



Eight killed, dozens injured in Indian strikes

Indian missile strikes targeted Muzaffarabad, Kotli, and Bahawalpur, with sources confirming loud blasts as tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors sharply escalated

By ISPR

RAWALPINDI: At least eight Pakistani civilians, including a young girl, have been killed and 33 others injured in what the military described as an unprovoked barrage of Indian cross-border strikes, according to a statement from the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry.

Addressing a press conference with visible restraint but unmistakable urgency, Major General Chaudhry confirmed that two people remain unaccounted for. He painted a chilling picture of the impact, describing how the border town of Ahmedpur East saw the deaths of five civilians, including a child. Elsewhere, the strikes struck at places of worship, hitting mosques in Kotli and



Muridke.

The attack on Muridke claimed one more life and left another person wounded. In Sialkot's Kotli Loharan village, a shell landed in a civilian residential area, while a local dispensary in Shakargah was also struck — all indications, the military says, that the targeting was neither random nor defensive.

The tone of the press briefing turned from somber to defiant as Major General

Chaudhry declared, "The Pakistani military is giving a fitting response to the enemy's unjustified aggression." He announced that the media would be escorted to the affected areas, allowing journalists to bear witness to what Pakistan insists are deliberate strikes on civilian infrastructure. "This is naked aggression," he said, his words underscoring the gravity of the moment. "And the world must see it."

While India has not publicly commented on the latest skirmish, the silence has done little to ease tensions. The Pakistani military's framing of the incident as a direct attack on innocent lives — homes, mosques, and medical facilities — is likely to push Islamabad into rallying diplomatic pressure on New Delhi, even as it signals readiness to respond on the battlefield.

The strikes mark a sharp escalation along the Line of Control, and although such flare-ups are not new, the civilian casualties and the destruction of non-military sites have added a new layer of urgency. Pakistan is now positioning the incident not merely as a border skirmish but as a breach of international norms — one that demands global scrutiny and response.

India criticizes OIC's backing of Pakistan

News Desk

NEW DEHLI: Tensions between Pakistan and India have escalated further following a statement by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) supporting Pakistan's position in the ongoing conflict.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs expressed strong disapproval of the OIC's statement, claiming it was issued under Pakistan's influence. "It is absurd to ignore facts such as the Pulwama attack and its cross-border connections," the statement read, referring to an attack in Kashmir that had previously sparked military tensions between the two countries.

India's foreign office also rejected the OIC's intervention in what it considers India's internal affairs, stressing that the organization's comments were unwelcome.

This statement from the OIC came in the wake of a meeting in New York, where the OIC group highlighted India's baseless allegations against Pakistan, stating that they were contributing to regional tensions and destabilizing the situation in South Asia. The statement reinforced Pakistan's position, further exacerbating the diplomatic rift between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.

Modi struggling with criticism at home, says Fazl

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), stated that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is facing growing criticism within India itself. Speaking to the media in Lahore after offering condolences on the passing of Senator Professor Sajid Mir at Markaz Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith on Ravi Road, the JUI-F leader highlighted internal dissent within India amid the rising tensions with Pakistan.

Praising the late Sajid Mir, Maulana Fazl described him as an ideological personality who always stood firmly for religious matters in Parliament, regardless of political affiliations. "Great people leave behind their greatness in the form of lasting ideologies," he said.

Commenting on the current Pakistan-India conflict, Fazlur Rehman said that India had made baseless allegations against Pakistan without presenting any evidence, which had, in turn, cast doubt on its own narrative. He noted that such unsubstantiated accusations had undermined India's credibility on the international stage. He emphasized that the defense of the homeland is a collective national duty, adding, "While we may have political differences, the entire nation is united when it comes to protecting the country."

Two Indian jets downed in Pakistan's swift response to strikes

In a CNN interview, DG ISPR Sharif Chaudhry confirmed the downing of two Indian Air Force aircraft near Bhatinda and Akhnoor, signaling a significant escalation in tensions

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan military has shot down two enemy jets in retaliation for late-night strikes by India, launched after midnight at the sites of Kotli, Bahawalpur, Muridke, Bagh, and Muzaffarabad, state media reported.

This was confirmed by Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, who said the response was ongoing but did not share operational details. "We shot down two Indian planes and we are responding to Indian aggression right now, as we speak," he told British broadcaster Sky News.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said in an interview on CNN: "I can confirm that two aircraft of the Indian Air Force have been taken down. The locations I have so far are around Bhatinda in India [Punjab] and Akhnoor [in occupied Kashmir]."

Earlier, he said three Pakistanis had been killed and 12 injured in what he described as "cowardly" missile strikes by India in Kotli, Bahawalpur, Muridke, Bagh, and Muzaffarabad, carried



out after midnight, for which military retaliation was already under way. The strikes come amid intensifying tensions between the two countries following a militant attack in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam.

Appearing on Sky News around 2.45am, Tarar reiterated that Pakistan's response was ongoing, while declining to share operational specifics. Asked about the potential for escalation, he said, "It is an evolving situation." He repeated that Pakistan had anticipated an attack by India and insisted that "they would be the aggressor."

"We offered an investigation into the whole Pahalgam episode. We wanted a fair and transparent investigation.

But India, without evidence, has targeted civilians, women, and children. India had no right to do that," he said. "As the minister for information, I have occupied a seat of responsibility," Tarar added. "I have taken an oath and I will give you verified information."

