

# Islamabad POST

Saturday, May 16, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Pakistan welcomes Chinese investors to Pakistan: PM**

Detailed News On Page-08

**British PM being asked to step down**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Pak, Tajikistan pledge to cement relations**

Detailed News On Page-03

## Paul Kapur meets minister

# Govt seeks early launch of Pak-US direct flights: Naqvi

Pakistan-US ties have become stronger during President Trump's tenure, says interior minister

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday said that the government sought the early launch of direct flights between Pakistan and the United States, emphasising that ties between the two nations are based on mutual trust and bilateral cooperation. The security czar made the remarks during a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Paul Kapur, where they discussed bilateral ties and the latest developments in the Middle East, the interior ministry said in a statement.

US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A Baker, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, and other officials also attended the meeting. During the huddle, Naqvi said that Pakistan-US relations have become stronger during President Donald Trump's tenure. Naqvi and Kapur also discussed enhancing cooperation in security, counterterrorism and counternarcotics sectors, with the interior minister saying that security for US companies working on the Reko Diq project had been ensured.

The security czar said that Pakistan remained hopeful for a lasting and peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict. In response, Kapur praised Pakistan's role in promoting peace and stability in the region. Naqvi's remarks on direct flights between Pakistan and the US follow the resumption of Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) direct flights to London after a six-year hiatus earlier this year. The airline confirmed the development on March 29, saying that the inaugural flight departed from Islamabad. It added that direct flights will also operate from Lahore to London. Days prior to that, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif asserted that the nation will "soon witness the expansion of PIA fleet and revival of its network of direct flights" to more destinations in the UK, Europe, and Canada. "Our government is also working closely with

Continued on Page 06

## India signs agreements with UAE

DNA

ABU DHABI: India and the United Arab Emirates agreed on the framework for a strategic defence partnership on Friday during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Gulf nation, the Indian foreign ministry said, as they seek to deepen ties amid the Iran war. India and the UAE also signed pacts on strategic petroleum reserves and supply of liquefied petroleum gas, the ministry said in a statement. Ahead of Modi's visit, Indian sources told Reuters that the prime minister was likely to discuss long-term energy supply deals with his hosts and also seek support to expand New Delhi's strategic oil reserves. The UAE's decision last month to leave Opec is expected to boost its output and help importing countries such as India.

The US and Israeli war on Iran, now in its third month, has roiled global energy markets with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint for the flow of around 20% of global oil. It has also disrupted transportation and business across the Gulf as Iranian strikes hit Gulf countries,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Paul Kapur met with the Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. - DNA

## 9 terrorists killed as attack on army camp frustrated

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Security forces killed nine terrorists as they repulsed an attack on an army camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, official sources said on Friday. Four security personnel were also martyred during the engagement, they added. The sources said terrorists from Fitna-al-Khawarij - the state-designated term for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) - attacked the camp with explosives on Thursday night and tried to end the camp from one of the gates while firing. But, security forces responded timely and effectively, as a result of which they remained unsuccessful in their nefarious designs, the sources added. They said that according to initial reports, nine terrorists had been killed and four soldiers were martyred during the engagement. The terrorists were unable to enter the camp despite using explosives and resorting to intense firing, they said, adding that a search and clearance operation was under way at the camp. Meanwhile, injured security personnel had been taken to Peshawar for medical treatment, they said. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement. The attack has taken place just three days after a blast in KP's Lakkhi Marwat claimed the lives of nine people, including two traffic policemen. Over 30 people were also injured in the attack. Prior to that, 15 police personnel were martyred after a suicide attack on the Fateh Khel police post in KP's

Continued on Page 06

## New twist in the story

# Trump says US-Iran ceasefire agreed as 'favour to Pakistan'

Ishaq Dar confirms repatriation of Pakistanis and Iranians

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former US President Donald Trump has claimed that the United States agreed to a ceasefire understanding with Iran as a "favour to Pakistan," amid renewed diplomatic activity involving Islamabad, Tehran, Washington and Beijing.

Trump, speaking during a media interaction, also stated that Chinese President Xi Jinping wants Iran to "open up" the Strait of Hormuz to ensure uninterrupted global energy supplies and ease tensions in the Gulf region. His remarks came at a time of growing international concern over regional stability and maritime security in one of the world's most critical oil shipping routes. Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had "received messages" from the United States indicating Washington's

Continued on Page 06

## Trump leaves Beijing with few wins, many warm words for Xi

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: US President Donald Trump departed China on Friday touting business deals that gave markets little to cheer, while Beijing warned Washington about mishandling Taiwan and said its war with Iran should never have started. Trump's visit to America's main strategic and economic rival, the first by a US president since his last trip in 2017, had aimed for tangible results to beef up his dented approval ratings ahead of crucial midterm elections.

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Shazia speaks on viral video clip

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: PPP MNA and spokesperson Shazia Marri said on Friday that one instance of interaction between two people who had worked closely for several years "cannot be viewed in isolation", after a video clip of PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari curtness with her went viral on social. The incident took place at a press conference after the PPP's parliamentary party meeting at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Thursday. During the press briefing, a journalist asked Bilawal for his views on ministers in the federal government suggesting that education, health and other subjects.

### India raises fuel prices for the first time

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's state-run fuel retailers have raised petrol and diesel prices for the first time in four years by 3 Indian rupees (\$0.03) per litre, or more than three per cent, according to dealers, to recoup some of the losses incurred due to higher global crude oil prices. India - the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer - is one of the last major economies to raise retail fuel prices following the disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz by the war started by US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

### Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

## UAE moves to expand oil exports beyond Hormuz

According to international media reports, Abu Dhabi has directed the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to fast-track the West-East Pipeline project, which is expected to double the UAE's export capacity through Fujairah by 2027

DNA

DUBAI/TEHRAN: The United Arab Emirates has announced plans to accelerate a major oil pipeline expansion project aimed at bypassing the Strait of Hormuz and significantly increasing crude exports through the strategic port of Fujairah, amid rising tensions in the Gulf and continued uncertainty surrounding Iran-US negotiations.

According to international media reports, Abu Dhabi has directed the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to fast-track the West-East Pipeline project, which is expected to double the UAE's export capacity through Fujairah by 2027. The project is designed to reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints. The UAE already operates the Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline (AD-COP), capable of transporting around 1.8 million barrels of crude oil per day directly to Fujairah on the Gulf of Oman, bypassing the Strait entirely. However, recent regional

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan-led mediation in difficult phase: Araghchi

CENTRELINE REPORT

IRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said that "contradictory messages" from the United States are complicating ongoing diplomatic efforts and peace negotiations. Araghchi criticized what he described as inconsistent signals from Washington regarding regional de-escalation and future talks. The Iranian foreign minister also reiterated Tehran's position on the Strait of Hormuz, warning that all vessels transiting the waterway must cooperate with Iranian naval authorities.

Continued on Page 06

# Pakistan, Bangladesh eye major defense pact


Pakistan and Bangladesh have shown signs of improving ties through diplomatic exchanges, trade discussions, and renewed political engagement.

NEWS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a potentially significant development for South Asian diplomacy, reports circulating in diplomatic and regional media circles suggest that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir are expected to undertake a three-day official visit to Bangladesh shortly after the anticipated China visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. According to the reports, the proposed high-level visit could mark a major breakthrough in bilateral relations between Islamabad and Dhaka, which have remained cautious for decades despite recent efforts to rebuild trust and cooperation. Sources familiar with the matter claim that several agreements and memorandums of understanding are likely to be signed during the visit, covering trade, connectivity, investment, cultural exchanges, and security cooperation. However, neither Islamabad nor Dhaka has officially confirmed the visit or the contents of the reported agreements so far. The most significant aspect of the reported discussions

is said to be a large-scale defense cooperation framework between the two countries. Under the proposed arrangement, Pakistan's military establishment would reportedly assist in the modernization of the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory (BOF), enabling it to manufacture sophisticated military hardware including drones, missile systems, ammunition, and advanced defense equipment. Analysts view the reported development as part of broader geopolitical realignments taking place in South Asia amid intensifying strategic competition in the region. The possible expansion of defense cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh is likely to attract attention from regional stakeholders, particularly due to Bangladesh's growing strategic importance and expanding defense modernization programs. Observers also believe that the timing of the reported visit - immediately following Tarique Rahman's expected China trip - could indicate increasing trilateral strategic coordination involving Beijing, Islamabad, and Dhaka on economic and defense matters.


Continued on Page 06




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## KP govt reviews province-wide monsoon contingency plan

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Friday chaired a meeting on the monsoon contingency plan and reviewed preparedness measures across the province. He directed all departments to complete pre-monsoon arrangements, ensure 24/7 functioning of emergency operation centers, and finalize vulnerability mapping, SOP trainings, and mock exercises by June 15. The meeting was informed that monitoring of glacial lakes, rivers, and rainfall is underway, while major progress has been made in cleaning drains and drainage lines across the province. The Chief Minister also ordered faster flood protection works, removal of encroachments, and readiness of rescue equipment, boats, and water pumps. Rescue 1122 has finalized its contingency plan and established water rescue points at various locations. Authorities were directed to ensure availability of medicines, tents, relief goods, and emergency machinery before the monsoon season. Tourism monitoring has also been intensified in Swat, Kaghan, Galiyat, Chitral, and Kumrat. The Chief Minister emphasized that delays in rescue operations during emergencies would not be tolerated.—DNA

## Punjab to ensure tight security during Eid, Muharram

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister and Chairman Cabinet Committee on Law and Order Khawaja Salman Rafique on Friday said that robust security arrangements would be ensured across the province on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, adding that illegal organisations would not be allowed to collect sacrificial skins. He was presiding over a meeting of the Provincial Intelligence Committee held at the Home Department to review the law and order situation and security arrangements for Eid-ul-Azha and Muharram-ul-Haram. During the meeting, Home Secretary Dr. Ahmed Javed Qazi briefed participants on the latest law and order situation across Punjab. Representatives of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Special Branch and other law enforcement agencies also attended the meeting, while all commissioners and Regional Police Officers (RPOs) joined through video link. Khawaja Salman Rafique said that the law and order situation in the province was satisfactory and comprehensive security measures were being finalised for Eid-ul-Adha. He said instructions had been issued for the prompt disposal of applications related to the collection of sacrificial skins. He reiterated that illegal organisations would not be permitted to collect sacrificial hides and said strict monitoring would be carried out in this regard. The meeting also reviewed security arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram. Khawaja Salman Rafique said the role of religious scholars and peace committees was vital in maintaining peace and harmony during the holy month. Home Secretary Dr. Ahmed Javed Qazi said the Punjab government was making comprehensive security arrangements for both Eid-ul-Azha and Muharram-ul-Haram.—APP

# UNODC, EU mark handover of PMI system in Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Balochistan, with technical support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under the European Union (EU) funded 'Deliver Justice Project', formally marked the handover of the Prison Management Information System (PMIS) to the Balochistan Prison Department during a high-level ceremony held in Islamabad today. PMIS is a landmark digital transformation initiative that has modernised prison administration across 13 facilities in Balochistan including 11 prisons and the offices of the IG and DIG Prisons, into a secure, centralised and integrated digital platform. The system streamlines inmate and case management, improves coordination with courts and law enforcement agencies, enhances reporting and transparency, and supports evidence-based decision-making across the corrections sector in Balochistan. A core achievement of the initiative is its alignment with the Nelson Mandela Rules, and international best practices promoting human rights-based, accountable and dignified prison management practices. The initiative marks significant step towards an integrated criminal justice system in Balochistan. Highlighting the EU's continued support to rule of law reforms and institutional strengthening in Pakistan, Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan highlighted that the "PMIS has been provided through the EU funded 'Deliver Justice Project' which has produced a remarkable number of results over the past 5 years in a very broad number of areas from helping to increase the number of women in the Police forces, providing more legal aid to women, training of judges, prosecutors and police officers on human rights, to the construction of court-annexed mediation centres in both provinces, amongst many other areas. He stated that the EU remains committed to supporting citizen-centric, inclusive, and sustainable justice sector reforms in Pakistan, particularly for vulnerable communities and underserved areas." The system provides direct benefits to families and the community; a dedicated visitor management module in the PMIS reduces delays and improves transparency for families, while broader digital recordkeeping enhances public trust through safer and more accountable prison management. Speaking on behalf of the Government of Balochistan, Inspector General Prisons Balochistan Capt. (R) Abdul Saeed Naveed observed that the system has significantly improved operational efficiency, record management and coordination across prison facilities. In his keynote address, UNODC Representative Mr. Troels Vester stated that the PMIS reflects a shared commitment to modern, transparent and



human rights-compliant prison management in Pakistan. He noted that through sustained institutional support, technology transfer and capacity building, the initiative has laid the foundation for long-term sustainability and stronger coordination across the criminal justice system in Balochistan. As part of sustainability efforts, transfer of technology, training-of-trainers (ToTs), and institutional capacity-building initiatives were delivered across Balochistan which includes Prison Training Academy, an eLearning Centre at Mach, a Central Command Unit in Quetta. Additionally, training curricula and training policies were established along with dedicated human resources and budgetary allocation by the Government of Balochistan, to ensure contin-

uity, local ownership and long-term operational sustainability of the PMIS. Concluding the ceremony, Honourable Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik underscored the importance of digital reforms in strengthening Pakistan's justice sector and improving governance outcomes. He noted that with the operationalisation of PMIS in Balochistan, all four provinces of Pakistan have now transitioned towards digital prison management systems. He further acknowledged UNODC's longstanding technical support in operationalising PMIS across Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and now Balochistan, marking an important milestone towards a more integrated and modern corrections system in Pakistan.

