



# Islamabad POST

Friday, May 15, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Ties with Azerbaijan from cordial to excellent: Gilani**

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**Pakistan thanks Qatar for supply of LNG ships**

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## Briefs

### PTI MNA's son sought asylum in Italy

PTI lawmaker says if prevailing conditions continued, no one would choose to remain in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry revealed that the son of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA Iqbal Afridi travelled to Europe on a blue passport and later sought political asylum in Italy. Speaking during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior, Chaudhry said the lawmaker's son held a diplomatic passport, and travelled to Italy via a European nation that does not require Pakistanis who hold official passports to obtain a visa before arrival. The blue passport is typically issued to government officials travelling on official duty, along with eligible dependents, under strict regulations. He noted that the incident had caused embarrassment for the country and questioned the image such actions projected internationally. The minister said the government had reduced the number of blue passports issued following such incidents.

### Senior UK minister resigns

DNA

LONDON: Labour's Wes Streeting resigned as health minister on Thursday to call for a leadership contest to oust Keir Starmer, accusing the British prime minister of overseeing political drift and forcing others to take the blame for his government's failings. Disastrous results for the governing Labour Party in last week's local elections have plunged Britain into its latest crisis, just under two years after Starmer won a large majority on a vow to bring stability and end a decade of political chaos. After days of calls by a growing number of Labour lawmakers for Starmer to either resign or set out a timetable for his departure, Streeting was the first senior minister to break cover, saying he was standing down because "it is now clear you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election". But he did not trigger a formal contest.

### Imran Khan sister moves court

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, sister of former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan, filed a writ petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday, challenging his prolonged solitary confinement at Central Jail Adiala, Rawalpindi, terming it illegal and a violation of fundamental rights. Imran - imprisoned since Aug 5, 2023, for concealing details of Toshakhana gifts - is serving a 14-year sentence at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail in the £190m case, also known as the Al-Qadir Trust case. The petition, filed through Barrister Salman Safdar and Salman Akram Raja, names the superintendent and deputy superintendent of Adiala jail, the inspector general of prisons, Punjab, chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the director general Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the medical superintendent of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), and the state as respondents.

## US-Iran row

# Chinese FM appreciates Pak role: FO

The Foreign Office said certain media reports "misrepresented" Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent remarks to Deputy Prime Minister and FM Ishaq Dar, affirming the call was held with cordiality

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday said certain media reports "misrepresented" Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent remarks to Deputy Prime Minister and FM Ishaq Dar, affirming the call was held with cordiality. The clarification comes after Chinese state media Xinhua reported that during his call with Dar on Tuesday, Wang expressed hope that "Pakistan can step up mediation efforts" between the United States and Iran. Addressing a weekly press briefing, FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said: "Some reports suggested that the Chinese side urged us to enhance the mediation efforts, implying as if Pakistan was being asked to sort in a 'do more' paradigm. So news coverage by some of local newspapers conveyed the same impression. 'I wish to place on record that such reports somewhat misrepresent the call in both letter and spirit,' he added, asserting that the call was held with "traditional warmth and cordiality". Andrabi said FM Wang appreciated "Pakistan's constructive mediation role and expressed full support for its efforts", echoing what was reported by Xinhua as well. "Wang reiterated China's principled position and commended Pakistan for facilitating

Continued on Page 06

## Iran signals open access to Strait of Hormuz

DNA

TEHRAN/NEW DELHI: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has stated that the Strait of Hormuz remains open to all commercial vessels, provided they cooperate with Iranian naval authorities and follow designated routes. IRGC said that 30 vessels passed through Strait of Hormuz as Iran allows transit for Chinese ships. The announcement, originally tied to a ceasefire in Lebanon, underscores Iran's position on maintaining maritime traffic through the critical chokepoint even as tensions persist in the Gulf. Araghchi emphasized use of coordinated safe lanes announced by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, while military vessels remain restricted. The development comes as the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported on Thursday that a vessel was seized by unauthorized personnel while at

Continued on Page 06

## Regional tensions

# US-Iran truce holds, says PM Shehbaz

The prime minister highlighted that the government's economic team had made collective efforts over the past two years

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Thursday that the US-Iran temporary ceasefire is currently in place, but the war has created significant hurdles for regional economies, including Pakistan. The prime minister made these remarks while addressing a federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad. Iran has largely shut the Strait of Hormuz to ships apart from its own since the United States and Israel launched their bombing campaign two-and-a-half months ago, causing the biggest ever disruption to global energy supplies. The US paused the bombing last month but added a blockade of Iran's ports. In his opening remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet earlier in the day, the prime minister highlighted that the government's economic team had made collective efforts over the past two years,

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## Ties with UAE good, says minister

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Thursday said that Pakistan's relationship with the United Arab Emirates was "absolutely fine". Chaudhry made the remarks while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly in response to concerns raised by lawmakers regarding the deportation of Pakistanis from the Gulf country. Several media outlets in recent days had reported that the Gulf country had begun a "large-scale expulsion" of Pakistani workers,

Continued on Page 06

# Pakistan launches Fatah-4 missile

The President, Prime Minister of Pakistan, COAS & CDF, Chief of the Naval Staff and Chief of the Air Staff commended successful training fire of Fatah-4 and appreciated the technical prowess, dedication and commitment of all those who contributed towards the successful training fire of the F series missile

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A successful training fire of indigenously developed Fatah-4, Ground Launched Cruise Missile was conducted today by Army Rocket Force Command. Equipped with advanced avionics and state of the art navigational aids, the weapon system is capable of engaging long range targets with high precision. The training fire was conducted to enhance operational efficiency of the troops and validate technical parameters of various sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability. The training fire was witnessed by senior officers from Pakistan Army Rocket Force Command along with scientists and engineers of the developing agency.

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## Pakistan, US discuss energy cooperation

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with Mr. S. Paul Kapur, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, United States, along with U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Ms. Natalie A. Baker. During the meeting, the two sides discussed matters of mutual interest, with a particular focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation in the energy

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Farid Turab Oglu Ahmadov, Justice Minister of Azerbaijan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

## 18th amend may not be undone: minister

PPP's Rafiullah warns against any move that could trigger political instability nationwide

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Law Barrister Aqeel Malik has rejected impressions that a possible 28th Constitutional Amendment would roll back the 18th Amendment, calling such claims "extremely false". "This impression being created that if the 28th Amendment is introduced, it is a rollback of the 18th Amendment - I believe an extremely false impression is being created," Malik said during Geo News' programme "Capital Talk". The remarks came amid growing political debate over reports of discussions surrounding a possible constitutional amendment ahead of

Continued on Page 06

## China's Xi hails trade progress in Trump summit, sends Taiwan warning

Chinese leader tells US counterpart that Taiwan is the most important issue in US-China relations

DNA


BEIJING: China's Xi Jinping told President Donald Trump that trade talks were making progress at the start of a two-day summit on Thursday but warned that disagreement over Taiwan could send relations down a dangerous path. The Chinese leader's remarks set the stage for what Trump described as possibly the "biggest summit ever" following a pomp-filled reception at Beijing's imposing Great Hall of the People. With Trump's approval ratings dented by his Iran war, the first visit by a US president to America's main strategic rival since his last trip there in 2017 has taken on added significance. After an opening ceremony that featured an honour guard and throngs of children excitedly waving flowers and flags, Xi began the summit by telling Trump that stable relations between the world's two biggest economies benefit the entire world. "When we cooperate, both sides benefit; when we confront each other, both sides suffer," he said in brief remarks that were open to media.

Continued on Page 06

## JD Vance says US making progress in Iran talks


DNA

WASHINGTON: US Vice President JD Vance said on Wednesday he believes progress is being made in negotiations with Iran to end hostilities, after President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest proposal as unacceptable. "I think that we are making progress. The fundamental question is do we make enough progress that we satisfy the President's red line?" Vance told reporters at the White House. "And the red line is very simple. He needs to feel confident that we put a number of protections in place such that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."



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## Kundi praises forces for successful operation in Barkhan

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday praised the security forces for carrying out a successful operation against Indian-backed terrorists in the Nosham area of Barkhan district of Balochistan. The Governor paid tribute to the armed forces for eliminating seven terrorists during the operation and commended the professional conduct of the security personnel. He said the sacrifices rendered by the brave soldiers, including Major Tausif Ahmed Bhatti and four other personnel who embraced martyrdom during the operation, were another great service of the armed forces for the country. Governor Kundi paid rich tribute to the martyrs and said the nation would always remember the sacrifices of its brave sons. He said the resolve of the Pakistani nation to safeguard humanity, democracy and peace was unwavering and unconquerable, adding that the struggle against terrorism would continue until its complete eradication. —APP

## Interactive session held on drone technology

RAWALPINDI: Ministry of Defence Production on Thursday held an interactive session on drone technology at its Directorate General Research and Development Establishment, with leading private-sector firms engaged in the manufacturing and development of unmanned aerial systems (UAS). The session was chaired by Secretary Defence Production, Lt Gen (Retd) Muhammad Chiragh Haider, said a press release. The session was focused on strengthening coordination between the public and private sectors in the rapidly evolving field of drone warfare and surveillance technologies. The participants observed that recent global conflicts have clearly demonstrated the decisive role of drones in modern warfare, intelligence gathering, border monitoring, and precision operations. Participating companies presented their concerns, operational challenges, and recommendations directly before the MODP.—APP

## Marc's book on emerging multi-polar world order launched

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on Thursday hosted the launch of book "Geopolitical Conflict in the Wolf World, Great Power Competition and the Illiberal Revolt against the Liberal Order," authored by Marc Saxon, Regional Director, Office of Regional Cooperation in Asia Pacific, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The event was organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at ISSI and attended by diplomats, academics, students, practitioners and members of civil society, said a press release. The reviewers included Ms Aiza Azam, Director Strategic Affairs, StrafAsia, and Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Senior Economist, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, Board of Governors, ISSI and Dr Amina Khan, Director CAMEA also spoke on the occasion. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood while expressing his views said that Marc Saxon's book offers an insightful analysis of the evolving global order characterized by intensifying.—APP

## Pak's elite buffalo genetics gain global attention

Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized that the livestock sector holds immense potential for export growth and foreign exchange earnings. He stated that Pakistan's premium dairy breeds can play an important role in strengthening agricultural trade cooperation with friendly countries, especially China

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain reaffirmed the government's commitment to modernizing the livestock sector, promoting scientific breeding technologies, and expanding export avenues for livestock products and genetic material. The minister chaired a high-level meeting with a Chinese delegation to discuss enhanced bilateral cooperation in the livestock sector, with particular focus on buffalo embryo exports, genetic resource development, and promotion of Pakistan's high-value dairy breeds in international markets. The meeting was attended by senior officials of the ministry, representatives from the Animal Quarantine Department (AQD), technical experts, and representatives of Chinese companies engaged in livestock breeding and biotechnology cooperation. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the growing potential of buffalo embryo exports from Pakistan to China and the broader opportunities for collaboration in livestock genetics, dairy productivity, and modern breed-

ing technologies. The Chinese delegation appreciated Pakistan's internationally recognized buffalo breeds and expressed strong interest in expanding cooperation in the field of animal genetics and embryo transfer technologies. Participants highlighted that Pakistan possesses some of the world's finest dairy buffalo breeds, particularly the Neeli Ravi breed, which is widely acknowledged for its superior milk production and strong genetic characteristics. The meeting noted that increasing global demand for elite dairy genetics presents significant export and investment opportunities for Pakistan's livestock sector. Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized that the livestock sector holds immense potential for export growth and foreign exchange earnings. He stated that Pakistan's premium dairy breeds can play an important role in strengthening agricultural trade cooperation with friendly countries, especially China. Senior Director Incharge (Animal Sciences Division), Dr. Syed Murtaza Hassan Andrabi, briefed the meeting on the importance of establishing

a comprehensive and internationally accepted framework for the export of biological and genetic material. He explained that Pakistan's valuable livestock genetics, particularly elite buffalo breeds, represent an important national asset that requires both promotion and institutional protection. Dr. Andrabi noted that the proposed Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) mechanism is aimed at facilitating long-term international cooperation while safeguarding Pakistan's intellectual and genetic ownership rights in accordance with globally accepted practices. Dr. Andrabi further informed the participants that the framework being developed would streamline future cooperation between Pakistani institutions and international companies engaged in livestock biotechnology and embryo transfer programs. He emphasized that the objective is to ensure sustainable exports, transparency, and investor confidence while simultaneously protecting Pakistan's indigenous livestock resources for future generations.—APP