When asked why India blamed Pakistan for the Pahalgam attack, Tarar responded: "This area (Pahalgam) is a good 200 kilometers from the Line of Control. The FIR was filed in 10 minutes, but police arrived after one and a half hours." He accused India of "running away" from an investigation into the attack and claimed that the country's governing party "wanted a reason to attack Pakistan."

Pakistan actively exposing India's false narratives: Tarar

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar addressed the National Assembly on Tuesday, emphasizing Pakistan's proactive stance against India's information warfare. He highlighted that Pakistan is actively working to expose India's false narratives on the global stage, countering its disinformation campaigns effectively, particularly after the recent Pahalgam incident.

The National Assembly continued its discussion on what lawmakers termed India's "false flag operation" in Pahalgam, which resulted in the deaths of 26 individuals on April 22, 2025, in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). India quickly blamed Pakistan for the attack without providing any evidence,



a claim Pakistan firmly denied.

In his address, Tarar revealed how Pakistan had successfully countered India's attempts to block its online content by airing a song from the Pakistani armed forces on Indian YouTube channels through strategic geotagging and advertisement purchases. Tarar also praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's diplomatic and public engagement efforts, which have been instrumental in exposing India's disinformation campaigns to the international community.

The minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmiri people, calling Kashmir the "jugular vein of Pakistan," and reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, political, and diplomatic backing for the ongoing struggle in IIOJK. He also noted Pakistan's sacrifices in the global war on terror, asserting that there is credible evidence linking India to state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan and accusing India of involvement in the assassination of Sikh leaders abroad. Meanwhile, MQM-P's Dr Farooq Sattar criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "jingoistic mindset" as a threat to regional peace and noted India's failure to gain international support.

Armed forces fully prepared, PM briefed at ISI headquarters

Shehbaz Sharif lauds Pakistan Army's unmatched professionalism and discipline, reaffirming full confidence in a force he hails among the world's finest

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made a high-stakes visit to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters, flanked by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and the country's top military brass, in a move that symbolized Pakistan's unshaken resolve to guard its sovereignty amid growing regional and internal threats.

The visit, though routine on the surface, took on heightened significance given the backdrop of escalating tension on the eastern border and the looming specter of hybrid warfare. In what appeared to be a show of unity between civilian and military leadership, Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed full confidence in Pakistan's armed forces, describing the Pakistan Army as "one of the most professional and disciplined military forces in the world."

With the country's top defence and intelligence apparatus at hand, he declared, "The nation stands with its brave forces," a statement that seemed designed to send a clear message to ad-



versaries beyond the border and within. During a comprehensive briefing, the Prime Minister and other senior leaders were updated on the current security landscape, particularly in relation to India's increasing belligerence along the Line of Control.

The conversation extended beyond conventional military preparedness to the complex realm of hybrid threats — a nod to the new age of conflict where cyber warfare, disinformation, and non-state actors now play a defining role.

The leadership was reportedly presented with a detailed account of the evolving regional matrix, including the use of terrorist proxies and asymmetric tactics by hostile elements.

The national defence strategy, as outlined in the briefing, appears to be recal-

ibrating towards a multi-layered response — combining intelligence, kinetic capability, and diplomatic maneuvering. What emerged clearly was a consensus that operational readiness must not only be maintained but further fortified to meet modern-day threats. The message was unambiguous: any breach of Pakistan's sovereignty would be met with "an effective and decisive response."

In his closing remarks, Shehbaz Sharif applauded the role of national security institutions in offering strategic clarity and timely decision-making during periods of uncertainty. The leadership, collectively, underlined their commitment to the defence of Pakistan's territorial integrity and the protection of its people, even as the rules of engagement in the region continue to shift.

Indian forces hit Noseri Dam in shelling attack

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Indian attack on water reservoirs has been condemned as a blatant violation of international laws and norms. According to reports, the intake structure of the Noseri Dam, located on the Neelum River, was targeted in a shelling incident that occurred at 2 a.m. last night.

Security sources have labeled the Indian shelling on the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project as one of the most severe acts of aggression on Pakistan's water infrastructure. The shelling caused significant damage to the intake gates and also targeted a hydraulic protection unit of the system. These actions are seen not only as an infringement of international laws but also



as a breach of established norms surrounding the protection of vital infrastructure, especially those related to water resources.

The attack is viewed with great concern as it undermines the safety and functionality of critical infrastructure that is essential for Pakistan's water and energy supply. Such provocations are expected to escalate

tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, already embroiled in a heated conflict over several issues, including water rights.

Pakistan's authorities have expressed strong condemnation of the attack, highlighting its damaging impact on the country's water resources and energy systems.

UN discusses India-Pakistan war standoff

News Desk

NEW YORK: In a move that underscores the escalating concern over regional stability, the United Nations Security Council held a closed-door meeting to address the growing tensions between Pakistan and India.

The meeting was convened at Pakistan's request following India's recent unilateral actions and increasingly provocative rhetoric, which have brought the two nuclear-armed neighbors perilously close to a military confrontation.



Pakistan's Foreign Office issued a statement following the session, revealing that Council members expressed "deep concern" over the deteriorating security situation and

the recent aggressive posturing by India.

Several Security Council members reportedly emphasized the Kashmir dispute as a central factor fueling re-

gional instability and underscored the need for a peaceful resolution in accordance with UN resolutions and the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiri people. During the meeting, Pakistan's envoy briefed the Council on India's actions on 23 April, highlighting intelligence reports that suggest the possibility of Indian military aggression. Pakistan's representative made it clear that the country is fully prepared to defend its sovereignty, adding that if provoked, it would exercise its right to respond in accordance with the UN Charter.

