trump has threatened to withdraw forces from Europe. He did the same during the final year of his first term but those plans were never implemented after he lost the 2020 election. But Trump is not alone in reducing America's military presence in Europe. In 2013, President Barack Obama also withdrew almost 10,000 troops from Europe, including every American tank, leaving the continent without a single US tank on its soil for the first time since the Second World War. This was done as part of his administration's failed "reset" with Russia. Just months after the last US tank left Europe, Russia annexed Crimea. Currently, the US has about 68,000 troops permanently based in Europe. This represents about an 86 percent reduction from the Cold War high of 475,000 troops in the 1950s. Still, due to training exercises and the arrival of rotational forces, the total number of American troops in Europe can at times approach 100,000. Critics often rely on outdated Cold War assumptions to argue that US troops are no longer needed in Europe. During the Cold War, the mission of US troops in Europe was clear: defend Western Europe, stop the spread of communism and, if necessary, defeat the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies on the battlefield. But since the end of the Cold War, the case for why US troops should remain in Europe has not been conveyed adequately to the American public. Instead, critics often rely on outdated Cold War assumptions to argue that US troops are no longer needed on the continent. This misses the point. The

reasons for keeping American forces in Europe today are different from those of the Cold War, but they are no less important. In the 21st century, there are two main reasons why it is important for the US to keep forces in Europe. The first is economic. Europe is too important to America's economic security for it not to have a direct security role on the continent. About half of the world's gross domestic product is found between North America and Europe. According to a recent report by the US Chamber of Commerce, Europe is America's No. 1 destination for exports. The report goes on to say that 48 out of the 50 US states export more to Europe than they do to China. Europe is also the single largest source of foreign investment into the US. Last year, about 56 percent of all foreign investment into America originated from Europe, totaling about \$3.5 trillion. The stability and security across Europe that have contributed to the region's economic prosperity – and in turn benefited the US – have been made possible in part by the continued presence of American military forces in Europe and Washington's continued participation in NATO. This presence is not an act of charity. It is a strategic investment in a region whose peace and prosperity directly affect American workers, businesses and consumers. The second reason US forces in Europe benefit their homeland is geography. One needs to look beyond Europe's traditional borders to understand why it is beneficial for America to have bases and troops deployed on the continent. From North Africa and the Levant to the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Russia and the Arctic, the regions surrounding Europe have long been sources of unpredictability and, at times, instability for American interests. Overlaid on this same broad region are some of the world's most important trade routes, energy corridors and transit chokepoints. Having US forces deployed in Europe gives policymakers more options and greater speed when reacting to events. Having US forces deployed in Europe gives policymakers more options and greater speed when react-

ing to geopolitical events. These bases also help America project force even farther afield. A recent example is the US air campaign against Iran. Without access to European airspace and basing, which was arguably made possible by a military relationship going back decades and underpinned by the presence of US military forces in Europe, the campaign would have been far more difficult to execute, if not impossible. In this sense, the large US garrisons of the Cold War have become America's forward operating bases of the 21st century. It is understandable that the Trump administration has placed the defense and security of the homeland and the Western Hemisphere at the center of its national security strategy. But the US already has about 85 percent of its military personnel permanently based within the country. Removing 5,000 troops from Europe will not meaningfully strengthen America's role in the Western Hemisphere. It will, however, significantly weaken a key deterrent presence in Europe. Perhaps most alarmingly, the decision to remove 5,000 troops from Europe does not appear to be part of a larger plan or strategy. Instead, it seems designed to settle a political grievance the White House currently has with the German government. That is no way to make decisions about America's global military posture. Europe will continue to be an important geopolitical region for the US. The presence of its forces there deter adversaries, reassure allies, support its operations beyond Europe and protect an economic relationship that is vital to American prosperity. Hopefully, the announcement that these troops will be removed is simply part of the heated rhetoric Trump often deploys against Europeans and will not come to fruition. The US should make decisions about its force posture in Europe based on its own long-term national interests, not short-term political frustration.

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'Any future aggression will have...

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adding that India wanted to isolate Pakistan and alter the balance of power in the region. CDF Munir said that India's ambitions were far beyond its stature and capabilities, noting that Pakistan would never allow India's "dream" to materialise. The army chief also said the enemy had forgotten that Pakistan's armed forces had never bowed to the dominance of power in the past and would never do so in the future. "The entire nation stood like a solid wall in the defence of the homeland," he said, noting that when Indian missiles fell, a large number of people came out in support of the country's defence. He also paid tribute to the unarmed women, elderly people, and innocent children martyred during Marka-e-Haq. "Pakistan regarded the sacrifices of its martyrs as a sacred trust and viewed its strength as a responsibility," he said, adding that the country considered its success a blessing from Allah. Field Marshal Munir said the message from the people and national leadership was clear: no compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national dignity. He also said the battle was not only won on the battlefield but also at the national level across all sectors. He further said that the brave "Shaheens" (Air force personnel) set an example of the longest and most decisive war of the modern era.

15 cops martyred in Bannu...

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The blast destroyed the post and armoured vehicle stationed there. Nearby buildings also suffered severe damage from the blast's intensity at the site and emergency was declared in local hospitals. The Bannu police launched an operation, led by RPO Sajad Khan, after the attack, and the area was cordoned off by security forces. Police also tightened security across the city and set up additional checkpoints. Local residents also came out in support of law enforcement personnel. Rescue 1122 teams concluded the rescue operation at the site of the incident on Sunday morning. Meanwhile the Prime Minister called KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and asked him to take all steps to reach out to the real culprits. The Prime Minister also expressed sympathies with the families of the martyred policemen. Government officials at both the federal and provincial levels had previously assured residents that militant infrastructure in the area would be dismantled. However, many locals say those commitments have yet to be fully implemented.

