



Nuclear power ensures peace, strategic balance in South Asia: Zardari



SAPM Humayun forms committee to address industry challenges



Aleema offers dialogue, deal to 'unseen forces' for Imran's release

Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

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

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan

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PM Shehbaz lands in Lachin to attend Pakistan-Turkiye-Azerbaijan summit

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

LACHIN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Lachin, Azerbaijan, on Tuesday for the Pakistan-Turkiye-Azerbaijan Trilateral Summit, the third stop on a five-day tour aimed at bolstering regional ties after unprovoked Indian aggression.

The PM concluded his two-day bilateral visit to Iran earlier in the day and departed for Azerbaijan. Following his visits to Turkiye, Iran, and Azerbaijan, he will proceed to Tajikistan.

At Lachin Airport, the prime minister was received by Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, Pakistan's Ambassador to Azerbaijan Qasim Mohiuddin, and other diplomatic staff, the PM Office Media Wing

said in a press release.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi are accompanying the prime minister.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, along with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, will participate in the Trilateral Summit.

The prime minister is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with President Ilham Aliyev.

The four-nation tour follows a military stand-off between Pakistan and India. The latest escalation in the decades-old India-Pakistan rivalry began on



May 7 when at least 31 civilians were martyred in unprovoked Indian strikes in different areas of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In retaliation, Pakistan downed its five fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. During the four-day standoff, at least 11 troops and 40 civilians were martyred at the hands of India.

Both nations halted their worst fighting in nearly three decades after agreeing to a ceasefire on May 10, following four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes, which took place after India launched unprovoked attacks on Islamabad.

Pakistan has intensified its diplomatic push to expose Indian propaganda and counter its hostile narrative at international forums.

Field Marshal Asim Munir meets Iranian Chief of General Staff

PEAK POINT



TEHRAN: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir visited the General Staff Headquarters, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to the ISPR, the COAS held meeting with Maj Gen Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces.

The two military leaders engaged in discussions on the evolving regional security landscape, with particular focus on strengthening bilateral defence ties. Key areas of mutual interest included enhancing military-to-military cooperation, improving security mechanisms along the shared border, and exploring avenues for transforming the border regions into zones of trade and economic connectivity, thereby contributing to regional stability and prosperity, said ISPR.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir was accorded a warm welcome upon his arrival, including a ceremonial guard of honour presented by a well-turned-out contingent of the Iranian Armed Forces.

The COAS, along with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, earlier met HE Ayatollah Syed Ali Hosseini Khamenei, Supreme Leader of Iran, and HE Masoud Pezeshkian, President of Iran.

Every sector must contribute to Pakistan's economic revival: Aurangzeb

SAMARA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday emphasized that every sector must contribute to stabilizing and growing Pakistan's economy, stating that the burden cannot be allowed to fall solely on the formal sector and salaried class.

Speaking during a high-level meeting with a delegation from the Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSPP), led by Patron-in-Chief Abbas Akbar Ali, the minister underlined the need for collective responsibility in driving economic recovery, said a news release.

The delegation raised critical challenges facing the steel industry, including high energy costs, regulatory inconsistencies, and the need for a stable policy environment to ensure



long-term investment and growth.

They also highlighted the impact of taxation policies on formal businesses and sought government support to level the playing field.

The minister acknowledged the industry's concerns and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting productive

sectors of the economy. He noted that the steel sector plays a pivotal role in infrastructure development and job creation, and assured the delegation that their input would be factored into ongoing budgetary meetings and policy discussions.

He further explained that the government is pursuing a broad-based strategy to expand the tax base, reduce reliance on over-taxed segments, and bring the undocumented economy into the fold.

In this regard, he noted that the Prime Minister is personally leading regular meetings aimed at strengthening economic governance and enforcing equity across sectors.

The minister appreciated PALSPP's constructive engagement and encouraged continued dialogue between industry and government to align reforms with practical ground realities.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring that economic policy is transparent, inclusive, and growth-oriented. The meeting concluded with mutual agreement to remain in contact and collaborate on sector-specific policy improvements in the months ahead.

Nuclear power ensures peace, strategic balance in South Asia: Zardari

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: President, Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday emphasised that becoming a nuclear power was not merely a demonstration of the country's technological advancement—it was a calculated decision to ensure peace through strength, to maintain the strategic balance in South Asia, and to protect the nation against any external aggression. In his message on the occasion of Youm-e-Takbeer (28th May), the president said Pakistan's nuclear capability amid current evolving regional security situation, continued to serve as a credible minimum deterrent that guarantees our peace and ensures that no one could undermine the country's sovereignty and national security. President Zardari said, "On this momentous occasion of Youm-e-Takbeer, I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the entire nation. Today, we observe the 27th anniversary of Youm-e-Takbeer—a day when we demonstrated our nuclear capabilities and established strategic deterrence. This day serves as a reminder of our commitment to safeguarding the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of our beloved country."

