



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا جو شخص اللہ اور آخرت کے دن پر ایمان رکھتا ہو اسے اپنے مہمان کی عزت کرنا چاہئے۔ اس کی خاطر داری اس ایک دن اور رات کی سے مہمانی تین دن اور راتوں کی اس کے بعد جو ہو وہ ضرور ہے اور مہمان کے لیے جائز نہیں کہ وہ اپنے میزبان کے پاس اس دن ٹھہر جائے کہ اسے تکلف کر ڈالے۔
(بیگناری: حدیث نمبر 6135)
Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



Trump shows off site of new \$400 million ballroom at White House

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday showed off the site of his huge new White House ballroom, a \$400 million project that critics say flies in the face of voter anger over the cost of living.



UK trade minister hopes Britain will rejoin EU

"I hope in my lifetime that we would be welcomed back in the heart of Europe fully and solidly as members of the European Union," Chris Bryant told AFP in an interview at the European Parliament, though he cautioned: "We're not going to be doing that this summer."

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Address to student officers & faculty members

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, addressing student officers and faculty members at Command and Staff College, Quetta on Tuesday.



Photo: ISPR

Dar urges envoy-designate to strive for stronger Pakistan-Iran partnership

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to the Islamic Republic of Iran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui on Tuesday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar ahead of his departure to Tehran.

Recalling the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and fraternal bonds between Pakistan and Iran, the deputy prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to further expanding bilateral cooperation in all spheres, particularly in trade, connectivity, people-to-people exchanges, and

regional collaboration.

He emphasized the importance of sustaining the positive momentum in bilateral engagement through close coordination and mutual understanding.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar also highlighted Pakistan's constructive and responsible role in promoting regional peace, dialogue, and stability.

Wishing him success in his new assignment, Dar expressed confidence that the ambassador-designate would make a valuable contribution towards further strengthening the enduring partnership between the two brotherly countries.

Field Marshal Munir Praises Command and Staff College Standards, Warns Against Propaganda

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited Quetta Garrison today.

During the visit, the Field Marshal addressed student officers and faculty members at Command and Staff College, Quetta. During his address, the Field Marshal appreciated high standards of training, intellectual rigour and professionalism that remain

the hallmark of Command and Staff College, Quetta.

The COAS & CDF highlighted rapidly transforming character of modern warfare and stressed the importance of remaining abreast with emerging technologies, multi-domain operations, tri-services synergy and future battlefield challenges. He advised the officers to continuously train themselves and their troops to effectively respond to the

changing character of war while maintaining highest standards of professionalism, preparedness and operational excellence.

Later, the Field Marshal interacted with officers and troops of formations deployed in Balochistan. Highlighting the contours of prevailing security environment, he reaffirmed that Pakistan Armed Forces, with the steadfast support of the people, remain fully committed to the eradication

of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Underscoring the importance of sustainable peace and stability in Balochistan, the Field Marshal highlighted that long-term progress depends upon a people-centric approach, inclusive development and improved governance alongside security efforts. He appreciated the ongoing efforts of the Government of Balochistan focused on public welfare, socio-economic uplift and strengthening the bond between the state and the people of the province.

The Field Marshal also appreciated the high morale, operational readiness and professional commitment of officers and troops in maintaining peace, stability and the writ of the state in Balochistan.

Earlier, upon his arrival at Quetta, the COAS & CDF was received by Commander Quetta Corps.

PM Sharif Vows Unwavering Defense of Sovereignty Before Military Leaders

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any aggression while addressing faculty and student officers at the Command and Staff College in Quetta.

He lauded the professionalism, preparedness, and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces in safeguarding the nation and maintaining peace.

The PM paid tribute to the forces' historic victory under the command of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. Sharif highlighted Pakistan's responsible and prudent conduct in managing escalation against unprovoked Indian aggression, a stance acknowledged internationally.

He confirmed Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq is proceeding with full resolve to protect citizens from Afghan Taliban-based terrorist proxies by targeting their hideouts and support networks.



Furthermore, the Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

Acknowledging officers from friendly nations, he emphasized the significance of military diplomacy and cooperation, noting Pakistan's role as a Net Regional Stabiliser contributing to regional and international peace.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Federal Ministers for Defence, Interior, and Information, and the Chief Minister of Balochistan. He was received upon arrival by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, COAS & CDF.

Security forces kill 22 terrorists in North Waziristan operation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed 22 terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Shewa area of North Waziristan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Tuesday.

The military's media wing said troops engaged militants belonging to Fitna al-Khawarj in an exchange of fire during the operation.

A large quantity of weapons and ammunition was recovered from the killed terrorists, the statement added.

According to the ISPR, the search and clearance operation has been underway since May 17 after security forces received intelligence-based



reports regarding the presence of militants in the area.

Security forces cordoned off the locality and effectively targeted

terrorist hideouts during the operation in Shewa, the military said.

The ISPR added that the killed militants were involved in multiple

terrorist activities.

Sanitisation operations are continuing in North Waziristan, while efforts to completely clear the area have been intensified, officials said.

According to reports, the terrorists used local residents as human shields, putting civilian lives at risk during the operation.

The ISPR said security forces were continuing counterterrorism operations under the vision of "Azm-e-Istehkam" and remained determined to eliminate terrorism from the country.

North Waziristan, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has remained a key focus of Pakistan's counterterrorism operations in recent years.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari meets Samina Khalid Ghurki in Lahore

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Tuesday visited the residence of senior party leader Samina Khalid Ghurki in Lahore and held detailed discussions on the country's political situation and internal party matters.

Party leaders reviewed

organizational affairs, future strategy and political engagement in the provincial capital, with a particular focus on the activities of the PPP Women's Wing in Central Punjab.

Ghurki, a former federal minister and member of the National Assembly, has previously served as president of the PPP Women's Wing (Central Punjab).

Her residence in Lahore has frequently hosted party meetings and political consultations.

The visit was described as part of efforts to strengthen the party's organization and presence in Lahore.

In December 2025, Asif Ali Zardari had also visited Ghurki's residence to congratulate her on her son's marriage and commended



her services to the party and her role in parliament.



Danish School project in Bhimber, Federal Minister expresses satisfaction

Abdul Majeed Tahir

BHIMBER.: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, visited the under-construction Danish School project in Bhimber, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, expressing satisfaction with the construction's speed and quality.

He stated the project reflects Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif's special interest in AJK and fulfills a promise of opportunity, aligning with the PM's vision for inclusive, quality education.

Muqam noted that the Danish School concept originated with former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif during his tenure as Punjab Chief Minister, aimed at providing equal educational opportunities for deprived children.



The Minister anticipates the Bhimber Danish School will become a center of academic excellence. Project officials confirmed completion within three months, with an expected inauguration by the Prime Minister. Following a briefing, former Senior Minister Chaudhry

Tariq Farooq thanked the Minister, praising the vision of Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif, but raised public concerns regarding potential flooding due to the diversion of the Bhimber drain.

Minister Muqam assured that these concerns would be addressed.

During his visit, the Federal Minister also praised the Pakistani armed forces for their services, particularly in the "Battle of Truth," which significantly boosted Pakistan's global standing. He was welcomed by local PML-N leaders upon his arrival in Bhimber.

Test for Bano Qabil Program

MUZAFFARABAD: Students appearing in Bano Qabil Program's aptitude test organized by Alkhidmat Fountain, in the State Capital.



Photo: Online

War is not an option; Masood Khan

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan expressed grave concern over the ongoing impasse between the U. S. and Iran, warning that renewed military escalation would destabilize the region and exacerbate global economic uncertainty.

He noted that Iran had recently sent new response points to Washington via diplomatic channels, hoping the U. S. would consider them constructively to avert another war.

Khan emphasized the negative impact of Gulf instability, particularly concerns over the Strait of Hormuz, on global energy markets and consumers, despite international calls for restraint.

Furthermore, Khan strongly criticized Israel's sustained military operations in Lebanon, citing extensive



civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure in southern and northern areas.

Regarding the Strait of Hormuz, he explained that Iran feels recent

security threats justify a more assertive stance, viewing navigation safety coordination with Oman as a matter of international law and sovereignty. However, he cautioned that brink-

manship there might trigger wider regional conflict, noting that while the U. S. might be hesitant, Israel could push for escalation. Khan highlighted diplomatic efforts by regional nations, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, to prevent conflict, and mentioned that both Washington and Tehran trust Pakistan's mediation.

Discussing the Trump-Xi meeting, he noted that tariffs, Taiwan, and the Iran situation were key topics, with China urging negotiations to end the conflict and reaffirming its stance on Taiwan.

He recalled China's role in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, noting international worry that any new agreement might be weaker than the original. Khan concluded by asserting that diplomacy is the only viable path to prevent a destructive conflict in the Middle East.

NAB Multan, Sadiq College jointly Organize an Awareness Seminar

News Desk

BAHAWALPUR: Role of Women in Combating Corruption. National Accountability Bureau. NAB Multan Region and Government Sadiq College Women's University Bahawalpur jointly organize an awareness seminar.

In line with the vision of Chairman NAB and Director General NAB Multan Region, taking forward the campaign of combating corruption and raising public awareness, a special event was Organized in Collaboration with NAB Multan and Government Sadiq College Women's University Bahawalpur.

An important lecture on the topic of "Role of Women in Combating Corruption" was organized by the Character Building Society (CBS) of the university. In this informative and corrective session, Ms. Warda Sheikh Assistant Director, Awareness and Prevention Wing NAB Multan Region and Dr. Asma Rani, Associate Professor/Chairperson, Department of Urdu.



