

Danish Taimoor seeks to allay fans' concern after remarks on multiple marriages

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## Huawei's ICT training program to help boost IT exports, create jobs: PM

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Huawei's Information and Communication Technology training program for Pakistani youth would help boost the country's IT exports and create employment opportunities.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a five-member delegation led by Huawei's Chief Executive Officer Ethen Sun, said that skill training of the country's youth in the IT sector was among the govern-

ment's priorities. He said that the government desired a solid and long-term partnership with Huawei.

During the briefing on Huawei's ICT training to Pakistani youth, it was told that out of the 300,000 youth, 240,000 will receive basic training, while the remaining 60,000 will receive high-tech training.

It was told that training for all 300,000 youth will be completed by the year end. Besides, the third-party validation of the training programs will be conducted.

The participants of



The meeting was told that Huawei, in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, has introduced courses in

Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Big Data, and Cybersecurity at 15 Pakistani universities.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahsan Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Nazma Fatima Khawaja, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, and other relevant senior government officials.

## Five Punjabi bus passengers, security man killed in Balochistan attacks

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: Terrorists killed at least six people in "coordinated" attacks in Balochistan that largely targeted bus passengers based on their ethnicity, police said on Thursday.

"Terrorists have targeted passenger buses and security officials in multiple districts of Balochistan, killing at least five non-local (Punjabi) passengers and a security official," a senior provincial police official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. The incident took place in the coastal town of Pasni in Gwadar district. "They stopped passenger buses and identified non-local travelers," the official added.

The gunmen stopped the bus travelling from Gwadar to Karachi in Kalmat area located between Pasni and Marra. They forced seven passengers belonging to different cities of Punjab off the bus, shot dead five and took two others with them. Dozens of militants have carried out the attacks in several districts of the province after they took control of major highways and set up posts to search vehicles.

## 3 dead, 21 injured in blast near police vehicle in Quetta market

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: Three people were killed and 21 others injured after an explosion occurred near a police vehicle in the Barch Market area on Quetta's Double Road, officials said.

The incident comes as Balochistan faces a spate of attacks targeting the police and security forces, and in some cases, civilians hailing from Punjab.

Police surgeon Dr Ayesha Faiz told Dawn.com, "Three bodies were moved to the Civil Hospital, while 21 people had been injured in the blast." "Four of the injured are in critical condition, while four policemen are among the wounded," she added. Confirming the

deaths, Balochistan's health department spokesperson Dr Waseem Balg said, "The injured were moved to the trauma centre at Civil Hospital." Balochistan Government Spokesperson Shahid Rind said in a statement that the explosion occurred near a police vehicle, adding that the nature of the blast was being determined.

Video footage circulating on social media, showed a crowd of people gathered at the scene of the blast, with the flaming wreckage of a motorcycle next to a charred police pickup truck. A damaged Suzuki also can also be seen in the frame.

A man was also seen pulling the burning wreckage of the motorcycle away from the vehicle in the video, while sirens could be heard in the background. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the blast. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif issued a statement condemning the Quetta blast in the



strongest terms. According to the statement, shared by state broadcaster PTV on X, the PM expressed grief and offered prayers for the families of the deceased and injured. He also ordered that authorities "immediately identify the incident, identify those responsible and bring them to justice."

"The elements spreading hatred in Balochistan are the enemies of development in Balochistan," PM Shehbaz was quoted as saying. "We will never allow the evil intentions of miscreants to succeed."

The statement added that the PM would "continue the war against the scourge of terrorism until it is completely eradicated from the country."

month of Ramadan reflect the sinister motives of terrorists," the president was quoted as saying. The statement added that President Zardari was "praying for the speedy recovery of the injured."

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the blast in a statement from his office, expressing sorrow over the death of the two people who lost their lives. "We equally share in the grief of the families of the deceased," Naqvi was quoted as saying.

## Imran Khan files plea for early hearing of 190m pound case sentence suspension

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Imran Khan has filed a miscellaneous petition seeking an early hearing of his sentence suspension request in the 190 million pound case.

Imran Khan, through his counsel Barrister Salman Safdar, approached the Islamabad High Court, making the federal government and NAB chairmen respondents in the petition. The plea stated that the sentence suspension case was scheduled for hearing on March 24, but due to the counsel's engagement in a murder case at the Supreme Court and a short case list, the hearing was postponed until after Eid.