President, Prime Minister...

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honour of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in defence of the country. In his speech, the prime minister rejected India's allegations regarding the Pahalgam incident, saying Pakistan was subjected to baseless accusations following the attack. He said that Pakistan had repeatedly warned the adversary against any adventurism and had even offered a comprehensive investigation into the incident. PM Shehbaz further said the situation escalated when the "cowardly enemy imposed war on Pakistan," prompting a strong and historic response from the country's armed forces. "Everywhere our Shaheens dominated the skies and enemy aircraft were reduced to wreckage," he said, adding that Pakistan's response had forced the opposing side to seek a ceasefire. He also stated that even after one year, India had not presented any evidence to substantiate its allegations. Declaring May 10 as "Youm-e-Marka-e-Haq", the premier announced that the day would be observed annually with national enthusiasm and renewed commitment.

KSrelief concludes final phase of food security support project

The distribution process was carried out in close coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), district administrations, and KSrelief's implementing partners, Hayat Foundation and peace and development organization

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully completed the final phase of the Food Security Support Project 2025-26 in Pakistan, marking a significant milestone in its ongoing humanitarian efforts to combat food insecurity and support vulnerable communities across the country about 195,487 individual were benefited in 31 district across Pakistan. Under this nationwide initiative, food assistance was delivered across multiple regions, covering a total of 31 districts, including 10 districts in Punjab, 5 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 7 in Balochistan, 6 in Sindh, and 3 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The project aimed to ensure the timely provision of essential food supplies to the most deserving and food-insecure households. As part of the final phase, KSrelief distributed thousands of food packages among



vulnerable families. Each package, weighing 97 kilograms, included essential food items such as 80 kg of flour, 5 liters of cooking oil, 5 kg of sugar, 5 kg daal chana, and 2 kg of dates, providing critical nutritional support to beneficiary households. The distribution process was carried out in close coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), district administrations, and KSrelief's implementing partners, Hayat Foundation and peace and development organization. The entire operation was conducted in a transparent, efficient, and well-organized manner to ensure that assistance reached the intended beneficiaries. This project reflects KSrelief's steadfast commitment to strengthening food security in Pakistan and delivering timely humanitarian assistance to those most in need. It also underscores the Centre's broader global mission to alleviate human suffering and promote sustainable development in vulnerable communities worldwide.

ACTIVIT Margalla Triathlon debuts on Marka-e-Haq Day



Trail Runners and ACTIVIT and is being seen as a milestone in promoting endurance sports in Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, ACTIVIT Ambassador Moazzam Khan Klair said the event reflected unity, resilience, and national spirit on Marka-e-Haq Day. He noted that civilians and armed forces stood together in the face of Indian aggression, demonstrating shared resolve and commitment to national dignity. "All participants showed exceptional endurance and discipline. The event was not only a competition but a message of unity, strength, and perseverance," he said. Moazzam Khan Klair credited Rd. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, CEO of ACTIVIT and Director National Hospital DHA Lahore, for sponsoring the event. He dedicated the occasion to the martyrs of the nation and to those contributing to Pakistan's progress through courage and service.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The first-ever ACTIVIT Margalla Triathlon 2026 was held in Islamabad on Marka-e-Haq Day, marking Pakistan's debut Olympic and Sprint-style triathlon. The event brought together local and international athletes who competed across

swimming, cycling, and running disciplines, showcasing endurance, discipline, and sportsmanship. In the main results, Shahrez Khan, widely regarded as Pakistan's leading triathlete, won the individual title, further strengthening his reputation as the country's top endurance athlete with growing international

recognition. The Pakistan Army team secured victory in the team category. In other categories, Saltanat Sambina won the women's sprint solo event, Evgenii Yusyuk claimed the Olympic solo title, Enub Khan won the 5-kilometre fun race, while Mona Khan finished second. The event was jointly organised by Margalla

EU-Pakistan Friendship Federation hosts Marka-e-Haq celebration

Chairman EU-Pak Friendship Federation Dr. Pervez Iqbal Lohsar, on the occasion, said that Pakistan's Armed Forces had given a strong response to Indian aggression in 2025 and successfully countered hostile actions against the country

ISLAMABAD: The EU-Pak Friendship Federation Spain organized a grand programme in Barcelona to celebrate Marka-e-Haq and Operation Bunyanun Marsoos. The event marked one of the largest gatherings of overseas Pakistanis in Europe with a massive turnout from diverse communities. A large number of participants, including overseas Pakistanis, members of the Kashmiri community and Arab nationals joined the celebrations with enthusiasm and patriotic spirit. The participants carried flags of Pakistan and Kashmir, along with portraits of Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, said a press release issued here Sunday. Chairman EU-Pak Friendship Federation Dr. Pervez Iqbal Lohsar, on the occasion, said that Pakistan's Armed Forces had given a strong response to Indian aggression in 2025 and successfully countered hostile actions against the country. He praised the leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and commended the professionalism and preparedness of Pakistan's armed forces. Dr. Lohsar emphasized that Pakistan seeks peace in the region but remained fully capable of defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any future aggression. The event concluded with renewed expressions of unity, patriotism and solidarity among overseas Pakistanis and supporters of Pakistan and Kashmir living across Europe.

Punjab expands stroke care network

The initiative was announced by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in February this year to establish stroke management facilities in every district, with a focus on timely intervention during critical hours to reduce mortality and disability.

