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Founded By: (Late) Rehmat Khan

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Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor Arif Mehmood Khan



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## Effective regulatory system for virtual assets sector must be made operational at the earliest: PM Shehbaz

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The Minister of State and Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal bin Saqib called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, here on Friday.

The Prime Minister directed that, in order to promote Pakistan's digital economy and increase investor confidence, an effective and internationally aligned regulatory system for the virtual assets sector should be made fully operational at the earliest.

He said that special measures should be taken to provide training to youth in modern technologies, especially artificial intelligence and digital finance, so that the country's workforce can be aligned with future requirements.

Bilal bin Saqib briefed the Prime Minister on the operational transition of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority into a regulator, as well as the inauguration of the regulatory sandbox.

The briefing stated that innovation is being introduced in areas such as AI-powered payments and regulated virtual asset services.

It further added that work was ongoing to prepare national institutions, the workforce, and the regulatory framework for the next wave of economic transformation.



LAHORE: Minister of State and Chairman Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority Bilal bin Saqib calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Three wounded in Bajaur as Khawarij continue cross-border attacks from Afghanistan

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Unprovoked aggression by Fitna al-Khawarij and continued attacks on the civilian population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have once again been reported, with a quadcopter strike injuring three people in Bajaur. According to details, the Khawarij carried out a quadcopter attack on a cricket ground in the Mamond area, specifically in the Shahi Tangi tehsil, leaving three people injured. The wounded were immediately shifted to a hospital for treatment. Local sources stated that the attack was launched when a cricket match was underway in the ground. They added that Fitna al-Khawarij are using quadcopters to target the general public in an effort to spread fear and terror, with multiple video evidences reportedly present. Meanwhile, a recent press release issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Bajaur highlighted continued cross-border hostilities. It stated that during March and April 2026, mortar shells were fired from Afghanistan into various border areas of Bajaur, particularly in Mamond and Salarzai.

## Trump says 'not satisfied' with new Iran proposal

MAHPARA ZAMAN



NEW YORK: United States President Donald Trump said on Friday that he was "not satisfied" with Iran's latest proposal in negotiations to end the war between the countries.

"They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happens," Trump told reporters at the White House. Trump did not elaborate on what he sees as the proposal's shortcomings. The president said negotiations continued by phone after he called off his envoys' trip to Pakistan last week. He expressed frustration with Iran's leadership, which he described as fractured. "It's a very disjointed leadership," he said. "They all want to make a deal, but they're all messed up." He further said that he had "great respect" for Pakistan, Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. Trump added that Pakistan was "continuing to work with us" in the negotiation process. Iranian state media reported earlier that Iran submitted its latest proposal for negotiations with the US to mediator Pakistan. IRNA reported that according to its foreign policy correspondent, the country "delivered the text of its latest negotiation plan to Pakistan on Thursday evening, May 10, as a mediator in negotiations with the US". The White House said it would not detail private diplomatic conversations when asked about Iran's new proposal.

## Over 100 Gaza aid flotilla activists taken to Crete after Israeli interception

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: More than 100 activists aboard aid ships bound for Gaza were taken to the Greek island of Crete on Friday after Israeli forces seized their vessels in international waters near Greece, flotilla organisers said. The activists were part of a second Global Sumud Flotilla, launched in recent months in an attempt to break Israel's blockade of Gaza by delivering humanitarian assistance. The ships set sail from the Spanish port of Barcelona on April 12. On Friday, an Israeli army ship transferred 168 members of the flotilla crew to Greek boats, which then took them to shore, where buses and an ambulance waited for them, organisers said and Reuters footage showed. Former Jamaat-i-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmad is also part of the Global Sumud Flotilla mission, though it is not immediately clear if he was among those taken into Israeli custody. Before communications were jammed, he posted videos to social media platform X saying, "Flotilla under attack Israeli terrorist army has captured 11 of our boats."

## Constable martyred as militants launch rocket attack on armoured police vehicle in Bannu

PEAK POINT

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: A police constable was martyred on Friday when militants targeted an armoured police vehicle with a rocket and sniper attack at Kingar Jan Bahadar, within the jurisdiction of Mandan Police Station near the Fatah Khel police post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district. The attack occurred while the vehicle was on a routine patrol. According to the police, the assault was sudden, causing severe damage to the vehicle and leaving driver, a constable, critically injured. He later succumbed to his injuries.

