

## No one dares stop Pakistan’s water: DG ISPR

DG ISPR General Sharif Chaudhry warned that any drastic water blockage would be irrational and could trigger severe consequences the world will inevitably witness

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry, the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), has issued a stark warning over any potential Indian move to block Pakistan’s water supply, describing the consequences as far-reaching and enduring. In a recent interview with a British news agency, he underscored the critical importance of water for Pakistan’s population of over 240 million and urged that no one should dare to cut off this vital resource.

While the government of Pakistan has already made its position on the water issue clear to India, Lieutenant General Chaudhry stated that the military has no further comment to add beyond what the civilian leadership has articulated. However, he was firm in his



message that such a drastic act of water blockage would not only be irrational but would also invite serious consequences that the world would eventually witness.

Reaffirming Pakistan’s commitment to peace and stability, the military spokesperson emphasized that the Pakistani armed forces fully respect and follow the directives of the civilian government. He reiterated that the ceasefire along the Line of Control will be

maintained, with ongoing confidence-building measures aimed at reducing tensions between the two countries. Yet, he warned that any violation of the ceasefire will be met with an immediate and precise military response, limited strictly to the area of the breach to avoid escalation.

Lieutenant General Chaudhry also confirmed the recent military developments in the aerial domain, announcing that the sixth In-

dian aircraft shot down by Pakistan’s air force was a Mirage 2000 fighter jet. He highlighted the restraint shown by Pakistani forces in targeting only enemy aircraft, without escalating the conflict further. Despite the hostilities, all Pakistani airbases remain fully operational, with resources ready to quickly restore any base if needed.

Turning to the broader political context, the ISPR chief sharply criticized India’s Kashmir policy. He described India’s approach as a failure, accusing it of repression and of treating the Kashmir dispute as an internal matter rather than a conflict requiring genuine dialogue. Lieutenant General Chaudhry warned that until India agrees to meaningful talks, the Kashmir conflict will remain unresolved, and the risk of further escalation will continue to loom over the region.

## Naqvi slams Kartarpur ban, calls Modi’s fascist agenda

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Senator Mohsin Naqvi has come down hard on the Indian government over its decision to stop Sikh pilgrims from visiting the Kartarpur Sahib corridor, calling it an act that lays bare the “fascist mindset” of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The move, which has drawn strong reactions across the region, was described by Naqvi as a reflection of growing religious intolerance under the Modi-led regime.

Speaking with clear indignation, the interior minister said the Indian leadership’s refusal to allow Sikh Yatris to visit one of their holiest sites was not only politically motivated but also a blunt betrayal of the basic principles of religious freedom. “The fascist thinking of the BJP and Modi has laid bare their narrow vision and disregard for religious freedom,” Naqvi remarked, calling the step yet another manifestation of a divisive ideology that thrives on exclusion.

Kartarpur, which lies just four kilometers inside Pakistan, has long been celebrated as a powerful symbol of religious harmony and cross-border peace, particularly between Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs. For Naqvi, the significance of the corridor stretches far beyond geopolitics. “Kartarpur stands as a shining example of tolerance and Pakistan’s solidarity with Sikh brothers and sisters,” he said, adding that the corridor serves as a rare and precious space for interfaith respect in a region too often defined by suspicion and conflict.

## Four killed, 20 injured in blast near FC fort in Qila Abdullah

News Desk

QILA ABDULLAH: At least four people lost their lives and around 20 others were wounded following a powerful explosion near the Frontier Corps (FC) fort in Qila Abdullah district of Balochistan on Saturday, officials confirmed. The blast, which struck close to the boundary wall of the security installation, caused significant destruction to nearby vehicles and shops, leaving the local community shaken.

Deputy Commissioner Riaz Khan described the scene as chaotic, explaining that the explosion targeted the rear wall of the FC fort, which backs onto a busy market area. The force of the blast was so severe that several shops in Jabbar Market collapsed, while others caught fire, leading to substantial loss of both life and property. “Armed assailants engaged in gunfire with FC personnel immediately after the explosion,” Khan said, highlighting the tense and dangerous situation that unfolded.

## No prior warning, denies Dar on Jaishankar’s claim

Foreign minister challenges India’s narrative on the Pahalgam incident, accusing New Delhi of inventing stories without any solid evidence against Pakistan

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Ishaq Dar, has strongly rejected India’s assertion that it provided prior warning before recent cross-border attacks, calling the claim baseless and lacking any credible evidence. Dar expressed confusion over whom Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was purportedly informing about such warnings, emphasizing that no official communication had reached Pakistan.

Dar struck a cautious yet firm tone regarding the fragile ceasefire between the two countries. While expressing hope that the ceasefire will continue, he warned that any further aggression from India would be met with a decisive and strong response. His remarks underline the tense atmosphere lingering on the borders despite diplomatic efforts to ease hostilities.

Challenging India’s narrative about the Pahalgam incident, Dar accused New Delhi of fabricating stories and failing to provide concrete proof of Pakistan’s involvement. He dismissed In-



dian claims of shooting down a Pakistani F-16 during the crisis, stating that Pakistan had not deployed its jets at that time, rendering the Indian assertion unfounded.

Highlighting the measured restraint shown by Pakistan’s armed forces during heightened tensions, Dar said Islamabad responded firmly only to hostile moves, including diplomatic provocations by India.

He noted that while Indian media stirred public emotions following Pahalgam, Pakistan had proactively communicated with several countries that it would not be the first to initiate conflict, underscoring Pakistan’s desire for peace despite provocations. Dar further disputed

India’s claim that Pakistan struck 15 targets, insisting that no such attacks had been launched by Pakistan at that stage. He referenced confirmation from a Western country supporting Pakistan’s account of events, reinforcing Islamabad’s position of innocence in the escalation.

Ending on a note of guarded optimism, Dar stated that the ceasefire between Pakistan and India remains in place but cautioned that any escalation by India would prompt Pakistan to respond firmly to defend its sovereignty. His comments reflect the delicate balance Islamabad seeks to maintain amid persistent regional volatility and diplomatic tensions.

## Kh Asif hits out at Taliban over regional tensions

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s defense minister, Khawaja Asif, has issued a sharp rebuke aimed at the Taliban, highlighting a bitter irony in regional politics. He pointed out that Pakistan endured accusations and pressure from the United States and Western countries over its alleged ties with the Taliban—an entity branded as terrorists and a threat to global security.

Yet today, the same Taliban, once Pakistan’s adversaries’ scapegoats, stand openly alongside Israel and India, countries long seen by Pakistan as hostile actors. Asif did not speak solely from his own view but echoed the words of Praveen Sawhney, a prominent Indian journalist and defence analyst widely regarded as a voice of Indian media. Sawhney reportedly noted that during India’s recent Operation Sindoor, only Israel and Afghanistan sup-



ported India’s stance globally, implying a troubling realignment in the region’s geopolitical allegiances.

This commentary gains added significance in light of recent reports suggesting that the Taliban’s interim defence minister made a covert visit to India shortly after the operation, underscoring how swiftly alliances are shifting. For Pakistan, this serves as a stark reminder of the fragile and complex nature of regional relationships, where yesterday’s adversaries can become unexpected partners, and the narratives

once wielded as political weapons lose their potency amid the evolving strategic landscape.

Khawaja Asif’s remarks reflect not just political posturing but the underlying anxiety of a nation grappling with changing realities. The question that now looms large is how Pakistan will navigate this emerging dynamic where erstwhile foes align with its own rivals, forcing Islamabad to rethink its approach to security and diplomacy in an increasingly uncertain neighborhood.