The Senate seat had become vacant after the passing of PPP's long-serving lawmaker Taj Haider. With this win, Waqar Mehdi will now serve in the upper house of Parliament until March 2027.

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War: A borrowed voice, a lost cause

In the fragile theatre of geopolitics, perception is often more potent than missiles, and narratives are crafted long before the smoke of any skirmish clears. Nowhere is this more visible than in the way India commands its media machinery, shaping global opinion with the precision of a seasoned strategist. On the other side of the border, Pakistan's media appears caught in a loop—always a step behind, always responding, rarely leading. The most recent episode in this ongoing saga came with former Indian-Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik's damning comment that Prime Minister Narendra Modi lacked the courage to go to war. For Indian media, this was raw material to stoke war hysteria, to flex muscles for domestic audiences, to feed the illusion of dominance.

Yet in Pakistan, the reaction was tragically telling. The clip was seized upon gleefully, paraded across television channels, reposted across social media platforms, and celebrated as though it were a diplomatic coup. But behind the chuckles and the headlines, reality offered a colder reminder. India, in the very same breath, had already advanced its agenda, crossing lines both geographical and military. While we made memes and traded press statements, Indian missiles were not just testing the limits—they were making statements in the sky, with intent and purpose. And here lies the deeper, more troubling issue. In our obsession with Indian narratives, we have allowed ourselves to become mere amplifiers of another country's agenda.

The core failure is not just one of communication—it is a national security lapse camouflaged in broadcast negligence. Media houses, obsessed with reactive journalism, missed the forest for the trees. The story was never about what Malik said. The real story was India's encroachment, its readiness to back rhetoric with movement, and our corresponding silence on how that line was crossed. Pakistan's military, a force respected globally for its professionalism and fortitude, deserves better than to be propped up by viral tweets and press conference bravado. If, as some quarters claim, Indian aircraft were downed during recent incidents, then show us the evidence. Share the debris. Present the captured. Do not make the world rely on patriotic assertions and cinematic monologues. In the age of high-definition wars and satellite intelligence, credibility lies in proof—not passion.

There is an urgent need to recognize the danger in outsourcing our national pride to the echo chambers of reactionary media. Our television panels, filled with loud voices and louder claims, create the illusion of control while ceding ground in the real battle for narrative power. Every time we allow Indian headlines to dictate our tone, we fall into a trap of their making. This isn't strategy. This is surrender dressed as commentary. Even more worrying is the blind faith placed in external allies, especially the presumed intervention of China should conflict with India escalate. It is a dangerous fantasy—one that confuses strategic alignment with unconditional loyalty. China's global interests are vast, and its priorities do not always intersect neatly with Pakistan's. Hoping for Chinese intervention every time tensions rise is not diplomacy. It is wishful thinking bordering on strategic negligence.

The defence of our sovereignty cannot be subcontracted out to another superpower. This is our fight, and our alone. It is only through clarity of thought and independence of policy that Pakistan can navigate such perilous waters. What the country needs now is a media that reports, not reacts. One that asks hard questions, not just of the enemy, but of ourselves. Why did our air defences fail to detect or prevent an incursion? Where were the institutional protocols that should have activated the moment the line of control was breached? And why, despite years of tension, do we still appear surprised every time India takes an aggressive stance? There is a deeper lesson buried in this cycle of reaction. As long as we continue to celebrate moments that only mirror India's chaos rather than challenge it with substance, we will remain hostage to their framing.

The world's sympathy does not lie with the loudest narrative, but the most consistent and credible one. And credibility cannot be built on selective outrage or reactionary patriotism. It must be cultivated through truth, evidence, and unshakable resolve. The Pakistani media must remember that it is not just a mirror reflecting national sentiment—it is a megaphone, an institution with the power to shape opinion, both domestically and abroad. Its failure to do so responsibly has consequences far beyond ratings and retweets.

In moments of crisis, the world listens closely. What it hears from us matters. So let us put an end to this unhealthy obsession with India's shadow. Let us stop measuring our strength through their weaknesses. Let us build a discourse that stands on its own feet—fortified by facts, powered by purpose. Let us treat national security not as a trending topic, but as a solemn responsibility. The war of perception, if fought right, is half the battle won. But to win it, we must first find our own voice—and use it not to echo, but to lead.

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

By Uzma Ehtasham



Despite Pakistan's visible restraint and its calls for peace, India has chosen aggression, launching targeted strikes along the Pakistani border. These provocations, once again, leave no doubt about India's reckless pursuit of dominance and the dangers of its unilateralism. While the international community is just beginning to stir from its selective slumber, Pakistan stands fully prepared—backed not only by its armed forces but by an increasingly mobilized public whose defiance has filled the streets in spirited demonstrations of unity and resolve. In the face of these hostilities, Pakistan has not merely postured but acted with strategic clarity. The recent successful tests of the Ababeel and Fatah missiles—both capable of long-range and nuclear payloads—send a clear message that national defence is neither neglected nor compromised. These are not bluffs. They are statements of deter-

rence aimed at preserving peace, not inviting war.

Pakistan has rightly taken the matter to the United Nations Security Council. A special session has been called to bring global attention to India's belligerence and to warn against the further erosion of regional stability. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, cancelling his foreign visits, and Deputy Prime Minister-cum-Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar are engaging with global counterparts to convey the gravity of the situation. Their tone is not incendiary; it is measured and urgent. Pakistan does not seek escalation—it seeks justice. But as India stages a false-flag drama in Pahalgam, allegedly to deflect from its own domestic failings and to invoke yet another chapter of manufactured terrorism, its intentions are becoming transparent. Malaysia's Prime Minister has backed Pakistan's call for an impartial investigation. Russia, too, has been briefed.