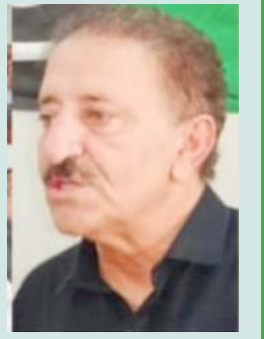
Government Sadiq College Womens University Bahawalpur participated and addressed the students. The speakers shed detailed light on the key and effective

role of women in eradicating corruption from the society and in the moral training of the new generation.

PPP Leader Highlights Development Focus in Singula Address

Bureau Report

RAWALAKOT/SINGULA: The PPP has always taken care of the people of Singula. From Sardar Qamar Zaman to Haji Yaqub to me, the PPP has solved all the basic problems of Singula and this time Singula has been given full representation in the education package. Two high schools and one higher secondary school have been given. These views were expressed by former government minister Sardar Abid Hussain Abid while addressing the elders of Singula, Singula organization, and party workers of Singula in Rawalakot. The meeting was addressed by Pakistan Peoples Party City Rawalakot President Sardar Murtaza Khan, Constituency Four President Zafar Mahmood Ashraf, senior party leaders Sardar Aqi Khan, Sardar Junaid Khan, Chairman Zakat Ashiq Awan, Peoples Party Singula President Saleem Mughal, former Pakistan Peoples Party Councilor Sardar Ajmal Khan, Peoples Party leader Sardar Shafaat Khan, former PSF Vice President Lawyer Forum Central Leader Raees Sarwar Advocate, Additional Advocate General Raja Ijaz Ahmed, Peoples Party Tehsil Rawalakot Official Akhtar Awan, Peoples Party Constituency Rawalakot Official Akhtar Awan, Peoples Party senior leaders Seth Siddique, Ishi Awan, Peoples Party Central Leader Khadim Awan, Babu Nisar, Sardar Pervez Khan, former District Councilor Altaf Hussain Parwaz and many other leaders..



Maryam Idrees directs door-to-door campaign for PML-N victory ahead of AJK polls

City Desk

MIRPUR:

A meeting of central and city office bearers and workers of the Muslim League-N Azad Jammu and Kashmir Women's Department was held, chaired by Central Vice President Maryam Idrees. Discussions focused on the political situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, particularly Mirpur Division,



party affairs, and election preparations. Attendees included key figures like Maimuna Shah and Benazir Butt. Participants offered suggestions for the election campaign strategy, and Maryam Idrees addressed the challenges faced by women campaigners, stressing a unified, brave approach to ensure party candidates' victory. She urged a door-to-door campaign across Mirpur division to promote the party manifesto and leadership, predicting PML-N's success in the upcoming elections. Idrees highlighted the crucial role of women in national development and society-building, noting that the PML-N leadership has consistently respected women and provided them political advancement opportunities to represent their capabilities fully.

Museums are the Custodians of Our History Rich Culture and identity: Irfan Ali Kathia



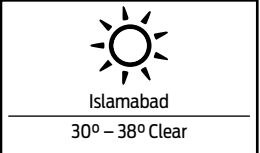
News Desk

BAHAWALPUR: Museum celebrated International Museum Day with various events, beginning with Commissioner Irfan Ali Kathia inaugurating a painting exhibition. He emphasized the theme "Museums Uniting a Divided World," highlighting museums as custodians of history, culture, and identity, fostering tolerance and connecting youth to their roots. Kathia praised the museum's role in promoting peace and commended the student artwork, which showcased local culture. Museum Director Muhammad Zubair Rabbani noted the international observance began in 1977 to raise awareness of heritage. The day also featured local handicraft stalls, national music performances, and free entry with guided tours to encourage youth participation.

Pakistan Railways teams up with Sargodha for Station upgrade

Asim Tanveer

Pakistan Railways Multan Division, directed by Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and DS Multan Muhammad Khalid Khan Said, is collaborating with Sargodha administration to upgrade Shaheenabad Railway Station. Multan Railway officials met DC Sargodha Hussain Ahmed Raza to discuss passenger facilities, cleanliness, and running goods trains. The district administration pledged full cooperation. They explored freight service for the local stone crushing industry to boost local business and railway income. Following this, local officials inspected the station to review its condition and proposed development. Instructions were given to expedite estimates for station improvements, including building an AC family waiting hall, renovating areas, installing new seating and water coolers, improving lighting, and repairing the approach road. Over 4,500 monthly passengers necessitate these upgrades. DC Sargodha praised the initiative, emphasizing shared goals for public travel improvements and increased railway revenue.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:27 am
Zohr 12:04 pm
Asr 5:00 pm
Maghrib 7:04 pm
Isha 8:42 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

Private School Body Slams Extended Vacations, Cites Court Non-Compliance

Leaders of the All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association (APSPA) urged Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to address the prolonged summer vacations, citing harm to student academics and governance image. APSMA officials stated that despite five committee meetings ordered by the Lahore High Court regarding the education sector, recommendations remain unimplemented, impacting Pakistan's global literacy standing. They criticized the excessive vacation extension, noting that students received only 110 teaching days last session. The group highlighted that the new notification allows 93 holidays, in addition to suspensions in March and ongoing Friday/Saturday closures since April, ignoring prior committee recommendations for 180 annual teaching days, two months of summer vacation, and January winter breaks. Concerned stakeholders view this as a disregard for court directives and plan to legally challenge the notification to advocate for a balanced academic calendar.

Chairman Senate Leads Tribute to Nurses at Maroof International Hospital & Mövenpick Hotel Islamabad

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Maroof International Hospital in collaboration with Mövenpick Hotel Centaurus Islamabad hosted a prestigious International Nurses Day Seminar in Islamabad, bringing together senior government officials, healthcare leaders, students, girl guides, lady health workers, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives from the corporate and hospitality sectors to recognize the invaluable contribution of nurses to Pakistan's healthcare system. The event was graced by Chairman Senate of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani as the Chief Guest. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor and National Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tourism, attended as Guest of Honor alongside Ch. Naseer Ahmed, Chairman, Maroof International Hospital. Ambassadors and diplomats from Turkmenistan, Germany, Russia, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Mauritius, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and Syria also attended the seminar.

The seminar was led by Haroon Naseer, CEO Maroof International, together with Dr. Mir Abdul Waheed, Medical Director, MIH, and Ms. Catherine, Chief of Nursing. Addressing healthcare professionals and guests, Haroon Naseer emphasized the urgent need to strengthen Pakistan's nursing workforce and healthcare infrastructure. Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan highlighted the growing opportunities for Pakistan in healthcare and medical tourism. Dr. Mir Abdul Waheed, Medical Director, MIH, paid tribute to nurses for their frontline role in patient care, emergency response, and community health services, while also recognizing the broader contribution of healthcare professionals in building a healthier and stronger Pakistan. Ms. Catherine emphasized the critical role of nurses as the foundation of patient care delivery and hospital safety standards.



Australian Day

ISLAMABAD: Number of people attend a reception to celebrate Australia Day in Spring at Australian High Commission in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Air University Launches Cutting-Edge Department of Statistics and Data Analytical Sciences

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Air University inaugurated its new Department of Statistics and Data Analytical Sciences. Chief Guest and Vice Chancellor, Air Marshal (R) Abdul Moeed Khan, emphasized that statistics and data science are crucial for modern development, marking a milestone for promoting technology and data-driven decisions in Pakistan. Distinguished guests, including leaders from the Pakistan Science Academy, industry, and national health services, attended. The Head of Department, Dr. Ammara Nawaz Cheema, presented the vision to equip students with advanced analytical skills. Speakers stressed the growing importance of AI and Machine Learning. The VC expressed confidence the department will become a leading research center.



Türkiye's Islamabad Embassy Marks Atatürk Day with Focus on Youth and Pak-Turkish Ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Islamabad marked the May 19 Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day with an event attended by Türkiye's Ambassador İrfan Neziroğlu, Chairman of the Pakistan Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Khan, the TRNC Representative Buket Kop, Education Counsellor Dr. Mehmet Toyran, Turkish citizens, and Pakistani students.

Following the Turkish National Anthem and student performances, Ambassador Neziroğlu highlighted that May 19, 1919, was when Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk began the Turkish War of Independence, leading to the Republic's foundation.



He stressed the day symbolizes hope, resilience, and that Atatürk dedicated it to the youth as custodians of peace and national values. Neziroğlu thanked Muslims,

particularly in Pakistan, for their support during the War of Independence, noting it solidifies the enduring brotherhood between Türkiye and Pakistan. He also observed that the

visions of Atatürk and Muhammad Ali Jinnah continue to inspire both nations, ensuring their strong relationship, built on shared values and solidarity, persists.

Efforts are focusing on enhancing interaction between the youth of both countries in education, culture, sports, and innovation, as they will shape the future of Turkish-Pakistani brotherhood.

Education Counsellor Toyran echoed that May 19, 1919, began Türkiye's independence struggle under Atatürk and marked the 107th anniversary, noting the date coincided with the Khilafat Movement, and expressed gratitude for celebrating the day in their "second homeland" with Turkish and Pakistani brothers and sisters.

Bangladeshi Academic Delegation Visits LUMS to Deepen Regional Ties



A high-level Bangladeshi delegation, led by UGC Chairman Prof. Dr. Mamun Ahmed, visited LUMS to foster deeper regional academic collaboration. The visit, facilitated by HEC Pakistan, included Vice Chancellors from leading Bangladeshi universities, building on existing ties involving HEC Expos and MOUs with Bangladeshi institutions. Discussions with LUMS leadership centered on strengthening links through research partnerships, student/faculty exchanges, and joint academic initiatives, emphasizing shared history and mutual learning. Prof. Dr. Ahmed stressed that collaboration is vital for enhancing academic excellence and institutional capacity in both nations.