## Assam CM accuses Congress MP of being ‘ISI agent’

News Desk

DISPUR, INDIA: The Chief Minister of India’s Assam state, Himanta Biswa Sarma, has levelled explosive allegations against Congress Member of Parliament Gaurav Gogoi, accusing him of having ties with Pakistan’s

intelligence agency, the ISI.

Speaking to the media, Sarma claimed that Gogoi had travelled to Pakistan at the invitation of the ISI and had even received training there. “We have evidence that Gaurav Gogoi visited Pakistan and was trained by the ISI. The

invitation came not from Pakistan’s Ministry of Culture or Foreign Affairs, but from its Interior Ministry,” the Chief Minister alleged.

He further vowed to present what he described as concrete proof of Gogoi’s alleged links with Pakistani intelligence by 10 September.

## Muslim professor arrested for questioning ‘Operation Sindoor’

News Desk

HARYANA, INDIA: Another sign of India’s shrinking space for dissent, Ali Khan Mahmudabad, an associate professor at Haryana’s Ashoka University, was arrested from his Delhi residence after tweeting critically about ‘Operation Sindoor’ and questioning the right-wing celebration of Colonel Sophia Qureshi’s role in the campaign.

According to police, the arrest was prompted by a complaint filed by a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)’s youth wing, while the Haryana State Commission for Women also issued a notice to the professor for his remarks. Professor Mahmudabad had posted that those



praising Colonel Qureshi should also speak up for victims of mob violence and illegal home demolitions.

The tweet, though measured, appeared to challenge selective patriotism—a move that drew swift institutional backlash. His arrest has triggered widespread condemnation.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi denounced the action, calling it an assault on free speech. “The professor’s post was neither anti-national nor anti-women—it was simply an opinion,” Owaisi stated, accusing Haryana police of violating legal protocol by detaining him outside their jurisdiction.

Academic circles and political commentators have voiced concern over the arrest, warning that such actions threaten democratic norms and academic freedom. “Silencing university professors over critical thinking is not just authoritarian—it undermines the very foundation of a free society,” said one university official who wished to remain anonymous. Observers note a troubling pattern in India’s treatment of minority voices and intellectuals, where dissent is increasingly equated with disloyalty.

## Fight against polio to continue until mission is complete: Mustafa Kamal

Experts urge the minister to trust his own source of information as most of EOC briefings are concocted and EOC Sindh’s performance may sabotage polio fight in the country

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal has reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to eradicate polio, vowing that the mission will not end until the virus is fully eliminated. Speaking ahead of a nationwide campaign, Kamal acknowledged the sacrifices made in the fight against the disease and assured that all necessary support and resources are being provided.

“Pakistan has made great sacrifices in this struggle. Our commitment is unwavering, and the campaign will continue until every child is safe from polio,” Kamal said. He emphasized that strong coordination between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains crucial, with both countries launching synchronized polio vaccination drives to tackle the cross-border threat. The upcoming nationwide anti-polio campaign is set to begin on 26 May, targeting over 45.4 million children under the age of five.

Kamal said the government remains determined to wipe out polio by the end of 2025. A spokesperson for



the Ministry of Health noted that Dr. Chris Elias, a key figure in global polio eradication efforts, has praised Pakistan’s progress and expressed hope that the country will meet its goal by next year. While cheering the praise, minister must work on weakened areas to truly get the virus out of the country.

Experts said the minister should rely on his own sources of information rather than EOC briefings—particularly those from EOC Sindh, which has consistently stumbled in its fight against the virus due to sheer administrative incompetence. Senior officials, especially partner staff, have remained in the same positions for years without any

accountability, despite repeated poor performance.

It is worth noting that during every campaign in Karachi, EOC Sindh has found itself mired in controversy—ranging from threatening parents to taking legal action against them—despite having access to communication strategies that could have persuaded rather than intimidated. Minister Kamal must pay serious attention to EOC Sindh, which has become a hub of mismanagement and nepotism.

This is a matter of public welfare and cannot be handled like Pakistan Steel or the Sindh Secretariat, where jobs are routinely handed out to family and friends.

## ‘Pakistan has avenged 1971 war defeat,’ says Atta Tarar

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has declared that Pakistan has avenged the wounds of the 1971 war, claiming a decisive military and diplomatic response against India that, he said, will be remembered for generations.

Speaking at a ceremony in Lahore to honor the military and political leadership after what he called a “victory in the battle of truth,” Tarar praised the leadership of Army Chief General Asim Munir. “Under General Munir’s spirited command, Pakistan has given India a resounding answer—one that it won’t forget,” he said.

Tarar claimed that Pakistani fighter jets downed six Indian aircraft and targeted military positions across the border, forcing a rattled India to seek ceasefire negotiations with the help of the United



States. “Defeated and desperate, India was left begging for peace at America’s feet,” he remarked. He described the recent events as a historic reckoning. “This is the lesson the enemy will remember forever. Pakistan has now taken its revenge for 1971,” Tarar said.

Touching on recent tensions, the minister said Pakistan was ready to investigate the Pahalgam incident, but India backed away from diplomatic dialogue. “If there are going to be talks, they will now

only be about occupied Kashmir,” he added. Reiterating Pakistan’s commitment to peace, Tarar said, “We are a peaceful nation, always advocating for peace, but if our goodwill is mistaken for weakness, we know how to respond.”

He also thanked allied nations for their support and vowed to continue Pakistan’s journey towards economic progress, saying the country would outpace India not just in defence, but also in development.

## Talks with India must now be on equal terms: Hafiz Naeem

By our correspondent

MALAKAND: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has made it clear that any future dialogue with India must take place on equal terms, accusing New Delhi of fabricating incidents and manipulating international opinion to malign Pakistan. Speaking at a large public gathering in Chakdara, Malakand—held under the banner of “Defence of the Homeland and Gaza March”—he directly challenged India’s credibility in the global arena.

Addressing a charged crowd, Hafiz Naeem criticized what he described as a



politically motivated drama staged by India in Pahalgam. He claimed the incident was a deliberate attempt by the Indian government to shift blame onto Pakistan while violating international norms in the process. “India staged a

talks without a firm stance. “If talks are to happen, they will be held on equal footing,” he said, suggesting that any return to the negotiating table should be guided by principles of parity and mutual respect, not desperation or imbalance. His comments appeared to be a veiled criticism of past attempts at dialogue that, according to him, lacked assertiveness on Pakistan’s part.

Reaffirming his party’s consistent position on the Kashmir dispute, Hafiz Naeem stressed that no durable peace in the region could be achieved without recognizing the will of the Kashmiri people.



# Trump highlights trade as key to peace in South Asia

Trump’s comments spotlight economic opportunity, they also reignite debates over his unpredictable diplomacy and past controversial remarks on the region

By Amjad Qaimkhani

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump, in a recent interview with an American news channel, once again stirred controversy with his remarks on South Asia, emphasizing trade as a crucial tool for resolving conflicts and promoting peace. He singled out India’s high tariff rates as a major obstacle to business, yet acknowledged India’s willingness to eliminate all tariffs on American goods—an overture that hints at a potentially significant trade agreement.

While Trump’s comments highlight economic opportunity, they also revive debates



over his unpredictable diplomatic style and past contentious statements regarding the region. Trump took a notably positive stance toward Pakistan, a country often viewed through a prism of geopolitical tension. He praised the ongoing constructive dialogue between the United States and Pakistan, underscoring Pakistan’s openness to trade despite enduring hostility from India.

This praise contrasts sharply with his criticism of India, implicitly acknowledg-

ing Pakistan’s role as a co-operative partner rather than a problematic actor. His remarks come amid heightened Indian aggression in Kashmir and beyond, issues that have long strained relations with Pakistan and attracted international concern. Further courting controversy, Trump claimed that his mediation prevented a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, framing himself as a peacemaker who defused one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the world.