# Retrospective exhibition of Akram Dost Baloch

The retrospective exhibition featured selected works from his acclaimed "Identity" series and other major bodies of work exploring themes of culture, memory, identity, and belonging, while also highlighting his academic research on traditional Baloch embroidery and handicrafts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts, in collaboration with Nomad Gallery, organized a retrospective exhibition of renowned Pakistani artist, painter and sculptor Akram Dost Baloch, curated by Nageen Hyat on 14th May 2026 at Gallery No. 1 & 3, PNCA, Islamabad. The exhibition was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as Chief Guest. He was accompanied by M. Ayoub Jamali, Director General PNCA, diplomats, artists, members of the civil society and art enthusiasts. Speaking at the inauguration, H.E. Dr. Maen Khreasat said, "It is a privilege to inaugurate this retrospective of Akram Dost Baloch, whose work speaks powerfully to the resilience and cultural depth of Balochistan. Art has a unique ability to preserve identity and build bridges between peoples, and this exhibition is a testament to Pakistan's rich artistic heritage. I commend PNCA and Nomad Gallery for bringing such important cultural narratives to the forefront." Ms. Nageen Hyat, Curator acknowledged the lifelong contribution of the artist and emphasized the importance of preserving and documenting the artistic heritage of Pakistan through collaborative cultural initiatives. Mr. Aqeel Solangi, Visual Artist and Head of Fine Arts Department NCA Rawalpindi, said that Akram Dost Baloch work reflects the collective consciousness of Balochistan, exploring themes of identity, sociopolitical realities, and the human condition with remarkable depth and honesty. I see Akram Dost Sahab's work as more real than reality itself — a space where one can search for deeper meanings and perhaps understand life a little better. Akram Dost Baloch is regarded as one of Pakistan's leading contemporary artists and a pioneering figure in the visual arts of Balochistan. Hailing from Nushki, he is widely known for his paintings and sculptures that portray the cultural identity, landscapes, and socio-political realities of Balochistan through a contemporary visual language rooted in traditional Baloch motifs, embroidery, weaving, and wood carving. A graduate of National College of Arts, he served as a founding faculty member and former Chairperson of the Fine Arts Department at University of Balochistan. His distinguished contribution to the arts was recognized with the prestigious Pride of Performance in 2004 by the President of Pakistan. His works have been exhibited nationally and internationally, including exhibitions in Paris and participation in the Asian Art Biennale. The retrospective exhibition featured selected works from his acclaimed "Identity" series and other major bodies of work exploring themes of culture, memory, identity, and belonging,



while also highlighting his academic research on traditional Baloch embroidery and handicrafts. The exhibition was organized as part of the continued efforts of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts to promote Pakistan's artistic heritage and recognize the services of senior artists who played a significant role in shaping the country's

cultural landscape. The organizers also acknowledged the support of Bestway Group-Pakistan for sponsoring the exhibition and their contributing towards the promotion of arts and culture in Pakistan. The exhibition is open for public viewing until 24th May 2026 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, except Fridays and Saturdays.

## Committee reviews Anti-Narcotics Bill 2026

QUETTA: The Provincial Assembly's Standing Committee on Excise and Anti-Narcotics convened a meeting under the chairmanship of Zmarak Khan Achakzai at the Assembly Committee Room. Committee members Muhammad Khan Lehri, Maulvi Noorullah, and Safia Bibi attended, alongside Assembly Secretary Tahir Shah Kakar, Excise Secretary Syed Zafar Ali Bukhari, Special Secretary Committees Abdul Rahman, and Additional Secretary Law Saeed Iqbal. The session focused on detailed deliberations over the Balochistan Control of Narcotics Bill 2026, aimed at strengthening provincial legislation against drug-related crimes. Officials briefed the committee that following the 18th Constitutional Amendment,

responsibility for narcotics control was devolved to the provinces. In line with this, the Balochistan government amended its Rules of Business in 2012, assigning the mandate to the Excise and Anti-Narcotics Department. According to the briefing, the proposed bill seeks to establish a robust legal framework to curb the production, processing, smuggling, and distribution of narcotics and prohibited substances. To support this effort, a Counter-Narcotics Wing has recently been established within the Excise Department, with plans underway to set up Narcotics Control Stations across divisional headquarters. Chairman Zmarak Khan Achakzai emphasized that narcotics are a cancer destroying the youth

and the future of society. He stressed that enforcement of the law must be impartial, urging authorities to take indiscriminate action against drug traffickers. He further highlighted that combating drugs is not solely the responsibility of government institutions, but requires active participation from parents, teachers, religious scholars, and civil society to raise awareness among youth. Committee member Maulvi Noorullah added that Islam strictly prohibits all forms of intoxicants, noting their destructive impact on human intellect, health, and social life. He underscored the importance of religious and moral education in protecting the younger generation from the menace of drugs.—DNA

## Minister emphasizes to further improve C&W deptt performance

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Communications and Works, Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa, emphasized upon the need to further improve the performance of the Communications and Works (C&W) Department, assured that all technical issues faced by the department are being resolved on a priority basis. The provincial minister chaired a progress review meeting on ongoing development projects in Quetta district. The session was attended by Secretary Communications and Works Babar Khan, Chief Engineer Quetta Zone Abdul Rahim Bangulzai, along with engineers and officers from the district. During the meeting, engineering officers presented detailed briefings

on road and building sector projects currently underway in their respective divisions. Addressing the participants, Minister Saleem Khosa stressed that no compromise would be tolerated on the quality of development projects. He directed all officers to strictly enforce quality control measures, including laboratory testing of materials and thorough inspection of completed projects before handing them over to the respective departments. Saleem Khosa further instructed sub-engineers to remain present at project sites to ensure proper monitoring and prevent any lapse in standards. He warned that contractors found guilty of negligence or using substandard materials would face strict

action. He also directed chief engineers and superintending engineers to personally review progress on ongoing schemes. "Quality must be maintained without even a one percent compromise," Khosa said, adding that he was monitoring the projects and expects officers to ensure continuous oversight. Highlighting the importance of infrastructure, the minister noted that the province's development and prosperity depended on modern facilities in both the road and building sectors. "Providing these facilities to the people is the responsibility of the Communications and Works Department, and fulfilling this responsibility with excellence should be our mission," he added.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Mary O'Neill met Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch for excellent discussions introducing the work of the new Irish Embassy in Islamabad and exploring ways to further strengthen Ireland-Pakistan bilateral relations. DNA

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

May 03/Poland National Day
May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
May 08/Czech Republic National Day
May 09/European Union National Day
May 17/Norway Constitution Day
May 21/Hungary Armed Forces Day
May 22/Yemen Republic
Re-unification Day(National Day)
May 24/Eritrea National Day
May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
May 25/Argentina National Day
May 25/Jordan Independence Day
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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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TMA.....5770886
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## Islamabad Metropolitan

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

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# Uzbekistan envoy visits Al-Shifa for cross-border eye care talks

Pakistan and Uzbekistan discuss regional ophthalmology cooperation



## DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan visited Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital to explore a potential partnership in eye care, including telemedicine, medical training, and institutional referrals for Uzbek patients. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev, accompanied by Second Secretary Ravshan Jumanov, met Al-Shifa Trust leadership including President Maj Gen (Retd) Rehmat Khan and Administrator Dr Khalid Yazdani Shah. The delegation was briefed on the Trust's nationwide network and specialised services, including

corneal treatment facilities led by Prof Dr Wajid Ali Khan, Chief of Medical Services. Discussions identified several areas for future cooperation including telemedicine links, short-term internships for Uzbek healthcare professionals, exchange of medical technologies, hospital management systems, vocational education, and joint workshops and specialised training programmes. Both sides also discussed collaborative outreach programmes in underserved communities and a proposal for a future presidential-level engagement aimed at formalising healthcare cooperation between the two countries. The talks come as Al-Shifa Trust expands its international outreach beyond Pakistan. In FY2024-25, it treated 5,632

patients and conducted more than 400 cataract surgeries in Somalia, part of a broader expansion targeting underserved regions including Afghanistan and East Africa. The Uzbekistan engagement marks Al-Shifa's first structured healthcare outreach into Central Asia, where specialised ophthalmology services remain limited outside major urban centres, particularly in corneal treatment, diabetic retinopathy screening, and paediatric eye care. Globally, cataract, refractive error, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration remain among the leading causes of preventable blindness, with lower-income countries facing the largest treatment gaps. If formalised, the arrangement could reduce treatment costs for Uzbek patients seeking specialised eye care abroad while open-

ing medical training and healthcare service export opportunities for Pakistan's healthcare sector. Ambassador Tukhtaev praised the hospital's patient-focused infrastructure and adherence to international clinical standards. Head of Marketing AST Raja Sabeeh Shamim and Pakistan's representative to the Uzbekistan embassy Hamid Mehmood were also present in the meeting. Officials said expanding bilateral cooperation in medical services and education could open a new chapter in regional healthcare collaboration. They said Al-Shifa Trust operates Pakistan's largest eye care outreach network through seven hospitals and thousands of medical camps, providing free treatment to nearly 80 to 90 percent of its patients.

## Artificial fragrances increase early puberty risks

ISLAMABAD: Health specialists on Thursday advised parents to limit children's exposure to perfumes, lipsticks scented creams and body lotions, warning that certain chemicals in these products may disturb hormone balance and contribute to early puberty, while stressing the need for parental counseling and greater awareness to encourage safer fragrance-free alternatives. While speaking on a morning show, a leading dietitian highlighted the need for stronger parental awareness and guidance regarding children's regular exposure to fragrance products and their possible health effects. She pointed out that a wide range of commonly used household and personal care items such as shampoos, soaps, detergents, body sprays, perfumes, lotions, air fresheners and scented candles contain artificial fragrance chemicals that children come into contact with daily. She explained that these fragrance compounds can be absorbed through the skin when applied in personal care products, while inhalation from sprays and scented indoor products allows the chemicals to quickly enter the respiratory system and bloodstream. Over time, repeated exposure in developing children may contribute to health concerns that are still being studied.—APP

## No wheat shortage in Rawalpindi, supply stable: DFC

WAH CANTT: District Food Controller (DFC), Azhar Abbas said on Thursday there was no shortage of wheat flour in Rawalpindi district and supplies remained stable across all tahsils, amid continued market inspections by the authorities. Speaking to media persons, he said flour stocks were available in sufficient quantities and uninterrupted supplies from flour mills to retail outlets were being maintained throughout the district. He said a 10-kilogram flour bag was being sold at Rs 950 while a 20-kilogram bag was available for between Rs 1,900 and Rs 2,000. Abbas said the district administration and food department were closely monitoring markets to ensure flour was being sold at officially notified prices. He added that inspection teams were carrying out regular checks in the different tahsils to monitor flour availability, quality and pricing. The authorities would take strict action against traders involved in overcharging or creating artificial shortages, Abbas said.—APP

# IRS organizes seminar on recalibrating regional geopolitics

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) held a seminar titled "Recalibrating Regional Geopolitics in the Age of Greater Eurasia." The event convened leading diplomats and scholars to examine Eurasia's shifting geopolitical landscape and the increasing relevance of regional connectivity and strategic cooperation. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem highlighted the strong ties among Pakistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan, noting their shared history, strategic alignment, and growing cooperation. He emphasized the importance of regional connectivity, economic partnerships, and projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in linking Central Asia to the Caspian Sea region. He also addressed the impact of rising tensions between Iran and the United States on regional stability and the global strategic environment. Prof. Dr. Ramazan Erda, Chairman of the Strategic Research Center, Ankara condemned recent terrorist attacks in Pakistan and reaffirmed Türkiye's

solidarity. He underscored the role of regional geopolitics and connectivity corridors in addressing new challenges, highlighting CPEC and the Middle Corridor as key to strengthening Pakistan-Türkiye cooperation. He also called for expanded bilateral trade, economic collaboration, renewable energy partnerships, and strategic coordination. Prof. Dr. Ismail Numan Telci of Ibn Haldun University discussed Türkiye's evolving strategic role in Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Gaza. He recognized Pakistan's diplomatic efforts during recent tensions involving the United States and Iran, and emphasized the importance of Islamic solidarity, cooperation through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and stronger Pakistan-Türkiye partnerships in trade, security, and diplomacy. He also noted the countries' shared positions on Palestine and Kashmir.

Dr. Farid Shafiyev, Ambassador and Chairman of the Center of Analysis of International Relations, Azerbaijan highlighted the increasing importance of trilateral cooperation among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan in Eurasia. He emphasized the strategic

value of the Caspian region, regional connectivity, and new trade corridors linking Central Asia with Pakistan. Referring to the "One Nation, Two States" relationship between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, he called for deeper economic, political, and strategic cooperation. He also addressed the normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia and broader prospects for regional peace and integration. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan discussed Greater Eurasia as an emerging multipolar region spanning the Atlantic to the Pacific. He noted intensifying competition among the United States, China, and Russia, declining confidence in multilateral institutions, and the rising importance of regional alliances and strategic partnerships. He stressed the value of Pakistan's cooperation with Türkiye and Azerbaijan in this evolving context. The seminar concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session and closing remarks from Ambassador Jauhar Saleem. The event also included a MoU signing ceremony to enhance strategic cooperation and the distribution of commemorative shields.

