



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
ہم سے عارہم تفتاح نے بیان کیا ہے انہوں نے کہا ہم سے ابو زرعہ نے بیان کیا اور ان سے ابو ہریرہ رضی اللہ عنہ نے بیان کیا کہ رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا: «مَنْ عَلَّمَ حَرْفًا مِنْ حَرْفِي يَكُنْ لَهُ بِرٌّ مِثْلُ حَرْفٍ» (میں نے تمہاری زبانیں اور اللہ رحمن کے یہاں پسندیدہ ہیں وہ یہ ہیں «سجائے اللہ و محمد» سجائے اللہ العظیم»۔
(بخاری: حدیث نمبر 6682)
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PM Shehbaz expands ECC with Khalid Maqbool's inclusion

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved an increase in the number of members of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC). He expressed hope that Dr. Khalid Maqbool would play an active role as a member of the ECC and contribute fully to the progress and development of the country and the nation.



Pakistani mountaineer Salman Atiq scales Mount Everest

Pakistani mountaineer Salman Atiq has successfully scaled Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, marking another milestone for Pakistan in international mountaineering. According to reports, Salman Atiq reached the summit of Mount Everest at 11:49am local time on Thursday. With this achievement, he has become the 14th Pakistani climber to successfully conquer the iconic peak.

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Breakfast

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the breakfast hosted in the honor of Prince Rahim Agha Khan at Prime Minister's House, on Thursday.



Photo: PID

PM Shehbaz urges AKDN to deepen, expand its partnership with Pakistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday hosted a breakfast meeting for Prince Rahim Agha Khan-V, wherein he encouraged the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) to deepen and expand its partnership with Pakistan, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, where its institutional presence and community outreach were highly valued.

The prime minister warmly welcomed Prince Rahim Agha Khan-V, who is on his first official visit to Pakistan, and appreciated his commitment to fostering peace, stability, and constructive engagement with governments and international partners, besides assuring him of Pakistan's shared commitment to these ideals.

Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighted the longstanding partnership between Paki-

stan and the AKDN, and commended its contributions in rural development, healthcare, education, disaster resilience, climate adaptation, renewable energy, digital skills training, and youth entrepreneurship.

He particularly appreciated AKDN's impactful work in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, especially in remote and vulnerable communities.

The prime minister

welcomed enhanced engagement with Aga Khan University (AKU), noting its major contributions in healthcare and higher education.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also extended his heartfelt condolences on the passing of Prince Rahim's father, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, paying tribute to the deceased's enduring humanitarian legacy and his longstanding association with Pakistan spanning nearly seven

decades.

The prime minister also presented a commemorative postal stamp issued by Pakistan Post to honour the late Prince Karim Aga Khan IV for his services to Pakistan.

Prince Rahim Agha Khan V thanked the prime minister for a warm welcome extended to him in Pakistan and expressed his desire to continue cooperation with Pakistan in various human development initiatives.

Pakistan completes Hajj flights to Saudi Arabia

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan's Hajj flight operation is concluding today as 3,296 pilgrims are departing for Saudi Arabia through 12 flights from different cities across the country.

The final Hajj flight from Lahore, PK-741, is scheduled to depart at 10:30pm carrying 290 passengers.



Officials said that by last night, a total of 114,078 Pakistani pilgrims had already arrived in Saudi Arabia for Hajj.

Authorities further stated that the last group of 457 pilgrims currently present in Medina would reach Mecca today.

In addition, 44,146 private Hajj pilgrims are also present in Saudi Arabia.

The return Hajj flight operation from Jeddah is expected to begin on May 31.

According to officials, monitoring teams from the ministry have completed interviews of 4,913 private Hajj pilgrims.

Authorities also took action on complaints regarding overcharging of Hajj expenses, resulting in refunds amounting to 73,255 Saudi riyals.

Momina Iqbal submits harassment evidence against PML-N MPA at NCCIA

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: Actor Momina Iqbal appeared before the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) in Lahore on Thursday, submitting digital evidence, including alleged threatening messages of PML-N Member of Provincial Assembly Saqib Chaddar, her lawyer said.

The actor, accompanied by her lawyer, recorded her statement and handed over evidence related to alleged online harassment, cyberbullying and death threats, investigative sources said.

The investigation continued for several hours. Iqbal later left through a back exit as a large number of media representatives waited outside, sources added. Speaking to reporters after-

wards, Iqbal's lawyer said Chaddar had formally sent a marriage proposal to the actor and wished to marry her as his third wife. The two had been in contact since 2022, he said.

"When Momina learned he was already married, she ended the relationship," the lawyer said. "When her engagement was later announced elsewhere, the harassment began."

The lawyer said Iqbal's wedding would proceed as scheduled and expressed confidence she would receive justice. He also thanked Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for taking notice of the matter.

Chaddar, who had not appeared despite being served notice, later presented himself at the NCCIA office where his ques-



tioning is ongoing, sources said. The NCCIA had summoned both parties after receiving Iqbal's online harassment complaint filed from Karachi.

Investigators will examine digital evidence, social media records and statements from both sides before deciding whether to register a formal case,

sources said.

If allegations of verbal or online harassment are substantiated, the matter could be referred to police for formal proceedings, they added.

Iqbal had gone public two days earlier on Instagram, alleging she had faced prolonged online harassment, cyberbullying and death threats from an influential political figure.

She said she had filed complaints with the NCCIA, FIA and Punjab Police on multiple occasions, but no action was taken due to alleged political influence.

She had also called on CM Maryam and relevant authorities to conduct a transparent, impartial investigation and provide immediate security to her family.

Security forces kill 23 terrorists in KP operations: ISPR



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's security forces killed 23 Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists during intelligence-based operations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the past 48 hours, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the operations were carried out in Datta Khel, Spin Wam and Bannu, where security forces struck militant hideouts and dismantled an underground network of tunnels and bunkers.

Among those killed was wanted militant commander Jan Mir, also known as Toor Saqib, on whose head the government had placed a bounty, ISPR said.

Jan Mir was involved in

attacks on security forces and the killing of civilians, it added.

Large quantities of weapons, ammunition and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were recovered from the targeted locations, according to the statement.

ISPR said all 23 killed Khawarij were operating under Indian sponsorship, reiterating Islamabad's longstanding position that New Delhi supports militant networks active against Pakistan.

Operations would continue until terrorism is completely eliminated, ISPR said, adding that security forces and law enforcement agencies remained committed to eradicating militancy under the ongoing Azm-e-Istehkam operation.

Iranian sailors return home after Pakistan secures their release



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, expressed his gratitude to the Pakistani government for its role in securing the release and return of 20 Iranian sailors stranded in Singapore.

Posting on his X platform on Thursday, Amiri Moghadam praised Pakistan's humanitarian and diplomatic efforts, saying the sailors had been in a "difficult situation" after their ship was seized in Singaporean

waters.

The ambassador specifically acknowledged the contributions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and other relevant Pakistani institutions.

"Following these diplomatic efforts, the sailors were transferred from Singapore to Islamabad and returned to our homeland a few hours ago," Amiri Moghadam said, highlighting the successful conclusion of the repatriation operation.

FCC moved for reinstatement of Ali Amin Gandapur as KP CM

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A petition has been filed in the Federal Constitutional Court seeking restoration of Ali Amin Gandapur as the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A petition filed by MNA Sher Afzal Marwat pleaded to the FCC to declare the former KP chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur's resignation as unconstitutional and void.

"De-notifying Gandapur has been unlawful and in collision with the constitution," petitioner argued.

Gandapur's resignation was taken on the dictation

of a convicted and disqualified person, petition read.

The petition also seeks abrogation of the notification of Sohail Afridi's appointment as chief minister of the province and restoration of Ali Amin Gandapur as chief minister.

Petitioner also argued that the resignation of Gandapur was taken by applying pressure thus the resignation has not been legitimate.

Applicant pleaded to the court that all official decisions made in result of unconstitutional measures should also be declared as cancelled.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari meets AJK Prime Minister to discuss region's development

Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, during a crucial meeting at Zardari House, Islamabad, discussed the prevailing political and administrative situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, prime minister Rathore apprised Bilawal Bhutto Zardari of his government's performance and the steps being taken to address issues faced by the public.