Pakistan condemns Modi's 'reckless provocation' in Gujarat speech

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Tuesday condemned the recent remarks towards Pakistan by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a speech in Gujarat, calling it a "reckless provocation".

The developments follow a recent military confrontation between India and Pakistan over New Delhi's allegations against Islamabad, about a deadly attack in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam.

On the night of May 6-7, New Delhi launched a series of air strikes in Pakistan, resulting in civilian casualties. Islamabad responded by downing five Indian jets. After intercepting drones sent by India and tit-for-tat strikes on each



other's airbases, it took American intervention on May 10 for both sides to finally drop their guns as a ceasefire was reached.

In a video shared by Indian news outlet ANI, Modi says: "The people of Pakistan must come forward to rid their country of terrorism. Their youth will have to come forward."

He went on to say: "Live a life of peace, eat your bread or [shoot my] bullet," to

applause from the crowd, with many adorned in orange and white outfits.

A statement by the FO early on Tuesday said Pakistan has taken note of Modi's remarks "delivered in Gujarat with the theatrical flourish of a campaign rally rather than the sobriety expected of the leader of a nuclear-armed state."

"The hate-driven invocation of violence in his remarks is deeply disturbing, not only for

its content but for the dangerous precedent it sets in region already burdened by volatility," the FO said.

"We regret the continued erosion of maturity and decorum in Indian statecraft."

The FO noted that such statement "blatantly violate" the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, which obliges member states to resolve disputes peacefully and to refrain from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty or political independence of other states.

"Pakistan views these remarks as a reckless provocation, intended to distract from the ongoing human rights abuses and demographic engineering in Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

CJCSC, services chiefs extend felicitations on Youm-e-Takbeer anniversary

AYESHA REHAN

RAWALPINDI: The Armed Forces of Pakistan, along with the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Services Chiefs, extend heartfelt felicitations to the people of Pakistan on the 27th anniversary of Youm-e-Takbeer. According to an ISPR news release, Youm-e-Takbeer commemorates the momentous occasion in 1998 when Pakistan emerged as a nuclear power, restoring the strategic balance in South Asia and asserting its sovereign right to self-defence. This historic achievement epitomises the nation's resolve, unity, and unwavering pursuit of a dignified and peaceful existence. Pakistan's strategic capability is a national trust, reflecting the collective aspirations of its people. The commemoration of Youm-e-Takbeer is a tribute to the foresight of visionary leadership, the brilliance of our scientists and engineers, and the countless contributions of all those who rendered Pakistan's defence unassailable. This day underscores Pakistan's steadfast commitment to preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It affirms our doctrine of credible minimum deterrence, rooted in the principle of maintaining peace and strategic stability in the region. The Armed Forces of Pakistan reiterate their unflinching resolve to defend the motherland against all threats across the full spectrum of conflict.



Sadia Iqbal reclaims top spot in ICC women's T20I bowling ranking

RIZWAN HAIDER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan women's left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal reclaimed her position at the top of the ICC Women's Twenty-20 International (T20I) Bowler Rankings, Cricket's governing body announced on Tuesday.

Sadia was also pivotal to Pakistan's win in the recently concluded ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers in Lahore and was named in the team of the tournament for her nine scalps for an average of 16. Her economy, like her spin twin Nashra Sandhu, was under four, and this meant that the duo provided the hosts the stranglehold during the middle overs and helped them maintain an unbeaten run throughout the tournament. "Sadia" was one of the leading performers at last year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup and rises one spot on the rankings for T20I bowlers to claim top billing", the ICC statement said.

She replaces England spinner Sophie Ecclestone at the top spot who sat out her side's recent T20I series at home against the West Indies. Her team-mate Lauren Bell however, rose 13 places to jump to sixth overall on the back of her seven wickets for the series against the West Indies.

For the batters, "the big winner on the rankings for T20I batters is Hayley Matthews, with the West Indies captain making some inroads on Australia's dominance at the top of the rankings following her Player of the Series efforts against England," the ICC added.

Last year in the T20 World Cup, Sadia Iqbal claimed three wickets for Pakistan as the Green Team beat Asia Cup champions Sri Lanka in their opening encounter of that tournament.

On the back of that match-winning performance, she subsequently became the first Pakistani woman bowler to top the ICC rankings.