## Load management ends as LNG supply stabilizes system: Leghari

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari on Friday announced the end of load management across the country following the arrival of LNG cargo.

In a video message, the minister said that the arrival of liquefied natural gas (LNG) has significantly improved power generation, enabling the government to eliminate load shedding. He recalled that around two weeks ago, consumers had faced load shedding due to a shortage of gas supply. On April 13 and 14, up to five hours of load shedding had to be carried out. However, there was no load management from April 17 to 19, while from April 19 to

29, load shedding was reduced to two to two-and-a-half hours.



The minister said the government had already clarified in a press conference that the power outages were not caused by any system failure or lack of generation capacity, but were the result of fuel constraints.

He said the gas shortage was caused by disruptions amid the ongoing US-Iran conflict, noting that expensive alternative fuels such as diesel and furnace oil could have been used to eliminate load shedding, but this would have placed an additional financial burden on consumers.

The minister said additional gas supplies, which were purchased on spot rates, have arrived. Moreover, hydropower generation in the country has improved, rising from

around 1,000 MW to nearly 6,000 MW, he said.

He expressed the hope that transmission lines would remain secure from any faults or disruptions, ensuring uninterrupted power supply.

Leghari said country's installed generation capacity stands at 32,000 MW and claims of higher figures circulating in public were inaccurate, adding that capacity varies during different periods of the year.

He said that the government had to run furnace oil-based plants to overcome the shortfall, but efforts would continue to protect consumers from expensive electricity. "With timely measures, we are hopeful that the public will not face load shedding in the coming days," he added.

## Sindh CM, Danish envoy discuss investment, renewable energy

PEAK POINT



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Friday met Denmark's ambassador, Maja Derrous Mortensen, in Karachi and discussed investment opportunities, environmental protection, and the promotion of clean and renewable energy, particularly wind power projects. According to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's House, CM Sindh told the Ambassador that the provincial government is working to improve electricity distribution and reduce power tariffs by lowering production costs and transmission losses. He said Sindh already has its own transmission company and is pursuing projects aimed at providing cheaper electricity to consumers.

# SPORTS



## PSL 11: Kingsmen edge past United to set up final with Zalmi

## Pakistan move up in ICC Test rankings after annual update



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan rose to sixth position from seventh after gaining seven points, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday in its latest annual update, following a recalculation of results. Australia retained their position at the top of ICC Men's Test Team Rankings, strengthening their lead with a three-point gain up to 131 points total. Reigning World Test Champions South Africa remain second on 119, also gaining three rating points overall. India climbed one place to third with 104 points, overtaking England, which slipped to fourth on 102 in the rankings. England's drop comes after the removal of results played prior to 30 April 2023 from the weighted calculation, including notable home series wins against New Zealand and South Africa, plus a 3-0 away triumph in Pakistan, included in the update impact analysis. The Blackcaps sit at fifth spot while Pakistan also benefited from update, as they now sit in sixth place with a rating of 89 points, moving ahead of Sri Lanka, who are on 86 points in the latest update overall. The shift comes after England's 3-0 series win over Pakistan falling outside the full-weightage period, along with the halving of Pakistan's 2-0 series defeat against Bangladesh in 2024.

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Hyderabad Kingsmen advanced to the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 final after defeating Islamabad United by two runs in the thrilling second eliminator at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Friday.

The victory propelled the debutants into the final, where they will lock horns with table-toppers Peshawar Zalmi at the same venue on Sunday, while it drew curtains on the United's campaign at the eight-team tournament.

The United got off to an unwanted start to the pursuit as they lost Sameer Minhas (six) and Mohsin Riaz (five) inside three overs with just 15 runs on the board.

Skipper Shadab Khan then joined Devon Conway in the middle, and the duo batted cautiously to put together 42 runs for the second wicket until Saim Ayub dismissed the left-handed opener in the eighth over, who made a 25-ball 30 with the help of four fours and a six.

Shadab was then involved in a brief 11-run partnership for the fourth wicket until eventually falling victim to Hassan Khan on the first delivery of the 11th over

and walked back after a cautious 22 off 24 deliveries. Following his dismissal, Chapman took the reins of United's pursuit and raised a crucial 64-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Haider Ali, who contributed with a 16-ball 31 until falling victim to Mohammad Ali in the 16th over.

