



Sharif, Araghchi meet as Pakistan rejects Indian allegations

Prime Minister Sharif expressed deep concern over India's provocative actions, particularly the weaponisation of water, condemning it as an unacceptable breach of regional and humanitarian norms

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has categorically dismissed India's accusations implicating Pakistan in the deadly Pahalgam incident, calling the claims baseless and devoid of evidence. Addressing the escalating tensions during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Sharif reiterated Pakistan's desire to strengthen regional cooperation, particularly with Iran, and highlighted Kashmir as the real flashpoint undermining South Asian peace.

The Pahalgam attack, which occurred on April 22 in Indian-administered Kashmir, claimed the lives of 26 tourists. In its aftermath, India hastily blamed Pakistan, suspended the Indus Waters Treaty, and ordered Pakistani nationals to leave Indian territory. In a reciprocal move,



Pakistan shut down its airspace to Indian aircraft and demanded an international probe into the incident—an appeal that remains unanswered by New Delhi.

Prime Minister Sharif voiced deep concern over what he termed India's provocative actions, notably the weaponisation of water, calling it an unacceptable

breach of regional and humanitarian norms. He also expressed solidarity with the people of Iran in light of the recent tragic explosion in Bandar Abbas and extended condolences to Iranian leaders, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian.

As international scrutiny of

India's narrative grows, countries such as China, Turkey, and Switzerland have thrown their weight behind Pakistan's call for a transparent investigation. Turkey, following China's stance, expressed solidarity with Islamabad, while Switzerland has offered assistance in probing the attack.

India's diplomatic standing has come under strain, with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urging both nuclear-armed neighbours to resolve their issues through dialogue. Similarly, the United States and European Union have advised restraint and called for direct engagement between the two countries.

Defence analysts suggest that the tide of international opinion—urging de-escalation and negotiations—signals growing discomfort with India's unilateral actions and narrative.

Pakistan successfully tests surface-to-surface Al-Fath missile

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has successfully conducted the second test in a week of the surface-to-surface Al-Fath missile. The missile was launched during the ongoing Indus war exercise and has a reported range of 120 kilometers. The military leadership has expressed full confidence in the operational readiness and technical proficiency of the Pakistan Army to counter any threat to the country's territorial integrity.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the missile tested during the exercise was indeed the surface-to-surface Fatah missile. It is capable of striking targets up to 120 kilometers away. The pur-



pose of the test, according to ISPR, was to ensure the operational readiness of troops and to validate key technical parameters, including the missile's advanced navigation system and improved accuracy.

In addition to senior military officials, scientists and engineers from Pakistan's strategic organizations were also present at the launch event. The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Chief of Army Staff congratulated the officers, scientists and engineers involved in the test on the successful launch. The operational preparedness and technical competence of the Pakistan Army remain entirely dependable, with the capability to repel any act of aggression against the country's sovereignty.

4 cops charged in kidnapping, extortion case

By Aziz Khatri

KARACHI: In another alarming incident of short-term abduction in Karachi, a case has been registered in Shah Latif Town against 12 individuals, including four police officers, for allegedly kidnapping a transporter and extorting a significant amount of money.

According to the complainant, Sarfaraz, he and a friend were abducted by armed men traveling in a police mobile and a private white vehicle. They were blindfolded and taken to an undisclosed location, where Sarfaraz claims he was subjected to physical assault for refusing to pay ransom.

In his statement, the victim revealed that he eventually disclosed to the abductors that a large amount of cash was hidden in the roof compartment of his vehicle. The kidnappers then retrieved Rs. 525,000 from the vehicle before releasing the victims near the National Highway.

SBP briefs economic analysts on monetary policy

The SBP projected foreign reserves to rise to \$14 billion by June 2025, reaffirming that talks with the IMF remain steady with no renegotiation in sight

By S.M. Inam

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has forecast that workers' remittances could touch a record \$38 billion by the close of the current fiscal year, offering a rare note of optimism amid the country's fragile economic climate. The central bank shared its projections during a detailed briefing for economic analysts, where it laid out encouraging signs of recovery in several key sectors, even as structural challenges persist.

According to SBP officials, the country recorded a current account surplus of \$1.9 billion over the past nine months, marking a notable turnaround from previous deficits. The surplus was buoyed in part by a recovery in imports, which the central bank interpreted as a sign of economic revival rather than fiscal slippage. Officials attributed the improved trade dynamics to falling global oil prices, which helped moderate the import bill and ease pressure on the external account.

In a further sign of economic stability, the SBP revealed that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are expected to climb to \$14 bil-



lion by June 2025. The central bank also assured that the current engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) remains on course, with no immediate plans for renegotiation. This comes as a relief for markets that have remained jittery over Pakistan's debt obligations and dependence on multilateral support.

On inflation, the SBP said its monetary policy remains geared toward maintaining price stability, targeting an inflation band of 5 to 7 percent in the medium term. While headline inflation has eased in recent months, officials acknowledged that core inflation pressures remain elevated, requiring sustained vigilance and cautious policymaking. However, the central bank struck a more somber tone when dis-

cussing public finances, particularly the growing burden of government debt. The country's debt-to-GDP ratio has reached 67 percent, with debt servicing costs ballooning due to high interest rates and currency depreciation. SBP officials noted that fiscal consolidation remains a critical challenge, as subsidies and administrative inefficiencies continue to weigh on the budget.

The outlook for agriculture, a key pillar of the economy, also carries considerable uncertainty. The SBP flagged potential setbacks from erratic weather patterns, water scarcity, and the rising costs of agricultural inputs. These risks, if left unaddressed, could undermine broader growth prospects and exacerbate food inflation.

Netanyahu announces plans to expel Palestinians from Gaza

News Desk

OCCUPIED BAITUL MAQDAS: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced plans to forcibly expel Palestinians from Gaza, amid an intensifying military campaign that has drawn widespread international condemnation. The statement, delivered alongside news of a prolonged offensive in the besieged enclave, has alarmed global leaders and human rights groups, who warn that such measures could constitute war crimes under international law.

Since early morning, Israeli airstrikes have killed at least 51 Palestinians, bringing the already staggering civilian death toll to catastrophic levels. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, more than 52,567 people have been killed and over 118,000 injured since October 7, 2023. The government media office reports a higher toll, with 61,700 dead, many still buried under rubble. These figures reflect one of the deadliest and most destructive military assaults in modern history.



Netanyahu has defended the planned expulsion as a civilian protection strategy, but critics have accused Israel of using military necessity as a pretext for demographic engineering in Gaza. The United Nations has strongly condemned the move, calling it "dangerous" and warning that any forced displacement of Gaza's population could amount to ethnic cleansing and collective punishment.

The Israeli government has also taken control of humanitarian aid delivery routes, a development that rights groups say risks weaponizing food and medical access in violation of humanitarian principles. With aid severely restricted, famine has taken hold

across Gaza, where medical supplies and clean water remain critically scarce.

Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, has rejected what it calls Israel's "blackmail" tactics and vowed to resist forced displacement. The group accused Israel of systematic violations of international law, and of attempting to erase Palestinian presence through prolonged siege and military escalation.

Despite mounting diplomatic appeals for an immediate ceasefire, Israel continues to defy international calls for restraint. Observers warn that without urgent intervention, the situation could deteriorate further, entrenching one of the most protracted and devastating conflicts in the region's history.

Putin calls for restraint, unity against terrorism

News Desk

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for stronger collaboration with India to counter terrorism, during a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that came amid heightened tensions in South Asia. The Kremlin confirmed the discussion, which followed a deadly attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and reflects broader regional security concerns.

Putin conveyed his condolences for the April 22 incident in Pahalgam, where 26 tourists were killed. Indian authorities have labeled the assault an act of terrorism and attributed responsibility to Pakistan, a claim that Islamabad has firmly denied.



The exchange between Putin and Modi underlined the strategic nature of India-Russia ties, as both leaders acknowledged the need for enhanced international cooperation to combat terrorism in all its forms.

