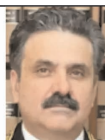




Ishaq Dar calls Marka-e-Haq a symbol of national unity, courage



CJP holds consultative meeting with Bar Council representatives



Health Ministry, NADRA sign MoU to digitize PM's Hepatitis C Elimination Program

Founded By: (Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

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

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



Friday 08 May 2026

Ziqad 20, 1447 A.H

VOI No: 06

Issue No. 89

Pages 4 Rs. 20

PM Shehbaz launches major development projects, Solarisation Drive in Gilgit-Baltistan

PEAK POINT

GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday inaugurated and performed groundbreaking of multiple development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), including renewable energy initiatives, Safe City projects, and the establishment of Daanish Schools amid distributing free solar panels, laptops, and business loan cheques among the youth. Addressing a ceremony, the prime minister said the government was committed to ensuring equitable development across all regions of Pakistan, stressing that progress would remain incomplete without the uplift of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He inaugurated a 100-megawatt solar power project for the region and launched the distribution of 58MW

worth of free solar panels among domestic and commercial consumers under a transparent digital balloting system. He said over 50,000 applications were received, out of which around 15,000 beneficiaries were selected purely on merit. The prime minister directed authorities to complete the solar project by mid-2027, noting that the initiative would significantly ease energy shortages in the mountainous region, particularly during harsh winters. He also revealed that confiscated solar panels in a fraud case were redirected for free distribution to the people of GB instead of auction. Highlighting education reforms, Shehbaz Sharif laid the foundation stones of four Daanish Schools in Sultanabad, Bunji, Ghanche, and Skardu, aimed at providing state-of-the-art education facilities to underprivileged children.



GILGIT: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the laptops and cheques distribution ceremony under PM's Youth Laptop and PM's Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme.

We don't talk of war but dialogue; Marka-e-Haq is about shaping future: FO spox

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday, reiterating its desire for dialogue and diplomacy, made it clear that it would respond with full strength and all available means if aggression was imposed on it, as it was exactly one year ago. "Pakistan's position on every issue is firmly anchored in international law, the UN Charter, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We do not talk of war or clashes; we talk of dialogue and diplomacy. However, if aggression is imposed on us as it was exactly one year ago, Pakistan will respond with full strength and all means available." Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said at his weekly press briefing here. On the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, he called the Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos a "defining moment" in the national journey, which was not just about remembering the past but about shaping the future. "Because the spirit of Marka-e-Haq lives not just in our history, but in each of us," he remarked. Tahir Andrabi said that Pakistan had always understood the importance of diplomacy, dialogue, and the peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues with India. "Pakistan has never shied away from dialogue with India on any issue. The fact that dialogue has not taken place cannot be blamed on Pakistan. We have repeatedly expressed our readiness for dialogue.

Pakistan defeated an enemy five times larger than itself in Marka-e-Haq: DG ISPR

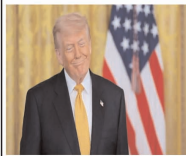
PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Thursday said that Pakistan inflicted a crushing defeat on a five times larger enemy across all fronts in Marka-e-Haq. The term "Marka-e-Haq" refers to the 2025 conflict with India, which began with the April 22 Pahalgam attack and concluded with a ceasefire on May 10 following Operation Bunyanum Marsoos. Addressing a press conference marking one year since the completion of Marka-e-Haq, he extended congratulations to the nation on the occasion. He said Pakistan had defeated India on every front during the conflict, describing it as a humiliating defeat for the adversary. He stated that the armed forces of Pakistan had overcome a much larger opponent, reiterating that the enemy was five times stronger in size. Senior officers from the Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force were also present alongside the DG ISPR during the briefing. On April 22, 2025, escalation between Pakistan and India began when an attack in Pahalgam killed 26 people. India immediately blamed Pakistan for the incident. However, Pakistan categorically rejected the Indian blame. In response, India undertook a series of hostile actions the next day, on April 23, 2025, including suspending the 65-year-old Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), cancelling visas for Pakistani citizens, closing the Wagah-Attari border crossing, ordering the shutdown of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, and reducing diplomatic staff at each other's embassies.

