

## PM backs Iran’s peaceful “Nuclear” ambitions

The Prime Minister declared readiness to engage with India on peace, trade, water rights, and counterterrorism, warning firmly that provocation will not be met with silence

News Desk

TEHRAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has voiced Pakistan’s firm support for Iran’s right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program, affirming a shared vision for regional peace, enhanced trade, and dialogue on pressing issues such as terrorism and water disputes. Following a high-level meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during his official visit to Tehran, Shehbaz described Iran as a “second home for Pakistanis” and said he was delighted to be visiting a brotherly nation.

The two leaders reportedly held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral ties, investment, and economic cooperation, reaching consensus on expanding engagement across key sectors. The prime minister,



while addressing the media alongside President Pezeshkian, reaffirmed that Pakistan is a peace-loving nation that desires regional harmony. However, he made it clear that any act of aggression would be met with a resolute response. “We are ready to talk about peace, trade, and even contentious issues like water rights and counterterrorism with India—but if provoked, we will not stay silent,” the prime minister

said. He also stressed that dialogue must remain the cornerstone of resolving long-standing disputes, including Kashmir. “Pakistan wants peace in the region and believes that sustainable peace is only possible through diplomacy and engagement,” he added.

On the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, Shehbaz was visibly emotional, condemning the Israeli aggression that has reportedly led to the deaths of

over 50,000 Palestinians. He called upon the international community to urgently secure a permanent and immediate ceasefire. “Time demands that the world act now. Pakistan stands firmly with its Palestinian brothers and sisters,” he said.

The Iranian president echoed similar sentiments, noting that both Iran and Pakistan maintain a unified position on key issues at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). He underlined the importance of close bilateral coordination in the border regions to counter terrorism and maintain stability. The meeting between the two leaders signifies a strengthening of Islamabad-Tehran ties, with both sides aligning their stance on peace, regional cooperation, and shared Islamic solidarity in the face of growing geopolitical volatility.

## PPP protesters set PTI camp on fire in Peshawar, case registered

By our correspondent

PESHAWAR: Peshawar saw a tense confrontation on Tuesday as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) staged a protest against alleged corruption in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The demonstration at Assembly Chowk escalated into clashes with police, who responded with tear gas to disperse the crowd.

Amid the unrest, protesters set fire to a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protest camp supporting former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The rally was led by PPP Central Secretary General Humayun Khan, provincial president Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, and other senior party figures. Police blocked access to the Red Zone via Khyber Road, which was



closed to traffic during the disturbance. Despite police efforts, protesters regrouped and attacked the PTI camp. Tensions further intensified when PTI supporters arrived, resulting in a direct face-off between the two groups. The situation gradually eased as PPP protesters dispersed, allowing traffic to resume. Senior Superintendent of Police Operations, Masood Bangash, stated that police had been deployed to secure the Red Zone and acted after masked individuals tried to breach the area.

## Israel rejects ceasefire proposal brokered by Qatar

News Desk

DOHA: A notable development has emerged from Doha where Hamas and the US special envoy have reportedly agreed on a ceasefire framework aimed at pausing the ongoing Gaza conflict. According to reports from Arab media, the agreement proposes a 60-day ceasefire alongside the phased release of ten hostages.

The terms include the release of five hostages on the first day of the ceasefire, with the remaining five to be freed on the 60th day. The deal also ensures unconditional humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza starting immediately. US President Donald Trump is expected to personally endorse the agreement and oversee the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The US envoy, Steve Witkoff, has sent the draft deal to Israeli authorities for approval.

## Iran will survive despite more sanctions: Iran’s President

The fragile talks with Washington have long overshadowed the region, fueling fears of renewed conflict and deepening economic turmoil

News Desk

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has sent a defiant message amid rising geopolitical tensions, insisting that Iran will persevere even if talks with the United States fail and new sanctions are imposed. Speaking from Tehran to Iranian state media, Pezeshkian sought to allay fears that the country’s economy or stability would collapse under external pressure.

“We will find a way to live,” he declared, reflecting a steadfast determination to endure despite mounting international challenges. His remarks come at a critical moment, as negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program remain fraught and uncertain. The prospect of a breakdown in talks with Washington has long cast a shadow over the region, raising fears of renewed conflict and economic hardship.

Yet Pezeshkian’s confident tone underscores Tehran’s refusal to be cowed by sanctions or diplomatic isolation, portraying a nation resolved to navigate



the storm with resilience and resourcefulness. In stark contrast, US President Donald Trump offered a cautiously optimistic view, suggesting that progress had been made in discussions with Iran and describing the talks as “very good.”

Yet this apparent thaw in one area was accompanied by a sharp rebuke of Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom Trump accused of causing deaths and condemned for actions that have drawn international criticism. Trump also indicated that the United States is considering further sanctions against Russia, signaling an intensification of pressure on multiple global fronts.

Together, these statements from two world leaders reveal the complex and

often contradictory nature of international diplomacy today. While there are tentative moves towards dialogue, the shadow of sanctions and political confrontation looms large, creating an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty.

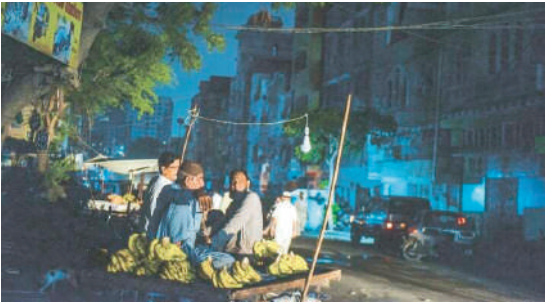
The ongoing situation highlights how fragile global relations remain, with major powers grappling with competing interests and the challenge of balancing engagement with strategic rivalry. This uneasy interplay between negotiation and confrontation illustrates a world caught between hope for progress and the harsh realities of geopolitical conflict, where the future of peace and stability remains precarious and deeply contested.

## KE fails to provide relief to Karachiites in relentless heat

By Ahsan Mughal

KARACHI: Karachi is once again in the grip of widespread despair as relentless heat collides with prolonged electricity load-shedding, turning the lives of its citizens into a daily ordeal. Women, children, and the elderly are particularly vulnerable, struggling to cope with soaring temperatures and hours-long power outages that have disrupted routines and endangered health.

Despite assurances from K-Electric, the city’s primary electricity supplier, that no unannounced load-shedding is taking place, the reality on the ground tells a starkly different story. According to K-Electric’s own load-shedding schedule, 651 out of 2,127 feeders across Karachi are subjected to scheduled power cuts. Shockingly, 496 of these feeders experience up to 10 hours of load-shedding daily — leaving nearly 23 per cent of the city in dark-



ness for significant stretches of time. In neighborhoods like Malir, Kemari, Liaquatabad, New Karachi, Surjani, and the Old City area, residents report that power cuts exceed 12 to 14 hours a day, far beyond the scheduled interruptions. Others in Lines Area, Quaidabad, Mauripur, Hawksbay, and Orangi Town claim they face unpredictable outages with no fixed timetable, often losing power for entire days under the pretext of maintenance.

The contradiction between K-Electric’s public

statements and residents’ experiences has only deepened frustration. The company insists that what people call unannounced load-shedding are merely regional faults, not systematic power cuts. But to the citizens trapped in stifling heat without fans, lights, or refrigeration, the distinction is meaningless.

As the mercury continues to rise, so too does public anger, with many demanding transparency, accountability, and immediate action to alleviate a crisis that threatens not just comfort but public health.

## Lalu Prasad expels son over viral video controversy

News Desk

PATNA: Senior Indian politician and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav has taken the extraordinary step of expelling his eldest son, Tej Pratap Yadav, from both the party and the family, following the viral spread of a video involving Tej Pratap and a young woman on social media. This decision marks a rare and highly public rift within one of Bihar’s most influential political families.