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab government has operationalized multiple stroke management centres across key public hospitals as part of a province-wide initiative to improve emergency response and treatment for stroke patients. The initiative was announced by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in February this year to establish stroke management facilities in every district, with a focus on timely intervention during critical hours to reduce mortality and disability. According to official details, stroke centres have been set up in major tertiary care hospitals including Punjab Institute of Neurosciences, Mayo Hospital, Services Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Lahore, along with Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology and Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi. Additional facilities have been activated in Faisalabad, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalpur. Officials said the initiative also includes deployment of trained medical staff, with doctors and nurses undergoing specialized stroke management training to handle emergency cases effectively at district headquarters hospitals. The government has also planned public awareness campaigns on stroke symptoms and response, emphasizing early recognition and rapid hospital access to improve patient outcomes. - APP

PAF officials recognize leadership's timely decision in Marka-e-Haq

Flight Lieutenant Noshervan expressed deep gratitude, stating that the prayers of his parents and the nation were a constant source of strength and honor

ISLAMABAD: Commanding Officer Wing Commander Nadir Ali and Flight Lieutenant Noshervan of the Pakistan Air Force on Sunday paid tribute to the leadership's timely decisions and the Air Force's swift, befitting response during Marka-e-Haq, praising the JF-17 Thunder as a modern, battle-proven fighter aircraft earning growing global recognition and admiration. While speaking to PTV News, the Commanding Officer expressed gratitude to the nation for its prayers and support, acknowledging the leadership's timely decision and the Air Force's befitting response during Marka-e-Haq 2025. He reaffirmed that the armed forces remained fully alert and prepared to counter any form of aggression, whether conventional or hybrid. He also referred to hostile cyber attempts linked to the conflict environment, stating that such digital threats were effectively identified and neutralized through robust cyber defence mechanisms, ensuring operational continuity and information security. He praised the JF-17 Thunder as a modern, highly precise fighter aircraft, highlighting its proven battlefield effectiveness and the advanced Block III variant's capability to accurately engage and neutralize sophisticated enemy air defence systems with speed and precision. He further noted that the platform has now gained worldwide attention

and recognition, becoming widely known for its performance and growing reputation in modern aerial warfare. He also criticized the Indian Air Force's operational capability, while emphasizing that the Pakistan Air Force continues to stand out globally through its high-level training, professionalism and growing international recognition. Flight Lieutenant Noshervan expressed deep gratitude, stating that the prayers of his parents and the nation were a constant source of strength and honor. He said this support reflects the spirit and resilience of the Pakistan Air Force, which continues to serve with dedication and unwavering resolve. He further described the PAF role as that of unforgettable heroes, whose sacrifices and professionalism will always be remembered and admired. Reaffirming his commitment, he paid tribute to the leadership and vowed continued dedication to duty with pride and loyalty. He concluded with a firm warning, emphasizing that any misadventure would be met with a decisive response, while underlining that Pakistan remains fully prepared and vigilant. He further stated that the Pakistan Air Force was always combat-ready, maintaining the highest level of operational preparedness to defend the nation's airspace at all times. - APP

PTCL users may face...

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"During this period, customers may face internet service degradation during evening hours," PTCL said. The state-owned telecom giant manages three undersea optical fibre cable networks that provide international internet connectivity to Pakistan. Internet users in Pakistan often face disruptions due to persistent submarine cable faults. According to a report by Top10VPN.com, Pakistan led the world in financial losses from outages and shutdowns of internet and social media apps in 2023.

FIA offloads two Afghan nationals

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The official said FIA authorities offloaded both passengers and took their passports and mobile phones into custody. He said the accused were later shifted to the FIA Anti Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad for further legal proceedings and registration of a case. The official said FIA continued indiscriminate action against fake documentation and illegal immigration under its zero-tolerance policy.

Trump: US would need two weeks...

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In recent remarks, Netanyahu stated that while substantial achievements have been made, remaining nuclear material, enrichment sites, and proxy threats require further action. He reiterated that the enriched uranium will leave Iran "by agreement or through resumed fighting," noting alignment with the US on this core issue. The developments reflect a delicate balance between diplomatic efforts — mediated by Pakistan — and persistent military posturing. The current two-week ceasefire framework remains in place, but key sticking points include Iran's nuclear program, proxy forces in Lebanon, and guarantees for long-term peace. No immediate breakthrough has been announced, and markets continue to monitor the situation closely for signs of escalation or de-escalation in the region.

Iran sends response to US...

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During the meeting, General Abdullahi briefed the Supreme Leader on the high combat readiness of Iran's forces—including the regular army, IRGC, Basij, and other branches—to confront any potential US-Israeli actions. Khamenei reportedly issued "new guiding measures to pursue military operations and firmly confront adversaries." The armed forces declared they remain "ready to confront any action by the American-Zionist enemies." These developments come amid indirect US-Iran talks mediated by Pakistan. The US has pushed for a permanent end to hostilities, reportedly including elements related to Iran's nuclear program and navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has been reviewing proposals while maintaining a firm military stance.

Iranian envoy slams Bannu...