## Pakistan's energy transition vital to combat climate change

ISLAMABAD: Amid worsening smog, rising temperatures and growing climate pressures, experts and policymakers have stressed the urgent need for Pakistan to shift towards cleaner, affordable and sustainable energy resources to secure the country's economic and environmental future. They said Pakistan could no longer rely heavily on imported fossil fuels and expensive conventional energy systems when the country possessed enormous untapped renewable energy potential, including solar, wind and hydropower resources. Speaking at a seminar on energy transition and climate resilience here Friday, they emphasized that Pakistan's long-term sustainability depended on revisiting national energy policies and adopting a modern, climate-responsive approach to energy production and consumption. The seminar was jointly organized by the Information Service Academy and the Alliance for Good Governance Foundation and brought together policymakers, energy experts, environmentalists and academics to deliberate on the country's energy transition challenges and opportunities. The experts observed that continued dependence on imported fuel had placed a severe burden on consumers, industries and the national

economy while increasing environmental degradation. They termed the prevailing energy crisis a reflection of policy failures and lack of long-term planning despite Pakistan being naturally endowed with abundant renewable energy resources. According to analysts, affordable and clean energy had become essential not only for public welfare but also for the country's economic survival, as high electricity and fuel prices had negatively affected industrial productivity, exports and business competitiveness, further widening the current account and trade deficits. The environmental experts noted that shifting toward renewable energy sources could significantly help Pakistan reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the growing impacts of climate change. They stressed that decarbonization and reduced dependence on fossil fuels were no longer optional but necessary for sustainable development. The experts noted that Pakistan, despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, remained among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. They said Pakistan's geographical position between the rapidly industrializing economies of China and India had intensified environmental pressures, particularly in

the form of transboundary pollution and smog. Renewable energy expert Dr. Muhammad Zubair, addressing the seminar, said the future of renewable energy in Pakistan held immense promise as the country simultaneously struggled to increase energy production and address climate change impacts. He said Pakistan needed to move beyond traditional methods of energy generation and adopt modern technologies capable of ensuring environmental protection, social security and industrial sustainability. Highlighting the concept of "just transition," Dr. Zubair said the approach required protecting vulnerable communities while shifting toward cleaner energy systems. He stressed that energy transition strategies must consider local realities, public ownership and inclusive participation at regional and national levels. "We need to move away from greenhouse gas-intensive economic activities through financing, policy engagement, technical support and knowledge sharing according to our national priorities," he said. Dr. Zubair said the Energy Transition Mechanism was expected to become one of the key tools for implementing Just Energy Transition Partnerships aimed at promoting international cooperation and climate financing.—DNA

## Stronger implementation of Punjab HBWs Act 2023 urged

LAHORE: Women parliamentarians, policymakers, labour rights advocates and civil society representatives have called for urgent and effective implementation of the Punjab Home-Based Workers (HBWs) Act 2023, stressing the need for social protection, registration systems and budget allocations for millions of women workers in the informal economy. The demands were made during a policy dialogue, organised by HomeNet Pakistan, which brought together Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs), representatives of the Women's Caucus, media personnel and civil society organisations to discuss challenges facing home-based workers across Punjab. According to a press release issued here on Friday, participants said home-based workers — particularly women engaged in garments, embroidery, handicrafts, stitching and food processing — continued to remain excluded from labour rights, health coverage, social security and financial inclusion despite their significant contribution to the economy. Citing findings from Punjab and national studies, speakers said Pakistan had an estimated 4.4 million home-based workers, including around 3.6 million women, while informal estimates placed the number of women workers at more than 12 million nationwide. They added that HBWs contributed nearly Rs400 billion annually, or around 3.8 per cent of the country's GDP, though their role remained largely undocumented and unrecognised.

Participants noted that although all four provinces had enacted legislation related to home-based workers, implementation remained weak due to insufficient budget allocations, poor institutional coordination, weak registration mechanisms and limited engagement of labour departments and local governments. MPAs Safia Saeed, Shagufta Faisal, Uzma Khardar, Amna Parveen, Farzana Abbas, Somia Atta, Syeda Samreen Taj, Mumtaz Begum and Fatima Begum highlighted key issues confronting women workers, including low piece-rate wages, absence of written contracts, workplace harassment, exclusion from social security and health schemes, occupational health risks, poverty, climate-related shocks and rising school dropouts forcing women and children into exploitative labour. HomeNet Pakistan Executive Director Ume Laila Azhar called for district-level registration systems, dedicated welfare and health insurance funds, and stronger coordination among labour departments, the Women Development Department, NADRA, EOBI, social welfare institutions and civil society organisations to ensure effective enforcement of laws protecting home-based workers. AWAZ Foundation Executive Director Ziaur Rehman urged women lawmakers to advocate revival of the Punjab government's discontinued 'Zewar-e-Taleem' stipend programme, saying school dropout rates had increased after its suspension.—DNA

## Centre to step in where provinces lag: Aleem

The minister reiterated that the federal government would prioritize timely completion of infrastructure projects to enhance national connectivity and transport efficiency across the country

ISLAMABAD, May 15 (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has expressed dissatisfaction over delays in key infrastructure projects and directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to accelerate work, including completing stalled schemes independently where provincial commitments have not been fulfilled. Chairing a high-level review meeting of the NHA here Friday, the minister said delays caused by provincial non-compliance were affecting progress on critical national road infrastructure and would no longer be tolerated, said a press release. He specifically highlighted that after more than five-month wait for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government regarding the Peshawar Northern Bypass, the NHA is now prepared to complete the project independently if provincial funds are not forthcoming. Furthermore, he observed that the Punjab Government has remained unable to deliver its promised share for the Rawalpindi-Kahuta project, leading to his directive that the NHA assume full responsibility for finalizing these incomplete transit corridors. In tandem with these administrative directives, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan ordered a strategic expansion of the Motorway network, mandating that the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway be widened from four to six lanes and ensuring the Sialkot-Kharian and Kharian-Rawalpindi segments are constructed as six-lane facilities. The minister emphasized the necessity of meeting strict technical and temporal benchmarks, instructing that the feasibility of all NHA projects must reach 100 percent accuracy and that the final phases of ongoing works—particularly the bridges on the Peshawar Northern Bypass must be concluded before the July monsoon season. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Communications and the Chairman NHA.—DNA

## Eco prosperity directly linked with health, edu: Gen (R) Zubair

Sardar Tahir Mehmood said while addressing health seminar at ICCI that Public-Private partnership vital to overcome health challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Patron of Sarwar Shahida Trust, Gen.(R) Zubair Mahmood Hayat, has emphasized that economic prosperity is intrinsically linked with health and education, stating that a healthy nation produces a stronger workforce, greater productivity and sustainable economic growth. He expressed these views while addressing the Sarwar Shahida Trust Cardiovascular Health Seminar held at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the chief guest. The seminar was attended by members of the business community, medical experts, social figures and representatives of civil society. Gen. Zubair Mahmood Hayat stressed that the growing burden of cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases poses a serious challenge to Pakistan's socio-economic development. He observed that Pakistan unfortunately ranks among the countries with a high prevalence of several critical diseases, which

requires urgent and coordinated efforts from both the public and private sectors. He underlined that promoting healthy lifestyles, regular medical checkups and preventive healthcare awareness among families, workplaces and communities has become the need of the hour. He further called upon philanthropists and welfare-oriented organizations to step forward and support institutions that are serving humanity in the fields of health and education. Speaking on the occasion, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted the Chamber's commitment towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. He said that ICCI firmly believes in collaborating with institutions working for the welfare of society, particularly in the sectors of healthcare, education and community development. He stated that a healthy business community is essential for economic stability and national progress, adding that awareness seminars and preventive healthcare campaigns can play an important role in reducing the growing incidence of fatal diseases. Dr.

Shoaib Sarwar Hashmi President Sarwar Shahida Trust delivered a comprehensive presentation on cardiovascular health and highlighted the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle, balanced diet, physical activity and timely medical tests to prevent life-threatening diseases. Dr. Saeed Ellahi and Dr. Jehanzeb Khan of Sarwar Shahida Trust also shared valuable insights and practical recommendations aimed at creating greater public awareness regarding preventive healthcare and early diagnosis. The ceremony was moderated by the ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, who also highlighted ICCI's contributions towards social welfare and public awareness initiatives. Among others present on the occasion were Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, former ICCI President Zahid Maqbool, Executive Members Ishaq Sial, Zulqurnain Abbasi and Malik Abdul Aziz, former Senior Vice President Naveed Malik, ICCI senior members Israr ul Haq Mishwani, Dr. Usman, Rizwan Chhena, Babar Chaudhry, Sarwar Shahida Trust's Mian Asmatullah and Ms. Nina Khan Mashriqi.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

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

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



### Enquiry

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



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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CDA.....9208301-04
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Islamabad.....0321-5744480
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# Pakistan, Tajikistan pledge to cement relations

The ambassador remarked that the people of Pakistan and Tajikistan shared deep historical, cultural and civilizational roots despite being separated by borders. Dr. Musadik Malik reaffirmed the strong brotherly ties between the two countries and expressed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Tajikistan on Thursday underscored the need for enhanced regional cooperation to address shared environmental challenges, including climate change, glacial melt, water management and wildlife conservation. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Masood Malik and Tajik Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda in Islamabad. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual cooperation in the fields of climate change, water, wildlife protection and regional connectivity. The discussions particularly focused on the upcoming 4th High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028), scheduled to be held in Dushanbe, where Dr. Musadik Malik expected to represent the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda said Pakistan and Tajikistan shared many geographical and environmental similarities, noting that both countries host nearly 13,000 glaciers each and have already lost around 1,000 glaciers due to the impacts of climate change and the passage of time. He stressed the need for stronger regional collaboration to tackle the growing environmental threats posed by glacial melt. The ambassador further highlighted that several protected wildlife species, including markhor, snow leopards, ibex and various migratory birds, were found in both countries. He said Tajikistan had established protected valleys and



conservation zones for the preservation of these species and emphasized the importance of joint cooperation between the two countries in wildlife protection, including through formal agreements and memorandums of understanding. Dr. Musadik Malik said energy, water and climate were intrinsically interconnected and emphasized that regional countries must work together to address shared environmental challenges. He expressed Pakistan's interest in

strengthening cooperation with Tajikistan in the fields of climate resilience, water management, wildlife conservation and sustainable development. The minister also expressed interest in establishing a regional corridor between Pakistan and Tajikistan focused not only on climate and wildlife cooperation but also on enhancing broader trade and regional connectivity. During the discussion, Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda also spoke about the potential for future

collaboration in utilizing regional weather patterns and innovative solutions aimed at improving water and climate management. The ambassador remarked that the people of Pakistan and Tajikistan shared deep historical, cultural and civilizational roots despite being separated by borders. Dr. Musadik Malik reaffirmed the strong brotherly ties between the two countries and expressed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation.