This assertion, while disputed by many analysts, feeds into his narrative of strong leadership and diplomatic prowess. Trump’s push for increased trade re-

lations in South Asia, particularly encouraging economic ties with Pakistan, reflects a broader strategy where economic interdependence is envisioned as a pathway to lasting stability, challenging traditional security-centric approaches to regional conflicts.

His remarks underscore a complex and often polarizing approach to diplomacy, one that simultaneously fuels debate and signals a shift in US engagement—highlighting Pakistan’s positive role amidst ongoing Indian hostility, while stirring fresh discussion about the limits and potential of trade-driven peace initiatives in a historically fraught region.

# Iran insists on uranium enrichment despite nuclear deal

News Desk

TEHRAN: Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araqchi, has made a firm declaration that uranium enrichment will continue regardless of whether a new nuclear agreement is reached. Speaking amid ongoing diplomatic tensions, Araqchi underscored Iran’s determination to maintain its nuclear activities while addressing the concerns raised by the United States.

He acknowledged that Washington seeks clear assurances that Iran will not develop nuclear weapons, describing this demand as central to the stalled negotiations. Araqchi suggested that if the US is genuinely committed to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear arms, there remains room for a constructive deal. “Iran is ready for serious talks



aimed at this goal,” he said, signaling a willingness to engage diplomatically despite the challenges.

Yet, he was unequivocal in stating that the enrichment of uranium—a process vital to Iran’s nuclear program—would persist even in the absence of a new agreement. This stance highlights the persistent impasse between Tehran and Washington, as both sides navigate a complex landscape of security concerns, sanctions, and regional dynamics.

Araqchi’s comments reflect Iran’s broader strategy of balancing its nuclear ambitions with international diplomatic pressures, maintaining that while negotiations remain possible, its sovereign right to pursue nuclear technology will not be compromised. The evolving situation remains closely watched by global powers, as the stakes for regional and international security continue to rise.

# SEPA to launch marine pollution control cell in Karachi

By our correspondent

KARACHI: In a significant move to combat environmental degradation, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has announced a comprehensive strategy to tackle marine pollution along Karachi’s coastal belt. This includes the formation of a dedicated “Marine Pollution Control Cell” to safeguard marine life and coastal habitats from the growing threat of untreated

industrial and domestic waste discharge.

The announcement was made by SEPA’s newly appointed director general, Waqar Hussain Phulpoto, during a roundtable on “Environmental Governance” hosted by the National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) at a local hotel. Phulpoto highlighted the growing severity of marine pollution, attributing it to unchecked effluent discharge from industrial zones, residential areas, and port operations. He stated that the proposed control cell will include expert staff capable of addressing coastal degradation swiftly and effectively.

He also acknowledged the complexities involved, noting that marine pollution is a multi-stakeholder issue, with overlapping jurisdictions of civic, municipal, and land-owning bodies often hindering SEPA’s enforcement efforts.

# Israeli strikes kill 135 in Gaza as assault hits 'safe zone'

News Desk

GAZA: Gaza City has witnessed another day of harrowing bloodshed as intense Israeli airstrikes, beginning before dawn, claimed the lives of at least 135 Palestinians in a single day, in what observers have described as one of the most devastating escalations since the offensive began. Arab media reports confirmed that 36 people were killed in a targeted assault on the Al-Mawasi

2023 to over 230, making it one of the deadliest periods for journalists in modern history.

Press freedom groups have condemned what they describe as the “systematic targeting” of reporters trying to document the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. On the ground, the humanitarian situation has plunged to new depths of desperation. The Palestinian Ministry of Health announced that the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza



camp—an area previously designated by Israel as a “safe zone” for displaced families.

Instead, the area was reduced to rubble, with images circulating of children pulled from debris and tents charred by fire. The rising civilian death toll is now compounded by another grim statistic: the deaths of five more journalists. This brings the number of media workers killed since the conflict erupted on 7 October

has ceased all operations due to a total blockade that has left it without fuel, electricity, or critical medical supplies.

With the hospital’s closure, northern Gaza is now devoid of a single functioning government-run health facility. Ambulances have reportedly been turned away, and families are being forced to treat their wounded in makeshift shelters or in the open air, often without even basic first aid.

# Quetta Gladiators clinch narrow win over Multan Sultans

By our correspondent

RAWALPINDI: Quetta Gladiators edged out Multan Sultans by two wickets in a nail-biting contest during the 28th match of Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10, propelling themselves to the top of the points table.

The match, held in Rawalpindi, saw Multan Sultans win the toss and choose to bat first, posting a competitive total of 185 for seven in their allotted 20 overs. In response, Quetta Gladiators chased down the target with just one ball to spare, complet-

stability to the chase.

For Multan Sultans, Shahid Aziz was the key bowler, claiming three wickets for 29 runs in his four overs and effecting two run-outs. His efforts kept the Sultans competitive throughout the match, but they were ultimately unable to restrict Nawaz’s late onslaught.

Multan’s innings was bolstered by a lively start from Yasir Khan, who scored 45 off 25 balls with six boundaries and two sixes. Middle-order batsman Tayyab Tahir added 36 runs from 24 balls, while Shahid Aziz’s quick-



ing a thrilling finish.

Hassan Nawaz was the standout performer for Quetta, remaining unbeaten on 67 runs off 38 balls. His innings was marked by powerful hitting, including two fours and six towering sixes, with crucial big shots in the final overs that swung the momentum in Gladiators’ favour. Khawaja Nafeez also contributed a vital 51 runs, providing

fire 29 off 14 deliveries pushed the total to a challenging level in the death overs.

Quetta’s bowling attack was led by Usman Tariq, who took three crucial wickets while conceding 32 runs. Mohammed Waseem impressed in the final over, picking up a wicket for 26 runs, with Fahim Ashraf and Khuram Shehzad also chipping in with a wicket each.

## METRO MATTERS

### Hopeless Karachi endures up to 14 hours of power cuts

By Ahsan Mughal

KARACHI: Residents across Karachi are facing crippling power outages lasting between 12 to 14 hours a day, with large swathes of the city left without electricity during the sweltering pre-monsoon heat. From Lyari and Korangi to Landhi, New Karachi, and Sarjani, prolonged load shedding has become an unwelcome and exhausting part of daily life.

Reports from the city indicate that other neighborhoods—North Karachi, Nazimabad, Malir, Quaidabad, and multiple blocks of the F.B. Area—are also caught in the grip of extended electricity disruptions. Even localities such as Model Colony, Jahangir Road, and PIB, often considered relatively stable in terms of power supply, are now experiencing unannounced outages. Communities in Mosquito Colony, Railway Colony, Madipur, and the coastal strip of Hawks Bay have expressed deep frustration, citing the collapse of daily routines, particularly for small businesses and households without backup power.

The blackout spells have only worsened public sentiment as Karachiites struggle to cope with heat, water shortages, and stalled economic activity. Many residents have taken to social media and local complaint forums to vent their anger and despair, with some neighborhood committees threatening to stage protests if the outages persist.

In response to growing public concern, KElectric issued a statement maintaining that Karachi’s power supply system is “largely operating normally.” According to the utility provider, 70 percent of the city’s electricity network remains exempt from load shedding. The company defended its load management policy, saying that power cuts are concentrated in areas with high levels of electricity theft and poor bill recovery rates.

A spokesperson for KElectric explained that load shedding is implemented “in line with ground realities,” particularly where theft or non-payment has been recurrent. However, critics argue that this blanket categorization often punishes entire communities regardless of whether individual households are compliant. “It’s unjust to penalize thousands who pay their bills regularly just because some in the area don’t,” said a resident of Nazimabad, who has been without electricity for over 10 hours a day this week.