In Moscow, Pakistan's ambassador, Khalid Jamali, openly warned of India's imminent aggression and made it unequivocally clear: any attack will be met with a defence that includes both conventional and

nuclear responses. The arrival of Iran's Foreign Minister in Islamabad, with plans to visit India next, signals that regional actors recognize the need to intervene diplomatically before events spiral further. Meanwhile, provocations on the Line of Control continue, but the Pakistan Army is responding with full capability and readiness. On the political front, Federal Minister for Information Attaulah Tarar and ISPR Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry briefed national political leaders in a rare in-camera session. That PTI chose to boycott this moment of national unity is both unfortunate and short-sighted.

In times such as these, the nation cannot afford political theatrics disguised as dissent. As Defence Minister Khawaja Asif pointed out, it is a poor reflection when politics is prioritised over the state. India's attempted narrative manipulation over the Pahalgam incident has not just failed—it has backfired. New Delhi's refusal to accept Pakistan's offer for an impartial probe has damaged its credibility, not ours. From the Gulf Cooperation Council to other global partners, calls are growing louder for a ne-

gotiated peace and for the implementation of UN resolutions on Kashmir. If anything, this crisis has exposed the fragility of India's international image as a responsible regional actor.

A resolution is expected soon in the National Assembly, which will not only condemn India's actions but also present evidence of its involvement in terror activities within Pakistan. This is not just about the defence of territory. It is about exposing the hypocrisy that has allowed India to posture as victim while playing the aggressor. Pakistan is at a critical juncture. Its leadership—both civil and military—must now act not just with caution but with clarity. The world is watching. But more importantly, the people of Pakistan are watching. This is not the time for division. It is the time for unwavering unity, wise leadership, and a refusal to be provoked into anything but a principled and proportionate defence.

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By Atiq Raja



When we think of world peace, we often picture formal summits, polished statements by world leaders, and photographs of diplomats shaking hands under the glare of a dozen cameras. That's the imagery international relations has given us—peace as something orchestrated by a powerful few. But the truth is quieter, more rooted, and far more accessible than we might think. Real peace doesn't start at podiums. It begins at kitchen tables, in school corridors, on neighborhood walks, and in the quiet moments when people choose empathy over ego. Peace, at its core, is deeply personal. It starts with individuals. And it starts inside them. A person who has made peace with themselves—who knows how to navigate their own anger, their fears, their prejudices—is far more likely to be a calming force in their surroundings.

The opposite is true too: inner turmoil often spills outward. A world full of people without emotional balance is a world primed for conflict, whether on the street or between nations. That is why practices such as mindfulness and emotional intelligence aren't just lifestyle choices; they are the earliest lines of defence in the struggle for a more peace-

ful world. But it isn't only about self-awareness. Peace must also be reflected in how we treat others. In divided societies, in regions marked by historical scars and ongoing tensions, the ability to respect difference is powerful. When a person chooses not to respond with suspicion to someone of another faith or background—when they choose dialogue over assumption—they are making peace tangible. And these choices stack up. A thousand acts of kindness can do more than one conference room declaration ever could.

The danger is not difference; it is division. And there's a subtle difference between the two. People will always disagree—it's a condition of human life. But disagreements don't have to lead to hostility. The choice lies in how we handle conflict. If we allow ourselves only to engage with those who already agree with us, we create echo chambers that deepen divides. If we learn to listen, especially when we disagree, and to ask questions rather than shout answers, we make space for resolution. That approach must begin at home and school—places where children absorb more from the adults around them than any curriculum could teach. Teaching them how to navigate disagreement with grace is as important as teaching arithmetic. What we pass on to the next generation matters enormously. We have, for too long, taught history as a series of wars, conquests, and col-

lapses.

Less time is spent on stories of reconciliation, peacebuilding, and the difficult, courageous work of those who chose healing over hatred. The legacy we leave behind should not only be a warning of the cost of violence but an invitation to imagine something better. And we don't need to be part of global organizations to help. Peace can be practiced through the smallest of initiatives. Volunteering at a local food bank, helping organize a community clean-up, or simply being present at interfaith dialogues can shift energy in a space. These are not just feel-good gestures—they are fundamental acts that counteract the growing normalization of division and indifference. Social media, so often blamed for fueling hate, can be turned into a vehicle for good. Every time someone uses it to share a story of unity, to challenge a discriminatory post, or to build bridges across digital divides, they are participating in a modern kind of peacekeeping.

Being a bridge builder isn't glamorous. It rarely makes headlines. But it is some of the most important work anyone can do. It is the effort of reaching out when it would be easier to walk away. Of choosing to understand instead of dismiss. Of making the time to see someone as more than a label or stereotype. And in deeply polarized communities—where mistrust runs deep and pain is generational—those small gestures matter enormously. They soften the ground.

They make dialogue possible. But peace also means standing firm when needed. There is no true peace without justice. Ignoring inequality or staying silent in the face of violence is not neutrality—it is complicity. Common people have more power than they think. A single voice calling out injustice in a community meeting, on a public bus, or online, can inspire others to speak too. It sends a signal: that silence is not the only option.