The prime minister said the government had launched projects for the construction of 500 kilometers of roads across Azad Jammu and Kashmir and taken significant measures to promote tourism aimed at attracting visitors from around the

world.

He said foundation stones for schools and colleges had also been laid in various parts of the state to improve educational infrastructure.

Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said the government had introduced a health package, restored health cards, announced an education package as part of its broader development agenda.

On the occasion, the PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari emphasized the need for continued consultation and dialogue with political stakeholders and public representatives to ensure lasting and amicable solutions to people's problems.

The AJK premier assured the PPP chairman that the government remained fully committed to addressing public issues and that no matter concerning the welfare of the people would be overlooked.



Kashmir's Painful Anniversaries: Mirwaiz Denounces Repression on Day of Martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq marked the anniversary of the martyrdom of Shaheed-e-Milat Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, a date he described as a painful reminder of one of Kashmir's darkest days. He also paid tribute to the Hawal Martyrs, recalling the tragic events where over 70 mourners were killed and hundreds injured. Dr. Farooq noted that the same date also saw the silencing of Shaheed-e-Hurriyat Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone. He strongly condemned the restrictions imposed by authorities, including intimidation, force, and media gags, which prevented public remembrance gatherings and individual tributes at Mazar-e-Shuhada, Eidgah. Dr. Farooq himself was placed under house arrest. He asserted that these repressive tactics cannot diminish the contributions of these leaders or their place in the hearts of the people. The Mirwaiz also shared a brief overview of the martyred leader's impactful religious, social, and political contributions to Kashmir.

Azad Kashmir braces for Eid heatwave: Temperatures to hit 40°C

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Director General State Disaster Management Authority Azad Kashmir, Saeed-ur-Rehman Qureshi, said during a media briefing that there is a possibility of a significant increase in temperature in Azad Kashmir on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, due to an increase in temperature of 5 to 6 degrees Celsius, the mercury may reach 38 to 40 degrees Celsius, which is likely to create a heat wave-like situation.

He said that in view of this situation, the State Disaster Management Authority has issued a heat wave advisory for the concerned institutions and the public. The public has been directed to avoid unnecessary going out during the afternoon hours, use water as much as possible, choose shady places and avoid working directly in the hot sun as much as possible so as to ensure the safety of lives and property. The DG SDMA further said that instructions have also been issued to the relevant institutions under which the health department will establish heat wave centers in hospitals and a public awareness campaign will be launched in all health centers so that potential threats can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Deputy Director Information retires, Honored by Chief Justice

City Desk

MIRPUR: Deputy Director Information Mirpur Muhammad Javed Malik met Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Saeed Akram Khan regarding his retirement from the Information Department. Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir congratulated Deputy Director Information Muhammad Javed Malik on his promotion and appreciated his performance as District Information Officer for providing excellent media coverage of all the programs of the Supreme Court. He said that it is a great honor to retire from the service in a dignified and honorable manner. Deputy Director Information Muhammad Javed Malik thanked Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Saeed Akram Khan for his good remarks and best wishes.



AJK Public Relations Director Praises TV Journalists Association



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Director Public Relations AJK Tariq Jameel Durrani visited the office of the TV Journalists Association AJK on Wednesday. He was warmly received by President TVJ Asif Raza Mir and other senior members of the association. President TVJ Asif Raza Mir conducted a tour of the TVJ studio and various operational sections, briefing the visiting dignitary on the association's professional activities. Tariq Jameel Durrani appreciated the role of the TVJ in promoting responsible and professional journalism. He stated that objective, research-based and ethical journalism remains essential for ensuring social stability, intellectual development and informed public discourse. Prominent members of the TV Journalists Association were present on the occasion, including Muhammad Arif Urfi, Imtiaz Avvan, Amiruddin Mughal, Naem Ahmed Abbasi, Syed Nadeem Shah, Ashfaq Hussain Shah, M. D. Mughal, and Haisam Naqvi.

Anti-polio campaign

RAWALPINDI: Health worker administration polio drops to a child at District Hospital during national wide anti-polio campaign.



Photo: Online

Ismaili Community in Sindh Celebrates Prince Rahim Aga Khan's Maiden Visit to Pakistan

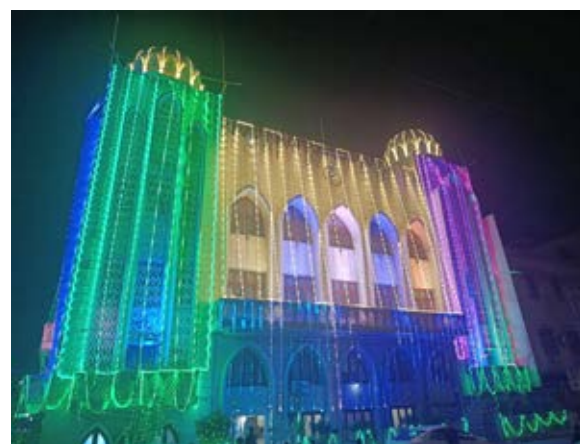
Kamran Khamiso Khawaja

THATTA/HYDERABAD: The arrival of His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan on his first official visit to Pakistan as the 50th Spiritual Leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community has sparked a wave of jubilation among community members across the country.

Anwar Ali, a senior community leader from Sujawal, noted that this time the Spiritual Leader will grace his followers in the northern areas with his presence and convene large

religious gatherings. "We are hoping that he will soon return to Pakistan to meet his followers residing in Sindh and Punjab," he said.

Another community member said the celebrations will continue throughout the Imam's stay in the country, adding that volunteers have been working relentlessly to facilitate members' participation in the events. Speaking about the guidance and teachings of their spiritual leader, Nabeel, a young member of the community, said their "Imam"



has always emphasized strictly following the ethics of Islam and remaining united.

"The Spiritual Leader has asked the community to remain loyal to their country, Pakistan, and always work for its progress and betterment, and to be generous in helping those in need," he added. It is pertinent to mention that Prince Rahim Aga Khan shares a generations-old bond with Pakistan, as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather tirelessly worked for the creation and progress of the country.

Kashmiris Mark Death Anniversary of Martyrs, Denounce Indian Rule

Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD: On the death anniversary of Shaheed Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Farooq, Shaheed Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone, and the Hawal martyrs, a ceremony was held at the Hurriyat Conference headquarters in Islamabad, presided over by APHC Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi.

Participants paid tribute to the martyrs' sacrifices for Kashmir's freedom and the right to self-determination. Speakers condemned India's alleged human rights violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir,

including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and suppression of basic freedoms, stating India's attempts to quell the freedom movement through state terrorism are futile.

Concerns were raised about India's efforts to alter the Muslim majority demographic by issuing domicile certificates to non-state residents, violating international laws and UN resolutions.

The speakers emphasized the need for unity, solidarity, and perseverance among Kashmiris, urging them to overcome internal differences to achieve their national objective. Ghulam Muhammad Safi, in his presiden-

tial address, referenced a Hadith, suggesting that great trials are accompanied by great rewards, and nations enduring hardship with patience earn Allah's pleasure.

He criticized India's intransigence on the Kashmir issue and its attempts to falsely link the legitimate freedom movement to terrorism. Safi affirmed that no solution would be acceptable without the will of the Kashmiri people and adherence to UN resolutions, vowing not to betray the martyrs' blood.

The APHC appealed to the international community, UN, OIC, and human rights organi-



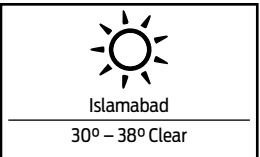
zations to advocate for the Kashmiri people, address Indian atrocities, and facilitate the realization of their right to self-determination. The event concluded with prayers for the martyrs and the deceased mother of Ghulam Nabi Najjar.