DC Umar Mela Reviews Ongoing Development Projects in Kamalia

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to the Details, Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela along with Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Erum Shahzadi conducted a detailed review of various ongoing development projects in the city. Chief Officer District Council Toba Tek Singh Chaudhry Kashif Mahmood, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Kamalia Ali Raza and officers of relevant departments were also present on the occasion. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the Cricket Arena, Jinnah Park, construction of the Pera office, Tuff Tiles project, upgradation work at Iqbal Bazaar and the temporary sale point established for sacrificial animals.

He reviewed the quality, pace and public utility aspects of the ongoing schemes and directed the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of all projects so that better facilities could be provided to citizens. Assistant Commissioner Erum Shahzadi briefed the Deputy Commissioner that work on various development projects was being carried out rapidly to provide improved civic facilities and a pleasant environment for residents.

The Bulldozer Republic: Hindutva's War on India's Muslims and Minorities

Continued from Page 4

Hindu-dominated hinterland through state terror and demographic engineering.

Parallel to this physical erasure runs an institutional decapitation of political opposition. While RSS and BJP leaders openly call for the economic boycott of Muslims, the genocidal cleansing of "termites," and the shooting of anti-CAA protesters—often with police standing in attendance—the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the National Investigation Agency (NIA), and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) function as the regime's private militias. Arvind Kejriwal sits in jail; Rahul Gandhi has been hounded; opposition chief ministers face midnight raids. The law is wielded with surgical precision against dissenters, while Hindutva foot soldiers enjoy blanket impunity. Hate speech has become the official language of the ruling class, protected by a law enforcement apparatus that has been thor-

oughly communalized and an election commission that has lost all spine.

India is being remade. The Constitution, with its promises of equality and secularism, is being bulldozed alongside the mosques of Dalmandi. What is underway is not a development project, but a purification ritual—a fascistic endeavor to cleanse the Indian landscape of Muslim presence, memory, and political agency. The bulldozer is the true flag of this republic, and its engine runs on the fuel of minority blood and dispossession. Unless the world awakens to the reality that India's democratic facade has been shattered by the hammer of Hindutva, the darkness descending on Varanasi's ancient mosques will soon engulf every corner of the subcontinent where minorities dare to exist. *The writer is Chairman of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and can be reached at: @sultan1913 and saleemcaini@hotmail.com*

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Israel's Bases in Iran and Iraq and Threat to Pakistan

The June war between Israel and Iran revealed a frightening new reality of modern warfare: nations are no longer defeated only by armies crossing borders or fighter jets bombing cities. Increasingly, wars are prepared from within. The real battlefield now lies inside societies, intelligence networks, covert safe houses, cyber systems, recruited insiders, and hidden operational bases quietly established years before conflict begins.

What shocked military analysts during the June conflict was not merely the intensity of Israeli airpower, but the astonishing precision with which Iran's top military commanders, nuclear scientists, IRGC leadership, missile batteries, and strategic facilities were targeted. According to multiple international investigations published by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Times of Israel, many of these attacks were enabled through covert Israeli operational networks functioning deep inside Iran itself.

Reports suggest that Mossad had spent years cultivating Iranian dissidents, smugglers, contractors, and covert assets near strategic locations such as Tehran, Natanz, Isfahan, and other sensitive military and nuclear sites. Through these embedded networks, Israeli intelligence reportedly obtained precise coordinates, movement patterns, communication details, and even internal meeting schedules of senior Iranian officials.

The result was devastating. Nuclear scientists were assassinated with pinpoint precision. Missile launchers were neutralized before activation. Air-defense systems were disabled from within. Underground command centers were reportedly identified and struck with astonishing accuracy. Even senior Iranian military gatherings were allegedly tracked through cyber deception operations and internal informants.

Iran later admitted the scale of internal infiltration by launching mass arrests across the country. Thousands were detained on accusations of espionage, treason, and collaboration with foreign intelligence services. Iranian authorities claimed that many individuals had shared coordinates of military sites and strategic locations with Israeli operatives. Tehran's response reflected a painful realization: much of the war had already been prepared inside Iran long before the first missile was fired. But the most alarming development emerged later.

International media reports revealed that Israel had allegedly established covert operational bases inside Iraq as well. According to these reports, hidden facilities in Iraq's western desert were used for reconnaissance, logistics, emergency pilot support, intelligence gathering, and preparation for attacks deep

inside Iran. Some reports suggested these installations dated back to 2024 and were operational during both the 2025 and 2026 conflicts.

The implications are enormous. If covert Israeli infrastructure could function inside countries openly hostile to Israel, then no regional state can assume immunity from similar penetration.

This is where the danger becomes particularly serious for Pakistan.

Pakistan today faces a highly sensitive strategic environment. The growing convergence between India, Israeli strategic interests, and evolving Taliban-controlled dynamics inside Afghanistan creates a deeply concerning security equation for Islamabad. Afghanistan's geography alone makes it an ideal staging ground for intelligence operations targeting both Pakistan and Iran.

Its porous borders, fragmented governance structures, smuggling networks, militant corridors, refugee movements, and weak centralized intelligence oversight create an operational environment where covert infrastructure can potentially be established with relative ease.

Israel's operational doctrine, as demonstrated in Iran and Iraq, appears increasingly dependent on first creating hidden operational ecosystems inside or near adversarial states before open

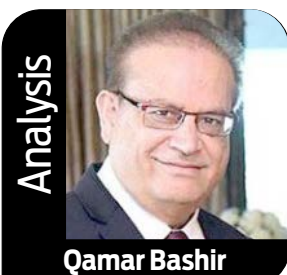
conflict begins. Such ecosystems may start as small reconnaissance cells, logistics hubs, communications nodes, safe houses, drone launch sites, cyber relay stations, or intelligence listening posts. Over time, they mature into fully operational covert bases capable of supporting sabotage, surveillance, targeted assassinations, and precision military operations.

This is precisely why Pakistan must now view Afghanistan not merely through the lens of terrorism or border security, but through the broader framework of strategic intelligence warfare.

The danger is compounded by the existing instability in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Long-running insurgencies, political polarization, smuggling routes, militant financing channels, ethnic grievances, and cross-border trafficking networks create fertile ground for foreign intelligence agencies seeking recruitment opportunities or covert operational access. Such environments are vulnerable to exploitation by any sophisticated intelligence service capable of leveraging local actors, financial desperation, ideological divisions, or anti-state sentiments.

If covert Israeli networks could allegedly penetrate the heavily monitored security structure of Iran, then Pakistan cannot afford complacency. The warning is clear and urgent: Pakistan and Iran must immediately strengthen their counterintelligence

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

2nd Pak-China Symposium on Early Warning for Hydrological and Geological Disasters Concludes at NDMA

The 2nd Pak-China Symposium on Early Warning for Hydrological and Geological Disasters concluded today at NDMA Headquarters, Islamabad. The two-day event focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation in disaster risk reduction and climate resilience through technical exchanges and high-level engagements.

The symposium commenced on 18 May 2026, with Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, attending the opening session as Chief Guest. The first Pak-China Symposium was held in August 2025.

On the concluding day, five parallel technical sessions were held at NDMA's Centre of Excellence (COE). The technical sessions were attended by experts, scientists and researchers from Pakistan and China where they shared research findings, technological advancements and operational experiences on hydrological and geological hazards, climate-induced disasters, glacial risks, and early warning systems. The sessions highlighted the critical role of science-driven policymaking, technological innovation and regional collaboration in tackling emerging climate challenges.

Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik HI(M) reiterated Pakistan's commitment to regional and international cooperation for disaster resilience. He emphasized leveraging scientific innovation, technology, and collaborative partnerships to protect vulnerable communities from future climate-induced hazards. He described the symposium as an important platform for practical cooperation and shared learning between Pakistan and China in disaster management and early warning systems. He proposed to conduct monthly meetings of joint working groups to review the progress on technological integration into disaster management.

Participants also visited the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC), where they received detailed briefings on key NDMA initiatives, including Global Disaster Lens, Water Equation, Global Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) and NDMA's Global Disaster App. The visit showcased NDMA's efforts to integrate advanced technologies, predictive analytics and real-time monitoring for enhanced anticipatory action and response preparedness.

A high-level panel discussion titled "Climate Change and Hydrological-Geological Hazard Warning in China and Pakistan: Experiences, Challenges, and Joint Responses" was chaired by Dr. Lei Yu. Prominent panelists included Prof. Kang Shichang, Director-General IMHE, Prof. Mohammad Qasim Jan from Pakistan Academy of Pakistan, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, Prof. Seyed Komail Tayebi, President ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Su Lijun, Deputy Director CPJRC, Prof. Javed Iqbal, Chairman Department of Earth Sciences, NUST, Member DRR NDMA, Mr. Idrees Masud.

The symposium concluded with the distribution of shields among participants and delegates, followed by a networking session attended by representatives from academia, research institutions, government organizations, and international partners from both countries.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

The Bulldozer Republic: Hindutva's War on India's Muslims and Minorities

The ancient lanes of Dalmandi in Varanasi have fallen silent, save for the mechanical growl of bulldozers and the muffled sobs of displaced families. In a brazen display of state-orchestrated erasure, Indian authorities have marked six mosques for demolition—including the 226-year-old Mirza Karimullah Beg Mosque—under the threadbare pretext of road widening. Over a hundred homes and shops have already been reduced to rubble, rendering hundreds homeless in a Muslim-majority locality that has stood for centuries. This is not urban development. This is demographic engineering disguised as governance, the latest front in the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) systematic campaign to transform India into a Hindu Rashtra by annihilating every physical and cultural vantage point of its Muslim citizens.