Fenerbahçe Beko Istanbul Wins 2025 EuroLeague Title

PEAK POINT



ABU DHABI, UAE: Fenerbahçe Beko Istanbul secured the 2025 Turkish Airlines EuroLeague title with an 81-70 win over AS Monaco in the final at Etihad Arena on May 25. This marks the club's second EuroLeague championship, their first since 2017. Head coach Sertun Sarıncı claimed his first EuroLeague title as a coach, having previously won four as a player. Nigel Hayes-Davis earned Final Four MVP honors, scoring 23 points and grabbing 9 rebounds in the final. Fenerbahçe reached the final after defeating defending champions Panathinaikos AKTOR 82-76 in the semifinal, capping off a dominant tournament run and reinforcing their place among Europe's elite basketball clubs.

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Hesson backs Babar, Rizwan in white-ball plans ahead of Bangladesh series

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's newly appointed head coach Mike Hesson has expressed strong backing for senior players Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan, calling them vital to the team's white-ball future.

Addressing the media in Lahore ahead of the upcoming three-match T20I series against Bangladesh, Hesson said, "Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan are top-class players and integral to our white-ball plans. There are areas where they can improve, and they are actively working on those."

Both players were earlier dropped for the T20I series against New Zealand, as selectors tested younger players. Rizwan was also replaced as T20I captain after just two series, with Salman Ali Agha named as his successor. Hesson, 50, outlined his approach as a blend of aggression and strategy. "We want to play aggressive cricket, but also smart cricket. We're very clear about the brand of cricket we want to play."

The series against



Bangladesh, starting May 28 at Gaddafi Stadium, will mark Hesson's first assignment as Pakistan head coach. He emphasised the importance of starting on a positive note and warned against underestimating the visitors. "They are a strong side and play good cricket. We will not take them lightly," Hesson said prepa-

are in full swing at Gaddafi Stadium, with players taking part in fitness drills, net sessions and fielding practice. Those involved in the PSL 10 final were granted rest for the day. All three T20Is will be held in Lahore on May 28, May 30, and June 1. Pakistan Squad: Salman Ali Agha (cap-

tain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub.

'Bangladesh can beat any team if we play good cricket', believes Litton Das

PEAK POINT

L AHORE: Bangladesh white-ball captain Litton Das has said that Bangladesh cricket team is capable of beating any team in the world if it plays good cricket.



Addressing a pre-series press conference at the media center at the Gaddafi stadium here on Tuesday evening, he said the defeat against the UAE was talk of the past, adding that the team will overcome the mistakes it committed in the past and play good cricket against Pakistan. Litton Das was frank in admitting that Bangladesh Men have not been playing good T20I cricket for the past many years and they needed to improve quickly to beat team in their home conditions. However, he said Pakistan is a balanced side despite the absence of Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi, adding that the tigers will have to play out of their skins to beat Pakistan. Litton said the Bangladesh were still a balanced side despite the absence of fast bowlers Nahid Rana and experienced Mustafizur Rehman, adding that the absence of the fast bowlers provides an opportunity to the young cricketers to prove their mettle.

Mohsen Gilani elected PFF president after six-year hiatus

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: After a six-year gap, the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) elected its 17th president on Tuesday, appointing former Fifa Development Officer Mohsen Gilani to lead the sport's governing body. In the second round of elections, Gilani secured a simple majority with 13 votes, defeating his closest rival, Taha Alizai of Karachi United Football Club, who received 11 votes.



Gilani brings extensive experience from his tenure at Fifa, having worked on numerous football development projects across the region. This election marks a significant milestone for Pakistani football. For over a decade, the PFF has remained mired in controversy, internal divisions, and repeated foreign intervention. The Fifa has stepped in on multiple occasions, appointing three separate normalization committees to bring order to the federation. Years of instability, legal wrangling, and administrative limbo have left Pakistani football languishing on the sidelines of regional and international competition. The successful election of a permanent governing body signals a transition toward more stable and autonomous leadership. The new leadership faces considerable challenges, including revitalizing domestic football competitions, launching the long-delayed franchise-style league, and improving the performance of national teams. This comes at a crucial time, with qualifiers for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 currently underway. Earlier this month, the governing body postponed its Executive Committee elections, originally scheduled for May 20 due to regional tensions and unavoidable logistical challenges.

Salman Agha promises 'fearless but not careless' cricket as T20I captain

MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan T20I captain Salman Ali Agha has said that Pakistan cricket team will follow modern day attacking cricket approach under him and play 'fearless but not careless' cricket.

Addressing a pre-series press conference at the media center of the Gaddafi stadium here on Tuesday evening, he said it is a luxury to have so many aggressive players in the pool, adding that explosive Hasan Nawaz will play in the middle order as he proved his mettle in the middle as well.

"No team is an easy opposition in international and we will try to play good cricket and overcome Bangladesh in the three match series," he responded. On Sufyan Mueqem's absence in the team, he reasoned that Gaddafi stadium pitch is not that helpful for spinner and that's why he was not included in the team for the Bangladesh series. However, he added that Sufyan Mueqem will be part of the future white-ball cricket of Pakistan.