The meeting was attended

by senior Hurriyat leaders and personalities from different walks of life, including Senior Hurriyat leaders Muhammad Farooq Rahmani, Mahmood Ahmed Saghar, Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Mir Tahir Masood, Altaf Hussain Wani, Madam Shamim Shaal, Hassan Al-Banna, Sheikh Abdul

Mateen, Syed Ijaz Rahmani, Zahid Safi, Director Liberation Cell Afsar Khan, Assistant Director Liberation Cell Najeeb Al-Ghafoor Khan, Imtiaz Wani, Haji Muhammad Sultan, Sheikh Muhammad Yaqoob, Abdul Majeed Lone, Muhammad Shafi Dar, Mian Muzaffar, Muhammad

Ashraf Dar, Syed Gulshan, Adeel Mushtaq, Manzoor Ahmed Dar, Nazir Karnahi, Syed Manzoor Shah, Sanawullah Dar, Imtiaz Ahmed Butt, Raees Mir, Secretary Information Mushtaq Ahmed Butt and many other people associated with political, social, religious and public circles.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings
 Fajr 3:25 am
 Zohr 12:04 pm
 Asr 5:00 pm
 Maghrib 7:06 pm
 Isha 8:44 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

CM Maryam Nawaz calls cultural diversity symbol of national identity and harmony

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Thursday said Pakistan was a hub of diverse cultures, languages, traditions and values, adding that cultural diversity

was a reflection of national identity and civilisational heritage.

In her special message on the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, the chief minister said cultural diversity also promoted unity, positive values, tolerance and



harmony. She said the purpose of observing the international day was to raise public awareness regarding dialogue and development linked to cultural diversity.

CM Punjab said individuals who recognised the importance of civilisation, culture and shared heritage

deserved appreciation. She further stated that Punjab's diverse cultural heritage was recognised around the world and represented the province's identity globally.

The chief minister said the Punjab Information and Culture Department was actively working for the preservation of cultural heritage across the

province. She added that the protection of culture and patronage of artisans and creative individuals were among the government's priorities.

"Ensuring access of Punjab's skilled craftsmen to national and international markets is our commitment," she said.

Certificate distribution

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani distributing certificate among the participants of Pakistan Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor Executive Training Programme for senior civil servants for Bangladesh at the National Institutes of Public Administration (NIPA) in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Zafar Shaikh Visits Karachi Orphanage, Advocates for Philanthropic Investment

Zafar Shaikh, a former official from the State Bank of Pakistan and Ministry of Finance, visited Aaghosh Home Trust in Karachi, commending their 25 years of humanitarian service to shelterless women and differently-abled orphan girls. He met with the Trust's leadership, including President Shugafta Saba, and toured the facilities, witnessing firsthand the care provided. Shaikh praised the Trust's dedication in offering a safe environment and essential support. He emphasized that institutions like Aaghosh Home deserve robust backing from philanthropists and the corporate sector, as they serve the most vulnerable. Assuring his personal support, Shaikh urged Pakistani corporations, banks, and business groups to actively engage in social responsibility by supporting the Trust. He specifically highlighted the critical need for the Trust to acquire its own building, as it currently operates from rented premises. A permanent facility, he stated, would ensure greater stability, dignity, and security for the residents, enabling the Trust to expand its services sustainably. Shugafta Saba and Secretary General Muhammad Jazib thanked Shaikh for his visit and support, detailing the challenges faced due to limited resources and rising operational costs, and stressed the importance of continuous public and corporate cooperation to sustain and enhance their work.

Pakistan and China Celebrate 75 Years of Enduring Friendship with Joint Flag Ceremony

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: central flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the Deputy Commissioner Office in Multan to commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations and friendship between Pakistan and China. Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Karim Khan presided over the event, hoisting both national flags simultaneously, accompanied by a siren and a moment of silence.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Noman Siddique, CPO Sadiq Ali Dogar, assembly members, and other dignitaries. Police, civil defense, and rescue teams rendered a salute. Khan, Siddique, and Dogar, along with political leaders, cut a cake symbolizing Pak-China friendship. Commissioner Khan emphasized that this friendship is a guarantee of regional peace, development, and prosperity, characterized by mutual trust,



cooperation, and an enduring bond. He highlighted China's unwavering support to Pakistan through all trials, providing assistance, financial aid, and modern technology. He further stated that the friendship stands the test of time, with China proving to be a true friend. Deputy Commissioner Siddique pointed to the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a milestone in Pakistan's development, noting significant progress in infrastructure, energy, and economy due to Chinese cooperation. He described the relationship as an example of friendship, trust, and development for the new generation, ensuring regional peace, stability, and economic

cooperation. Leaders from both countries consistently prioritize common interests and public prosperity. Former MNA Tariq Rashid poetically described Pak-China friendship as higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the seas, and sweeter than honey. The participants congratulated both nations on this significant anniversary.

75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: A dignified ceremony was held at the District Council Hall Attock in connection with the 75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship. The chief guest of the ceremony was Additional Deputy Commissioner General Attock, Aneel Saeed, while Assistant Commissioner Arif Qureshi, CEO Education Attock Dr. Muhammad Azhar, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Attock Sardar Aftab Ahmad Khan, Chief Officer District Council Ali Abbas Bukhari, various district officers, and other distinguished personalities also attended the event.

At the beginning of the ceremony, the national flags of Pakistan and China were hoisted, while the national anthems of both countries were also played. On this occasion, tribute was paid to the historic and strong relations between Pakistan and China.

Speaking to the media, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Attock Aneel Saeed said that the friendship between Pakistan and China is exemplary and everlasting, which is becoming stronger with the passage of time. He said that mutual cooperation, economic ties, and people-to-people relations between the two countries are extremely important for the development and prosperity of the region.

The participants of the ceremony termed Pak-China friendship as a strong example at the global level and reaffirmed their commitment to promoting everlasting relations between the two countries.

Fudan University Screens Documentary in Pakistan to Attract Pakistani Students



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Moon is Yours, a 102-minute documentary by Vincent Zhou, filmed by Fudan University's School of Journalism, premiered in Pakistan at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad. The film showcases the lives of international students in Shanghai, marking its debut in Pakistan and fourth international screening. This initiative highlights Fudan's student recruitment efforts, aiming to attract Pakistani students. The screening, attended by over a hundred Pakistani students and faculty, was followed by an admissions briefing on programs and scholarships. Fudan's vice dean spoke about the film's themes of authentic educational and cross-cultural experiences. Pakistani attendees, including lecturer Salman Ali Bhitani and student Tayyab, expressed optimism about the film fostering educational and cultural ties, encouraging more Pakistani youth to consider higher education in China.

24 Million People Smoke in Pakistan: Dr Asma Akbar



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: An awareness seminar on smoking's harms and prevention was held at Women University Multan. Sultan Mahmood Malik highlighted the «Tobacco-Free Pakistan» campaign aiming to protect youth, noting 24 million smokers in Pakistan and a worrying trend in educational institutions. Dr. Muhammad Abdul Sami called smoking a global war, with 1200 youth starting daily due to thousands of harmful chemicals in cigarettes. The university established a Tobacco Control Committee to create a tobacco-free campus. Deputy Director Dr. Ismail Akbar stressed enforcing laws like «no-smoking zones» and banning sales to minors and near schools. A committee member demanded immediate closure of vape shops to protect the youth. An awareness wall was inaugurated, promoting the «Tobacco Prohibition and Protection of Health of Non-Smoking Persons Ordinance 2002».

Childhood TB: Pakistan Consults WHO to Align National Policies

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), is intensifying efforts to combat childhood tuberculosis (TB), a disease affecting an estimated 93,600 children nationwide. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination's Common Management Unit (CMU) led a two-day consultation in Islamabad to align national policies with the latest WHO guidelines for TB prevention and treatment in children. Children constitute at least 14% of Pakistan's total TB cases, with the country bearing a significant burden



of the disease in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The consultation, also involving the Pakistan Paediatric

Association, focused on integrating WHO's science-based recommendations, such as a 4-month treat-

ment regimen and new approaches for drug-resistant TB, into national policies. Lessons learned from MSF's TACTIC initiative were also considered. Dr. Faisal Siraj, CMU's TB Programme Manager, highlighted Pakistan's prioritization of pediatric TB, emphasizing integrated interventions, standardized diagnostics, contact tracing, and TB preventive therapy within primary healthcare. WHO Deputy Representative Ellen Thom underscored the vulnerability of children to TB and pledged WHO's continued support for Pakistan's commitment to eradicating childhood TB through preventive care, early diagnosis, and timely treatment for every child.