Chapman, on the other hand, followed suit 10 deliveries later, falling victim to Hunain Shah in the 18th over. He remained the top-scorer for the United with a quickfire 43 off 26 deliveries, Javed, Hassan Khan and Saim studded with five fours and two Ayub chipped in with one scalp apiece.

both the three-time champions as the all-rounder duet of Faheem Ashraf and Chris Green put them into the commanding position by smashing Ali for 22 runs in the penultimate over, and brought the required equation down to six runs off the last over. Bowling the final over, with just six runs to defend, Hunain delivered impeccable death bowling as he gave just three runs to secure a thrilling two-run victory for the Kingsmen. For the Kingsmen, Ali and Hunain bagged two wickets each, while Akif Javed, Hassan Khan and Saim Ayub chipped in with one scalp apiece.

## PMYP, POA sign LoI to promote youth empowerment through sports



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) here Friday to strengthen youth development through sports, Olympic education and the promotion of Olympic values nationwide.

The agreement was signed by Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan and POA President Arif Saeed, aiming to cre-

ate structured opportunities for young people from grassroots to elite levels through coordinated sports initiatives.

Under the LoI, both sides will work together to promote youth engagement, talent identification and progression, while also supporting programmes on Olympic education, integrity, Safe Sport, ethical conduct and the prevention of competition manipulation.

A major focus of the partnership is the advancement and

leadership of women in sport through inclusive programming and awareness campaigns aligned with Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship.

According to the framework, the National Olympic Committee of Pakistan will provide technical expertise and programme design support, while PMYP will use its digital and institutional networks to reach and engage youth across the country.

The LoI will remain valid for four years and may be extended by mutual agreement. It carries no financial obligation for either side, while all initiatives will be implemented through mutually agreed annual plans.

Speaking on the occasion, Rana Mashhood said sports are not merely a recreational activity but a powerful tool for nation building, character development, discipline and leadership.

"Through this partnership with the Pakistan Olympic Association, PMYP is committed to ensuring that every young Pakistani, including girls and women, has access to structured sports opportunities and Olympic education," he said.



LAHORE: A view of toss between Islamabad United and Hyderabad King Men during 2nd Eliminator of PSL-11 here on Friday.

## AFC President reaffirms support; PFF builds key alliances in Vancouver

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Pakistan football received a significant boost on the global stage as Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) president Syed Mohsen Gilani held a key meeting with Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa during the 76th FIFA Congress in Vancouver, where the Asian Football Confederation reiterated its full backing for the development of the game in Pakistan. Sheikh Salman assured continued support, stressing that stability within the PFF remains vital for the growth of football in the country. He also acknowledged the federation's recent progress, including advancements in infrastructure such as FIFA Arena pitches, increased international participation, and initiatives like women's football development and community-driven programmes. The meeting, also attended by PFF vice-

president Hafiz Zakaulah and COO Shahid Niaz Khokhar, highlighted Pakistan's renewed push to rebuild its football structure and presence internationally. On the sidelines of the Congress, the PFF delegation

actively expanded its global outreach through a series of bilateral engagements with multiple football federations. Discussions with the Football Association of Thailand opened doors for potential team visits and training opportunities, reflecting growing international goodwill towards Pakistan



Further meetings with the Guyana Football Federation, Namibia Football Association and Barbados Football Association focused on collaboration in coach education, youth and women's football development, referee training and futsal programmes. These engagements underline a broader diplomatic strategy by the PFF to forge meaningful partnerships that can translate into technical growth and competitive opportunities for Pakistani players.



LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Faisal Ayub Kokar, Bilal Yaseen, Sohail Shaukat Butt and others inaugurate Nawab Town Sports Complex here on Friday.