## IRSA releases 159,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 159,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 162,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1452.49 feet which was 52.49 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 59,600 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1163.60 feet, which was 113.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 40,000 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 121,900, 74,000, 59,200, and 15,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 38,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 10,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Solution to reserve medical seats issue for Balochistan soon

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Mustafa Kamal on Friday informed the Senate that the government was working on a permanent solution to resolve the recurring issue of reserved medical seats for students from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Responding to a question during Question Hour, the minister said the issue had surfaced repeatedly over the years due to the absence of a long-term mechanism. He said that some 194 seats were allocated during 2017-18 and again in 2018-19, while no seats were granted during 2019-23. He said 333 seats were later allocated during 2023-24 and the same number was maintained in 2024-25 after the present government assumed responsibility. Mustafa Kamal said the matter had also reached the Supreme Court, which ordered the provision of 194 seats for one year. He said the government later decided to establish a permanent arrangement by creating 333 seats in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so that students from both provinces would not face the same issue every year. The minister said the Health Ministry and PMDC had repeatedly written letters to provincial governments, colleges and universities in both provinces, urging them to obtain the required permissions and complete the process for regularisation of the seats. However, he regretted that despite repeated correspondence over the past year, the provincial authorities had shown little interest in pursuing the matter. Mustafa Kamal said the federal government was ready to facilitate both provinces by expediting inspections.—DNA

## Abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir slammed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Victoria Schofield, a renowned British historian was speaking at a high-level policy discussion titled "Jammu and Kashmir Dispute: Navigating Pathways to Peace" organized by Institute of Regional Studies, in collaboration with Youth Forum for Kashmir. Addressing the constitutional developments of 5 August 2019, Ms. Schofield observed that the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, combined with heavy militarization and communication restrictions, had intensified alienation in the Kashmir Valley and reinforced demands for self-determination. She stressed for an inclusive political process involving the genuine representation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

While referring to prospects of peace in the region she remarked that "the future is not in the rigidity of nation states, but the fluidity of cross-cultural and regional communication. To achieve peace in Jammu and Kashmir, dialogue must replace hostility". She stressed that any durable resolution

of the dispute must be grounded in on-ground realities rather than rigid cartographic claims. She highlighted the strategic implications of the China dimension, particularly regarding Aksai Chin and the legacy of the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, emphasizing that excluding China from analytical and diplomatic considerations would weaken any meaningful settlement framework. Tracing the historical evolution of the dispute from the 1948-49 war to the post-Simla Agreement Line of Control, Ms. Schofield noted that while territorial realities have remained largely static, the strategic environment has transformed significantly due to nuclearization, technological developments, and geopolitical competition. She warned that rapid military mobilization, misinformation, and escalatory rhetoric in a nuclearized environment increase the risk of miscalculation and wider regional confrontation. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President Institute of Regional Studies, while acknowledging fragility of 'ceasefire' between India and Pakistan, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Kashmir cause, grounded in the principles of justice,

human rights, and the right to self-determination. The discussion also featured remarks from Senator Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur, who emphasized that Pakistan and India, bound by geography and history, cannot remain perpetual adversaries. She called for peaceful coexistence, warning that another war between two nuclear-armed states would have catastrophic consequences for South Asia. Lt Gen Asif Yasin Malik described Kashmir as the central issue driving tensions between Pakistan and India, arguing that sustainable peace is impossible without addressing the core dispute. Prominent Kashmiri voices at the event emphasized the importance of self-determination, narrative-building, and inclusive peace processes. Participants also highlighted the growing importance of information warfare, strategic communication, and media narratives in shaping international perceptions of Kashmir. Several speakers called for stronger intellectual and diplomatic engagement to counter misinformation and ensure that the lived experiences of Kashmiris are not marginalized.

## NHA marks Pak-China ties with tree plantation campaign

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority (NHA) marked the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations with simultaneous tree plantation ceremonies held across its regional offices. It was aimed at highlighting the longstanding friendship and shared commitment to environmental sustainability between the two countries. Gwadar Pro in its report, quoting an official statement, stated on Friday that the commemorative activities were organized in compliance with directives issued by the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the NHA headquarters in Islamabad. In Sukkur, a ceremonial tree was planted at the premises of the NHA Regional Office by General Manager Maintenance Sindh-North Muhammad Hussain Shah. The ceremony was attended by other officials. A similar event was held at the NHA West-Zone Regional Office in Quetta, where Member West-Zone Basharat Hussain led the plantation drive. At the NHA Regional Office (M-5) in Multan, General Manager (M-5) Kashif Nawaz planted a commemorative tree along with Deputy Director Maintenance M-5 and staff members to mark the occasion. Meanwhile, the NHA M-4 Office in Faisalabad organized a plantation ceremony within the NHA complex under the supervision of General Manager (Maintenance) M-4 Khawar Waqar. A commemorative plaque was also installed beside the planted tree to symbolize the enduring partnership between Pakistan and China. Addressing the gathering, Khawar Waqar said the tree plantation symbolized renewal, continuity and confidence in the future, reflecting the deeply rooted and forward-looking relationship between Pakistan and China over the past 75 years. He added that the initiative also represented environmental responsibility and a shared commitment to future generations. In Lahore, the NHA Central Zone also observed the occasion with a tree plantation ceremony at the NHA Regional Office. Member Central Zone Iftekhar Ahmed Sajid planted the ceremonial tree in the presence of several other officials.—DNA

## Work on Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway to begin this year

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday informed the Senate that construction work on the long-awaited Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway would begin this year adding that approval has already granted for three out of its five sections and the tendering process underway. Responding to a question raised by Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan during the Question Hour, the minister said the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway project had been divided

into five sections stretching from Sukkur to Hyderabad. He said that approval for three sections had already been completed, while the tendering process had also started, expressing hope that practical construction work would begin by August or September this year. The minister said the government was focusing on improving road infrastructure despite financial constraints and declining allocations under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). He said

there were currently 109 toll plazas operational across the country and directives had been issued not to keep toll plazas active on roads that were in poor condition until rehabilitation work was completed. Abdul Aleem Khan said toll revenue was essential for maintaining existing roads and constructing new highways, adding that the National Highway Authority (NHA) had generated significant revenue through toll collection to support infrastructure projects.—APP

## Mushaal inaugurates NHSD cultural, craft festival

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Peace and Culture Organisation and former SAPM on Human Rights & Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, inaugurated the grand Cultural & Craft Festival organized by Network for Human and Social Development (NHSD) and praised the organization's efforts toward women empowerment, children's education, disaster relief management, technical vocational training, and economic upliftment. The vibrant festival featured diverse cultural and philanthropic stalls representing Kashmir, Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Kashmiri paper mache art, embroidered handicrafts, traditional cloth-

ing, food stalls, women-led startups, and products developed by emerging entrepreneurs from across Pakistan, said a press release here on Friday. The event also included free medical eye camps and participation from several renowned welfare organizations. Organizers shared that proceeds from the stalls would contribute toward charitable and humanitarian initiatives undertaken by NHSD. Addressing the ceremony, Mushaal Hussein Mullick congratulated NHSD for creating a platform that beautifully merged culture, compassion, entrepreneurship, and social welfare. She emphasized that empowering women through education, vocational opportunities, and economic independence is essential for the future development and stability of Pakistan. Mushaal Hussein

Mullick was also presented with an award in recognition of her services for women empowerment, human rights advocacy, and social welfare. During her speech, she paid tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his leadership and vision during Marqa e Haq and highlighted the importance of national unity, resilience, and humanitarian values in strengthening Pakistan's future. She also spoke about the ongoing humanitarian suffering in Kashmir and reiterated her appeal for the release of jailed Kashmiri leader Mohammad Yasin Malik and other political prisoners through the Awami Rabta Mohim. She stated that peace, justice, cultural harmony, and social empowerment must go hand in hand to build a stronger and more compassionate Pakistan.

## More than 100 poles under Gwadar safe city project

ISLAMABAD: Under the modern surveillance system, government has started to install more than 100 towers and poles at various important and busy locations of the city for the installation of Safe City cameras in Gwadar. Rapid practical progress is being made on the Gwadar Safe City project under the vision of transforming Gwadar city into a modern, safe and smart city. Safe City Project official told Gwadar Pro that the total cost of the project is about Rs 7.5 billion rupees, while under the project, a total of 760 modern cameras will be installed at 135 different important locations in the city. Through this modern surveillance system, effective surveillance of an area of about 145 square kilometers will be made possible, he added. He said that the construction of the central complex and command and control center of the Safe City project is also progressing rapidly and the project will be completed and operationalized soon so that an effective modern surveillance and security system can be activated in the city. He said that the Gwadar Safe City project is a critical need of the hour and an indispensable project for the future of the city, which will play an important role in promoting law and order, citizen safety, traffic management, business activities and investment in Gwadar. The Gwadar Safe City project is an important and historic step towards making law and order more effective in the city, preventing crime, providing a safe environment for citizens and investors, and strengthening the surveillance and security system through modern technology. This project is of exceptional importance in the context of the growing commercial, economic and international importance of Gwadar, especially in the context of the CPEC project. The main objectives of the Gwadar Safe City project include timely detection of crimes, monitoring of terrorist threats, traffic management, making emergency response effective, immediate monitoring of suspicious activities and providing support to law enforcement agencies through modern technology. The project will also significantly increase the capacity of the relevant agencies. The project is being implemented with the latest technology and surveillance systems, including high-resolution CCTV cameras, facial recognition systems, vehicle number plate recognition cameras, PTZ (Pan-Tilt-Zoom) cameras, thermal cameras, real-time monitoring systems, command and control centers, fiber optic communication networks, solar power backup systems, digital data storage and analytics systems. The Gwadar Safe City project will increase investment, tourism, business activities and international trust in the city, while the project will help develop Gwadar as a safe, modern and world-class smart port city.—DNA

## Briefs

## Ayaz seeks explanation from Finance Ministry

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday sought an explanation from the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) over the non-submission of replies to questions in the House. During the Question Hour in the National Assembly, the Speaker noted that answers to three questions related to the finance ministry had not been received and asked Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani about the matter. He directed officials of the Ministry of Finance present in the House to immediately contact the ministry and the FBR and submit a written explanation for the delay in providing the replies. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also advised lawmakers and ministers to keep their questions and answers brief during Question Hour and Calling Attention Notices so that more questions could be entertained. He urged members to limit supplementary questions to 30 seconds or one minute, while directing ministers to avoid lengthy explanations and policy statements and instead give concise and relevant answers. —APP

## Over 5,000 plots ready in I-12

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior and Narcotics Talal Chaudhry informed the National Assembly that more than 5,000 plots are now ready in Sector I-12, and the final phase of possession will be completed within the next 10 to 15 weeks. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding the inordinate delay in handing over possession of plots in Sector I-12 by the Capital Development Authority, he said the long-delayed development work in the sector had reached its final stage of completion. He admitted that the project had been under development for a long time due to multiple issues, including land possession matters, landowner compensation, and other development-related challenges. He acknowledged that the delay in Sector I-12 had persisted for years and said the concerns raised by lawmakers were justified. Responding to another question, he said temporary cattle markets are also established in suitable areas away from residential localities during Eid al-Adha to ensure proper facilities, including security and other civic arrangements for citizens. —APP

## HEC, Pakistani varsities engage Bangladeshi students

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan held Pakistan Higher Education Expo in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, under the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor, following successful exhibitions in Dhaka and Barisal aimed at promoting academic collaboration and scholarship opportunities for Bangladeshi students. As many as 20 prestigious Pakistani universities are taking part in the exhibition series, highlighting the 500 Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships for the Bangladeshi youth, said a press release received here on Friday. The University of Rajshahi hosted a detailed orientation session, conducted by HEC as part of the Pakistan Higher Education Expo. A huge number of students, parents, and general public visited the stalls, where HEC and university representatives welcomed and guided them about the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor and its various components. Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of Rajshahi Prof. Mohammad Main Uddin, who attended the session as chief guest, appreciated the initiative to strengthen academic collaboration between Pakistan and Bangladesh. He encouraged students to apply for scholarships offered by Pakistani universities and highlighted the importance of education, academic exchange, and research collaboration in promoting mutual understanding between the two countries. Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan in Bangladesh Muhammad Wasif also addressed the orientation session. —APP

## Capital opens first dedicated market for women entrepreneurs

Samina Fazil, IWCCI Founder President, described the project as a historic first for the capital, saying Islamabad had never before offered a dedicated commercial space built around women-led businesses



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad inaugurated its first marketplace in G-11 dedicated exclusively to women entrepreneurs, a step aimed at reducing gender gap in business participation, where only 1 percent of women are entrepreneurs compared to 21 percent of men. The Women Enterprise Market was inaugurated by Farah Naz Akbar, MNA and Parliamentary Secretary, at an event organised by the Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI) in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority, Metropolitan Cor-

poration Islamabad, and JazzCash. Samina Fazil, IWCCI Founder President, described the project as a historic first for the capital, saying Islamabad had never before offered a dedicated commercial space built around women-led businesses. Naima Ansari, former Vice President of the FPCCI, said marketplaces supporting scalable and sustainable growth for women entrepreneurs were long overdue. The market has been designed as a fully cashless commercial space, a significant move in a country where women's financial inclusion is below average. Imtiaz Ali, Senior Deputy Chief Manager at the SBP, said the digital pay-

ment model would help women entrepreneurs build practical financial skills and improve access to formal banking channels. JazzCash joined the initiative as technology partner, aligning with the SBP's 2024-2028 financial inclusion strategy, which seeks to reduce the banking access gender gap from 30 percent to 25 percent. The initiative comes against a backdrop of limited financing access for women-owned businesses. The 2025 WECON Policy Report found that only 3.2 percent of SME loans in 2022 went to women-led firms, while 91 percent of women remained reluctant to use institutional financing channels. SBP data shows

women own only 8 percent of Pakistan's more than 5 million SMEs. Farooq Mirza, President of 4th Pillar, said such initiatives could help women-owned businesses grow into established brands and eventually enter export markets. Ms Fazil said the market could create new income opportunities in a country where female labour force participation remains low. Farah Naz Akbar emphasized that the government is deeply committed to transitioning women-led businesses into the formal economy. Ensuring women have equal access to the legal, financial, and institutional support is necessary for national development.