The Kremlin highlighted that the call took place in a spirit of goodwill. Prime Minister Modi extended greetings to Putin ahead of Russia's Victory Day commemorations, while Putin accepted an invitation to visit India, reinforcing long-standing bilateral ties between the two countries.

However, the backdrop remains fragile. India has responded to the attack by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty and ordering Pakistani nationals to leave its territory. Pakistan, in turn, has closed its airspace to Indian flights and proposed an international investigation into the attack—an offer that India has yet to accept.

The rising tensions have prompted international reactions. China, Türkiye, and Switzerland have expressed support for a neutral probe into the incident. Türkiye has also echoed Beijing in urging restraint from India and calling for a peaceful resolution. Both countries have voiced concern about the potential for further escalation.

Malala appeals for Gaza ceasefire, child support

Sharing a haunting image from The New York Times, Malala called the plight of Palestinian children "heartbreaking" in a somber Instagram story

News Desk

NEW YORK: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai has once again turned the world's attention to Gaza, issuing a heartfelt plea for urgent humanitarian aid and a permanent ceasefire as the crisis deepens in the besieged Palestinian enclave. In a message that resonated across social media, the Pakistani education activist voiced anguish over the worsening plight of children caught in the crossfire of Israel's military operations.

Sharing a striking image from The New York Times on her Instagram story, Malala described the condition of Palestinian children as "heartbreaking." The accompanying message was clear and deeply personal: "The situation for children in Gaza is horrifying. They are facing extreme hunger and death. I am praying for their safety and future. I appeal for urgent aid, relief, and a lasting ceasefire."

Her call comes at a mo-



ment of growing alarm. Israel has tightened its siege on Gaza, choking off access to food, clean water, and medical supplies. Aid convoys have slowed to a trickle. Health facilities, already overwhelmed and under-resourced, are collapsing. According to international reports, including those from the United Nations and human rights organizations, famine is no longer a distant risk—it is imminent. Thousands of children are now severely malnourished, with the absence of medical care leading to preventable deaths that could have been avoided with even the most

basic assistance. Malala's voice joins a growing chorus of global figures urging restraint and compassion amid the unrelenting violence. Her words, simple yet urgent, speak to a broader truth often lost in geopolitical debates—the suffering of children, innocent and powerless, who are paying the highest price in a war they did not choose. As the world watches, and as governments weigh their next moves, the call from Malala Yousafzai serves as a stark reminder that humanity must come before strategy, and that the children of Gaza cannot wait.

India begins work on two hydro projects in occupied Kashmir

News Desk

NEW DEHLI: India has initiated work on two hydroelectric projects in occupied Jammu and Kashmir without notifying Pakistan, in what is being seen as a serious breach of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). According to international media reports, India is expanding water storage capacity at these sites—an act the treaty expressly prohibits without prior bilateral consultation.

The projects, located at the Salal and Baglihar dams on the Chenab River, involve a process known as "reserve air flushing," which started on May 1. This marks the first time such activity is taking place at these dams, originally commissioned in 1987 and 2008/09 respectively. Notably, India's National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and the local Jammu and Kashmir administration have not responded to requests for



comment on the matter.

Sources suggest that both Salal and Baglihar dams had their gates closed recently, leading to a drastic drop in water flow downstream. The flow in the Chenab River has now reportedly reduced to just 5,300 cusecs, raising concerns in Pakistan over water scarcity in key agricultural zones and potential long-term environmental impact.

India has previously taken unilateral steps to suspend or bypass the IWT, a World

Bank-brokered treaty signed in 1960 that governs the use of shared river waters between the two nations. Under the treaty, India is not permitted to construct dams or alter water flow in a manner that harms Pakistan's rights as a lower riparian state.

The Pakistani government has yet to issue a formal diplomatic response, but the move is expected to escalate tensions already strained by cross-border skirmishes and political rhetoric.

India to step back, regional tension benefits no one: Tarar

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar has issued a stern message to India, asserting that New Delhi will have to retreat one step if peace in South Asia is to be preserved. Tarar emphasized that reducing Pakistan tensions is in the interest of the entire region and its people.

Tarar drew attention to the growing criticism faced by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi within his own country. "Even Modi's own people and the public are raising questions," he



said, pointing out how swiftly an FIR was registered—within 10 minutes—after the Pulwama-style incident in Pahalgam, raising suspicions about the credibility of the narrative.

The Fed Min reiterated Pakistan's willingness to allow an impartial international investigation into such incidents, suggesting that

India's strategy of quickly placing blame had reached a dead end.

"They made the accusation but now they don't know what to say next," he said. Referring to the recent attack on the Jaffer Express, Tarar said that terrorists from the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) were visibly featured on Indian television channels, implying collusion and support.

The minister claimed Pakistan had credible reports of a potential Indian strike, but no such move was made—likely deterred by Pakistan's preparedness.

Trade tension mars India-Bangladesh relationship

Tensions simmer as India’s quiet suspension of a vital trade route leaves Bangladesh grappling with mounting export hurdles and diplomatic unease

News Desk

DHAKA: Tensions between India and Bangladesh have begun to simmer beneath the surface as both countries imposed new trade restrictions, in what appears to be a rare but telling economic standoff between two traditionally close neighbors. While official statements on both sides remain cautious and restrained, the moves have cast a shadow over one of South Asia’s more stable bilateral relationships.

The trouble began when India quietly suspended a key transit facility that allowed Bangladeshi exporters to route goods through Indian ports and air-



ports to reach third countries. The facility had long been seen as a practical symbol of regional cooperation, helping Dhaka improve its export efficiency by leveraging Indian infrastructure. New Delhi, however, cited growing congestion at its logistics hubs as the reason for the sudden halt. The ex-

planation, though bureaucratic in tone, did little to soften the blow in Dhaka. In a swift response that surprised many observers, Bangladesh imposed a retaliatory restriction of its own — banning the import of cotton yarn from India via road routes. Authorities in the Bangladeshi capital argued

the measure was necessary to protect domestic textile industries, which have complained of being undercut by the lower prices of Indian goods flooding local markets. The move signals a clear pushback from Dhaka, even if it stops short of escalating the matter into a full-blown trade dispute.

For now, both governments are treading carefully in public. There have been no fiery statements, no ambassadors summoned — just a quiet tightening of economic levers, each side hoping to make a point without derailing the broader relationship. Yet the symbolism of this tit-for-tat is hard to miss. In a region where trade is often tied up in poli-

tics and history, small disruptions can carry large echoes.

India and Bangladesh share more than just a long border. Their ties are built on decades of political goodwill, cultural affinity, and economic interdependence. But as national interests become more sharply defined and domestic pressures mount on both governments, even friendly neighbors can find themselves at odds. The situation may still be reversible — a matter of backchannel talks and bureaucratic compromise. But the episode reveals an underlying tension: the fragility of trade cooperation in a region still learning how to balance friendship with economic rivalry.

174 posts scrapped at PSQCA under right-sizing plan

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Science and Technology has axed 174 posts at the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) as part of a federal right-sizing initiative, following a decision by the federal cabinet.

A formal notification was issued confirming the move, which targets a significant cutback in staff positions across various pay grades. Out of the total, 61 posts are to be terminated immediately, while 113 are categorized as "dying cadre" — meaning they will be phased out gradually as employees retire, opt for early retirement, or pass away.

The cuts include a wide range of roles, with the immediate removals affecting positions from Grade 1 all the way up to Grade 19. Among them are one Grade-19 Director, ten Grade-18 Deputy Directors, seven Grade-17 Assistant Directors, and four Field Officers, also in Grade-17. Lower-scale staff are also impacted, including clerical and support roles.