# After losing 18,700 hectares yearly, Pakistan reverses forest decline with +15,600 annual gains

**NADEEM TANOLI**  
ISLAMABAD: After decades of continuous forest loss, Pakistan has staged a dramatic environmental turnaround, reversing a long-standing deforestation trend and recording net forest gains for the first time in over 25 years, according to the latest Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025 by the Food and Agriculture Organization. The data exposes the scale of the earlier crisis. Between 1990

and 2015, Pakistan consistently lost forest cover, with annual losses peaking at 18,700 hectares per year. During this period, total forest area shrank from 3.46 million hectares to just 3.03 million hectares, highlighting a sustained environmental decline. However, the latest figures reveal a sharp reversal. Between 2015 and 2025, Pakistan recorded a net gain of 15,600 hectares annually, pushing total forest cover up to 3.19 million hectares. The shift marks a

significant policy-driven recovery after decades of degradation. The turnaround is even more pronounced in natural forests. After years of decline, naturally regenerating forests — which form the backbone of Pakistan's ecosystem — are now expanding by 14,000 hectares per year. At the same time, planted forests have accelerated their growth, increasing to 127,000 hectares with a stronger annual growth rate of 1.4%. Despite the recovery, the data reveals a complex

reality. Pakistan remains a forest-poor country, with its total forest area still relatively small compared to global benchmarks. Experts warn that while the trend has reversed, the margin for error remains narrow, and any policy slowdown could quickly push the country back into decline. One of the most striking findings is Pakistan's unique forest management model. The country is among only 18 nations globally where 100% of forest area is designated for "multiple use,"

meaning forests are simultaneously managed for timber, biodiversity, water protection, and social needs. While this reflects a comprehensive approach, it also raises questions about balancing competing priorities within limited forest resources. The data suggests that Pakistan's recent gains are not accidental but closely aligned with large-scale afforestation initiatives and stronger environmental governance. However, analysts caution that sustaining

this progress will require long-term consistency, stricter enforcement, and continued expansion of forest cover. The report ultimately highlights a rare success story emerging from a region historically plagued by deforestation. Yet, it also serves as a warning: Pakistan may have reversed the trend, but the country's environmental future still depends on whether these gains can be protected and scaled in the years ahead.

# Cambridge exams 2026 hit by centre chaos, paper leak sparks nationwide outcry (sub headline) students report last minute venue changes, confusion at centres, as authorities probe maths paper issue

**NADEEM TANOLI**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ongoing Cambridge examination session has come under intense scrutiny after widespread complaints from parents and students about exam centre mismanagement, alongside reports of a leaked A Level Mathematics paper. According to multiple parent and student accounts shared publicly, serious disruptions were reported at several exam centres, particularly in

Islamabad. The complaints describe confusion over exam venues, with some students arriving at assigned centres only to be informed that their exams were scheduled elsewhere. Parents say exam centres were changed at the last minute without prior communication. In several reported cases, students under the age of 18 were unable to sit their exams at the original venue and had to travel to alternate locations on short notice. Some parents also stated

that students had to move between centres on their own after being dropped off. Witness accounts circulating on social media platforms suggest that students experienced panic and distress due to unclear instructions and lack of coordination. Some reports claim that students were told to quickly find alternate venues to avoid missing their exams, though these claims could not be independently verified. The concerns come at a time when families invest

heavily in international examinations. Many parents highlighted that Cambridge exams can cost around Rs40,000 per paper, making the situation particularly stressful for middle income households. At the same time, the exam system is also facing questions over integrity after reports that an A Level Mathematics paper (9709) was shared online before the scheduled exam. Cambridge Assessment International Education has confirmed it is aware of the reports

and has launched an investigation. In an official statement, Cambridge said it is examining how widely the paper may have been shared and will provide updates to exam centres after the completion of the exam timetable. Pakistan's Inter Boards Coordination Commission has also taken notice of the situation. Executive Director Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah stated that complaints have been received and a formal response has been sought from Cambridge

before any further action is taken. Education observers say the combination of reported exam centre issues and the paper leak has raised broader concerns about exam management and student experience during high stakes assessments. Parents and students are now calling for clear explanations, improved coordination at exam centres, and steps to ensure fairness for all candidates as the examination session continues.

# Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmood Khan  
Group Editor: 0333-5366814  
Samra Athar Kakakhel  
Resident Editor  
Nadim Tanoli  
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874  
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com  
www.peakpoint.pk

## Child marriage law

Child marriage in Pakistan has never been sustained by law alone. Instead, it has survived because the law itself has remained fractured. The passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2026 by the Punjab Assembly is therefore significant for what it exposes across the federation, which is a deeply uneven legal regime. Punjab's decision to raise the minimum age to 18 for both boys and girls and criminalise violations with stronger penalties brings it closer to a rights-based framework. Yet the larger picture remains inconsistent. Sindh has, since 2014, maintained the most progressive position, setting 18 as the minimum age for both genders and criminalising child marriage with enforceable penalties. That law has survived legal scrutiny, including review by the Federal Shariat Court, strengthening its legitimacy. More recently, Balochistan has also moved in the same direction. Its 2025 legislation raised the legal age to 18 and introduced penalties for facilitators, signalling a shift in a province where enforcement challenges remain significant, but intent is now clearer. The real outlier is Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Despite repeated attempts, legislation to raise the age has stalled. As a result, the province still largely operates under the colonial-era Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, where the minimum age for girls remains 16.