## NDMA warns nationwide storms, hail and flood risk

The National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) on Friday issued a nationwide weather alert warning of thunderstorms, heavy rain and hailstorms in several parts of the country during the next 12 to 24 hours.

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) on Friday issued a nationwide weather alert warning of thunderstorms, heavy rain and hailstorms in several parts of the country during the next 12 to 24 hours. NDMA also cautioned citizens and authorities about possible flash floods, landslides and glacial lake outburst floods in northern areas amid rising temperatures. The NDMA said the prevailing weather situation is "fully in line" with forecasts and seasonal assessments issued by the NEOC three to four months ago, adding that the authority had already reviewed pre monsoon preparedness measures through a national monsoon conference convened on the directions of the prime minister. According to the advisory, strong winds, thunderstorm related rain and isolated hailstorms are expected in most parts of the country, including Islamabad, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In Punjab, rain accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms is expected in Murree, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Sialkot, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Narowal, Mandi Bahauddin, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Sahiwal and Okara. The authority said Islamabad and adjoining areas could also witness heavy rain and hailstorms at isolated locations. In Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, rainfall and thunderstorms are likely in Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Nagar, Ghizer, Diamer, Astore, Ghanche, Shigar, Kharmang, Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, Bagh, Haveli, Poonch and Rawalakot. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also expected to receive rain and gusty winds in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Swabi, Kalam, Mingora, Malakand, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Kohat, Charsadda and Dera Ismail Khan, with isolated hailstorms forecast in some districts. The NDMA further warned of thunderstorms and possible hailstorms in Sindh, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Matli, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, Tando Mohammad Khan, Thatta, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Sujawal and Jamshoro. In Balochistan, rain bearing weather systems are likely to affect Quetta, Zhob, Qila Saifullah, Qila Abdullah, Pishin, Chaman, Loralai, Khuzdar, Qalat, Mastung, Ziarat, Sibi, Barkhan, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Surab, Hub, Gwadar and Kech. The authority warned that rising temperatures in northern regions could accelerate glacier melting, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods, flash floods and landslides in mountainous areas. Citizens are advised to avoid unnecessary travel, stay away from glacial lakes and vulnerable slopes, and remain indoors during dust storms and severe weather conditions. The NDMA also cautioned that strong winds and hailstorms in southern regions could damage weak structures, solar panels and vehicles. The authority said all relevant departments and provincial administrations had been directed to remain on alert and undertake precautionary measures to deal with any emergency situation. —DNA

## Pakistan's energy transition vital to combat climate change

ISLAMABAD: Amid worsening smog, rising temperatures and growing climate pressures, experts and policymakers have stressed the urgent need for Pakistan to shift towards cleaner, affordable and sustainable energy resources to secure the country's economic and environmental future. They said Pakistan could no longer rely heavily on imported fossil fuels and expensive conventional energy systems when the country possessed enormous untapped renewable energy potential, including solar, wind and hydropower resources. Speaking at a seminar on energy transition and climate resilience here Friday, they emphasized that Pakistan's long-term sustainability depended on revisiting national energy policies and adopting a modern, climate-responsive approach to energy production and consumption. The seminar was jointly organized by the Information Service Academy and the Alliance for Good Governance Foundation and brought together policymakers, energy experts, environmentalists and academics to deliberate on the country's energy transition challenges and opportunities. The experts observed that continued dependence on imported fuel had

placed a severe burden on consumers, industries and the national economy while increasing environmental degradation. They termed the prevailing energy crisis a reflection of policy failures and lack of long-term planning despite Pakistan being naturally endowed with abundant renewable energy resources. According to analysts, affordable and clean energy had become essential not only for public welfare but also for the country's economic survival, as high electricity and fuel prices had negatively affected industrial productivity, exports and business competitiveness, further widening the current account and trade deficits. The environmental experts noted that shifting toward renewable energy sources could significantly help Pakistan reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the growing impacts of climate change. They stressed that decarbonization and reduced dependence on fossil fuels were no longer optional but necessary for sustainable development. The experts noted that Pakistan, despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, remained among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. —DNA

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ing toward renewable energy sources could significantly help Pakistan reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the growing impacts of climate change. They stressed that decarbonization and reduced dependence on fossil fuels were no longer optional but necessary for sustainable development. The experts noted that Pakistan, despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, remained among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. They said Pakistan's geographical position between the rapidly industrializing economies of China and India had intensified environmental pressures, particularly in the form of transboundary pollution and smog. Renewable energy expert Dr Muhammad Zubair, addressing the seminar, said the future of renewable energy in Pakistan held immense promise as the country simultaneously struggled to increase energy production and address climate change impacts. —DNA

## IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, the electricity supply in Islamabad Circle will remain suspended from 7:00 am to 11:00 am in areas fed by Khana Dak, Burma, Waheedabad, Rehman Enclave, Khanna East, Khanna-II/Qadeer Road, Al Noor Colony, Shareefabad, Ghouri Garden, Scheme-I, Fazal Rehbar, New PTN and MG Steel feeders. In Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, the power supply will remain suspended from 6:00 am to 11:00 am in areas connected with Old Rawat, New Rawat, AOWHS, Suparco and CWO feeders. Similarly, from 7:00 am to 11:00 am, electricity will remain unavailable in areas served by New Mandra, Old Mandra, LTC, Hamid Jhangi, NPF-I, NPF-II, Doctor Town, PWD-I, PWD-II, Rehmatabad-I, Chaklala, Takbeer-I, Takbeer-II, Takbeer-III and Kot Jabbi feeders. Under Rawalpindi City Circle, the power supply will remain suspended from 6:00 am to 12:00 pm in COB Lane, Askari-XI and Cheering Cross areas, while from 7:00 am to 11:00 am outages will affect Katarian, Banni, Dhok Chaudhrian, Peshawar Road, PAF, Millatabad, NRC, Sector-IV and APHS feeders. In Attock Circle, the electricity supply will remain suspended from 7:00 am to 11:00 am in Attock Cantt, Dhoke Fateh, Dar ul Islam Colony, Katchery, Attock Rural, Teen Mela and Bagh Nelab feeders. Similarly, in Jhelum Circle, the power outages from 7:00 am to 11:00 am will affect areas linked with Hayat Sir Road, New Sanghoi, Chotala, Khai Khulia, City Housing, Sanghoi, Safdar Shaheed, Nathwal and Langar Pur feeders. —DNA

## Raids against fake, unregistered medicines

ISLAMABAD: On the instructions of Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), in collaboration with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), has launched major operation across the country against the manufacture and sale of fake and unregistered medicines. According to the Ministry of National Health Services on Friday, Regulations and Coordination on Friday, several successful operations were also conducted in Karachi between February and May 2026 against individuals involved in illegal pharmaceutical activities. The Ministry stated that 10 major joint raids were carried out during the last three months. During the operations, teams targeted networks involved in the production of illegal medicines, fake pharmaceutical factories and centres manufacturing unregistered injections. Authorities seized a large quantity of unregistered medicines, raw material of controlled drugs including Tramadol, machinery, packaging material and counterfeit brands during the raids. Several suspects were also arrested during the operations, the Ministry added. Speaking on the occasion, Mustafa Kamal said that the elimination of fake and unregistered medicines was among the government's top priorities and that no concessions would be given to elements playing with human lives. —APP

## Plan to support 65,000 students: Junaid

ISLAMABAD: The Maritime Educational Endowment Fund is being designed as a long-term financing mechanism for the maritime sector with projections indicating a potential Rs25 billion scholarship corpus over 10 years and cumulative disbursements of about Rs12 billion benefiting around 65,000 students. The matter was discussed at a meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Muhammad on Friday to review progress on the proposed fund, which aims to expand access to maritime education and support workforce development in the sector, said a press release. Junaid Chaudhry described the fund as a "self-sustaining financial platform" to deliver scholarships and strengthen capacity-building across the maritime industry. —APP

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 190

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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

## Trump vs Xi: The Clash of Two World Orders

QAMAR BASHIR

THE historic meeting between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in Beijing from 13 to 15 May 2026 is not merely another diplomatic summit. It represents a confrontation between two radically different worldviews, two competing models of global order, and two opposing philosophies about power, prosperity, and humanity's future. Behind the polished smiles, ceremonial handshakes, and carefully choreographed statements lies a deep ideological divide that may define the twenty-first century. Under Trump's leadership, the United States has embraced an uncompromising "America First" doctrine. Every alliance, every trade deal, every military commitment, and every diplomatic engagement is evaluated through a narrow national-interest lens. Washington increasingly views the world not as a shared system of cooperation but as a battlefield of transactional competition where gains for others are often perceived as losses for America. Trump's tariffs on allies and rivals alike, pressure campaigns against NATO partners, confrontational trade policies toward China, and demands that partners "pay their share" reflect this philosophy. China, under Xi Jinping, presents itself as the opposite model. Beijing repeatedly promotes the concept of a "shared future for mankind," arguing that nations rise together or fall together. China's diplomacy emphasizes infrastructure, connectivity, trade integration, and development partnerships. Xi's language consistently revolves around "win-win cooperation," multilateralism, and economic interdependence rather than military alliances or ideological confrontation. Whether one accepts China's narrative completely or not, Beijing has undeniably invested enormous resources into projecting this image globally. The clearest manifestation of China's approach is the Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013. According to estimates from institutions such as the World Bank and the Council on Foreign Relations, China's Belt and Road Initiative has involved more than 145 countries and generated infrastructure investments exceeding \$1 trillion through ports, highways, railways, power plants, industrial zones, and digital infrastructure projects. In countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, China has financed highways in Pakistan, ports in Greece, rail systems in East Africa, industrial parks in Central Asia, and renewable energy projects across the developing world. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and other Chinese-backed financial mechanisms have expanded alternatives to Western-led lending institutions. China argues that development—not military intervention—is the real foundation of peace. Supporters of Beijing's model point to measurable outcomes. Nations connected through Belt and Road projects have seen increases in trade volumes, logistics efficiency, electricity generation capacity, and industrial productivity. China's trade with Belt and Road partner countries surpassed \$3 trillion in recent years, while Chinese overseas construction contracts and investments continue



reshaping large portions of the Global South. At the technological level, China is also attempting to project itself as a provider rather than a gatekeeper. Chinese companies and research institutions have increasingly supported open-source artificial intelligence platforms, telecommunications infrastructure, and digital payment systems. Beijing frames this strategy as democratizing technology access, particularly for developing nations that cannot afford Western-controlled ecosystems. Washington, however, views China's rise through a completely different lens. Successive American administrations—especially under Trump—have increasingly defined China as America's primary strategic rival. The United States accuses China of unfair trade practices, intellectual property theft, industrial espionage, military expansion, and efforts to displace American global leadership. The rivalry is no longer limited to tariffs or trade deficits; it now spans semiconductors, artificial intelligence, rare earth minerals, cybersecurity, quantum computing, and military dominance in the Indo-Pacific. The result is a world drifting toward economic fragmentation. The United States has imposed sweeping export controls on advanced semiconductor technology destined for China and pressured allies to reduce dependence on Chinese supply chains. Beijing, in turn, has accelerated efforts toward technological self-sufficiency and diversification away from U.S.-controlled systems. Trump's return to aggressive economic nationalism has also strained America's relationships with traditional allies. European leaders increasingly speak of "strategic autonomy," seeking to reduce dependence on Washington in defense, energy, and industrial policy. Canada and parts of Europe have openly resisted aspects of U.S. trade pressure and unilateral sanctions policies. Even in the Middle East, where American influence once appeared unshakable, regional powers are diversifying partnerships toward China, Russia, and other emerging blocs. The contrast between Washington and Beijing became even sharper during recent Middle Eastern crises. China positioned itself as a diplomatic broker, most notably facilitating rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023. Meanwhile, critics argue that U.S. military interventions over the past two decades—from Iraq to Libya and beyond—have often left instability, destruction, and humanitarian crises in their wake. The United States still remains the world's strongest military and financial superpower. The U.S. dollar dominates global trade and reserves, American universities lead in innovation, and U.S. corporations remain central to the global economy. Yet the image of America as the unquestioned architect of the international order has weakened significantly. Endless wars, political polarization, debt expansion exceeding \$35 trillion, trade confrontations, and growing global resentment toward unilateral sanctions have all damaged Washington's soft power. China, meanwhile, presents itself as patient, pragmatic, and economically focused. Beijing rarely frames its rise as ideological conquest; instead, it frames it as shared prosperity. Critics, of course, accuse China of creating debt dependency, expanding authoritarian influence, and leveraging economic ties for strategic gain. Yet many developing nations still see China as a source of roads, railways, ports, energy, and financing that Western powers either ignored or conditioned heavily. The deeper issue is philosophical. Trump's America increasingly defines the world through competition and dominance.