### EOC claims Karachi sees decline in polio refusals

By our correspondent

KARACHI: In a welcome development for public health officials, the number of parents in Karachi refusing to vaccinate their children against polio has declined significantly, according to new data from the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC). The findings reflect a stronger performance in the April immunization campaign, which successfully reached over 94 percent of its target areas across the city.

Officials attribute the improvement to enhanced community engagement and sustained awareness efforts led by frontline health workers, supported by local administration and civil society partners. While resistance to the vaccine has historically posed a barrier to eradication efforts, the recent campaign appears to have made inroads in building trust, especially in areas previously marked by high refusal rates.

Health department insiders report that parental refusals remain a challenge, with over 39,000 children across Sindh—including Karachi—still missing their polio drops due to vaccine hesitancy or outright refusal. Nonetheless, the overall reach of the campaign marks a major stride forward. More than 2.06 million children were administered polio drops in Karachi alone, while the total number vaccinated across Sindh surpassed 8.8 million.

This progress arrives at a crucial moment, as Pakistan continues to battle sporadic polio cases, particularly in urban centers where population density and mobility complicate immunization coverage. Health authorities are now preparing for the third nationwide polio campaign of the year, scheduled to run from 26 May to 1 June. The upcoming drive will focus on tracking and vaccinating children who were missed in previous rounds, with special efforts to revisit high-risk pockets.

### Stanislavski Theatre Club stages ‘Watan Ka Beta’ at Russian House

By our correspondent

KARACHI: The Stanislavski Theatre Club marked the culmination of its eighth batch with the staging of Watan Ka Beta, a theatrical production inspired by the works of Russian literary giant Leo Tolstoy. The performance was held on Saturday, 17 May 2024, at the Russian House in Karachi.

Building on the success of its previous productions, the club once again brought its artistic vision to the fore with a moving tribute to patriotism, sacrifice, and love—aligning with the dual celebration of Mother’s Day and Russian Soldiers Day.

The play featured powerful acting performances, heartfelt poems, and soulful Russian songs performed by Pakistani artists, highlighting the cultural fusion that defines the club’s ethos.

During the event, Ruslan M Prokhov, director of the Russian House, presented shields and certificates to outstanding participants in several categories: best performance, best actor, best supporting actor, best writer, and best director.

The Stanislavski Theatre Club, known for promoting Russian language and culture through the medium of performance, continues to serve as a creative platform for emerging talent in Pakistan. With Watan Ka Beta, it once again reaffirmed the power of theatre to transcend borders and unite audiences through shared human values.

### Evening of Hope raises support for Kiran Foundation

By Zahid Karani

KARACHI: The Kiran Foundation held a heartwarming fundraising event titled Shafqat Bhari Shaam, bringing together more than 400 supporters in an evening that celebrated hope, compassion, and the powerful spirit of family that defines the organization’s mission.

Meticulously curated by Danish Aman, Shazia Amin Mandavia, and Nausheen Zaid, the evening reflected deep love and dedication to Kiran’s cause. From thoughtful invitations to the elegant setting, every element bore testimony to the organizers’ care and commitment.

The event attracted a remarkable gathering of individuals — long-time admirers of Kiran’s work alongside many new supporters who left as part of its ever-expanding family. A special note of gratitude was extended to Chief of Patrons Danish Aman and his wife Nashmia, who opened their home and hearts to support and expand the foundation’s reach.

The evening felt nothing short of magical as prominent personalities from diverse sectors came together under one roof in support of Kiran. These included leading philanthropists and change-makers such as Dr Ghaffar Billo, Dr Abdul Bari Khan, Mr Mushtaq Chappra, Dr Farhan Essa, and Dr Quratul Ain Bakhteari.

The event was further honored by the presence of Chief Guest Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib and his wife Farrukh. Known widely for their compassion and social impact, their attendance served as a significant source of encouragement for the foundation.

### PDP urges ending corruption after India standoff

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) chairman Altaf Shakoor on Sunday declared that after the successful defence against India, it is now time to defeat the internal enemy: corruption. Addressing a press conference, he said corruption and bribery are eroding the nation’s foundations and must be rooted out with the same resolve shown against external threats.

He criticised Pakistan’s political elite, calling their corruption a “curse,” and claimed they are among the most corrupt politicians globally. Despite being the fifth largest country in the world by population, Pakistan is perceived as one of the poorest due to entrenched corruption, he said. Successive governments, Shakoor added, have left the nation with a crushing debt burden, to the point where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) effectively controls national budget decisions.

“Financial slavery is the worst form of slavery,” he remarked, lamenting that Pakistan is currently experiencing it.

He praised the Pakistani armed forces for their strength in defending against India and said they should also be empowered to help eliminate corruption. “Corruption is an internal security threat, and the armed forces have a mandate to deal with such threats,” he said, adding that trillions of rupees are lost annually due to graft.

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## May 10th declaration

On 10 May, a date that now bears the weight of national significance, Pakistan stood still in gratitude—and in quiet defiance. It was not just a day of military triumph, but of collective resolve, of a nation breathing in the clarity of what it means to be sovereign. As prayers rose from mosques and homes alike, as the green and white flag fluttered above the Prime Minister’s House in Islamabad, the message to the world was resounding: Pakistan may seek peace, but it does not cower before aggression. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his solemn address, was deliberate in his tone—resolute, yet not inflammatory. He spoke not only as the head of government but as a citizen who, like millions across the country, has lived through a history scarred by conflict and stitched together by resilience.

Prime Minister extended his gratitude to the armed forces for repelling the recent threat from across the eastern border. It was, as he described, more than a tactical victory. It was a reaffirmation of Pakistan’s foundational principle: peace with dignity, defence without hesitation. There was visible pride in the Prime Minister’s tribute to Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir. His name now joins a list of military leaders whose presence steadies the ship in uncertain waters. Likewise, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Baber Sidhu was commended for the professionalism of the Pakistan Air Force, whose aerial response was swift and effective, dismantling the attempted aggression with surgical precision. And in Admiral Naveed Ashraf’s stewardship of maritime defences, the full arc of Pakistan’s defence preparedness came into view—air, land, and sea working in harmony.

President Asif Ali Zardari’s remarks echoed these sentiments with statesmanlike clarity. His articulation of Operation Binyan-e-Murus as not just a military operation but a national stance reminded Pakistanis that strength does not reside in weaponry alone, but in unity. His condemnation of India’s unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty underscored another layer of conflict—the battle for rights enshrined in international agreements, now under strain from India’s rising belligerence. Yet, even as he praised the nation’s defenders, the president’s tone, like the prime minister’s, was one of measured strength. The overarching theme was restraint paired with readiness. Beyond the symbolism of flags and speeches lies the deeper story of regional insecurity. Pakistan’s caution is neither paranoid nor performative.

It is born of experience—decades of provocation from across the border, of false narratives pinned on Pakistan before investigations even begin. This is not conjecture. From the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001 to the Pulwama incident in 2019 and now the recent events in Pahalgam, the script has become all too familiar. Pakistan is blamed, pressure mounts, and in the fog of nationalistic fervor, the facts are often forgotten. Under Narendra Modi’s tenure, India has taken a hard turn toward militaristic nationalism. The abrogation of Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the rising tide of religious intolerance are not just domestic policies—they are part of a broader ideology that seeks to redefine India’s image at home and abroad through a lens of supremacy and dominance.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid is no longer a historical footnote; it is a symbol of a trajectory where secularism is yielding to sectarianism, and diplomacy to dogma. Yet in all this, Pakistan’s position remains remarkably consistent. It continues to assert its right to self-defence while extending a hand for peace. The doctrine of minimum credible deterrence, rooted in the vision of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and materialized through the efforts of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, was never about warmongering. It was a shield, not a sword—a reminder that survival in a hostile neighborhood requires preparedness. The nuclear tests of 1998 were not celebrations of destruction but declarations of sovereignty.