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that terrorism remains a common threat to regional peace and stability. "On behalf of the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I strongly condemn the terrorist attack on the Fateh Khel police post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district," the ambassador stated. He extended heartfelt condolences to the Government of Pakistan, the police force, and especially the bereaved families who lost their loved ones in the attack. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost their loved ones. We pray for the safe and speedy recovery of the injured," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Irena Gancheva of Bulgaria, Ambassador of Poland Macej Pisarski and Mrs Justyna Pisarki, the Ambassador of Belgium Idesbald van Graff and Mrs Lorrain, newly arrived Ambassador of Spain Carlos Aragon and Mrs Sabine Richter, the Embassy of Argentina Deputy Mrs Erica Lucero in a group picture on the occasion of polo match. DNA

Briefs

Syrian pilgrims depart for Hujj

LONDON: Hundreds of Syrians departed from Damascus international airport for Saudi Arabia on Sunday as authorities began operating flights for pilgrims participating in the Hajj season. Two flights left from Damascus with 680 Syrian pilgrims to Jeddah, from where they will travel to Makkah, according to the Syrian Civil Aviation Authority. On Saturday, the first flight carrying 340 pilgrims from Syria took off. In the coming days, about 12,900 pilgrims will travel through Damascus, with around 9,000 departing from Aleppo international airport heading to perform Hajj, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency. Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, and every non-disabled Muslim is required to undertake the pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah at least once in their life. This year, it is expected to take place from May 24-29, and thousands of Muslims have already arrived in Saudi Arabia to prepare for it. Last year, 1,673,230 pilgrims performed Hajj, according to the General Authority for Statistics, of whom 166,654 were citizens or residents, and the rest came from outside the Kingdom.—APP

Kuwait, UAE detect hostile drones in airspace

DUBAI: Kuwait's army said it detected and dealt with several hostile drones in the country's airspace at dawn, marking the first such incident since a ceasefire in the Iran war came into effect in April. The United Arab Emirates' air defenses also dealt with two drones coming from Iran on Sunday, the defence ministry said. Earlier this week, air defenses in the United Arab Emirates engaged two Iranian ballistic missiles and three drones, leaving three people injured. Kuwait had previously said its air defenses dealt with Iranian missiles and drones during the war, including a wave of Iranian drones on April 8 that targeted vital infrastructure.—APP

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 3

CAIRO: Israeli strikes killed at least three Palestinians in Gaza on Sunday, including two members of the Hamas-run police force, health officials said, in violence that underscored the fragility of a US-brokered ceasefire. Medics said an air strike killed one person in the Maghazi refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, while another killed the head of the criminal police force in Khan Younis, Wessam AbdelHadi, and his aide, according to Gaza's Hamas-run interior ministry. Reuters has previously reported that Israel has heightened its attacks on Gaza's Hamas-run police force that the militants have used to re-establish governance in areas under their control. The Israeli military didn't immediately comment on either incident. Violence in Gaza has persisted despite an October 2025 ceasefire, with Israel conducting almost daily attacks.—APP

Qatar says cargo vessel coming from Abu Dhabi attacked in its waters

DUBAI: The British military said a ship caught fire Sunday after being hit by an unknown projectile off the coast of Qatar. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Center said the attack caused a small fire on the bulk carrier, which was extinguished. The attack happened 23 nautical miles (43 kilometers) northeast of Qatar's capital, Doha, the UKMTO said. There were no reported casualties, it said. Qatar's foreign ministry condemned the drone attack, describing the targeting of commercial and civilian vessels as a "grave violation of international law."—APP



MULTAN: The Azerbaijan International Development Agency has extended humanitarian assistance to families impacted by floods in Multan, Pakistan, underscoring the robust friendship, solidarity, and mutual support shared between Azerbaijan and Pakistan.

FBR chief assures business community of max facilitation

The proposals stressed the need to end policy instability caused by frequent SROs and changing tax interpretations, stating that unpredictability in policies had become one of the major causes of de-industrialization

LAHORE: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Chairman Rashid Mahmood Langrial and Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol discussed key taxation, industrial and business-related issues along with the upcoming federal budget proposals submitted by the Lahore chamber. The LCCI spokesman told the media here on Sunday that during the meeting, the FBR chairman informed the LCCI president that he would visit Lahore chamber before the announcement of the federal budget to brief the business community on the evolving role of the FBR in policy implementation and facilitation. "In its new role the FBR will facilitate the business community to the maximum", he assured. Rashid Mahmood Langrial said

that in its new role, the FBR would focus on facilitating the business community while ensuring effective implementation of tax policies. While Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol briefed the FBR Chairman on the major challenges being faced by trade and industry and presented detailed budget proposals aimed at reducing the cost of doing business, promoting industrial growth and improving the taxation system. The proposals stressed the need to end policy instability caused by frequent SROs and changing tax interpretations, stating that unpredictability in policies had become one of the major causes of de-industrialization. He also emphasized the need to reduce the cost of doing business that is significantly higher than competing regional economies.

The Lahore Chamber also called for a sector-wise tariff structure to protect domestic industries operating under higher production costs, restoration of a simple and predictable Final Tax Regime (FTR) for exporters, and introduction of a fixed tax regime for traders to help broaden the tax base. The budget proposals further recommended uniform tariff and tax treatment across all regions including FATA and PATA, gradual removal of advance taxes and shifting taxation towards the sales stage to simplify the system. To curb misuse while supporting genuine exporters, the Chamber proposed strengthening the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) through real-time data sharing and post-clearance audits. The Lahore Chamber also urged the govern-

ment to diversify exports and support value-added and capital goods sectors, besides declaring a vocational training emergency with industry-linked and skills-focused programmes. It also recommended redirecting vocational training funds toward practical skill development and promoting IT, digital services and modern industrial skills. Among other proposals, the Chamber suggested allowing third-country trade transactions through SBP regulatory reforms and addressing the 18 percent sales tax disparity on packaged dairy and meat products, stating that the current taxation structure discourages hygienic processed food products while untaxed unpackaged products continue to dominate the market.—DNA