The petition requested that Imran Khan's sentence suspension appeal be scheduled for hearing before Eid along with the main appeal.

Notably, yesterday, Imran Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, also filed a similar request for an early hearing on her sentence suspension plea.

## Pakistan issuing Panda Bonds to access China's Capital Market: Finance Minister

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday hinted at the strong possibility of Pakistan issuing Panda Bonds in Yuan this year to access China's vast and deep capital market.

In an interview with Chinese media outlets, including CGTN English and China Daily, the minister said, Pakistan has previously issued bonds in US dollars and Euros, and this time has benefit from the Chinese

capital market. The issuance of Panda Bonds will connect Pakistan's capital markets with China and reflect China's important role in Pakistan's digital transformation, he said and thanked China for its consistent support, referring to Pakistan and China as "iron brothers" and strategic partners.

It is pertinent to mention that the minister is visiting China, participating in the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025. The minister praised China's efforts to open up



He emphasized Pakistan's desire to become a hub for the transfer of export-oriented facilities and services

from foreign, especially Chinese, companies. He commended the construction of communication infrastructure, roads, and ports in Pakistan under the CPEC project.

Aurangzeb stressed the need to promote financial benefits from the infrastructure built in Pakistan and to enable Chinese industries to benefit from this infrastructure. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening regional trade and road and rail links with neighboring countries. China's export sector

and companies can benefit from Pakistan's existing infrastructure and low-cost labor.

Aurangzeb also studied Chinese banks and their digital transformation, emphasizing that Pakistan can learn from China's experiences, particularly in improving financial inclusion through digital solutions.

The Minister also highlighted the importance of bilateral cooperation in areas such as financial technology, agriculture, drone technology, and other key sectors.

## Opp's grand alliance fails to finalise internal structure and protest plan

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: The grand opposition alliance has failed to meet its deadline for finalising an organisational structure and protest strategy, delaying its much-anticipated anti-government movement scheduled after Eid-ul-Fitr.

The alliance was supposed to finalise its protest roadmap during Ramadan, but internal disorganisation has stalled progress.

The opposition parties debated various proposals regarding the alliance's structure but could not reach a consensus. As a result, the finalisation of the post-Eid protest plan has also been delayed.

Sources revealed that Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has declined to formally join the opposition alliance, opting instead to pursue its own independent movement. The opposition alliance suggested an alternative plan, proposing that JI hold its protest in Rawalpindi while the rest of the alliance demonstrates in Islamabad.

However, JI has yet to respond to this suggestion. Despite these hurdles, the sources said the opposition parties have decided on a leadership structure, and Mahmood Khan Achakzai will serve as chairman of the alliance, while the president will be from Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F).

## Pakistan welcomes limited Russia-Ukraine ceasefire; lauds US engagement for agreement: FO spox

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday welcomed the recently agreed upon limited ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure and ensuring safe navigation in the Black Sea.

Foreign Office spokesperson Shafiq Ali Khan, at his weekly press briefing here, appreciated the active engagement of the US administration and its leadership in securing the agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

He expressed optimism that the momentum generated by these initial steps would eventually lead to a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire. "Pakistan's position on the Ukraine conflict has been consistent. Pakistan has enjoyed friendly relations with both Russia and

Ukraine. We have always advocated dialogue and diplomacy, immediate cessation of hostilities and peaceful resolution of this conflict," he remarked.

The spokesperson said that Israel's continued and repeated incursions and air strikes into the Syrian territory, continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, and its declared intent for an indefinite presence and full demilitarisation of Syria were "unacceptable, constitute blatant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and undermine international law and regional stability."

He said that durable peace in Syria hinged on a credible bilateral transition, national unity and reconciliation and inclusive governance. Spokesperson Khan



public services, obstruct freedom of movement, and create an atmosphere of insecurity.

He said that such elements were not mere protesters but active participants in a broader campaign of lawlessness and violence.