Praising Bangladesh's current fast bowling trio, Agha said that Bangladesh has the best fast bowling trio in their recent history, adding that the Men in Green have their plans against the Bangladesh bowlers. He further said that Bangladesh is a quality side.

Acknowledging the role of Babar, Rizwan and Shaheen in the white-ball cricket in future, Salman said Pakistan has certain young cricketers who can replace any cricketer at any number. He said Babar Azam,

Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi these players will help in replacements if have won many matches for the country and injury occurs to some players. brought glory. Salman Ali Agha attributed

"It's a good headache to have too many quick changes in the team as part of the plans to prepare a pool of 20-25 cricketers who could be available for selection for the ICC T20I World Cup 2026 in Sri Lanka, adding that World Cup 2026 and beyond.

Salman Ali Agha, to a query, hinted at inclusion of some senior players as well in the T20I squad for the upcoming T20I World Cup, adding that only those team do well at the international level which keep a balance between youth and age.

On the team selection on PSL X performances, Salman said that the team has been selected on the PSL X performances but players' international performance was not ignored in the selection of the current team. He said that most of the current team have done really well on international circuit.

On captain and head-coach's say in team selection, Salman Ali Agha said captain and head-coach are heard in playing eleven, adding that, during his New Zealand tour as captain, the team management listened to his voice on the playing eleven.

Salman Ali Agha said that maximum players will be provided opportunity in the current T20I series and future assignments, adding that Hasan Nawaz will play in the middle order as he has proved his metal played in the middle order as well.

Salman Ali Agha admitted the fact that quick-bowler Mohammad Wasim was picked for the T20I series against Bangladesh despite nursing an injury which he sustained during the PSL X, adding that the team physios were working on his rehabilitation and no decision has been made yet on his selection in the playing eleven.



Experts Call for Reversing 18% GST on Packaged Milk to Promote Formalization, Nutrition, and Growth: SDPI

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The experts and stakeholders from government, industry, and research institutions on Tuesday called for immediate reforms in the taxation regime affecting Pakistan's dairy industry and revert the 18 per cent GST imposed on packaged milk to 5 per cent to promote formalization, nutrition and growth. The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) organized a focused policy dialogue titled "Enabling Dairy Sector Transformation through Smart Taxation". The session, moderated by Zainab Naem and organized as part of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute's (SDPI) pre-budget consultation series, aimed to

finalize a joint statement and action plan to formalize the largely informal dairy sector through rational tax policies. In his opening remarks, Dr. Abul Qayyum Sulteri, Executive Director of SDPI, highlighted that despite contributing significantly to economic activity, over 90% of Pakistan's dairy sector remains undocumented and untaxed. "Documentation of the economy is crucial not just for fiscal stability but also for tackling malnutrition and ensuring food safety," said Dr. Sulteri. He emphasized that the current tax policy - particularly the 18% GST on packaged milk - disincentivizes the formal sector and undermines both public health and economic develop-



ment. Representing the private sector, Muhammad Nasir of Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan stressed the sector's socio-economic importance, especially in rural areas. "Dairy acts as a social safety net, yet our productivity remains among the world's lowest," he said. Nasir also flagged Pakistan's alarming 40% stunting rate and warned that increased taxation on safe milk could worsen national nutrition indicators. Aatekah Mir from Nestlé Pakistan explained that the sales tax freeze has halted investment in milk conversion infrastructure. "This tax was criticized across political lines," she noted, adding that Nestlé and others are fully aligned with the SDPI's policy recommendations. Dr. Shehzad Amin, CEO of the Pakistan Dairy Association, called for a rational and uniform tax regime. "No country taxes milk at 18% - the highest global rate is 9%. Safe milk is not a luxury, it's a right," he asserted. He warned that shifting consumption from packaged to loose milk due to pricing pressures could severely impact public health and contribute to a stunted generation in the next five years. Dr. Muhammad Anjum Iqbal, Animal Nutritionist at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research urged the government to incentivize quality milk production, highlighting the need for improving animal health, diet, and environment.

Resolution Passed in Support of Gaza, Urges Pakistan to Lead at OIC and UN

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights passed a resolution in support of Gaza victims and raised alarm over ongoing human trafficking involving Pakistani nationals. The committee emphasized the need for coordinated government action both at home and abroad to address these urgent humanitarian concerns. The meeting, chaired by Sahibzada Muhammad Hamid Raza, MNA, was held at the Ministry of Human Rights in Islamabad. It was attended by

several Members of the National Assembly and senior officials from the Ministries of Human Rights, Law & Justice, Interior, and the FIA. During the session, the Committee unanimously adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with the innocent victims of violence in Gaza. Members criticized the Muslim Ummah for failing to play an effective role in stopping Israel's continued aggression and called upon the Government of Pakistan to raise the issue more forcefully at international platforms such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations (UN).