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

## A great leap forward in Spanish-Saudi relations

Javier M. Carbajosa



Prince Faisal's visit serves several purposes. The first and most relevant is the establishment of a Strategic Partnership Council, representing the culmination of our excellent relations, which have been taken to the highest diplomatic level. The council will be the mechanism aimed at promoting coordination in areas such as political and security matters...

SAUDI Arabia and Spain culminated a long process in Madrid on Wednesday. It will be consequential for the future of bilateral relations between our two countries. The visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan constitutes a major milestone in the long-standing relationship between Spain and the Kingdom, based on friendship, cultural and historical bonds, political proximity, and the determination of both governments to address future challenges together. Prince Faisal's visit serves several purposes. The first and most relevant is the establishment of a Strategic Partnership Council, representing the culmination of our excellent relations, which have been taken to the highest diplomatic level. The council will be the mechanism aimed at promoting coordination in areas such as political and security matters, defense, transport, economy and commerce, energy, and culture. In addition, Prince Faisal and Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares signed an agreement on reciprocal visa exemptions for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports, aimed at facilitating institutional exchanges and further strengthening bilateral ties. The meeting was also a very timely opportunity for both sides to address a

number of other bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest, including the ample possibilities of EU-Gulf Cooperation Council relations. On the bilateral agenda, we need to note that significant progress has been made in areas such as security and defense, trade and investment, and cultural cooperation—let us not forget that Saudi Arabia is Spain's first commercial partner in the region. Most importantly, the meeting provided Spain with a new opportunity to convey our solidarity with Saudi Arabia after the unacceptable Iranian attacks on its territory. From a regional perspective, both Saudi Arabia and Spain are staunch defenders of multilateralism, international law and the UN Charter. More than ever, we need to stand up for these values. This is the time for de-escalating, for negotiations and for dialogue, not for war or violence, be it in Gaza, Lebanon or the Gulf. Spain considers Saudi Arabia a leading force for peace, stability and security in the region and beyond. Spain considers Saudi Arabia a leading force for peace, stability and security in the region and beyond. In our view, the Kingdom plays a crucial role in matters such as the Palestinian issue. Saudi Arabia and Spain are active members of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-

State solution and Spain recognized the state of Palestine in May 2024. Saudi Arabia's role is also relevant in terms of issues such as Lebanon, Yemen and the future of the Strait of Hormuz, with both countries supporting the need to guarantee freedom of navigation in this strategic chokepoint for global energy and trade flows. From a different angle, it is hard not to mention our admiration for the Kingdom's Vision 2030 modernization process under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi Arabia is indeed undergoing a stunning transformation and Spanish firms operating in the Kingdom are willing to continue their participation in this process. Finally, Spain has reaffirmed its support for Expo 2030 in Riyadh. As Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez did last year, Foreign Minister Albares reaffirmed this commitment on Wednesday and expressed his hope that our presence at this major event will meet the expectations of the Saudi hosts. We do not know what the future will bring, but let us walk this road together.

— Javier M. Carbajosa is the Ambassador of Spain to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Javier has also served in Pakistan as the Spanish Ambassador.

## Canada between Beijing and Washington

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



China's growing influence has accelerated this transformation. Through trade, investment and infrastructure projects, Beijing has expanded its global presence far beyond Asia. Countries that once viewed China mainly as a manufacturing centre now see it as a technological, financial and diplomatic power capable of shaping international institutions and global economic trends. For Western governments, this creates a dilemma. They remain wary of China's political system, strategic ambitions and expanding military influence. However, they also recognise that China is too important...

WHEN Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney stood beside Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing's Great Hall of the People earlier this year, the image carried more weight than the carefully scripted diplomatic language exchanged during the meeting. Only months before, Carney had publicly described China as Canada's foremost geopolitical challenge. Yet there he was, speaking warmly of partnership and welcoming cooperation in what he called a "new world order." The shift was not merely symbolic. It reflected the growing uncertainty in global politics and the difficult choices facing middle powers caught between competing giants. Canada's changing tone toward China also revealed a deeper reality: countries that once relied almost exclusively on the strategic and economic umbrella of the United States are now reassessing their options in a world increasingly shaped by rivalry, economic nationalism and geopolitical unpredictability. The immediate trigger for this reassessment came from Washington itself. Former U.S. President Donald Trump had once again unsettled allies with remarks about Canada becoming the "51st state" of America. Although many dismissed the statement as political theatre, its implications were serious. For Canadians, such rhetoric touched a sensitive nerve regarding sovereignty, identity and economic dependence. Relations between Ottawa and Washington have historically been close, but they have never been entirely free of tension. Trump's comments revived longstanding fears that Canada's overwhelming economic reliance on the United States leaves it vulnerable to pressure from its southern neighbour. For decades, Canadian foreign policy rested on a careful balance. Geography made close ties with the United States unavoidable, while diplomacy encouraged engagement with Europe, Asia and the wider international community. Canada projected itself as a moderate middle power committed to multilateralism, open trade and international cooperation. However, the global environment that sustained this approach is rapidly changing. The return of aggressive economic nationalism in the United States has created anxiety not only in Canada but across the Western alliance. Protectionist policies, trade disputes and unpredictable political rhetoric have weakened confidence in the stability of traditional partnerships. In such circumstances, even close allies are exploring alternative economic and strategic relationships. This partly explains Canada's renewed outreach toward China despite years of strained relations. The relationship between Ottawa

and Beijing deteriorated sharply after the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver in 2018 at the request of American authorities. China responded by detaining two Canadian citizens, leading to a prolonged diplomatic crisis that poisoned public opinion in both countries. Concerns over Chinese interference, cybersecurity and human rights further deepened mistrust. Yet economics often pushes states toward pragmatism. China remains one of the world's largest markets and a major trading partner for many countries, including Canada. Canadian industries ranging from agriculture to energy and education have strong interests in maintaining stable ties with Beijing. In an era of economic uncertainty, few governments can afford to ignore the opportunities presented by the Chinese market. Carney's remarks in Beijing therefore reflected realism more than ideological change. His government understands that Canada cannot entirely detach itself from China without significant economic costs. At the same time, it recognises that excessive dependence on the United States also carries risks. The result is a strategy aimed at diversification rather than alignment. This approach is not unique to Canada. Across Europe and Asia, many countries are attempting to navigate between Washington and Beijing without becoming fully dependent on either side. The emerging international environment is less rigid than the Cold War order. Instead of two clearly defined blocs, today's world is characterised by overlapping economic partnerships, strategic competition and selective cooperation. China's growing influence has accelerated this transformation. Through trade, investment and infrastructure projects, Beijing has expanded its global presence far beyond Asia. Countries that once viewed China mainly as a manufacturing centre now see it as a technological, financial and diplomatic power capable of shaping international institutions and global economic trends. For Western governments, this creates a dilemma. They remain wary of China's political system, strategic ambitions and expanding military influence. However, they also recognise that China is too important to isolate completely. The challenge lies in managing competition without allowing rivalry to escalate into open confrontation. Canada's position is especially delicate because of its deep integration with the United States. More than three-quarters of Canadian exports go to the American market. Security cooperation between the two countries is extensive and longstanding. Any major deterioration in U.S.-Canada relations would have profound consequences for the Canadian economy and national

security. Nevertheless, recent developments suggest that Ottawa is no longer willing to place all its strategic assumptions in Washington's hands. Carney's Beijing visit signalled an effort to create greater diplomatic flexibility in an increasingly uncertain world. Critics within Canada argue that engagement with China risks compromising democratic values and national security interests. They point to concerns over espionage, foreign influence and Beijing's assertive foreign policy. Supporters of closer engagement, however, contend that diplomacy requires communication even with rivals. They argue that economic cooperation and political dialogue can coexist with strategic caution. This debate reflects a broader international conversation about the future of global order. The post-Cold War period was marked by American dominance and the assumption that economic globalisation would gradually reduce geopolitical tensions. That assumption no longer holds. Great-power competition has returned to the centre of international politics, while economic interdependence has become both a source of opportunity and vulnerability. In this environment, middle powers such as Canada are searching for room to manoeuvre. They seek economic resilience without strategic isolation. They want security partnerships without complete dependence. Most importantly, they are attempting to adapt to a world where certainty is increasingly scarce. The symbolism of Carney's meeting in Beijing therefore extended beyond Canada-China relations. It highlighted the emergence of a more fragmented and fluid international landscape in which alliances remain important but are no longer unquestioned. Nations are recalibrating their policies according to shifting economic realities and political uncertainties. Whether Canada can successfully balance its ties with both Washington and Beijing remains uncertain. Much will depend on future developments in U.S.-China relations, domestic political changes within Canada and the broader trajectory of the global economy. Yet one conclusion is already evident: the era in which countries could rely on fixed assumptions about global politics is fading. As the international order undergoes transformation, states are increasingly driven by pragmatism rather than ideological certainty. Canada's diplomatic outreach to China, despite years of tension and mistrust, illustrates how rapidly geopolitical realities can reshape political choices. In a world defined by strategic competition and economic interdependence, even longstanding allies are learning to keep their options open.

## Briefs

## Govt seeks early launch of Pak-US...

FROM PAGE 01  
the aviation authority of the US to revive direct flight operations to [the] US. I wish all stakeholders a brighter future after [the] successful transformation of [the] aviation sector in Pakistan, acknowledged by all International Aviation Authorities," the defence minister wrote in a post on X.

## India signs agreements with UAE

FROM PAGE 01  
including the UAE, before a fragile ceasefire was reached last month. In January, New Delhi and Abu Dhabi signed a \$3 billion deal for India to buy LNG from the UAE, its third-largest trading partner, as well as a letter of intent to work towards forming a strategic defence partnership. In its statement on Friday, the Indian foreign government also announced UAE investments worth \$5 billion, pointing to past deals including Emirates NBD's acquisition of a 60% stake in RBL Bank last year for \$3 billion, and Abu Dhabi's IHC \$1 billion investment in Sammaan.

## Pakistan, Bangladesh eye major...

FROM PAGE 01  
In recent months, Pakistan and Bangladesh have shown signs of improving ties through diplomatic exchanges, trade discussions, and renewed political engagement. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen relations with Dhaka, while Bangladesh's evolving regional diplomacy has opened new avenues for cooperation. Defense experts say that if finalized, the proposed military-industrial collaboration could significantly boost Bangladesh's indigenous defense production capabilities while providing Pakistan an opportunity to expand its defense diplomacy footprint in the region. Despite the growing speculation, officials in both countries have yet to issue formal statements confirming the visit schedule or the details of the reported agreement.

## UAE moves to expand oil exports...

FROM PAGE 01  
instability and fears of disruptions to maritime traffic have prompted Abu Dhabi to expand its alternative export infrastructure. The move comes as tensions continue to simmer between Iran, the United States, and Israel, with growing concerns over the security of global shipping lanes in the Gulf region. Reports indicate that Fujairah and Khor Fakkan ports have been increasingly becoming the UAE's economic lifeline as trade and energy flows through Hormuz face mounting risks.