The Dalmandi demolition drive is neither isolated nor accidental. It follows a well-worn blueprint perfected by the Hindutva regime over decades. From the criminal destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992—an act that was subsequently sanctified by the judiciary—to the recent razing of mosques and madrasas in Delhi, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh, the methodology remains chillingly consistent: manufacture a legal pretext, deploy the bulldozer, and let the courts legitimize the fait accompli. The Marble Wali Masjid, the Ali Raza Khan Mosque, and the other houses of worship now facing the wrecking ball in Varanasi are not obstacles to traffic; they are obstacles to the Sangh Parivar's vision of a Muslim-less public sphere.

What makes this machinery terrifying is not

merely the brutality of the bulldozer, but the total complicity of the Indian state. In Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has transformed the bulldozer into an official emblem of Hindu majoritarian rule, using it to pulverize Muslim homes, businesses, and places of worship with theatrical cruelty while police cordons ensure no resistance is possible. In Assam, the state's eviction drives have specifically targeted Bengali-speaking Muslim villages, with security forces firing on protesters as bulldozers advance. In Delhi, following the anti-Muslim pogrom of 2020, the municipal corporation turned its wrath on Shaheen Bagh and other Muslim neighborhoods, claiming "encroachments" while sparing adjacent Hindu-owned properties. In Uttarakhand, the BJP government has weaponized the Uniform Civil Code alongside demolition drives to squeeze the Muslim and Christian minority populations. In Manipur, the state machinery did not merely stand aside during the ethnic cleansing of Kuki Christians; elements within the police and administration actively facilitated the violence, arming Meitei mobs while blockading relief to besieged hill communities. The message is unambiguous: in BJP-ruled states, the law exists not to protect minorities, but to erase them.

The judiciary, entrusted as the final guardian of constitutional morality, has largely abdicated its responsibility, acting as a silent—or worse, complicit—observer in this nationwide project of dispossession. From the Babri verdict that rewarded the mob with the land they desecrated, to the habitual refusal of courts to intervene when bulldozers are mobilized against Muslim localities, the scales of justice have been

tilted decisively toward the majoritarian mob. When petitions are filed, hearings are delayed; when stay orders are granted, they arrive after the rubble has cooled. The Supreme Court's intermittent expressions of concern have done nothing to deter the bulldozer regimes in Lucknow, Dispur, or Dehradun.

This is not merely administrative persecution; it is electoral strategy. The BJP has built its political empire on the embers of Muslim marginalization. In recently held elections in West Bengal, the party's campaign of communal polarization yielded massive dividends brought partly to power, proving that anti-Muslim vitriol translates directly into Hindu consolidation. In Assam, the communally tailored National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) served as rallying points to isolate the Muslim Bengali population. In Bihar, the party has stoked communal fires to fracture the opposition's social coalition. The formula is cynical and effective: dehumanize, demolish, and harvest the votes of a frightened majority.

The project is far from complete. Having turned Uttar Pradesh into a laboratory of Hindu supremacy and let Manipur burn as a warning to minorities, the RSS-BJP apparatus now eyes new territories. In Punjab, the agrarian protests temporarily checked the Hindutva advance, but the Sangh's long-term project remains the subjugation of Sikh political assertion and the dilution of minority cultural autonomy. In Indian Occupied Kashmir, the abrogation of Article 370 was only the opening salvo. The Modi regime's alteration of domicile laws, its crackdown on Muslim political leadership, and its settler-colonial demographic designs reveal an intent to replicate the Palestine model in the Himalayan valley—transforming a Muslim-majority region into a

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Analysis

Altaf Hussain Wani

Rethinking Research and Development (R&D) Priorities in Pakistani Universities

For decades, we have measured the health of Pakistan's higher education research by a single metric: the number of publications. We celebrate when universities climb international rankings and when PhD production increases yearly. Yet a troubling silence hangs over more fundamental inquiries: what actual problems have we solved? What industries have we transformed? What innovations have emerged from our laboratories to touch ordinary Pakistani lives? The uncomfortable truth is that our research priorities have been profoundly misdirected, and national progress has paid the price.

The evidence stares back from multiple angles. Pakistan spends merely 0.16 per cent of GDP on research and development, negligible beside India's 0.8 per cent, China's 2.6 per cent, or South Korea's commitment exceeding five per cent. Our universities produce over 7,000 research papers annually with 28 per cent appearing in top-tier journals, yet Pakistan files fewer than 1,000 patents yearly and ranks 91st on the Global Innovation Index 2024. These numbers indicate systemic failure to align research with national needs.

Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal recently articulated this dilemma, expressing concern that much of Pakistan's research remains confined to journals without contributing to national development. He described this phenomenon as "academic inflation": like currency printed without backing, research without application loses value even as quantity increases. His vision that universities

must evolve into "innovation engines, startup launchpads and policy think tanks" represents precisely the reorientation our circumstances demand.

The Higher Education Commission has begun responding with initiatives signalling changing priorities. The HEC has directed universities to introduce artificial intelligence as a compulsory subject in all degree programmes from Fall 2026, recognising that Pakistan must prepare youth for coming technological demands. The government's plan to invest significantly in AI by 2030 and establish national research centres represents strategic investment long absent from our research landscape. The HEC recently showcased over 100 locally developed technology solutions, demonstrating that Pakistani researchers can produce commercially viable innovations when properly directed.

Yet the deeper pathology lies in university-industry relationships. Less than 20 per cent of university research is utilised by industry, reflecting a lack of applied research and private sector distrust. The private sector contributes less than 10 per cent of total R&D investment, and 93 per cent of firms conduct no research whatsoever. Industry relies on imported technology, increasing production costs and foreign dependence, while researchers remain unaware of practical challenges facing the economy. Research without industry engagement produces knowledge nobody needs, while industry starved of research input limps along with outdated methods.

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Analysis

Dr. Jam Muhammad Zafar

Media briefing

Russia Backs Pakistan Mediation in US-Iran Tensions, Denies Recruitment Claims

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Albert P Khorev has extended all-out support to Pakistan mediation efforts in the conflict between the US and Iran, saying Moscow supported all such steps which facilitate peaceful resolution of the dispute.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, Russian ambassador said Moscow will also back other initiatives which help in allaying the reservations of both Washington and Tehran.

Responding to a question regarding recruitment in Pakistan for fighting in Russia, the envoy said he cannot confirm such a report published in the Pakistani media.

He said the man who said to be recruited here has not applied for a visa in the Russian Embassy so far. "Pakistani agencies are now investigating the matter. I hope result will be out soon," he added.

Meanwhile, the envoy accused the Ukrainian leadership and its Western allies of prolonging the conflict in Ukraine, alleging widespread violations of ceasefire arrangements, forced mobilization, corruption, and disinformation campaigns against Russia.

Ambassador Khorev said Russia had recently commemorated the 81st anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War and reiterated Moscow's

stance against what he termed the "glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism" in certain countries. He thanked Pakistan for supporting Russia-backed resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly aimed at combating Nazism and racial intolerance.

The envoy said Russia had declared a ceasefire from May 8 to May 11 as a goodwill gesture during Victory Day commemorations, but alleged that Ukrainian forces violated the truce more than 30,000 times. He claimed a similar pattern was witnessed during the Easter ceasefire in April.

According to the ambassador, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was unwilling to end the conflict and continued pursuing large-scale mobilization despite growing public dissatisfaction. He alleged that Ukrainian authorities had issued hundreds of thousands of draft notices and that recruitment methods involved coercion and human rights abuses.

Ambassador Khorev also criticized Western countries, including members of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for continuing military and financial support to Kiev. He claimed foreign mercenaries from several Western countries were participating in combat operations alongside Ukrainian forces and said additional Western military



aid worth billions of dollars was under discussion for 2026.

The Russian envoy further accused Ukraine of targeting civilian and energy infrastructure, including attacks on the Turkish Stream and Blue Stream gas pipelines, as well as oil facilities linked to Kazakh-

stan's exports. He warned such actions posed risks to regional energy security.

Raising concerns over internal conditions in Ukraine, Khorev alleged increasing cases of corruption, arms smuggling, narcotics trafficking, and human trafficking. He also accused



senior Ukrainian officials of involvement in financial scandals and misuse of Western assistance.

The ambassador rejected international initiatives such as the "Register of Damage for Ukraine" and the proposed "Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine," calling them politically motivated and legally invalid.

Referring to the 2022 killings in Bucha, Khorev described allegations against Russian forces as a "staged provocation" and part of what he termed a Western-led disinformation campaign against

Russia.

He also revisited the issue of Ukrainian children transferred during the conflict, arguing that Russia had cooperated through mediation efforts involving Qatar and the Holy See to reunite children with their families.

The Russian ambassador further recalled the 2014 Odessa tragedy, in which dozens of anti-government protesters died during clashes following the Euromaidan unrest, saying those responsible had yet to be brought to justice.

Concluding his remarks,

Khorev reaffirmed Russia's position on Crimea, marking the anniversary of its reunification with the Russian Federation and criticizing the transfer of the "Scythian gold" archaeological collection from Dutch custody to Ukrainian authorities instead of Crimean museums.

During the event, Zakhar Prilepin's book "Militia Romance" was presented. The book recounts the experiences of Donbas residents in the aftermath of the 2014 events.

Pakistani student makes history as First Elected VP at Queen Mary University of London

Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

LONDON: Hassam Naeem has made history by becoming the first Pakistani ever elected as Vice President of Queen Mary Students' Union, marking a proud and significant milestone for the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom.