Trump says Iran deal 'very possible' but threatens strikes if talks fail

MAHPARA ZAMAN



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he believed a deal with Iran was "very possible" but threatened to again bomb the country if negotiations fell apart. Despite Trump's optimism, Iran has yet to respond to a new US proposal, with its chief negotiator warning that Washington was seeking to force the Western Asia nation's "surrender." Positive signs that the foes could return to the table after weeks of deadlock grew after Trump halted a short-lived military operation to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, citing hopes for a deal. Trump said Wednesday if "Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to," the war would be over, but if not, the bombing would resume "at a much higher level and intensity." "We've had very good talks over the last 24 hours, and it's very possible that we'll make a deal," Trump later told reporters. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told local media that the "US plan and proposal are still under review," and that Tehran would communicate its position to mediator Pakistan after finalising its views. "Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker, who has taken the lead in negotiations, meanwhile, warned that Washington "is seeking, through a naval blockade, economic pressure and media manipulation, to destroy the country's cohesion in order to force us to surrender."

3 children killed, several injured in South Waziristan attack: security sources

PEAK POINT

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Two separate attacks in South Waziristan on Thursday killed three children and injured several people, security sources said. According to reports, an explosion occurred near a civilian settlement in the Gawa Khwa area of South Waziristan, while mortar shells were also fired at civilians by Afghan Taliban forces in the border tehsil of Angoor Adda.

Air Chief honours PAF for crippling Indian defence systems during Marka-e-Haq

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A ceremony was held at Air Headquarters in Islamabad on Thursday to mark the first anniversary of "Maarka-e-Haq", with Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu paying tribute to the Pakistan Air Force as a decisive response to Indian aggression.

The Air Chief, who attended the event as chief guest, said the Pakistan Air Force had inflicted severe damage on enemy air defence systems during the conflict and had demonstrated its operational strength against some of the world's most advanced fighter aircraft. The ceremony included

the screening of a documentary highlighting the role of the Pakistan Air Force during the operation. Families of martyrs and decorated personnel were presented with military honours, while several officers and airmen received the Sitara-i-Jurat in recognition of their bravery. Addressing the gathering, Air Chief Marshal Sidhu congratulated Pakistan Air Force personnel on the success



of the operation and praised their response during the conflict. He stated that the force had delivered a "strong and effective" reply to Indian aggression and claimed that enemy defence installations had suffered extensive damage. He added that operations carried out from Srinagar to Bathinda had sent a clear message to the adversary. The Air Chief further claimed that Pakistan's fighter pilots had neutralised some of the world's leading combat aircraft, while the country's cyber teams had also targeted Indian cybersecurity infrastructure during the confrontation. Referring to the Pahalgam incident, Air Chief Marshal Sidhu said India had levelled "baseless allegations" against Pakistan following what he described as a false flag operation. He added that Pakistan had offered India an impartial and independent investigation into the matter.

PTI decries reports of Bushra Bibi's 'sudden, secret' hospital visit

PEAK POINT



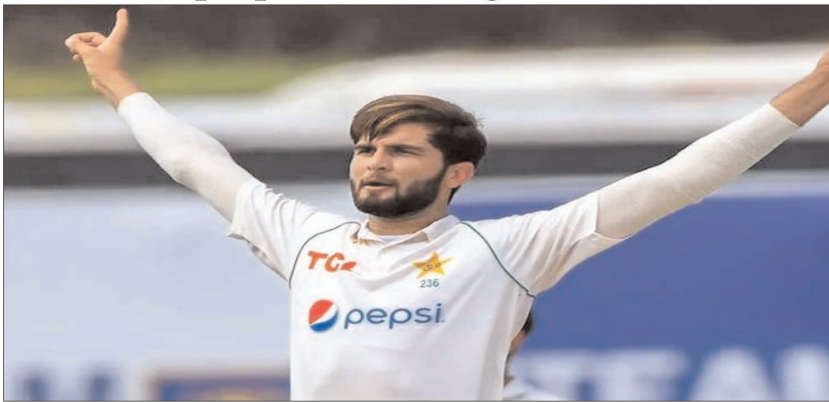
ISLAMABAD: The PTI on Thursday expressed concern and anger over reports of Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi being "suddenly and secretly" taken to the hospital in the middle of the night and then taken back to jail. "The entire matter is shrouded in unusual secrecy, a lack of transparency, and serious human rights violations, which have raised countless questions in the minds of the nation," the party said. The statement came after media reports emerged on Wednesday night alleging that Bushra Bibi, who is currently incarcerated at Adiala jail, was taken to a hospital under tight security for a follow-up examination of her eye.