# China Window produces Pashto song

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese cultural center China Window, based in Peshawar, has produced a special Pashto song to commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations and enduring friendship between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. The music video was filmed at the historic Takht-i-Bahi, a UNESCO-recognized archaeological site and an important center of the ancient Gandhara civilization, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The location holds special cultural significance because of the historical links between Gandhara heritage and ancient Chinese Buddhist travelers who visited the region centuries ago. The song has been penned by renowned Pashto poet Professor Dr. Abaseen Yousofzai, whose thoughtful and poetic lyrics have given the project a timeless emotional appeal. Amjad Aziz Malik, Administrator of China Window, directed the production, while the music was composed by celebrated musician Gohar Jan. The song has been beautifully rendered by internationally acclaimed singers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Irfan Khalil and Yamsa Noor, whose vocals add emotional depth and artistic richness to the composition. According to organizers, the song blends traditional Pashto musical elements with modern arrangements to appeal to audiences in both Pakistan and China. The formal launching ceremony of the song will be held on May 20 in Islamabad, where distinguished personalities from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, and the academia, media, and representatives of the Chinese Embassy are expected to participate.—DNA

# Pak-China Hospital treats over 100,000 patients

Through free treatment facilities, modern medical infrastructure, and patient-centered care, GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar continues to play a key role in improving healthcare access and raising medical standards across the region.

ISLAMABAD: GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar, a state-of-the-art CPEC project managed by Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHNN), treated over 100,000 patients during the first four months of the year, as 31,311 patients were treated in the month of April, Gwadar Pro reported. According to the latest statistics issued by the hospital on Wednesday, Family Medicine/General OPD recorded the highest patient turnout in April with more than 12,900 OPD visits. Dental OPD treated around 1,458 patients, including those requiring specialized procedures, while Internal Medicine OPD managed approximately 1,465 patients. Children's OPD (Pediatrics) provided healthcare services to 1,405 patients, and Dermatology OPD treated more than 1,200 patients suffering from various skin conditions. ENT OPD and General Surgery OPD also catered to a significant number of patients through consultations and treatment services. Specialized departments including Orthopedics, Gastroenterology, and Gynecology OPD continued to provide expert medical care to patients from Gwadar and surrounding districts. Alongside outpatient care, the hospital also carried out thousands of laboratory tests, radiology investigations, and other diagnostic procedures during the month. Emergency and inpatient services remained fully operational throughout April, ensuring timely treatment for patients requiring urgent and critical medical attention. GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar continued to provide modern healthcare facilities, expert doctors, and quality treatment services to citizens during April, contributing to steady improvement in healthcare standards for the local community. The hospital is providing free medical treatment, medicines, laboratory tests, radiology services, and free meals for admitted patients while serving around 1,100 to 1,200 patients daily. Hospital statistics showed that 25,525 patients were treated in January, 23,081 in February, around 25,000 in March, while patient visits crossed 31,000 in April, reflecting the increasing public trust in the hospital's healthcare services. As per the hospital, its administration and medical staff remain committed to delivering the best possible healthcare services not only to the people of Gwadar but also to the wider population of Balochistan. Through free treatment facilities, modern medical infrastructure, and patient-centered care, GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar continues to play a key role in improving healthcare access and raising medical standards across the region.—DNA

# Solar boom driven by massive Chinese panel imports

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-driven imports of low-cost solar panels have rapidly transformed Pakistan's energy landscape, making it one of the fastest-growing rooftop solar markets in the world. Over the past few years, rooftop solar adoption has surged at an unprecedented pace across Pakistan, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. Satellite and aerial observations show that before the COVID-19 pandemic, solar panels were largely absent from major cities such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Installation activity began gradually in 2021–2022 but accelerated sharply during 2023 and 2024, with rooftops in many urban and semi-urban areas now increasingly covered in solar systems, particularly in affluent neighborhoods. A key driver of this expansion has been the surge in Chinese solar panel exports to Pakistan. According to energy think tank Ember, imports rose from around 3.3 GW in 2022 to 19 GW in 2023, followed by approximately 17

GW in 2024. By mid-2025, Pakistan had emerged among the world's top three solar importers, with over 10 GW of Chinese solar components imported in just the first four months of the year. Analysts attribute this growth primarily to rising electricity tariffs, persistent load-shedding, and the falling cost of solar technology. Clean energy analyst Chris Meder describes Pakistan's trajectory as a rapid shift toward a decentralized energy model. He notes a significant gap between official statistics and real-world deployment, suggesting that much of the solar capacity is operating outside formal net-metering systems. He estimates that Pakistan imported around 16.6–17 GW of solar panels in 2024 and about 18 GW in 2025, bringing cumulative imports to roughly 51.5 GW by late 2025. However, officially registered rooftop solar capacity remains much lower at around 5.3–6.8 GW in 2025, implying that a large share—possibly over 24 GW—is operating off-grid or behind the meter. This gap highlights how rapidly distributed solar is expanding through house-

holds, farms, factories, and commercial users, largely driven by economic pressure. Rising electricity costs, frequent outages, and expensive backup fuels have pushed consumers toward self-generation, while declining solar and battery prices have made the transition more financially attractive. This rapid expansion is not limited to urban rooftops alone. In rural areas, solar adoption is increasingly embedded in daily agricultural and household life. Talking to Gwadar Pro, one local villager described the extent of this shift, saying: "In my village everything from tubewell to cell phone chargers are on solar even the hay cutting machine is on solar," highlighting how deeply solar energy has penetrated rural economies beyond basic electricity needs. Analysts believe Pakistan's solar adoption is expanding faster than official systems can fully track, turning the country's energy transition into a largely consumer-driven movement. The rapid growth is also attracting increasing foreign investment interest, with Chinese and regional companies exploring local assembly, distribution.

## Briefs

## IBCC confirms re-conduct of affected papers

ISLAMABAD: Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) Executive Director Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah on Thursday assured students that investigations into repeated Cambridge paper leaks were underway, reaffirming that all affected papers in this same series would be re-conducted with the same fee and without any additional charges. While speaking in an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Executive Director Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah said the paper leak has been confirmed and authorities are awaiting a formal response from Cambridge. He stated that a strict and high-level investigation is being conducted to determine the real cause of the incident, with all relevant agencies involved in the probe. He added that the matter has been referred to the Cyber Investigation Agency for detailed inquiry to identify those responsible across different zones. He said that another meeting has also been scheduled for tomorrow under the direction of the Minister to trace the root cause of the issue. ED noted that, according to Cambridge, this is a case of paper theft, and investigations are underway to determine whether the breach occurred across an entire zone or was limited to Pakistan. Responding to another query, he confirmed that students should not be worried as the re-conducted papers will be held in the same series with the same fee and examination dates will be announced soon. He added that the papers will not be shifted to another series, ensuring that there is no impact on admissions, and said that all possible efforts are being made to resolve the matter as per official policy.—APP

## Mushal slams Indian crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Kashmiri activist and wife of jailed Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, Mushal Mullick on Thursday strongly condemned a large scale crackdown by Indian occupation forces in the Shalimar area of Indian occupied Kashmir, where several Kashmiri youths are allegedly detained during raids, sparking public protests and demonstrations against the arrests. According to Ms Malik, angry residents poured onto the streets following the operation, chanting slogans against Indian authorities and demanding the immediate release of the detained youths. She said the arrests reflected New Delhi's continued attempts to suppress dissent and silence the voice of the Kashmiri people through coercion and intimidation. India cannot crush the legitimate struggle of Kashmiris for their right to self-determination through force, oppression and illegal detentions," Ms Malik said, adding that the people of Kashmir remained steadfast despite mounting pressure and repeated crackdowns. She termed the detention of innocent youths and the harassment of civilians as "clear evidence of Indian state terrorism" in occupied Kashmir and warned that the human rights situation in the region was deteriorating rapidly.—APP

## Pak hajj mission strengthens wheelchair assistance

ISLAMABAD: With a firm commitment to the comfort and well-being of pilgrims during Hajj 2026, the Pakistan Hajj Mission is offering state-of-the-art facilities, wheelchair support and specialized assistance for elderly and differently-abled pilgrims, ensuring effortless movement within the mosque and surrounding courtyards. Speaking to PTV News, Officials from the Pakistan Hajj mission described that pilgrims have expressed great satisfaction with the services provided by the Mission. He noted that a dedicated Wheelchair Desk has been established to address the specific requirements of elderly and physically challenged pilgrims participating in the government Hajj scheme.—APP

## First Lady inaugurates Begum Nusrat Bhutto Library

Later, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also met with PRCS volunteer children at the Headquarters and appreciated their commitment and participation in humanitarian and community service activities



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: First Lady, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, MNA, visited the Headquarters of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Islamabad and inaugurated the Begum Nusrat Bhutto Library. She also visited the exhibition titled "Humanitarian Journey of PRCS". Upon arrival at the PRCS Headquarters, the First Lady was received by Chairperson PRCS, Mrs. Farzana Naek, and senior officials of the organisation. She was briefed on the humanitarian work, historical role and relief efforts undertaken by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society since its establishment in 1947, including its nationwide volunteer network and youth engagement initiatives. Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari cut the ribbon to inaugurate the Begum Nusrat Bhutto Library and visited

the exhibition showcasing the humanitarian journey of PRCS, including disaster response operations, historical relief activities and long-standing humanitarian initiatives associated with the Bhutto family. The First Lady also unveiled the commemorative plaque of the newly designated Begum Nusrat Bhutto Library and held a meeting with Chairperson PRCS, Mrs. Farzana Naek. During the meeting, she was informed that students from universities and educational institutions would benefit from the library facility, while PRCS has also established youth clubs across the country and is running mentorship programmes for young volunteers. Speaking on the occasion, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari appreciated the humanitarian services being carried out by PRCS and assured her full support in making the organisation more effective and active in serving vulnerable communities. She said that PRCS is playing an important role in the service of humanity and that its hu-

manitarian mission needs to be carried forward with dedication and seriousness. During the visit, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari recorded her remarks in the Visitors' Book, stating that she is continuing the legacy of humanitarian service associated with her grandmother, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, her mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and her father, who serves as President of the Society. She also expressed appreciation and best wishes for the Pakistan Red Crescent Society's continued service to humanity. Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek said that the inauguration of the Begum Nusrat Bhutto Library is a tribute to the enduring legacy of compassion, public service and humanitarian leadership of late Begum Nusrat Bhutto. She said that Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto had played an important role in promoting humanitarian values and supporting the mission of PRCS through their engagement

with vulnerable communities. She also thanked President Asif Ali Zardari, who is also President of their National Society, for his support. She added that the library would serve as a platform for learning, research and inspiration for youth, volunteers and future humanitarians. Later, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also met with PRCS volunteer children at the Headquarters and appreciated their commitment and participation in humanitarian and community service activities. Mr. Andreas Weissenberg, IFRC Head of Delegation in Pakistan; Mr. Christoph Sutter, ICRC Head of Delegation in Pakistan; Ms Beyza Taner, Head of Delegation Turkish Red Crescent in Pakistan; Mr. Asif Aman Khan, Head of Office, German Red Cross in Pakistan; Dr. Ulugbek Aminov, Head of Delegation, Norwegian Red Cross in Pakistan and Ms Shazia Marri, MNA, were also present on the occasion.