Reports from Indian media reveal that 76-year-old Lalu Prasad Yadav has



suspended his 37-year-old son, who also serves as a party leader in the state assembly, from the RJD for a period of six years. More strikingly, the move severs Tej Pratap’s ties to the family, signaling a dramatic personal and political fallout.

In a statement shared online, Lalu voiced his deep disappointment in his son’s act, condemning it as a violation of moral values that ultimately weakens the party’s collective fight for social justice and political causes. He criticized Tej Pratap’s recent actions, public conduct, and what he described as irresponsibility, asserting that they run counter to the traditions and principles upheld by their family for generations.

Lalu was unequivocal in declaring that, under the current circumstances, Tej Pratap will have no role or influence within the party or the family for the next six years. This unprecedented public censure reflects underlying tensions that have long simmered beneath the surface in a family that has long been at the heart of Bihar’s political landscape.

## Macron says video with wife ‘blown out of proportion’

News Desk

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has sought to downplay the fuss surrounding a viral video capturing a tense moment with his wife, describing the incident as nothing more than a light-hearted exchange that has been blown out of proportion.

Speaking to reporters following the circulation of the footage, Macron emphasized that he was joking with his wife in a playful manner and urged the public not to read too much into what was clearly a private moment.

The brief clip, filmed in Paris and widely shared on social media, shows Macron’s wife expressing a moment of frustration by lightly slapping the president’s face as they arrived in Vietnam.

## SC bars Sunni Ittehad Council from reserved seats

Justice Musarrat Hilali challenged the Ittehad Council’s claim to reserved seats, stressing its non-parliamentary status and PTI’s complex role as a non-original party in the dispute

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A constitutional bench of Pakistan’s Supreme Court has delivered a landmark verdict ruling that the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is not entitled to reserved seats in parliament. The bench, chaired by Justice Aminuddin and comprising 11 judges, was hearing a review petition challenging the allocation of reserved seats to the PTI.

During the live-streamed proceedings, the court clarified that while independent candidates are free to join parliamentary parties, they cannot be counted as members of political parties that lack official representation in the assembly. As the Sunni Ittehad Council does not hold parliamentary status, it cannot claim reserved seats. Justice Musarrat Hilali questioned the basis on which the SIC sought reserved seats without being a parliamentary party, noting that PTI was not originally a party to the case, complicating the award of seats to it.

Justice Jamal Mandokhel observed that the issue would not have arisen if independent members had joined PTI instead of the Sunni Ittehad Council. He also criticized the Elec-



tion Commission for failing in its duty, allowing confusion over party affiliation and seat allocation to persist. Makhdoom Ali Khan, representing the petitioners, argued that while the Supreme Court can interpret the constitution, it cannot amend it, leaving open the possibility for the court to revisit its earlier rulings on the subject.

Justice Shahid Bilal raised doubts about PTI’s involvement in the case, emphasizing that a party not formally part of the proceedings cannot be awarded reserved seats. The court exposed inconsistencies in the Election Commission’s issuance of party certificates and the declarations made by elected members regarding their affiliations.

The court’s earlier majority verdict in July had invalidated decisions by the Election Commission and the

Peshawar High Court, which had permitted reserved seats meant for women and minorities to be allocated to the Sunni Ittehad Council through PTI-supported independents. The ruling clarified that out of 80 independent members, 39 should be considered PTI nominees, with the remainder recognized as independents.

The hearing concluded with Makhdoom Ali Khan completing his arguments, while Faisal Siddiqui, the Sunni Ittehad Council’s lawyer, is slated to present his case on Tuesday. This verdict highlights the Supreme Court’s firm commitment to uphold constitutional principles regarding party legitimacy and the rightful distribution of reserved seats, signaling a clear stance against political manipulation in the allocation of parliamentary representation.

## PM thanks Iran’s Ali Khamenei for support war against India

News Desk

TEHRAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Monday, where he expressed deep gratitude for Iran’s continued support to Pakistan on key regional matters. During their meeting, the Pakistani prime minister briefed Ayatollah Khamenei on what he described as India’s aggression and expansionist ambitions.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Iran, agreeing that regional cooperation was vital for peace and stability.

“Sheikh Ayatollah Khamenei is a towering figure in the Muslim world,” Shehbaz Sharif said. “The entire Muslim Ummah values his leadership and guidance.” In response, the Iranian Supreme Leader acknowledged Pakistan’s unique position in the Islamic world.

The Prime Minister



called for greater collaboration between Tehran and Islamabad to counter the atrocities being committed by Zionist forces in Gaza, saying both nations must act together in a more effective and coordinated manner.

According to an official statement, Shehbaz Sharif also commended the Iranian leadership’s clarity and vision during nuclear negotiations and spoke warmly about Ayatollah Khamenei’s admiration for the poetry and philosophy of Allama Iqbal.

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khamenei praised Prime Minister Sharif’s efforts towards regional peace and offered special prayers for

the prosperity of Pakistan and the well-being of its people. Accompanying the prime minister were Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

The meeting followed Shehbaz Sharif’s arrival in Tehran earlier in the day on an official visit at the invitation of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Upon arrival, the prime minister was received by Iran’s interior minister and the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan. A military guard of honor was presented at the airport.

## Devastating blaze kills four in Northwest London

News Desk

LONDON: Police have released the names of the four victims who tragically died in a devastating house fire in Brent, northwest London, on Saturday morning. The Metropolitan Police confirmed that the deceased are 43-year-old Nusrat Usman, 15-year-old Maryam Mikaeel, 8-year-old Musa Usman, and 4-year-old Raees Usman.

The fire broke out in a residential property in Stonebridge, engulfing the home before emergency services could fully contain the blaze. A 13-year-old girl, whose name has not been disclosed, is in



critical condition in hospital, while a 70-year-old woman was treated and later discharged.

Superintendent Steve Allen of the Met’s North West London policing team expressed condolences, saying, “Our thoughts are with all those affected by this tragic inci-

dent.” He confirmed that specialist officers are continuing to support the wider family, who have requested privacy during what he described as “an extremely distressing time.”

A major investigation is underway, with officers from the Specialist Crime Command working alongside local units. Authorities described the inquiry as “very complex” and confirmed that additional officers will be present in the area in the coming days. Some cordons remain in place as the investigation continues.

In connection with the incident, a 41-year-old man was arrested at the scene but has since been released on bail and detained under the Mental Health Act. Police have appealed to anyone with relevant information to come forward, urging local residents to approach officers with any concerns or assistance that may aid the ongoing investigation.

# Putin announces Russia ranks 4th in purchasing power parity

Russia's economy has surged ahead, outpacing expectations with robust growth over the past two years, says the president

News Desk

MOSCOW: Russia has quietly climbed the ranks to become the world's fourth-largest economy by purchasing power parity, a milestone President Vladimir Putin proudly highlighted during a recent meeting with representatives from the country's business community.

Speaking with a tone of measured confidence, Putin attributed this achievement not to isolated efforts but to the collective work of countless teams across factories, farms, service sectors, and financial institutions scattered throughout Russia's vast regions. The president underscored that this growth



was no fleeting success born of favorable conditions but rather the product of resilience and determination in what he described as "fair challenging and far from being 'hothouse' conditions."

The economy's expansion, he noted, was steady

and broad-based, with a 4.1% increase recorded in 2023 followed by an even stronger 4.3% growth projected for 2024. Such figures, Putin said, are impressive benchmarks, particularly amid global economic uncertainties and sanctions that

continue to weigh heavily on Russia. Importantly, Putin emphasized that this economic progress was not confined to any single sector or region.

Instead, it reflected a wide-ranging upswing encompassing industry, agriculture, finance, and services. He insisted that such a comprehensive advance is only possible through the contributions of millions of ordinary workers and professionals, highlighting the collective spirit driving Russia's economic ambitions.