Originally from Okara, Hassam moved to the UK in 2023 to pursue a Master's degree in International Relations at Queen Mary University of London, where he graduated with distinction. Before beginning his postgraduate studies, he completed a Bachelor's degree in Journalism in Pakistan, which helped build his strong foundation in leadership, communication, and public service. In an exclusive interview with Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah,



Hassam described his journey as one driven by resilience, ambition, and a deep commitment to serving both students and society. Now serving his second term as Vice President, Hassam has delivered remarkable achievements for students at Queen Mary. His accomplish-

ments include securing £2.2 million in scholarships for international students, successfully campaigning for the installation of bidets (Muslim showers) across university facilities, and launching the award-winning Cultural Unity Week, celebrating the diversity of more than 100



nationalities on campus. He has also actively lobbied UK policymakers to reduce financial burdens on international students and is currently campaigning for 100 percent scholarship opportunities for deserving students.

During his tenure, Hassam

has worked tirelessly to promote a positive image of Pakistan among a student community representing more than 170 countries, serving as a strong cultural ambassador for his homeland. Through his leadership and engagement, he has highlighted Pakistan's values of



diversity, talent, and resilience on an international platform. His role has also provided opportunities to engage with and represent students before several prominent public figures and international personalities, further strengthening the global visibility of Pakistani youth leadership. He currently serves as a student leader representing almost 31,000 students at Queen Mary University of London. He also successfully lobbied against the UK government's proposed international student levy, ensuring relief for Queen

Mary's international student community. "My ambition is to work in public service and serve people in whatever capacity I can," Hassam said. "True leadership is about creating opportunities, solving problems, and making a meaningful difference in people's lives. Hassam Naeem's historic achievement stands as a powerful example of the talent, resilience, and leadership of Pakistani youth abroad proving that Pakistani students are not only building successful futures for themselves, but are also bringing pride and hope to Pakistan."



A Name Etched in National Institutional History

In every generation, a handful of individuals rise above professional accomplishment to become living pillars of national heritage. In the rich, turbulent, and endlessly consequential landscape of Pakistan's media, one such towering figure commands universal esteem — Syed Sarmad Ali. His recent conferment of the prestigious Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Pakistan's Star of Excellence, is not merely a personal milestone. It is the nation's formal acknowledgement of an extraordinary life devoted to truth, press freedom, democratic values, and the institutional advancement of journalism.

The honour resonates far beyond the walls of any boardroom or broadcast studio. It echoes across the editorial rooms of regional newspapers, through the classrooms where future journalists are trained, and in the corridors of democratic governance where a free press remains the most steadfast guardian of the public interest.

"Journalism is not merely a profession — it is a covenant between truth and the people. Syed Sarmad Ali has honoured that covenant throughout a distinguished career." **Leadership of a Media Empire Built on Credibility**

Guardian Of The Free Press

Syed Sarmad Ali — Visionary Architect of Pakistan's Democratic Media Legacy

Jang Media Group — Pakistan's largest and most influential media organization — which encompasses Geo News, Daily Jang, The News International, and a constellation of regional publications, magazines, and digital media platforms. Under his strategic stewardship, these institutions have not merely preserved journalistic credibility; they have elevated it, expanding the frontiers of investigative reporting, public accountability journalism, and informed democratic discourse across every province, every language community, and every socioeconomic stratum of the country.

His tenure as President of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) has been equally transformative. In that role, he has functioned as a sentinel for press freedom, an architect of modernized journalistic infrastructure, and an unwavering advocate for the welfare of editors, reporters, and newspaper workers at every level of the industry.

Pakistan's Newspaper Landscape: Scale, Diversity, and Significance

To appreciate the magnitude of Syed Sarmad Ali's contribution, one must first understand the extraordinary scale and diversity of Pakistan's print media environment. With more than 700 registered newspapers and periodicals — including approximately 300 daily newspapers published in Urdu, English, Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi, and several other regional languages — Pakistan operates one of Asia's most linguistically

pluralistic media ecosystems. These publications serve not merely as conveyors of information but as irreplaceable connective tissue between communities and governance, between citizens and their constitutional rights, between rural populations and the national conversation on agriculture, health, education, and economic opportunity. In safeguarding the institutional health of this ecosystem, Syed Sarmad Ali has performed a service whose full value may only be recognized by history.

Champion of Investigative and Ethical Journalism

The most consequential journalism is rarely comfortable journalism. Investigative reporting — that most demanding, most dangerous, and most indispensable form of public-interest media — requires not only the courage of individual reporters but the institutional backbone of editors and executives willing to stand behind difficult truths. Syed Sarmad Ali has consistently provided that backbone.

Under his influence, Pakistan's media sector witnessed a meaningful strengthening of fact-based reporting, rigorous editorial verification, and the professional standards that distinguish journalism from mere commentary. At a moment in global history when sensationalism corrodes public trust and misinformation travels faster than truth, his insistence on discipline, accuracy, and ethical integrity stands as both a profes-

sional achievement and a moral exemplar.

"When sensationalism threatens to eclipse truth, leaders of integrity become not merely admirable — they become essential." **Media as a Strategic National Institution**

A free and credible press is among the most powerful institutions a democratic nation can possess. It strengthens governance by holding power accountable, promotes constitutional awareness among citizens, enhances transparency in public institutions, and builds a living bridge between the state and the society it is meant to serve. Nations with robust and independent media institutions are, by every measurable standard, more accountable, more informed, and more politically resilient than those without.

Universities, research institutions, and policy bodies draw upon credible journalism to disseminate knowledge, stimulate policy debate, and engage citizens in the intellectual life of the republic. Media illuminates scientific discovery, highlights educational reform, amplifies the voices of the marginalized, and sustains the national dialogue on challenges ranging from climate change and food security to constitutional governance and international affairs.

In Pakistan — where tens of millions of citizens depend upon newspapers and broadcast media for awareness of their rights, their government, and their world —

responsible journalism is not a commercial luxury. It is a democratic necessity.

Navigating the Digital Revolution with Vision

The transformation of global media by digital technology has been simultaneously liberating and destabilizing. Newspapers that built their authority over generations have been forced to reimagine their identity in an environment defined by immediacy, algorithmic distribution, and the relentless competition of social media. Many venerable institutions have faltered; some have collapsed entirely.

Under Syed Sarmad Ali's leadership, Pakistan's premier media institutions embraced digital evolution without surrendering editorial seriousness. Online platforms were expanded, multimedia reporting was developed, and social media was integrated into the journalistic workflow — all while preserving the credibility and depth that distinguish professional journalism from the noise of unverified online content. This delicate balancing of innovation with integrity is among his most lasting and significant achievements.

Championing Regional Voices and Democratic Inclusion

A truly democratic media ecosystem must speak to all of its citizens — not merely to those concentrated in major urban centres. Regional and local newspapers are the lifeblood of democratic inclusion. They represent smaller communities, amplify

marginalized voices, and provide the provincial perspectives so often overlooked by the centralizing tendencies of national discourse.

By actively encouraging regional publications and supporting broader geographic and linguistic representation, Syed Sarmad Ali contributed to a more participatory, more equitable, and more genuinely democratic journalism in Pakistan. His commitment to the regions reflects an understanding that the health of the whole is inseparable from the vitality of its constituent parts.

A Legacy That Will Outlast the Headlines

The global history of journalism offers enduring lessons about what institutions must be to earn lasting public trust. The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, and other great newspapers of the democratic world became global institutions not through circulation figures alone, but through their commitment to truth, editorial independence, and professional integrity across decades of political pressure and technological disruption.

The Jang-Geo Group, under Syed Sarmad Ali's strategic vision, has earned its place in that tradition of journalistic resilience. Whether covering national crises, democratic transitions, public health emergencies, judicial developments, or international affairs, the organization has consistently maintained its position at the centre of informed national discourse — a record that speaks



Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

not to the ambitions of a corporation, but to the convictions of its leadership.

Pakistan today stands at a pivotal crossroads. The nation requires strong, credible, and independent institutions more urgently than ever — institutions that protect democratic values, encourage education, uphold constitutional principles, and foster informed citizenship. The services of Syed Sarmad Ali toward these ends will remain historically significant long after today's headlines have faded.

Heartfelt Congratulations

The Editor, Naveed Ahmad Khan, the Editorial Team of The Spokesman, and Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif extend their most sincere and warm congratulations to Syed Sarmad Ali upon the receipt of the Sitara-i-Imtiaz — a distinction that honours not only an exceptional individual, but an entire era of principled Pakistani journalism.

About the Author

Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif is a distinguished academic and former Professor and Head of the Department of Entomology at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. A respected public intellectual and commentator on national affairs, Dr. Arif writes on media, democracy, and institutional development in Pakistan.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
162,896.68	161,805.02
Day's High	Day's Low
164,309.64	162,563.58
Index Value	Change
18,970,897,189	+1091.66
Percentage	Time
+0.67%	19 May, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,330.55	+6.80
Percentage	Time
+0.066%	19 May, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,571.33	-114.79
Percentage	Time
-0.23%	19 May, 1:47 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
60,550.59	-265.36
Percentage	Time
-0.44%	19 May, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	197.17	201.47
Bahrain Dinar	731.47	741.85
Canadian Dollar	201.57	207.81
China Yuan	40.05	41.15
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	324.38	329.43
Hong Kong Dollar	35.09	36.06
Indian Rupee	2.52	2.77
Japanese Yen	1.7423	1.8424
Kuwaiti Dinar	879.18	889.25
Malaysian Ringgit	65.35	66.25
New Zealand \$	161.74	165.65
Norwegians Krone	27.70	28
Omani Riyal	722.00	732.25
Qatari Riyal	74.66	75.75
Saudi Riyal	74.20	75.20
Singapore Dollar	216.25	221.95
Swedish Korona	30.35	30.65
Swiss Franc	352.78	356.68
Thai Bhat	8.50	8.70
U.A.E Dirham	75.90	76.90
UK Pound Sterling	373.82	379.32
US Dollar	279.00	279.60

Government of Pakistan Invites Expressions of Interest for Privatisation of FESCO, GEPCO and IESCO

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Government, via the Privatisation Commission, has invited Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from local and international investors for the privatization of three major electricity distribution companies (DISCOs): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO), and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO).