Of course, none of this is easy. Living peacefully, especially in a world where rage and suspicion dominate headlines, can feel like swimming against the tide. But peace is not passive. It demands action. It requires showing up, not with banners and slogans necessarily, but with honesty, humility, and courage. It asks us to apologize when we're wrong, to forgive even when it's hard, to hold space for someone else's pain, and to choose humanity over ideology. The idea that peace is only the work of leaders is not just false—it is dangerous. It lets too many off the hook. The world's great peacemakers were not born with titles. They were teachers, neighbors, students, shopkeepers. They simply made a choice. And that choice is available to all of us.

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Faith, forgiveness and the future

By Ahsan Iqbal

May 6 is etched in my memory – not because it ended in tragedy, but because it nearly did. That afternoon in 2018, as I stepped out from a routine community gathering in Narowal, a young man in the crowd pulled out a gun and shot at me. The bullet tore through me, but that day, something else was wounded more deeply than flesh – our collective spirit as a nation. That bullet, driven by hate and false religiosity, was not just aimed at me. It was aimed at the very dream of a peaceful, pluralistic and united Pakistan. As I reflect on that harrowing moment, what grieves me most is not personal pain, but the reminder of how deeply we are drifting apart, poisoned by division, and misled by the voices of intolerance.

The young man who shot me was not a foreign agent, a hardened criminal, or a militant with years in the mountains. He was one of our own – driven by a warped understanding of religion and intoxicated by a culture of political hate. That realisation shook me more than the bullet itself. He emerged from an environment where, despite our society's strong values of tolerance and unity, a few have sought to exploit religion for political purposes and suppress dialogue with discord. His action, though condemned by the vast majority, is a symptom of a more profound crisis: the polarisation of our people and the presence of certain elements who seek to hijack our faith by preaching division.

My survival was a miracle, but the sickness in the section of our society remains. While I received overwhelming support and adoration in the months that followed, what I also saw were social media campaigns justifying violence, the silence of those who should have condemned it, and the troubling glorification of intolerance by certain elements.

This left me feeling more wounded than any bullet could. When hate is nurtured in the garb of faith, when slogans replace arguments and when dissent becomes a crime, we are tearing apart the fabric of our beloved Pakistan.

The experience became

a defining moment in my life. Rather than responding with fear, I chose hope. Rather than retreating, I chose to rebuild. Today, on the very soil where hatred struck, we are launching the Narowal Peace Dialogue Forum – a platform that transforms pain into purpose, and tragedy into transformation.

Pakistan today stands at a crossroads. The rampant polarisation is not accidental but manufactured. Certain groups and voices have made it their mission to weaponize religion and politics. They exploit the emotional and spiritual commitments of ordinary Pakistanis, turning them into tools for disruption. The cost of this intolerance is not just political instability but the erosion of trust, community and the foundations upon which our country was built. The tragedy is that Islam, a religion rooted in peace, mercy and justice, is being misrepresented by those who seek power through fear.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Do you want me to tell you of what is better than the rank of fasting, prayer and charity?" The Companions said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He (pbuh) said, "Making peace between people among whom there is discord, for the evil of discord is the shaver." We must return to that path.

As we work towards transforming our nation, we are working towards building a nation where faith is used to heal. Where difference of opinion is celebrated. We are now working towards promoting critical thinking, empathy, revitalising education curricula and institutional reform. We are now focused on instilling values in our youth that the true essence of religion is compassion, not condemnation. That democracy is built on dialogue, not destruction.

We are initiating interventions that align our educational systems, religious institutions, and digital platforms with the goals of peace, stability and tolerance. We are working towards investing not just in infrastructure, but in values – tolerance, empathy, critical thinking and the dignity of disagreement.

I believe in the boundless potential of our people. But we cannot realize it unless we confront this culture of hatred head-on, which is

why we are working towards a national curriculum that teaches critical thinking, not blind obedience. We are engaging with Ulema to preach unity, not division. As political leaders – myself included – we are prioritising healing over point-scoring.

Undoubtedly, we need justice – not just in the courts, but in our culture. Therefore, efforts are being made to ensure that no person is targeted because of their beliefs, their party, or their profession. Justice that protects the right to disagree without fear. Justice that is seen, heard, and felt in every town, classroom, and mosque.

There are no shortcuts to rebuilding a broken society. It requires each of us to step back from the edge, look inward, and make the conscious choice to listen, forgive and rebuild. Our history is rich with examples of tolerance and coexistence. Let us not allow the voices of extremism to erase that legacy.

We cannot allow the misguidance of a few to determine the destiny of the many. What happened to me is not a symbol of despair, but a call to action. I have now redoubled my efforts to reform our education system to instill critical thinking, empathy and an accurate understanding of religious values. Our children will now grow up learning that disagreement is not enmity, and that diversity is not a threat but a strength. Curriculum reform will include teachings on civic responsibility, tolerance, and the shared history of our diverse communities.

We have crafted a national strategy for interfaith and intrafaith harmony. Pakistan is home to many faiths and sects, each woven into the fabric of our society. We are working towards fostering spaces – both online and offline – where dialogue is encouraged, differences are respected and common ground is celebrated. The Narowal Peace Dialogue Forum is an example of such interventions. We are engaging with religious leaders, educators, media figures, and policymakers to amplify messages of peace and reject the voices that preach exclusion and hatred.

I am also cognizant of the fact that the digital age requires a new kind of vigilance. Online platforms have become breeding grounds for misinformation, conspiracy theories and radicalisation. We are working towards establishing robust frameworks to monitor and counter hate messaging online, not by silencing free speech, but by drowning out lies with truth. We are creating digital literacy programs in schools and communities that empower citizens to question what they see, resist manipulation, and engage responsibly in civic discourse.