While international observers remain cautious about Russia's broader economic outlook given ongoing geopolitical tensions and ex-

ternal pressures, Putin's remarks seek to project an image of strength and unity at home. His narrative positions the Russian economy as not merely surviving but thriving, supported by a determined population playing their part in a national effort that stretches across the country's vast landscape.

This declaration arrives at a time when Russia faces considerable economic challenges, yet the leadership's message is clear: despite sanctions and global isolation attempts, the country is carving out a prominent place on the global economic stage, propelled by the persistence and hard work of its people.

# Over 100 peacocks die amid soaring heat in Tharparkar

By Dr Zulfiqar Nohrio

THARPARKAR: In the arid landscapes of Tharparkar, a distressing crisis is unfolding as more than 100 peacocks have died over the past week, sending ripples of concern through local communities. The soaring temperatures, with mercury levels rising above 40 degrees Celsius, are taking a severe toll on the district's delicate wildlife, particularly its iconic peacock population.

Residents across rural Tharparkar have observed the escalating heat with growing unease, witnessing firsthand the devastating impact on these vibrant birds. Deputy Conservator Mir Ijaz Talpur confirmed that multiple reports of peacock deaths have come from villages within the Mithi tehsil. In response, a specialized team was dispatched early this morning to Bhimasar village, where efforts are un-



derway to provide urgent medical aid to the affected birds.

The Deputy Director of the Poultry Department shed light on the grim situation, attributing the spike in mortality to the combined pressures of climate change and acute water scarcity. These factors, he explained, are causing illness among the peacocks, with the intense heat particularly damaging their brains—a condition that, without timely treatment, often proves fatal. However, he remains cau-

tiously optimistic, noting that many affected birds can be saved if they receive proper care.

This troubling loss of peacocks serves as a stark reminder of the harsh realities faced by wildlife in regions increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather patterns. The incident underscores the urgent need for coordinated environmental and veterinary interventions, as the health of Tharparkar's ecosystems—and the species that inhabit them—hangs in the balance.

# Sukkur Commissioner urges unity against Thalassemia

By Imtiaz Hussain

SUKKUR: Commissioner Sukkur Fayaz Hus-sain Abbasi has stressed the need for collective responsibility in the fight against Thalassemia, calling for increased public awareness and regular blood donations. He made these remarks at a seminar on blood donation and Thalassemia awareness held at RT Grace Hotel, Sukkur, or-

healthier future for our next generations." He commended SBTA's efforts in organising the event and assured full support from the district administration for future awareness and donation campaigns.

Sindh Assembly Speaker Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure and prioritising Thalassemia prevention. His



ganised by the Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority (SBTA).

The seminar brought together key stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, civil society members and government officials, to address the growing challenge of Thalassemia and improve Sindh's blood transfusion systems.

Addressing the gathering, Commissioner Abbasi said: "Thalassemia is a preventable disease, and with collective efforts through regular blood donation and awareness, we can secure a

remarks underscored the urgency of systemic improvements in health services to manage and ultimately eradicate the disease.

The seminar was also attended by MNA Noman Islam Shaikh, Deputy Commissioner Sukkur and Secretary SBTA Dr Dur-e-Naz Jamal, who echoed the need for coordinated action to ensure safe and sufficient blood supply for Thalassemia patients. The event concluded with a strong pledge from all stakeholders to continue collaborative efforts towards a Thalassemia-free Sindh.

# Federal, Sindh pledge joint action on climate change

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Federal Minister Masood Malik's recent visit to the office of Sindh's Provincial Adviser on Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development, Dost Muhammad Rahmoon, marks a critical step in addressing the escalating climate challenges facing the province. The meeting underscored a shared recognition of the urgent need for federal and provincial governments to join forces in

responses that can mitigate these risks and protect citizens from the most harmful consequences.

Following the talks, Masood Malik and Dost Muhammad Rahmoon addressed the media to reinforce their commitment to this cause. They emphasized the importance of a united front in mobilising all available resources and expertise to tackle the climate crisis head-on. A key part of their strategy includes strengthening communica-



confronting the devastating impacts of climate change, which continue to threaten vulnerable communities across Sindh.

In their discussions, both leaders acknowledged the increasing severity of environmental shifts—from rising temperatures and erratic rainfall to the intensifying threat of coastal erosion and flooding—that place immense pressure on the region's resources and livelihoods.

They agreed that collaboration and coordination between different tiers of government are essential to formulate timely, effective

channels to ensure the public receives timely warnings about extreme weather events and other climate-related threats.

The meeting also highlighted a broader vision: one where climate resilience is integrated into every layer of governance and where preventive measures are prioritized over reactive ones. Both officials stressed that safeguarding Sindh's environment is not only about protecting nature but also about securing the future of millions of people who depend on its stability for their homes, health, and livelihoods.

## METRO MATTERS

### Mayor commits to citywide cleanup ahead of Eid-ul-Adha

By Aziz Khatri

KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has announced a comprehensive cleanliness plan for Eid-ul-Adha, ensuring public convenience through close coordination with Town Chairmen and the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB). The announcement came during a high-level meeting held at the SSWMB office to finalize preparations for the upcoming religious festival.

Joined by MD SSWMB Tariq Ali Nazamani, Town Chairmen, officials and representatives of private cleaning firms, the mayor outlined the measures aimed at maintaining hygiene and public health during the days of sacrifice. "On Eid-ul-Adha, we will ensure timely removal of animal waste and a clean environment in coordination with Town Chairmen," Wahab stated, adding that public awareness campaigns are also underway.

The plan includes the establishment of around 100 waste collection points across Karachi's seven districts and the digging of seven trenches for the burial of animal waste. These landfill trenches are located at Jam Chakro, Gond Pass and GTS Sharafi Goth. More than 8,000 sanitary workers and additional support staff will be mobilized to collect animal offal directly from homes and neighborhoods. In addition to offal, workers will collect bhalu mitti (soft soil), which will be stored at Garbage Transfer Stations and offered free of charge to parks and green belts upon requests from Town Municipal Corporations (TMCs).

Mayor Wahab also revealed that special bags for offal collection will be distributed this year, and Town Chairmen will play a central role in ensuring efficient service delivery in their respective areas. "The public expects a lot from us. We are committed to addressing city issues on priority and will use all available resources to achieve excellent performance," he stressed.

Instructions were issued to ensure proper lime sprinkling and insecticide spraying at waste collection points and other locations following waste removal, to prevent health hazards and maintain sanitation. During the meeting, the MD of SSWMB presented a detailed operational and monitoring plan for Eid. He confirmed that waste would be transported from residential areas to collection points and then to the designated trenches for safe disposal.

### Iraqi CG announces Karachi-based visa facility

By Musarrat Arif

KARACHI: In a significant development for academic and diplomatic ties, the Iraqi Consul General Dr Maher Mujahid Jaijaan announced that the Republic of Iraq will soon begin issuing visas directly from its consulate in Karachi. The move will eliminate the need for visa applicants to travel to Islamabad, making the process easier for those based in southern Pakistan.

Dr Jaijaan made the announcement during his meeting with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi, Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, at the university's Secretariat on Monday. He was accompanied by diplomatic attaché Imad Yasin, Sabah Faraj, and protocol officer Abdul Ghaffar Banglani.

During the meeting, the Iraqi Consul General shared insights into Iraq's education system, noting that around 200,000 Iraqi students are currently pursuing education in various countries around the world. He expressed hope that future collaboration with Pakistani institutions would help Iraqi students access new learning opportunities, particularly in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence.

Welcoming the proposal, Vice Chancellor Dr Khalid Iraqi said the university would instruct relevant departments to prepare for the arrival of Iraqi students and facilitate academic exchange. "We already have students from several African and Asian countries enrolled in various departments," he said. "Now, even more international students are joining our MPhil and PhD programs."