## Pakistan-led mediation in difficult...

FROM PAGE 01  
His remarks came amid heightened maritime security concerns and reports of vessel seizures and tanker movements with tracking systems switched off to avoid possible attacks. Energy analysts say the UAE's decision reflects broader Gulf concerns over the vulnerability of oil exports passing through Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supplies traditionally transit. The accelerated pipeline expansion is expected to strengthen the UAE's ability to maintain exports even during periods of regional conflict or maritime disruption. Recent shipping data and Reuters reports have shown that several UAE-linked tankers have already used unconventional routes and switched off tracking systems while moving crude shipments through the Gulf amid escalating tensions.

## Adil, Sadia Shine at SOP National Games

*Athletes from across Pakistan showcased remarkable energy, talent and determination in various track and field events during the National Games*

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Ten gold medals were decided on the second day of the Special Olympics Pakistan National Games being held under the banner of Special Olympics Pakistan (SOP) at the Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. Athletes from across Pakistan showcased remarkable energy, talent and determination in various track and field events during the National Games. The events were witnessed by SOP Chief Executive Officer Ronaq Lakhani, SOP Board of Directors member Farrukh Abbas, Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, former Vice Chairman of Special Olympics Pakistan Mahfooz Elahi, along with several other dignitaries. In the men's 400m race, KP's Basit Ali secured the gold medal with a timing of 1:01 minute, while Punjab's Muhammad Adil claimed silver and Federal Region's Muhammad Wasif took bronze. In the women's category, Sindh's Sadia Junaid won the gold medal with a timing



of 1:55 minute. Tabassum finished second with 1:59 minute, while Hajra Munir secured third place with a timing of 2:01 minute. In the F2 women's 100m race, Sindh's Saira Akram claimed gold with a timing of 20 seconds, followed by Sindh's Iman Niaz with silver at 20.37 seconds, while Punjab's Sahar Safdar won bronze with 20.45 seconds. Punjab's Adil Khan emerged victorious in the B Plus men's 100m race, winning gold with a timing of 13.98 seconds. Fellow Punjab athlete Tayyab Waleed secured silver with 14.23 seconds, while KP's Hammad Zahoor claimed bronze with 14.35 seconds. In the mini javelin throw event, Federal Region's Elishba Karim and Amreesh Karim secured first and second positions respectively, while Punjab's Sahar Safdar finished third. In the men's long jump competition, Sindh's Asif Ali won gold with a jump of 2.84 meters. Punjab's Mehboob Rasool claimed silver with 2.75 meters, while Muhammad Ahmad secured bronze with a jump of 2.74 meters

## Pakistani actor continues to build screen career in China, eyes cross-border film

*"My Chinese has improved a lot. Now I can read lines more easily and memorise them," Anees said in a recent interview. "It has helped me get better roles"*

BEIJING: Since 2022, Anees Qadir, a Pakistani actor was marking Chinese lines with Pinyin before heading to another shoot. Four years on, he says he can read most scripts more directly and has appeared in 14 Chinese film and television projects. Anees first came to China as an international student to study nautical engineering in Xi'an. Acting was not his original plan, but it gradually became his chosen path into Chinese television and film. "My Chinese has improved a lot. Now I can read lines more easily and memorise them," Anees said in a recent interview. "It has helped me get better roles." Since the 2022 interview with China Economic Net, Anees said he has appeared in eight TV dramas and six films in China, with some projects broadcast on China Central Television or released on popular streaming platforms such as iQIYI. His screen credits include the TV drama Nanyang Daughter's Love, the historical drama Ask the Vast, the TV drama Dream City and the Hong Kong action film A Mission in Danger. He said Ask the Vast, in which he portrayed historical figure M.N. Roy, was particularly meaningful.

"It was a realistic character from history, so I really enjoyed playing this role," he said. In terms of opportunities for foreign actors in China, Anees said there are chances for those who are professional, dedicated and able to stay in China for work. But actors also need to accept the uncertainty of the industry, he added. "Sometimes you may not have work for six months or even a year, and sometimes your schedule is full," he said. "You need passion, and you need to accept this reality." Anees said he still hopes to push forward a film project about Pakistan-China cooperation around the Karakoram Highway, which he mentioned during the 2022 interview. "We wrote the script according to that time, but now circumstances are different, so it definitely needs some changes," he said. As the two countries mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, Anees said he hoped screen cooperation could move beyond individual appearances to larger co-productions. "I want both countries to collaborate and make one blockbuster movie related to Pakistan-China friendship, history and culture," he said. - APP

## Pak fined, lose WTC points for slow over-rate in first Bangladesh Test

DHAKA: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has penalised Pakistan 40% of their match fee and docked eight ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow over-rate during the first Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. The sanction was imposed by the match referee, Jeff Crowe, who ruled that Pakistan were eight overs short of the required target after taking permitted time allowances into account. The charge was levelled by on-field umpires Richard Kettleborough and Kumar Dharmasena, third umpire Allahuddin Palekar, and fourth umpire Gazi Sohel. In line with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which deals with minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 5% of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. As a result, Pakistan incurred a 40% fine. Furthermore, under Article 16.11.2 of the ICC World Test Championship playing conditions, teams are penalised one point for each over short. This led to an eight-point deduction from Pakistan's World Test Championship tally. Pakistan captain Shan Masood admitted the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, meaning no formal hearing was required. - DNA

## Smooth, punctual shuttle services to Haram Pakistan earn praise

The pilgrims expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Hajj Mission and related authorities for such exemplary arrangements. Hajj Mission officials reported that nearly 60,000 to 70,000 pilgrims were benefiting from the dedicated transport system, which had been designed to ensure efficient, timely and hassle-free movement of government scheme Hujjaj to Haram Pak for their daily prayers and religious activities

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hajj Mission 2026 received immense praise from Hujjaj for its outstanding pilgrim-centered services, especially the well-organized transport system that provided timely, convenient and hassle-free travel for pilgrims performing their sacred religious duties. While speaking to PTV News channel from Saudi Arabia on Friday, the pilgrims expressed satisfaction and praised the excellent arrangements, especially the smooth and well-coordinated transport services provided for their daily journeys to Haram Pak, which greatly facilitated their religious obligations with ease and comfort. The Hujjaj remarked that "we have never seen such a better system before," adding that the transport facility worked like a train system with strict punctuality, discipline and timely departures and arrivals. The pilgrims further stated that the transportation arrangements were highly organized and reliable, allowing them to reach Haram Pak for prayers without any delay or difficulty. They appreciated both Paki-

stan and Saudi government's efforts, saying that the shuttle services were operating efficiently like a "next train" system, where every movement was scheduled and managed in a timely manner, making the overall journey peaceful and stress-free. They also highlighted that the system was far better than previous years, noting that "this time everything is timely and well-managed." According to them, the buses were available on time, routes were properly managed, and crowd control was impressive, which made their daily travel to Haram Pak smooth and comfortable. The pilgrims expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Hajj Mission and related authorities for such exemplary arrangements. Hajj Mission officials reported that nearly 60,000 to 70,000 pilgrims were benefiting from the dedicated transport system, which had been designed to ensure efficient, timely and hassle-free movement of government scheme Hujjaj to Haram Pak for their daily prayers and religious activities. - APP

## Commerce Minister meets APBUMA

*The Minister assured that the delegation that Trade and Investment Officers of Pakistan posted in US shall extend the due facilitation to the members of APBUMA participating in the Home Textile exhibition in Los Angeles to forge meaningful collaboration with the global brands and retailers*

ISLAMABAD: Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan has met All Pakistan Bedsheets and Upholstery Manufacturers Association (APBUMA) and Pledged support for Pakistan's home-textiles exports. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, accompanied by Special Secretary Commerce Syed Hamid Ali, Director General (Textile) Mudassar Raza Siddiqi, and Director General Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Arif Ullah, held a detailed meeting with a delegation of the All Pakistan Bedsheets and Upholstery Manufacturers Association (APBUMA) to discuss a broad range of matters including export marketing, branding and promotion, international market access, trade financing and the key issues being faced by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), said a release issued here on Friday. The APBUMA delegation included Former Chairman Arif Ehsan Malik, Vice Chairman Shehzad Hussein, Executive Member Shehzad Ahmad, Sadaqat Limited Awais Mukhtar, AB Exports Muhammad Ahmed, Secretary General Rao Dilshad, and Messe

Frankfurt Pakistan Office Kaleem Baig. The delegation briefed the Minister regarding the association's ongoing efforts to expand footprint of Pakistan's SMEs in international markets, and drive export growth through trade promotion initiatives. They apprised that 15-member companies of APBUMA are participating in the upcoming Home Textile Sourcing exhibition scheduled from 21 to 23 July 2026 in Los Angeles through a dedicated Pakistan's Pavilion, for which the association requested the Federal Minister to patronage the event and extend the support for targeted business-to-business engagements and productive outcomes. The delegation highlighted that the companies are participating in this exhibition through their own resources as part of private sector-led efforts to promote Pakistan's home-textiles exports, attract foreign buyers, and strengthen international commercial linkages. The Minister assured that the delegation that Trade and Investment Officers of Pakistan posted in the United States shall extend the due facilitation to the

members of APBUMA participating in the Home Textile exhibition in Los Angeles to forge meaningful collaboration with the global brands and retailers. The association further proposed bringing globally recognized exhibition platforms such as Heimtextil to Pakistan, stating that hosting such events in Pakistan would significantly enhance the country's global visibility, attract international buyers directly to local manufacturing hubs, and create long-term branding and investment opportunities for the textiles and apparel sector. Minister Jam Kamal Khan commended the private sector's proactive efforts and acknowledged that international exhibitions and direct engagement with foreign buyers are essential tools for improving country branding in the global marketplaces and expanding Pakistan's export. He further stressed the importance of actively pursuing new markets and forging meaningful international business linkages. He noted that Pakistani exporters have consistently proven themselves on the global platforms and encouraged the industry to keep building on that momen-

ment for greater penetration in existing as well as new markets. The APBUMA delegation also sought government support for international branding and promotional campaigns, stressing that more visible and consistent promotion would give Pakistani exporters a much-needed edge in high-value global markets. The delegation further highlighted financing-related issues being faced by the SMEs, including export credit risk insurance facility by the EXIM Bank of Pakistan. The meeting recognized the need for greater facilitation, particularly for SMEs seeking entry into new markets. The Minister said that, as per the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, State Bank of Pakistan along-with EXIM Bank is working to sort out all kind of financing related issues being faced by the export industries in general and the SMEs in particular. The delegation raised concerns over issues relating to yarn bags and related cost escalations, impacting exporters' competitiveness. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan took note and assured the delegation that the matter would be taken up urgently with the relevant authorities. - APP

## Trump says US-Iran ceasefire agreed as...

FROM PAGE 01  
willingness to continue diplomatic talks despite ongoing tensions and sanctions-related disputes. The development is being viewed by analysts as a possible indication of back-channel diplomacy aimed at avoiding further escalation in the Middle East. Diplomatic observers believe Pakistan has quietly played an important role in facilitating communication between regional and global stakeholders amid the evolving situation. Islamabad has maintained close ties with both Tehran and Washington while also coordinating with Beijing on regional security and economic matters. In another significant development, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced the successful repatriation of 11 Pakistani nationals and 20 Iranian citizens who had been aboard vessels seized by the United States on the high seas. Dar shared the update through a statement on X, saying all individuals were safe and in good health. "All individuals are in good health and high spirits," Dar stated, adding that the welfare of Pakistanis abroad, particularly those facing distress situations, remained the government's highest priority. According to the foreign minister, the rescued individuals had reached Bangkok from Singapore and later boarded a flight to Islamabad scheduled to arrive late at night. "Our Iranian brothers will then be facilitated to return to their homeland," Dar added, highlighting Pakistan's humanitarian coordination with Iranian authorities. The incident involving the seized vessels has not yet been fully explained publicly by US authorities, though it comes amid heightened maritime monitoring operations in regional waters linked to sanctions enforcement and anti-smuggling activities.

## Trump leaves Beijing...

FROM PAGE 01  
The summit was filled with pageantry, from grand receptions with goose-stepping soldiers to lavish banquets and private tours of a secret garden, while Trump repeatedly heaped praise on his host, commenting on his warmth and stature. "It's been an incredible visit. I think a lot of good has come of it," Trump told Xi at their final meeting at the Zhongnanhai complex, a former imperial garden housing the offices of Chinese leaders, before they dined on a menu of lobster balls and Kung Pao scallops. But just before Friday's meeting, China's foreign ministry issued a blunt statement outlining its frustration with the United States and Israel's war with Iran. "This conflict, which should never have happened, has no reason to continue," the ministry said, adding that China was supporting efforts to reach a peace deal in a war that had severely affected energy supplies and the global economy. At Zhongnanhai, Trump said the leaders had discussed Iran and felt "very similar," though Xi did not comment. Trump had been expected to urge China to use its leverage with Iran to make a deal. But analysts doubt Xi will be willing to push Tehran hard or end support for its military, given Iran's value to Beijing as a strategic counterweight to the US. A brief US summary of Thursday's talks highlighted what the White House called the leaders' shared desire to reopen the Strait of Hormuz off Iran, through which a fifth of global oil and gas once flowed, and Xi's apparent interest in American oil purchases to pare its dependence on the Middle East.