As a nation, we must also learn to forgive – not as a sign of weakness, but of strength. Justice is necessary, but healing cannot come from punishment alone. We are working towards investing in de-radicalisation programmes that offer young people a way back from the edge. Compassion, not vengeance, is our compass if we are to truly rebuild trust.

On May 6, I could have lost my life. But instead, I gained a mission. A mission to ensure that no other parent must bury a child lost to hate, that no other leader is shot for words they speak, and that no Pakistani is ever again made to feel like an enemy in their own land. The bullet missed my heart, but it struck my conscience – and I intend to act.

This is not just the duty of the government, but of every parent, teacher, cleric, journalist, and citizen. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe." Let us make this teaching a lived reality in our streets, schools, and institutions.

To the youth of Pakistan, I say this: you are not the soldiers of anyone's ideology but the builders of your own destiny. Let your hands raise books, not guns. Let your voices be used for debate, not destruction. And let your hearts remain open – to difference, dissent and humanity.

The future of Pakistan depends not on silencing each other, but on hearing each other. Not on dividing in the name of religion, but on uniting in its true spirit. It starts with a choice: to replace hate with hope, fear with faith, and division with the determination to build a country where every citizen feels seen, safe and heard.

Mines and minerals

By Iftekhar A Khan

Since the good news of minerals worth trillions of dollars was announced, politicians of various hues went into action to oppose the exploration of newfound underground wealth. Politicians of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government have been at the forefront in opposing the mining process in the province. They link the decision to explore and excavate minerals with the consent of Imran Khan. But Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's enthusiastic announcement about the underground mineral wealth is worth mentioning: 'Trillions of dollars' in mineral deposits can help Pakistan say goodbye to institutions like the IMF.

The PTI stalwarts presented a strange logic. They equated national wealth, which would likely change the fate of the people of the province and the country, with Imran's release from prison. His sister was at the forefront in vocalising this decision. Despite facing serious legal cases, Imran is having the best time. He gets choice food at state expense, holds political meetings with his subordinates, and meets his friends and family. What else does he need? No political prisoner in the nation's history lived in such style and comfort.

KP politicians were never known to oppose government projects to explore and excavate natural wealth, unlike the politicians of Balochistan, who have always defied state-sponsored projects.

The Baloch have usually been under the strong influence of Baloch chieftains. But now, the situation is rapidly changing. The previously underprivileged class is becoming educated and aware of its basic rights.

Recall the Reko Diq project in Balochistan. It was then-chief minister Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo who had organised an in-camera briefing for the lawmakers to take them into confidence on the Reko Diq subject. And who else could it be other than Yar Mohammad Rand, then the PTI chief in Balochistan, who called the arrangement a 'fiasco'. The PTI leadership

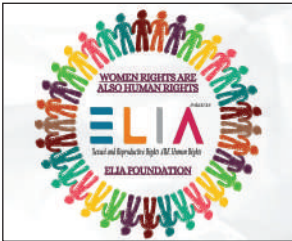
is now opposing mines and minerals projects in KP. History is repeating itself. The PTI leadership seems to be anti-progress. Is there any major project to show for Imran Khan's nearly four-year rule?

However, in 2013 the then CJP Iftekhar Chaudhry ordered the cancellation of the Reko Diq project for being non-transparent and primarily in favour of Tethyan Copper Company, an Australian organisation and its Chilean partner company. The Australian company claimed to have invested more than \$220 million to import equipment and machinery to carry out the exploration and excavation process according to the agreement. It filed a case in the International Court of Arbitration, which fined Pakistan heavily. Chaudhry Iftekhar hasn't been heard of much ever since. Reko Diq episode was his last exploit.

Many politically motivated situations have a common reason: class disparity. The rich class of society in politics has its coffers full, while the poor class living below the poverty line wants jobs and two meals a day, education for its children and affordable medical treatment. Whether mines and minerals are a federal or provincial subject would have little consequence for the poor.

Nevertheless, the dissenting political parties are suggested to settle their differences by keeping the plight of the poor in mind. The stark reality is that when children of the rich politicians and bureaucrats go abroad for their education, 26 million poor children remain unschooled, thus illiterate. What would be their future in the country in the years to come, where the rich politicians do not allow the government to dig out the mineral wealth concealed underground?

What's the point of the prime minister's proclamation about the country being bestowed with mines and minerals worth trillions of dollars if the nation cannot benefit from them? The misgivings shown by the provincial governments are that the federal government might deprive the provinces of their share of mineral wealth unearthed from their territories.



Military vows response to 'heinous Indian provocation'

India's Prime Minister declared that water once flowing beyond its borders will now be retained for domestic use, intensifying regional resource tensions

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: The military spokesperson issued a stern warning, stating, "Pakistan will respond to this at a time and place of its own choosing. This heinous provocation will not go unanswered." Local sources reported a complete blackout in Muzaffarabad following the explosions, raising concerns about the extent of the damage. The situation remains fluid, with authorities conducting damage assessments and verifying casualty reports.

The military spokesperson did not provide immediate details on potential casualties or infrastructure damage, but assured the public that further information would be shared once confirmed. Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major



General Chaudhry confirmed that Indian forces had carried out airstrikes on three locations within Pakistan. The targets included the Subhanullah mosque in Bahawalpur's Ahmed East area, Kotli, and Muzaffarabad.