"Hiding behind a façade of alleged grievances, these elements are operating in collusion with terrorists—evident from their coordinated efforts to obstruct State responses, including synchronized roadblocks facilitating terrorist attacks." He said that the latest proof of this nexus was the unlawful storming of the District Hospital in Quetta, where they forcibly seized the bodies of five terrorists eliminated during the Jaffer Express. Three of these bodies were retrieved back

from these violent protesters by the police. He said that the pattern of "selective and disproportionate" focus by the UN machinery served no constructive purpose. Instead, it inadvertently emboldened extremist elements, fuels unwarranted media sensationalism, incites disorder, and—most alarmingly—exacerbates societal polarization and fragmentation, he added.

He said that the statement by the UN Special Procedures, Mandate Holders stood in stark contradiction to the very essence and spirit of the UN's own Resolution 2354. Rather than supporting a sovereign State in its determined and resolute efforts to combat terrorism, such statements risk legitimizing extremist narratives—an outcome that is not only counterproductive but also fundamen-

mentally at odds with the principles the UN purports to uphold."

He also apprised the media of the recent visit of Special Representative for Afghanistan Ambassador Mubashir Sadiq to Kabul, he said that during a meeting with Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Mubashir, both sides exchanged views on all issues of mutual concern, including peace and security, trade and economic bilateral relationship, with a view to achieving lasting regional peace and stability.

Both sides agreed to enhance high-level engagement and dialogue to strengthen bilateral cooperation. The two sides also reinforced their commitment to a mutually beneficial bilateral relationship, with a view to achieving lasting regional peace and stability.



# Pakistan need time to make new approach work, says Salman

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

WELLINGTON: Pakistan are looking to play white-ball cricket with a new approach and it will take some time before they start reaping the benefits of it, the team's Twenty20 International captain Salman Ali Agha has said.

Salman led an inexperienced side — barring the likes of a few seniors — against New Zealand in the five-match series, which ended with Pakistan's eight-wicket loss in the final fixture on Wednesday.

Salman and co. managed to win only one of the five matches, taking the third T20I by nine wickets, as the side chased down 205 with four overs to spare, thanks to young opener Hasan Nawaz's blistering century.

But the ultra-attacking style of play did not work in the remaining fixtures as a second-string New Zealand team dominated throughout. Salman said the conditions were challenging for his young players, whom he expected to learn from their experiences.

"The kind of cricket we are playing is fearless, but the key is to use our minds wisely with that fearless approach," he told reporters after the match on Wednesday.

"These are youngsters, and they'll learn and gain experience. We're introducing a new way of playing cricket in Pakistan, and it will take some time, but we'll back these youngsters."

The Pakistan batters failed to negotiate with the seam and bounce on offer on the New Zealand surfaces, which Salman



Salman Ali Agha batting during a match.

observed were new for his subordinates.

"...the conditions in New Zealand are challenging," he said. "Any team from Asia that comes here struggles. These conditions take time to get used to, and you'll see as the matches progress, the boys have started performing better."

"But if you arrive just a couple of days before the match and play, there's not enough time to adjust to these conditions."

Failing in New Zealand conditions may not be a point of concern for Pakistan, who Salman said had their sights on the upcoming Asia Cup and next year's T20 World Cup. "...the goal is the Asia Cup and the World Cup,"

the batter noted. "This series is helping us achieve that goal. Any upcoming series, we'll use them for combination building or giving experience to the new players."

Salman believed that his young team will come good in both tournaments, with the T20 World Cup set to be held in India and Sri Lanka.

"Bowling or batting in these conditions is tough," said the all-rounder. "These are the same youngsters who, in the future, will give good performances for Pakistan."

"This is a learning experience for them. If they learn from this, they will find it much easier in our home conditions."

# Jazz's tamasha breaks records during ICC champions Trophy 2025

RIZWAN HAIDER

ISLAMABAD: Tamasha, Pakistan's leading digital entertainment platform by Jazz, achieved a historic milestone during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, setting new benchmarks in cricket streaming. With an unprecedented 22.3 million monthly active users (MAUs), it reinforced its position as the premier hub for live sports and premium digital entertainment in the country. Transforming the way Pakistanis watched cricket, the platform delivered an immersive and interactive viewing experience. With a peak of 10.1 million daily active users (DAUs), it ensured seamless access to every thrilling moment of the tournament, attracting a highly engaged audience through live chats and gaming features, according to a news release.