## NPT Review Conference - challenges ahead?

**Prof Dr Rizwana Abbasi**  
The 11th Nuclear Non-proliferation (NPT) Review Conference (RevCon) is under way at the UN, having started on 27 April to run till 22 May. As per the NPT's Article 8, the RevCon is mandated to take place every five years, convening all the member and observer states as well as intergovernmental and civil society organisations to review the implementation process of the treaty. Two previous RevCons, in 2015 and 2022, had failed to build consensus on a final document. This year's RevCon is taking place at a time when the world is more fragmented and disordered, and the multilateral system is deeply fractured. Wars are being legitimised in search of a notion of victory, and arms buildup is increasing while discussions on disarmament are waning. New technologies have taken a role in the battlefield, and states' territorial boundaries are disrespected, and the UN charter is dis honoured. Nuclear weapons are being seen widely as a toolkit to safeguard national security against foreign invasions. Thus, it is thought that negotiations at RevCon 2026 will be potentially challenging and without a consensus; and the event may conclude in another failure to reach an agreed-upon outcome. The diplomatic atmosphere going into the conference is widely tense. The divergences over the Ukraine war and its impact on the nuclear energy infrastruc-

ture of the country; the differences over the Iran war and its nuclear programme, the management of its enriched uranium and verification processes; the attack of some states on others' nuclear facilities; and the safety of nuclear material amid civil unrest will remain on the table. Anxieties of the US-led alliance system about China's strategic force modernisation; apprehensions of many states on the forward deployment of USA's tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) in Europe and Russia's declaration of deployment of its TNWs in Belarus; and the inability of the P5 states to engage in meaningful negotiations on nuclear disarmament will also dominate discussions. Already, deep geopolitical divisions between nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS) seem to widen during this RevCon. The ongoing geopolitical rivalry and great power competition between the US, Russia and China, and the division between NATO and others, have already created sharp disagreements and mistrust within P5 states over nuclear policies and transparency. These competing trends seem to become a stumbling block as regards cooperation and shared understanding at the RevCon forum. Recently, US President Donald Trump's announcement to resume nuclear testing and abrogate the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty has removed barriers for the US and Russia to increase their

strategic arsenals in current times. Against the backdrop of Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and the USA's shrinking footprint from European security architecture, France has also demonstrated its strategic forces and working closely with its allies on making nuclear deterrence credible. The ongoing arms control crisis is a major blow to the NPT's survival. With the global demise of the arms control architecture between the US and Russia, conventional asymmetries are aggravated in various conflict-prone regions. States in the Asia-Pacific, South Asia, the Middle East, the Korean peninsula and Eastern Europe are actively involved in a security-dilemma-driven arms race problem. Thus, the NPT's norms are losing credence; states' reliance on armament and military capabilities has increased; and their aspiration for nuclear disarmament has declined. The advent of new technologies such as cyber warfare tools, AI-led drones and Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, nuclear hypersonic glide vehicles, hypersonic cruise missiles, global prompt strikes, states monopoly in space and cyberspace, anti-satellite and surveillance systems and blurring of the thin line between TNWs and high-precision advanced conventional systems have lowered the threshold for use of nuclear weapons.