Only 1,000 NGOs Registered Out of 18,000; Parliament Urges Regulatory Crackdown

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers convened a very review Pakistan's poverty alleviation efforts, expressing concern over delays, staffing shortages, and lack of project timelines. The Committee called for greater inter-ministerial coordination, improved regulatory oversight, and immediate steps to unblock institutional bottlenecks. Chaired by Mir Chulam Ali Talpur, the ninth meeting of the Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety

was held at Parliament House to assess the pace and effectiveness of current anti-poverty initiatives. The absence of defined timelines in a subcommittee report was cited as a critical barrier to project implementation. To address the issue, the Committee resolved to summon the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan and presidents of private banks in its next session. Their presence will be sought to agree on concrete deadlines and to resolve system integration delays affecting pilot projects.

Youm-e-Takbeer Day will be Celebrated tomorrow in Punjab Schools

REPORT: WAJIBA TAMSEEL

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab government has declared a public holiday on the occasion of Youm-e-Takbeer Day across the country. Summer vacations have begun in schools across Punjab. Only those government schools where children have to organise events regarding Youm-e-Takbeer Day Schools will only be open for two hours. Youm-e-Takbeer is considered an asset of Pakistan's history and modern



al institutions with enthusiasm and a message of peace and unity to the world. Regular programs will be organised on the occasion of Takbir Day in all schools across the country, including assembly special program, anthem, and appreciation of the services of Pakistan Army. Competitions will also be held in all educational institutions and students across the country are requested to celebrate the 28th May 2025 in their respective education-

Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmoond Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
Samra athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Diplomatic blitzkrieg

AFTER facing off on the battlefield, Pakistan and India are now fighting a battle of narratives with each side sending high-level delegations to world capitals to communicate their respective points of view regarding the recent hostilities.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif landed in Turkey on Sunday as part of a four-nation tour that will also see him travelling to Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Meanwhile, current and former lawmakers and diplomats are due to leave for the US and Europe.

Ex-foreign minister and PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari may reportedly lead one of these delegations. The team visiting the US is scheduled to meet the UN secretary general, American lawmakers, as well as engage with think tanks and the media in Washington DC. An Indian team, led by lawmaker and former UN official Shashi Tharoor, has visited the US as part of New Delhi's lobbying efforts.

Personal interactions have considerable influence in the conduct of diplomatic relations, which is why the PM himself is leading delegations to friendly regional states.

Similarly, senior lawmakers with experience in foreign affairs are being dispatched to the US.

The fact is that in the current circumstances, Pakistan has strong talking points. While the Indian side may try to spin the details, the fact is that New Delhi started blaming Pakistan for the Pahalgam atrocity very soon after the killings, without a shred of evidence. India has yet to share the details of any alleged Pakistani role with this country, or the international community.

Banu Mushtaq's polyglot India

Jawed Naqvi

GOOGLE Translate has become among the handiest apps for a good reason. It discards the cliché about the meaning getting lost in translation and helps strangers to connect in a naturally multilingual world.

Many Indians who love Urdu poetry can do so because it was translated into English or reset in the Devanagari script. Same with Persian and Latin classics, not to speak of Russian literary treasures. The way some Indians talk knowledgeably about Helen of Troy often sounds as though she was kidnapped by an island king in the neighbourhood.

I asked Graham Earnshaw, my news agency's Asia editor in the 1990s, to let me cover the raging Islamist insurgency in Tajikistan, but he tossed me a disarming question. "Do you speak Russian or Tajik?" As I could speak neither of the amazing languages, how was I hoping to report, say, an assault on the women of a minority community in a remote Tajik village?

There's always another way of seeing the problem, though. Most foreign journalists assigned to South Asia, for example, speak little or no local language. Graham's question, therefore, was a non-sequitur. Besides, there was a larger point at stake. The editor seemed surprised when he learnt that I used translators anyway, even to cover a story in Delhi's neighbourhoods - not the stories journalists pick up along the highways, where dhabas and panwallas deal with assorted clients via a handy mish-mash of connecting phrases and languages.

One could argue that an exceptionally erudite scholar of Hindi would perhaps feel challenged traversing India's

sprawling 'Hindi heartland', also called the 'cow belt'. Try to connect conversations from, say, the areas bordering Pakistan in western Rajasthan to the eastern flank of Maithili-speaking Bihar, both notionally Hindi-speaking states, and come back with a cogent narrative.