Commenting on this milestone, Aamir Nawaz, President Digital Platforms at Jazz, said, "Tamasha is redefining how



Aamir Nawaz, President Digital Platforms at Jazz, holding a tablet displaying 'FREE LIVE STREAMING'.

Pakistan experiences live sports, making cricket more immersive and accessible than ever. The overwhelming engagement during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 reflects our commitment to innovation and user experience. And not just sports, our users can access more than 90 Live TV channels, trending movies and shows, and short-form content."

Beyond streaming, Tamasha's success fueled significant commercial impact. More and more brands are choosing Tamasha as their preferred advertising platform, leveraging its growing reach and engage-

ment. The platform delivered over 1,200 minutes of ad airtime and generated 217 million ad impressions. It also recorded 7 million organic click-throughs on Google Search in just 28 days and maintained its No. 1 ranking on both Google Play Store and Apple App Store throughout the tournament.

Tamasha's widespread adoption underscored its growing inclusivity, with 66 percent male and 34 percent female users, and a near-equal urban-rural split of 52 and 48 percent, respectively. The 34 percent female engagement and 48 percent rural participation reflected it is expanding reach across diverse demographics. Tamasha's rapid evolution continues to reinforce its position as Pakistan's premier digital entertainment hub. In 2024 alone, the platform delivered 12.5 billion minutes of content, hosted 250 days of live action, and expanded its on-demand library to over 3,900 hours.

# Haris Rauf, Usman Khan added to Pakistan's ODI squad in New Zealand

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan team management has instructed fast bowler Haris Rauf and wicket-keeper-batter Usman Khan to stay in New Zealand and join the ODI squad for the upcoming series.

Meanwhile, eight T20 squad players will return to Pakistan, while five others have already joined the ODI team in Napier.

Following the completion of the T20 series, the Pakistan team and coaching staff traveled from Wellington to Napier. Rauf and Usman, originally part of the T20 squad, have now been included in the ODI lineup.



Haris Rauf and Usman Khan in Pakistan cricket gear.

Players who have joined the ODI squad include Salman Ali Agha, Haris Rauf, Khushdil Shah, Irfan Khan Niazi, Abrar Ahmed, Sufiyan Muqeem, Muhammad Ali, and Usman Khan. Meanwhile, captain Mohammad Rizwan, Babar Azam, and seven other ODI players were already in Napier. The

remaining eight T20 squad players, including Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Umar Bin Yusuf, Hassan Nawaz, Mohammad Haris, Abbas Afridi, Abdul Samad, and Jahandad Khan, will return to Pakistan via Dubai.

The three-match ODI series between Pakistan and New Zealand is set to begin on March 29.

# Serena Masters Series Concludes Successfully in Islamabad

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd edition of the Serena Masters Series concluded successfully at the PTF Tennis Complex, Garden Avenue, Islamabad, featuring the top eight men's and women's players from across Pakistan. Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President-PTF also participated in the event's doubles category, highlighting the importance of the tournament. Tournament Results:- Men's Singles Final: Aqeel Khan defeated Barkatullah 6-3, 6-2 to claim the title. Women's Singles Final: Ushna Suhail secured victory over Sheeza Sajid 6-4, 4-0 (ret'd) to win the Masters Cup. Men's Doubles Final: Due to inclement weather, the match was abandoned at 3-all, and



Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi playing tennis on a court.

both teams, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi/Aqeel Khan and Shahzad Khan/M. Abid, were declared joint winners. The Serena Masters Series is part of Serena Hotels' Sports Diplomacy Initiative, which aims to promote tennis and provide a platform for Pakistan's top talent. The series has been held in three cities: Peshawar (December 2023), Faisalabad (February 2023), and Islamabad. The closing ceremony was attended by Mr. Syed Fahim Inam, Chief Marketing Officer, Serena Hotels, as the Chief Guest,

and Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President-PTF, as the Guest of Honour. Other notable attendees included Major Suleman Junaid SEVP-PTF, Mr. Suhail Khawaja SVP-PTF, Mr. Saeed Ahmad Khan SVP-PTF, Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail Secretary General-PTF, Mr. Imran Hassan-Serena Hotels, Col. Cul Rehman-PTF, Ms. Sidra Zaeher -Serena Hotels and a large number of players, parents, coaches, and media representatives. Mr. Syed Fahim Inam, Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, and Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail distributed prizes among the winners and runners-up, congratulated them on their achievements. Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi expressed heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Azeef Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels.