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Why USA Wants to Overrun Cuba

For more than a century, Cuba has occupied a unique place in the geopolitical imagination of the United States. Barely 90 miles from Florida, the island has long been viewed by Washington not merely as another Caribbean nation, but as a strategic frontier whose political orientation directly affects American security, trade routes, and regional dominance. Today, under President Donald Trump, the rhetoric surrounding Cuba has once again intensified. Trump recently described Cuba as a “failing nation” lacking oil, economic vitality, and civic infrastructure, portraying it as a country from which people are desperately fleeing. Simultaneously, Washington has revived historical legal cases, tightened sanctions, and launched what many analysts describe as a renewed “maximum pressure” campaign against Havana.

The latest turning point came with the indictment of former Cuban leader Raúl Castro over the 1996 downing of aircraft belonging to the “Brothers to the Rescue” organization. The symbolism of announcing the case on May 20—the anniversary of Cuba’s formal independence from Spain under U. S. oversight—was impossible to ignore. For many observers, this was not merely a legal action but a geopolitical message that Washington intends to reshape Cuba’s future once again.

pressure, and hardline policies toward Havana. Surveys show a large majority of Cuban Americans in Florida continue to support strong pressure on the Cuban government and largely align with Republican foreign policy positions.

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba retained immense symbolic and strategic importance. For American policymakers, the survival of a communist state only miles from U. S. shores represented unfinished business. For Cuba, resisting American pressure became a symbol of sovereignty and anti-imperial defiance. That unresolved historical conflict continues to shape policy today.

One of the most overlooked but powerful dimensions of U. S.-Cuba relations is the influence of the Cuban diaspora in America. According to recent demographic estimates, nearly 2.9 million people of Cuban origin now live in the United States, with around 1.6 million concentrated in Florida alone. Their political influence, particularly in South Florida, is enormous. Cuban Americans have historically voted in high numbers and have exercised outsized influence over U. S. foreign policy toward Havana.

For decades, anti-communist Cuban exiles formed one of the most powerful lobbying communities in American politics. Leaders such as Marco Rubio became symbols of this political influence, pushing for sanctions, regime

increasingly views control over energy resources and shipping routes as central to maintaining global power. Recent confrontations involving Venezuela and Iran reveal a broader strategic pattern: securing influence over oil-producing regions and the maritime chokepoints through which energy flows.

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world’s most important oil arteries. Any disruption there affects global prices, shipping insurance, and economic stability. If tensions in the Persian Gulf intensify or Hormuz becomes partially blocked, the United States would increasingly depend on Western Hemisphere energy routes and Atlantic-based supply chains. In that context, Cuba gains enormous strategic importance.

Cuba sits near the maritime corridors connecting the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean shipping lanes, and Atlantic energy routes. Control or influence over Cuba strengthens America’s ability to secure oil transportation from the Gulf Coast, Latin America, and Atlantic markets. Washington fears that a hostile Cuba aligned with China, Russia, or Iran could threaten surveillance, naval access, logistics, or energy movement near U. S. territory.

This explains why Cuba is viewed not merely as a poor island nation, but as a strategic node in the larger architecture of global energy and maritime security. Just as Washington seeks influence over the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, it also seeks dominance over the Caribbean basin and Gulf maritime network.

At the same time, Cuba’s relationships with Russia and China intensify American concerns. U. S. officials increasingly

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Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Pak-China relations continue to grow in strength, substance, and strategic significance

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that built on mutual trust, sovereign equality, and shared aspirations for peace and development, the relations between Pakistan and China have continued to grow in strength, substance, and strategic significance, amidst changing regional and global circumstances.

The prime minister, in his message on on 75th Anniversary of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Pakistan and China being observed today, said that the commemoration would enable the two peoples, particularly the younger generations, to better appreciate the depth, breadth, vitality, and future-oriented character of Pakistan-China relations.

“On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, as well as on my own behalf, I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the peoples of Pakistan and China, on the historic occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China,” he remarked.

He said that the people of Pakistan held the people of China in the highest esteem and affection as since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951, the Pakistan-China friendship had steadily evolved into an All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

“Pakistan highly values the visionary leadership of Xi Jinping and appreciates China’s remarkable achievements in economic development, technological advancement, poverty alleviation, and global connectivity. Under President Xi’s visionary leadership, China has achieved remarkable progress in modernization, innovation, poverty alleviation, and national rejuvenation,” the prime minister said.

He said that China’s progress and transformation continued to inspire the developing world and contribute significantly to global peace and prosperity.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the commitment of the Chinese leadership to strengthen bilateral relations and advance the shared vision of building a closer “Pakistan-China Community of Shared Future in the New Era” was “most commendable.”

He said that Pakistan deeply appreciated China’s cooperation with Pakistan in multifaceted fields and that his country remained firmly committed to the One-China principle and would continue to support China on issues concerning its core interests.

Highlighting the phenomenal role played by China’s robust support for Pakistan’s socio-economic development and national priorities, he said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, had made tremendous contribution towards Pakistan’s infrastructure development, energy security, industrial cooperation, and regional connectivity.

“Pakistan remains firmly committed to the high-quality development of CPEC as it enters its next phase, with greater emphasis on industrialization, agriculture, information technology, science and technology, green development, and enhanced people-Centered cooperation.”

To understand America’s enduring obsession with Cuba, one must look beyond ideology and examine geography, diaspora politics, military calculations, energy security, and historical psychology. Cuba sits at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico and near some of the



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

Environmental Problems in Pakistan and Our Responsibility

Pakistan is currently facing serious environmental pollution problems. Rapid population growth, unplanned urban expansion, ignoring environmental principles in industrial development, deforestation, and the careless use of resources are severely affecting our environment. Pollution is not only an environmental issue; it is also closely linked to health, the economy, agricultural production, water resources, and the future of coming generations. If timely and serious measures are not taken, the consequences could be extremely dangerous, and our future generations may be forced to live in an unhealthy environment.

Air pollution has become a serious issue in major cities of Pakistan. Industrial and densely populated cities such as Lahore, Karachi, and Faisalabad are particularly affected. Smoke from vehicles, toxic gases emitted by factories, emissions from brick kilns, burning of garbage, and construction activities are increasing the level of harmful particles in the air. During winter, smog becomes a major threat to public health, leading to an increase in respiratory, eye, and heart diseases. Air pollution is especially harmful to children, the elderly, and patients, and it severely disrupts daily life.

Water pollution is also a significant problem in Pakistan. Chemical waste from industries is often discharged into rivers and canals without proper treatment, while domestic sewage is also released into water bodies without purification. As a result, drinking water becomes contaminated, causing diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis. Important water sources like the Indus River are polluted at various points,

affecting not only human health but also agriculture and aquatic life. The contamination of groundwater with chemicals poses a serious threat to the future and requires immediate attention.

Land pollution is also damaging our environment. Heaps of garbage in cities, excessive use of plastic bags, agricultural pesticides, and industrial waste are affecting soil fertility. Throwing trash in streets and roads has become a common practice, leading to foul smells, the spread of germs, and various diseases. In the agricultural sector, the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is damaging the natural structure of the soil, and as a result, the quality of food is declining, which is harmful to human health.

Noise pollution is another growing problem in urban areas. Traffic noise, misuse of loudspeakers, industrial machinery sounds, and loud music at various events disturb mental peace. This leads to stress, sleep disturbances, and hearing problems. Unfortunately, people do not take this issue seriously, even though its long-term effects can be harmful to human health.

Deforestation and climate change are also closely linked to environmental pollution. The forest area in Pakistan is already limited, but illegal logging and the use of wood as fuel have further reduced it. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help maintain environmental balance, but the decrease in forests is causing rising temperatures and climate irregularities. In recent years, severe heatwaves, unusual rainfall, and devastating floods are clear signs that the environmental balance is being disturbed.

The government has introduced various tree plantation campaigns and environmental laws, but their full implementation remains a challenge. Lack of resources, weak monitoring, and limited public cooperation create obstacles in this regard. There is a need for strict monitoring of industrial institutions, promotion of clean energy projects, and strict action against violations of environmental laws.

The solution to pollution does not depend solely on government efforts; every individual must realize their responsibility. We need to bring positive changes in our lifestyle, such as using cloth bags instead of plastic, conserving water and electricity, disposing of waste properly, and planting more trees. Avoiding unnecessary use of private vehicles and preferring public transport can also help reduce air pollution. Promoting environmental awareness in educational institutions and educating the younger generation about the importance of protecting the environment is also essential.