## Cars' sale, production surge 53.32%, 51.76%

ISLAMABAD: The sale and production of cars in the country increased by 53.32 percent and 51.76 percent, respectively, during the first ten months of the current fiscal year 2025-26 compared to the same period last year, demonstrating a revival in economic activity and growing consumer confidence in the automobile market. During July-April (2025-26), as many as 127,042 cars were sold as against 83,401 units during the corresponding months of last year, while production rose to 131,181 units from 86,439 units, according to official data of the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). Among different models, the sale of Honda cars increased by 52.44 percent, rising from 13,034 units last year to 19,870 units during the period under review. Similarly, the combined sale of Toyota Corolla and Toyota Yaris grew by 64.87 percent to reach 30,496 units compared to 18,496 units sold during the same period of the previous fiscal year. The sale of Suzuki Swift also recorded a substantial growth of 109.57 percent, increasing from 6,562 units to 13,752 units. Hyundai Elantra sales also climbed to 2,389 units from 1,395 units. Meanwhile, Suzuki Cultus sales rose to 4,206 units from 2,130 units during the corresponding months of last year. Suzuki Alto remained the top-selling model in the country, with sales increasing to 48,832 units compared to 33,560 units in the same period last year, reflecting strong demand in the small car segment. The sale of Suzuki Every also witnessed a sharp increase of 195.65 percent, rising from 2,253 units to 6,661 units during the months under review, largely driven by higher demand in the light commercial and small transport segments. Meanwhile, the country's transition towards cleaner transportation also gained momentum as 293 units of the newly launched Dewan Honri-VE electric vehicle were sold during July-April of the current fiscal year. On the production side, Honda cars' output increased by 60.31 percent from 12,554 units to 20,126 units during the ten-month period. Similarly, the production of Toyota Corolla and Toyota Yaris also grew by 60.99 percent, increasing from 19,094 units to 30,740 units during the period under review. Suzuki Swift production also rose significantly by 107 percent, increasing from 6,821 units to 14,121 units, while Hyundai Elantra production increased to 2,510 units from 1,653 units. The production of Suzuki Cultus also climbed to 3,894 units from 2,259 units, whereas Suzuki Alto production rose to 53,797 units compared from 34,849 units during the same period last year. Suzuki Every production also posted an increase of 19 percent, rising from 4,368 units to 5,198 units during the ten-month period. Meanwhile, as many as 270 units of the newly launched Dewan Honri-VE electric vehicle were produced during July-April (2025-26), reflecting the gradual entry of electric mobility into Pakistan's automobile sector.—DNA

## SFA director raises public awareness on toxic turmeric

ISLAMABAD: Stressing greater public awareness, Sindh Food Authority (SFA) Director Technical Dr. Ahmed Ali Shaikh on Thursday urged consumers to remain vigilant against lead (seesa) contamination, saying exposure through adulterated whole turmeric poses serious health risks, including kidney damage, anemia and impaired cognitive development in millions of children. While speaking to a local media outlet, SFA Director Technical Dr. Ahmed Ali Shaikh warned that lead-contaminated turmeric continues to pose a serious public health threat, urging consumers to remain cautious while purchasing spices commonly used in daily cooking. He advised the public to prefer branded turmeric products or naturally shaped turmeric roots resembling ginger, explaining that adulterated turmeric often appears unnaturally bright due to the addition of harmful chemicals containing lead (seesa). Dr. Shaikh said prolonged exposure to lead has been linked

to cardiovascular disease, kidney damage, anemia and impaired cognitive development in children, adding that repeated intake through contaminated food can gradually affect overall health. Emphasizing the need for greater public awareness, he urged consumers to make informed choices and carefully examine food products before buying, saying awareness and precaution are essential to reducing exposure to toxic adulterants. Responding to a query, Dr. Ahmed Ali Shaikh said some adulterants and shopkeepers are putting public health at risk by adding harmful substances to increase the volume and appearance of turmeric for commercial gain, while endangering the health of consumers, particularly children. He said the Sindh Food Authority is taking strict action against those involved in food adulteration through inspections, sampling, and legal proceedings, adding that no compromise will be made on public health and safety.—APP

## PCJCCI appoints Adeel as Commercial ambassador

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) has appointed Adeel Munawar as the Commercial Ambassador of PCJCCI, recognizing his valuable services to Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector and his efforts in promoting stronger business relations between Pakistan and China. He is also recognized among the top 100 CEOs of Pakistan. The appointment reflects PCJCCI's vision of connecting progressive Pakistani businesses with international opportunities, especially in sectors that directly impact people's lives such as healthcare and pharmaceuticals. Talking to Gwadar pro, Adeel Munawar stated that as

Commercial Ambassador of PCJCCI, he will actively work to strengthen commercial linkages between Pakistani and Chinese pharmaceutical companies by facilitating business networking, investment opportunities, joint ventures, and technology-sharing initiatives. He added that Chinese pharmaceutical companies possess advanced manufacturing expertise and research capabilities, while Pakistan offers a growing healthcare market and strategic regional connectivity, creating strong potential for mutually beneficial partnerships. He noted that under the framework of Pakistan-China economic cooperation and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,

the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors can emerge as important areas for bilateral collaboration. Adeel Munawar stressed that over the past decade, Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has become one of the country's fastest-growing sectors, serving millions of patients and contributing significantly to healthcare accessibility. In a country where access to quality medicines and vaccines remains a critical need, companies like M & M Pharma have played an important role in bridging global healthcare innovation with local healthcare demands. Pakistan's healthcare and pharmaceutical sector have shown strong growth in recent years.—DNA

## DIG Rana reviews SPU security system

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Security Islamabad Rana Umar Farooq visited the Special Protection Unit (SPU) Control Room along with SSP VVIP Security Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider to review overall security arrangements and protection measures for Chinese nationals residing in the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that SSP VVIP Security Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider briefed the DIG Umar regarding security arrangements for Chinese nationals, protection of various ongoing projects and the overall operational mechanism of the SPU. DIG Umar conducted a detailed review of the monitoring and response system at the control room and issued directions for further improvement in security arrangements and operational coordination. Rana Umar emphasized the importance of maintaining effective surveillance, rapid response and foolproof security measures to ensure the safety of foreign nationals, particularly Chinese citizens working on different projects in Islamabad.—APP

## Action promised on stalled Green Enclave-1 Scheme

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the allottees of Green Enclave-1 headed by Ch. Amjad Ali, met Federal Secretary for Housing and Works Captain (R) Muhammad Mahmood Rai in the Committee Room on Thursday to raise concerns over the long-delayed housing project and seek immediate action for its development. During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the persistent delays, lack of visible development work, and growing frustration among allottees who have been waiting for 17 years for progress on the project. Responding to the grievances, the Federal Secretary briefed the delegates in detail about the status of Green Enclave-1 and assured them that the project was included among his top priorities and assigned responsibilities. Captain (R) Muhammad Mahmood Rai informed the delegation that the Authority was actively working to overcome the obstacles that had slowed down the project. Following the meeting with the Secretary, the delegation also met project contractor Dr. Hafeez Abbasi and urged him to help resolve pending issues with FGEHA so that development work could move forward without further delay. The delegation emphasized the need for better coordination between the contractor and the Authority in order to remove hurdles affecting the project. Later, during a private meeting, the members of the delegation reviewed the situation and agreed on a future course of action.—APP

## Maritime academy set to gain degree-awarding status

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Thursday announced that a bill to grant degree-awarding status to the Pakistan Marine Academy would soon be presented before the National Assembly, marking a significant step towards strengthening the country's maritime education framework. The federal minister made these remarks during his visit to the academy, where he was briefed by Acting Commandant, Muhammad Asif Farooq, on ongoing institutional developments and training initiatives, said a news release issued here. Junaid Chaudhry said consultations with all relevant stakeholders had been completed regarding the proposed upgrade of the academy into a degree-awarding institute. "The bill will be tabled in the National Assembly for final approval in due course," he added. During the briefing, Commandant Farooq highlighted measures undertaken under the prime minister's maritime sector reform initiative.—APP

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## How Israel is losing America

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

NOT long ago, questioning America's unconditional support for Israel was seen as political suicide. For US lawmakers, presidential hopefuls and advocacy groups alike, the relationship was beyond scrutiny – a sacred fixture of American foreign policy. That era is over. Since Israel launched its war on Gaza in October 2023, American public opinion has undergone one of the most dramatic realignments in the history of US-Israel relations. The shift is historic, measurable and accelerating – and it is rewriting the rules of one of Washington's most entrenched political arrangements. The numbers tell a stark story. American approval of Israel's military conduct has fallen to a record low of 32 percent. Among Americans under 35, it stands at just 9 percent. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs has given Israel its lowest favorability rating in nearly five decades of polling – a score of 50 on a 0 to 100 scale, the worst since the council began tracking the relationship in 1978. This collapse did not happen in a vacuum. Immediately after the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, American sentiment tilted – however tentatively – toward Israel. In those early days, Israel was widely cast as the victim, with broad public sympathy for its right to respond. A Gallup poll conducted in the weeks that followed found 50 percent of Americans approved of Israel's military response in Gaza, with 45 percent opposed. That narrow margin concealed a fault line that would crack open dramatically over the next two years. Footage of the carnage reached people worldwide and no amount of official messaging could contain it. What changed? In a word: visibility. While legacy media largely adhered to the Israeli government's framing of the war – downplaying or ignoring evidence of mass civilian casualties, the destruction of hospitals, schools and universities, and the systematic targeting of civilian infrastructure – social media told a different story. Footage of the carnage reached hundreds of millions of people worldwide and no amount of official messaging could contain it. The gap between what governments said and what ordinary people saw became impossible to bridge. The generational dimension of this shift is particularly striking – and particularly consequential for Israel. Only about one in 10 adults under 35 approves of Israel's military conduct in Gaza, compared with roughly half of those aged 55 and older. The pattern holds on Iran: just 15 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34 approved of Israel's strikes on Iran's nuclear program, versus 55 percent of those aged 55 and over. Even among Republicans – long Israel's most reliable political base – the ground is moving. The most recent Pew Research Center data, from last month, shows that 57 percent of Republicans aged 18 to 49 now hold an unfavorable view of Israel, up from 50 percent the previous year. Older Republicans remain strongly supportive but the direction of travel is unmistakable. Crucially, Brookings Institution research suggests this is not purely a youth phenomenon. Older Democrats have shifted more than any other age group, pointing to a broader realignment



on the American left that goes well beyond generational politics. For decades, Israel managed its relationship with American power primarily through the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby founded in 1954 that became arguably the most influential foreign policy advocacy organization in Washington. AIPAC channeled millions of dollars into congressional and presidential races, cultivated allies across the evangelical community and university campuses, and enforced a bipartisan consensus that made criticism of Israel all but politically toxic. That grip is loosening. A growing cohort of Democrats has publicly refused AIPAC invitations or pledged to reject its money: Reps. Cori Bush, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Jamaal Bowman, along with Sen. Bernie Sanders, led the way. But the rebellion has spread well beyond the progressive flank. Sens. Cory Booker and Josh Shapiro – both considered serious contenders for the 2028 Democratic presidential nomination – have announced they will no longer accept AIPAC funding. California Gov. Gavin Newsom has offered similar assurances. A year ago, such positions from mainstream Democrats would have been unthinkable. Today, they are becoming a credential. What is emerging is a cross-ideological convergence of people united by opposition to unconditional US support for Israel. The fracturing even extends into “Make America Great Again” territory. Prominent former Trump allies Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene have openly accused the president of betraying his movement by allowing Israel to draw the US into the Iran conflict. Even Robert Kagan, the neoconservative intellectual who co-founded the Project for the New American Century, has warned that the conflict risks ending “in a very disastrous way for Israel” as regional power shifts away from Washington and Tel Aviv toward Tehran. Israel is reportedly spending millions on social media campaigns to arrest the trend. Few analysts believe it will work. The forces driving the shift are structural, not rhetorical: a younger generation shaped by different information ecosystems, a Democratic Party whose base has moved decisively leftward on foreign policy, and a populist right increasingly skeptical of foreign entanglements and globalist commitments alike. What is emerging is something without modern precedent in American politics: a cross-ideological convergence of left-wing progressives and right-wing populists, united by opposition to unconditional US support for Israel. The old bipartisan consensus that AIPAC once enforced with near-total impunity is in pieces. One figure has been particularly blamed for accelerating the decline in Israel's image: Benjamin Netanyahu. According to a recent CNN poll, the Israeli prime minister faces a profound trust deficit among the American public. Those expressing no confidence in him stand at 59 percent, up from 42 percent. The erosion cuts across party lines: 81 percent of older Democrats say they have no confidence in him and – tellingly – 58 percent of younger Republicans say the same. For Israel, the political consequences of that collapse may prove as consequential, and as lasting, as the wars that caused it. For decades, Israel took blind American support – a cornerstone of both its national security and its expansionist agenda – entirely for granted. It may yet discover what it means to be on the wrong side of that assumption: isolated, exposed and regarded by the world's most powerful nation not as its closest ally but as a liability.