### Karachi braces for three days of heat, humidity

By Uzma Ehtasham

KARACHI: Karachi sweltered under intense heat on Monday as the city recorded a maximum temperature of 38.6 degrees Celsius, according to the Meteorological Department. The weather is expected to remain hot and humid in the coming days, with temperatures forecast to remain high throughout the week.

The department has predicted that daytime temperatures will range between 37 and 39 degrees Celsius, but could edge past the 40-degree mark on Thursday and Friday, pushing the heat index even higher and amplifying discomfort for residents.

Despite the heat, strong sea breezes are expected to continue during this period, offering some relief from the oppressive conditions. However, meteorologists warn that the humidity will likely remain high, creating a muggy atmosphere that could affect vulnerable groups, particularly the elderly and those with existing health conditions.

Authorities have advised residents to stay hydrated, avoid unnecessary outdoor activities during peak heat hours, and take basic precautions to cope with the elevated temperatures. With summer conditions now in full swing, Karachiites are bracing for what may be a prolonged spell of extreme weather.

### Three women steal jewelry worth Rs9.8m

By our correspondent

KARACHI: In Karachi's KDA Scheme 1, a daring theft unfolded as three women stole jewelry worth 9.8 million rupees from a family home before fleeing the scene. The incident, registered as theft case number 560 at the Sharah Faisal police station, was reported by Mansoor Azeem, the homeowner.

According to the complaint, the women approached the family claiming to be unemployed and requested cleaning work. Out of compassion, the family hired them for a day. The women briefly cleaned the house, took their payment, and left. However, between noon and 3 pm on May 17, they took advantage of their access to steal the jewelry.

Authorities are actively investigating, using CCTV footage to track the suspects, whose mobile phones are currently switched off. The case has heightened concern over the growing use of deception in high-value robberies in the city.

### MIT chief demands accountability for Pakka Qila carnage

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Dr Saleem Haider, chairman of the Muhajir Ittehad Tehreek (MIT), expressed deep concern over the continued denial of justice for the families of victims of the Pakka Qila massacre that took place on 26–27 May 1990. He alleged direct involvement of the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in orchestrating the attack.

Dr Haider stated that those terrorists disguised in police uniforms who carried out the killings of Muhajirs have neither been punished nor has any inquiry been conducted in the past 35 years. The families of the martyrs still await justice.

He strongly criticized the PPP, which claims to be a federal party, for orchestrating the massacre of Muhajirs in Pakka Qila and surrounding areas by deploying terrorists in police uniforms, looting their properties, and committing ethnic cleansing. Despite the passage of several decades, no government—including MQM, which has been in power multiple times and is currently part of the federal government—has taken any serious steps to punish the killers of dozens of Muhajir victims.

Dr Haider accused the PPP of longstanding hostility toward Muhajirs, noting that its founder, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was responsible for the division of Pakistan and for obstructing the return of stranded people from East Pakistan. He said the PPP nationalized Muhajir-owned mills, factories, schools and hospitals, pushing the community toward economic decline. The party continues to control Muhajir resources while ethnic cleansing persists in Karachi, Hyderabad and other Sindh cities.

He added that Muhajirs have been deprived of education, employment and basic facilities. Dr Haider condemned the fact that the terrorists who opened fire on Muhajirs on 26–27 May were hailed as heroes by then prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

He further lamented that despite MQM's repeated tenure in government and its current federal role, it has neither sought a proper inquiry nor provided financial, political or moral support to the victims of the tragedy.

### Exams delayed over May 28 holiday

By our correspondent

KARACHI: The intermediate exams scheduled for 28 May in Karachi have been postponed, the board confirmed. This delay comes in observance of the nationwide public holiday on Youm-e-Takbeer, which led authorities to reschedule the exams out of respect for the occasion.

According to the spokesperson for the intermediate board, the exams originally set for Wednesday, 28 May, will now take place two days later, on Friday, 30 May. The board has communicated this change to ensure students and educational institutions can adjust their preparations accordingly.

This decision reflects the board's recognition of the significance of Youm-e-Takbeer, a day that marks an important moment in the country's history. By aligning the exam schedule with national observances, the board aims to balance educational commitments with respect for national sentiment.

Students and parents have been advised to note the revised dates and prepare accordingly.

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# ‘Solar Revolution’ on DHA rooftops not Orangi

The world has been generous in its applause for Pakistan’s apparent solar energy surge. In speeches at clean energy summits and reports by development banks, the country is lauded for its leap in solar investment over the past two years. Billions of rupees have flowed into the sector. Solar panels are now more visible across rooftops and commercial structures, especially in urban centers. But despite the grand narrative of green progress, the question hangs uncomfortably in the air: has Pakistan truly stepped into a solar revolution? The answer is more inconvenient than inspiring. No, not yet. Not even close. For all the statistical triumphs and international headlines, the reality on the ground tells a story of misdirected intentions and uneven gains. The immense financial commitment to solar infrastructure has not translated into any meaningful public benefit for the average Pakistani.

Instead, it has largely padded the fortunes of the already powerful. At the heart of this misalignment lies a policy framework shaped by those who have the most to gain, not the most to lose. One of the most telling examples is the drastic, almost theatrical, reduction in import duties on solar equipment—by as much as 90 percent. It was presented as a policy to make solar more accessible, a way to bring clean energy to the masses. In practice, however, it served a select audience: real estate magnates, industrialists, and influential middlemen. The wealthy imported in bulk, stockpiled equipment, and swiftly deployed solar installations across private projects. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens—those facing the brunt of energy poverty—found themselves locked out, priced out, and increasingly frustrated.

There’s no shame in policy benefiting businesses, provided there is a public payoff. But that return simply never came. What makes matters worse is the simultaneous unfolding of another scandal: the exploitation of solar energy by independent power producers, or IPPs. These energy giants, already accused of profiteering under previous contracts, found new ways to inflate their margins by incorporating solar into their portfolios. The government, for its part, staged a performance, announcing lower per-unit prices from IPPs with great fanfare. But the relief never reached the consumer. If anything, the cost of power remained high, and in some areas, it actually increased—this time under the green banner of sustainability.

Karachi presents perhaps the most jarring contradiction of all. Here, in a city of over 30 million, where temperatures now routinely cross 45°C, solar energy should be a savior. Yet it is sold to the people at prices even higher than those of furnace oil-based generation. For the working poor in New Karachi, Liaquatabad, Surjani, Orangi Town, Baldia Town, Korangi, and Malir, this isn’t just unaffordable—it is grotesque. They sweat through power cuts of 12 to 14 hours a day and sometime it reached up to 20 hours, then wake to utility bills that punish them for being poor. All the while, solar-generated electricity flows into elite neighborhoods and centralized air-conditioned houses.

The root problem lies in how Pakistan imagines energy justice. Instead of free laptops or small cash handouts through Benazir Income Support Program, aiming at getting votes from the poor, the PPP-led Sindh government could make a truly transformative shift: offer interest-free solar systems to the middle class and the lower-middle segments, with installation linked directly to national identity cards. Such a move would not only undercut the market dominance of monopolistic energy providers like Karachi Electric but also create decentralized energy ownership, empowering communities in ways that aid cannot. Of course, this kind of policy would require more than promises. It would demand real accountability from installation companies, with contracts that mandate free maintenance for at least five years. This would help break the cycle of broken public goods and quickly deteriorating infrastructure.

More importantly, it would introduce a culture of service that the energy sector in Pakistan desperately lacks. Then there are the charitable giants—organizations like JDC and Saylani—who do commendable work but remain stuck in a narrow framework of feeding street wanderers. Handing out food, while noble, is not a long-term solution to poverty or powerlessness. What if they instead financed interest-free solar systems for families, offering them a way out of chronic energy insecurity? But again, such a shift would threaten entrenched interests. There is an entire economy around crisis management in Pakistan—be it land grabs in the name of welfare projects or political influence secured through handouts. The last thing these actors want is for people to become self-reliant.