SPORTS



Shaheen Afridi targets WTC final as Pakistan prepare for Bangladesh Test series



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan fast bowler Shaheen Afridi has said the national side is aiming to qualify for the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 final, as it prepares for a challenging Test schedule beginning with a two-match series against Bangladesh. Speaking ahead of the series, Afridi said the team was fully prepared for what he described as an extended red-ball season and stressed the importance of consistency and adaptability. "We are looking forward to the challenge of the Test series.

Tests are very important for us, and this is a long Test season — perhaps for the first time like this. We are fully prepared and ready to give our best," he said. Afridi noted that Pakistan's campaign in the World Test Championship is still in its early phase but emphasised that the team's ambitions go beyond individual series. "We are not only focused on this Test series but also on the World Test Championship. Our target is to reach the final, and for that we must play our best cricket consistently," he added. Pakistan are aiming to

improve their position in the WTC standings through strong performances in both home and away fixtures. Afridi acknowledged the challenges of playing in varying conditions, particularly in the subcontinent where spin-friendly pitches often favour home teams. "Every team is strong in its home conditions, but what matters most is how well you prepare and execute your plans," he said. Commenting on the upcoming matches, Afridi said Pakistan had prepared for different pitch conditions. "Bangladesh have done well on spin tracks, and teams use

the home advantage. We have prepared for both spin conditions and green wickets, so we are ready for every challenge," he said. The Test series between Pakistan and Bangladesh will begin at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium from May 8 to 12, while the second match will be played at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium from May 16 to 20. Pakistan will be led by Shan Masood and feature a mix of experienced and emerging players, including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Afridi and Hasan Ali.

Australia to tour Pakistan for 3-match ODI series beginning on May 30



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Thursday that the Australia men's cricket team will tour the country for a three-match one-day international (ODI) series. In a press release, the cricket board said that the visitors would arrive in Islamabad on May 23 and take on the Green Shirts in the first ODI scheduled at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on May 30. The second and third ODIs of the series will be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on June 2 and 4, respectively, it said. "All three ODIs are scheduled to begin at 4:30pm local time, with the toss taking place at 4pm," the press release said. It went on to say that the upcoming bilateral ODI series would be Australia's first in Pakistan since 2022. It also highlighted that Australia last visited Pakistan earlier this year to participate in a three-match T20I series, which the hosts won 3-0 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. It further said that Australia also featured in ICC Champions Trophy 2025 matches in Pakistan, including a five-wicket win against England at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on February 22.

Pak-Bangladesh 1st Test to commence today in Dhaka



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will take on Bangladesh in a two-Test series commencing on Friday (tomorrow). The first Test will be played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka from 8 to 12 May, while the Sylhet International

Cricket Stadium will host the second Test from 16 to 20 May. The two Tests are part of the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27. Pakistan are currently placed 27th in the ICC World Test Championship standings after losing their two-Test series against Sri Lanka 1-0 in June 2025. The hosts won the first Test by 93 runs, while the touring side won the second Test by eight wickets. Bangladesh are currently placed eighth in the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 standings after losing their two-Test series against South Africa at home last year. Pakistan last toured Bangladesh for a two-Test series in November/December 2021 and won the series 2-0. Overall, the two sides have played 15 Tests against each other, with Pakistan winning 12 and Bangladesh winning two, while one match ended in draws. Pakistan's 16-member squad comprised Shan Masood (captain), Abdullah Fazal, Amad Butt, Azan Awaiz, Babar Azam, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Muhammad Ghazi Ghori (wk), Noman Ali, Sajid Khan, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Aqeel Khan becomes oldest player in tennis history to win an ITF professional match