According to the ministry’s notification, this reduction follows the 60 perfect vacancy elimination formula — a measure intended to streamline operations and reduce administrative overheads. The remaining 113 posts marked for gradual elimination span several levels: three more Grade-19 Directors, 21 Grade-18 positions, 32 at Grade 17, and others from Grade 16 down to Grade 1. These positions are not being filled once vacated.

Iraqchi, Dar discuss regional issues, emphasize dialogue

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi met with Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, where the two leaders discussed the ongoing regional challenges and the implications of the Pahalgam incident on Indo-Pakistani relations. In a media interaction following the meeting, Araqchi emphasized the importance of resolving such issues through diplomacy and dialogue, expressing Iran’s commitment to fostering regional peace.

During the meeting, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar made it clear that Pakistan had no involvement in the Pahalgam attack, which occurred on April 22 and resulted in the deaths of 26 tourists. Dar reiterated Pakistan’s willingness to cooperate with international investigators, stressing that while Pakistan had no intention of ini-



tiating conflict, any form of aggression would be met with a strong response.

Araqchi, on his part, acknowledged the importance of maintaining high-level engagements between the two countries to address regional issues. He also mentioned that he would be meeting with Iranian President and Prime Minister before visiting India later in the week, highlighting the continuing diplomatic outreach from Iran in the region.

The Pahalgam attack, which led to heightened tensions between India and Pakistan, saw Indian authorities accusing Pakistan without providing evidence. In response to the allegations, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and ordered the expulsion of Pakistani nationals. Pakistan retaliated by closing its airspace to Indian flights.

Despite Pakistan’s call for an international investigation into the incident, India has yet to respond, while countries like China, Turkey, and Switzerland have expressed support for Pakistan’s position on the matter.

COAS sends clear message to India: US newspaper

News Desk

NEW YORK: A US newspaper has commended Pakistan’s military leader, General Syed Asim Munir, for sending a strong and unequivocal message to India amid the escalating tensions over the Kashmir issue.

The article underscored General Munir’s prominence as Pakistan’s most influential figure, noting that his firm stance marks a significant shift from his traditionally behind-the-scenes approach to a more visible role in shaping the nation’s position in the face of mounting confrontation with India.

The newspaper highlighted that, in the aftermath of the Pahalgam incident, General Munir has become a key player in Pakistan’s military and political narrative, reinforcing the country’s position on the Kashmir issue.

His public statements and actions demonstrate that Pakistan’s military leadership is taking a more assertive role in addressing regional tensions.

The article also referenced General Munir’s repeated invocation of the two-nation theory, a foundational principle in the creation of Pakistan.

During a recent military exercise, where he stood atop a tank, General Munir addressed his troops, declaring that any military provocation from India would be met with a swift and decisive response.

PM invites UK's participation in Pahalgam investigation

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formally extended an invitation to the United Kingdom to participate in the investigation into the Pahalgam incident, following a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott.

In the meeting, the Prime

Minister reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to a transparent, high-level, and impartial international inquiry into the attack, which took place on April 22 in Indian-administered Kashmir and resulted in the deaths of 26 tourists.

Sharif urged the UK to leverage its diplomatic ties with both Pakistan and India

to play a constructive role in de-escalating the growing tensions in the region. He briefed the British High Commissioner on the developments following the Pahalgam attack and reiterated Pakistan’s rejection of the unsubstantiated claims made by India, which accused Pakistan without providing any concrete evidence.

Israel conducts airstrike on Yemen, killing two and injuring 40

News Desk

SANA'A: In the wake of a Houthi missile strike that targeted Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport earlier in the day, Israeli forces launched a retaliatory airstrike on the Yemeni city of Bajil. The air raid, which involved around 30 Israeli fighter jets, targeted a cement factory in the coastal city, with initial

drawing international attention to the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Houthi rebels, who have been increasingly active in the region.

The missile strike on Ben Gurion Airport earlier that day marked a significant escalation in the conflict, as the missile struck the airport’s grounds, injuring eight people. The strike caused major dis-



reports confirming at least two fatalities and around 40 others wounded.

The airstrike, which saw Israel deploy 20 fighter jets, was aimed at the cement factory as well as the port of Hodeidah, both of which are strategic locations in Yemen. The destruction caused by the bombing has heightened tensions in the region,

ruptions to air operations, with flights halted for several hours as authorities scrambled to assess the damage and secure the area. This missile attack, attributed to the Houthis, was one of the most direct assaults on Israeli infrastructure in recent weeks, underscoring the volatile nature of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

METRO MATTERS

Traffic management course graduation ceremony

By Aziz Khatri

KARACHI: The 145th Traffic Management Course concluded with a formal passing-out ceremony at the Shahid Hayat Training Centre in Saeedabad, marking another step forward in strengthening Karachi’s traffic infrastructure. The event was attended by DIG Training Faizullah Qureshi, DIG Traffic Karachi, and the officers and personnel who successfully completed the specialized training.

Congratulating the graduates, DIG Traffic Karachi lauded their commitment and underscored the pivotal role they are expected to play in reshaping the city’s traffic system. In his address, he stressed the urgent need for modernization, pointing to the implementation of cutting-edge technology, including advanced surveillance cameras and intelligent traffic signals, as critical tools in developing Karachi into a fully functioning mega city.

He announced the upcoming introduction of electronic traffic challans (e-challans) through modern camera systems, a move aimed at streamlining traffic enforcement and reducing manual interventions. “With these digital systems, we aim not only for efficiency but also for transparency and accountability,” he said.

The DIG also encouraged the newly trained personnel to maintain high standards in turnout and conduct, stating that professionalism on the streets was key to rebuilding public trust and strengthening citizen-police relations. “Your attitude and discipline on the road can transform public perception. Let your presence reflect integrity and order,” he remarked.

In a gesture of mutual respect and appreciation, a commemorative shield was presented to DIG Traffic Karachi by DIG Training at the conclusion of the ceremony, symbolizing the shared commitment to continuous improvement in Karachi’s traffic management landscape.

LUX Style Awards go digital in celebration of creative talent

By our correspondent

KARACHI: The 23rd edition of the LUX Style Awards unfolded digitally this year, offering a glittering yet intimate homage to Pakistan’s creative spirit across fashion, film, music, and television. Hosted by celebrated filmmaker Sarmad Khoosat, the awards were unveiled through LUX’s official platforms, embracing a modern format while retaining the prestige long associated with the country’s most iconic awards ceremony.

This year, singer Ahmed Jehanzeb’s emotionally resonant ballad Tera Mera Hai Pyar captured hearts and headlines, becoming the most streamed song of the year. The track’s popularity was matched by critical acclaim, as Jehanzeb was named Singer of the Year, affirming his enduring influence on Pakistan’s music scene.

Actor Wahaj Ali’s artistic versatility shone brightly, securing him a rare double triumph in both film and television categories. His roles in Teri Meri Kahaniyaan and Tere Bin resonated deeply with both audiences and critics, marking him as one of the standout performers of the year. The accolades not only recognised his compelling screen presence but also reflected the blurring boundaries between cinematic and television storytelling in Pakistan.

The television segment saw a dominant performance by Kabli Pulao, which swept the Critic’s Choice awards. With Kashif Nisar’s deft direction, the serial clinched Best Play, while its leads Ehteshamuddin and Sabeena Farooq earned honors for Best Actor and Best Actress. Their deeply textured performances and the show’s poignant narrative secured its place as a landmark drama in an increasingly competitive landscape.

In cinema, Gunjal emerged as the clear favorite, winning Best Film awards from both critics and the public.

The dual recognition underscored the film’s ability to resonate on multiple levels—cinematically powerful and emotionally compelling. It marked a significant milestone for the production team and signaled a growing appetite for layered storytelling in Pakistani cinema.

The fashion industry also had its moment in the spotlight. Designers Jaweria Ali and Hussain Rehar were honored for their contributions, reflecting the dynamism and innovation that continue to redefine Pakistan’s sartorial identity. Their recognition highlighted the evolving narrative of fashion as both cultural commentary and creative enterprise.