Karachi’s electricity woes in the summer of 2025 are no longer seasonal inconveniences—they are full-blown humanitarian crises. Data from Karachi Electric suggests that 651 out of 2,127 feeders are subject to load shedding, with nearly 500 suffering up to ten hours of daily outages though actual period of loadshedding is far longer. That is a grim figure, but it still does not capture the extent of suffering. Ask the residents of Lines Area or Quaidabad, and they will tell you that electricity disappears without warning, often for days. No load-shedding schedule is followed; no helpline offers solutions. Sometimes, an entire neighborhood is plunged into darkness under the pretext of “maintenance”—a word that now provokes anger rather than reassurance.

Yet, somehow, the official spokespersons continue to deny any unscheduled loadshedding. They say regional faults are to blame, or that feeders trip due to overuse. It is a masterclass in avoiding responsibility. The chasm between official statements and daily life grows wider with every blackout. What the government fails to understand—or worse, ignores—is that electricity is not just a utility. It is a lifeline.

It powers hospitals and water pumps. It enables small businesses to survive. It helps children study. Denying it to a quarter of a city like Karachi while pretending progress is being made on solar energy is more than dishonest. It is inhumane.

Pakistan’s flirtation with a solar revolution risks becoming another story of elite capture dressed up as development. Until the benefits of this energy transition are felt in the homes of the working class, until rooftop panels become as common in Orangi as they are in DHA, until policies are designed for empowerment instead of enrichment, there can be no celebration. There can only be more heat, more darkness, and more broken promises. The sun may shine brighter than ever, but its light has yet to reach those who need it most.

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

By S.M. Inam



Revolutions are rarely born in silence. They are stirred by anger, nurtured by hope, and eventually set alight by the will of a people who can no longer bear the weight of injustice. In the history of Bangladesh, two such turning points continue to shape its political identity and national psyche. One was a war of liberation meticulously planned and fought with purpose. The other, less structured but equally significant, was the uprising on November 7, 1975—a spontaneous revolt rooted in frustration and fear, erupting like a long-suppressed cry for change. These revolutions, though separated by only four years, came from different impulses but spoke to a common yearning: the right to self-determination.

The 1971 Liberation War, led ideologically by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was the result of long-standing grievances against the political domination of West Pakistan. It was also aided strategically by India, which supported the movement to serve its own regional interests. Sheikh Mujib’s speeches gave shape to the dream of an independent Bangladesh, even though he could not physically lead the armed resistance when it unfolded. Still, the nation was born out of that dream, carried forward by his allies and an outraged population. The liberation was,

at once, a political triumph and a geopolitical maneuver. It remains a celebrated milestone, enshrined in textbooks and national ceremonies.

But revolutions do not end with declarations of independence. They begin there. And that is where Bangladesh’s journey became complicated. The euphoria of 1971 quickly gave way to growing disillusionment. Sheikh Mujib, hailed as the Father of the Nation, was soon criticized for authoritarian governance, media censorship, and political intolerance.

A single-party system replaced multi-party democracy. Dissent was discouraged. A devastating famine in 1974 highlighted the inadequacy of government response and revealed the fragile state of a young nation struggling under the weight of inflated expectations. Internationally, the Soviet Union offered limited support, and despite the initial sympathy for Bangladesh’s cause, the West and the Muslim world remained largely distant.

Discontent began to simmer, particularly among the military and the working class. Then came the events of November 7, 1975. The Sipahi-Janata Biplob—literally the ‘soldier-people uprising’—was a raw, unpolished revolution, erupting without the meticulous planning of the 1971 war. It was born out of betrayal, instability, and the thirst for a different kind of leadership. Amid this chaos, emerged Ziaur Rahman, an army officer turned national figure. He was not just a man in uniform. He was a man many saw as a symbol of order, pragmatism, and re-

newal. His leadership brought a sense of balance after months of political turbulence. He did not come from a dynastic background, nor did he inherit power through a party machine. He appeared, to many, as the people’s choice—an answer to their call for genuine reform.

While Sheikh Mujib had envisioned a sovereign Bangladesh, Zia was seen by his supporters as the one who could consolidate it. His policies gave a renewed sense of purpose. He initiated structural reforms, encouraged private enterprise, and sought to realign Bangladesh’s foreign policy away from dependence on a single power bloc. Under Zia’s leadership, the idea of Bangladesh as an independent, self-reliant nation seemed within reach. And yet, like many revolutions, his too was interrupted. His assassination in 1981 reopened the door to political instability. What followed was a cycle of mistrust, dynastic politics, and ideological polarization.

More than four decades later, Bangladesh continues to wrestle with the unfinished business of those revolutions. The dreams remain vivid in public memory, but the reality of their fulfillment is far less certain. On one side, the nation has made undeniable progress. There has been economic growth, infrastructure development, and improved literacy. But these advances have come alongside persistent concerns about political freedom, electoral fairness, and the role of external influences in domestic affairs. Rumors abound—some wild, some plausible—about the involvement of

foreign powers in Bangladesh’s internal affairs. From diplomatic missions to intelligence networks, many believe that unseen hands still shape the contours of the country’s political landscape. Critics of the current government claim that national interests are being compromised behind closed doors, while those in power argue these accusations are little more than the noise of political rivals desperate for attention. The truth, as is often the case, likely lies somewhere in between.

Still, it is not just rumors that threaten the revolution’s legacy. It is the erosion of public trust, the sidelining of civil voices, and the tendency to view political opposition as treason rather than democratic disagreement. The people of Bangladesh deserve better. They deserve open institutions, free media, accountable leadership, and a judiciary unshackled by political pressure. These are not abstract ideals—they are the backbone of any revolution that seeks permanence. To secure the revolution’s future, the government must lead with transparency and humility. That means making policy decisions in the public eye, engaging citizens in national dialogue, and embracing scrutiny not as a threat but as a tool for progress. Above all, it requires a renewed commitment to justice—social, economic, and political. The revolution began with the people. It must be completed with them.

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By Uzma Ehtasham



It has been two months since a parliamentary committee in Pakistan, after much debate and deliberation, announced what should have been a landmark decision for educational justice: a cap of Rs1.8 million on the five-year tuition fees for private medical colleges. For a brief moment, the announcement inspired cautious hope, particularly among thousands of students who dream of becoming doctors but whose financial realities often stand in harsh contrast to those dreams. Yet here we are, weeks later, with the decision rendered practically irrelevant. The truth is not hidden in some bureaucratic fine print—it is glaring and disheartening. Those meant to enforce the regulation are, in many cases, the very people who benefit from flouting it.

The Rs1.8 million ceiling, formally agreed upon by a 25-member government committee, was supposed to cover the entire cost of MBBS and BDS programs, across all private colleges, including every conceivable due. And yet, private medical colleges continue to charge students two to three times this amount—between Rs3.5 to 4 million. These figures are not rumors whispered in frustrated hallways; they are documented, reported, and disturbingly consistent. They speak to a culture of impunity where the law exists on

paper and paper alone. It is here that the hypocrisy becomes undeniable. When those responsible for regulation sit in the boardrooms of the very institutions they are meant to oversee, the notion of governance collapses into farce.

The regulatory framework is not just flawed; it is compromised from the inside. What should have been a powerful instrument to protect merit and equity has instead become a shield behind which profiteers thrive. To understand the magnitude of this failure, one must look at the broader landscape.

Every year, more than 200,000 students apply to medical colleges in Pakistan. Only a sliver of these—roughly 15,000—secure seats in public institutions, where the total cost for a five-year program hovers around a modest Rs90,000. The rest, regardless of academic merit, must contend with private institutions, whose fees are not just high—they are prohibitive. These are not institutions of learning anymore; they are auction houses where futures are sold to the highest bidder.