## Israel's Campaign Against Pakistan's Neutrality in Iran War

Qamar Bashir



The implication behind his remarks was unmistakable: Pakistan's sovereign foreign-policy decisions should somehow require approval from Washington or Tel Aviv before Islamabad could legitimately maintain relations with Tehran. Soon afterward, Benjamin Netanyahu intensified the campaign by accusing Pakistan of running “bot farms” and social-media influence operations designed to weaken relations between the United States and Israel. Netanyahu claimed anti-Israel sentiment among younger Americans

The latest political storm surrounding Pakistan and its mediation role between the United States and Iran did not emerge in isolation. It erupted after Lindsey Graham openly questioned senior American military leadership during congressional hearings over reports that Iranian aircraft had temporarily used Pakistani facilities after the April 7 ceasefire. Addressing Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and senior military officials, Graham insinuated that Pakistan could no longer be trusted as a neutral mediator if it maintained cooperative understandings with Iran. The implication behind his remarks was unmistakable: Pakistan's sovereign foreign-policy decisions should somehow require approval from Washington or Tel Aviv before Islamabad could legitimately maintain relations with Tehran. Soon afterward, Benjamin Netanyahu intensified the campaign by accusing Pakistan of running “bot farms” and social-media influence operations designed to weaken relations between the United States and Israel. Netanyahu claimed anti-Israel sentiment among younger Americans was being amplified by coordinated foreign manipulation rather than emerging organically within American society itself. Yet the timing of these accusations reveals something far deeper. The real crisis today is not Pakistan's diplomacy with Iran. The real crisis is the growing political and intellectual rebellion inside the United States itself against the long-standing assumption that Israel should receive unconditional military, diplomatic, and financial backing regardless of consequences. One of the most extraordinary developments came from Jonathan Pollard – the former American intelligence analyst imprisoned for spying for Israel. In a dramatic interview with i24NEWS, Pollard declared that the U.S.-Israel alliance was “finished” and described President Donald Trump as “dangerous.” Pollard accused both American and Israeli leadership of strategic failure after October 7 and argued that Israel no longer possessed dependable allies in Washington. Coming from a figure long associated with pro-Israel advocacy, the remarks reflected the growing fractures within the alliance itself. At the same time, voices across the American political spectrum are increasingly demanding that the United States begin treating Israel like any other sovereign state rather than granting it exceptional status beyond normal scrutiny. Tucker Carlson has repeatedly argued that America must detach itself from endless Middle Eastern wars fought in the name of Israeli security. Jeffrey Sachs has warned that unconditional support for Israel is damaging America's global credibility and strategic interests. Mehdi Hasan, Jeremy Scahill, Chris Hedges, and Norman Finkelstein have all criticized what they view as extraordinary protection and political privilege granted to Israel within American politics and media. Even more remarkable is that this reassessment is no

longer confined to progressive circles. Figures such as Douglas Macgregor and Scott Ritter from anti-interventionist and conservative circles increasingly argue that American foreign policy has become excessively shaped by Israeli strategic calculations. On the progressive side, Ana Kasparian and Cenk Uygur have openly questioned whether the United States is sacrificing its own sovereignty and reputation in pursuit of policies benefiting another state. Simultaneously, lawmakers such as Peter Welch and Chris Van Hollen have demanded greater scrutiny of military aid to Israel, including discussions surrounding the Leahy Law and NSM-20 reviews over alleged human-rights violations. What was politically unimaginable in Washington a decade ago is now openly debated in Congress, universities, mainstream media, podcasts, and digital platforms. This is the real context behind Netanyahu's accusations against Pakistan. The erosion of unquestioned support for Israel inside the United States is not created by Pakistan, Iran, or foreign “bot farms.” It is increasingly emerging from American citizens themselves – journalists, students, veterans, academics, influencers, religious leaders, podcasters, and ordinary voters questioning decades of war, instability, civilian casualties, and endless military entanglements across the Middle East. The digital revolution has accelerated this transformation. Traditional gatekeepers no longer control political narratives. Millions of Americans now receive information through podcasts, livestreams, independent media, and social platforms where alternative perspectives circulate freely. Images from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran have profoundly shaped public opinion, especially among younger generations who increasingly reject unconditional support for war. Against this backdrop, attempts to blame Pakistan for changing American attitudes appear politically convenient but strategically hollow. At the same time, the controversy over Pakistan's mediation role raises a much larger legal and diplomatic question: the sovereignty of states under international law. The Charter of the United Nations explicitly recognizes the sovereign equality of all member states under Article 2(1). Article 2(4) further prohibits coercion or threats against the political independence of states. Beyond the Charter itself, UN General Assembly Resolution 2131 on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States clearly declares that no country has the right to intervene directly or indirectly in the political, economic, or external affairs of another sovereign state. Likewise, Resolution 36/103 reaffirmed that every nation possesses the right to freely develop political, economic, diplomatic, and strategic relations according to its own national interests without outside interference. Under these principles, Pakistan has every legal right to maintain relations simultaneously with

Iran, the United States, China, Gulf countries, or any other nation. If Islamabad chose under bilateral understanding to temporarily facilitate Iranian aircraft during a ceasefire period, that falls within sovereign bilateral relations between two independent UN member states. No third country possesses automatic authority to interfere with or dictate those relationships unless binding international sanctions exist. Therefore, Pakistan should not appear apologetic, nervous, or defensive if it has allowed Iranian aircraft temporary logistical arrangements under bilateral understandings. Sovereign states act according to national interests, geography, strategic necessity, diplomacy, and regional realities. Pakistan's historic, cultural, religious, and geographic ties with Iran are well known and entirely legitimate under international law. Nor should Pakistan become intimidated by the insinuations of Israeli-aligned political figures in the U.S. Senate or Congress who now appear determined to downgrade Islamabad's status as a mediator. Much of this criticism reflects frustration that Pakistan succeeded where many others failed: helping facilitate the April 7 ceasefire that prevented a potentially catastrophic regional war. That ceasefire, now indefinitely extended, likely saved the global economy trillions of dollars in losses, prevented massive disruptions to oil supplies and maritime trade, and protected countless civilian lives across the Middle East and beyond. Instead of acknowledging Pakistan's diplomatic contribution, sections of the Israeli political establishment and its supporters continue attempting to poison perceptions of Pakistan in Washington. Their objective increasingly appears not merely to criticize Pakistan, but to create suspicion around Islamabad's neutrality and undermine the confidence that President Trump himself has repeatedly expressed toward Pakistan's leadership. Yet despite these pressure campaigns, Trump has publicly praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir for facilitating diplomacy and helping reduce regional tensions. His administration clearly recognizes that Pakistan's communication channels with all sides made meaningful mediation possible. Ultimately, this controversy reflects a larger geopolitical transformation underway across the world. The debate is no longer simply about Pakistan, Iran, or Israel alone. It is about sovereignty, international law, independent foreign policy, and whether powerful lobbying networks can continue dictating global narratives indefinitely despite changing political realities inside the United States itself. And increasingly, that debate is being driven not by outsiders, but by Americans themselves.

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## The Bus to Kallar Kahar: A Parable for Our Reckless World

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



At this measured pace, one of the insolent youths rose in mockery and exclaimed that it would have been far better had they hired a donkey cart, for at least that humble conveyance would have carried them faster. The taunt struck the driver's pride like a spark upon dry tinder. In a surge of anger, he pressed the

As the bus rolled out of Lahore bound for Islamabad that fateful morning, it carried a microcosm of life itself—men and women of all ages, rich and poor, young and old, each absorbed in their private dreams and duties. Some travelled for business, others to visit family, and a few in search of better prospects in the capital. The weather was delightfully pleasant, with a gentle breeze softening the sun's warmth. The driver, a man of middle years with a composed bearing, inspired quiet confidence among the passengers. For the greater part of the journey, an air of peaceful expectancy prevailed. Yet, as is often the case in life, a small group of reckless young men aboard soon disturbed this harmony. Their loud voices, rude jests, and careless behaviour made the women and elderly passengers visibly uncomfortable. The driver observed all this in silence, choosing prudence over confrontation. The mischief persisted until the bus reached Bhera. As it began the gradual climb toward the picturesque yet treacherous hills of Kallar Kahar, the driver, exercising wise caution, slowed the vehicle to navigate the winding roads safely. At this measured pace, one of the insolent youths rose in mockery and exclaimed that it would have been far better had they hired a donkey cart, for at least that humble conveyance would have carried them faster. The taunt struck the driver's pride like a spark upon dry tinder. In a surge of anger, he pressed the accelerator with vengeance. The bus surged forward at dangerous speed. Alarmed passengers cried out, pleading with him to reduce pace and think of the lives entrusted to his care. Mothers clutched their children, elderly men warned of the sharp turns ahead—but the driver, now deaf to reason, only drove faster, as if to prove his mastery over both machine and mockery. The inevitable came swiftly. At a sharp bend in the road, the bus careened out of control and plunged into a deep ditch. The crash was devastating. Many precious lives were lost in an instant, while scores of others were left grievously injured, some condemned to lifelong disability and dependence. That single moment of reckless impulse destroyed years of hopes, plans, and quiet human endeavours. Years have since passed, yet the memory of that tragedy awakens with fresh pain as one surveys the present global landscape.

For the world, too, had been journeying with tolerable smoothness. Commerce flourished from the vibrant ports of the Gulf to the great markets of Asia and Europe. Nations pursued their legitimate interests, and ordinary people—much like the passengers on that bus—sought only to live, work, and provide for their families. Then, mischievous elements, with Israel at the forefront and India offering tacit encouragement, began to unsettle the delicate balance. Yielding to provocation, the United States launched military operations against Iran. Its traditional allies urged restraint with earnest counsel, warning of the grave risks to regional stability and global prosperity. Yet, much like the angered driver, America heeded not these voices of moderation. It accelerated its course. The consequences now unfold before our eyes with painful clarity. According to the US Department of Defense, nearly 29 billion dollars have already been spent on this conflict, with credible estimates suggesting the real cost may approach 200 billion dollars. In just two weeks, an additional four billion dollars were added to the official expenditure. Even within the United States, the Secretary of Defense now faces mounting bipartisan pressure in Congress over these ballooning costs. Inflation has tightened its grip on American households, while economic growth has visibly slowed. Far beyond American shores, the ripples have become waves. Fears of disruption to oil shipments through the critical Strait of Hormuz have sent global energy prices soaring. Brent crude has climbed by three dollars and fifty cents to 107.71 dollars per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate has risen by three dollars and seventy-three cents to 101.80 dollars per barrel. Stock markets in New York, London, Tokyo, and beyond have shuddered under the strain. Pakistan, almost entirely dependent on imported oil (much of it routed through the Strait of Hormuz), faces acute challenges. Its weekly oil import bill has reportedly jumped from \$300 million to \$800 million. Fuel prices have risen dramatically—over 50% in some cases—feeding directly into inflation, transport fares, and agricultural costs. Analysts warn of inflation exceeding 11%,

a widening current account deficit, and GDP growth slowing to 2.5–3% in FY27. Industrial output and services are particularly at risk. This compounds existing debt and balance-of-payments pressures, limiting the government's ability to provide relief to its people. Developing nations, already burdened by debt and fragile recoveries, now face higher costs for fuel, food, and essential imports. The common citizens of Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and many others—innocent passengers on this global journey—find their daily bread becoming dearer and their modest aspirations dimmed. Broader ripples compound the hardship. Stock markets experience heightened volatility; riskier assets and emerging-market currencies come under pressure. Central banks face difficult choices—fight inflation with higher rates (hurting growth) or accommodate it (risking entrenched inflation). Higher costs disrupt global supply chains, raise poverty levels in import-dependent countries, and force governments toward subsidies or support programs that widen budget deficits. Today, the world stands precariously at the same dangerous turn where that ill-fated bus met its doom. The damage has been done. Lives have been lost, economies destabilised, and the prospects of millions thrown into uncertainty. Yet, unlike the irreversible tragedy on the Kallar Kahar road, there remains time for wiser counsel to prevail. The great powers must now temper their momentum. Diplomacy, patience, and collective reason must replace the dangerous thrill of escalation. For when a handful of reckless voices provoke those at the wheel of great nations, it is not the provocateurs or the drivers alone who suffer—the entire company of humanity pays the price. The situation remains fluid. Much depends on how quickly supply lines normalize and whether geopolitical tensions subside. In the meantime, prudent fiscal management, energy conservation, and diversification toward renewables remain essential buffers. May the leaders of our age draw wisdom from this parable of the road. Let them ease their foot from the accelerator of war before another plunge brings still greater suffering upon us all. The ordinary passengers of this world, with their simple dreams and quiet endurance, surely deserve a safer journey.

## Briefs

## Chinese FM appreciates Pak role: FO

FROM PAGE 01  
US-Iran talks and helping extend the temporary ceasefire. He expressed hope that Pakistan will maintain confidence and contribute to restoring regional peace at an early date, which is also the common aspiration of the international community," the report read. China will continue to support Pakistan's mediation efforts and make its own contribution toward this end, Wang was quoted as saying. In its statement on the call, the FO had also said Wang reiterated Beijing's appreciation and support for Pakistan's role as a mediator. It added that both top diplomats "underscored the importance of continuing a durable ceasefire and ensuring normal passage through the Strait of Hormuz". Despite signs that negotiations between the US and Iran have stalled after President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest response to a proposed settlement framework, Pakistan has remained engaged in mediation efforts.