## Tribal trap

**Saif Ali Khan Babakhel**  
WE are rapidly descending into what can be described as a tribal trap. Political individuals and groups have become so entrenched in their own beliefs that any opposing view is dismissed outright. This leads both sides into a perpetual tussle to prove the other party wrong. It often comes at the cost of broader political and societal goals, compelling political groups and actors to prioritise political affiliation over nation-building. This tribal divide has intensified over a short span of time. The issue lies not with the debate but the manner in which the debate is carried out. Leading political parties have each assembled an elite group of polemicists whose sole purpose is to propagate incoherent rhetoric. Political old-timers have been relegated to the backfield while performative commentators steal the show. Profanity has become mainstream with politicians mindlessly calling one another out on national television and talk shows sporadically featuring brawls. The brawling participants are cheered on by their respective followers, with each side asserting their leader emerged triumphant. The chief issue remains who deal the most blows, putting the actual political discourse on the back-burner. While most certainly benefits television viewership, such dispute-resolution methods fail to translate into broader national benefit. The tribal trap manifests itself through several dangerous types of behaviour, including affective polarisation, where individuals don't just disagree with the opposition but also develop a strong dislike for them. It might also include motivated reasoning, which filters information that is in favour of one's group. Another feature is zero-sum thinking, where the gain of the other party is seen as a total loss for oneself, leaving no room for a modus vivendi. The tribal trap is further deepened by cult-like personality following, in which loyalty is often tied to an individual rather than political principles.

## Tarar terms Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos a defining moment in Pakistan's history



PEAK POINT

The minister said Pakistan was a blessing of Allah, achieved after immense sacrifices by the Muslims of the subcontinent.

Tarar terms Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos a defining moment in Pakistan's history

He added that the vision of Allama Muhammad Iqbal was materialized under the leadership of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, enabling the nation to live in freedom.

Referring to regional tensions, Tarar said Pakistan's enemies could not tolerate its independence and continued to conspire against it.

He said that during the Pahalgam "false flag operation," the Pakistan had taken a clear and principled stance and offered an independent and transparent investigation.

He said Pakistan was actively fighting terrorism, while India was involved in promoting it, adding that the international community.

PEAK POINT

Addressing a ceremony held in connection with the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, he said the month of May marked one year since the victory which, by the grace of Allah Almighty, had been bestowed upon the Pakistani nation.

He said the enthusiasm and passion of the students participating in the ceremony reflected that the future of Pakistan was in safe hands.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Friday said that Pakistan's success in "Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos" (Iron Wall) established a new standing for the country and changed the course of history.

Tarar terms Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos a defining moment in

## President witnesses signing of joint venture agreement, MoUs on machinery, animal health, medical technology in Sanya

PEAK POINT

SANYA: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday witnessed the signing of one Joint Venture Agreement and two memorandums of understanding between Pakistani and Chinese organisations, covering construction machinery, animal health and medical technology.

The engagements are aimed at advancing practical cooperation in key sectors, a Presidency's news release said.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Al Hassan Trade Establishment, Sany International Development and Hainan Jiaolong International Technology on cooperation in high-end equipment, manufacturing and construction machinery.

The trilateral collaboration focuses on supporting work related to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, strengthening cooperation in the supply of complete construction machinery and equipment, development of a professional talent training system and provi-

sion of after-sales operation and maintenance services.

The parties will also explore investment opportunities for establishing factories in Pakistan and advancing localised production of construction machinery. The MoU was signed by Senator Saleem Mandivilla, Vice President of Sany Group Li Qin, and Chairman of Hainan Jiaolong International Trade Company Hao Jiaolong.

A Joint Venture Agreement was concluded between the Livestock & Fisheries Department, Government of Sindh and Luoyang Modern Biology Group, China for the distribution and supply of animal vaccines in Pakistan, including Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccines. The agreement also provides for exchange of technology and future cooperation on the introduction of track and traceability systems for animals in Pakistan. The Agreement was signed by Senior Provincial Minister Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon and Chairman Luoyang.

## Magsi raises alarm over lead exposure risks

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD:

Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi on Friday expressed serious concern over the dangerous effects of lead exposure on maternal and child health during a meeting with a high-level delegation of UNICEF. The minister underscored the urgent need for effective government and regulatory measures to address the growing issue of lead contamination.

Both sides emphasized that protecting mothers and children from lead poisoning must be treated as a national public health priority. The officials from the Ministry of Science and Technology informed the meeting that a proposal is under consideration to establish a lead-free testing laboratory at PCSIR Karachi.

In addition, the establishment of sub-centers in Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar was also discussed to expand testing capacity and outreach across the country.

The meeting also reviewed the possibility of further tightening regulations under the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) regarding permissible lead limits in paints, cosmetics.

## Mohsin Naqvi reviews FIA headquarters, orders early completion of upgradation projects

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid an important visit to the FIA Headquarters on Friday, where he reviewed progress on the ongoing upgradation projects of the headquarters and the FIA Academy.