A major reason for the spread of pollution in our society is public negligence, carelessness, and lack of proper training. From childhood, we hear and read that cleanliness is half of faith, but unfortunately, we do not seriously practice this teaching. We maintain cleanliness inside our homes, but as soon as we step outside, we do not hesitate to throw garbage in streets, markets, and public places. Throwing plastic bottles, empty snack packets, and other waste on the roads has become a common habit, even though this behavior leads to social filth and diseases. The real problem is not lack of awareness but lack of action; we know everything, yet we do not accept responsibility. If we start with self-improvement, provide better training to our children, and collectively adopt cleanliness as our habit, it will not be difficult to create a clean and healthy environment.

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Analysis

Muhammad Asif

Childhood First: Punjab’s Historic Move for Girls’ Rights

For generations, girls in Punjab have grown up dreaming of becoming teachers, doctors, artists, and entrepreneurs. Yet before opportunity could reach them, marriage often did. Child marriage has quietly stolen opportunities from thousands of girls across Pakistan. Poverty remains a challenge but so do the social barriers that continue to limit girls’ futures and silence their ambitions. For many young girls, childhood ends far too early, replaced by responsibilities they were never ready to carry. A school uniform replaced by household responsibilities, a classroom abandoned for motherhood and dreams sacrificed before they were ever given a chance to grow.

Recently, Punjab took a historic step toward changing that reality.

The Punjab Assembly has passed a law raising the minimum legal age of marriage for girls to 18 years. This brings the province closer to a future where childhood of girls is protected instead of negotiated away. Early marriages often push girls out of education, expose them to health risks, economic dependency, and emotional trauma, while reinforcing cycles of poverty that pass from one generation to the next. The new legislation recognizes this reality. By setting 18 as the legal age of marriage and strengthening penalties against those facilitating underage marriages, Punjab has acknowledged that protecting girls is not merely a cultural debate;

it is a matter of human rights, public health, and social progress. More importantly, the law sends a powerful message: a girl is not ready for marriage while she is still fighting for her education, identity, and future.

The importance of this reform goes beyond legal language. Countries that invested in girls’ education and delayed early marriages have consistently seen improvements in maternal health, workforce participation, and economic growth. When girls stay in school longer, societies become stronger, healthier, and more prosperous. Yet laws alone cannot transform society overnight.

The real success of this bill will depend on implementation. Awareness campaigns, community engagement, school retention, and local enforcement will determine whether this law becomes meaningful protection or simply another document in official records. Families, educators, religious scholars, and policymakers all have a role to play in ensuring that daughters are seen not as burdens to be married off early, but as individuals with potential worth investing in.

Punjab’s decision is therefore more than a legal reform; it is a statement about the kind of society it wishes to become. A society where girls are allowed to finish school before becoming wives. A society where childhood is protected instead of shortened. And a society where a daughter’s future is defined by her ambitions and not by an early marriage contract.



Analysis

Syeda Aaleen Hussain

President Zardari, PM Shehbaz reaffirm Pakistan-China 'Iron Brotherhood' at 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its strategic partnership with China, describing the bilateral relationship as a time-tested friendship rooted in mutual trust, shared aspirations and steadfast support through every challenge.

Addressing a grand ceremony and photo exhibition held in Islamabad to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, President Zardari said the friendship with China remained a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and had evolved into a model of interstate relations over the decades.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress Cai Dafeng, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, federal ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats and distinguished guests.

President Zardari congratulated the leadership and people of China, especially President Xi Jinping, on completion of 75 years of diplomatic ties, stating that the relationship between Islamabad and Beijing was built on mutual trust, unwavering support and shared development goals.

He said bilateral cooperation had expanded across trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, defence and people-to-people exchanges, while appreciating China's consistent support to Pakistan on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and reaffirming Pakistan's firm adherence to the "One China Policy".



The president said Pakistan and China would continue supporting peace, stability, development and multilateralism at the regional and global levels. He added that both countries had always safeguarded each other's core interests and maintained close cooperation in education, agriculture, science and technology, defence and cultural exchanges.

President Zardari thanked the Chinese government for its support in Pakistan's development projects, particularly Gwadar Port, and termed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a historic initiative that continued to play a transformative role in Pakistan's socio-economic progress.

Paying tribute to President Xi Jinping's leadership, he said China had achieved unprecedented economic development and remarkable poverty alleviation under his vision.

President Zardari shared that he had visited the country 14 times, including two visits last year, and recently visited the birthplace of Chairman Mao

Zedong during his latest trip.

On the occasion, President Zardari unveiled a commemorative postage stamp marking the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan was proud to be the first Muslim country to recognize the People's Republic of China and among the earliest countries in the world to establish diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1951.

"Through mutual efforts, sincerity of purpose and shared commitment, we have built a relationship which is second to none and truly unique in the world," the prime minister said.

He stated that China had always stood by Pakistan "like a solid rock" during difficult times, including earthquakes, floods and economic challenges, and said Beijing's support for Islamabad was unmatched in history.

to help affected people.

"How can we forget these acts of kindness and generosity on the part of the Chinese people," he remarked.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the One China Policy, saying Pakistan had supported the principle "without any second thought" and would continue to do so "without fear or favour".

He termed CPEC, launched under President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a shining example of China's commitment to Pakistan's economic development, employment generation and prosperity.

The prime minister praised President Xi's vision for promoting multilateralism and resolving conflicts through diplomacy and peaceful dialogue, while appreciating China's support for Pakistan's peace initiatives in the region.

Describing China as Pakistan's most steadfast and trusted friend, Prime Minister Shehbaz said the relationship was based on sincerity rather than political interests or conditions.



He said China's extraordinary economic transformation and its success in lifting over 800 million people out of poverty under President Xi's leadership served as an inspiration for the world.

Referring to future cooperation under CPEC 2.0, the prime minister said agriculture, information technology, artificial intelligence, special economic zones, and mines and minerals would remain key areas of collaboration.

He highlighted Pakistan's young population as both a challenge and an opportunity, expressing confidence that with China's support, Pakistan could transform its youth potential into economic strength.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also appreciated China's support in training Pakistani agricultural graduates in Chinese universities, saying the initiative was contributing to agricultural research and development in Pakistan.

Chinese leadership that Pakistan would provide the highest level of protection to Chinese nationals working in the country.

"The security meant for the prime minister and president should be available for every Chinese citizen in Pakistan," he said, adding that Pakistan remained committed to enhancing counterterrorism cooperation with China.

The prime minister expressed hope that President Xi Jinping would visit Pakistan during the year-long celebrations commemorating the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

Addressing the ceremony, Cai Dafeng said China and Pakistan had always stood firmly by each other and noted that Pakistan was the first Muslim country to establish diplomatic relations with China on May 21, 1951.

He reaffirmed China's support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity, and pledged enhanced cooperation in education, agriculture,

mining, industry, information technology, climate change, media and other sectors.

Cai also reiterated China's support for Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and stressed the importance of continued coordination at multilateral forums, including the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

A special photo exhibition held alongside the ceremony showcased memorable moments of Pakistan-China friendship, solidarity and shared achievements over the past seven decades.

The event began with the national anthems of both countries and concluded with President Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chinese dignitaries and Ambassador Jiang Zaidong jointly cutting a commemorative cake, while Pakistani and Chinese children presented colourful performances celebrating the enduring friendship between the two nations.

Uzbekistan and Pakistan Celebrate Literary Ties with New Bilingual Publications

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Pakistan organized a landmark cultural event in Islamabad featuring the launch of two unique publications: "20th Century Fiction Anthology" in Urdu, showcasing the works of distinguished Uzbek writers, and the "Dictionary of Common Words in Uzbek and Urdu Languages."

The event was attended by the Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Mr. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi;

Advisor to the Chairman Senate, Ms. Misbah Khar; Senator Talha Mahmood; Director General of the National Language Promotion Department, Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar; Professor of Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Ms. Muhayyo Abdurakhmonova; the dictionary's author, renowned scholar and researcher Mr. Toshmirza Kholmurzayev; Ambassadors of Russia, Türkiye, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, academics, writers, journalists, and representatives of



civil society.

Particular interest was



generated by the "Dictionary of Common Words in Uzbek and Urdu Languages," which contains approximately 4,000 words reflecting the centuries-old historical, cultural, and linguistic ties between our two nations.