The opportunity offers investors the acquisition of 51% to 100% shareholding, including management control, in each DISCO. This initiative is integral to Pakistan's economic reform agenda, aiming to boost efficiency,

improve service delivery, attract investment, and foster sustainable growth in the power sector. Collectively, FESCO, GEPCO, and IESCO serve over 14 million consumers across key industrial, commercial, and urban areas in Punjab and Islamabad, controlling vital energy infrastructure.

The privatization process is mandated to be transparent and competitive, adhering to international standards. Investors can participate individually or in consortia, subject to qualifications detailed in the Request for Statement of Qualification (RSOQ). Separate submissions are required for each DISCO with varying deadlines: FESCO by July 7, 2026; GEPCO by August 6, 2026; and IESCO by September 7, 2026. An online investor briefing will detail opportunities and procedural requirements. The government considers this step crucial for

modernizing the energy sector, reducing inefficiencies, encouraging private participation, and enhancing consumer standards, expecting positive impacts on fiscal sustainability and long-term economic stability. The Commission plans to engage stakeholders to refine tariffs, the business model, and the framework for competitive suppliers, aiming for a performance-based return regime that allows private buyers to leverage existing infrastructure. Pakistan remains committed to ensuring a predictable investment climate supported by policy continuity and regulatory transparency. Detailed information is available on the Privatisation Commission's official website.



ECC meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) at the Finance Division, on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

Long March Tyres IPO Shatters Records, Oversubscribed 16.7 Times on PSX

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Service Long March Tyres Limited's Initial Public Offering (IPO) achieved historic investor participation, oversubscribing 16.7 times and generating total interest of approximately PKR 69.4 billion (\$250 million) over two days, setting a new record for IPO bids on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). This overwhelming response, described as unprecedented, signals strong confidence from

institutional and high-net-worth investors in the company's fundamentals and growth potential. The IPO successfully met its maximum fundraising target of PKR 7.77 billion at the maximum cap price, a 40% premium over the floor price, positioning it among the most strongly participated industrial IPOs in recent history. The success underscores growing investor appetite for scalable, export-oriented manufacturing companies with technological advantages. Shahid Ali Habib,

CEO of Arif Habib Limited (lead manager), called it a historic moment, noting it's the largest transaction and raised the highest amount ever for a PSX IPO. He added that the response confirms the capital market is ready to back companies with strong fundamentals and clear growth strategies, viewing the successful book building as a landmark event for the Pakistan-China joint venture and a vital indicator of renewed investor confidence in export-led industrial listings.

Ethiopian Interest-free Banking (IFB) Development Program Launch

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: AlHuda CIBE launched a free Professional Development Program in Interest-Free Banking & Finance (IFB)-Ethiopia Edition, running virtually from June 10 to August 10, 2026, aiming to strengthen professional capacity for IFB in Ethiopia.

This initiative targets bankers, financial professionals, regulators, insurance, and microfinance practitioners, providing practical skills in IFB, Takaful, Islamic microfinance, and Shariah-compliant operations to bridge knowledge gaps and support ecosystem development aligned with global standards. Applications are open until June 5, 2026.

Mr. Muhammad Zubair Mughal, CEO of AlHuda CIBE, highlighted Ethiopia

as a promising market for IFB due to its evolving regulation, young workforce, and demand for ethical finance. He stressed that IFB promotes financial inclusion and sustainable development, and this



program aims to equip Ethiopian professionals to build resilient IFB institutions. The program is strongly supported by four key Ethiopian industry associations: the Ethiopian Interest Free Finance Professionals Association (EIFFPA), which

focuses on standards and human capital development for IFB; the Association of Ethiopian Micro Finance Institutions (AEMFI), crucial for extending IFB reach to underserved communities; the Ethiopian Bankers Association (EBA), indicating mainstream banking support for IFB expansion; and the Association of Ethiopian Insurers (AEI), recognizing the importance of Takaful and Shariah-compliant risk solutions.

Their joint involvement signifies a unified commitment to advancing ethical and inclusive finance in Ethiopia. AlHuda CIBE has an established history in Ethiopia and across Africa, supporting IFB windows, Takaful growth, and maintaining strong relationships with regulatory bodies to foster financial inclusion and sustainable economic development.

Insurance Bill 2026 Introduced in NA to Open Market

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has introduced the Insurance Bill, 2026 in the National Assembly to make insurance services simpler, faster and more accessible for citizens through digital platforms.

The legislation, proposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), seeks to replace the 25-year-old Insurance Ordinance, 2000 and facilitate quicker claim settlements and stronger consumer protection mechanisms.

The proposed law is also expected to attract investment, promote competition and support the development of affordable and modern insurance products in Pakistan, where the sector has long struggled with low penetration, outdated regulations and limited innovation. Under the proposed

law, insurance services are expected to become simpler, faster and more accessible for the public through digital onboarding, tech-driven insurance products and streamlined regulatory procedures. The SECP has been closely collaborating with federal ministries, parliamentary committees, and stakeholders to build consensus and ensure a smooth legislative transition and effective implementation of the proposed reforms.

Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Chairman SECP, said that insurance plays a critical role in protecting households, businesses and the broader economy from financial shocks. Dr. Sidhu said the Insurance Bill, 2026 is a key step toward enhancing insurance penetration in Pakistan by enabling affordable insurance products through digital platforms for all segments of society.

MG Motor Pakistan Unveils the All-New MG4 EV Urban in Pakistan!

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: MG Motor Pakistan has officially unveiled the all-new MG4 EV Urban, introducing a modern electric hatchback designed to make EV ownership more practical, accessible, and technology-focused for Pakistan's evolving automotive market.

The launch event brought together dealership leadership, media representatives, and industry stakeholders for an exclusive first look at MG's latest global electric vehicle offering. The event also included a dedicated product training session for MG dealership teams and executives.

Globally, the MG4 has emerged as one of MG's most successful electric vehicles, with more than 200,000

units sold worldwide. Building on that success, the new MG4 EV Urban brings an upgraded blend of practicality, intelligent technology, safety, and urban usability to Pakistani consumers.

Speaking at the launch, Jianqiang Shao, CEO of MG



Motor Pakistan said "The MG4 EV Urban reflects our commitment to expanding smart and accessible electric mobility solutions in Pakistan. As consumer interest in EVs continues to grow, we believe the future of urban mobility will be driven by technology, practicality, and efficiency, all of which are at the core of the MG4."

Food commodities worth \$4.190 bln exported in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: Food commodities worth of \$ 4.190 billion were exported during the first 10 months of current fiscal year as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year.

The food group exports from the country during the period under review decreased by 32.2 percent as it was recorded at \$ 6.164 billion during the first 10 months of last financial year.

According to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, over 3.579 million tons of rice worth \$1.879 billion were exported during the period from July-April, 2026 as compared to the exports of 5.085 million tons valued at \$ 2.963 billion of the same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, Basmati rice worth of \$668.380 were exported as compared to the exports of \$ 722.709 million of the same period of the last year, it added. During the period under review, over 629,638 metric tons of Basmati rice were exported as compared to the exports of 702,626 metric tons of the same period of the last year, it added.

Rethinking Research and Development (R&D) Priorities in Pakistani Universities

Continued from Page 4

Recognising this gap, the HEC has strengthened mechanisms for bridging academia and industry. The establishment of Offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialization at universities facilitates technology transfer and industry partnerships. The HEC has formed high-level committees to develop a Five-Year

Reform Roadmap, focusing on strengthening government-academia-industry linkages through the Triple Helix model and creating new accreditation councils for emerging fields like Artificial Intelligence and Renewable Energy. The Pakistan Engineering Council has deployed 600 engineering graduates in over 40 organisations nationwide, creating a structured framework for closing the academia-industry gap.

Punjab University's Research, Innovation and

Commercialisation Policy 2026 offers a compelling example of reoriented priorities. The policy permits faculty spin-off companies, provides institutional support for commercial ventures, and establishes transparent revenue-sharing through which researchers receive between fifty and eighty per cent of royalty income from products they develop. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali describes this initiative as converting research excellence into national benefit.

The Ministry of Science and Technology has sought Rs 10 billion for 38 projects under the Public Sector Development Programme for 2026-27, including NUST's Chip Design Centre and Surface Engineering Centre for advanced materials research. These initiatives demonstrate growing recognition that targeted investment in strategic areas can yield substantial returns. Yet the ministry's develop-

ment budget was reduced by Rs 700 million this year, prompting warnings that cutting research funds at a critical time could hamper national progress.

The fault, however, does not lie solely with academics. Our university promotion systems overwhelmingly reward publications rather than patents, prototypes, or market impact. A faculty member who publishes advances their career; one who develops commercially viable technology often finds their work relegated to hobby status. Until performance evaluation aligns with national development priorities, researchers will continue producing what earns promotion rather than what creates impact. HEC's reform initiatives, including faculty salary revisions and efforts to combat brain drain, must accelerate if we expect priorities to shift.