"It's obviously disappointing to lose Tom as captain on the eve of the series and we wish him a speedy recovery," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said. "The side is in safe hands with Michael, who's done a great job through the T20I series."

Henry Nicholls will return from a calf strain to replace Latham, while Mitch Hay will keep wickets. Canterbury batsman Rhys Mariu earned his maiden call-up as a batting cover.

"We've had to be flexible this tour with numerous players unavailable for different reasons," Stead said.

# Oman's national hockey team to tour Pakistan

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: After Germany's junior hockey team, Oman's national squad is visiting Pakistan from April 6 to play four matches against Pakistan juniors, Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) President Tariq Hussain Bugti said on Wednesday.

Bugti said this while addressing a press conference after Pakistan hockey player Aamad Shakeel Butt was honoured for being awarded Tamgha-e-Intiqaz on the Pakistan Day. Bugti was flanked by Aamad, PHF secretary Rana Mujahid and newly-appointed head coach Tahir Zaman. The PHF said that it was a moment of pride for the country's hockey fraternity that Aamad was honoured with a civil award. "The Oman team will play two



Oman national hockey team players on the field.

matches each in Lahore and Islamabad." Bugti said while thanking German and Oman hockey federations for sending their teams to Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, Aamad said he was excited after earning the award and hoped that more hockey players would get the honours. According to Aamad, the series against Germany's juniors had benefited the hosts who would get more

experience from the forthcoming series against Oman. To overcome PHF's financial problems, Bugti said, the federation had established a marketing department. When asked to comment on some reports suggesting the Malaysian Hockey Federation had not invited Pakistan for this year's Azlan Shah Cup because the PHF had to pay some of their dues.

# Injured Latham out of Pakistan ODIs, Bracewell continues as NZ captain

MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: New Zealand stumper-batsman Tom Latham was ruled out of the one-day series against Pakistan with a hand injury on Thursday leaving Michael Bracewell to continue as the side's captain.

With regular white-ball captain Mitchell Santner busy in the Indian Premier League, Bracewell led New Zealand to a 2-1 victory in a T20 series against Pakistan.

Latham was due to lead New Zealand in the three-match ODI series against Pakistan on Saturday, but he fractured his hand while batting in the nets and will require at least four



Tom Latham in New Zealand cricket gear.

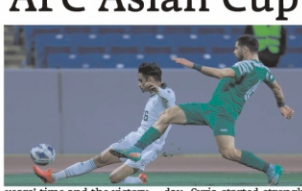
weeks to recover, the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said in a statement. Opener Will Young, meanwhile, will miss the last two ODIs to be with his wife as they await the birth of their first child.

# Pakistan go down to Syria at AFC Asian Cup

PEAK POINT

AL AHSA: Pakistan showed grit and determination but ultimately it wasn't enough to keep out Syria. Stephen Constantine's men fell to a 2-0 loss to the much-fancied Syrians in their Group 'E' opener in the final round of qualifiers for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup at the Prince Abdullah Bin Jalawi Stadium on Tuesday night; the result leaving them bottom of a section that also has Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Only the group winner advances to the Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia in two



Pakistan players on the field during a match.

years' time and the victory put Syria in pole position to qualify for their third consecutive appearance at the continental showpiece. They lead the group on goal difference from Afghanistan, who beat Myanmar 2-1 earlier in the day. Syria started strongly in the game played in neutral Saudi Arabia, pushing Pakistan back and took the lead in the 23rd minute when Amar Ramadan's pinpoint corner kick was nodded in by defender Ahmed Faga.



# Model School C-6/4 Hosts Annual Result Ceremony



**PEAK POINT** announcing the results of students from prep to 5th grade. The chief guest, Choudhry Muhammad Rasheed Sal, President of the School Management Committee, honored students for their hard work and outstanding performance. He distributed trophies and certificates to students who secured first, second, and third positions. Choudhry Muhammad Rasheed Sal praised the efforts of students, teachers, and parents, saying that this ceremony was not only a celebration of students' achievements but also an inspiration for teachers and parents. He said that food program under way for children which is good step, he said AI education being initiated. The school's principal also addressed the Parents and Told the School Initiatives and congratulated the students on their achievements.