## 9 terrorists killed as attack on...

FROM PAGE 01  
Bannu district on May 9. KP has seen a rise in terrorist attacks in the past year. According to the Annual Security Report 2025 from the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), KP recorded a significant surge in violence last year as "fatalities rose from 1,620 in 2024 to 2,331 in 2025".

## Briefs

Short-term  
inflation up  
by 0.47pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation increased by 0.47 percent during the week ended on May 14, 2026 for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. According to PBS data, SPI for the week under review rose to 358.71 points as compared to 357.04 points recorded in the previous week. On year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 14.52 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 0.39 percent to 335.77 points from 334.45 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 increased by 0.42 percent, 0.39 percent, 0.44 percent and 0.52 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 items (45.10 percent) increased, 09 items (17.65 percent) decreased, while 19 items (37.25 percent) remained stable. Major increase was observed in the prices of tomatoes which rose by 22.13 percent, followed by wheat flour 4.94 percent, diesel 3.76 percent, petrol 3.73 percent, onions 2.98 percent, bananas 1.93 percent, potatoes 0.74 percent, curd 0.54 percent, fresh milk 0.48 percent and sugar by 0.46 percent. On the other hand, prices of chicken declined by 6.34 percent, followed by eggs 3.83 percent, garlic 2.20 percent, LPG 1.23 percent, pulse mash 0.63 percent, pulse gram 0.37 percent, pulse masoor 0.28 percent and pulse moong by 0.18 percent. On year-on-year basis, the SPI for the week under review increased by 14.52 percent compared to the corresponding week of last year. During the period, major increase was recorded in the prices of petrol by 64.23 percent, diesel 61.61 percent, wheat flour 57.56 percent, electricity charges for Q1 52.58 percent, onions 50.06 percent, LPG 48.34 percent and tomatoes by 40.66 percent. Prices of mutton, chilies powder, garlic, beef and bananas also increased.—APP

Gold prices  
decline by Rs  
15,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Friday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 15,500 to settle at Rs 476,862 compared to Rs 492,362 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 decreased by Rs 13,289 to Rs 408,832 from Rs 422,121, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 12,182 to Rs 374,776 against Rs 386,958. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$155 to \$4,545 per ounce from \$4,700. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola declined by Rs 972 to Rs 8,232, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs 833 to Rs 7,057. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$9.72 to \$77.48 per ounce.—APP

Rupee gains 01  
paise against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.61 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.62. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.05 and Rs 279.70, respectively.

The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 1.99 and closed at Rs 324.24 from the previous day's close of Rs 326.23, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise to close at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 4.11 and closed at Rs 372.29 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.40. The exchange rate of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise each to close at Rs 75.85 and Rs 74.24, respectively.—APP

Jam pledges support for  
Pak's home-textiles exports

Reaffirming the government's support for export-led growth, the Minister said Ministry of Commerce remains committed to working closely with industry stakeholders to remove bottlenecks, improve competitiveness, and strengthen Pakistan's position in international trade.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan has met All Pakistan Bedsheets and Upholstery Manufacturers Association (APBUMA) and Pledged support for Pakistan's home-textiles exports. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, accompanied by Special Secretary Commerce Syed Hamid Ali, Director General (Textile) Mudassar Raza Siddiqi, and Director General Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Arif Ullah, held a detailed meeting with a delegation of the All Pakistan Bedsheets and Upholstery Manufacturers Association (APBUMA) to discuss a broad range of matters including export marketing, branding and promotion, international market access, trade financing and the key issues being faced by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), said a release issued here on Friday. The APBUMA delegation included Former Chairman Arif Ehsan Malik, Vice Chairman Shehzad Ahmad, Sadaqat Limited Awais Mukhtar, AB Exports Muhammad Ahmed, Secretary General Rao Dilshad, and Messe Frankfurt Pakistan Office Kaleem Baig. The delegation briefed the Minister regarding the association's ongoing efforts to expand footprint of Pakistan's SMEs in international markets, and drive export growth through trade promotion initiatives. They apprised that 15-member companies of APBUMA are participating in the upcoming Home Textile Sourcing exhibition scheduled from 21 to 23 July 2026 in Los Angeles through a dedicated Pakistan's Pavilion, for which the association requested the Federal Minister to patronage the event and extend the support for targeted business-to-business engagements and productive outcomes. The delegation highlighted that the companies



are participating in this exhibition through their own resources as part of private sector-led efforts to promote Pakistan's home-textiles exports, attract foreign buyers, and strengthen international commercial linkages. The Minister assured that the delegation that Trade and Investment Officers of Pakistan posted in the United States shall extend the due facilitation to the members of APBUMA participating in the Home Textile exhibition in Los Angeles to forge meaningful collaboration with the global brands and retailers. The association further proposed bringing globally recognized exhibition platforms such as Heimtextil to Pakistan, stating that hosting such events in Pakistan would significantly enhance the country's global visibility,

attract international buyers directly to local manufacturing hubs, and create long-term branding and investment opportunities for the textiles and apparel sector. Minister Jam Kamal Khan commended the private sector's proactive efforts and acknowledged that international exhibitions and direct engagement with foreign buyers are essential tools for improving country branding in the global market-places and expanding Pakistan's export. He further stressed the importance of actively pursuing new markets and forging meaningful international business linkages. He noted that Pakistani exporters have consistently proven themselves on the global platforms and encouraged the industry to keep building on that momentum for greater penetration in existing as

well as new markets. The APBUMA delegation also sought government support for international branding and promotional campaigns, stressing that more visible and consistent promotion would give Pakistani exporters a much-needed edge in high-value global markets. The delegation further highlighted financing-related issues being faced by the SMEs, including export credit risk insurance facility by the EXIM Bank of Pakistan. The meeting recognized the need for greater facilitation, particularly for SMEs seeking entry into new markets. The Minister said that, as per the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, State Bank of Pakistan along-with EXIM Bank is working to sort out all kind of financing related issues being faced by the export industries in general and the SMEs in particular.—DNA

Iran's internet  
blackout leaves  
millions isolated

DUBAI: "It's costing me money talking to you" said Mona — not her real name — as she chuckled over a voice note she managed to send. "It'll cost me a lot more if the boogey men find out too," she said, referring to the Revolutionary Guards. Like millions of Iranians, Mona's life has been upended by Iran's internet blackout, the longest in the republic's history. The latest shutdown came after American and Israeli airstrikes in February, weeks after authorities partially restored internet access following a brutal crackdown on nationwide protests. While Iranian officials insist the restrictions are necessary to prevent espionage and surveillance operations during the war, critics say the country is moving toward something far deeper than temporary wartime controls: an internet no longer equally accessible to everyone. To defend the measures, the Iranian regime has regularly cited Article 79 of Iran's constitution, arguing that exceptional restrictions are permitted during war or emergency conditions. The provision has been used to justify tighter controls over messaging apps, social media platforms and access to foreign websites under the banner of national security. Iranian historian and author Arash Azizi said the authorities have used the war as an opportunity to impose martial law on Iranian society. "Some in the regime might want to further the restrictions and repression to make Iran turn into a North Korea," Azizi told Arab News. Internet shutdowns are not new in Iran. Authorities have repeatedly cut or severely restricted access during periods of unrest, often keeping parts of the domestic network running for banking, government services and local platforms while blocking much of the outside world. Foreign websites and apps become unreachable, leaving people in the country connected only on the state's terms. For years, ordinary citizens have relied on VPNs to get around restrictions on social media platforms and foreign websites. Access, however, deteriorated during the war— Sarah, an Iranian based in America, said she found it increasingly hard to check on her loved ones back home. "They can buy calling cards, but they are very, very expensive. During the war, they would use them to call us and let us know they were safe," she told Arab News. "People go through long stretches of time without internet there, one of my cousin's kids is a doctor and recently doctors and pharmacists have been allowed to connect to the internet, the family relies on her hot-spot and so are able to contact us." Since early April, lawyers, doctors, teachers and business owners have reportedly been able to apply for broader internet access through a program known as "Internet Pro," with approvals believed to involve intelligence and security bodies. Officials said the initiative is meant to help businesses and professionals continue operating during the conflict, particularly as millions of Iranians face mounting financial pressure from the shutdown.—DNA

Leather industry training  
initiatives discussed

SIALKOT: President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, attended an online meeting with representatives of the Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design to discuss initiatives aimed at strengthening the leather industry through specialized education and training. During the meeting, participants exchanged views on the introduction of new courses related to the leather sector, focusing on enhancing technical skills, innovation, and workforce development in line with the evolving needs of the industry. The discussion highlighted the importance of industry-academia collaboration in preparing skilled professionals capable of supporting the growth, competitiveness, and modernization of Pakistan's leather sector. Syed Ahtesham Mazhar emphasized the need for practical and market-oriented training programs to meet emerging industry demands and create better opportunities for the younger workforce.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi, presenting souvenir to Farid Ahmadov, Minister for Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Research to lead Pakistan's journey to  
trillion-dollar economy: Ahsan

While addressing the Pakistani research community, the Minister suggested that the country does not simply need more research, but more relevant, more courageous, and more implementable research. The best policy insights, he said, are rarely born in isolation; they emerge when evidence meets lived experience

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) today inaugurated the "6th RASTA-PIDE Conference" in a virtual ceremony. The three-day virtual conference, organised under the RASTA-PIDE and Planning Commission Competitive Research Grants Programme, is running from May 15 to 17, 2026. The conference is bringing together scholars, practitioners, government officials, and development experts from across Pakistan and abroad to deliberate on evidence-based solutions to the country's most pressing economic and social challenges. Professor Ahsan Iqbal (NI), Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and Chancellor of PIDE, delivered the keynote address as the Chief Guest. He opened with a diagnosis of Pakistan's development predicament, observing that for too long, research and policymaking in the country have travelled on parallel tracks where researchers were producing papers while policymakers managed crises, and that valuable evidence

has remained confined to conferences and journals while implementation has suffered from weak feedback and limited engagement with ground realities. He declared that this disconnect between knowledge and governance has been one of the silent structural weaknesses of Pakistan's development journey, and that the time to change it is now. Setting out the scale of national ambition, the Minister articulated Pakistan's aspiration to transform into a trillion-dollar economy by 2035 and a three-trillion-dollar economy by 2047. He was clear, however, that such a transformation cannot emerge from slogans alone; it requires a new development mindset rooted in evidence, innovation, execution, and institutional coordination. He identified URAAN Pakistan (the National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-29) as the expression of that mindset. Built around the 5Es framework of Exports, E-Pakistan, Environment, Energy, and Equity, URAAN Pakistan is, in the Minister's words, not merely another planning document but an attempt to create a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to national transformation. Economic transformation, he argued, is never produced by isolated interventions; it happens when institutions,

incentives, policies, and intellectual capital begin moving in the same direction. While addressing the Pakistani research community, the Minister suggested that the country does not simply need more research, but more relevant, more courageous, and more implementable research. The best policy insights, he said, are rarely born in isolation; they emerge when evidence meets lived experience. He called for the next generation of Pakistani policy research to become more field-informed, stakeholder-driven, and solution-oriented, and for scholars to answer the practical questions that actually matter to governance: how reforms can be implemented, what institutional bottlenecks stand in the way, how federal and provincial coordination can improve, and how policy can become simpler, smarter, and more citizen-focused. He praised PIDE and RASTA for their efforts to connect academia with policymaking and address local issues through solutions. He also commended the Research Advisory Committee for encouraging diverse viewpoints and appreciated the virtual conference format, which was necessary due to government austerity measures. He stressed that intellectual engagement and policy dialogue should persist despite resource limitations.