Major General Chaudhry condemned the attacks, describing them as "cowardly" and "shameful." In a late-night press briefing, Chaudhry stated, "Some time ago, the cowardly

in Pakistan, including Muzaffarabad, Kotli, and Bahawalpur, as tensions between Pakistan and India reached a new peak. The blasts, believed to be the result of Indian airstrikes, have raised serious concerns about the escalating situation between the two nuclear-armed nations.

In the wake of the attacks, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif warned that a clash between Pakistan and India seemed "inevitable" and could occur "at any moment." His remarks come after weeks of heightened tensions following an attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which India blamed on Pakistan—an accusation that Islamabad vehemently denied. Authorities have urged the public to remain calm as they await official updates.

Kh Asif warns of 'inevitable' response to India

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has issued a stark warning about the growing likelihood of a military confrontation with India, citing escalating regional tensions and increasing signs of Indian aggression. Speaking to the media, Asif revealed that recent briefings shared with the government suggest that hostilities between the two countries could erupt at any moment. "A confrontation could occur at any moment," he cautioned.

Asif made it clear that Pakistan would respond decisively to any attempts by India to seize its territory, vowing that New Delhi would face severe consequences for any strategy aimed at occupying even a fraction of Pakistan's land. "India will pay a heavy price for any strategy aimed at occupying even an inch of our land," he declared, underscoring the gravity of the situation.



The Defence Minister also condemned India's recent actions to restrict Pakistan's water supply, referencing the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty by India. He warned that any attempt to block Pakistan's access to water would result in dire consequences. "If Indian leaders attempt to block our water, they will drown in it," Asif said, adding, "Should India build any structures to stop our rivers, we will destroy them."

In parallel, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the headquarters of the Inter-Services Intelligence

India's military strikes in Pakistan regrettable: China

News Desk

BEIJING: China has expressed its concern over the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, following India's military strikes in Pakistan earlier this week. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson described India's military operation as "regrettable" and called for both countries to act with restraint in the face of mounting hostilities.

"We are concerned about the ongoing situation," the spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday, highlighting China's position in the matter. The spokesperson further noted that India



and Pakistan share a long-standing relationship as neighbors, a dynamic that is of importance not only to the two South Asian nations but also to China, which shares borders with both.

Emphasizing China's stance on terrorism, the spokesperson reiterated Beijing's opposition to all forms of terrorism. However, the key message was one of de-escalation and dialogue. "We urge both sides to act in the larger interest of peace and stability," the statement read. "Remain calm, exercise restraint, and refrain from taking actions that may further complicate the situation."

The comments from China reflect growing international concern over the risk of further escalation in the region.

With tensions high between the two nuclear-armed countries, the international community has increasingly called for diplomatic solutions to avoid the outbreak of full-scale conflict.

China's position underscores its desire for stability in a region that is critical to its own geopolitical interests.

Pak-Iran border security top agenda in Iranian FM, COAS talks

By our correspondent

RAWALPINDI: Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the Foreign Minister of Iran, met with General Syed Asim Munir, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan, at the General Headquarters (GHQ) on Tuesday for a strategic discussion focusing on regional security and bilateral cooperation.

The meeting provided an opportunity for both leaders to engage in constructive talks regarding the geo-strategic challenges facing their respective countries, with particular attention given to the security situation along the Pak-Iran border. The meeting also focused on ways to enhance coordination between the two nations, specifically aimed at improving border management and addressing security concerns.



General Munir reaffirmed the long-standing, brotherly relationship between Pakistan and Iran, underscoring the shared history, culture, and religious ties that unite the two nations. Both leaders acknowledged the importance of continued collaboration to strengthen security and regional stability.

In his remarks, Seyed Abbas Araghchi expressed his appreciation for Pakistan's role in fostering peace and stability in the region, recognizing the signifi-

cance of Pakistan's efforts for broader regional cooperation. The discussions further reflected the shared commitment of both countries to address common challenges and work together on mutually beneficial developments for the future.

The meeting highlights the ongoing efforts by Pakistan and Iran to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance regional stability, focusing on practical measures to address security issues and promote peaceful cooperation.

Imran bars PTI leaders from attending APC, NSC

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has issued strict instructions to party leaders, commanding them to prevent the implementation of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill. Additionally, he has prohibited them from attending key national meetings such as the All Parties Conference (APC), the apex committee, and the

National Security Committee unless granted his prior approval.

These directives were shared following a 45-minute prison meeting between Imran Khan and his sisters, Uzma Khan and Noreen Khan. Imran's sister, Aleema Khan, who was denied permission to meet him personally, conveyed details of the discussion to the media, sharing that her brother had expressed strong reservations about party

operations being conducted without his direct input. According to Aleema, Imran made it clear that no policy decisions would be approved without his consent.

Imran Khan also took specific issue with party member Ali Amin Gandapur, accusing him of neglecting his duties by not visiting him in jail despite his seniority within the party. He noted, "Entire cabinets used to go to jail or London—why not Ali

Amin?" drawing a comparison to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's cabinet.

In the meeting, Imran directed PTI leader Junaid Akbar to focus on reinvigorating the party's movement, stressing the need for a strong push from the grassroots level.

He encouraged protests outside the Election Commission and urged filing appeals in election tribunals to challenge perceived injustices.

PSL PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE



10



Sultans exit shakes up PSL playoff battle

By our correspondent

KARACHI: With only five league matches left in Season 10 of the Pakistan Super League, the race to the playoffs has entered its most intense and unpredictable phase. While Multan Sultans have bowed out of contention, the rest of the league is embroiled in a high-stakes scramble, where every game now carries the weight of a do-or-die encounter.