## Pakistan's Diagnostic Industry Reaches a Historic Milestone: Paving the Way from Import to Export-Based Economy



**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading diagnostic industry institutions and Advisory Bodies (Lab Diagnostic system LDS & Saman-e-Shifa foundation), has announced a major and transformative shift in the country's diagnostic sector. After decades of reliance on imports, the diagnostic industry is now transitioning towards an export-based economy. This move marks not just a moment of pride for Pakistan but also a significant milestone towards national self-reliance. Representatives and supporters from the diagnostic industry while briefing the press, stated that after achieving self-sufficiency in traditional testing, Pakistan is now advancing towards modern diagnostic technology. The industry requires specific reforms and policies to sustain its growth, similar to initiatives taken in countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Iran where governments have played special measures to support local industries. Unfortunately, Pakistan has yet to receive clear government support, causing major challenges for the diagnostic sector. Post-COVID-19, the diagnostic industry has witnessed remarkable transformations, with local manufacturers playing a crucial role. The government significantly benefited from locally produced testing kits during the outbreaks of dengue, malaria, and chikungunya. It is hoped that in the future, the government will give similar support to the diagnostic industry, as it has to other pharmaceutical sectors, to strengthen the national economy and empower local industries. Key stakeholders in the market, including laboratory owners and hospital administrators, have warmly welcomed this positive trend. To adopt technological advancements, agreements for technology transfer are being finalised with China and other countries. This partnership will enhance contract manufacturing and original equipment

manufacturing (OEM) production in Pakistan. Mr. Zafar Mahmood (Member HDAP, CEO Lab Diagnostic system LDS, and Health industry analyst) and Prof. Dr. Syed Shahid Noor Chaudhry Saman-e-Shifa Foundation and a prominent supporter of the local manufacturing industry, shared their thoughts on this development, stating, "This is a historic opportunity for Pakistan to elevate our diagnostic industry to international standards." He emphasized that with adequate government support, the industry could not only become self-sufficient but can also achieve a distinguished position on the global stage. On this occasion, Diagnostic industry representatives urged the government and relevant authorities to introduce effective policies that will foster the growth of the diagnostic industry and enable it to become a strong pillar of the national economy. Mr. Zafar Mahmood further added, "Only by supporting local industries, we can play our part in stabilizing Pakistan's economy."

## Last Friday of Ramadan designated as World Quds Day by Imam Khomeini

**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: The last Friday of Ramadan designated as World Quds Day by Imam Khomeini, stands as a symbol of unity among Muslims worldwide, reaffirming unwavering support for the Palestine Cause. It is a global movement to remind the international community of eight decades of Palestinian suffering, renew commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the right to self-determination. The Zionist regime continues to pose a grave threat to global peace and security, violating the ceasefire once again, resumed relentless attacks on innocent civilians. The recent negotiations between the Israeli regime and Hamas, along with the exchange of Palestinian hostages, further exposed the occupying regime. Resistance against occupation has always been a fundamental right throughout history, and as long as occupation persists, so will resistance. However, with Islamic resistance groups, the Palestinian struggle has grown stronger, countering the escalation of Israeli aggression with even greater resolve. Rather than acknowledging their role in occupation, the regime and its supporters attempt to shift blame onto the indigenous Palestinian resistance groups, Yemen, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. By intensifying their attacks on Gaza and Yemen, they have once again unleashed indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians. It strongly condemns the ongoing crimes in Palestine, Gaza, Syria, and Yemen and expresses deep concern over the escalation of the atrocities in Yemen. It appreciates the government and the people of Pakistan for their firm stance and resolute response against the Zionist regime's genocidal crimes. Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause and its bold advocacy for justice serves as a beacon of solidarity in the face of oppression. It reiterates the urgent need for the establishment of one sovereign, secure, contiguous and unified Palestinian state through democratic elections that include the full participation of all the indigenous Palestinian people. It reaffirms that the complete liberation of Palestine remains a central issue for the Muslim world. It emphasizes the necessity of confronting Zionist's occupation and expansionism, enforcing an immediate, constant ceasefire in Gaza and ensuring the swift delivery of humanitarian aid. It calls upon all Muslims and freedom-seekers across the world to stand together in solidarity and actively participate in the World Quds Day campaign.