This doctrine was vindicated once again during the May 2025 confrontation, where Pakistan’s air force not only thwarted an incursion but brought down multiple Indian aircraft, reasserting its strategic superiority. The Rafale jets and Israeli drones deployed by India did not achieve the intended psychological impact. Instead, they awakened a familiar spirit of unity among Pakistanis, cutting across political divides, and rallying support behind the armed forces. The significance of commemorating 10 May annually cannot be overstated. It is not jingoism. It is remembrance—of sacrifice, of survival, and of a collective determination that Pakistan’s destiny will not be dictated by others. It is a day that demands reflection, not just celebration. Reflection on what it means to live under the shadow of threat, and what it takes to confront that threat with integrity.

What happened this May is not just a chapter in the military archives. It is a story of a country, long misunderstood, once again pushed to the edge and once again refusing to fall. The names of the generals, the fighter pilots, the sailors—they will be remembered. But so too will the quiet strength of civilians who stood in prayer, who taught their children what it means to be brave, who did not let fear settle in their hearts. In an era where might often masquerades as right, Pakistan’s stand on 10 May is a reminder that true power lies in unity, in clarity of purpose, and in the courage to defend peace, even when surrounded by noise. For a nation that has long danced on the edge of geopolitical fault lines, standing tall is not an act of defiance. It is survival. And on that count, Pakistan has once again proven it knows how to endure.

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

# One ‘Nation’ thwarts Modi’s aggression

By Uzma Ehtasham



In a region long scarred by suspicion and rivalry, few moments stand out as forcefully as the recent episode that unfolded between Pakistan and India. It was a moment charged with danger, where rash decisions could have hurled the subcontinent into deeper chaos. Yet, through courage, clarity and what many in Pakistan call divine providence, the tide was turned. The Modi government’s baseless accusations of terrorism were merely a curtain behind which lurked a calculated military aggression aimed at destabilizing Pakistan. But the script did not go according to India’s plan. Pakistan’s response—measured, forceful, and unified—marked a defining episode in the nation’s history, not just as a display of military prowess, but as a moment of national reaffirmation.

Named Bunyān Mursos, the Pakistani operation became more than a strategic retaliation. It embodied a collective national spirit, a steel wall forged by the people, the army, and the government standing shoulder to shoulder. While India’s government beat its drum of propaganda, claiming phantom victories through a partisan media machine, Pakistan opted to speak less and act more. The truth had no need for amplification. It was written in the sheer effectiveness of Pakistan’s countermeasures, the coherence

of its response, and the solidarity of its people. When Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressed the nation during a thanksgiving ceremony, he didn’t merely list military achievements. He painted a picture of faith in action.

A conviction in the purpose for which Pakistan was founded—the belief that this country was willed into being by divine design—echoed through his words. And when he shared how Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir had personally informed him of Indian missile strikes on sensitive sites including Nur Khan Airbase, it revealed not just the severity of the threat, but the resolve that had been quietly building. General Munir’s determination to answer fire with fire was not driven by vengeance, but by necessity—a pledge to protect, not provoke. The names of Pathankot and Udhampur now ring differently. No longer just locations on a map, they became the turning points where Pakistan’s precision strikes through its Shaheen and Al-Fatah missiles shattered any illusion of Indian invincibility.

As missiles rained and the world held its breath, it was India that stepped back. The call for a ceasefire came not from a position of strength but out of sheer need. For the Pakistani leadership, accepting that offer was not about chest-thumping. It was about demonstrating the very maturity and restraint the region so desperately needs. At the heart of this measured response lies a principle that Pakistan has long espoused but rarely has the world acknowledged:

Islam is not a faith of confrontation, but of peace. The Quran’s injunction—to incline toward peace if the enemy seeks it—guided both the military and political leadership in their conduct. There was no triumphalism. No indulgence in revenge. Only a somber recognition that war, even when justifiable, is never a victory unless it leads to peace.

And peace, as Prime Minister Sharif reminded the world, remains elusive until the Kashmir issue is resolved with justice and dignity. The conduct of Narendra Modi’s government during this period has drawn widespread scrutiny. Instead of acknowledging the failure of an aggressive approach, India’s leadership appears to be doubling down on hostility. This posture, rooted in a bruised ego rather than strategy, offers no solace to the millions living on both sides of the border. Modi now faces a choice: to cling to the narrative of domination or to pivot towards genuine dialogue. The latter would be a courageous act of leadership. The former, a continuation of a perilous gamble that already backfired once. It is here that the world community must raise its voice.

It cannot afford to remain indifferent as two nuclear-armed neighbors teeter on the edge. It is time for the global conscience—especially those powers that preach peace elsewhere—to recognize the urgency of this moment. Diplomatic engagement is not a courtesy, it is a necessity. Equally, within India itself, voices of reason must rise above the din of hyper-nationalism. Its civil society,

its opposition leaders, its intellectuals—many of whom still believe in the ideals of justice and mutual coexistence—must speak up before more damage is done. What Pakistan has shown in this critical hour is that deterrence is not always about superior weaponry. It is about unity. It is about leadership that can steady the ship when storms arrive. And above all, it is about a belief that peace is the ultimate strength, not the absence of conflict but the triumph of wisdom over war-mongering.

The echoes of Bunyān Mursos will not fade easily. Not because they brought momentary pride to a nation, but because they reminded the world—and perhaps Pakistan itself—of who we are when we stand together, calmly but firmly. In the face of aggression, Pakistan chose clarity over chaos. And in doing so, it not only protected its sovereignty but reclaimed its narrative. In a time where misinformation travels faster than truth, Pakistan’s restraint and resolve offer a lesson. That even in a volatile neighborhood, dignity can be defended without descending into darkness. That a show of strength can also be a call for sanity. And that perhaps the truest measure of power is not in the missiles one fires—but in the peace one dares to pursue.

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## Joy is not a luxury

By Atiq Raja



In an age defined by exhaustion, where in-boxes overflow and to-do lists stretch endlessly into the horizon, there is something quietly radical about giving weight to joy. We live in a time when productivity is often equated with purpose, where seriousness is conflated with virtue, and where joy—if it appears at all—is relegated to the margins of life. And so, to take your pleasures seriously can seem almost irresponsible. Yet, it may be one of the most necessary acts of self-preservation in our anxious, over-scheduled world. We’ve been conditioned to believe that pleasure is something extra, a treat doled out at the end of a hard day or saved for weekends when the “real work” is done. Joy is framed as a reward, not a right. We’re told to hustle, to grind, to push through—and only then, maybe, to rest. But what if joy is not a break from the meaningful parts of life, but one of the most meaningful parts of all? What if pleasure is not the opposite of productivity but a path to purpose?

Consider what lights you up—not the things that distract you, but the ones that make you feel vividly, unmistakably alive. It

could be the act of painting without an audience, the ritual of baking bread with your hands, the thrill of a perfectly-timed joke, or the calm of watching your garden grow. These are not idle pastimes or guilty pleasures. They are clues. Clues to your values, your temperament, and the rhythm your soul prefers to dance to. It’s not about escapism. It’s about expression. The things that bring you joy are often the truest expression of who you are when no one is watching. To dismiss them as trivial is to turn away from yourself. There is a long-standing cultural suspicion of pleasure, particularly in societies shaped by struggle, sacrifice, and scarcity. The narrative goes something like this: the more difficult the journey, the more noble the destination. Hardship is lionized.