Prof Higgins would struggle. It's difficult to imagine a 'Hindi heartland' in which a Brij-speaker from a Mathura village in UP can communicate her story to an Awadhi-speaking village belle in Ayodhya, also in UP. It's a tricky proposition at the very least.

Women writers in South Asia are legion. They write in myriad languages but are read in many more.

And this is what makes the award of the Booker Prize last week to Banu Mushtaq so important. Her collection of short stories was written in Kannada, a South Indian language with a dazzling cultural pedigree. It was crucial that the 12 stories selected from a corpus stretching over three decades of writing were published as Heart Lamp in English, the translation done by a scholar of Kannada and English.

Deepa Bhasti, too, thus became a worthy co-recipient of the Booker. In 2022, Geetanjali Shree, a Hindi writer from Mainpuri in UP, won the prize for her novel on Partition after Daisy Rockwell translated it into English as Tomb of Sand. Geetanjali has authored three novels and several story collections, and her work has been translated into French, German, Serbian and Korean.

Arundhati Roy joined the surge of award-winning women writers from South Asia and underscored the need for translation when her Booker-winning God of Small Things was published

in several Indian languages, including Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Urdu, and Bengali.

Her other works have also been translated for domestic and foreign readers. Pakistan-born Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride was translated into Urdu at Zaitoon, and made it to the prestigious Rekhta collection of Urdu prose and poetry. Mahashweta Devi, the ardent feminist from the left, won the Magsaysay Award for her work in Bengali and celebrated in different languages.

Women writers in South Asia are legion. They write in myriad languages but are read in many more. Rakshanda Jalil has become a literary bridge between India and Pakistan with her translations of Urdu writings from both countries.

According to early reviews of Mushtaq's 12 short stories selected from her vast collection, they traverse religion, patriarchy, oppression, gender inequality and violence, and vividly capture the everyday trials and tribulations of Muslim women in Karnataka.

I liked the review in The Hindu. In the story about Mehrun, the mother of three decides to end her life after her husband takes a second wife. But her daughter Salma rushes to her mother with her baby sister and begs her not to make them orphans. As a lawyer and social activist as well as a writer, Mushtaq has been publishing stories since 1981. "Can stories change things, the way a legal case can?" The Guardian asked her. "Of course, because people will not know what rights they have got, and how silent suffering is not the solution."

Courtesy Dawn

My imperfect postpartum

Sumayya Tariq

I became a mother earlier than most of my peers. When I went back to work, my daughter was just eight months old. She could recognise me. She would cry when I left, and honestly, sometimes so would I.

It wasn't anything dramatic, but just sped up. A rushed goodbye in the morning, packing her things, half-prepping the lunch and driving off while feeding her oatmeal or omelette in the car. I'd drop her at my parents' and then leave for work. I used to text midday asking for her photos or videos. I was breastfeeding and expressing milk during work hours and honestly it was awkward and always in hiding.

People sometimes gave me more respect, which is a great part of our Pakistani culture. We revere mothers, but it also puts you in a box. You're seen as a mom first, not a human.

The postpartum blues were the worst. I had no glow, no maturity and honestly had the best family and spouse support anyone could have. Mostly, older women gave me a hard time, calling me a 'banaspati' (concocted, fake version) of a mom. I couldn't verbalise that I didn't feel fine inside. I felt like my body was rejecting me, and it took over a year to feel like myself again.

My social life basically disappeared. I didn't have the time or the energy for it anymore. My workaround was to only meet friends outside the house because I had stopped inviting people in - both emotionally and physically. My home became my safe space, not something I kept ready to impress others.

I heard the judgment loud and clear. People think working moms don't raise their kids right, that somehow your child is being deprived just because your mother is earning. It's a lazy and cruel stereotype, but it is what it is. Over time, I have learned not to take things so seriously.

I feel even getting bitter over it is a part of taking it seriously. Everyone has their flaws.

I was very lucky to have huge support from family and my spouse. And that's something I'm genuinely grateful for. It's one of the beautiful things about growing up in a collectivist culture that there's often a safety net underneath you.

Courtesy The News

Kazakhstan eager to build stronger connections with Pakistan in multiple sectors: Kistafin



ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Zherzhan Kistafin, on Tuesday reaffirmed his country's commitment to further strengthening ties with Pakistan through cooperation, emphasizing Islamabad's strategic position as a vital trade corridor for Central Asia. Speaking at an event organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) here, to launch a book titled "Examining the Feasibility of an East-West Economic Corridor for South and Central Asia: Views from India and Pakistan." The book is a result of collaboration between IPRI (Pakistan),

the RAND Corporation (USA), and India's IMPRI. The envoy highlighted the growing importance of regional cooperation and Pakistan's potential to serve as a bridge between landlocked Central Asian nations and global markets. Kistafin said Kazakhstan values its 35-year-long relationship with Pakistan and is eager to build stronger connections in multiple sectors.