The impact is devastating. This is not merely about unaffordable tuition. It is about the systematic exclusion of bright, hardworking students from lower- and middle-income families. It is about telling the child of a farmer, a laborer, or a schoolteacher that no matter how well you do in your exams, your future in medicine depends not on your intellect but on your bank account. That is not just an educational injustice. It is a moral failure.

And the consequences of that failure echo beyond the lecture halls. Pakistan continues to grapple with a severe shortage of medical professionals, especially in rural and underserved areas. Clinics are understaffed, hospitals overburdened, and patients often left to the mercy of ill-equipped facilities or long-distance travel to access care.

Yet, thousands of potential doctors are turned away from the profession every year—not because they lacked ability, but because they lacked access. It is not an exaggeration to say that the country has lost millions of doctors over the decades to this systemic exclusion. Imagine what the nation could have achieved if even a fraction of those young minds had been nurtured, trained, and allowed to serve. In a time when health crises from dengue to malnutrition to mental illness are reaching alarming levels, this deliberate waste of human potential borders on criminal negligence. What is worse, the regulatory announcements have become a kind of theatre. The script is repeated annually—an order is issued, a press conference held, and a few headlines made. Then silence.

The colleges continue to charge what they want, families continue to borrow, beg, or break, and the dream of a fair, merit-based system continues to rot in plain sight. The problem is not that the state lacks tools; it is that it lacks will. If the government is serious about reform, then the first step must be to dismantle the incestuous relationship be-

tween regulators and institutions. You cannot task wolves with guarding the flock. Fee oversight must be transferred to independent bodies, accountable to the public and protected from political interference. These watchdogs should not only monitor compliance but also be empowered to penalize violators. And those penalties must hurt—not token fines that institutions can write off, but real consequences that serve as deterrents.

The stakes are too high for half-measures. This is not just about education policy. It is about the kind of country Pakistan wants to be. Does it believe in upward mobility through merit, or does it condone a system where money dictates destiny? The choice is ours to make, but time is slipping away. Unless bold, transparent, and immediate action is taken, Pakistan’s dream of equitable medical education will remain just that—a dream. It will fade, like so many before it, into the annals of broken promises. And the children who still dare to believe that hard work can take them somewhere will be left with nothing but regret and the echo of a system that told them they were never meant to belong. Justice in education is not a luxury. It is a responsibility. The future of the nation’s health depends on it.

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By Atiq Raja



In today’s hyperconnected world, the tools that shape opportunity are no longer bricks and mortar—they are code, conversation, and creative output. At the heart of this new era lies generative AI, a technology that can write essays, craft images, build apps, translate languages, and even compose music. But its most profound impact won’t be found in Silicon Valley boardrooms or elite university labs. It will be in the hands of a child in a remote village, a teacher in a conflict zone, or a community worker trying to solve local problems with limited resources. Generative AI, when used responsibly and inclusively, has the potential to radically democratize opportunity for the world’s underserved.

Unlike traditional charity models that often reinforce cycles of dependence, generative AI offers something far more enduring: autonomy. It creates access, enables expression, and fuels imagination. It doesn’t hand down answers; it opens up pathways. For millions of children who lack access to trained teachers, stable schools, or basic textbooks,

generative AI can serve as a reliable educational lifeline. Language barriers, teacher shortages, and geographic isolation no longer have to mean educational neglect. With multilingual AI tutors capable of adapting to a student’s pace and style, learning becomes personal, instant, and resilient. Whether it’s a girl in rural Sindh seeking help with algebra or a teenager in a refugee camp trying to understand biology, generative AI makes quality education portable and inclusive.

This isn’t just about academic content—it’s about restoring curiosity in those who have been denied the luxury of learning. In underserved regions, the unemployment crisis is not just a labor issue—it’s a crisis of missed potential. Generative AI can shift that trajectory by offering low-cost, high-impact training in digital and creative skills. Young people can learn to code, design, write, and communicate professionally without needing expensive tuition or connections. Even more powerfully, they can begin to freelance, build startups, and contribute meaningfully to local economies. They move from passive job-seekers to active contributors and creators. Too often, development conversations gloss over the cultural cost of progress. Indigenous languages are dying, oral histories are fading, and traditional art forms are under-

funded. Generative AI offers a chance to reverse that tide.

When trained on local dialects and storytelling traditions, it can become a living archive and a creative collaborator. Communities can document folklore, create learning material in native languages, and even generate poetry and music rooted in their own heritage. In doing so, AI helps communities preserve what makes them unique—while still participating in a global digital dialogue. Generative AI is also a practical tool for local problem-solving. In places where government services are distant and NGOs are overstretched, community-led innovation is essential.

Whether it’s drafting a grant proposal, creating a public health awareness campaign, or documenting community grievances, AI can support the process with speed, clarity, and professionalism.

With just a smartphone and a bit of training, local voices can gain clarity, reach, and recognition—turning residents into researchers, journalists, and change agents. Perhaps the most profound impact of generative AI lies in what it restores: self-worth. A teenager who gets their first design job thanks to an AI-generated portfolio; a mother who learns to read with the help of an audio bot; a student who codes a health app in her

native language—these are not just stories of progress. They are moments of dignity reclaimed. Empowerment isn’t always loud. Sometimes it’s a child asking a question without fear of mockery, or a community leader writing a speech for the first time. Generative AI gives people the confidence to imagine, articulate, and build their futures.

None of this will happen without infrastructure. Access to the internet and digital devices remains a fundamental barrier, and public-private partnerships must prioritize closing that gap.

Ethical considerations must also come first—AI tools must be inclusive, free from bias, and built with local sensitivities in mind. Human oversight is critical; empathy cannot be outsourced to algorithms. The real transformation begins when underserved communities stop being passive recipients of AI and start shaping it. Local youth trained to build, adapt, and localize generative AI tools will define the next chapter of digital inclusion. They won’t just use technology; they will own it, reshape it, and ensure it serves their context, language, and vision.

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# Pakistan’s exploited workers

By Dr Naazir Mahmood

There are not many among us who are interested in the working conditions and wages of low-paid workers. Naeem Sadiq is perhaps the only one who consistently highlights the extremely challenging conditions in which such workers survive through his articles, emails, and letters.

Naeem is an industrial engineer cum social activist engaged in promoting public interest causes for the last couple of decades. In addition to advocacy for governance reforms, he has spearheaded a campaign to improve workers’ wages and working conditions on the lowest rung of society. His particular concern is for cleaners, coal miners, delivery boys, janitors, railway colliers and security guards and sweepers.

Recently, he drew my attention to a news report that appeared in papers on May 21 about the suicide of a private security guard in Karachi. Most newspapers reported it as a case of family dispute. Naeem Sadiq says that anyone made to stand for 12 hours a day for 30 days a month while getting just Rs25, 000 with no old-age benefits and no social security is an absolutely vulnerable person – for shooting himself to

death. A majority of affluent people are least bothered about the miserable life they live, and many of us do not know that it was the ninth reported suicide case of a security guard in the recent past. The police conveniently tend to camouflage these as suicide cases.

Obviously, many such cases result from extreme cruelty meted out to the low-paid staff such as coalminers, janitors, night watchmen and security guards. The exploitation that these workers face is a shame to any civilised society. It is criminal to treat the lower staff with this indignity and pay them such low wages that they end up taking their own lives. It is the greed and the desire of our rich and the powerful for more and more profits that force the poor workers to accept anything that their employers offer.

Cleaners, coal miners, delivery boys, guards and janitors are perhaps the lowest-paid workers in our society, as most of them receive less than half of the legal minimum wage and that too without the four mandatory monthly holidays. The Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and the social security department – if there is any functioning – appear to be least concerned about registering all workers across the

country. The minimum wage should be at least Rs40,000 for an eight-hour duty and at least Rs75,000 for those who perform a 12-hour duty, not what most low-paid workers get.