PFF marks 27 years of struggle for fishermen rights

By Saeed Baloch

KARACHI: The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) marked its 27th anniversary on Sunday with a vibrant celebration at Motani Jetty in Ibrahim Hyderi, honoring nearly three decades of unwavering advocacy for the rights and dignity of fisher communities.

Since its founding on 5 May 1998, the PFF has grown into a powerful social movement, transforming grassroots grievances into national discourse on livelihoods, justice, and environmental stewardship.

From modest beginnings in Karachi, the Forum has extended its reach across Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, uniting fishing communities against the tide of marginalization. Sunday’s event, attended by founding members, local leaders, and delegates from as far as Gwadar and central Punjab, offered both reflection and resolve.

Participants hailed the PFF’s role in empowering coastal families, advocating for ownership over sea and land resources, and persistently campaigning for the release of Pakistani fishers imprisoned across the border in India.

Speeches were charged with both pride and frustration. Central Information Secretary Ayub Khan recounted the Forum’s journey, crediting the unity of fisher families — men, women, and children alike — for sustaining the movement. “When we founded PFF, it was born out of a need to raise voices that had long been ignored. We are still carrying that mission forward with the same dedication,” he said.

Senior PFF members including Saeed Baloch, Fatima Majeed, Ayub Shan Khaskheli, and Majid Motani addressed the gathering alongside guests like Babu Hasan and Talib Kacchi from Gwadar. The anniversary concluded with a symbolic cake-cutting ceremony, underscoring solidarity and hope.

Wahab leads memorial inauguration for martyr firefighters

By Aziz Khatri

KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab paid a heartfelt tribute to the bravery and sacrifices of the city’s fire brigade personnel on Monday, calling them the “pride of the nation” during a solemn ceremony at the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Fire Brigade Headquarters. The event marked the inauguration of Yaadgar-e-Shuhada, a memorial erected in honor of firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Speaking to media representatives, Mayor Wahab praised the dedication of these frontline responders. “Our brave firefighters are not only lifesavers, but they ignite the light of hope in the darkest hours,” he said. “We salute their unmatched courage and selflessness.”

The Mayor also distributed shields among families of the fallen and offered prayers for the martyrs.

Accompanied by KMC Council Deputy Parliamentary Leader Dil Muhammad, local UC Chairmen, and business community representative Atique Mir, Wahab underscored the importance of recognizing the fire brigade’s silent heroism. “They face blazes, disasters, and danger head-on — all to protect others. Their courage lights up the lives of entire communities.”

Reflecting on the department’s legacy, the Mayor shared that Karachi’s first firefighter martyr fell in 1955. “Since then, 34 firefighters have given their lives while saving others. This memorial is our way of honoring their legacy, and our city acknowledges their service through initiatives like the Tamgha-e-Karachi,” he added.

He reaffirmed the KMC’s commitment to firefighter welfare, citing continued fire allowance payments and plans to further strengthen their rights. “As a society, our gratitude should go not only to soldiers and police but also to our firefighters and journalists,” Wahab stressed.

Turning to broader civic issues, the Mayor announced a ban on plastic bags across Karachi starting June 15, after consultations with the Chief Minister of Sindh.

“Plastic bags are choking our environment. Legal challenges won’t derail our resolve,” he stated.

A major pre-monsoon cleanliness operation targeting stormwater drains is also scheduled for June. Mayor Wahab warned against illegal use of municipal land along the coastal belt, including unauthorized cattle markets and “China-cutting,” vowing strict action.

Addressing federal-provincial tensions, Wahab criticized a recent advertisement by the Karachi Port Trust, labelling it misleading. “Yes, we have disagreements with the Federal Government, but our focus remains on Karachi’s development. The Water Corporation is actively upgrading pipelines and repairing critical infrastructure.”

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India’s desperate diversion

The façade is beginning to crumble. The face of Narendra Modi’s Hindutva-led India, carefully constructed with slogans of progress and global leadership, is once again giving way to its darker underpinnings of hyper-nationalism and communal politics. The latest controversy surrounding the Pahalgam incident has cast a long shadow over India’s international standing, not least because of how hastily and aggressively the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) moved to blame Pakistan—without any real investigation, without evidence, and without pause for dialogue. It is a familiar script, and yet one that is growing thin, even among India’s traditional allies. There was a time when India’s claims would be taken at face value, accepted unquestioningly as the voice of a stable democracy combating threats from across the border.

But that narrative is beginning to wear out. In its reaction to the Pahalgam attack, India didn’t just point fingers—it reached for the nuclear playbook of crisis escalation. Suspending the Indus Waters Treaty and making thinly veiled threats of military action aren’t the responses of a rational actor seeking justice. These are the tools of a government that sees more value in inflaming public sentiment than in preserving regional stability. What makes this episode more revealing is the timing. With state elections looming in Bihar, the Modi government is again resorting to the politics of fear and manufactured enmity. The calculation appears cynical and painfully obvious: rally the electorate through nationalist fervor, conjure up external enemies, and cloak governance failures in the garb of patriotism. The cost, however, is far from domestic. It is regional, and potentially global.

In stark contrast, Pakistan has taken a notably measured approach. Rather than resorting to the same tactics, Islamabad has stepped up its diplomatic game, calling calmly and clearly for an independent, transparent investigation into the Pahalgam incident. That call has found sympathetic ears. Turkey, Switzerland, Greece, and Iraq have all indicated willingness to consider the Pakistani position seriously. Turkish Ambassador Dr Irfan Neziroğlu didn’t mince words when he expressed support for Pakistan’s stance during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Swiss and Greek foreign ministers likewise acknowledged the legitimacy of Pakistan’s demand for a fair probe in discussions with Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. There’s a sense that the international community is beginning to distinguish between noise and reason.

India, for all its volume, has failed to offer any substantive proof linking Pakistan to the incident. Its claims, shouted from podiums and echoed across its media landscape, are fast resembling empty rhetoric. The irony is sharp. A government that routinely equates dissent with treachery is now being met with growing scepticism abroad, not because of any bias, but because of its own inability to meet the basic standards of accountability and transparency. The European Union’s intervention further demonstrates the shifting winds. Kaja Kallas, the EU’s foreign policy chief, called for restraint and renewed dialogue—an unmistakable cue that inflammatory gestures are being frowned upon. Russia’s Sergey Lavrov was even more forthright, urging both India and Pakistan to resolve tensions under the principles of the Simla Agreement and Lahore Declaration—an approach rooted in diplomacy, not demagoguery.

Lavrov’s willingness to engage with both countries as equals is telling. It signals that New Delhi’s narrative monopoly is no longer guaranteed. The expected visit of Iraq’s foreign minister, who plans to shuttle between the two capitals to reduce tensions, is another sign of growing global engagement. These are not token moves. They stem from real concern. With both nations being nuclear-armed, the risk of conflict, even an accidental one, cannot be taken lightly. And there is increasing international consensus that India’s provocations are not helping. Indeed, what stands out most starkly is India’s refusal to consider an independent investigation. If the BJP leadership truly believed in the strength of its claims, what could it possibly fear from an impartial probe? But instead of embracing transparency, it has clung to threats and unilateralism. This not only erodes India’s credibility—it isolates it.

Pakistan’s approach, by contrast, is slowly shaping an alternative narrative—one that prioritizes reason, dialogue, and evidence. It has refrained from escalating rhetoric and chosen instead to engage the world with clarity and poise. For a country often caricatured as impulsive or unstable, this new diplomatic poise is striking. It reveals the Modi government’s behavior for what it is: a calculated gamble built on public sentiment, but out of step with global expectations. The path forward is not ambiguous. India must return to diplomacy. It must allow facts, not fear, to guide its response. The refusal to do so does not just reflect poorly on the BJP—it endangers the peace of an entire region. No domestic election or real the risk of regional war, whether rhetorical or real. And it is increasingly clear that the international community will not be a passive bystander to such recklessness.