## Pakistan, US discuss energy...

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sector and expanding economic engagement between Pakistan and the United States. Mr. S. Paul Kapur stated that Pakistan and the United States have always been important to each other and noted that the current momentum presents an opportunity that can be translated into a stronger economic partnership. Federal Minister Ali Perwaiz Malik welcomed the U.S. delegation and briefed them on the reforms underway in Pakistan's energy sector aimed at indigenous production, improving efficiency, and creating an enabling environment to attract foreign investment. He highlighted the potential for collaboration in key areas including port infrastructure, development of storage facilities, and refinery upgrade projects, exploration and minerals. He said that it is the first time that Pakistan has imported around six million barrels of crude from United States.

## US-Iran truce holds, says PM...

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which were coming to fruition, ensuring stability and preventing the need for rationing. PM Shehbaz called for concerted national efforts to transform Pakistan into an economic power, urging the same level of dedication and resilience that enabled the country to achieve its status as a responsible nuclear state. "This is a long and difficult journey. However, nations that commit to facing and overcoming their challenges are the ones that ultimately meet with success," he remarked. About the celebrations of the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq on May 10, he said that a year ago, Almighty Allah had blessed the nation with grandeur due to the professional excellence of the armed forces and national unity. "The forces, with utmost valour, taught the enemy a lesson they would never forget," the prime minister remarked.

## China's Xi hails trade...

FROM PAGE 01  
"You're a great leader, sometimes people don't like me saying it, but I say it anyway," Trump responded. "There are those who say this may be the biggest summit ever," he added. Xi said negotiations between US and Chinese economic and trade teams in South Korea on Wednesday had reached "overall balanced and positive outcomes", according to a readout by China's foreign ministry. The negotiations had aimed to maintain the trade truce struck between Trump and Xi last October and establish mechanisms to support future trade and investment, officials with knowledge of the matter said.

## Australia celebrated 10 years supporting girls' cricket in Pakistan

Australia's HC to Pakistan, Timothy Kane, congratulated the participants and highlighted the significance of sustained investment in women's sport



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission (AHC), in partnership with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Serena Hotels, hosted the Islamabad leg of the AHC-PCB Girls' Cricket Cup today — marking 10 years of Australia's support for girls' cricket in Pakistan. The tournament brought together young players from government schools and community institutions across Islamabad, using cricket as a platform to build confidence, develop

skills, and expand opportunities for girls. Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Timothy Kane, congratulated the participants and highlighted the significance of sustained investment in women's sport. "Cricket is a powerful force for connection between Australia and Pakistan. But just as importantly, it creates opportunity — giving girls the confidence, skills and pathways to shape their own futures." "As Australia's ODI men's team prepares to return to Pakistan later this month, the Girls' Cricket Cup underscores the depth and breadth of our cricket partnership — from grassroots development through to elite

competition." The initiative, launched in Islamabad in 2016 to foster opportunities for underprivileged girls through cricket, has since expanded to Lahore and Karachi and contributed to increased participation of girls in cricket across Pakistan. Participants were supported through pre-tournament coaching delivered by PCB coaches, helping to develop technical skills and cultivate leadership. PCB representatives noted the importance of sustained partnerships in building the future of women's cricket in Pakistan. Serena Hotels, a long-standing partner of the initiative, reaffirmed commitment

to supporting inclusive sport and youth development. Serena Hotels, a long-standing partner of the initiative, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting women's empowerment, inclusive sport and youth development in Pakistan. The tournament featured teams from Islamabad Model College for Girls Punjran, Islamabad Model School for Girls F-6/1, Islamabad Model School for Girls I-9/1, and SOS Children's Village H-11. The event reflects Australia's broader commitment to advancing gender equality and inclusion through sport, in line with its international development and sports diplomacy priorities.

## US waives visa bonds for eligible Fifa World Cup fans from 50 countries

Waiver applies to fans registered through FIFA PASS by April 15; visa bonds ranged from \$5,000 to \$15,000

THE Trump administration will temporarily waive visa bond requirements for eligible World Cup ticket-holders from countries subject to a controversial US travel deposit scheme, a State Department official said on Wednesday. Citizens from 50 countries have been required since last year to pay deposits ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 to obtain tourist visas for the United States, with the money refunded upon departure. Washington said the measure was introduced to prevent visa overstays. Assistant Secretary of State

for Consular Affairs Mora Namdar said the bond requirement would now be lifted for qualifying football fans attending this summer's FIFA World Cup. "The United States is waiving visa bonds for qualified fans who bought World Cup tickets and opted in to FIFA PASS as of April 15, 2026," Namdar told Al Jazeera. The waiver also applies to eligible players, coaches and team staff from the affected countries. Five nations subject to the visa bond rules qualified for the World Cup: Algeria, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Tunisia. However, sepa-

rate Trump administration restrictions remain in place for some countries, including Haiti and Iran, whose citizens face broader entry bans under US immigration directives. "We remain committed to strengthening US national security priorities while facilitating legitimate travel for the upcoming World Cup tournament," Namdar said in a statement. The FIFA World Cup will take place in June and July across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The tournament opens on June 11 in Mexico, while the first match in the United States

## Ocean Dream' blue-green diamond sells

GENEVA: A 5.5-carat triangular-cut diamond billed as the largest fancy vivid blue-green diamond known to exist sold for more than 13.5 million Swiss francs (\$17.3 million) on Wednesday, Christie's said, calling it a record price for a stone of its kind sold at auction. The "Ocean Dream," the standout offer at the auction house's Geneva sale of jewelry, was found in Central Africa in the 1990s. The price easily topped the presale estimate to fetch 7-10 million francs (around \$9-13 million). Rahul Kadakia, president of Christie's Asia Pacific, said that an unspecified private client was the buyer, and the stone took about 20 minutes to sell — an indication that interest was high. The price was more than double that of the roughly \$8.5 million that the gem, which was featured among rare colored diamonds at the Smithsonian Splendor of Diamonds Exhibition in 2003, sold for at Christie's in 2014. "A stellar result worthy of the world's rarest blue-green diamond," Tobias Kormind, managing director of online jeweler 77 Diamonds, said in a statement. On Tuesday, a 6-carat fancy vivid blue diamond at a Geneva auction at Sotheby's didn't sell. The auction house said that the rare stone unearthed from South Africa's famed Cullinan mine had come in with a presale estimate of 7.2 million to 9.6 million francs (\$9.2 million to \$12.3 million). — APP

## Pakistan launches Fatah-4...

FROM PAGE 01  
The President, Prime Minister of Pakistan, COAS & CDF, Chief of the Naval Staff and Chief of the Air Staff commended successful training fire of Fatah-4 and appreciated the technical prowess, dedication and commitment of all those who contributed towards the successful training fire of the F series missile.

## Ties with UAE good, says minister

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particularly Shia workers, signalling a shift in Pakistan-UAE ties. The Interior Ministry has denied the claims. "I don't know why people are intent on building a narrative against a country; that people from there are being deported based on sectarian differences," the state minister said on Thursday. "There is no such thing. The government has categorically denied this. Our ties with the UAE are absolutely fine," he said. He went on to say that for this month, the highest amount of remittances was received from Saudi Arabia, followed by the UAE.

## 18th amend may not be undone...

FROM PAGE 01  
Eid ul Adha, which is expected to take place on May 27. The amendment, passed during PPP-led government in 2010, has triggered many debates in the past, with calls to make changes to it. However, PPP has strongly objected to such proposals and has vowed resistance against any tweaks to the amendment. The 18th Amendment devolved powers to provinces on issues such as health, women's development, social welfare, and local government. The law minister — during the show — further said no official work was constitutionally underway on any constitutional amendment, but acknowledged that broader national issues had been discussed previously. "If we discuss a single national curriculum alongside health, this is no secret. Conversations regarding the NFC Award also took place during the 27th Amendment," he said, adding that Article 140A related to local governments had also been discussed. Malik maintained that any formal progress towards a constitutional amendment in matters of "national or public interest" would be a positive development.

## Iran signals open...

FROM PAGE 01

anchor approximately 38 nautical miles northeast of Fujairah, UAE. The ship is now heading toward Iranian territorial waters, according to the agency. UKMTO is investigating the incident, which occurs near key oil export facilities amid ongoing maritime security concerns in the region. Separately, Iran has called on fellow BRICS members to jointly challenge what it describes as "international law violations" by the United States and Israel. The appeal comes as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi attends the BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi, India (May 14-15, 2026), where regional stability is a key agenda item. Iranian officials, including Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei, have highlighted BRICS condemnations of U.S.-Israeli military actions, framing them as breaches of the UN Charter and threats to global order. Tehran is pushing for stronger collective statements from the bloc, which includes newer member Iran alongside major powers like China, Russia, and India. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of global oil passes, has been a flashpoint in recent months. Iran's statements aim to reassure commercial shipping while maintaining its security oversight in the waterway.

## Cricket legend Shahid Afridi conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz

President Asif Ali Zardari confers prestigious award on Afridi at Aiwan-e-Sadr

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan captain and all-rounder Shahid Afridi has been conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz, the country's second-highest civilian award, in recognition of his outstanding services in the field of sports. The award was conferred by President Asif Ali Zardari during a prestigious ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Afridi was recognised for guiding Pakistan to their historic 2009 T20 World Cup triumph. The honour also acknowledged Afridi's contributions to England's county cricket and his leadership role in the World Championship of Legends. After receiving the award, Afridi wrote on X that receiving the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz from the president is an honour for him, adding that it represents not only his achievement

but that of the entire Pakistani nation. The former Pakistan captain said the award reflected the love, prayers and support he had received from the public throughout his career. Afridi dedicated the honour to Pakistan's martyrs, saying it was also in recognition of those who sacrificed their lives for the country. He concluded by praying for Pakistan's continued safety and prosperity. The 46-year-old made exceptional contributions to Pakistan cricket across all formats, having played 398 ODIs and scored 8,064 runs, including 39 half-centuries and six centuries, while also claiming 395 wickets with nine five-wicket hauls. In the T20I format, the right-handed batter featured in 99 matches, scoring 1,416 runs and taking 98 wickets. Afridi also enjoyed vast experience in franchise cricket, representing teams in the Pakistan Super League, Lanka Premier League, Bangladesh Premier League, Caribbean Premier League, Champions League Twenty20, Big Bash League and Indian Premier League. — DNA

## Wani Moves to Rebuild Islamabad Women's Hockey

The announcement was made during the closing ceremony of the Shahida Raza Memorial Hockey Tournament held at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move aimed at the revival and promotion of women's hockey, President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation and Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), Mohyuddin Wani, has entrusted former Deputy Mayor Islamabad Syed Zeeshan Naqvi with an important responsibility for the development of women's hockey in the federal capital. The announcement was made during the closing ceremony of the Shahida Raza Memorial Hockey Tournament held at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad. The ceremony was attended by Patron of Islamabad Girls Hockey Academy Ammara Awais Niazi, former Deputy Mayor Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, Event Organizing Secretary Riffat Masood, and several other distinguished guests. Speaking on the occasion, Mohyuddin Wani reaffirmed the government's commitment to restoring the glory of Pakistan's national sport. He stated that after focusing on the senior and junior men's national teams, the federation is now turning its full attention toward the growth and development of women's hockey. "We are making serious efforts for the revival and promotion of hockey. Our goal is to provide maximum playing opportunities and exposure to women players so they can compete at higher levels," Wani said, adding that collective efforts from all stakeholders are essential for Pakistan to regain its lost stature in international hockey. While assigning the new responsibility to Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, the PHF President expressed confidence that he would play a vital role in strengthening and promoting women's

hockey in Islamabad and beyond. Earlier in the tournament final, Olympian Zakir Hockey Academy Wah delivered a dominant performance to defeat Islamabad Girls Hockey Academy 7-0. For the winning side, Anaya Batool scored a brilliant

hat-trick, while Shireen Fatima and Areeba Aslam netted two goals each. At the conclusion of the event, Mohyuddin Wani distributed prizes among the players and praised the participants for their passion and commitment to the sport.



## Briefs

## Gold prices increase by Rs 1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold increased in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 1,000 to settle at Rs 492,362 compared to Rs 491,362 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 858 to Rs 422,121 from Rs 421,263, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 787 to Rs 386,958 against Rs 386,171 in the international market, the price of gold increased by \$10 to \$4,700 per ounce from \$4,690.

Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 65 to Rs 9,204, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs 55 to Rs 7,890.