According to him, leadership on both sides is committed to enhancing cooperation. "Pakistan holds a unique position to support Central Asian countries in accessing global markets," he said, noting that Kazakhstan, being the largest landlocked country in Central Asia, is actively working to improve its trade links through Pakistan. Kistafin said regional connectivity is vital and mentioned ongoing efforts to link Kazakhstan with Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan. He added that after 2021, the situation in Afghanistan was getting stable. Afghanistan is an integral part of our regional cooperation, highlighting recent progress in bilateral cooperation, he said that

last month, over 300 members from Kazakhstan visited Karachi and signed agreements worth more than \$200 million.

The visit, he said, allowed Kazakh stakeholders to witness Pakistan's trade potential firsthand. The ambassador pointed out two key challenges to deeper cooperation: limited communication and weak connectivity between the two nations.

He stressed the need for improved media collaboration and business exchange to overcome these gaps. "We need to close the communication gap between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, including improving collaboration between the media and business sectors. Pakistan can act as a connector between landlocked Central Asian countries," he said.

Kistafin said Kazakhstan is shifting from a landlocked to a "land-linked" country by improving its regional transport and trade infrastructure. In this effort, Pakistani ports like Gwadar, Karachi, and Port Qasim are crucial gateways for Kazakhstan's markets in the Gulf, Africa, and beyond.

SAPM Humayun forms committee to address industry challenges

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Humayun Akhtar Khan on Tuesday announced the formation of a committee to address key industry challenges.

In this regard, SAPM held a high level meeting with the All Pakistan Ceramic Tiles Manufacturers Association (APCTMA), said a news release.

A joint committee comprising members of the Tiles Manufacturers Association and the Engineering Development Board (EDB) established. The committee has been tasked to present a progress report by Thursday.

The meeting was attended by representatives from 10 Pakistani manufacturers and 4 Chinese manufacturers. The key issues discussed included the tariff policy, customs duties, exports and imports, and the need for tariff protection for the local ceramic tiles industry. Humayun Akhtar appreciated the role played by the tiles industry in Pakistan's industrial development. "I am fully aware of the challenges faced by tile manufacturers and I will personally advocate for your

cause," he added. SAPM directed the tile manufacturers to submit a detailed report outlining the specific reasons why higher protection is necessary for the industry. He further instructed that the report must quantify cost disadvantages as a percentage of total production costs. "The government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is committed to supporting and revitalizing the industrial sector," SAPM emphasized. "We are strongly defending the case for industries, including tiles, in the National Tariff Policy Board."

Haron reiterated his vision to see Pakistani manufacturers become regionally competitive and assured that Chinese manufacturers, as partners and friends, will continue to receive full support.

"No industry will be allowed to shut down," he affirmed. "Revival of industries is our vision, and we are formulating long-term policies to ensure sustainable growth."

He concluded by assuring full government support to the tile manufacturing sector and reaffirmed the government's commitment to the broader development of the local industrial base.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Mr. Humayun Akhtar Khan, held a high level meeting with the All Pakistan Ceramic Tiles Manufacturers Association at the Ministry of Industries and Production.

Pakistan marks Youm-e-Takbeer by celebrating peaceful applications of nuclear technology

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of Youm-e-Takbeer, Pakistan marks its historic achievement of becoming a nuclear power on May 28, 1998. While honoring this strategic milestone, the day also highlights Pakistan's remarkable strides in the peaceful use of nuclear technology for national development, health, energy, and agriculture. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), the country's premier nuclear organization, continues to lead efforts in leveraging nuclear science for the benefit of its citizens. A prominent example is the PAEC's network of 20 can-

cer hospitals across the country, offering advanced diagnostic and treatment facilities. Equipped with state-of-the-art technologies such as linear accelerators and PET scanners, these hospitals provide comprehensive care to cancer patients. Notably, the NORI Cancer Hospital in Islamabad offers cutting-edge treatment through the Cyber Knife technology, a non-invasive robotic radiosurgery tool available to patients. Approximately 80% of Pakistan's cancer patients receive diagnosis and treatment through PAEC's medical facilities—an enduring testament to its commitment to

public health. In the energy sector, Pakistan is making significant contributions to low-cost, clean and sustainable power generation through its six nuclear power plants. These nuclear power plants provide a stable and reliable source of electricity to the national grid, meeting the country's continuous energy demands while reducing environmental impact. Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit-1 (C-1) recently achieved a milestone by operating continuously for 400 days, setting a national record and demonstrating operational excellence. Looking ahead, Chashma Unit-5 (C-5),

Zulhijj moon not sighted, Eid-ul-Azha to be celebrated on June 7: Ruet-e-Hilal Committee

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee on Tuesday announced that the moon marking the beginning of Zulhijj 1446 AH was not sighted across the country. Consequently, the first day of Zulhijj will fall on Thursday, May 29, while Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated across the country on Saturday, June 7.