What is perhaps most sobering is that this entire episode could have been a moment of unity. Both countries share a painful history of conflict, yes—but also moments of cooperation, dialogue, and even camaraderie. The Simla and Lahore agreements are not relics; they are blueprints for peace, still relevant, still valid. But they require political will, not political games. The mask, then, is not just slipping—it is coming off. And what the world sees beneath is not the shining example of modern democracy India once aspired to be, but a government more interested in applause than accountability, more enamored with power than peace. Pakistan, for now, has chosen the more difficult path—one of reason over rage. And the world is beginning to notice. Slowly, but unmistakably, the verdict is shifting. It is not who shouts loudest that commands respect, but who speaks with clarity, truth, and restraint. The test now is whether India is willing to listen.

Metro Morning and its policy not necessarily consensus with any writer’s thoughts

By Uzma Ehtasham



There was a time when India and Bangladesh, despite their differences, leaned on each other with a neighborly understanding rooted in shared history, culture and economic interdependence. But that fragile bond is now being worn thin by a political tide sweeping through New Delhi—one that thrives on division, religious fervor, and short-term political gain. With India’s announcement to cut trade ties and seal all borders with Bangladesh, the region is witnessing yet another example of how the ruling BJP’s ideological agenda is undoing decades of careful diplomacy and goodwill. It’s not just about trade routes or customs tariffs. It’s about a growing pattern, one where India’s neighbors are increasingly being painted as threats rather than partners. After stirring tensions with Pakistan over the Pahalgam incident without investigation, India has now turned its gaze toward Bangladesh, suspending a key transit facility that was vital for Bangladeshi exports to reach three countries.

The facility, which allowed Dhaka to use Indian ports and airports, was not merely a logistical convenience—it was a symbol of practical cooperation in a subcontinent often weighed down by history and politics. Now, citing congestion at ports and airports, India has pulled the plug. But few are buying that explanation at face value. The timing, the tone, and the broader regional context suggest something deeper—something

more troubling. This isn’t an isolated bureaucratic decision; it’s a political signal. A signal that the Modi government, already accused of leveraging communal rhetoric domestically, is extending its inward-looking nationalism into foreign policy. Bangladesh, understandably, has responded with its own restriction, banning cotton yarn imports from India via road. Officials in Dhaka have framed the move as an economic decision to protect their local industries.

But beneath that surface lies unease—an unease that the neighbor once seen as a friend and partner has grown unpredictable, driven by ideological calculations rather than diplomatic sense. The irony is bitter. Bangladesh and India share more than a border. They share rivers, languages, families divided by lines on a map, and trade relationships nurtured over decades. But the very fabric of this coexistence is being tested, not by external enemies, but by the internal politics of a ruling party that seems to see electoral gain in creating foreign adversaries. What’s at stake isn’t just bilateral trade—it’s the region’s stability and the principle of cooperation among South Asian neighbors. The BJP-led government’s actions echo its growing tendency to inject religion into every political decision. Sources within India’s own policy circles suggest that decisions like these are less about strategic necessities and more about fanning domestic sentiment.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation, becomes an easy target for a party that has built its electoral identity on majoritarian nationalism. There’s a deeply worrying implication in this approach—that foreign policy

is being tailored not to serve India’s long-term interests, but to serve its ruling party’s short-term political narratives. One must consider the human cost of such decisions. Border closures don’t just stop trade; they stop lives. Thousands of families who depend on cross-border commerce are left in limbo. Laborers, truck drivers, customs workers, and small business owners bear the brunt of decisions made in high offices, far from the dust and reality of border towns. These aren’t just geopolitical ripples; they are real economic shocks for communities that survive on thin margins and daily movement across artificial lines.

Diplomatic silence between the two countries now grows louder by the day. While both governments maintain formal public diplomacy, the underlying frost is unmistakable. The interim government in Dhaka, according to insiders, has decided to respect its public’s sentiments rather than rush into further confrontation. It’s a mature stance, one that avoids fanning the flames, but it also reflects the disappointment and mistrust now settling in. What could have been a moment for mutual problem-solving—perhaps easing logistical issues at Indian ports together—has instead become a zero-sum game. This headline approach from New Delhi fits a broader pattern: manufacturing crises, invoking threats, and isolating neighbors in the name of national pride. But the international community is watching, and the cracks in this strategy are becoming visible.

Regional diplomacy is not a game of optics. It demands patience, maturity, and an ability to listen. India’s recent behavior is not just diplomatically irresponsible—it is self-

defeating. A country that aspires to regional leadership and global respect must be prepared to act like one. Yet the Modi administration continues to alienate allies, provoke tensions, and pursue policies rooted more in ideological fervor than economic or geopolitical logic. Bangladesh deserves better. So does India. The legacy of shared struggle and mutual respect between the two countries should not be allowed to be rewritten by those who see neighbors not as partners, but as convenient political scapegoats. The hope is that cooler heads in both capitals will prevail—that the region’s leaders will remember that trade, dialogue and cooperation build nations, while suspicion, aggression and border closures only sow instability.

In the end, the question remains: how far is India’s government willing to go in its pursuit of nationalist narratives? At what cost? The border with Bangladesh may now be shut, but the message being sent is far broader and far more isolating. The subcontinent, already carrying the burden of history, cannot afford to be burdened further by ideology masquerading as policy. For the sake of regional peace, for the people who live along these borders, and for the integrity of India’s standing in the world, it is time to pause, reflect, and choose dialogue over division. Because no election victory is worth sacrificing a nation’s place in the world—or its relationship with its closest neighbors.

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By Atiq Raja



In a world that prides itself on progress — a world of rockets to Mars, international summits, human rights treaties, and the supposed triumph of democracy — it is astonishing that the one thing we cannot seem to outgrow is war. Not just the kind that tears apart cities with bombs and bullets, but the kind that invades slowly and silently — through economic embargoes, disinformation campaigns, and puppet regimes. The wars that live in statistics, in aid convoys, and in the forgotten eyes of refugees. We keep asking the same question, over and over again: why is the world still at war? There is no single answer, but there is a common thread — power and profit dressed in the language of patriotism and morality. Modern wars, despite the speeches and ceremonies that try to make them noble, are rarely fought to preserve peace. They are systems of profit, carefully managed by the few, paid for by the many.

Behind every image of destruction — a bombed-out school in Gaza, a crumbled maternity ward in Khartoum, a frightened child in Donetsk — there is someone making money. War is not just about territorial disputes or ideological differences. It’s a trillion-dollar industry that turns blood into bonuses and ruins into revenue. Take the global arms trade. In 2023, the world spent more than \$2.4 trillion on military expenditures. The

biggest players — the United States, China, Russia, India, and Saudi Arabia — pour billions into weapons they hope they’ll never use, yet quietly ensure someone else will. Corporations like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and BAE Systems thrive not when peace is on the table, but when the world teeters on the edge of chaos. When tanks roll and jets fly, stocks soar. The irony is brutal — peace is bad for business.

But the arms dealers aren’t the only ones cashing in. War is also a powerful political tool. Leaders facing domestic crises often turn to external enemies, real or imagined, to shore up their authority. They wrap themselves in flags, declare a threat to the homeland, and expect loyalty in return. Nationalism becomes the smokescreen for corruption, incompetence, or authoritarian ambition.

The tactic is timeless: distract the public with fear while consolidating power behind closed doors. Meanwhile, the shadows swell with darker figures. In every war zone, state authority weakens, and the underworld takes over.

Arms smuggling, human trafficking, and drug routes thrive in the wreckage of collapsed regimes. These are not accidents of war — they are part of its ecosystem. Where there is lawlessness, there is opportunity, and where governments fail, criminals rule. It is not just warlords with rifles; it is entire networks of trade, bribery, and blood.