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Aqeel Khan has become the oldest player in tennis history to win an ITF professional match at the age of 46, in the McDonald's Pakistan ITF Championship 2026 (ITF M-15 Leg-2) continued here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Wednesday. A total of 86 men's players from 22 countries are participating in this prestigious international event. The participating nations include Pakistan, Kuwait, Russia, Uzbekistan, Sweden, Morocco, Malaysia, Great Britain, Italy, Lithuania, China, Turkey, Algeria, Canada, Ireland, Poland, Hong Kong, Greece, Lebanon, Germany, France, and Japan. Samir Hamza Reguig

(Algeria), holding an ATP ranking of 844, is the top seed of the tournament. Aqeel Khan defeated Makar Krivoshechekov (RUS) 6-3, 4-6, 6-0. With this victory, he became the oldest player in tennis history to win an ITF professional match at the age of 46, adding another remarkable record to his career. After the match, Aqeel stated that he is thankful to Almighty Allah for this milestone and expressed his happiness at continuing to play tennis and winning matches. He also thanked the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) for organising back-to-back ITF tournaments, which enabled him to achieve this record on home soil. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President PTF, Col. Zia-ud-din Tufail, Secretary General PTF, and the entire PTF management congratulated Aqeel Khan on this outstanding achievement.



PSB honours Rd. Rizwan Aftab for transformational support to athletes



PSB launches merit-based national talent system to transform athlete selection

PEAK POINT
LAHORE: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has launched the National Talent Identification and Verification System (NTIVS), a nationwide digital initiative designed to ensure transparent, merit-based identification and development of young athletes. The new system aims to eliminate long-standing challenges in talent discovery, where athletes often depended on informal networks, limited exposure, or personal connections to gain recognition. By introducing a structured and documented pathway, NTIVS seeks to level the playing field and provide equal opportunity to aspiring sportsmen and women across the country. Open to Pakistani nationals aged 12 to 25, the programme covers all PSB-affiliated

sports except cricket. Athletes can apply free of cost through the official PSB website in both Urdu and English, with applications accepted throughout the year on a rolling basis. Under the framework, submissions will first be reviewed by an independent panel of experts. Shortlisted candidates will then be referred to relevant National Sports Federations (NSFs) for technical assessments and trials. While final selections will remain the prerogative of the federations, the PSB will oversee the process to ensure transparency and integrity at every stage. To widen access and inclusion, physical evaluation camps will be organised in major cities, including Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, and Skardu, bringing opportunities closer to athletes from remote and underserved regions.





Heavy tobacco taxes, single-tier system, youth-focused steps urged ahead of budget

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a policy seminar called for stronger and more consistent tobacco taxation, elimination of two-tier tax structure, and targeted measures to curb youth smoking, as part of recommendations for the Federal Budget 2026-27. The policy dialogue, titled: "Strengthening Tobacco Taxation for Public Health and Fiscal Gains: Preparing for the 2026-27 Budget," was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute

(SDPI) here on Thursday. Opening the discussion, Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, Senior Research Associate at SDPI, emphasized that strengthening tobacco taxation is among the most effective evidence-based tools to improve public health while boosting domestic revenues. He highlighted analytical findings, which show that even a one-percentage-point reduction in smoking prevalence could recover around Rs294 billion in economic losses and generate over Rs103 billion in addi-



tional tax revenue. He noted that Pakistan, as a lower-middle-income country, lags behind optimal tobacco taxation levels. Attributing stagnant tax rates partly to industry influence, he called for a comprehensive review of the two-tier system to prevent manipulation and improve regulatory effectiveness. Dr Sajid Amin Javed, SDPI Deputy Executive Director, described tobacco taxation a "win-win" policy with benefits for revenue generation,

public health, and economic stability. He suggested the formation of a working group of think tanks to initiate dialogue, conduct awareness campaigns, and engage educational institutions on the health risks of tobacco. He further suggested that commonly consumed cigarette brands should face higher taxation, while revenues generated should be earmarked for health sector improvements. Highlighting youth vulnerability, he proposed the mapping of youth consumption

trends and imposing higher taxes on products popular among young people to limit affordability. He also suggested integrating tobacco awareness into government initiatives such as youth development programmes and strengthening evidence-based counterarguments to industry claims regarding taxation impacts. Waseem Ifkhar Janjua, SDPI Senior Advisor, focused on structural reforms, calling the existing two-tier taxation system inequitable and counterproductive.