S Korea welcomes rare baby bump as population shrinks

SEOUL: Kim Su-jin and her husband have set aside their doubts and embraced parenthood, joining a small but notable wave of South Korean couples having children despite the country's steep demographic decline. South Korea has one of the world's lowest birth rates, and the government has spent billions of dollars trying to encourage citizens to have more babies and cushion the worst impacts of a shrinking population. The Asian nation is still nowhere near reversing the trend, but a modest baby bump has come after years of consistently low statistics — even as experts disagree on the underlying causes. Kim, 32, a freelance music industry worker, gave birth to her daughter in January last year despite earlier financial concerns during her four-year marriage. She shook off worries over housing, schooling and work "because we believed that having (a baby) would bring us happiness," she told AFP. South Korea's fertility rate hit a record low in 2023 but has picked up since then, with the number of monthly births consistently rising compared to the previous year. Nearly 23,000 babies were born in February, the most for that month in seven years, according to the statistics ministry. The on-year growth of 13.6 percent was the highest for any February since records began in 1981. The uptick in births has tracked a similar, though less even, rise in marriages going back to mid-2022, official figures show. Experts said the trend may reflect more positive attitudes toward family among younger South Koreans.—APP

GDA okays Rs 280b uplift projects

GWADAR: Under the medium-term phase of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan (2025–2035), Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has announced mega development projects worth approximately Rs280 billion in phases to transform Gwadar into a world-class, modern, smart, environmentally friendly, and economically vibrant port city. The announcement was made in an important meeting regarding future development projects held under the chairmanship of Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Muin-ur-Rehman Khan, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Sunday. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on projects aimed at finalizing Gwadar's upcoming 10-year development program. The program includes projects such as the Central Business District, Special Economic Zones, GDA Housing Scheme, ecological corridors, and implementation of micro-planning under the master plan. Additionally, commercial centers, public spaces, museums, heritage centers, coastal tourism resorts, foreign tourist resorts, Grab Beach Park, and the GDA Club will also be part of the development agenda. The 10-year program will also include construction and expansion of internal and external roads, completion of unfinished GDA roads, and development of new highways in accordance with the master plan. Special emphasis will also be placed on modernizing urban infrastructure, environmental protection, socio-economic growth, and provision of public amenities. While briefing the meeting, Deputy Director Town Planning Abdul Razzaq stated that, in line with directives from the provincial government, GDA is preparing a comprehensive 10-year development program under an "Umbrella PCL." The program will first be presented to the provincial government and later to the federal government for approval and funding, with hopes of inclusion in the 2026–27 fiscal year budget. He explained that the program would integrate GDA's existing business plan and various ongoing development schemes into a coordinated framework, with the primary objective of ensuring the effective implementation of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan. The meeting was informed that the master plan has now entered its second phase, focusing on modern urban infrastructure, industrial development, socio-economic improvement, environmental protection, promotion of tourism activities, and provision of modern municipal facilities in Gwadar. The meeting also discussed the upgradation of Senator Muhammad Ishaq Cricket Ground, underground electricity cabling across the city, installation of modern streetlights under solarization of GDA highways, establishment of green belts, and beautification projects. Under the Old Town Rehabilitation Project, schemes for road construction and expansion, improvement of sewerage and drainage systems, installation of streetlights, memorial monuments, and provision of modern municipal services in Shambay Ismail Ward, Surbandar, and Pishukan will also be included in the program. Meanwhile, proposals were also reviewed for laying approximately 200 kilometers of new water pipelines and establishing water desalination plants to improve water supply in master plan areas.—DNA

No trees, no fans: Surviving extreme heat in India's salt pans

LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH: India faces challenging heatwaves each year, but few places endure conditions as searing as the country's western desert salt pans, where workers rely on simple techniques to survive almost unbearable temperatures. Up to 50,000 workers in Gujarat spend eight months on the remote salt pans without electricity or health care, relying on a tanker to deliver drinking and washing water every 25 days. They use shaded rest breaks, cloth-cooled water bottles and staggered hours to survive. In Gujarat's Little Rann of Kutch summer temperatures routinely cross 45C, and can climb to 47-48C. The same dry heat that makes life punishing also makes the desert ideal for salt production — Gujarat produces roughly three-quarters of India's total salt output. "We work in staggered timing... doing our work in early mornings and after sunset," said 42-year-old Babul Narayan, who rakes the salt as brine water dries in shallow pools. During the hottest hours, many retreat to makeshift huts — frames of sticks draped with coarse homespun cloth, plastered with wild donkey dung. "We sit here every two to three hours, so that we do not feel weak or dizzy," said 17-year-old salt worker Bhavna Rathore. The dung blocks the sun and allows heat to escape, while the rough cloth allows some air to pass through, she explained. The huts offer shel-

ter in a landscape without trees or natural shade, and where the sun reflects harshly off the white salt crust. anchan Narayan, 44, uses a damp cloth-wrapped bottle hung on a string, cooling the drinking water inside via evaporation. "The wind helps to cool the water," she said. Poornima, a salt pan worker, sips black tea during the day — saying the hot drink induces sweating in the dry weather to cool the body. The salt is produced by pumping saline water from bore-wells into shallow pans, where the liquid evaporates under the sun and wind. Workers rake the surface daily to ensure even crystallization. Over weeks, a thick crust of salt forms, which the workers break and stack into mounds. The job has always involved enduring harsh conditions, but this year the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasts an "above-normal number of heatwave days" across several regions, including Gujarat. Workers are exposed to the heat for longer than before. Previously, they relied on expensive diesel pumps to bring the saline water to the surface. But a switch to solar has brought down costs and allowed families to operate the pans for longer. That means work that used to end in March now continues into the hottest months. "Fever" - The consequences for workers can be deadly, with regular reports of fatigue, dizziness and nausea — signs of heat stress, when the