And then there is the role of the media — a difficult subject, yet impossible to ignore. Not all newsrooms are guilty, but many are

complicit. Conflict coverage, especially when it is graphic or dramatic, drives traffic and ratings. War, like celebrity scandal, keeps people glued to their screens. The endless stream of breaking news, special coverage, and expert panels sometimes serves less to inform and more to entertain, to shock, to sell. Tragedy becomes spectacle. People far from the battlefield watch suffering unfold in real time, yet rarely hear the full story of how it all began — or who profits from its continuation. Post-war, the business does not stop. In fact, it changes shape. The same governments and corporations that supplied the weapons often win the contracts to rebuild. Roads, hospitals, schools — all must be constructed anew, and it is usually firms from the countries most involved in the conflict that secure the deals. It is a grotesque cycle: first destruction, then reconstruction, both profitable, both planned.

All this begs a simple question: is peace even possible? Not in abstract speeches or feel-good documentaries, but in the real world. Can we unmake this machine? The answer is yes — but not without courage, and not without honesty. To end war, we must first expose the interests that keep it alive. We need transparency in arms deals. We need watchdogs with teeth. We need to invest not just in diplomacy at the highest levels, but in education and reconciliation on the ground. The roots of many modern wars stretch back decades or centuries — to colonial borders, ethnic divisions, or economic betrayal. Peace is not a switch to be flipped; it is soil to be nurtured. Citizens, too, bear re-

sponsibility. The stories we believe, the leaders we trust, the ideologies we absorb without question — all feed the fire or help extinguish it. In times of rising nationalism and political manipulation, asking questions becomes a radical act. Peace is not passive. It is an effort, a resistance against those who claim war is necessary, normal, or inevitable.

And yet, in all this darkness, there are glimmers of humanity. Volunteers risking their lives to deliver aid. Journalists who tell the stories that power tries to silence. Young people who choose to build, not destroy. Mothers who mourn but still hope. Communities that rebuild from rubble, not just with concrete, but with courage. Their resilience is a quiet defiance against those who profit from their pain.

[The world does not need more weapons, more soldiers, or more speeches about strength. It needs honesty. It needs accountability. And it needs the will to say, at last, that war is not the answer — not because it is ugly, though it is — but because it is designed to serve the powerful while sacrificing the powerless. So long as war is profitable, peace will remain a threat to those in power. But if we dare to unmask the lies, name the profiteers, and reclaim the narrative, perhaps — just perhaps — we can build a world where peace is not just a hope, but a right.

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Letters and leadership

By Dr Naazir Mahmood

Among the many new academies, institutions and organisations that Z A Bhutto established within just five years, from 1972 to 1977, the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) stands out as a thriving academy. Though it is nearly always short of funds, its chairpersons from Fakhar Zaman and Ifkhar Arif to Qasim Bhugio and Yusuf Khushk have contributed their efforts to produce some good work.

Now under the leadership of Dr Najiba Arif, the first female chairperson of the Academy, the PAL has once again become a dynamic body that organises frequent conferences and seminars across the country, even with the meagre resources it has at its disposal. Najiba Arif is a prolific academic with over 50 research papers to her credit, published in some of the top literary journals and magazines both nationally and abroad. She is also a poet and translator of considerable repute, with over a dozen books with her name adorning the shelves.

As the head of the Urdu department — and later as the dean of the faculty of language and literature — at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, she launched the research journal ‘Meyaar’ that set good research standards in Urdu. She was also the guest editor of ‘Bunyaad’, the research journal of the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). Another of her contributions was as the editor of the first indexation agency of Urdu journals in Pakistan. Recently she has initiated a series of provincial conferences to discuss the literary developments in all the country’s federating units.

Being in Karachi in the last week of April allowed me to attend the second day of the two-day conference ‘Adabyaat-e-Sindh: Muasir Tanazur’ (Literature of Sindh: Contemporary perspective). Held on 25-26 at the National Museum Auditorium, the conference was well-attended on the first day, but due to the strike in Karachi protesting against the genocide, the second day witnessed thin participation. The quality of discussions was high

and the level of interest in the audience remained noticeable throughout all the sessions. The first session discussed post-independence literary criticism and research in Sindh. The second session, ‘The state of fiction in Sindh after independence’, was highly informative and interesting. Iqbal Khursheed is a short-story writer who has established his name in the literary circles of Pakistan at a fairly young age. He set the tone of the discussion on the post-independence fiction in Sindh by recalling his own family’s migration from India to Sukkur and how it impacted the psyche of those who found their new homeland welcoming. When the newcomers settled in Sindh, the linguistic panorama of the province became more colourful and fecund. Of course, the early writers had a tremendous backlog of nostalgia that reflected in their writings.

Iqbal Khursheed cited the examples of ‘Aab-e-gum’ by Mushtaq Yusufi that had a clear touch of nostalgia, and ‘Khuda ki Busti’ by Shaukat Siddiqui which delineated the life in Karachi in the 1950s when the city was stretching itself to accommodate millions of new inhabitants that were pouring in from all corners of India. The life in Lyari Khalid Akhtar is depicted in his novel ‘Chakiwara mein Wisaal’, a literary masterpiece that drew instant appreciation from Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Quratulain Hyder’s novels ‘Aag ka darya’, ‘Sita Haran’, and ‘Housing Society’, Iqbal Khursheed finds epitomes of novel writing in Pakistan. However, Hyder relinquished her Pakistani citizenship to head back to India.

Pre-partition Sindh appears in the stories of Amar Jaleel and in the translations of Agha Saleem, whereas Asad Muhammad Khan carries forward his nostalgia with a pinch of salt. Hasan Manzar is another writer whose novels and novellas have appeared regularly in recent decades. Other writers that Iqbal Khursheed mentioned included Akhlaq Ahmed, a former editor of ‘Akhbar-e-Jahan’, Shamshad Ahmed, Anwar Ahsan Siddiqui, and more recently Kashif Raza and Rafiqat Hayat.

The next speaker was Rafiqat Hayat, who emerged as an out-

standing Urdu fiction writer in the 21st century. His novels ‘Khamkhwah ki Zindagi’ (A futile life) and ‘Mirwah ki raatein’ (The Mirwah nights) proved to be his major early achievements in Urdu fiction writing, discussing common people’s lives in Sindh. More recently, his magnum opus novel ‘Rolaaq’, spanning over 600 pages, has attracted wide appreciation and won several literary awards. In his discourse on the literature of Sindh, Rafiqat stressed that by the 1970s the fiction in Sindh did have a nostalgic linge such as in the fiction of Quratulain Hyder and Ahsan Farooqi.

But in the past 50 years or so Urdu novels did focus on the issues of Sindh as a complex province where diverse ethnic entities converged. In this category, Rafiqat mentioned the name of Hasan Mantzar, whose novel ‘Dhani Bukhsh ke betay’ (Dhani Bukhsh’s sons) is a literary tour de force. Asif Farrukhi also wrote stories reflecting the problems of Karachi that deteriorated from the 1980s onwards. Jeem Abbasi is also a prominent name in the fiction coming from Sindh. Though Jeem Abbasi is a Sindhi, most of his fiction writing is in Urdu. Rafiqat Hayat concluded his discussion on an optimistic note that there are visibly new trends in fiction writing in Sindh.

Dr Karan Singh, in his comprehensive essay, outlined all major trends in fiction writing in Sindh. He believed that from the early nostalgic writing the literature in Sindh has moved to reflect the new ground realities of life in the province. He mentioned Umrao Tariq as a noteworthy writer whose ‘Badan ka twaa’ and ‘Khushki mein jazeerey’ are prime example of contemporary fiction writing in Sindh. In addition, he mentioned Sultan Jameel Naseem, Zaheda Hina, Najmul Hasan, Mubeen Mirza, Anwaar Ahmed Zai, Hasrat Kasgunjwi, and Akhtar Ansari Akbarabadi as prominent writers of Urdu in Sindh.