Joy is questioned. Even the arts—once considered essential to the human spirit—are often asked to justify themselves with metrics, outcomes, and impact. And so we internalize the belief that enjoyment is frivolous, unserious, even selfish. But this mind-set costs us. When we sideline joy, we lose more than just happiness. We lose connection—to ourselves, to others, to the world. We become burnt out, brittle, and disengaged. Creativity wilts. Compassion thins. Energy evaporates. And then, ironically, the productivity we chase so desperately begins

to slip away too. Conversely, people who give themselves permission to enjoy life, who embrace pleasure as a practice rather than an afterthought, are often more resilient, more imaginative, and more grounded. They live longer, they think more clearly, and they connect more deeply. Their joy does not make them less serious. It makes them more whole.

To take your pleasures seriously is not to abandon responsibility. It is to hold responsibility with both hands—acknowledging the outer demands of life while nurturing the inner currents that sustain you. It is to believe that tending to your joy is not selfish, but sacred. That delight has a dignity all its own. Of course, this philosophy requires commitment. It asks that you treat your joy not as a guilty pleasure but as a worthy pursuit. That means giving it time, space, and respect. Schedule it. Protect it. Invest in it. Share it.

The things you love deserve your attention, not your leftovers. They deserve intention. Look to those whose legacies live on not only because of what they achieved, but because of how they stayed human through it all. Einstein found comfort in his violin. Churchill wielded a paintbrush between speeches and strategy. Tolstoy found peace in the soil. These men were not less serious for it—they were more sane for it.

So, what if we all asked ourselves: What brings me joy, real joy—not distraction, but delight? And what if we then answered that question not with guilt or restraint, but with action? Because at its core, this is not just about hobbies or leisure. It is about identity. It is about claiming the right to be more than just a functionary in someone else’s system. It is about remembering that we are not machines to be optimized, but beings meant to experience the full texture of life—its softness, its color, its music. To take your pleasures seriously is to take yourself seriously—not the version of you that performs, but the one that plays. Not the one that impresses, but the one that feels. This, perhaps, is the true rebellion in a culture that commodifies every hour and monetizes every talent. To say: I will make space for joy. I will protect it. I will honor it. Because it is not the opposite of ambition. It is its compass. So take your pleasures seriously—not in spite of your responsibilities, but because of them. Let joy inform your work, your relationships, and your rhythms. Follow it with curiosity, not caution. You’ll find that it leads somewhere truer than any checklist ever could.

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## Silencing the war drums, amplifying her voice

By Wardah Iftikhar

On May 7, India launched Operation Sindoor, a retaliatory strike on Pakistan to ‘avenge’ the terror attack in Pahalgam that killed more than 30 civilians. Touted by the Indian government as “measured” and “non-escalatory”, the operation resulted in the deaths of over 40 civilians on both sides of the border. Yet these facts remain largely overshadowed by nationalistic headlines and wartime spectacle.

More troubling than the military action itself is the gendered imagery and language that surrounded the strike. It is an unsettling reminder of how women’s grief, bodies and identities are routinely conscripted into nationalist rhetoric.

The name itself, Sindoor, refers to the red powder worn by Hindu married women. Days after the attack, a stylised, anime-inspired image of Himanshi Narwal, a grieving widow, went viral. In it, she wears bridal attire, sitting solemnly beside her husband’s body. This symbolic tableau transformed personal loss into a nationalistic emblem.

When Himanshi later called for peace and urged citizens not to respond with communal hatred, she was met with a bombardment of online abuse. Her patriotism was questioned and her agency was erased. The message was unmistakable: women may mourn, but only in ways the state can exploit. Their grief is not theirs to define; it belongs to the nation.

In a widely televised press conference, Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh became the faces of India’s military leadership. Media outlets across India rushed to celebrate their presence as proof of a progressive, inclusive nation. But this is not feminism in action. It is

feminism co-opted to sanitise violence.

This is part of a broader trend scholars call femonationalism, where states use feminist optics to promote exclusionary or militaristic agendas. The presence of women in combat roles, especially in front of the cameras, provides moral cover. Violence seems more palatable when narrated by empathetic faces. The military appears inclusive. The nation seems just.

Colonel Qureshi’s identity as a Muslim woman was also weaponised, a calculated move to counter accusations of communal targeting. Yet her visibility does little to address the systemic discrimination faced by countless Muslim women under the same regime. Her role, while significant, was instrumentalised.

Across borders, the rhetoric of war is deeply steeped in misogyny. In Pakistan, one female politician was reported as saying that Pakistan’s counterstrike would “take care of what happens post Sindoor”. It was a deeply misogynistic metaphor that equated military violence with sexual conquest.

On social media, users on both sides gleefully speculated about who ‘gets’ which actress after the war, trading women’s identities like war trophies. Female celebrities and media personalities were treated like objects on a battlefield candy shelf. What some might dismiss as dark humour is, in fact, a window into a toxic masculine culture that equates peace with femininity, and femininity with weakness.

This language is not just crude but dangerous. It reflects a symbolic system where women’s bodies represent honour, territory and purity, and where violating them becomes a metaphor for national conquest. As feminist scholars have long argued, during conflict, sexual violence against the ‘other’s’

women is not incidental. It is deliberate, used to symbolically destroy the enemy group’s identity and dignity.

These constructions do not end with ceasefires. They persist in everyday discourse and policy, continuing to restrict women’s agency, casting them as vessels of honour or icons of victimhood long after the missiles stop falling.

Violence against women during conflict is often as much about masculinity as it is about warfare. While maleness is biological, masculinity is a performative status – asserted, reaffirmed and displayed.

In wartime, men assert dominance not only over women but over other men by ‘defiling’ the honour of their enemies’ mothers, wives and daughters. It is not random. It is ritualistic. When a man fails to protect ‘his’ women, his masculinity and, by extension, the strength of his community, is deemed compromised. This fuels retaliatory cycles where women’s suffering is used not as a reason for peace, but as justification for more war.

In both India and Pakistan, nationalism is steeped in the logic that Women are avatars of family, community, religion, and the nation itself, thus, to violate their purity is to stain the social order.

In ‘The Power’, novelist Naomi Alderman imagines a world where women acquire the ability to physically dominate men. But power, she warns, is not redemptive just because it is held by women. “Power has her ways. She acts on people, and people act on her.”

We are watching this play out in real time. States are dressing up patriarchal violence in feminist language, placing women in leadership to project moral superiority while preserving the very systems feminists seek to

dismantle. A woman in uniform reading a press statement does not signal liberation; it sadly proves that even feminism has been weaponised.

As airstrikes shook the region, children stayed home from school, frightened and confused. With both countries already grappling with high numbers of out-of-school girls, child marriages, infant mortality and femicide, this is not just a momentary disruption. It is a deafening alarm. It is not only soldiers who carry the burden of war. It is mothers, daughters, and wives who live with its social and psychological costs long after the headlines fade.

The ceasefire was announced a day before Mother’s Day, a poignant intersection that reminded us of environmentalist Vandana Shiva’s words: “We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all.”

If we are to protect both Mother Nature and the women and girls who bear the brunt of war’s aftermath, we must stop using feminine metaphors as rhetorical tools to justify violence. Instead, we must place women in positions of real power. Not to validate nationalism, but to reshape it. To prioritise justice over vengeance and care over conquest.

True feminism is not a performance. It is a transformation. It does not look like grief turned into propaganda or uniforms used to soften the blow of airstrikes. It looks like equity, justice and peace.

Here’s to a world where girls grow up knowing they are not symbols, not trophies, not excuses for violence, but thinkers, leaders, and change-makers. Let us stop fighting wars in their name. Let us start building a future worthy of them.