body's natural cooling systems are overwhelmed. This can cause organ failure and even death. Several studies have found high levels of dehydration, heat stress and even signs of kidney malfunction among these communities. "I take a paracetamol whenever fever becomes high," said Kanchan, a rare worker wearing rubber boots — to protect against prolonged exposure to brine, that can crack skin so deep it bleeds. India has no fixed legal temperature at which work must stop. Instead it relies on IMD heatwave thresholds — around 40C for alerts and 47C for "severe" conditions — with local authorities imposing restrictions. The desert conditions make the extreme heat marginally more survivable — at low humidity, sweat evaporates more quickly off the skin, cooling the body. But conditions are growing harder, with heatwaves intensifying and unseasonal storms also threatening livelihoods. A sudden rainstorm can dissolve crystallized salt overnight — forcing workers to restart the evaporation cycle. "A big dust storm hit us last month, destroying salt worth 200,000 rupees (\$2,100)," Narayan said. He and five relatives made a profit of 250,000 rupees (\$2,635) — or \$450 each for eight months of hard work. But families say they have little alternative. "What else will we do?" said 65-year-old worker Rasoda Rathore. "We have no land to farm, no livestock to earn our livelihood from... this is all we know.—DNA

New law will strengthen Somali fraud probe

CHICAGO: Minnesota lawmakers investigating allegations of Somali fraud have said they are encouraged by this week's state House approval of a law to create an independent Office of the Inspector General. It was approved by an overwhelming majority of Republicans and Democrats in the Minnesota House, with 126 in favor and only five opposed. The OIG will become law once approved by the state Senate and then signed by the governor, which is expected soon. Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, has indicated that he will sign it. Under the legislation, the OIG will begin operations immediately and become fully functional with enforcement powers by 2028. Although the OIG will focus on all aspects of corruption and state-related crime, legislators say it will further expose the billions of dollars of stolen state money in the Somali fraud scandal. US President Donald Trump and federal prosecutors allege that more than \$9 billion have been stolen in widespread, Minnesota-based social service fraud schemes that appear dominated by members of the Somali community, potentially tied to nearly half of all federal funds, \$18 billion, provided to 14 state welfare programs since 2018. Minnesota is home to the largest Somali community in America, and a majority of fraud cases appear to originate there.—APP

S Korea says 'unidentified aircraft' hit cargo vessel

SEOUL: Unidentified aircraft have struck a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz this week, the foreign ministry said Sunday, days after the fire-damaged HMM Namu arrived at port in Dubai. Following the attack, US President Donald Trump has claimed that Iran had "taken some shots" at the Panama-flagged vessel and urged South Korea to join American operations aimed at restoring normal shipping through the strait. The waterway has been virtually closed since the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran in late February, with Tehran responding with attacks across the Middle East and imposing a chokehold on the strait, rattling global energy markets. On Monday, "two unidentified aircraft struck the outer plate of the port-side ballast tank at the stern of the HMM Namu at roughly one-minute intervals, causing flames and smoke," Seoul's foreign ministry spokesman Park II told a news briefing. He did not specify what kind of aircraft had been involved in the attack, saying they "were captured on CCTV footage, but there are limitations in identifying the exact type, launch origin and physical size of the objects."—APP

First group of Spanish passengers disembarks from hantavirus-hit cruise ship

TENERIFE: A first group of passengers, all Spanish nationals, has begun to disembark into a small boat from the cruise ship which was hit by a hantavirus outbreak and is headed to Tenerife's Port of Granadilla, Spain's health ministry said. The passengers will be transported directly from the port in military buses to the airport and evacuated by a Spanish government plane to Madrid where they will be taken to hospital and quarantined, officials have said. The passengers, none of whom has displayed signs of infection, will be tested by Spanish health authorities to ensure they remain asymptomatic and then transported to land in small boats, according to Spanish officials. Sealed-off buses will then take the passengers to the Spanish island's main airport about 10 minutes away, where they will board planes heading to their respective countries. All passengers on the luxury cruise ship MV Hondius are considered high-risk contacts as a precautionary measure, Europe's public health agency said late on Saturday as part of its rapid scientific advice.—APP

Briefs

Gas supply suspended in parts of Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Gas supply was disrupted in major parts of the city on Saturday evening after the Red Line construction work damaged a high-pressure gas pipeline near Jail Chowrangi. A spokesperson for the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) said that a 12-inch diameter high-pressure pipeline was hit during excavation for the bus rapid transit (BRT) project. The spokesperson said as a result the gas supply to Saddar, Garden, Jamshed Road, PIB Colony, Lyari, Lines Area and adjacent localities was immediately suspended. She said that the SSGC teams reached the site and cordoned off the damaged section of the supply line with safety barriers to prevent further risk. Residents in affected areas reported complete disconnection of gas at 7pm, adversely impacting mainly households, who relied on piped gas during peak cooking hours in the evening. The spokesperson said that repair work was being carried out on an emergency basis. "Gas supply will be restored gradually once repair work is completed," she added.