Akhlaq Ahmed took the floor and, rather than enumerating the names of writers, he preferred to talk about the contours and nature of fiction writing that is never stale, quite contrary to the normal perception about the ‘decline of fiction’. Akhlaq re-

minded the audience that Karachi suffered under intense ethnic rivalries for at least 25 years, witnessing some improvement in the situation that is still marred by killings almost on a daily basis. But the fiction did not properly reflect that period due to an atmosphere of terror and dominance of a party that many writers feared.

Akhlaq Ahmed opined that we have not translated our fiction into English, nor do we have ample access to world literature in Urdu; that should be a cause of concern. Today’s world has new issues — related to the digital age, mobile technology, and social media. In this unipolar world, the fiction is not the same anymore, with a so-called war on terror appearing to be never-ending, and suicide bombers may appear anywhere from nowhere. Virtual reality is also transforming fiction the world over, which will also reflect in our fiction soon.

The next speaker was Madad Ali Sindhi, who delivered his talk about the evolution of literary journals and magazines in Sindh, citing examples of ‘Nai Zindagi’ that Ubaidullah Sindhi edited. Shaor by Azar Zubi, Naya Adab by Jamil Jalibi, and Nai Qadrain from Hyderabad and Mehran by Ibraheem Joyo also came under discussion. The session on children’s fiction was pretty interesting as Ibn-e-Aas informed the audience that thousands of books for children appear on shelves every year but most of them revolve around themes of religions and sectarian issues.

Ibn-e-Aas struck a chord with the audience when he asked the listeners to visit any book fair to see the books on display for children and check how many could be considered good literature for children’s intellectual grooming.

He was right in pointing out that an overemphasis on patriotism and religiosity has turned children into ticking time bombs that could explode anytime. Overall, the conference was a timely intervention that proved to be a success, though there were some writers whose names appeared in the program, but due to the strike in the city and protests, they could not attend the event.

A sacred trust

By Shahameen Jehan

Tampering with rivers and nature transcends mere environmental concern; it touches upon deep spiritual, ethical, and philosophical dimensions found across various faiths and belief systems. Canal construction on rivers is prohibited due to its detrimental impact on ecosystems, water quality and local communities. Protecting our waterways is essential for the well-being of all.

From a spiritual perspective, many religious texts emphasise the sacredness of creation. In the Quran, Allah is described as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and humans are seen as stewards of His creation. Tampering with rivers, which are often viewed as symbols of life and sustenance, could be seen as a violation of this stewardship. Similarly, in the Bible, the Book of Genesis speaks of God creating a harmonious world, and humanity’s role is to care for it. The Torah also emphasises the importance of preserving the land and its resources, recognising that all creation is interconnected.

In Hinduism, rivers are revered as sacred entities, often personified as goddesses like Ganga. Tampering with such rivers is not just an ecological concern but also an affront to the Divine. The Hindu philosophy of Dharma emphasises living in harmony with nature, suggesting that disrupting natural systems leads to disharmony not just in the environment but in society as well.

Buddhism, with its principle of interdependence (pratityasamutpada), teaches that all beings are interconnected.

Araghchi, Munir discuss regional security in crucial talks

COAS Asim Munir and Iranian FM Araghchi discuss border cooperation, emphasizing the need for deeper bilateral coordination

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

RAWALPINDI: Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi held crucial talks with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, during a high-level meeting at the General Headquarters (GHQ) on Monday. The discussions, as reported by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), centered on regional security dynamics and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two nations.

The meeting focused on the evolving geo-strategic environment, with both Pakistan and Iran acknowledging the shared security challenges they face. One of the key issues discussed was the security mechanism along the Pak-Iran border, where both sides agreed on the need for improved coordination and more robust operational responses. This cooperation is seen as critical, particularly in the context of rising tensions in the region and the need for swift, coordinated action to mitigate potential threats.



General Munir underscored the historical ties that bind Pakistan and Iran, referring to the countries not just as geographical neighbors but as brotherly nations united by centuries-old cultural, historical, and religious connections. He emphasized the importance of strengthening mutual trust and reinforcing cooperative mechanisms to address emerging security concerns effectively. According to ISPR, both leaders agreed on the necessity of building on these foundational ties to ensure long-term stability in the region.

Foreign Minister Araghchi, in turn, praised Pakistan's ongoing role in promoting peace and stability within the region. He expressed appreciation for

the meeting comes at a critical moment in South Asian geopolitics, with tensions between Pakistan and India reaching new heights, and a renewed emphasis on securing borders and addressing cross-border threats. As both nations look towards fostering greater cooperation, the outcomes of this dialogue could have significant implications for regional security and diplomatic relations moving forward.

Pakistan's commitment to fostering constructive military and diplomatic engagements with Iran. The tone of the meeting reflected a shared desire to deepen the strategic partnership between the two countries, recognizing the potential for collaboration across various sectors, including security, economic development, and diplomatic efforts.

The meeting comes at a critical moment in South Asian geopolitics, with tensions between Pakistan and India reaching new heights, and a renewed emphasis on securing borders and addressing cross-border threats. As both nations look towards fostering greater cooperation, the outcomes of this dialogue could have significant implications for regional security and diplomatic relations moving forward.

Zardari cautions India on peace risks, China offers support

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Chiang Kai-shek called on President Asif Ali Zardari at the Presidential Palace to discuss bilateral ties and the deteriorating Pakistan-India situation. The meeting underscored China's consistent support for Pakistan and highlighted shared concerns over India's recent actions.

During the meeting, President Zardari voiced strong concern over what he described as "irresponsible and aggressive" statements from the Indian government, warning that India's behavior is threatening the peace and stability of the entire region. He thanked the Chinese government for its steadfast friendship and unwavering support during critical times.

"The reckless posture of the Indian government after the Pahalgam incident is endangering not only bilateral relations but also regional stability," Zardari said, refer-



ring to the deadly April 22 attack in Pahalgam that killed 26 tourists and has since been followed by a flurry of Indian accusations against Pakistan.

Ambassador Chiang Kai-shek reiterated China's position as Pakistan's enduring and trusted partner, calling the two nations "iron brothers" and stressing Beijing's support for peace and stability in South Asia. "China will always stand by Pakistan in achieving our shared aspiration for regional harmony

and prosperity," he affirmed.

The ambassador also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's diplomatic openness in sharing its position on the evolving situation.

He emphasized that China continues to closely monitor developments and supports dialogue over confrontation. President Zardari reiterated this stance, declaring that water is a non-negotiable lifeline for Pakistan and any interference will be met with resolute national defence.

SC to decide fate of civilian trials in military courts

Press Release

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has completed its hearings in the highly anticipated case concerning the legality of trying civilians in military courts. The court has reserved its verdict, which is expected to be delivered within the week. The decision will have profound implications for Pakistan's judicial system and could significantly affect the political trajectory of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The proceedings of the case were marked by internal divisions among the lawyers representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), with cracks emerging in the party's legal defense. Senior counsel Khawaja Harris, a prominent figure within PTI's legal team, notably undermined key arguments put forth by his colleagues aligned with the party. His critiques exposed weaknesses in the overall defense strategy, leaving PTI's position increasingly fragile.

On the other side, the Attorney General of Pakistan put forth a robust defense of military trials, arguing that such proceedings are constitutionally valid under the current security situation. He emphasized that military courts are necessary to maintain national stability, especially given the recent spate of violent attacks on military installations. This stance is rooted in the claim that civilian courts are ill-equipped to handle cases related to national security in times of heightened unrest.

OIC urges India to halt provocative rhetoric

News Desk

RIYADH: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has expressed deep concern over the deteriorating security situation in South Asia, which is further escalating due to baseless accusations made by India against Pakistan.

The OIC group has condemned all forms of terrorism, stressing that the region, already unstable, is facing heightened tensions.

In a statement, the OIC pointed out that the long-standing Kashmir dispute remains a core issue affecting peace and security in the region.