We must also confront uncomfortable

questions about research quality and sectoral imbalances. Funding remains concentrated in mature sectors with limited innovation potential: agriculture received average annual funding of Rs 19.7 billion from 2015 to 2025 but displayed only 2.38 per cent growth, while the IT sector received one-sixth of that allocation and recorded nine times higher growth. Strategic allocation toward sectors with higher innovation margins proves more effective than mere spending. Additionally, plagiarism and unethical practices have undermined the credibility of Pakistani research. If we pursue new priorities while tolerating old corruption, we will merely displace problems rather than solving them.

Encouraging developments suggest priorities may finally be changing. Minister Iqbal's call for transformation "in emergency mode" reflects appropriate urgency given global tech-

nological change. HEC's Dr Zia Ul Haq has reiterated commitment to bridging academia and industry, emphasising that innovation depends on strong partnerships between all stakeholders. The question remaining is whether urgency will translate into sustained action, whether promising policies announced today will yield transformed practices tomorrow, and whether we will finally prioritise not how much research we produce, but what difference that research makes. The answer will determine not merely the future of our universities but the future of Pakistan itself.

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Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Visit to Azerbaijan

Punjab Government Appreciated at the World Forum

Azma Zahid Bukhari

Pakistan's relations with Azerbaijan are not new; rather, the foundation of these strong ties was laid during Nawaz Sharif's first tenure as Prime Minister, when Heydar Aliyev was President of Azerbaijan and the father of the current President, Ilham Aliyev. Today, this legacy is being carried forward by Nawaz Sharif's daughter, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and Heydar Aliyev's son, Ilham Aliyev. Before beginning my discussion, I would like to share some important facts about Azerbaijan's national leader and founder, Heydar Aliyev.

Most Pakistanis are unfamiliar with Pakistan's relations with Central Asian countries. Pakistan established ties with Azerbaijan in the 1990s, when Nawaz Sharif was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan for the first time. Azerbaijan's national leader and founder, Heydar Aliyev, was a visionary statesman. He led the country for nearly three decades. Initially, he governed Soviet Azerbaijan from 1969 to 1982 and later became the President of independent Azerbaijan.

At the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan faced severe political and economic crises. During this period of instability, the people of Azerbaijan turned to Heydar Aliyev as a leader. He was elected Speaker of Parliament in June 1993 and later became President of Azerbaijan in October 1993. He served as President until his death in 2003.

Heydar Aliyev restored peace in Azerbaijan and strengthened the national economy through agreements with foreign companies. Owing to his successful foreign policy, Azerbaijan emerged as an important country on the global stage.

There existed a long-standing personal and diplomatic friendship between Nawaz Sharif and Azerbaijan's founding President Heydar Aliyev, established in the early 1990s. This close relationship became a milestone in fostering brotherly and strategic ties between the two countries. Even today, these relations are regarded as a strong diplomatic and cultural asset between



Pakistan and Azerbaijan, a fact repeatedly acknowledged by Azerbaijan's top leadership.

From the time Nawaz Sharif first became Prime Minister of Pakistan, deep ties were forged between him and Heydar Aliyev. These relations played a key role in promoting political, economic, and defense cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Both leaders openly supported each other's positions on matters of mutual interest and worked towards strengthening connectivity between Central and South Asia.

Heydar Aliyev's son and the current President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has also continued this long-standing friendship between his father and Nawaz Sharif. During the recent visit to Baku, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif held an important meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, where both leaders appreciated the continuation of this enduring friendship and bilateral relations.

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, accompanied by her cabinet, arrived in Baku to participate in the United Nations World Urban Forum. She received a grand welcome at the airport. On the first day, Maryam Nawaz Sharif visited the mausoleum of Azerbaijan's founding leader, Heydar Aliyev, laid a floral wreath, and offered prayers. She also placed flowers at the Martyrs' Memorial.



Subsequently, Maryam Nawaz Sharif visited Baku's historic library, where she was shown commemorative photographs of Nawaz Sharif and Begum Kulsloom Nawaz Sharif's visit to Azerbaijan. She also toured Baku's old and historic district and tasted traditional Azerbaijani bread.

Before addressing the World Urban Forum, Maryam Nawaz Sharif also met President Ilham Aliyev. In addition, she held side-line meetings with the leaders of Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and several other countries.

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif attended the World Urban Forum to introduce the Punjab Government's historic housing initiative, "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar," to the world. In a



short period of time, the Punjab Government has provided homes to citizens of the province. So far, one hundred thousand people have been provided with homes, while construction work on sixty-five thousand additional houses is progressing rapidly. This is among the fastest and largest



housing projects of its kind in the world.

At the beginning of her speech, CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif conveyed greetings to the participants of the World Urban Forum on behalf of Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the people of Pakistan.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed great admiration for the performance of President Ilham Aliyev and described his vision as highly impressive. Referring to Nawaz Sharif's close association and friendship with Baku, she remarked that it felt as though she had come not to Baku but to her own home. She further stated that the respect and hospitality extended to her were beyond words.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif informed the participants of the World Urban Forum about the Punjab Government's key initiatives, including "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar," "Suthra Punjab," the Punjab Socio-Economic Registry, electric buses, model villages, and clean drinking water projects through the Public Health Engineering Department.

The participants of the forum gave Maryam Nawaz Sharif a standing ovation and appreciated her for implementing such large-scale and impactful initiatives within a short period of time.

This was the third occasion on which Maryam Nawaz Sharif addressed an international forum as chief minister. Prior to this, she had also demonstrated her capabilities in Türkiye and Brazil. Her style of addressing international forums reflects her confidence and composure. Whether addressing high-level dignitaries or general audiences, her speech remains confident and consistent, which makes it impactful.

Alongside being a successful politician, Maryam Nawaz Sharif has also demonstrated strong performance as the chief minister. Only a short time has passed since her election as chief minister, yet her governance style reflects experience, vision, and leadership. Rather than focusing on temporary relief, she is concentrating on ensuring the provision of permanent and fundamental public services.

All projects launched by Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Punjab have been designed with future requirements in mind. This is why her initiatives are receiving increasing appreciation at both national and international levels.

Exclusive write-up by Minister for Information and Culture, Punjab

UMT Hosts 8th International Conference on "Emerging Psychological Practices"

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The School of Professional Psychology at the University of Management and Technology (UMT) organized the 8th International Conference on "Emerging Psychological Practices," bringing together distinguished national and international experts to deliberate on contemporary psychological trends, generational transitions, mental health and emerging professional challenges.

The conference was attended by Rector UMT Air Vice Marshal (R) Dr. Asif Raza, Dean School of Professional Psychology Dr. Haziq Mahmood, Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif, Dr. Rukhsana Kausar, Prof. Dr. Rafia Rafiq, along with renowned psychologists, educationists and social leaders from across the country and abroad. International psychology experts Dr. Amy Blackmore and Dr. Matthew Sacchet also addressed the conference virtually and shared



their valuable insights. Addressing the participants, Dr. Asif Raza emphasized that merely awarding degrees to students is no longer sufficient; rather, educational institutions must equip youth with practical skills, positive thinking and the capacity to adapt to rapidly evolving global demands. He stated that the conference would serve as an effective platform for academic, intellectual, and professional dialogue.

Rector UMT further

remarked that modern research and innovation are the true pathways to progress and advancement, adding that professional psychology can play a pivotal role in promoting social stability, mental well-being and societal harmony. Dr. Asif highlighted that the mental and social well-being of the younger generation is among the most pressing challenges of the modern era, stressing that strong collaboration between academia and industry is essential for

national development. Speakers at the conference underscored the need for educational institutions to focus on personality development, skill-based learning, and mental health awareness to better prepare students for real-world challenges. Experts emphasized that in today's rapidly changing world, mental health, a positive lifestyle, and psychological resilience are critical for individual and collective success.

Special panel discussions were held on key themes including "Degree versus Skill" and "Generational Transitions," where experts exchanged detailed views and stressed the importance of adopting modern educational and psychological strategies aligned with contemporary needs. Later Rector UMT Dr. Asif Raza presented commemorative souvenirs to the distinguished guests in recognition of their valuable participation and contributions.

Israel's Bases in Iran and Iraq...

Continued from Page 4

cooperation regarding Afghanistan. Both countries need to activate deep intelligence monitoring systems capable of detecting even rudimentary efforts to establish covert operational infrastructure near their borders. Intelligence operations can no longer remain reactive. They must become aggressively preemptive. This requires several immediate strategic measures.

First, Pakistan and Iran must significantly expand intelligence penetration inside Afghanistan itself. Monitoring militant networks alone is no longer sufficient. Greater focus must now be placed on suspicious logistics activities, foreign funding channels, unexplained infrastructure projects, covert aviation activity, encrypted communications networks, and unusual movements near sensitive border regions.

Second, Pakistan's intelligence agencies must intensify scrutiny over recruitment pipelines operating through financial networks, NGOs, smuggling channels, technology firms, cross-border trade routes, and ideological organizations. Modern intelligence warfare rarely begins with soldiers; it

begins with local facilitators.

Third, sensitive military, nuclear, communication, and leadership infrastructure inside Pakistan must undergo a complete security reassessment. The Iranian experience demonstrated that covert targeting becomes possible only after years of surveillance, infiltration, and mapping. Preventing such penetration requires constant internal vetting, cyber monitoring, communication discipline, and aggressive counter-espionage measures.

Fourth, strategic coordination between Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and other regional states must expand beyond diplomacy into active intelligence-sharing frameworks focused specifically on covert foreign operational networks.