Senate targets MDCAT "Tuition Mafia" as medical college fees jump from Rs18 lakh to Rs25 lakh

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: A major controversy erupted in the Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination after lawmakers accused the MDCAT "tuition mafia" of exploiting students and families through billions of rupees in coaching businesses while private medical college fees continue to rise sharply across Pakistan. The committee, chaired by Senator Amir Waliuddin Chishti, announced strict steps to investigate both the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council and the growing financial burden on medical stu-

dents. During the meeting, officials admitted that delays in MDCAT examinations had created severe mental stress for students and opened the door for private academies to make huge profits by extending preparation periods. A senior official told the committee that MDCAT coaching centers across the country had become a powerful "tuition mafia" earning billions of rupees by making emotional promises to students and parents. "These academies tell students 'we will not let you fail,' and whenever exams are delayed, they charge even more fees," the committee was informed. The issue became

more serious when senators discussed how middle class and poor families are struggling to pay separate coaching fees on top of already expensive education costs. Officials said the government now wants students to pass MDCAT using only their normal FSc preparation instead of depending on expensive private academies. The committee was informed that in previous years MDCAT exams were delayed for seven to nine months after intermediate exams, leaving students stuck in what officials described as "trauma" and uncertainty. To stop delays and reduce opportunities for exploitation, the

ministry reviewed the schedules of all education boards, including Federal Board, Cambridge and Aga Khan Board. Officials informed the committee that the last FSc examination in Pakistan, conducted by the AJK Board, will finish on July 20, 2026. After discussions, the ministry officially announced before the Senate committee that the next MDCAT examination will be held on August 16, 2026. Lawmakers said the fixed and shorter timeline would block coaching centers from creating extra preparation periods simply to collect more money from students. The meeting also focused heavily on the

Pakistan Medical and Dental Council itself. The chairman admitted that PMDC related matters repeatedly create frustration in committee meetings because senators remain dissatisfied with the authority's responses. The Senate body formally reviewed issues related to PMDC disciplinary committees, pending complaints against doctors, delays in licensing cases involving foreign and local medical graduates, and the legal powers of the PMDC president. However, one of the strongest reactions came when senators discussed the sudden rise in private medical college fees. The chair-

man revealed that fees had increased from nearly Rs18 lakh to Rs25 lakh, raising serious questions about regulation and affordability. To investigate the matter, the committee formed a special sub-committee with representation from all provinces. The committee gave the sub-committee two months to investigate PMDC affairs, MDCAT related issues and the sharp increase in medical college fees. Senators warned that unchecked fee hikes and the growing tuition industry are turning medical education into a business that many talented students can no longer afford.

Opinion & Editorial

Health: Rafiq Khan
Opinion: Arif Mehmood
DAILY PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD
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

The passing spectacle

Khurram Husain
ONE year ago, Pakistan scored a big victory in the May war against India and a round of applause went up around the country for the valiant efforts of our armed forces. Today, Pakistan is on the brink of securing a historic peace deal between the US and Iran. This is an impressive roster of victories on the geopolitical stage for a country that everyone was ready to write off only a few years ago.

But as these successes roll in, it is worth one while to remember what a strong defence is all about. It is all about safeguarding people's lives and livelihoods. With that in mind, when we look at the geopolitical successes and lower our gaze to see the foundation upon which they stand, it is impossible to escape the impression that much work remains to be done. The government has scored well on the diplomatic and defence front over the past one year. But these successes cannot mask its failure on the economic front.