The "20th Century Fiction Anthology" introduced Pakistani readers to the works of prominent Uzbek literary figures, including Abdulla Qahhor,

Said Ahmad, Saïda Zunnunova, O'tkir Hoshimov, and other distinguished masters of Uzbek literature.

Today, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are experiencing one of the most dynamic periods in the history of their bilateral relations. Alongside the expansion of political dialogue, trade, investment and transport connectivity, we are consistently strengthening cultural and humanitarian coop-

eration, which serves as a solid foundation for the friendship between our brotherly peoples.

I am confident that these publications will make a meaningful contribution to bringing Uzbekistan and Pakistan even closer together, expanding academic cooperation, and promoting the rich historical and cultural heritage of our two brotherly nations.

Photo by Sultan Bashir



Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
168,514.44	164,831.42	
Day's High	Day's Low	
168,869.18	166,638.56	
Index Value	Change	
26,504,918,026	+3683.02	
Percentage	Time	
+2.23%	21 May, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,443.47	+11.13	
Percentage	Time	
+0.11%	21 May, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
49,921.32	-88.03	
Percentage	Time	
-0.18%	21 May, 1:04 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
61,684.14	+1,879.73	
Percentage	Time	
+3.14%	21 May, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	196.36	203.63
Bahrain Dinar	731.47	741.85
Canadian Dollar	201.41	207.65
China Yuan	40.05	41.15
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	323.01	328.48
Hong Kong Dollar	35.09	36.06
Indian Rupee	2.50	2.75
Japanese Yen	1.7423	1.8424
Kuwaiti Dinar	879.28	890.25
Malaysian Ringgit	65.35	66.25
New Zealand \$	161.06	165.85
Norwegians Krone	27.70	28
Omani Riyal	722.00	733.25
Qatari Riyal	74.66	75.75
Saudi Riyal	74.20	75.20
Singapore Dollar	215.98	220.02
Swedish Korona	30.35	30.65
Swiss Franc	352.78	356.68
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.75
U.A.E Dirham	75.90	76.90
UK Pound Sterling	373.10	378.60
US Dollar	279.00	279.60

PIDE Urges Institutional Clarity in Regulatory Governance

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a consultative roundtable, as advised by the Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, following a study directive from the Prime Minister on separating regulatory functions from ministries.

The study, "Improving Governance and Accountability: Mechanisms for Separating Regulatory Functions from Ministries," identified that ministries exert de facto influence over regulatory bodies through funding, appointments, and policy guidelines.

Dr. Nasir Iqbal of PIDE highlighted Pakistan's declining GDP growth and stressed that reforms should facilitate, not restrict, business activity by reducing costs and eliminating regulatory hurdles. Dr. Mahmood Khalid presented the study's findings from five ministry-regulator pairs, revealing overlapping mandates and constraints on regulatory independence.

Vague eligibility criteria and renewable tenures for executives were identified as significant issues.

A broader survey of 31 regulatory bodies uncovered five systemic failures, including structural conflicts of interest (regulator



and operator being the same entity), policy duplication, fragmented standards, fiscal overreach by non-revenue bodies, and incomplete ministerial compliance.

Discussions at the roundtable led to

suggestions for Regulatory Impact Assessment guidelines to ensure regulator accountability and a need for legal frameworks to align with regulatory aims.

While acknowledging ministerial over-

reach, participants also raised concerns about full regulatory independence without accountability. PIDE will compile feedback into a policy brief for the Prime Minister's Office and relevant ministry.

Moroccan Food Festival inaugurates

ISLAMABAD: Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hamid Asghar Khan and Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Morocco, Ahmed Drif along with GM Mövenpick Hotel Nicolas Verdun and Member National Assembly Dr. Mirza Ikhtiar Baig inaugurating the Moroccan Food Festival at Movenpick Hotel in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

CPHC Strengthens Pakistan-China Ties Through Pharmaceutical and Biotech Ventures

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Adeel Munawar of the Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) highlighted the significant opportunities arising from the China-Pakistan Health Corridor (CPHC) for bilateral cooperation in healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, medical infrastructure, and professional training.

He noted Pakistan's potential as a regional medical manufacturing hub with low production costs, attracting Chinese investment.

Munawar referenced \$250 million in MOUs signed in January 2025, reinforcing cooperation. The CPHC, initiated in 2017 under the Belt and Road Initiative, has focused on medical education, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, telemedicine, and

research, opening new export markets for Pakistan.

A proposed \$1 billion medical city by China is expected to create thousands of jobs, introduce advanced technologies, and boost Pakistan's healthcare system.

Chinese companies like CanSino, Hangzhou New Sea Technology, and UH Biopharma are already involved in Pakistan. Munawar also pointed to the growing role of telemedicine in bridging healthcare gaps and emphasized the importance of joint research on diseases and the promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine for affordable healthcare solutions.

He acknowledged China's crucial support during the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing vaccines and equipment, which further strengthened bilateral trust.

Over 150 textile mills closed amid rising energy costs, says Markazi Kisan League

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chairman Markazi Kisan League (MKL) Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Olakh and President Muhammad Ashfaq Warrak have expressed concern over the closure of more than 150 textile mills across the country, warning that the national economy could face further damage if immediate steps are not taken.

In a joint statement, the leaders said the textile industry was the backbone of Pakistan's economy, but rising electricity prices, high interest rates and continuous increases in petroleum prices had pushed the sector into a serious crisis.

They said the textile sector was not only a major source of foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan but also provided employment to millions of workers and labourers. According to them, several major textile mills have already shut down, while many other industries are also facing the risk of closure.

The leaders warned that if the current situation continued, unemployment would increase further and millions of families could face severe financial hardship.

They also said Pakistan was once considered among the world's leading cotton-producing countries, but poor government policies, lack of agricultural research and anti-farmer measures had caused a sharp decline in cotton production. "The shortage of cotton had created a raw material crisis for the textile industry," they added.

The MKL leaders criticised the closure of a cotton research institution in Multan and called it an unfortunate decision. They urged the government to reactivate agricultural research institutions, establish modern research centres and introduce new cotton varieties through practical measures.

They further demanded a reduction in electricity, gas and petroleum prices, lower interest rates and a special relief package for industrialists and farmers to help save the textile sector and the national economy from further decline.

ABHI Microfinance and CBA Forge Pakistan Financial Access Partnership

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: ABHI Microfinance Bank Ltd. and CBA, a venture of EPL (PVT) Limited, have formed a strategic partnership to boost financial accessibility and digital innovation across Pakistan. This collaboration will establish a Super Agent Network and offer tailored Retailer Lending Solutions, addressing liquidity and credit challenges for MSMEs. The alliance enables real-time cash-in/cash-out services, digital transaction routing, and biometric account openings for underserved retailers. The framework includes termination clauses for material breaches or with 30 days' notice. The partnership integrates instant digital credit and working capital into CBA's merchant ecosystem through API integration and joint testing to ensure system reliability. Retailers will undergo data-backed credit risk assessments via the digital platform, leading to instant disbursement of short-term financing into dedicated wallet accounts. ABHI's lending portfolio is secured by a Corporate Guar-



tee and promissory note from CBA, along with a structured collections process and fraud prevention measures.

This initiative aims to transform commerce efficiency and foster trust in formal financial networks by empowering

the retail supply chain with digital banking tools and lending mechanisms. ABHI solidifies its leadership in merchant-centric solutions, while CBA expands its digital agent network's reach and economic impact.

Boosting Bilateral Trade: Pakistan and Qatar Launch Joint Business Council

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-Qatar Joint Business Council, established to foster collaboration between the private sectors, held its inaugural virtual session in Lahore.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh emphasized its role in exploring investment and partnerships. Discussions covered bilateral trade, investment, and enhancing mutual cooperation.

Zaki Ajjaz highlighted Pakistan's investment potential in agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and infrastructure, inviting Qatari investors.

Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Obaidly noted the strengthening Qatar-Pakistan ties, with bilateral trade reaching QR 11.8 billion in 2025, and affirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting trade and investment.

Mehmood Arshad underscored the private sector's crucial role in boosting cooperation,



predicting the council will enhance communication and create new investment and partner-

ship opportunities, leading to increased trade and economic benefits for both nations.