## Peacemaker Trump

By Abdul Sattar

More than one billion people in India and Pakistan breathed a sigh of relief after the ceasefire between the two countries. Life is returning to normal, with people on either side of the Line of Control trying to rebuild their shattered lives, ruined by the frenzy of war. The ceasefire was secured after a flurry of diplomatic activities in several parts of the world, but it wouldn’t be unfair to say that the flames of war could not have been doused without the active involvement of the US – and especially President Donald Trump.

Trump might be criticised for a number of policies that he has tried to impose since his inauguration in the Oval Office, but some of his actions do deserve appreciation. His initiatives to restore peace in several parts of the world have even forced his critics to praise him. After making hectic efforts to secure peace in Ukraine, his administration pressured the ruling elites of Pakistan and India to let sanity prevail in a region that has witnessed at least three wars and a number of limited border conflicts. Had Trump not intervened, this conventional war could have escalated into a

nuclear Armageddon – leaving behind a trail of death, destruction and annihilation.

Given the volume of trade the US has with India and the level of involvement that Western companies have had in the largest democracy, almost all US administrations have been careful even to contemplate actions that might be construed as an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of India, owing to New Delhi’s extreme sensitivity to the perception of external interference in its internal matters.

India has always tried to create the impression that it would not tolerate any outside interference in the internal affairs of the largest democracy. Since it considers Kashmir an internal issue, it does not want any other country to counsel it on the matter. This was perhaps one of the reasons that prompted India to force Pakistan to accept Kashmir as a bilateral matter between the two states in the Simla Agreement of 1972. Islamabad, on the other hand, has always tried to internationalise the issue. In the past, New Delhi has con-

temptuously rejected outside mediation over Kashmir, categorically declaring that it is an issue between the two states and that any outside interference amounts to undermining the sovereignty of India, which has been making efforts to emerge not only as a regional power but as an international player as well.

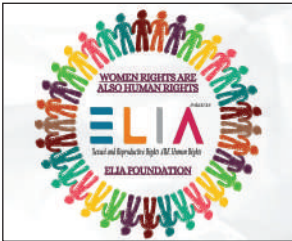
India was flabbergasted when Trump tweeted about the ceasefire, putting a question mark on India’s claim that it would not countenance any outside interference in its internal affairs. New Delhi contemptuously dismissed suggestions that the US played any role in securing the ceasefire, asserting that it was the director general of military operations of Pakistan who contacted his Indian counterpart to reach an understanding. Indian media also seems to be buying this claim. One Indian newspaper wrote, “Donald Trump’s assertion that the India-Pakistan ceasefire resulted from US mediation appears to have been unequivocally refuted by the Indian government, which said that

the ceasefire was negotiated directly between the two nations.”

It seems that the very word ‘mediation’ has hurt the ego of the Indian political elite, with many of them trying to put a spin on the US role. Congress MP and former diplomat Shashi Tharoor weighed in on Trump’s claim, suggesting it was “not mediation” but rather US efforts at playing a constructive role. But the alacrity with which the ceasefire was imposed – within an hour of Trump’s tweet – clearly flies in the face of claims by some Indian politicians that the US played no role.

This has boosted the Republican leader’s image as a peacemaker. This is not his first effort at securing a ceasefire. He made similar efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine. His peace initiatives have infuriated the powerful war lobbies operating in the power corridors of Washington, London, Paris and several other Western capitals, which wanted the conflict in Ukraine to last so that arms manufacturers could witness a phenomenal surge in their profits and market shares.





## IMF urges Pakistan to raise revenue by Rs2tn next year

With \$19 billion in loan repayments looming, the IMF is pressing Islamabad to keep its debt servicing on a sustainable track

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has called on Pakistan to raise its total revenue collection to Rs2 trillion in the upcoming fiscal year, a significant increase from the current Rs1.78 trillion. The suggestion comes at a crucial moment as Pakistan prepares for policy-level budget negotiations with the IMF, set to commence tomorrow.

Officials within the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) have confirmed that the IMF is not only pushing for a broader tax base but also demanding tighter controls over non-developmental expenditures.

With nearly \$19 billion due in foreign loan repayments next year, the IMF is pressing Islamabad to ensure that its debt servicing



remains on sustainable footing. The emphasis is clear: without structural reforms and prudent spending, Pakistan risks slipping deeper into fiscal vulnerability.

The upcoming budget talks are expected to be anything but routine. According to sources familiar with the negotiations, Pakistan is looking to remove the withholding tax on raw materials for the construction sector and on property

transactions—both moves aimed at spurring economic activity. There are also discussions underway to abolish the federal excise duty (FED) and the contentious super tax on property sales. Additionally, the government is weighing options to provide tax relief to salaried individuals, a segment that has increasingly borne the brunt of inflation and previous fiscal tightening.

Despite the anticipated relief measures, Islamabad

will be walking a tightrope. It will need to convince the IMF of its ability to simultaneously stimulate the economy and raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to 11 percent. This assurance is likely to become a key point of negotiation, as the IMF insists on revenue reforms to underpin any future financial support.

The talks come at a time of economic fragility, where balancing growth and fiscal discipline remains a daunting task for Pakistan's economic planners. As the country inches closer to presenting its federal budget, all eyes will be on how the government navigates this round of IMF engagement—whether it bends, bargains, or boldly proposes a pathway that addresses domestic needs while satisfying global lenders.

## Peshawar's college takes action after harassment accusations

News Desk

PESHAWAR: The assistant professor at Islamia College Peshawar has been dismissed following complaints of harassment by a female student, provincial minister Mina Khan confirmed. The student had reported the harassment to the Higher Education Department.

Mina Khan Afridi told the media that, based on the inquiry committee's report, the college syndicate decided to terminate the professor's employment, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment in universities.

In response, Islamia College has issued a new code of conduct for faculty members. The directive instructs teachers to maintain professional boundaries and avoid any inappropriate or romantic relationships with students.

The administration highlighted that such incidents damage the institution's reputation and warned that strict action will be taken against any violations of the code of conduct.

The dismissal follows allegations made public just days earlier, marking a firm stance against harassment within academic institutions.

## Dar heads to Beijing for trilateral talks on regional stability

The three-way talks between Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan are set to focus on trade, security, and shared geopolitical concerns amid rising Pakistan-India tensions

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will travel to Beijing tomorrow for high-level talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, as South Asia grapples with rising tensions and uncertain security dynamics. The visit, confirmed by the Foreign Office, will run from 19 to 21 May and comes at the invitation of China's top diplomat.

Dar's arrival in the Chinese capital will precede a trilateral meeting involving Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, who is due to land in Beijing on 20 May. The three-way talks between Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan are expected to center on boosting trade ties, deepening security cooperation, and addressing shared geopolitical concerns, particularly in light of the recent Pakistan-India hostilities.

The upcoming dialogue reflects growing urgency among regional players to find common ground at a time when economic pressures, border tensions, and



security threats have heightened instability across the region. Pakistan's renewed engagement with Beijing is being seen as part of a broader strategic alignment aimed at diffusing tensions and reinforcing multilateral cooperation.

For Islamabad, the visit is particularly timely. With Afghanistan's security landscape still precarious and Pakistan-India relations once again strained, the trilateral forum offers an opportunity to reassess regional diplomacy and promote a collective roadmap for stability. The recent surge in cross-border skirmishes and threats of water blockade by India have only intensified Islamabad's diplomatic outreach.

China, which has posi-

tioned itself as a stabilizing force in the region, is expected to advocate for stronger economic integration through trade corridors and development projects, including those under the Belt and Road Initiative. Security collaboration, especially counterterrorism efforts and border management, will also be high on the agenda.

The meeting will serve as a litmus test for the ability of the three countries to align their interests and manage long-standing mistrust. In a region where fault lines run deep, the Beijing talks mark a rare and critical moment for regional diplomacy to gain momentum—offering, at least in principle, a path forward in a deeply fragile landscape.