Bangladesh, Pakistan discuss untapped potential in pharma sector

By Uzma Ehtasham

KARACHI: Bangladesh and Pakistan have significant untapped potential for collaboration in the pharmaceutical sector, with discussions held in Karachi on 5 May 2025 between Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner S.M. Mahbubul Alam and the visiting President, Senior Vice President, and office bearers of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI).

The meeting focused on promoting bilateral trade and investment, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry. Present at the discussion were prominent business figures, including Sohail Altaf, Hamza Tabani (Chairman of Tabani Group), and Hatim Tabani (CEO of Tabani Group). RCCI President Usman Shaukat, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, and Vice President Fahad Barlas expressed keen interest in enhancing trade relations between



Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The RCCI President highlighted an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between RCCI and the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) aimed at fostering mutually beneficial trade and commercial ties. A major point of discussion was the potential collaboration between the two nations in the pharmaceutical industry.

Deputy High Commissioner Alam shared that Bangladesh is home to over 300 advanced pharmaceutical companies and that the country exports its pharmaceutical products to more than 80 countries globally. He further noted that

Bangladesh meets 97 percent of its domestic pharmaceutical needs and is developing a dedicated Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) industrial zone.

The Deputy High Commissioner extended an invitation for business delegations from RCCI to visit Bangladesh and encouraged deeper interactions between business chambers and entrepreneurs of both nations. Emphasizing the importance of stronger people-to-people connections, he assured the Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner's full support in fostering stronger trade and economic relations between the two countries.

forming the force and restoring public confidence.

The suspended individuals, including several SHOs, sub-inspectors, head constables, and constables, have been instructed to report to "B Company PHQ Garden, South Zone Karachi" without

delay. The action affects officers from various regions of Sindh, including Karachi, Larkana, Sukkur, and Mirpur Khas. According to the official notification, while the suspended personnel will continue to receive their salaries and allowances as per depart-

mental rules, they are barred from resuming their previous assignments until further notice. This disciplinary crackdown follows the outcome of an internal inquiry triggered by a surge in complaints regarding misconduct, corruption, and negligence.

PSL PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE



Zalmi crush Sultans by 7 wickets to stay playoff race

By our correspondent

MULTAN: Peshawar Zalmi handed Multan Sultans a comprehensive seven-wicket defeat in the 25th match of Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10, played at the Multan Cricket Stadium, as they chased down a modest target of 109 with ease. Zalmi's dominant run chase was a statement of intent, reaching their target in just 13 overs, with a commanding 42 balls to spare.

The chase was anchored by a solid knock of 49 runs from Saim Ayub, who fell just short of a half-century. He was supported by Max Bryant, who remained unbeaten on 38, alongside Mohammad Harris, who chipped in with 7. The performance was a stark contrast to the expectations set by some of Zalmi's key players, as captain Babar Azam could only muster 8 runs and Mitchell Owen was dismissed cheaply for just 1. However,



the batting depth ensured the chase was completed without any further hiccups.

On the bowling front, Shahid Aziz was the only bright spot for Multan, claiming two wickets, but his efforts were not enough to stem the tide as Zalmi cruised to victory.

Earlier in the day, Multan Sultans, after winning the

toss, chose to bat first but were left to rue their decision as they were bundled out for a paltry 108 runs in 19.1 overs.

Their batting line-up crumbled under pressure, with Tayyab Tahir top-scoring with just 22 runs. Mohammad Rizwan and Shai Hope both contributed 17 runs each, but no batter

could anchor the innings as wickets fell in quick succession.

Zalmi's bowlers executed their plans with precision. Ahmad Daniyal was the standout performer with three wickets, while Muaz Sadaqat and Luke Wood picked up two each. Ali Raza, Saim Ayub, and Alzarri Joseph chipped in with one wicket apiece, as they kept the Sultans under constant pressure.

This loss marked Multan Sultans' eighth defeat of the tournament, further plunging their campaign into disarray and leaving their playoff hopes in tatters. For Zalmi, the win was a crucial boost, bringing them up to 8 points from 8 matches. They now face two must-win fixtures against Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars on May 8 and 9. With their playoff hopes on the line, Zalmi cannot afford to slip up in these remaining games—anything less than two victories could end their PSL 10 journey.

Pakistan's position in latest ICC test and ODI rankings

By our correspondent

KARACHI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has released its latest update to the men's Test and One-Day International (ODI) rankings, revealing subtle shifts in team standings as the cricketing world gears up for a busy season. Australia continues to lead the Test rankings with 126 rating points, though its margin at the top has slightly narrowed, dropping from 15 to 13 points. England has leapfrogged both South Africa and India to claim the second spot with 113 points, marking a significant boost for Ben Stokes' side as they prepare for upcoming series.

South Africa now sits in third, while India has slipped to fourth place in the Test format. New Zealand holds on to fifth, with Sri Lanka in sixth. Pakistan has dropped to seventh—a concerning



decline for the team as they continue to seek stability in the red-ball format. The West Indies, Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe round out the bottom three, ranked eighth, ninth, and tenth respectively.

In the ODI rankings, India remains firmly at the top with 124 points, extending their lead as the most consistent team in the 50-over format.

New Zealand has climbed to second, nudging Australia down to third. Sri Lanka has secured the

fourth position, while Pakistan stands fifth, edging out South Africa, who are now sixth.

The rankings come at a crucial time as teams prepare for the upcoming international calendar, including the ICC Champions Trophy next year and several high-stakes bilateral series. For teams like Pakistan and South Africa, the latest rankings serve as a wake-up call, while India and Australia continue to consolidate their dominance across formats.

Zalmi aim to win final two matches, says Ahmed Daniyal

By our correspondent

MULTAN: Peshawar Zalmi all-rounder Ahmed Daniyal has expressed confidence in his team's ability to secure victories in their final two matches of the ongoing tournament. Speaking at a post-match press conference in Multan, Daniyal conveyed the squad's determination and focus, stressing that they are fully committed to performing well in their remaining fixtures.

"I've played two matches now. The whole team has worked hard, and we're trying to win the last two games," Daniyal said, expressing his confidence in the squad's preparations and unity. He emphasized the strong sense of camaraderie within the team, noting that everyone backs each other, a sentiment that has contributed to the team's resilient spirit.

Daniyal, who has been contributing to the team's efforts in multiple areas, shared that he particularly enjoys batting and is continuously working on improving his skills in that domain. His all-round ability has been an asset for Zalmi, and he remains committed to refining his game for



the challenges ahead.

While acknowledging the formidable nature of the Multan Sultans, Daniyal reiterated the strength of Zalmi's planning and mindset. "Our planning and intent are solid—we'll try our best to win," he said, underlining the team's focus on executing their strategy in the upcoming matches.

When asked about his captain, Babar Azam, Daniyal had nothing but praise for his leadership style. "I think Babar made his own decisions—he always thinks about the team," Daniyal remarked. "This is my first time playing under Babar's captaincy. He explains things well and leads thoughtfully," he added, highlighting the trust and respect Babar commands within the team.

By ISPR/
Asghar Ali Mubarak

RAWALPINDI: Security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have successfully eliminated eight militants during a series of targeted operations, underscoring the region's ongoing battle against cross-border terrorism. According to a statement from the ISPR, the op-

erations, which took place over May 4 and 5, focused on foreign militants suspected of orchestrating attacks on civilians and security forces.

One of the key operations occurred in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, where three foreign militants were killed in a major intelligence-based raid. This success was followed by a series of intense

confrontations in South Waziristan, where two more militants were gunned down during a fierce exchange of fire.

Tragically, the operation also saw the loss of Naik Mujahid Khan, a 40-year-old soldier from Kohat district, who was martyred in the line of duty. ISPR hailed his bravery and sacrifice, recognizing his dedication to the country's

fight against terror.

In separate clashes, security forces engaged foreign militants in the Khyber and Bannu districts, resulting in the deaths of three additional suspects. The operations, which also led to the recovery of weapons, ammunition, and explosive materials, painted a chilling picture of the militants' preparedness for further violence.