# Opinion & Editorial

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## Troubled waters and barren lands

**Kamila Hyat**  
The issue of the six canals to be pulled out of the River Indus apparently to irrigate Cholistan is now well known. Also, well understood is the stress it has caused in Sindh where activists against the canals say that millions of people are in danger of losing their livelihoods as water is taken away from their lands. Tail-end farmers in Sindh already face problems linked to growing water scarcity notably in the Indus Delta and consequent erosion from the sea. Beyond this, there is also the issue of quite what the proposed canals will achieve in Cholistan. Experts who have studied the problem point out that a similar canal project worked out neighbouring Rajasthan in 1960 led to only small pockets of land close to the canals created by diverting two rivers being made green and the rest of Rajasthan remaining a vast desert, with the sands overtaking the water pumped through it by the authorities in the hope of turning the desert to arable land. There is a danger that the same will happen in Cholistan. Already it has been pointed out that the use of waters from the River Ravi and the River Sutlej, handed over to India under the 1960 Indus water treaty, are heavily polluted and the water in these rivers is essentially provided by link canals from India in which waste and sewage is dumped by that country. This is stated to be one reason why there is such a high ratio of sickness linked to the digestive system in southern Punjab. There are also studies which suggest there are safer ways of providing water to Cholistan and surely the main requirement should be to provide water for people to drink and use for their needs rather than agricultural water in a project that according to past precedent in neighbouring areas is not likely to succeed. The key issue here is ideas that are dependent on the use of water in Punjab and the vastly different approach to the problem in water-starved Sindh. In Punjab, the governments had to come down with a law to penalise the wastage of

water such as washing one's cars in driveways etc. In Sindh, people across the province and especially in the Thar area struggle to collect a few litres of water to meet their daily needs. Even in this day and age, women walk many miles to collect water their families need. This is surely something which should not be accepted in a time when people need to be provided with at least their most basic necessities. The political turmoil caused by the canals issue is already visible as is the new injection of strength it has provided to Sindh nationalism in all its various forms. Essentially Sindh is united against the canals, even as the federal government tries to push the project through. The key issue here is the desperate need to unite rather than further divide our country. For this to happen there must be an understanding of the unique problems of each province and its people. These need to be shared by others and understood by the entire country. The fact that people in Punjab do not fully recognise quite what water means in other parts of the country, including Sindh and Balochistan, is in so many ways desperately sad. There are also constituents to ensure that decisions which affect a particular province are based on consensus. The Council of Common Interests should have met to discuss the canals. The fact that such a meeting was not called again shows how fragile the pillars holding up our federation have become and the need to make them more stronger. This can happen only if we make a genuine effort to accept provincial differences and diversities. We cannot create uniformity in a country which has so many diverse issues and so many different nationalities living within it. While essentially the identity of everyone in Pakistan should begin with being a Pakistani, most people when asked state their ethnic groups first of all and then go on to smaller details like the place in which they live. The issue of being a Pakistani does not fall on the top of the list. We need to change this by driving home the messages we are

receiving from Sindh to people across the country including decision-makers behind the Green Cholistan project. The dangers of not attaining this are immense. We already see divides in the country that have badly damaged its structure and made it weaker in so many different ways. The terrorism in Balochistan is once again threatening the province and has most recently led to the closure of several major universities within it. Students are asked to stay away from campuses and take online classes. There are of course many other issues especially if you walk across the chapters of history and look at the various acts which in so many ways separated our country into different portions and in 1971 led to the tumultuous creation of Bangladesh. The very reason to learn from mistakes and not repeat them again. Precisely how this end can be achieved is not easy to determine. But the leadership in Punjab and centre needs to take a major role in raising their voice and joining in the chorus we hear from Sindh. At the very least the Cholistan agricultural project should be revisited and water brought to the area from other sources rather than in a manner which affects Sindh and its people. This is possible according to experts who have closely studied the problem and written in detail about it. It is sad that their many suggestions and proposals continue to be ignored. This should not become a matter of pride or a win-lose situation but one in which the good of the country can be put ahead of everything else and unity created among the federating people of Pakistan so that we can gain strength in a time when we so badly need it and so many recognise that it is essential to the future of a country which struggles to pull together and hold together all the various units which make up a land of diversity and one inhabited by so many different groups and so many different people. This is its beauty and its potential strength. Courtesy: The News