During the visit, the minister inspected the construction and modernization work, directing that all activities be completed at the earliest while maintaining the highest quality standards.

Dr. Usman Anwar, Director General FIA, briefed the interior minister in detail about the upgradation project.

Later, Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting at the FIA Headquarters to review reforms aimed at making the FIA a more effective, efficient and public-



friendly institution.

He emphasized that modernizing the FIA along contemporary lines by the end of the year is a top priority of the government. "We are improving infrastructure, technology and human resources to strengthen the institution's capacity," Naqvi said, adding that merit and transparency must be ensured at all stages of new recruitments.

The Chief Commissioner Islamabad, the Islamabad Police chief and other senior officials were also present during the visit and briefing.

## Kamal highlights breakthroughs in pharma & vaccine policy to drive future growth

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, on Thursday highlighted two major breakthroughs in Pakistan's health sector, saying they would boost the global reach of the country's pharmaceutical industry while driving future growth.

Speaking at a press conference, he said the World Health Organization (WHO) pre-qualification of the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) in Karachi, that is working under the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), would significantly enhance pharmaceutical exports and ease regulatory barriers for Pakistani medicines abroad.

He said the certification



would reduce documentation process and simplify export procedures, enabling local manufacturers to better access international markets.

"This achievement has moved Pakistan closer to attaining WHO Maturity Level 3 status," he said, adding that the country is currently at Level 2 and is expected to reach Level 3 within six to eight months.

Kamal noted that Pakistan currently exports medicines to around 51 countries.

## Rubina Khalid hails workers as backbone of Pakistan's progress

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Senator Rubina Khalid Friday paid tribute to Pakistan's working class on International Labour Day, reaffirming the government's commitment to workers' rights and social protection through the BISP. In her message, Senator Khalid said that May 01 serves as a reminder of the struggles, sacrifices, and rights of workers, stressing that the labour class is the backbone of Pakistan's development and that progress is impossible without them. She stated that the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and



Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was always pro-labour, and that BISP carries forward that legacy by providing financial support to millions of working-class families across the country. Senator Khalid emphasized that protecting workers' rights is the hallmark of a civilized and just society, and that development without social protection remains an unfulfilled dream — a gap that BISP.



SANYA, HAINAN, CHINA: President Asif Ali Zardari witnesses the signing of an MoU between Dr. Ziauddin Hospital and Shenzhen Weibang Technology, signed by Dr. Anoop Kumar Dawani and Deputy General Manager of Shenzhen Weibang Technology, Deng Haitao.

## IMF official warns ME conflict to affect regional growth, asks Pakistan to implement continued reforms

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maher Binici, Resident Representative of International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Pakistan, has said that the ongoing Middle East conflict is likely to create a significant economic slowdown and heightened risks across the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP) region.

He was speaking at an outreach session here at Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), where he presented the IMF's

April 2026 Regional Economic Outlook Update regarding the MENAP region.

Dr. Binici said the outbreak of war on February 28 had triggered a severe and multifaceted shock, disrupting energy markets, trade routes and financial conditions, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz. These developments, he maintained, have also affected global logistics, as well as food and fertilizer prices, leading to a sharp slowdown in regional growth with downside risks.



Dr. Binici said that oil-importing economies like Pakistan, the conflict had compounded the existing vulnerabilities through higher energy and food import costs, potential decline in remittances from Gulf-based workers and tighter financial

conditions. He also emphasized for achieving macroeconomic stability, rebuilding fiscal and external buffers, in addition to protecting vulnerable segments through targeted and temporary support measures instead of giving broad-based subsidies.

Appreciating that Pakistan's performance under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme had remained broadly on track, he said a staff-level agreement on the third review under the EFF and the second review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) had been reached in March. He further said policy priorities for Pakistan included maintaining a prudent fiscal stance, ensuring a tight and data-driven monetary policy and advancing structural reforms.

Over the medium term,

Dr. Binici stressed the need for strengthening economic resilience through diversified trade routes, investment in critical infrastructure, enhanced regional cooperation and reforms to promote private sector-led inclusive growth. He added that continued implementation of reforms would be crucial for Pakistan to maintain stability and navigate an increasingly volatile regional and global environment. Earlier, welcoming the IMF Country Resident Representative, SDPI Executive Director Dr. Abid Qayyum Suleri,