UMT Hosts 11th Budget Summit 2026-27 to Discuss Pakistan's Economic Challenges and Fiscal Reforms

News Desk

LAHORE: The University of Management and Technology (UMT) hosted the 11th Budget Summit 2026-27, convening economists, policymakers, business leaders, industrialists, academics, and students to tackle Pakistan's pressing economic challenges.

The summit focused on tax reforms, fiscal discipline, the debt burden, inflation, and global economic pressures. Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the chief guest, emphasized the need for sustainable economic policies, highlighting that excessive taxation burdens most sectors and is ultimately passed to the public.

He asserted that long-term growth, industrial expansion, and export development are crucial, but economic progress has been hampered by recurring foreign exchange crises and a lack of political stability, policy continuity, and institutional reforms.

Abbasi underscored that national progress stems from effective policymaking, hard work, transparency, and



good governance, noting the disproportionate tax burden on the salaried class and the unsustainable gap between national expenditures and income, which necessitates structural economic reforms.

Former FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi stressed the urgent need for structural tax reforms and enhanced

revenue generation, pointing out that the corporate sector faces a nearly 51 percent tax burden, with large companies and ordinary citizens bearing the brunt. He identified weak governance, incompetence, and flawed policymaking, rather than just corruption, as Pakistan's core issues.

Zaidi explained that fiscal deficits



often dictate tax targets and projected tax collection at PKR 17 trillion for the current fiscal year. He reiterated that a clear economic roadmap, policy consistency, and transparent governance are essential for overcoming the crisis.

A worrying trend highlighted was exporters using informal channels for remittances. However, current global conditions could present economic opportunities with the right strategies. CEO Abacus Fatima Asad Saeed

advocated for prioritizing tax relief for taxpayers and carefully considering low- and middle-income groups in budget formulation, echoing that the salaried class carries the heaviest tax load. Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque stressed the importance of research, transparency, and institutional reforms for evidence-based economic policymaking.

ICMA Vice President Muhammad Yaseen emphasized fiscal discipline, economic stability, and effective financial strategies.

UMT Rector Dr. Asif Raza highlighted the critical role of youth, the business community, universities, and researchers in achieving sustainable economic growth and equipping the younger generation with necessary skills.

The summit concluded with experts presenting practical recommendations for Budget 2026-27, including tax reforms and fiscal transparency, and UMT Rector Dr. Asif Raza presenting souvenirs to the distinguished guests.

ECCE Convocation held at GGSS Happy Dale, Nazimabad



News desk

KARACHI: The first-ever ECCE Convocation 2025-26 was successfully held at GGSS Happy Dale, Nazimabad No. 4, under the supervision of the Happy Dale School Alumni Foundation (HDSAF). The event marked a historic milestone in the institution's journey after the school's adoption by HDSAF in 2022 with the vision of uplifting the educational environment and providing quality learning

opportunities to children from underprivileged communities.

The convocation celebrated the successful completion of one year of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by young learners. Parents, students, teachers, educationists, alumni members, and distinguished guests participated enthusiastically in the colorful ceremony. During the last year, nearly 100 students from disadvantaged areas were inducted into the ECCE program and provided

educational support, learning facilities, and a nurturing environment for early childhood development.

The ceremony was graced by renowned dignitaries including Tariq Hasan advisor to Chief Minister Sindh, Tariq Saud chairman APTMA, Bashir Abbasi Director primary, Deputy Director Itrat Jamal, District Officers, Deputy Directors, Regional Director of Allama Iqbal Open University, Director creative marketing, Batoool Kazim

Director Sports, members of the Alumni Foundation, Dr Arif Hafeez, media coordinators, and other respected guests from the education sector.

Administrator Haseen Fatima and management of Happy Dale School Alumni Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to continue educational reforms, community support, and student-centered initiatives for the betterment of society and future generations.

Cuba condemns the despicable accusation against the Leader of the Revolution

Spokesman Report

HAVANA: The Revolutionary Government condemns in the strongest terms the despicable accusation by the United States Department of Justice announced on May 20 and proclaimed for several weeks against Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, leader of the Cuban Revolution.

The United States government lacks the legitimacy and jurisdiction to carry out this action. It is a despicable and infamous act of political provocation, based on the dishonest manipulation of the incident that led to the downing, in February 1996, of two aircraft operated by the Miami-based terrorist organization Brothers to the Rescue over Cuban airspace, which repeated violations of Cuban airspace for hostile purposes were of common knowledge.

Furthermore, the U. S. government distorts other historical truths about the event it uses as a pretext. It omits, among other details, the numerous formal complaints filed by Cuba during that period with the State Department, the U. S. Federal Aviation Adminis-

tration (FAA), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding more than 25 serious and deliberate violations of Cuban airspace committed by the cited organization between 1994 and 1996, in blatant transgression of international law and U. S. legislation itself.

It also ignores public and official warnings issued by Cuban authorities about the inadmissibility of such violations of its airspace and alert messages conveyed directly to the President of the United States about the seriousness and possible consequences of such transgressions.

Cuba's response to the violation of its airspace constituted an act of legitimate self-defense, protected by the Charter of the United Nations, the 1944 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, and the principles of air sovereignty and proportionality.

The United States, which has been a victim of the use of civil aviation for terrorist purposes, does not and would not permit the hostile and provocative violation of foreign aircraft over its territory and would act, as it has demon-



strated, with the use of force.

The inaction of the US government in the face of the warnings issued by Cuba at the time, revealed its complicity in the planning and execution from its territory of violent, illegal and terrorist actions against the Cuban government and people, a recurring and systematic practice since the triumph of the Revolution to present day.

It is highly cynical that this accusation is made by the same government that has murdered nearly 200 people and destroyed 57 vessels in international waters of the Caribbean and the Pacific, far from the territory of the United States, with the disproportionate use of military force, for alleged links to drug trafficking operations that

were never proven, which qualify as extrajudicial executions, in accordance with International Law, and murders, according to US laws themselves.

This spurious accusation against the Leader of the Cuban Revolution adds to the desperate attempts by anti-Cuban elements to construct a fraudulent narrative in an effort to justify the collective and ruthless punishment against the noble Cuban people, through the strengthening of unilateral coercive measures, including the unjust and genocidal energy blockade and threats of armed aggression.

Cuba reaffirms its commitment to peace and its firm determination to exercise the inalienable right to self-defense, recognized by the Charter of the United Nations.

The Cuban people reaffirm their unwavering decision to defend the Homeland and its Socialist Revolution and, with the greatest strength and firmness, their unrestricted and unchanging support for Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, Leader of the Cuban Revolution.

Homeland or Death, We Will Prevail.

Why USA Wants to...

Continued from Page 4

warn about alleged Chinese intelligence facilities and Russian military cooperation on the island. Whether exaggerated or not, such developments reinforce Washington's longstanding fear of rival powers establishing strategic footholds near U. S. shores.

Yet overt military action against Cuba would carry extraordinary risks. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has warned that any invasion would trigger a "bloodbath with incalculable consequences." Cuba's military is vastly weaker than America's, but Havana's doctrine relies on asymmetric warfare, territorial militias, and prolonged resistance designed to make occupation politically and economically costly.

But history also shows that pressure alone rarely produces stable outcomes. Attempts to reshape nations through sanctions, coercion, or military threats often create resistance, instability, and humanitarian suffering. Cuba's future will depend not only on American strategy or Cuban resilience, but on whether both nations can eventually escape the cycle of confrontation and historical resentment that has defined their relationship for more than a century.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Macomb, Michigan

Environmental Problems in Pakistan and Our Responsibility

Continued from Page 4

As a result of filth and environmental pollution, extremely dangerous and life-threatening diseases emerge, posing a serious threat to society. Garbage lying in streets becomes a breeding ground for germs, bacteria, and viruses, spreading diseases such as cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, and diarrhea. Stagnant dirty water becomes a breeding place for mosquitoes, leading to the rapid spread of diseases like dengue and malaria. Air pollution causes asthma, lung infections, and heart diseases, while contaminated water leads to kidney and liver problems. Children, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems are the most affected. Thus, our small acts

of negligence not only endanger our own health but also put the entire society at risk. Therefore, adopting cleanliness and environmental protection seriously is the need of the hour.

In conclusion, it is essential to understand that a clean and healthy environment is vital for our survival. If we do not fulfill our responsibility today, future generations will never forgive us. Even small steps can make a big difference. If every individual pledges to play their part in protecting the environment, Pakistan can become a clean, green, and prosperous country where a healthy life is the right of every citizen.