Israel strikes  
Lebanon as  
talks in US enter  
second day

BEIRUT: Israel carried out new strikes in southern Lebanon that it said targeted the militant group Hezbollah on Friday, hours before the two countries' envoys were set to meet for a second day of peace talks in Washington. A truce in the war between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah has been in place since April 17, but it has not stopped the fighting, with hundreds killed in strikes since then and both sides accusing the other of violations. The US described the first day of talks in Washington on Thursday as positive, and the two sides were set to resume the negotiations Friday, but neither Lebanon or Israel have commented as the attacks continued. "The IDF has begun striking Hezbollah infrastructure sites in the area of Tyre in southern Lebanon," the Israeli military said in a statement. An AFP correspondent said at least two strikes hit locations near Tyre city, while state media reported a third targeted a center run by a local NGO near a hospital, injuring seven people including two nurses. The Israeli army had earlier issued evacuation warnings for five towns and villages in and around the southern city. In a separate statement, the military said an Israeli soldier was killed in southern Lebanon, bringing the number of Israeli soldiers killed in clashes with Hezbollah since early March to 19. A civilian contractor was also killed.—APP

Gaza aid  
flotilla sets  
sail again  
after Israeli  
interceptions

MARMARIS, TURKIYE: Ships from the Global Sumud Flotilla set sail for a third time on Thursday from southern Turkey, after earlier attempts to deliver aid to Gaza were intercepted by Israel in international waters. The flotilla had previously departed from Spain on April 12, but Israeli forces intercepted vessels in the group, taking more than 100 pro-Palestinian activists to Crete and detaining two others in Israel. Activists on the flotilla departing from the Turkish port of Marmaris said the flotilla needed to reach Gaza to provide much-needed aid to the enclave at a time when global attention had shifted elsewhere, including to the impact of the Iran war. "It's very important that what's happening around the world is not allowing us to see Gaza for the situation as it is," said Susan Abdullah, a member of the flotilla's steering committee. "The blockade is still on. The aid is not coming in." Katy Davidson, an activist from the British delegation on the flotilla, said the group had previously been intercepted between Sicily and Crete. She criticized the response of the British government, which she said "did nothing." Davidson added that even if the flotilla failed to reach Gaza, any interception would still help draw attention to the situation. Turkish activist Seyma Denli Yalvac said limited media coverage would not deter the group.—APP

Systemic neglect found  
at public dog  
shelters in  
Romania

BUCHAREST: In a steel-mesh pen at a compound in eastern Romania, a dog licks icy water from a metal drinking bucket while another chews listlessly on dried feces scattered on the hard ground. The scenes, captured on video, are among the findings from an undercover investigation into conditions in Romania's publicly funded shelters for stray dogs, carried out by the international animal welfare organization Vier Pfoten, known as Four Paws. Between Jan. 8-18, the animal welfare group sent investigators to nine shelters in different parts of the country, documenting what it describes as "high death rates and disturbing conditions" amounting to "systemic neglect." The welfare group found overcrowded kennels, dogs suffering from untreated open wounds, and many living in kennels exposed to freezing winter temperatures. Romania has an estimated 500,000 stray dogs, one of the largest populations in the European Union. Many thousands of strays are kept in shelters, from where they can be adopted.—APP

## Briefs

### UK's Starmer faces survival battle

DNA

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer was struggling to hold on to power after his main rival in the government resigned on Thursday, accusing him of political drift, and others positioned themselves for potential challenges to his leadership. Disastrous results for the governing Labour Party in local elections last week have plunged Britain into a new 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 Labour lawmakers for Starmer to quit or set out a timetable for his departure, Wes Streeting resigned as health minister, the first senior minister to break cover. He said he was standing down because "it is now clear you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election". While Streeting did not trigger a formal contest, potential rivals to the prime minister, such as Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham, started positioning themselves for a possible leadership challenge that Starmer has said he will fight. Streeting criticised his former boss in a resignation letter which said he was standing down to allow a wide debate about what comes next, one which the Labour movement wanted to focus on ideas rather than personalities or factions.

### US set to drop charges against Indian billionaire

NEW YORK: The U.S. Justice Department is planning to drop criminal fraud charges against Gautam Adani, India's richest man, following an unusual private meeting in Washington in which his lawyers offered to invest \$10 billion in the American economy if prosecutors closed the case, the New York Times reported Thursday. The newspaper said that the reversal came after Adani hired a new legal team led by Robert Giuffra, one of President Donald Trump's personal lawyers and co-chairman of Sullivan & Cromwell, a global law firm. According to the newspaper, Giuffra said Adani would invest \$10 billion in the US economy and create 15,000 jobs if prosecutors dropped the charges against him. - APP

### IMF says Pakistan recovery continues

Lender praises govt over performance, saying Pakistan made "significant progress" under reform programme'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that Pakistan's steady policy execution has helped preserve economic stability and improve financing conditions, even as the fallout from the Middle East conflict tests the broader outlook, stressing that maintaining disciplined policies and accelerating structural reforms will be critical for the country to build resilience and secure sustainable long-term growth. The Fund's Executive Board released the report on Friday after completing the third review of the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the second review of the arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). A day earlier, the country's central bank, State Bank, confirmed that it received \$1.32 billion, saying the IMF had approved the disbursement of \$1.1bn under the EFF and around \$220 million under the RSF. The global lender said that Pakistan had made "significant progress" under its reform programme supported by the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). "Pakistan's policy efforts under the EFF arrangement have delivered significant progress in stabilising the economy and rebuilding confidence amid a challenging global environment, including the ongoing Middle East war," the Fund said. "Fiscal performance has been strong, with a primary surplus of 1.6 percent of GDP expected to be achieved in FY26, in line with targets. Inflation has increased as higher global commodity prices have passed through to domestic energy prices." The IMF said that total disbursements under both programmes now stand at roughly \$4.8 billion. The lender said the programme has played a central role in restoring macroeconomic stability, improving confidence, and rebuilding external buffers in an environment of continued global uncertainty. According to the IMF, Pakistan's growth momentum picked up in the first half of the current fiscal year, inflation remained contained, and the current account stayed broadly balanced. Foreign exchange reserves also improved more than earlier projections, reaching about \$16 billion by the end of December, up from \$14.5 billion mid-year, it said. However, the Fund cautioned that the conflict in the Middle East has introduced fresh uncertainty into Pakistan's economic outlook.

# PM welcomes establishment of Digital Economy HQs

Expressing confidence in Pakistan's economy, Qian Xiaojun said IBI hoped to help build digital backbone for digital transformation of Pakistan's economy



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday appreciated IBI Group's decision to establish its Pakistan Digital Economy Head-

quarters in Pakistan and expressed satisfaction at the expanding business to business (B2B) cooperation between Pakistan and China. He was talking to a high-level 11-member Chinese business delegation led by Qian Xiaojun, Founder, President and Controlling Share-

holder of IBI Beijing United Technology which called on him at the Prime Minister's House. While welcoming the delegation to Pakistan, the prime minister said that Pakistan and China enjoyed historic ties and the two countries were All-Weather Strategic Coop-

erative Partners. He lauded the remarkable progress made by China under the visionary leadership of President Xi Jinping and said that he was looking forward to his visit to China later this month. He said it was particularly encouraging that IBI would promote digital economy cooperation, investment facilitation and industrial collaboration. Expressing confidence in Pakistan's economy, Qian Xiaojun said IBI hoped to help build digital backbone for digital transformation of Pakistan's economy. He said establishment of IBI's Digital Economy Headquarters in Pakistan would be a command centre for this transformation and shall provide massive opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan by offering a gateway for them to a vast Chinese market. The delegation was visiting Pakistan as a follow up to the Pakistan-China B2B Investment Conference held in Beijing in September 2025 during the Prime Minister's visit. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Investment, Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for IT & Telecom, Ali Pervez Malik, Federal Minister for Petroleum, Haroon Akhtar, SAPM Industries & Production, SAPM Tariq Fatemi, and other senior officials were also present during the meeting.

### Toll from India's Uttar Pradesh storms rises to 111

Officials raise death toll after more districts report casualties from Wednesday's storms

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Powerful storms that swept across India's northern Uttar Pradesh state this week killed at least 111 people, government officials said, raising an earlier death toll as more districts reported casualties. Gales, lightning and torrential rain battered the state on Wednesday, ripping tin roofs from buildings and uprooting trees that blocked roads, footage broadcast on television showed. Uttar Pradesh, home to more than 240 million people, is frequently hit by storms during the summer months ahead of the monsoon rains, with lightning strikes a regular cause of death. The Relief Commissioner's office, the state aid agency, had initially said that on May 13, 89 people had been killed and 72 injured, with more than 200 homes damaged. It later updated the toll to 111 dead as more reports came in, according to published remarks in The Hindu newspaper on Friday. "Reports of 111 deaths were received," the statement read, adding that 72 people were injured. The Times of India reported the toll at 117, but AFP was not able to immediately confirm the figure. One video, widely shared by Indian media, appeared to show a man hurled high into the air in the state's Bareilly district, as a building roof was torn off. AFP was unable to immediately verify the video, but the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency spoke to a survivor in hospital who said he was the man seen in the video.

# Punjab eases business hour restrictions until June 1

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Friday relaxed business operating hour restrictions across the province until June 1, suspending the mandatory closure of markets and commercial centres by 8pm. According to an official notification, the decision will apply to markets, shopping malls, hotels, restaurants and food outlets throughout Punjab, with the decision taking effect immediately. Lahore Deputy Commissioner Ali Ejaz said the relaxation in market timings would provide relief to traders and make shopping more convenient for citizens. "Providing relief to traders is the government's priority," he said, adding that there would no

longer be a restriction requiring markets to shut by 8pm from Friday onwards. Business hours were curtailed across the country last month as part of energy conservation measures introduced amid a sharp increase in domestic fuel prices, triggered by the conflict in the Middle East. In a handout issued on April 6, the Prime Minister's Office said shopping malls, departmental stores and shops dealing in daily-use items would close at 8pm in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The measures formed part of the federal government's broader austerity and fuel-conservation plan aimed at reducing energy consumption following the surge in fuel prices.

In line with the federal policy, the Punjab government also introduced province-wide restrictions to curb fuel and electricity use. Besides limited business hours, the provincial administration directed educational institutions to hold physical classes only from Monday to Thursday, while public transport services - including the Orange Line, Metro Bus, Speedo and Green Bus - were made free for commuters. As part of relief measures, the provincial government announced a subsidy of Rs100 per litre of diesel per acre for farmers, while motorcyclists were offered Rs100 on every 20 litres of petrol purchased. The government also cut allowances of Punjab Assembly members by 25% for two months and taking 70% of official assembly vehicles off the road.

# Chairman Bilawal Bhutto inaugurates health initiatives

DNA

QUETTA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari inaugurated 11 health initiatives for Balochistan on Friday, including an air ambulance service, health insurance for government employees, and a modern digitalised healthcare system. The initiatives aimed at strengthening emergency response capacity and improving healthcare access across the province, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The newly inaugurated projects included the Peoples Air Ambulance, Peoples Welfare Programme, Trauma Emergency and Response Institute, Benazir Ambulance Services for Emergency Situation, Health Information and Digitalisa-



tion Unit, restoration of basic health centres in Balochistan, health insurance programme for government employees, expansion of Child Life emergency services, strengthening of immunisation programmes, Bacha Khan Memorial Hospital, and drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) treatment centres. Addressing the inauguration ceremony in Quetta, Bilawal said regional and global instability had been worsening Pakistan's economic challenges. He thanked the chief minister, governor, parliamentarians, PPP leaders and party workers for their continued support in advancing public welfare initiatives across Balochistan. He stated that every citizen of Balochistan had the right to receive free and quality healthcare services, adding that the state must ensure equal healthcare provision regardless of income or social status.

### Pak activist joins Gaza flotilla

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani activists and aid workers, including representatives of the Edhi Foundation, have this week joined a new Gaza-bound humanitarian flotilla, weeks after Israeli forces intercepted and detained participants aboard an earlier mission in international waters. The latest Global Sumud Flotilla departed from Marmaris, Turkey, on Wednesday night with more than 500 activists from different countries onboard, according to a statement issued by the Edhi Foundation. "The Global Sumud Flotilla's peaceful mission is expected to be completed within six to seven days," the Edhi Foundation said in its statement, adding that Saad Edhi, son of the renowned late Pakistani humanitarian Abdul Sattar Edhi, departed aboard the flotilla after overseeing the purchase of humanitarian supplies in Turkey over the past several days. The aid includes ration supplies, dry food, medicines, baby formula milk and other essential items intended for civilians in Gaza, according to the statement. The mission comes amid growing international scrutiny of Israel's blockade of Gaza and follows the seizure earlier this month of another Global Sumud flotilla carrying humanitarian activists and aid supplies toward the Palestinian enclave.

### Iran war blocking food aid for a million children

DNA

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.

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Serena Meets cultural diplomacy initiative Page: 14-15  
I.H. Ado Khan makes inaugural visit to Canada Page: 37

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