Putin says Ukraine war winding down

DNA

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday said the war in Ukraine was winding down, slamming Western support for Kyiv, as the first day of a US-brokered ceasefire was marked by mutual accusations of violations. Putin spoke after telling soldiers at the scaled-down parade in Moscow that they were fighting an "aggressive force" in Ukraine, backed by all of NATO and describing his war goals as "just." The Russian leader has made the memory of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II a central narrative of his 25-year rule and repeatedly invoked it to justify his Ukraine offensive. Russian authorities typically mark the Victory Day parade with pomp and grandeur. But a spate of Ukrainian long-range attacks in recent weeks prompted the Kremlin to ramp up security measures and downsize this year's celebrations. When asked after the parade whether the Western military aid to Ukraine had gone too far, Putin said: "They started ratcheting up the confrontation with Russia, which continues to this day."

Israel deports two foreign activists

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel deported on Sunday two foreign activists seized from a Gaza-bound flotilla, in what a rights group representing them described as a "punitive attack" on a civilian mission. Saif Abu Keshek, a Spanish national of Palestinian origin, and Brazilian Thiago Avila were among dozens of activists aboard a flotilla intercepted by the Israeli navy in international waters off the coast of Greece on April 30. The pair were seized by Israeli forces and brought to Israel for questioning, while the others were taken to the Greek island of Crete and released. "Saif Abu Keshek and Thiago Avila, from the provocation flotilla, were deported today from Israel" following an investigation, the Israeli foreign ministry posted on X on Sunday. "From their abduction in international waters to their unlawful detention in total isolation and the ill-treatment they were subjected to, the Israeli authorities' actions were a punitive attack on a purely civilian mission." Adalah, the rights group that represented the pair, said after their release.

Romania and Pakistan celebrate friendship through culture and cuisine

Ambassador Dan Stoenescu Hosts Vibrant Romanian Independence Day Reception

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the Independence Day of Romania and to showcase the rich culture and traditions of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Dr. Dan Stoenescu hosted a grand and colourful reception in Islamabad. The event was co-hosted by the Honorary Consul General of Romania in Peshawar, Masood Qazi, and attracted diplomats, government officials, members of the business community, civil society representatives and cultural enthusiasts. The reception presented a vibrant and festive look as guests arrived dressed in traditional attire reflecting both Romanian and Pakistani cultures. The gathering became a beautiful blend of Eastern and European traditions, with many foreign diplomats also wearing shalwar qameez, symbolizing cultural harmony and friendship between the two nations. Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoenescu warmly welcomed the distinguished guests and highlighted the importance of celebrating cultural diversity and people-to-people connections. He said relations between Romania and Pakistan had grown from cordial to excellent over the years and were now touching new horizons in different sectors, including education, trade, culture and diplomacy. The ambassador expressed optimism that bilateral relations would further strengthen in the coming years through enhanced cooperation and increased exchanges between the two friendly countries. He appreciated the contribution of the Pakistani community as



well as Romanian nationals working to promote mutual understanding and friendship. Masood Qazi, Honorary Consul General of Romania in Peshawar, also addressed the audience and welcomed the guests to the special celebration. He emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy in bringing nations closer and said events of this nature help strengthen ties between the people of Romania and Pakistan. He particularly highlighted the cultural richness and hos-

pitality of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which was prominently featured during the evening. Guests thoroughly enjoyed the traditional Peshawari cuisine served at the reception. The menu included famous dishes such as namkeen gosht, lamb specialties, Peshawari chicken karahi, Kabuli pulao and several other local delicacies that reflected the culinary heritage of the province. The evening became even more lively with colourful traditional dance performances

that added charm and excitement to the celebration. Romanian nationals also presented cultural dances, which were warmly appreciated by the audience. The fusion of Romanian and Pakistani music, food and traditional performances created a memorable atmosphere and reflected the growing friendship between the two countries. - Detailed coverage of the event shall be published in the May 2026 issue of CENTRELINE magazine.

Modi urges Indians to reduce petrol use

DNA

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged the people of India to cut down on petrol and diesel consumption amid supply disruptions due to the Middle East war. India is one of the few countries in the region that has not increased the prices of petrol and diesel for domestic consumers or rationed supplies. But it has increased prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) - a primary cooking fuel in this country - after disruptions following the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which led to Iran's near-total blockade of the strategic Strait of Hormuz. "We have to reduce our use of petrol and diesel. In cities with metro lines, we should try to travel by metro... If we must use a car, then we should try to car pool," he said, addressing a gathering in southern Telangana state.

Governor Kundi meets PTI leaders

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with PTI leaders on Sunday at Governor House KP discussed the province's constitutional and economic rights, stressing on the need to present a firm case before the federal government to ensure "justice and fair treatment". In a social media post on X, Governor Kundi said that PTI leaders, including former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser, MNA Junaid Akber, and other parliamentarians, called on him for a "constructive exchange on the pressing issues of KP". "We discussed the province's constitutional and economic rights, including Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) closures, wheat concerns, National Finance Commission (NFC) matters, and the challenges faced by the merged districts and the business community," he stated. The meeting comes less than a week after KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi had announced observing a province-wide pen-down strike over the federal government's alleged "discrimination" against KP in the NFC Award, electricity and gas.