The writer is senior analyst and he can be reached at sirasi786@gmail.com

70% Beautification Work Completed in Iqbal Bazaar Kamalia: CO MC Ali Raza

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Chief Officer Municipal Committee Kamalia Ali Raza talking to our correspondent said that beautification and improvement projects are being carried out rapidly in markets across the city in accordance with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He said that providing citizens with a clean, beautiful and pleasant

environment is among the top priorities of the present government and for this purpose renovation and beautification work is underway in various markets, roads and important public places. Ali Raza further stated that the beautification campaign is continuing effectively under the special directions of Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela and the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Erum Shahzadi. He said

that measures including wall beautification, painting, cleanliness arrangements, improvement of green belts and decoration along roadsides are being taken in different markets to provide a better environment for the public. He informed that nearly 70 percent of the beautification work in Iqbal Bazaar has been completed, while the remaining work will also be finished soon. Ali Raza said that the beautification project is significantly enhanc-



ing the beauty of the markets and citizens are appreciating these efforts. He added that the Municipal Committee Kamalia is utilizing all available resources to maintain cleanliness and beautification across the city.

Recognition

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir is awarding awards to the families of the martyrs, officers and soldiers in recognition of their exceptional bravery in operations and distinguished services to the nation during an Investiture Ceremony was held at General Headquarters, Rawalpindi



Field Marshal Munir Bestows Military Honors for Exceptional Service

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Investiture Ceremony to confer military awards to officers and soldiers of Pakistan Army was held today at General Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF as the chief guest conferred

the awards to the families of shuhada, officers and soldiers in recognition of exceptional gallantry in operations and distinguished services rendered to the nation.

Decorations conferred included 50 Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 12 Tamgha-i-Basalat. Medals awarded posthumously were received with

honour by families of Shuhada. Paying tribute to the Shuhada and Ghazis, the Field Marshal stated "Shuhada and Ghazis remain the enduring pride of the nation. Their honour and sacrifice are a sacred trust for every Pakistani. Peace and security of our motherland are owed to their supreme sacrifices and unwavering devotion to duty."

The Field Marshal also expressed profound admiration for the resilience, dignity and steadfastness demonstrated by the families of Shuhada, acknowledging their unparalleled sacrifices and unwavering commitment to the homeland. Commending the operational preparedness and unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), the Field Marshal lauded their sustained efforts against terrorists and reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism will continue with full national resolve until enduring peace and stability are achieved across the country.

Although unsuccessful, Pakistan continues its mediation for a lasting ceasefire and potential deal. Naqvi's visits are part of this initiative to de-escalate regional tensions. Meanwhile, President Trump indicated that US-Iran negotiations are at a critical juncture, warning of rapid developments if satisfactory responses are not received, suggesting a deal could be imminent if Iran provides "100 percent correct answers."

April 11.

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Conversely, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that Tehran is reviewing the American position and reiterated demands for the release of frozen assets and the lifting of US port blockades.



President Donald Trump and Iranian officials.

Direct US-Iran talks, brokered by Pakistan, were held in Islamabad on

Mohsin Naqvi meets Iranian FM as Pakistan intensifies regional diplomacy

Spokesman Report

TEHRAN: The article details Pakistan's intensified diplomatic efforts, led by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, to promote regional peace amidst rising tensions.

Naqvi made an unannounced visit to Tehran, meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and President Masoud Pezeshkian.

This was his second visit in under a week, highlighting increased bilateral engagement.

Pakistan has been actively mediating since reported US and Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28, playing a role in seeking a ceasefire and facilitating negotiations, efforts praised by US

Diplomacy is Key: Poland Champions Dialogue, Praises Pakistan's Mediation Role

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Poland's Ambassador to Pakistan, Maciej Pisasrski, underscored the significance of diplomacy, dialogue, and regional cooperation at a "Meet the Press" event in Islamabad.

He lauded Pakistan's pivotal role in mediating international disputes, notably between the US and Iran, highlighting Islamabad's unique diplomatic position and the trust placed in it by involved parties.

Ambassador Pisasrski emphasized Poland's strong support for negotiations and diplomacy in resolving global conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war, advocating for adherence to UN resolutions and principles of sovereignty.

He described Poland-Pakistan relations as "warm, friendly, and steadily expanding," citing recent high-level exchanges, including the Polish Foreign Minister's visit to Pakistan, which have opened new avenues for political,



economic, and strategic cooperation. Discussions on counter-narcotics, law enforcement, and illegal migration were also noted following Interior Minister Naqvi's meetings in Warsaw. Economically, bilateral trade between Poland and

Pakistan has reached \$1.3 billion, with potential for growth in sectors like IT and investment. Ambassador Pisasrski encouraged Pakistani businesses to explore EU markets via the GSP Plus framework,

aimed at boosting Pakistani exports and economic development. Public, cultural, and think-tank exchanges are also being fostered to deepen mutual understanding. Defence cooperation, though temporarily slowed by the pandemic, is being revitalized. Ambassador Pisasrski also highlighted Pakistan's appeal for Polish tourists and mountaineers, referencing the historic K2 summit by Wanda Rutkiewicz.

Regarding South Asia, he encouraged Pakistan and India to pursue cooperation and dialogue for mutual benefit, drawing parallels with Europe's experience. He also addressed concerns about irregular migration, noting Poland's open discussions with Pakistan on the matter.

Ambassador Pisasrski concluded by reaffirming Poland's commitment to strengthening multifaceted cooperation with Pakistan and emphasizing the vital role of continued dialogue for global stability.

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British High Commissioner calls on Defence Minister Khawaja Asif



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, here on Thursday.

The Defence Minister warmly welcomed the High Commissioner and expressed Pakistan's desire to further deepen bilateral relations

between the two countries, said a press release.

The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on matters of mutual interest.

The meeting concluded with a shared understanding to continue constructive engagement and further solidify the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, it is said.

Islamabad High Court fixes 190 million pounds case appeal hearing for June 18, 2026

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court has issued a written order in the ongoing appeals against the conviction in the 190 million pounds case.

The order was issued by a division bench comprising Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif in the case involving former prime minister and Imran Khan.

According to the court order, defence lawyer Barrister Salman Safdar sought adjournment on medical grounds, stating that he is suffering from a retinal eye condition.

The court noted that the appellant's counsel had already been given a final opportunity to present arguments during the previous hearing.

It further directed that if the defence counsel is again unavailable due to medical reasons at the next hearing, the appellant must appoint an alternative lawyer.

The court warned that in the absence of an alternative counsel, the appeal may be decided on the basis of available record and law.

The order also issued instructions to the Superintendent of Adiala Jail regarding the processing of legal authorization documents.

It directed that all legal formalities be completed and the authorization documents be promptly returned to the lawyer.

The court further instructed all concerned authorities to ensure strict compliance with its directions.

The Islamabad High Court has fixed the next hearing of the case for June 18, 2026.

60 flights cancelled across Pakistan amid operational disruptions

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A total of 60 flights were cancelled and 14 others faced significant delays across Pakistan today (Thursday) due to operational issues.

In Pakistan, multiple domestic and international routes were affected, with major cancellations reported from key airports including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and other cities. From Karachi, 24 flights were

cancelled, including services to Jeddah, Doha, Dubai, Sharjah, Madinah, Najaf, and Abu Dhabi. From Lahore, 19 flights were cancelled on routes including Dammam, Dubai, Jeddah, and Kuwait.

In Islamabad, six flights were cancelled, including those operating to Jeddah, Riyadh, Tehran, and Dubai. Additional cancellations were also reported from Sialkot, Multan, Peshawar, and Faisalabad.

Global Sumud Flotilla: Pakistan condemns illegal detention of humanitarian activists

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday condemned in the strongest possible terms the unlawful interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla by Israeli occupying forces in the international waters as well as arbitrary detention and reported mistreatment of humanitarian workers onboard.

Those detained also reportedly include Pakistani humanitarian activist Saad Edhi, the Foreign

Office said in a statement on Thursday.

"Pakistan demands the immediate release of all illegally detained activists. It also calls on the international community to ensure safety, dignity, and fundamental rights of those detained."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is remains in close contact with Pakistani diplomatic Missions in the region to ensure the safe return of any detained Pakistani nationals.