The price of silver in the international market increased by \$0.65 to \$87.20 per ounce.—APP

## SAPM, Millat Tractors CEO discuss budget, auto policies

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday met with the CEO of Millat Tractors and discussed matters related to the upcoming federal budget, auto policy, tractor policy, and the promotion of local manufacturing. During the meeting, Haroon Akhtar emphasized that the government is taking practical measures to strengthen local industry in line with the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, said a news release. He said that industrial development is being accelerated to support economic revival and sustainable economic growth. The special assistant highlighted that the upcoming tractor policy is being designed to be both farmer-friendly and industry-friendly, with a focus on supporting the agricultural sector while enhancing domestic industrial capacity. The auto policy will prioritize local production, investment, and technological advancement in Pakistan's manufacturing sector, Haroon added. He underlined that increasing exports is essential for economic stability and long-term national growth. He noted that the promotion of local manufacturing will create employment opportunities, attract investment, and contribute significantly to export growth. The government is continuing reforms aimed at modernizing the industrial sector and improving competitiveness.—APP

## Ocean Dream diamond sells for more than \$17m

GENEVA: A 5.5-carat triangular-cut diamond billed as the largest fancy vivid blue-green diamond known to exist sold for more than 13.5 million Swiss francs (\$17.3 million) on Wednesday, Christie's said, calling it a record price for a stone of its kind sold at auction. The "Ocean Dream," the standout offer at the auction house's Geneva sale of jewelry, was found in Central Africa in the 1990s. The price easily topped the presale estimate to fetch 7-10 million francs (around \$9-13 million). Rahul Kadakia, president of Christie's Asia Pacific, said that an unspecified private client was the buyer, and the stone took about 20 minutes to sell — an indication that interest was high. The price was more than double that of the roughly \$8.5 million that the gem, which was featured among rare colored diamonds at the Smithsonian Splendour of Diamonds Exhibition in 2003, sold for at Christie's in 2014. "A stellar result worthy of the world's rarest blue-green diamond," Tobias Kormind, managing director of online jeweler 77 Diamonds, said in a statement. On Tuesday, a 6-carat fancy vivid blue diamond at a Geneva auction at Sotheby's didn't sell. The auction house said that the rare stone unearthed from South Africa's famed Cullinan mine had come in with a presale estimate of 7.2 million to 9.6 million francs (\$9.2 million to \$12.3 million).—APP

## RCCI urge govt to withdraw smart lockdown in view of Eid Alzuha

Addressing the gathering, RCCI President Usman Shaukat called upon the government to abolish the smart lockdown policy and allow markets to remain open until 10:00 PM, while hotels and restaurants should be permitted to operate until 12:00 midnight



RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged the government to withdraw the ongoing smart lockdown restrictions and revise business operating hours in view of the upcoming Eid season and prevailing summer conditions. The demand was strongly endorsed by RCCI members and traders during the RCCI Members' Night ceremony, where a packed hall raised its hands in unanimous support of extending market and restaurant timings. The Members' Night event was organized by RCCI in honor of its members. The chief guest on the occasion was Brigadier Ali An-

jum Syed. The event witnessed large participation from representatives of traders' associations, business communities from city and cantonment markets, and RCCI members from Gujar Khan, Taxila, and Wah. Addressing the gathering, RCCI President Usman Shaukat called upon the government to abolish the smart lockdown policy and allow markets to remain open until 10:00 PM, while hotels and restaurants should be permitted to operate until 12:00 midnight. He stated that the current restrictions are not aligned with ground realities, especially considering Pakistan's extreme summer weather,

where daytime shopping becomes difficult for citizens. He further remarked that the smart lockdown has negatively impacted business activity and contributed to tax shortfalls for the government. He urged policymakers to review the restrictions in consultation with the business community. RCCI Group Leader Sohail Altaf said that due to the intense heat, shopping during daytime hours is inconvenient for the public. He emphasized that under the government's austerity drive, unnecessary public expenditures should be reduced instead of restricting business activities. He also demanded that markets remain open

until 10:00 PM during the Eid shopping season and that restaurants either be exempted from restrictions or allowed to operate until midnight. Event Chairman Khawaja Rashid Waen, in his welcome address, thanked the members for their participation and stated that the purpose of the event was to promote networking, exchange of ideas, and explore new business opportunities among the business community. Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former presidents, executive committee members, and a large number of chamber members were also present on the occasion.—DNA

## Families grieve Bangladeshis killed by Israeli airstrikes in S Lebanon

DHAKA: When Sharif Sheikh spoke to his Lebanon-based younger brother Karim Miah over the phone in the early hours of Monday, discussing his safety amid Israel's war on the country was inevitable. "He said everything was fine with him despite the war situation. But that 'fine' didn't last for him," Sheikh told Arab News. It was the last time they spoke. On Monday afternoon, Miah was killed by Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon, which also took the lives of three other Bangladeshi migrant workers. The 45-year-old had been living and working in a flour mill factory in the Mayfadoun area in Nabatieh for the last 10 years, supporting his wife and two children back home in Bangladesh's central Narsingdi district. "He was a very responsible father. Miah left one son and daughter. I don't know what will happen now with my nephew and niece," said Sheikh, who had been close and spoke regularly with Miah on the phone. "Our family is engulfed with deep sadness. We are at a loss over what to do." Since Israel began its war on Lebanon on March 2, more than 2,800 people, including medical workers, have been killed, while over a million others were displaced. Israel's offensive has included widespread airstrikes and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, which has continued despite a US-mediated ceasefire reached last month. As the war increasingly put millions of migrant workers in the Middle East at risk, in Lebanon alone the clashes have killed at least five Bangladeshi nationals. Of around 7 million Bangladeshis who work overseas, the majority are in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia hosting around half of the total. This week, the number of Bangladeshis killed in the Middle East reached at least 11 since the US and Israel launched a joint attack on Iran on Feb. 28 and triggered a conflict across the region. On Wednesday evening, the Bangladeshi Embassy in Beirut said in a statement that Miah's body "may be under the rubble," adding that neither the Lebanese Army nor the Lebanese Red Cross could recover his remains "due to security risks." But local authorities have managed to recover the body of Sree Shuvo Kumar Das, who was also killed on Monday in the same location as Miah in Mayfadoun. Das' sibling, Sree Shanto Das, said his 23-year-old brother was supposed to come home later this month. "He went to Lebanon three years ago. His three-year contract in Lebanon was supposed to complete on May 27th," Shanto told Arab News. Shuvo Kumar was not only the family's breadwinner, but also a "very kind-hearted man and a good soul." When news of his death came, their neighbors in the southwestern Bangladeshi district of Satkhira had "cried over the tragic and untimely death of my brother," Shanto said. "He was loved by all in our community due to his good and gentle behavior.—APP

## Fatah party to elect leaders

RAMALLAH: Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement is due on Thursday to elect a new central committee for the first time in 10 years, as it faces existential challenges in the wake of the Gaza war. During the three-day general conference, the movement will vote on the central committee, its highest leadership body, even as analysts warn of Fatah's diminishing legitimacy in the face of endemic corruption and its lack of progress on Palestinian statehood — especially amid an intensified Israeli settlement drive. The committee is expected to play a key role in the post-Abbas era, with some wondering whether the 90-year-old leader might finally step down after more than two decades at the helm, despite the lack of a clear heir apparent. The conference comes as the Palestinian national movement is facing some of "the most serious challenges in our struggle," said Jibril Rajoub, the current secretary general of the committee. He expressed hope that the conference, repeatedly delayed, would contribute to "ensuring and protecting the establishment of a Palestinian state on the world's agenda and protecting the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Fatah has historically been the main component of the PLO, which includes most Palestinian factions but excludes Islamist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In recent decades, Fatah's popularity and influence have dwindled amid internal divisions and growing public frustration over the stagnation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The sense of disappointment led to a surge in support for rival Hamas, which made huge political gains in the occupied West Bank in 2006 elections that it won handily, before going on to expel Fatah from the Gaza Strip almost entirely after a bout of factional fighting. Hani Al-Masri, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (Masarat), told AFP that Fatah now merely uses the PLO to provide itself with legitimacy, "a legitimacy that is eroding in the absence of a unified national project, elections and national consensus." He added that Thursday's conference was overshadowed by competition over seats on the central committee, "while the national project is conspicuously absent from the discussions." Rajoub nonetheless declared that the conference was a first step toward "putting the Palestinian house in order, to build a partner for establishing a (Palestinian) state." The conference will be held over three days, with approximately 2,580 Fatah members participating, the majority of them in Ramallah, though several hundred are also spread across Gaza, Cairo and Beirut. They are expected to elect 18 representatives to the central committee and 80 to the movement's parliament, known as the revolutionary council.—DNA



BEIJING: US President Donald Trump with Chinese President Xi Jinping inspecting an honour guard during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on Thursday.

## Berlin meeting highlights Pak-Germany ties, overseas welfare

Ambassador Saqlain Syedah highly appreciated the efforts of Mian Mubeen Akhtar for actively serving as a bridge between the overseas Pakistani community in Germany and the embassy

DNA

BERLIN: Pakistan Embassy Berlin Hosts Discussion on Pakistan-Germany Relations, Overseas Community Welfare & Climate Cooperation. A significant meeting was held at the Embassy of Pakistan in Berlin under the coordination of Mian Mubeen Akhtar, where discussions took place regarding Pakistan-Germany bilateral relations, overseas Pakistani community welfare in Germany, student facilitation, climate cooperation, media engagement, and future collaboration between both countries. The meeting was attended by Saqlain Syedah, Mian Mubeen Akhtar (Ambassador of Justice Helpline International Europe and President of Grand Overseas Club International Europe), Tariq Usmani (President Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists), Zahoor Ahmed (President Pakistan-German Press Club Berlin), and student Muhammad Anwar Ul Haq. During the meeting, Ambassador Saqlain Syedah highlighted the longstanding diplomatic relationship between Pakistan and Germany, noting that bilateral relations between the two countries span more than 75 years. She emphasized Germany's important role in Pakistan's development in various sectors, including trade, education, healthcare, industrial growth, energy infrastructure, and technical cooperation. Discussions were also held regarding further strengthening economic and trade ties between the two countries and expanding future cooperation opportunities. Climate change and skilled workforce cooperation were also discussed in detail. Participants emphasized the importance of enhanced collaboration between Pakistan and Germany

in addressing environmental challenges and developing climate resilience initiatives. It was noted during the meeting that progress has already been made regarding a skilled workers cooperation framework, while the signing of the remaining Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would further strengthen opportunities for Pakistani skilled professionals in Germany. Ambassador Saqlain Syedah highly appreciated the efforts of Mian Mubeen Akhtar for actively serving as a bridge between the overseas Pakistani community in Germany and the embassy. She acknowledged his role in facilitat-

ing overseas Pakistanis in Germany, helping newly arriving students, supporting community members facing challenges, and bringing community concerns and issues to the attention of the embassy in an organized and constructive manner. The Ambassador further stated that positive cooperation between the Pakistani community and the embassy plays an important role in promoting a stronger and more positive image of Pakistan internationally. She appreciated the contributions being made by overseas Pakistanis in Germany toward community welfare, social support.—DNA



## Regulatory reforms essential to ease of doing business: Tahir

ISLAMABAD: President Sardar Tahir Mehmood of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said that regulatory reforms are essential for improving ease of doing business, removing procedural bottlenecks and accelerating economic activities in the country.

Talking to different visiting businessmen here at the Chamber House on Thursday, he said that complicated regulations, excessive documentation, delayed approvals and lack of coordination among departments are creating serious difficulties for the business community. He stressed that simplifying procedures, ensuring policy consistency and promoting digital governance are necessary to restore investor confidence and facilitate businesses.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood observed that unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles increase the cost of doing business and discourage local and foreign investment. He urged the government to introduce business-friendly reforms, strengthen one-window operations and eliminate outdated regulations to create a more competitive and investment-friendly economic environment.

Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub said that the private sector can play a more effective role in economic growth if it is provided with a transparent and efficient regulatory framework. He emphasized the need for reducing unnecessary inspections, expanding tax net and ensuring quick resolution of business-related issues.