Let's start with a few obvious observations. It has taken some doing to keep the oil supply chain going through these trying days. Timely price adjustments played a part in ensuring this continuity, due to which Pakistan has not seen the massive build-up of receivables in the oil supply chain or queues at pumps that snake on for more than a kilometre. But the unavoidable

impact on prices is now cascading through the economy, and the State Bank has justifiably raised the discount rate, anticipating higher inflation in the months ahead. Let's pause here to notice that the State Bank is finally behaving like a real central bank. It is not making nonsensical arguments like "this is supply-driven inflation and therefore does not require a monetary response", like it did during the artificial growth spurt following the Covid years. Prudent and proactive monetary tightening is the right thing when the outlook shows heightened inflationary risk.

The inability of the economy to supply and safeguard livelihoods is the real testing ground of this government. The second obvious observation is the precariousness of the foreign reserves as the trade deficits gallop along. All through 2025 and in the opening months of this year, the trade deficit has remained elevated. This is natural since the economy has shown some signs of revival, and in more recent months, is posting slightly stronger signs of activity. But in the past, this is what has always done us in: a mounting trade deficit that eats away at the reserves. We are far from that right now, but the appearance of the same trend is a bad sign. It is a key dysfunction in our economy that it cannot grow without eating away at its foreign currency reserves. So whenever growth returns, however

incipient, it is always necessary to ask whether it can be sustained. It is no different this time.

What usually happens when this sign first appears is that governments (in some cases, the State Bank) start making all kinds of excuses and performing clever little tricks to try and argue away the trade deficit. In the past, for example, governments have argued that the trade deficit will disappear once the machinery being imported is installed and leads to higher exports; or that high growth will itself solve the problem of a rising trade deficit; or that the deficit is due to temporary factors; or that it is due to high oil prices only and the 'non-oil deficit' remains in check.

All these arguments are specious. So long as the trade deficit is eating away at the reserves, it needs a corrective response. Our history teaches us to be cautious of specious arguments that try to spin the deficit away. Perhaps in acknowledgement of this, the State Bank has said in its most recent monetary policy decision that there is a "need for further strengthening in FX buffers", given the uncertainties plaguing the economy and its outlook. For now, the external outlook is amply supported by workers' remittances. But the real impact of the high oil prices is yet to be reflected in the trade data, since the March import data largely reflects oil orders placed in February.

Courtesy Dawn

A new equilibrium

Durdana Najam
The first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq, observed on May 10, 2026, serves as a profound moment of reflection on a conflict that lasted only ninety-six hours but fundamentally transformed the strategic landscape of South Asia.

To understand the weight of this day, one must first grasp the concept of the "Balance of Power" in international relations. This principle suggests that regional stability is only possible when no single nation is strong enough to dominate or bully its neighbours. For nearly a decade leading up to the events of May 2025, this balance had become dangerously tilted. India, bolstered by a massive defence budget and the acquisition of advanced weaponry like the S-400 systems and Rafale jets, began to operate under a cloud of "strategic hubris". There was a growing, mistaken belief in New Delhi that they could launch "limited" military strikes or violate sovereign borders without Pakistan being able to deliver a meaningful response.

Marka-e-Haq was the moment that the saw was levelled, proving that a smaller, more agile force could achieve tactical paralysis over a larger adversary through superior strategy and technological integration. This shift did not occur in a vacuum but was the latest chapter in a long and volatile history between two nuclear-armed neighbours. Since the partition in 1947, relations between Pakistan and India have been defined by a gruelling cycle of brief diplomatic thaws followed by deep freezes and outright conflict. From the conventional wars of the 20th century to the high-altitude standoff at Kargil, the unresolved issue of Jammu and Kashmir has remained the primary flashpoint. However, the years following 2019 saw a dangerous shift toward "unilateralism", where India sought to bypass diplomacy entirely, believing it could simply outmuscle Pakistan on the global stage.