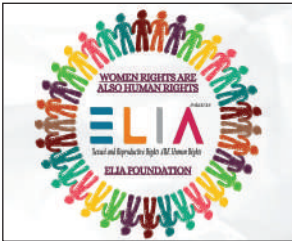
For a reality check, you may talk to any guard working at a bank branch anywhere in the country. You will be surprised to know that most of the guards receive just Rs25,000 a month and that too at a huge personal cost. Most industrial units in Pakistan are even crueler to their staff, as there is hardly any check on the hazardous working conditions in which they are employed. Many industries that deal with chemicals and heavy machinery seldom provide proper training to the staff who put their lives in danger for the employers’ profit.

Even big industrial units in Pakistan seldom have an in-house clinic or a doctor with paramedical staff for any immediate medical needs of their workers. Protective gear is also mostly in short supply at many industrial units in the country. The same applies to shopping malls where a janitor or a guard is on a non-stop duty for 10-12 hours. One can see the janitorial staff constantly sweeping floors and picking up trash that careless customers or visitors drop here and there. A guard is more than a guard,

sometimes making tea for other staff or directing customers to their required counters.

This makes them even more vulnerable to attacks by robbers who may strike at any time at unsuspecting guards who are not adequately trained to defend themselves. Petrol pumps are another example of low-paid workers being at perpetual risk. Since our drivers hardly bother to switch off their engines while refuelling their vehicles, there is always a high risk of a fire breaking out. Workers who service or wash vehicles at petrol pumps and service stations are mostly untrained and without protective gear. Fumes and gas emissions seriously threaten respiratory health, but there is hardly any petrol pump or service station that takes care of such issues.

Cash in bare hands is an even greater invitation to robbers who can make a kill anytime. Government and private hospitals are also no exception to this rule. Most government hospitals – especially in rural areas – do not have proper waste disposal systems, and even for the safe storage of corpses. A couple of years back, there was an incident of some dead bodies strewn over the rooftop of a hospital somewhere in Punjab.



## Fin Min links defence strength to national well-being

The Finance Minister stressed that government support for the armed forces reflects a broader commitment to national stability and security beyond mere military interests

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has reiterated Pakistan's steadfast commitment to bolstering its armed forces, framing military strength as essential not only for defence but as a cornerstone of the country's overall stability and economic well-being. Aurangzeb made it clear that the government's support for the military extends beyond mere institutional allegiance; it is a national priority rooted in broader security.

Addressing the media, the finance minister emphasized the government's determination to assist the armed forces to the fullest extent, insisting that this commitment is a reflection of the country's fundamental needs rather than a gesture confined to military interests. His remarks underscored the link between defence and economic stability, highlighting that a strong military apparatus is integral to main-



taining sovereignty and fostering a conducive environment to growth.

In a pointed comment on regional geopolitics, Aurangzeb disclosed that India had actively sought to undermine Pakistan's ongoing loan program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He revealed that despite efforts by India to influence the IMF board, Islamabad successfully defended its position, with the program being evaluated on its merits. This diplomatic resilience, Aurangzeb suggested, reflects Pakistan's ability to navigate complex international pressures while

safeguarding its economic interests.

Looking ahead, the finance minister hinted at significant relief measures in the forthcoming federal budget, aimed primarily at easing the financial burdens on the salaried class, which has been disproportionately affected by persistent inflation. "We are working to provide relief to salaried citizens," Aurangzeb said, signaling that bold and decisive steps are under consideration in the budget to address the challenges faced by ordinary workers and middle-income families.

Aurangzeb also outlined

the government's broader economic vision, promising a clear strategic framework in the upcoming fiscal plan. He highlighted ongoing reforms across critical sectors, including taxation and energy, with a special focus on modernizing the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) through digitization. This shift towards technology-driven governance, he said, is central to transforming Pakistan's economic landscape.

Further emphasizing the government's reform agenda, Aurangzeb mentioned plans for pension reforms and initiatives to mitigate the impacts of climate change, pointing to a commitment to sustainable development and long-term policy innovation. His remarks portrayed a government striving to balance national security, fiscal responsibility, and structural reform as interconnected pillars necessary to steer Pakistan through a challenging economic and geopolitical environment.

## Former Sindh governor Kamal Azfar passes away

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Kamaluddin Azfar, former governor of Sindh, has passed away in a hospital in Karachi. He was 95 years old and had been unwell for some time, according to Senator Waqar Mehd.

The announcement regarding his funeral prayers and burial will be made later,



officials said. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah expressed his sorrow over the death of Kamaluddin Azfar.

Senator Mehd described Azfar as a shrewd politician who had also served as finance minister. Murad Ali Shah said his political services would always be remembered. The chief minister offered heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for the late governor's elevated status in the hereafter.

## Kuwait lifts visa ban on Pakistanis after 19 years

News Desk

KUWAIT: Kuwait has officially ended its 19-year-old visa restrictions on Pakistani citizens, a move that opens new avenues for work, family visits, tourism, and commercial activities. The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis' focal person, confirmed this development, highlighting it as a major opportunity for skilled Pakistanis to access employment and business prospects in Kuwait.

The focal person emphasized that the easing of visa rules signifies a positive shift as "the world is opening doors for skilled Pakistanis," promising to benefit thousands eager to work or travel abroad. He also announced that Pakistan will soon introduce an annual job quota for its citizens in Italy, further expanding overseas opportunities.

The Ministry has formalized cooperation with Italy through a memorandum of understanding, while other Arab countries are reportedly keen to offer jobs to Pakistani workers. Importantly, the entire visa application process for these countries is now available online, making it easier and more efficient for applicants.

## PM reflects on enduring Pakistan-Iran friendship

Sharif expressed sincere gratitude to the Iranian leadership for their mediation offer, seeing it as a hopeful stride toward lasting peace between India and Pakistan

News Desk

TEHRAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has underscored the unprecedented strength and resilience of Pakistan's relationship with Iran, emphasizing a deepening bond marked by strategic, diplomatic, and economic collaboration between the two neighbors. In an interview with Iranian media, Sharif reflected on the history of solidarity between Pakistan and Iran, noting that both countries have stood steadfastly by each other through all challenges.

The Prime Minister expressed Pakistan's sincere appreciation for Iran's unwavering support on critical regional and humanitarian issues.

His gratitude extended to the Iranian leadership for its offer to mediate in the longstanding India-Pakistan dispute, a gesture that Sharif welcomed as a constructive step toward regional peace. Unfortunately, he lamented, India declined the mediation proposal, a setback that did not diminish the commitment shared by Pakistan and Iran to seek peaceful resolutions through dialogue.

During his visit, Sharif said, discussions would center on strengthening bilateral ties and advancing mutual interests across multiple sec-



tors. He reaffirmed Pakistan's solidarity with Iran in condemning Israel's ongoing military aggression and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, describing both nations as united in their opposition to the violence and genocide affecting Palestinians.

The Prime Minister's comments highlighted the shared vision of the two countries for justice and peace, rooted in the belief that lasting solutions for conflicts such as Kashmir and Palestine must respect the aspirations of the people directly impacted. Calling for enduring unity within the Muslim world, Sharif stressed that peace in the region remains elusive without addressing these fundamental conflicts. He was clear that Pakistan and Iran would continue to support each other on these critical issues, reinforcing their commitment within the broader Muslim Ummah and regional

framework. On the economic front, Sharif revealed Pakistan's intention to explore a free trade agreement with Iran, signaling a new phase in economic cooperation between the two countries. He confidently predicted that trade volumes would expand significantly over the next decade, reflecting a forward-looking vision for closer economic integration and strategic partnership.

The Prime Minister also welcomed renewed diplomatic efforts concerning Iran's nuclear program, describing recent progress as hopeful and promising for regional stability. His remarks arrived at a time when the geopolitical dynamics of the region are shifting rapidly, with Pakistan positioning itself as a vital bridge for dialogue, stability, and cooperation, particularly with longstanding allies like Iran.