At the top of the table, Quetta Gladiators sit with 11 points and appear to be in the most comfortable position, but they are not out of the woods just yet. Their upcoming fixtures against Islamabad United and Multan Sultans will determine whether they secure a playoff berth with momentum or risk slipping at the final hurdle. Quetta's campaign has been marked by consistent



performances, but with such fine margins at play, even the slightest misstep could reshape the table.

Islamabad United and Karachi Kings both trail closely with 10 points apiece from eight matches, and they are now set for a nerve-wracking finale. United face the dual challenge of taking on both Quetta and Karachi—fixtures that could not only define their own playoff des-

tiny but could directly eliminate or elevate their rivals. Karachi Kings, meanwhile, will look to maintain their late-season resurgence, but must first get past Peshawar Zalmi before their high-stakes clash with United, which has all the makings of a virtual knockout.

On the edge of the playoff picture, Lahore Qalandars find themselves teetering. With nine points

from nine games, their qualification hopes hinge entirely on a final clash with Peshawar. For Lahore, it is a straightforward equation—win and wait, or bow out and reflect. Their journey through the tournament has been a mixed bag of near misses and clutch moments, but their margin for error has now disappeared entirely.

As for Peshawar Zalmi, they remain alive in the race despite sitting fifth with eight points. Two matches remain in their campaign, and a clean sweep would see them back in contention. But like Lahore, the window is narrow, and the pressure immense. Their upcoming matches offer both opportunity and peril—especially with their final fixture coming against Karachi, another side desperately clinging to its playoff hopes.

Rana cites rain disruptions in Qalandars' PSL setback

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars Team Director Sameen Rana has said his side was well on course to finish in the top two of the PSL 10 league stage, but uncontrollable circumstances, particularly weather disruptions, tilted the season against them. Speaking to media in Lahore, Rana pointed to the washed-out match against Quetta Gladiators and rain-altered conditions in the tight contest against Karachi Kings as key setbacks.

Despite sitting fourth on the table, Rana remained optimistic about Qalandars' playoff chances. "Our fate is in our own hands now. If we win, we qualify," he said, stressing that the team still has everything to play for. "The defeat was a shock, not a knockout. That's what keeps us going. We're still in the tournament." Rana defended pacers Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf, who have faced criticism in recent days, calling them "Pakistan's pride" and "two of the world's best bowlers."

He said both were



deeply affected by the team's recent results. "Rewards are not about greed—they're about affection. It's a tradition we started that others followed," he added, referring to the culture of acknowledging players' efforts with personal incentives. Responding to criticism around player selection, Rana pushed back against claims that inclusions like Naeem were made for publicity. "Qalandars don't need a name. It's unfair to say that. Ahmad Daniyal played well—we're happy for him," he said.

He also underlined the success of Qalandars' Player Development Program (PDP), pointing out that many of its graduates now represent rival PSL franchises. "We didn't work

for fame, but to provide talent to Pakistan," he said. Addressing technical critiques of the team's strategies, particularly the decision not to play a third pacer, Rana said: "Not playing a third pacer wasn't the sole reason. If Shaheen and Haris couldn't defend it, no one else could have either."

On franchise ownership, Rana categorically dismissed speculation of a change. "The rumor that new owners will take over is false. We've already confirmed on 31 December that all six current owners will continue," he said, affirming the Qalandars' long-term commitment to the PSL. "We've been through highs and lows—security issues, COVID, fixing scandals—and we're still here."

Riaz Afridi suffers health setback during practice

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars' assistant coach Riaz Afridi, elder brother of team captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, was rushed to hospital on Tuesday after falling ill during a training session, just days before the team's crucial final league match in the Pakistan Super League.

Team sources revealed that Riaz experienced a sudden drop in blood sugar levels while at practice, prompting an immediate medical response. He was swiftly taken to a nearby medical facility where he is now receiving treatment and reported to be stable. Riaz Afridi, who briefly represented Pakistan at the international level with a solitary Test appearance in 2004, has been a regular fixture on the coaching staff of the Qalandars, working closely with the team and his younger brother throughout the season. His sudden illness has come at a critical juncture for the franchise, as the team prepares for a do-or-die encounter against Peshawar Zalmi on May 9.

The pressure on Lahore Qalandars is



palpable. With nine points from nine games, the side must secure a win in their final match to stay alive in the tournament. The stakes have only grown higher after Peshawar Zalmi's dramatic victory over Multan Sultans, which shook up the points table and left the race to the playoffs hanging in the balance.

Shaheen Shah Afridi now finds himself tasked with not only leading a team on the brink of elimination but also coping with the emotional strain of his brother's medical emergency. The squad, already walking a fine line between qualification and exit, must summon both skill and resilience as they head into Thursday's decisive clash.

Qalandars must beat Zalmi to keep PSL dream alive

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars must secure victory in their final group-stage match against Peshawar Zalmi on May 9 to stay alive in the tenth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL X). With nine points from nine games, the defending champions are teetering on the edge, making their last fixture a virtual knockout.

The playoff race was



thrown wide open after reshuffled the standings Zalmi's recent triumph over Multan Sultans, which the final round of league

matches. Shaheen Shah Afridi's side will now have to dig deep to ensure they don't miss out on a top-four finish in what has already been a turbulent campaign marked by inconsistent performances and weather-affected matches.

Led by Babar Azam, Peshawar Zalmi now find themselves in a commanding position. Victory in their remaining two fixtures would guarantee them a playoff berth.