Courtesy Tribune

Silent AIDS epidemic

Pakistan now holds the unenviable distinction of being home to one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, which covers 22 countries in West Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Central Asia. New infections have surged by an alarming 200 per cent over the last 15 years, rising from 16,000 in 2010 to 48,000 in 2024. But even worse is the fact that public awareness campaigns and harm reduction strategies have been almost completely ineffective. Just this week, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Health was told that nearly 20,000 patients out of 84,000 registered have gone "missing" after initiating antiretroviral therapy. That means they are walking around with potentially contagious levels of the virus in their systems. Meanwhile, even the 84,000 people registered are nothing compared to the estimated 369,000 people living with HIV nationwide. This large, mostly untreated population, makes it harder to even identify who should be included in "high-risk" groups. While unsafe sexual practices and intravenous drug use with used needles are still the main transmission routes, other medical routes, such as unsafe injection practices, unsterile blood transfusions, weak infection control and unchecked quackery are driving transmission to children and spouses.

Ishaq Dar calls Marka-e-Haq a symbol of national unity, courage



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday said the country's response during last year's conflict with India was "measured, responsible, and precise", as he marked the first anniversary of Marka-e-Haq.

The term "Marka-e-Haq" refers to the 2025 conflict with India, which began with the April 22 Pahalgam attack and concluded with a ceasefire on May 10 following Operation

Bunyanum Marsoos.

In a message to the nation issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on X, Dar described the occasion as "a defining moment in our national journey", saying it reflected "a story of courage, unity, and unwavering resolve".

He paid tribute to Pakistan's armed forces and citizens, saying: "When the nation stands as one, no force on earth can shake its foundations." Referring to last year's mili-

tary tensions, Dar said Pakistan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, acted "with calm resolve and moral clarity". "Our response was measured, responsible, and precise; guided not by emotion, but by principle," he said.

Dar said Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos was "more than a military success", adding that Pakistan exercised its "inherent right of self-defence under the UN Charter".

He praised the role of Pakistan's armed forces leadership, including Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu and Admiral Naveed Ashraf, claiming that the Pakistan Air Force had achieved "notable operational successes".

According to Dar, these included "the downing of multiple Indian fighter jets and the neutralisation of key military targets". The foreign minister also highlighted Pakistan's diplomatic outreach during the crisis, saying the Foreign Office had worked to present Pakistan's position "on bilateral and global platforms".

India begged for ceasefire from US, other countries during Marka-e-Haq: Naqvi

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi said on Thursday that the information Pakistan had received prior to the Marka-e-Haq played a key role in victory over India during the military confrontation in May 2025.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the minister said that Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan Army and intelligence agencies' role in the war against India was very significant. "Almighty Allah's help was with the field marshal not only during the Indo-Pak war but also when he was making efforts to bring the US and Iran to a negotiating table," he added.

Naqvi said that India got frightened by a befitting response given by Pakistan during Marka-e-Haq due to which it was in a hurry for a ceasefire. "Had there



been no ceasefire between the two countries, India's losses would have been 10 times more than it suffered during the initial two to three days." He went on to say that India approached different countries for a ceasefire. "It begged the US for that," he added. He said that Pakistani drones kept flying over Indian cities, including Delhi, for hours, which instilled fear in the hearts of Indians. "We also targeted India's oil refineries." He informed that India fired several missiles at the Noor Khan Airbase.

PTI founder, Bushra Bibi receiving medical facilities as per law: Rana Sanaullah

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan on Thursday informed the Senate that PTI founder his spouse Bushra Bibi were in judicial custody and all matters related to their custody and facilities were being dealt with in accordance with court orders and jail rules. Responding to a point of order raised by PTI Parliamentary Leader in Senate Ali Zafar in said Bushra Bibi and PTI founder had been convicted by courts and were currently in judicial custody. He said the matter regarding custodial conditions had already been discussed in the higher judiciary, including the Islamabad



High Court and Supreme Court. Rana Sanaullah said senior lawyer Salman Safdar had earlier been appointed as a friend of the court and had visited the jail before submitting a report regarding the living conditions and facilities available to the PTI founder. He said that the report submitted by Salman Safdar matched the report provided by the jail superintendent regarding facilities and living conditions in custody.

CJP holds consultative meeting with Bar Council representatives

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi on Thursday held an interactive and consultative meeting with the vice chairmen and chairmen of the executive committees of the Pakistan Bar Council and provincial bar councils at the Supreme Court of Pakistan as part of ongoing stakeholder engagement aimed at improving the justice sector. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Pakistan Bar Council, Punjab Bar Council, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, Sindh Bar Council, Balochistan Bar Council, AJK Bar Council and Islamabad Bar Council, along with officials from the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan and the Federal Judicial Academy.