## Fleecing lambs

**Khurram Husain**  
The federal cabinet took two correct decisions in its meeting on Wednesday. One was to send the changes to the net metering policy back to the energy ministry for reconsideration. And the other was to postpone, amid the protests, the decision to raise higher education institutions which everyone was told suddenly in December 2024 had been withdrawn in the budget announced in June 2022. In both instances, we had a story that was rather typical of how things are done in Pakistan and how it presents itself with a problem to be solved. In the case of the solar policy, the energy ministry literally took the explosive success of their last net metering policy and presented it as a failure, arguing that all the beneficiaries of that policy were "elites" who had become a burden on the tax system, amid the protests, the burden was the main reason that electricity bills had become so expensive. This was a rather odd way to perceive success. One would think if they were able to add something like 7,100 megawatts of power generation capacity without paying anything from its state's own money it would be a good thing. They said that 283,000 households had availed of the net metering policy, and this number was very small by comparison to the 40 million households on the grid. The enduring problem here is that this figure – 283,000 – actually needs to rise to 50m, and the question they should have jumped to ask themselves was "what's the best way to get there? Instead, they asked "how do we stop this? All's well that ends well. But it's a good idea nonetheless to find lessons to draw from such episodes. It is something similar with the widening of the tax rebate. I use this as an example because it impacted non-elite incomes, which have been under the anvil in any case as the government struggles to stabilise its fiscal equation, and also because it is illustrative of the way in which our tax bureaucracy has grown accustomed to operating over the decades. All those who run a business of their own have horror stories to share of their experiences with the tax authorities. In the case of the rebate in question, universities around Punjab received a notice from their higher education department of the provincial government informing that "Clause 2, Part III, Second Schedule of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 has been omitted" in the Finance Act 2022. The clause covers the rebate enjoyed by teachers and researchers, and other notices served to the universities said that they will have to recover arrears from the previous two years as well. Now you might surmise that teachers and researchers in Pakistan's higher education system are not exactly "elites", and undoubtedly many were quite worried that a very steep tax bill is about to be dropped on them for something that nobody even knew about for two years. If the said rebate was withdrawn in 2022, how come everyone was asleep since then and only woke up in December 2024 to start demanding recovery of this tax, along with arrears? Luckily better sense prevailed. Courtesy: Dawn

## Death at every turn

A routine medical check-up turned into an irreparable tragedy for a young couple in Karachi when their motorcycle was crushed by a water tanker on March 24. The most harrowing detail of the accident – so severe that the pregnant woman gave birth on the spot, only for the newborn to succumb moments later – serves as a gut-wrenching indictment of the conditions that Karachi's citizens must endure daily. This is an indictment of a system that has rendered human life meaningless. According to the driver's initial statement, the accident was caused by brake failure. However, investigations later revealed that the driver had been on a gruelling 24-hour shift, leading to sheer exhaustion and loss of control over the vehicle. This revelation is unsurprising. The norm in Karachi's heavy transport sector is drivers surviving on energy drinks, chai, and cigarettes and dangerously long shifts, their fatigue turning them into unwitting agents of death. This systemic exploitation of workers, coupled with lax regulatory enforcement, creates the perfect storm for repeated disasters. Who, then, should be held accountable for this latest tragedy? In 2024 alone, nearly 500 people were killed and 4,879 injured in road accidents in Karachi due to reckless driving, infrastructural neglect and poorly enforced traffic laws. Last month, the Sindh government restricted heavy vehicles' movement to the 11 pm-6 am slot, later relaxing it under pressure from transporters. But this accident proves what was already evident: laws mean nothing if not enforced. The Sindh government's inability to regulate transport companies and ensure humane working conditions for drivers is criminal negligence.