Israel operated secret base in Iraq for attacks on Iran

NEW YORK: Israel built a clandestine military base in the Iraqi desert to support its air campaign against Iran and launched airstrikes against Iraqi troops who nearly discovered it, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported on Saturday. Citing people familiar with the matter including U.S. officials, the newspaper said Israel set up the installation, which housed special forces and served as a logistical hub for the Israeli air force, with the knowledge of the U.S. just before the start of the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran. The Israeli outpost also included search-and-rescue teams positioned to assist any downed Israeli pilots, the Journal said. The report said that after a US F-15 fighter jet was downed near Isfahan, Israel offered assistance, but US forces rescued the two crew members independently. Israeli forces nevertheless carried out airstrikes to help secure the mission, according to the report. The base nearly came to light in early March after Iraqi state media reported that a shepherd had observed sus-

picious military activity in the area, including helicopter movements, prompting Iraqi troops to investigate. According to the report, Israel responded with airstrikes that prevented Iraqi forces from reaching the site. Israel's military declined to comment on the report, according to the report. The Iraq government at the time condemned the attack, which killed an Iraqi soldier. "This reckless operation was carried out without coordination or approval," Qais Al-Muhammadi, deputy commander of Iraq's Joint Operations Command, told Iraqi state media following the March incident. Regional tensions have sharply escalated since the US and Israel launched strikes against Iran on Feb. 28, triggering Iranian retaliation against Israel and American allies in the Gulf, along with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. A ceasefire took effect on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, though US-Iran negotiations in Islamabad failed to produce a permanent agreement. Trump later announced an extension of the truce without setting a deadline. - DNA

Iran's Guards threaten US Mideast sites

"Recent escalation by American forces added to suspicions about seriousness of diplomacy," says Araghchi

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards threatened to target US sites in the Middle East if its tankers come under fire, Iranian media reported, as Washington was left waiting for Tehran's response to its latest negotiating position. "Any attack on Iranian tankers and commercial vessels will result in a heavy attack on one of the American centres in the region and enemy ships," the Guards said, a day after US strikes on two Iranian tankers in the Gulf of Oman. US President Donald Trump had said on Friday he was expecting Iran's answer to Washington's latest proposal for a peace deal "supposedly tonight". But if Tehran sent Pakistani mediators a response, there was no public sign of it, and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reportedly questioned the reliability of US leadership. "The recent escalation of tensions by American forces in the Persian Gulf and their numerous actions in violating the ceasefire have added to suspicions about the motivation and seriousness of the American side in the path of diplomacy," he said in a call with his Turkish counterpart, according to Iran's ISNA news agency. On Friday, a US fighter jet fired on and disabled two Iranian-flagged tankers that Washington accused of challenging its blockade of Iran's ports. An Iranian military official told local media the navy had responded with strikes.

Pakistan launching first yuan-denominated 'Panda bond'

LONDON: Pakistan is expected to access Chinese capital markets for the first time through a yuan-denominated bond next week, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Saturday, as Islamabad seeks to shore up foreign reserves and diversify funding sources. "God willing, next week you will hear good news that for the first time, we will be accessing Chinese capital markets through Panda bond," said Aurangzeb, addressing a press conference alongside Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik. The planned \$250 million issue - part of a broader \$1 billion programme - will be backed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Pakistan has increasingly turned to friendly nations and multilateral lenders to stabilise its economy after a prolonged balance-of-payments crisis pushed the country to the brink of default in 2023. Reuters has previously reported that Islamabad has been seeking new external financing avenues, including Chinese and Gulf markets, while remaining under an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme aimed at economic re-

forms and fiscal discipline. Aurangzeb said the economy was showing signs of recovery, citing improving exports and remittances, despite regional tensions linked to the Iran war and disruption around the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil shipping route. He said the country's large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector recorded 11% year-on-year growth in April, while cumulative growth during the first nine months of the current fiscal year stood at 6.5%. The government expected the GDP growth rate to remain close to 4% during the current fiscal year, compared to 3.1% last year, according to Aurangzeb. "Exports have grown by 9% month-on-month and 14% year-on-year, driven by value-added textiles, IT and other sectors, he said, adding that the export growth was broad-based," he added. Pakistan imports much of its fuel and liquefied natural gas requirements, making it vulnerable to external supply shocks and higher energy prices. His remarks came after the IMF released about \$1.32 billion in fresh funding to Pakistan under two ongoing lending programmes, providing a boost to the country's foreign exchange reserves. - Agencies

Russian embassy commemorates Victory in Great Patriotic War



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Russia in Pakistan commemorated the 81st anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The celebrations began with the "Immortal Regiment" march, attended by Russian Chargé d'Affaires Natalia Shmeleva, Russian Defence Attaché Colonel Vadim Fenchenko, the Ambassadors of Belarus, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan together with their family members, Embassy staff, Russian community in Pakistan, as well as citizens of several Central Asian countries. The "Immortal Regiment" is an annual public remembrance campaign held around Victory Day on May 9. During the march, participants carry portraits of relatives who fought, perished, or contributed to the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War. The event symbolizes the continuity of historical memory across generations and pays tribute to the sacrifice, courage, and resilience of those who defend-

ed their homeland during the Second World War. As part of the celebrations, the Russian Embassy School hosted a commemorative concert. The event was attended by the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In her opening remarks, Russian Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Natalia Shmeleva emphasized that Victory Day remains a symbol of courage, unity, and the unparalleled feat of the peoples of the USSR, who, at the cost of immense sacrifice and hardship, crushed Nazism. She condemned attempts to distort historical truth and revive Nazi ideology, stressing that Russia will continue to preserve the memory of the Great Victory of the Soviet people. A particularly moving part of the evening was the recitation of wartime poetry and performances of heartfelt compositions by children of Embassy staff. Guests were also treated to a photo exhibition titled "Saved Europe," prepared by the National Center for Historical Memory under the President of the Russian Federation.

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