During the meeting, representatives of the bar councils appreciated the consultative engagement and acknowledged reform measures being undertaken in the justice sector.

They emphasized the need for enhanced capacity-building opportunities for young lawyers and also discussed issues relating to verification of academic degrees by the

Higher Education Commission, periodic rotation of judges and conflicting judgments on similar legal questions.

The Chief Justice briefed participants on Continuing Legal Education programmes being conducted by the Federal Judicial Academy and informed them that the training calendar was available on the academy's digital platform. He also said that a dedicated online course had been designed and shared with the bar councils to facilitate broader participation of young lawyers.

The Chief Justice encouraged bar representatives to make effective use of the initiative and said physical training programmes for young lawyers would continue. He added that a specialized training programme for lawyers from Sindh province would be held at the Federal Judicial Academy in July 2026.

Justice Yahya Afridi also requested representatives of the bar councils to share instances of conflicting judgments with the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan for appropriate consideration, observing that other institutional and administrative matters would be addressed at relevant forums.

Abbasi meets Iran Ambassador, discusses bilateral relations

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif

Abbasi Thursday met with Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam and discussed bilateral relations, railway cooperation and the overall regional situation. During the meeting, the minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iran, said a news release.

He said that Pakistan highly values its close historical, cultural and mutually respectful ties with Iran and remains committed to expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The two sides held detailed discussions on enhancing railway connectivity between Pakistan and Iran, particularly focusing on the Taftan-Zahedan railway route and the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train project. Both sides agreed that stronger railway cooperation would play a vital role in promoting regional trade and connectivity.



ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr Justice Yahya Afridi, chairing a meeting with representatives of all Provincial and AJK Bar Councils at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Health Ministry, NADRA sign MoU to digitize PM's Hepatitis C Elimination Program

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen the digital system of the Prime Minister's Hepatitis C Elimination Program.

The MoU signing ceremony was held at NADRA headquarters here and was attended by Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal and NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar.

Addressing the ceremony,



Mustafa Kamal said NADRA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, would develop an integrated digital data management system for the program to improve monitoring and service delivery. He said the system would ensure patient registration, verification, tracking, and real-time data sharing, enabling transparent and effective implementation of the initiative.

Marka-e-Haq Glory: Sharif-Munir Bond, Forces' Valor Crush India: Rana Mashhood

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Thursday said Pakistan's success in "Marka-e-Haq" is made possible through the coordinated leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, whose swift decision making, strategic restraint and unified chain of command enabled the country to foil India's alleged aggression while earning global recognition as a responsible nuclear



state. In an exclusive interview with APP on the first anniversary of "Marka-e-Haq" victory, Rana Mashhood said Pakistan responded decisively to every changing regional situation while maintaining

discipline, professionalism and patience despite possessing the capability to inflict greater military damage on India. He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had from the outset demanded an independent

international inquiry to establish facts before the world, asserting that Pakistan never pursues aggression or terrorism but reserves the right to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. "Pakistan emerged successful because the world witnessed a responsible nation exercising restraint despite having the upper hand," he said, adding that the country's armed forces, pilots and youth demonstrated exceptional professional excellence during the conflict.

Tree Plantation drive launched to combat environmental pollution

WAJIHA TAMSEEL MIRZA

MULTAN: A tree plantation campaign has been officially launched in Multan to address the growing issue of environmental pollution. Under this initiative, plants were planted at various locations across the city to promote a cleaner and greener environment. During the event, Sun News Multan's Special Correspondent, Malik Haris Abbas, participated in the plantation activity alongside MD Horticulture Authority Multan, Syed Waseem Hassan. Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized the importance of tree plantation and highlighted



that planting more trees is essential to ensure a healthy environment for future generations. At the conclusion of the event, Malik Haris Abbas led a prayer, and appreciation was extended to MD Horticulture Authority Multan, Syed Waseem Hassan, for his efforts in organizing and supporting the campaign.