## Nine-year-old boy gets heart surgery after India refusal

News Desk

RAWALPINDI: Abdullah, a nine-year-old boy born with congenital heart disease, has successfully undergone open-heart surgery at the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology (AFIC), after being denied treatment abroad. The child's journey to recovery marks a poignant moment for his family, who had earlier returned from India without medical assistance due to rising regional tensions.

His father, Shahid Ali, recounted that the family had travelled to India in hopes of securing urgent treatment for both Abdullah and his seven-year-old sister, Minsa. However, in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, they were forced to return to Pakistan without any medical procedures being



carried out—a painful loss for a family already struggling with two critically ill children.

Upon their return, medical support was mobilized within Pakistan. Abdullah's surgery at AFIC has been hailed as a success, while his sister Minsa has undergone angioplasty and is scheduled for open-heart surgery in six months. Shahid Ali expressed deep gratitude towards the Army Chief, the Federal Health Minister, and others who played a role in facilitating the treatment of his children at a time of distress and uncertainty.

Their story underscores the ongoing difficulties many families face in accessing life-saving healthcare, especially when treatment abroad becomes entangled in political or security complications.

For the Ali family, the ordeal has turned into a testament of resilience and a reminder of the need for robust healthcare systems within national borders, capable of serving those in need regardless of the circumstances.

## Spain demands Israel honor int'l duties in Gaza conflict

Spain's foreign minister called on the international community to impose sanctions on Israel, demanding urgent pressure for a swift ceasefire

News Desk

MADRID: At a recent gathering of foreign ministers in Madrid, Spain's prime minister reaffirmed support for United Nations resolutions addressing the crisis in Gaza. The meeting, which brought together ministers from 20 European and Arab nations, focused on urgent calls for Israel to immediately halt its bombing campaign in the besieged territory, underscoring the pressing need for recognition of a two-state solution as the pathway to lasting peace.

Spain's foreign minister took a firm stance, urging the international community to consider imposing sanctions on Israel as a means to pressure the country into a swift ceasefire. This call for economic and political measures reflects growing frustration among global actors over the ongoing conflict, which has been raging since 2023 and has resulted in significant loss of life and humanitarian suffering.

Among the participants were longstanding allies of



Israel who expressed deep concern over the sustained hostilities against Hamas. Their voices added weight to the collective demand for an end to the violence and a return to dialogue. During the summit, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, held talks with Spain's Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, where both agreed on a coordinated diplomatic approach to address the escalating tensions in Gaza and the West Bank.

Spain went further to advocate for an immediate ban on arms shipments to Israel, signalling a willingness to take concrete steps in support of peace. The Spanish

government also indicated its readiness to impose targeted sanctions on any individuals or groups that undermine the two-state solution, highlighting a commitment to hold parties accountable for actions that fuel the conflict.

The French Foreign Minister, participating via video link, echoed the urgent call for intensified joint efforts to secure a ceasefire and pressed for the prompt release of hostages held amid the turmoil.

The meeting as a whole represents mounting international pressure on Israel to adhere to its global responsibilities and to engage constructively in the pursuit of peace.

## Memon reveals truth behind Moro house, truck arson

By Aziz Khatri

KARACHI: Sindh's Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has provided the provincial government's official account of the violent protests that shook Moro on 20 May, resulting in arson, clashes with police, and the torching of the residence of Interior Minister Zia Lanjari.

Speaking at a press conference in Karachi, Memon released video footage showing scenes of unrest, including masked men hurling stones and attacking law enforcement. According to Memon, the protest involved individuals who were not from the area and were heard speaking unfamiliar languages.

He claimed these masked ele-



ments used chemicals to ignite the fire that engulfed Lanjari's house — flames so intense they even charred the walls. A truck nearby was also set ablaze during the turmoil.

Memon squarely blamed the proscribed group Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM), alleging that its exiled leader Shafee Barfat had or-

chestrated the demonstration. He stressed that the police had initially tried to manage the situation peacefully but were met with gunfire and aggression from the demonstrators. He further claimed that the two fatalities reported during the protests were caused not by police bullets but by the weapons of fellow protesters.

Addressing widespread claims that the police had refused to hand over the bodies of the deceased to their families, Memon said such allegations were false and part of a misinformation campaign. He accused the protesters of creating unnecessary drama by refusing to accept the bodies unless their demands were met, thus manipulating public sentiment against the state.

## Bilawal slams KP govt after attack on Peshawar PPP rally

By our correspondent

PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned the violent attack on a PPP rally in Peshawar, held as part of the Save Province Movement. He accused the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provincial government of deliberately suppressing peaceful protests in a desperate bid to hide rampant



corruption within its ranks.

Bilawal expressed deep regret over the use of tear gas against unarmed political activists who had gathered to voice their concerns about rising lawlessness and soaring unemployment

in the province.

He made it clear that such tactics would not deter the PPP, which remains determined to expose what it calls the corrupt and incompetent administration ruling KP.

The PPP leader harshly criticized the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in KP, branding the decision to use violence against peaceful protesters an act of cowardice. He as-

serted that the Save Province Movement had now become the collective voice of the province's citizens, reflecting widespread frustration and demands for justice.

Undeterred by the police's brutal response, Bilawal declared that PPP workers stand ready to confront the provincial government's corruption and misgovernance head-on. He warned that the people of

KP have now witnessed the true, authoritarian face of the PTI-led administration, marking a turning point in the political landscape of the province.

Bilawal's remarks highlight the intensifying political tensions in KP, where demands for accountability and better governance clash with a crackdown on dissent, setting the stage for further unrest and contestation in the coming weeks.

## Aleema warns against double-dealing within ranks

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, has shared her brother's strong message from Adiala Jail, saying that there is no place in the party for those "playing on both sides of the wicket." She also highlighted the harsh conditions her brother is facing, including denial of basic rights.

Speaking outside the jail in Rawalpindi, Aleema said that Imran Khan has only been allowed to speak with his children once in eight months and is not permitted to meet his sisters. She added that attempts to send books have been blocked by jail authorities, and the former prime minister is not receiving medical check-ups from his personal doctors.

Aleema quoted Imran Khan as saying the party must prepare for a larger movement and that he will not call people to Islamabad but will lead a nationwide campaign.

## 'JF-17 Thunder' sold for just Rs5m in Hyderabad

By Imtiaz Hussain

SUKKUR: A colossal bull named JF-17 Thunder, weighing an astonishing 1,600 kilograms, has captivated residents of Liaquat Colony, Hyderabad, after being sold for a record-breaking Rs5 million. The giant sacrificial animal has become a local celebrity, drawing crowds eager to snap selfies and witness the grand farewell parade organized by its former owner.

Shahruckh, the bull's owner, celebrated the sale with a vibrant public send-off. The event featured colorful decorations, music and lively performances to honor the new buyer and entertain onlookers. In keeping with Sindhi traditions, attendees exchanged garlands made of currency notes and flowers, along with the culturally symbolic Ajrak, creating a festive and patriotic atmosphere.

The bull's name, JF-17 Thunder, is a tribute to the Pakistan Air Force's fighter jet known for its role in



downing Indian aircraft during Operation Bunyan Muroos, adding to the animal's symbolic value and patriotic appeal. While the sale reflects the high economic stakes often involved in the purchase of sacrificial animals ahead of Eidul Azha, religious scholars have stepped in to remind the public of the deeper meaning of the ritual.

"The true essence of sacrifice lies in devotion and seeking Allah's pleasure," they emphasized, urging people not to equate spiritual value with an animal's price or size. As Eid approaches, the spectacle of JF-17 Thunder has become a reflection of both cultural pride and the need to remember the core values of humility and faith that define the sacred occasion.