## Pak ranks among top 10 exporters of TBR tyres

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has emerged among the top 10 exporters of truck and bus radial (TBR) tyres to major global markets, including the United States and Brazil, marking a notable development in the country's industrial and export sector. Industry data shows that Pakistani tyre exports have gained steady traction in recent years, with the United States and Brazil now among the leading destinations. At the centre of this growth is Service Long March Tyres Limited (SLM), the country's largest tyre manufacturer and exporter, which has expanded its international reach since starting operations in 2022. The company has reported strong export performance in the United States and Brazil, as well as emerging markets such as South Africa and Egypt. The export growth has been supported by compliance with strict international standards, including certifications required for access to regulated markets like the US and Brazil, where quality benchmarks are essential.—APP

## PSX remains bearish, loses over 952 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bearish trend on Thursday, losing 952.30 points, a negative change of 0.57 per cent, closing at 166,498.84 points against 167,451.14 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 706.019 million shares with a traded value of Rs 19,921 billion, compared to 684.901 million shares valuing Rs 21.740 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization declined to Rs18.475 trillion from Rs18.570 trillion a day earlier. Out of 484 active companies in the ready market, 155 advanced, 293 declined, and 36 remained unchanged. Bunnys Limited topped the volume chart with 115.352 million shares, followed by Trust Brokerage with 62.760 million shares and Treet Battery Limited with 56.827 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited B, which increased by Rs 119.47 to close at Rs 18,797.00, and Khairpur Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 119.04 to settle at Rs 1,309.47.—APP

## Briefs

### Rubio says Cuba leaders must go as US dangles \$100 million

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that crisis-hit Cuba's leadership must change as Washington renewed an offer on Wednesday of \$100 million in aid if the communist-run island agrees to cooperate. Cuba has been suffering severe economic turmoil led by an energy shortage that plunged 65 percent of the country into darkness on Tuesday. Cuba's leaders have blamed US sanctions but Rubio, a Cuban-American and vociferous critic of the government established by Fidel Castro, said the system was to blame including corruption by the military. "It's a broken, nonfunctional economy, and it's impossible to change it. I wish it were different," he told Fox News host Sean Hannity on Air Force One as he traveled with President Donald Trump to China. "We'll give them a chance. But I don't think it's going to happen," Rubio said. "I don't think we're going to be able to change the trajectory of Cuba as long as these people are in charge in that regime." Trump - who since the start of the year has deposed Venezuela's leftist leader but less success in a war on Iran - has mused that Cuba could be next and that the United States could take over the island 145 kilometers (90 miles) off Florida. - APP

### Gwadar Varsity VC goes missing

**DNA**  
GWADAR: The Vice Chancellor of the University of Gwadar, along with his two colleagues and driver, went missing on Wednesday evening during a road blockade by unidentified armed men in Balochistan's Mastung district. Authorities fear that all four have been kidnapped. According to police, the Vice Chancellor of Gwadar University, Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir, along with Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Syed Manzoor Ahmed, Personal Staff Officer and Lecturer Dr. Muhammad Irshad and driver Adam, were travelling from Gwadar to Quetta in a car, but contact was lost before they reached Quetta. Mastung District Police Chief SP Allah Bakhsh told that 'the family contacted the administration and police after 10 pm, after which the incident came to light.'

## Anmol alias Pinky claims paying millions in 'bribe' to police monthly

**A**NMOL alias Pinky, who was arrested on charges of running a "network of drug supply," revealed during the initial investigation that she used to pay hundreds of thousands of rupees monthly to different police stations of Karachi as a bribe, sources told Geo News. The suspect is currently on physical remand and is being investigated by the police on charges related to drug trafficking. During preliminary investigation, Anmol revealed that she was involved in the sale of narcotics worth more than Rs20 million per month in Karachi, the sources said. According to the statement attributed to her, the suspect revealed that drugs were being transported from Lahore using intercity bus services. When her original identity card was blocked, she opened a bank account under the name of another person. The sources added that drug-related payments were made and received through mobile applications, and that another bank account was opened under the name "Zeeshan" for financial transactions. - APP

## Independence Day of Azerbaijan

# Pak, Azerbaijan cooperation touching new horizons: Gilani

*Ambassador Khazar highlighted practical milestones, including direct flights operating up to 11 times a week, which have boosted tourism, trade, and people-to-people connections*



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani termed relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan as exemplary adding both countries have cooperated with each other on various forums. He expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of Independence Day of Azerbaijan, as the chief guest. Prominent figures, federal ministers including Aleem Khan, Musadaq Malik, Salik Hussain, Shaza Fatima, Azam Nazir Tarar, Tariq Fatemi, Maryam Aurangzeb, Deputy Speaker National Assembly and others attended the event. The Chairman Senate further said that Pakistan wants to have cordial relations with Azerbaijan adding both countries have huge scope to further diversify their relations. He

appreciated leadership of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev whose visionary leadership had made Azerbaijan a strong country. Chairman Senate Gilani said that he had the opportunity to hold several meetings with the President of Azerbaijan and parliamentary leaders, during which bilateral relations, parliamentary cooperation, and coordination at international forums were discussed in detail. He added that the two countries share close understanding and common values at international platforms such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly. In his address, Ambassador Khazar Farhadov welcomed dignitaries, colleagues, media representatives, and distinguished guests, extending warm greetings. He described May 28, 1918, as a landmark date when the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic

was established - the first secular republic in the Muslim East. "Today, we proudly celebrate the 108th anniversary of Azerbaijan's independence and the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on May 28, 1918," Ambassador Farhadov stated. He noted that within a short time, the first republic established a parliament and government, defined its borders, adopted state symbols, and carried out significant state-building reforms while actively engaging in international relations. Although the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic lasted only 23 months, it left an enduring legacy of democratic values and national statehood that continues to inspire the nation today. As the legal successor to the 1918 republic, Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991. A significant portion of the speech was dedicated to the brotherly relations between

Azerbaijan and Pakistan. Ambassador Farhadov described the ties as an "exemplary partnership founded upon mutual trust, solidarity, and unwavering support." "Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence on December 12, 1991, with diplomatic relations formally established on June 9, 1992. The two nations have consistently supported each other both bilaterally and in international forums, particularly during Azerbaijan's period of occupation and its subsequent liberation and reconstruction efforts. Today, cooperation spans political dialogue, trade and investment, defense, tourism, education, and cultural exchange. High-level visits and engagements have intensified, reflecting strong political will at the leadership level. G2G, B2B, and P2P contacts are expanding rapidly.

## UN says can feed a million more Afghan children

KABUL: The United Nations could feed a million additional children at risk of malnutrition in Afghanistan if the country's conflict with Pakistan and the Iran war had not inflated prices and transport costs, a senior official told AFP. Afghanistan saw a record rise in malnutrition cases in 2025, following a deadly earthquake, climate disasters, and the return of millions of Afghans expelled from Iran and Pakistan. "It is a nutrition crisis here in Afghanistan," Carl Skau, Deputy Executive Director of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), told AFP. "The surge last year was the worst we've ever seen. It's worse this year." The WFP estimated in January that five million women and children in Afghanistan, out of a population of more than 40 million, will experience a life-threatening level of malnutrition this year. Afghanistan's ongoing conflict with its neighbor Pakistan has led to a near-total border closure for around eight months. Along with the global economic fallout from the Iran war, that has driven up prices for food and fuel and disrupted the supply chains needed to deliver them. "If we weren't struggling with the supply chain, both delays and costs, we would be able to feed a million more children here in Afghanistan," Skau said. He cited the example of thousands of tons of fortified biscuits meant for Afghan schoolchildren, which the WFP had planned to send into the country via Pakistan. - APP

## Japanese oil ship passes through Hormuz

**DNA**  
TOKYO: A Panama-flagged crude oil tanker managed by Japanese refining group Eneos has passed through the Strait of Hormuz, ship-tracking data from LSEG showed on Thursday, the second instance of such a Japan-linked ship making it through. Before the US-Israeli war on Iran largely disrupted oil supplies via the Strait of Hormuz, Japan relied on the Gulf for about 95 percent of its oil imports. The Eneos-managed tanker is carrying 1.2 million barrels of Kuwait crude and 700,000 barrels of Emirati Das Blend oil loaded in late February, Kpler data showed. The vessel is expected to arrive in Japan on June 3, according to Kpler. It was not immediately clear under what arrangements the tanker sailed through the Strait. Eneos, Japan's biggest refining group, declined to comment. Tokyo has stepped up diplomatic efforts since the conflict, and switched to alternatives to partially substitute for the lost barrels, while holding down domestic fuel prices with massive government subsidies. The latest passage through the Strait follows one in late April by the Idemitsu Maru, carrying Saudi oil and managed by a unit of Japanese refiner Idemitsu Kosan. Idemitsu, Japan's second biggest oil refining group.

## Iran and UAE clash at Brics ministers' meeting

Chinese FM Wang Yi did not attend the conference because of Trump visit to Beijing

**DNA**  
NEW DELHI: Foreign ministers from the BRICS nations began a two-day meeting in New Delhi on Thursday as the expanding bloc faces divisions over the war in Iran, rising energy prices and growing global economic uncertainty. The meeting brings together diplomats from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa along with newer member countries. It comes as the war in Iran has disrupted global energy supplies and driven up oil prices and coincides with U.S. President Donald Trump's meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Russia's top diplomat Sergey Lavrov are attending. China is represented by Ambassador Xu Feihong while Foreign Minister Wang Yi remains in the Chinese capital during Trump's visit. India Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said the talks would focus on global and regional challenges and ways to deepen cooperation among member nations. In opening remarks, Jaishankar said BRICS could help developing countries more effectively respond to the health

and financing challenges they face as well as high prices for energy, food and fertilizer. "We meet at a time of considerable flux in international relations," he said, adding that emerging and developing countries increasingly expect BRICS to play a "constructive and stabilizing role." At the meeting, Araghchi urged BRICS nations to condemn the US and Israel over what he called their "unlawful aggression" against Tehran. He called on the bloc members and other countries to "take practical steps to stop warmongering" and end what he described as impunity for violations of the U.N. Charter. Araghchi also urged the bloc members to stop what he called the politicization of international institutions. He said Iran appreciated the support shown by BRICS countries but called for stronger action. "It is necessary for all of us to intensify our efforts to end this sense of superiority and impunity on the part of the United States - a notion that has no place in today's world," he said. Founded by Brazil, Russia, India and China, BRICS was formed as a grouping of major emerging economies seen as a counterbalance to Western-led institutions such as the G7. South Africa joined in 2010 and the bloc expanded further in 2024 with the addition of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Indonesia became a full member in 2025. The group has sought to expand its influence by pushing for a bigger role in a global order long dominated by the United States and its Western allies.

## Senior RSS leader, ex-Indian army chief back dialogue with Pakistan

**I**NDIA should keep diplomatic channels with Pakistan open, says RSS leader; former army chief backs his remarks. A senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader and a former Indian army chief have advocated maintaining open channels of dialogue with Pakistan, a stance that has drawn strong criticism from opposition parties, especially the Congress. RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale, considered the organisation's second-most senior leader, told news agency PTI that India should continue diplomatic engagement with Pakistan. "India should always be ready to engage in dialogue with Pakistan. That is why diplomatic relations are maintained, trade and commerce continue, and visas are being given. So we should not stop these, because there should always be a window for dialogue." The RSS, also known as the Sangh, is a right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary organisation seen as the ideological guiding force behind the BJP. Referring to past diplomatic efforts, Hosabale cited former Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's outreach to Pakistan, including his Lahore bus visit, as an example of engagement despite tensions.

"Everything has been tried, but more such efforts should continue. Atal ji tried to engage them in dialogue. He went to Lahore by bus, and many things have happened. [Modi] also invited Pakistan at the time of taking oath," Hosabale said. Hosabale's sentiments were echoed by ex-Indian army chief, Manoj Mukund Naravane, who told the media on Wednesday: "People-to-people connections and contacts are very important. Common people live on both sides of the border and face similar problems in daily life." Naravane said that when friendship develops between people of two countries, it helps improve relations as well. India and Pakistan relations have remained largely frozen in recent years, with diplomatic engagement stalled. The two neighbouring countries have also experienced border skirmishes and a brief 87-hour conflict last year. In May 2025, Pakistan, during the 87-hour conflict, downed eight Indian fighter jets, including four French-made Rafale, one Su-30 aircraft, one MiG-29 aircraft, one Mirage 2000 aircraft, and one "expensive" multi-role unmanned aerial system as well as dozens of drones. - APP

## Ali Pervaiz Malik Thanks Qatar for Providing LNG Cargoes



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Ali bin Mubarak Al-Khater, at the Petroleum Division. The primary purpose of the meeting was to express Pakistan's gratitude to the State of Qatar for its timely facilitation in ensuring LNG supplies and to further strengthen coordination for future energy cooperation especially around strategic storages. During the meeting, the Federal Minister thanked the State of Qatar for its continued support in providing LNG

cargoes at a critical time when Pakistan was facing challenges due to congestion in Strait of Hormuz & peaking summer power demand. He noted that Pakistan greatly values Qatar's cooperation, which reflects the strong brotherly ties between the two countries. The Minister shared that he remained in constant contact with Qatar's Minister of Energy, H.E. Mr. Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, and coordinated closely regarding LNG vessels. As a result of these efforts, two LNG cargoes have successfully reached Pakistan. The Minister stated that Pakistan will continue to coordinate closely with Qatar to ensure uninterrupted LNG supplies. He emphasized that Pakistan's preference is to secure supplies from friendly brotherly countries through necessary approvals, without risking any loss of life or property. He added that efforts are underway to secure additional gas supplies in view of national energy requirements. H.E. Ali bin Mubarak Al-Khater reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering support for Pakistan and stated that the State of Qatar has directed him to extend all possible facilitation to Pakistan in meeting its energy needs. He said this reflects the deep-rooted relationship between the leadership of the two brotherly nations. The Ambassador also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's mediation efforts and its constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region. - APP

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