## SHC nullifies DDs' appointments in federal ministry

Press Release

KARACHI: In a ruling issued by the Sindh High Court on 14 May 2025, the appointments of two individuals, Ali Bux Soomro and Khalid Ahmed Bablani, have been declared fraudulent, disqualifying them from holding public offices. The decision, related to case CP No. D-1450/2017, confirmed that both men were never legally employed under court orders, and their recruitment was found to be fake.

According to the judgment, unless and until a competent authority issues a new order, neither individual can claim employment within the department. The designated authority in this matter is the Federal Minister and Secretary for Science and Technology. The ruling makes it explicitly clear that any continuation of duties, issuance of official orders, or employment of state perks—including government vehicles, fuel, drivers, salaries, bonuses, housing subsidies, uranium allowances, or TA/DA—would be deemed illegal, unconstitutional, and a direct contempt of court.

In light of the verdict, international organizations such as ISO, SMIEC, and IEC have been urged to be immediately notified. The individuals must be removed from their roles as focal persons to protect the dignity of both the institution and the country. Speaking on the matter, Muhammad Faheem Bari—the most senior official in the department—has expressed strong disappointment.

Bari claimed that instead of being promoted, he was overlooked while such individuals were illegally appointed as deputy directors through corruption, nepotism, and forgery. He further alleges that the posts they occupied were never officially sanctioned or existed within the department's structure. The case highlights yet another troubling example of how fraudulent practices and misuse of power continue to undermine merit and governance in Pakistan's public sector.

## Sindh launches mini truck assembly in Karachi with China

Memon praised the vehicle's advanced engineering, smart design, and environmental adaptability as a timely response to Pakistan's growing demand for light commercial vehicles

News Desk

BOZHOU, CHINA: The Sindh government has announced an ambitious plan to establish a mini truck assembly line in Karachi, marking a significant step in strengthening industrial ties with China. Senior Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, who was present at the unveiling ceremony of the super mini truck in China, described the project as a promising opportunity for business groups and individuals across the province.

The event also saw participation from Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and other senior officials, underscoring the importance of the collaboration. The super mini truck, jointly developed by China's Cherry Holding and Padi Technology Company Limited, was showcased as a revolutionary vehicle designed to provide an affordable and sustainable solution for transportation needs in both urban and rural areas.

Memon highlighted the vehicle's advanced engineering, intelligent design, and environmental adaptability, praising it as a re-



sponse to the growing demand for light commercial vehicles in Pakistan.

This project is not merely about vehicle assembly; it represents a broader vision for industrial growth in Karachi, aimed at boosting local manufacturing of parts, creating job opportunities, and facilitating technology transfer from China to Pakistan.

The Sindh government has committed to providing regulatory support, enhancing infrastructure, and offering training to prepare the local workforce for this new industrial venture.

An important facet of the super mini truck is its unique feature of being convertible into a super mini car, which could further diversify its utility and appeal.

Memon praised the leadership of Cherry Holding chairman Yen Tongyu, attributing the project's success to his visionary approach.

Alongside the assembly line plans, the Sindh government also revealed intentions to set up electric vehicle charging stations across the province, reinforcing its commitment to green transportation and environmental sustainability.

The event also included notable figures such as Sindh's Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and Zahid Bashir, CEO of Budget Petroleum Investment Holdings Company based in Hong Kong, further signalling the collaborative spirit of this endeavor.

## Gilani attends Pope Leo XIV's inauguration ceremony

News Desk

VATICAN: Chairman of the Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani represented Pakistan at the formal inauguration ceremony of Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican, extending congratulations and warm wishes on behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan to the newly elected pontiff.

The ceremony, a significant religious and diplomatic event, was attended by a wide array of global dignitaries and heads of state. Accompanying Gilani were Federal Minister Kheil Das Kohistani and Punjab Minister Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, reflecting Pakistan's inclusive representation of religious minorities.

According to a statement from the Senate Secretariat, Gilani used the occasion to reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to interfaith dialogue, global peace, and the values of mutual respect. He underscored that these principles form the core of Pakistan's foreign policy and domestic ethos, rooted in the founding vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

## MQM-P, PML-N delegations to discuss city issues, budget

By Ahsan Mughal

KARACHI: Delegations from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) are expected to meet today at the Governor House in Karachi, in what is being seen as a significant consultation ahead of the federal budget. The talks are expected to focus on budget proposals, development schemes, fund allocations, and concerns raised by the city's business community.

The meeting will bring to-



gether key leaders from both parties. Governor Sindh Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Farooq Sattar, and Ameen ul Haq are among those representing the MQM-P, while the

PML-N delegation will be led by Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. The session comes amid increasing expectations that Karachi's long-standing devel-

opment needs and financial grievances will be brought to the table with a renewed sense of urgency.

At the heart of the discussion will be the allocation of development funds for Karachi—a recurring issue that has often fueled political tension between stakeholders in the city. MQM-P, which has consistently called for greater fiscal autonomy and targeted development in urban Sindh, is expected to present a detailed set of recommendations to the visiting federal delegation.

## Sindh CM calls for local retention of saved gas

By Salman Shah

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has firmly insisted that any gas saved from suspending supply to captive power plants should remain within the province, warning against the risk of this valuable resource being diverted elsewhere. His remarks came during a recent meeting where Rana Sanaullah, the Prime Minister's special assistant, provided a detailed briefing on efforts to boost industrial growth.

Murad Ali Shah's position highlights the importance of ensuring that Sindh benefits directly from any adjustments in gas distribution, particularly given the province's significant industrial base. The chief minister made it clear that the gas saved by stopping supply to captive power plants must be used locally, underscoring the need to protect Sindh's economic interests amid on-



going energy challenges.

Rana Sanaullah emphasized that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is deeply committed to promoting industrial development and that the meeting focused extensively on ways to support this goal. One key decision from the gathering was the formation of a dedicated committee tasked with reviewing the tax implications surrounding the intermittent transfer of captive power plants to the national grid.

This committee is expected to provide clear rec-

ommendations on whether taxes should be imposed on such transfers. The final proposals will be presented to the prime minister, aiming to streamline policymaking and ensure industrialists' concerns and suggestions are heard directly at the highest level.

The overall intent behind these discussions and measures is to create a more conducive environment for industrial growth in Sindh, balancing energy resource management with the province's economic priorities.

## French firm refuses Indian jet sale without PAF training: Tessori claims

By Uzma Ehtasham

KARACHI: The governor of Sindh, Kamran Tessori, has revealed that a French company declined to sell fighter jets to India unless the accompanying pilots were trained by the Pakistani Air Force. Speaking to the media outside CMH Hyderabad, he said this shows India's limitations and sends a clear message that such hostile moves won't be tolerated.

Tessori praised the Pakistani military for raising the



nation's pride, saying India will think twice before making any similar moves again. "Our soldiers have made the

whole nation proud," he said. "The slap we gave India has been witnessed worldwide." He noted that

the recent attack came at night and despite limited resources, Pakistan won the battle with courage and resilience.

Tessori suggested India's attack was part of a larger conspiracy linked to terrorism in Balochistan and KP, aimed at destabilizing Pakistan after decades of sacrifice. The Sindh governor also thanked federal ministers and leaders from MQM-Pakistan for their support, commending Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif for their roles.

During a meeting at Sindh Governor House in Karachi, officials discussed budget matters and the region's defence.

Tessori highlighted the military's success in ending "Modi's dominance" in the region and criticized the Indian government's failed attempts to delay IMF loan payments. He said Pakistan's armed forces have shown strength, and now the focus must shift to strengthening the economy and ending dependence on IMF loans.