The reality of modern warfare is brutal. By the time airstrikes begin, the enemy may already have spent years building the battlefield from inside your territory.

This is why the June war should not merely be studied as a military confrontation between Israel and Iran. It should be understood as a case study in how intelligence penetration, covert bases, recruited insiders, cyber deception,

and hidden logistics networks can cripple even powerful states from within.

For Pakistan, the lesson is existential. The greatest threat may not come from visible armies massing at the border, but from invisible networks silently embedding themselves within vulnerable spaces long before conflict erupts. Afghanistan's instability, combined with emerging India-Israel strategic alignment, creates precisely the type of environment where such covert infrastructure could potentially take root.

Time, therefore, is not on the side of complacency. Pakistan, Iran, and other regional powers must act now — before covert operational ecosystems mature into irreversible strategic threats. Once such networks become deeply entrenched, the cost of dismantling them becomes extraordinarily high, and the damage they can inflict may already be beyond repair.

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Pakistan's Ancient Forests: Hidden Climate Treasure

As the world races to plant billions of new trees in the fight against climate change, some researchers give us the powerful lesson that beyond increasing plantation numbers, climate resilience depends on protecting the right forests, conserving native biodiversity, and ensuring long-term ecological sustainability.

As global climate finance grows under initiatives like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), forests are no longer viewed only as ecological resources, but also as valuable

climate assets. Research by Harris et al. (2021) estimates that the world's forests absorb nearly twice as much carbon dioxide as they emit, creating a net carbon sink of approximately 7.6 billion tonnes annually. Since forest are natural carbon vaults, the real strength lies in protecting mature forests and conserving native species that can store carbon for decades, even centuries.

Studies conducted in Pakistan provide strong evidence of this reality. Research by Khan et al. (2023) found that in the Oak-dominated forests of the Hindu Kush region, a specific Oak species named *Quercus semecarpifolia* possess exceptionally high carbon storage potential of up to 235 MgC/

ha (megagrams of carbon per hectare) due to their dense biomass and long lifespan. Similarly, research conducted by Afzal, M et al. (2023), in the Tangir Valley of Gilgit-Baltistan has also identified Oak forests as significant contributors to carbon sequestration for local mountain communities. Within Punjab's own ecological landscape, native species such as Shisham (*Dalbergia sissoo*), Kikar (*Vachellia nilotica*), and Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) are also considered highly valuable carbon sinks

because of their strong wood density, durability, and resilience under harsh climatic conditions.

Reliable data on carbon storage capacity of different tree species can help countries like Pakistan access international funding and carbon market opportunities. For Pakistan, already ranked among the world's most climate-vulnerable nations (Press Information Department, Government of Pakistan), these ancient Oaks and other native species represent a

hidden national asset. Protecting them could strengthen the country's climate commitments while also opening doors to international environmental financing. Pakistan is already working on global climate action by committing in its Updated Nationally Determined Contributions submitted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to reduce projected greenhouse gas emissions by up to 50 percent by 2030, subject to international climate finance and support. At the provincial level, Punjab has taken notable steps through the Punjab Forest Policy 2019, which emphasizes sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and

expanding tree cover with indigenous species, alongside initiatives such as the Punjab Green Development Program (PGDP) that focus on ecosystem restoration, climate adaptation, and improved environmental governance. The message from Ancient forests and its native species is clear: Climate resilience is not only about planting more trees, but also about protecting the right ones.

This World Environment Day, Pakistan has an opportunity to rethink conservation priorities, valuing forests not merely by the number of trees they contain, but by the ecological and economic strength of the species within them.



Syeda Aaleen Hussain

Information Department, Government of Pakistan,

Meeting

QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee of National Action Plan on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

PM orders enhanced security for mineral corridor amid chairing Balochistan Apex Committee huddle

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the Balochistan Apex Committee meeting in Quetta, ordering the deployment of the Frontier Corps (FC) in the Rakhshan Division to establish a dedicated security corridor protecting the province's vital mineral resources and related economic activities.

This corridor will feature

additional FC wings, highway checkpoints, surveillance, and border posts.

The PM stressed that security is paramount for maintaining confidence among local and international investors in Balochistan's mineral sector.

During the meeting, the PM commended Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and the armed forces for counter-terrorism efforts, and praised

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti for public welfare initiatives and maintaining merit in district administration appointments.

Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need for modern policing, advanced training, and technology to eliminate terrorism.

The federal government reaffirmed its commitment to mainstreaming Balochistan's youth through education, vocational training, employ-

ment, scholarships, digital skills, sports, and increased participation in decision-making.

Special focus is being placed on infrastructure, education, healthcare, and communication projects. Briefings indicated significant progress: institutions are actively working to eradicate terrorism, youth welfare projects are advancing, and no polio cases have been reported

since November 2024.

Several healthcare facilities, including a cancer institute and trauma centers, are operational.

Furthermore, 99% of schools are open, and a solar energy initiative benefiting over 15,000 households has reportedly saved Rs105 billion. The meeting was attended by top civil and military leadership, including the Army Chief.

Punjab showcases housing, urban reforms at UN World Urban Forum

Spokesman Report

BAKU: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif attended the opening ceremony and reviewed various projects and initiatives displayed at the pavilion.

The exhibition highlights Punjab's progress in urban planning, sustainable development, affordable housing and digital governance.

Officials briefed the chief minister on the province's public welfare and climate-smart development projects aimed at improving urban infrastructure and living standards.

The pavilion also featured the Punjab government's "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" programme, under which more than 100,000 homes have been commissioned for low-income families.

The forum brings together



and development experts from around the world to discuss sustainable urban growth and housing solutions.

Pakistan extends ban on Indian aircraft until June 24

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has extended its ban on Indian civilian and military aircraft using its airspace for another month, according to a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) issued by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority on Tuesday.

Under the new directive, all Indian-registered aircraft, including commercial airlines and military flights, will remain prohibited from entering Pakistani airspace until 4:59 a.m. on June 24.

The restriction came into effect on May 19 at 10:40 a.m., the NOTAM said. The previous extension was due to expire on May 24.

The latest move means Indian



airlines and military aircraft will continue to remain barred from operating through Pakistani airspace amid ongoing tensions between

two neighbouring countries.

Pakistan and India closed their airspaces to each other's airlines in late April 2025 after tensions esca-

lated following a deadly attack in Pahalgalam in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

On April 24, Pakistan's top leadership announced a series of retaliatory measures against New Delhi, including the immediate closure of its airspace to all India-owned and Indian-operated aircraft.

India had accused Pakistan of backing the Pahalgalam attack without presenting evidence, an allegation Islamabad strongly denied while offering support for a neutral investigation.

The two nuclear-armed neighbours later witnessed their most intense aerial confrontation in May, during which Pakistan had shot down seven Indian fighter jets.

DPM Dar for expanding Pakistan, Saudi Arabia trade, energy cooperation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday appreciating the strong fraternal relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, emphasized further strengthening the ongoing positive momentum and expanding bilateral cooperation across all sectors, including trade, investment, energy, and human resource development.

The deputy prime minister was talking to Ambassador of Pakistan to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq, who called on him here on the sidelines of the Regional Envoys Conference held here.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar also underscored continued engagement with the Pakistani community in the Kingdom, recognizing their constructive and positive contribution in further deepening the close bilateral ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Azad Kashmir PM Vows Development Push for Backward Regions

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has said that his government is committed to the development of backward areas, improvement in education, health, and infrastructure, and provision of better opportunities to the younger generation.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation from Tachhan and Phulwari in Haveli led by Raja Naseem Rathore.

He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party has always worked for the rights and welfare of the common people and that accelerating development projects in neglected areas remained among the government's top priorities.

It is pertinent to mention here that prominent leaders of the Gujjar and



Kashmiri communities, impressed by the Prime Minister's people-friendly initiatives, joined the Pakistan Peoples Party on the occasion.

The delegation thanked the Prime Minister for launching development projects in Haveli and termed the establishment of a high school in Tachhan a major milestone for the area.

They said the project would improve educational opportunities for students in remote areas.

Opposition alliance announces protest against inflation, price hike

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The opposition-led Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) has announced a nationwide protest on Friday against soaring inflation, rising petroleum prices, the law and order situation, and the release of political prisoners.

The decision was taken during a meeting of opposition parties presided over by Mahmood Khan Achakzai.

According to a statement released after the meeting, opposition leaders held a detailed discussion on the country's current political and economic situation.

It noted that escalating inflation and continuous increases in petro-

leum prices are causing severe hardships for the public.

The statement criticised the government for adding to the public's burden instead of providing relief under these circumstances.

The meeting also reiterated its demand for the release of political prisoners, stressing that protests have become essential to end lawlessness and restore constitutional and democratic principles.

Protests will be staged at all district headquarters across the country on Friday, according to the statement.

The opposition leaders emphasised that the struggle for the upholding of the constitution, democracy, and public rights will continue at every level.

Bangladesh civil servants delegation visits FCCP, discusses Judicial Reforms

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of senior civil servants from Bangladesh visited the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan on Tuesday and held detailed discussions on constitutional governance, judicial reforms, and institutional cooperation with Chief Justice Aminud-Din Khan and other judges of the court.

The delegation, accompanied by the Director General of the Civil Services Academy (CSA) and senior faculty members, is currently in Pakistan under an Executive Leadership

Development Training Programme aimed at enhancing understanding of governance, constitutional administration, and public service leadership.

The meeting was attended by judges including Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, and Justice Arshad Hussain Shah, as well as the Registrar of the court.

During the interaction, members of the Bangladeshi delegation appreciated the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court and termed specialized constitutional forums important for strengthening democratic institutions and safeguarding citizens' rights.