The announcement was made by Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Maulana Syed Abdul Khair Azad, following a meeting of the committee held in Islamabad. The session was convened to review moon-sighting reports and was attended by members of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee as well as representatives from relevant government departments.

Simultaneously, meetings of zonal and district Ruet-e-Hilal Committees were held in their respective regions, including provincial capitals. Despite intensive coordination and observation efforts, no credible moon sighting reports were received from any part of the country.

Maulana Azad, addressing a post-meeting press conference, said, "Most areas across the country experienced overcast skies today, and no testimony regarding the sighting of the Zulhijj moon was received. Therefore, with consensus, it has been decided that Eid-ul-Azha will be observed on June 7. He also emphasized the spiri-



tual and communal importance of the occasion, urging all those who are financially able to perform the act of Qurban (sacrifice) in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Maulana Azad praised the unity of the Pakistani nation in standing shoulder to shoulder with the country's armed forces and government during a critical phase of national defense. Drones He said, "The nation stood united in the face of aggression and supported its armed forces and leadership with unwavering resolve. We are grateful to Allah Almighty for granting us a decisive victory in this just battle."

He said the conflict was imposed on Pakistan by India, but the world has now seen through New Delhi's false narrative. "It is no longer hidden from the international community that India initiated hostility, and its disinformation has been exposed globally," he remarked.

Lauding the swift and bold response of Pakistan's military, he said, "Our Field Marshal and armed forces compelled India to retreat within just three hours, demonstrating unmatched courage and professionalism."

22 injured in alleged quadcopter attack in SW: hospital

PEAK POINT

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Seven minors were among 22 people injured in an alleged quadcopter strike in the Wana tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district, according to a hospital list.

An incident report issued by the district headquarters hospital (DHQ) in Wana mentioned a "drone attack" at 8pm, which injured 22 people aged between 13 and 60 years. The condition of a 13-year-old and a man was listed as "serious", and they were referred to "tertiary care". Seven, including three aged 18 and 19 years, had "major" injuries. The rest of the 13 had "minor" injuries, of which two were discharged.

PTI-affiliated MNA Zubair Khan Wazir echoed the hospital's tally and told Dawn.com, "The young men were playing volleyball when the quadcopter fired shells on them." He added that people in the area were "scared and restricted to their homes after the attack". Wazir, in a post on Facebook, strongly condemned the "drone attack in which innocent citizens were targeted". He demanded that the federal government and the relevant institutions "immediately investigate the incident, provide justice to the affected families, and take immediate and effective steps to prevent such attacks in the future".

Aleema offers dialogue, deal to 'unseen forces' for Imran's release

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: In a rare development, PTI founder Imran Khan's sister has called on "unseen forces" to negotiate a "give and take" deal aimed at securing her brother's freedom, expressing willingness for direct talks. Speaking to the media in Islamabad on Tuesday, Aleema Khan claimed judges were "facing pressure" in the former prime minister's cases, citing incidents where, allegedly, his petitions were added to caudles but mysteriously disappeared. Khan, the deposed prime minister who was ousted from power via the opposition's no-confidence motion in 2022, has been facing a slew of charges ranging from corruption to terrorism since his removal as the premier. He has been in prison since August 2023. She also claimed that hidden directives were preventing judicial action. "I want to say to these unseen forces—whatever you are, don't hide. Come forward. Khan's sister are ready to sit with you. Tell us what he has done to you, what has he said, what wrong has he committed against you," she demanded. She said that her brother remained defiant and steadfast, refusing to bow down even if jailed for life. "He told me, 'Even if I remain in prison forever, I will not submit to tyrants.'" Aleema accused these forces of threatening judges and parliamentarians and urged them to engage directly



rather than exert influence from behind the scenes. "Don't fear us—come and speak to us. We need to know what you want from Khan. If there's a give-and-take, let us know what it is," she added.

She stressed that Imran only stood for democracy and had not acted against the interests of the country. "Why are you afraid of his release? He is not someone who would harm Pakistan," she said.

Speaking to the media outside the Islamabad High Court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur launched a scathing attack on the federal government, judiciary, and political opponents. He strongly opposed the 26th Constitutional Amendment, calling it "unacceptable". "We were against it and will throw it in the dustbin," he said.

Gandapur claimed that the February 8 general elections were rigged, saying that "traitors conspired together to steal the elections". He announced that the next hearing of the case has been scheduled for June 5, just before Eid. "We will reveal during the hearing how the laws of Pakistan are being manipulated," he said.

Training Workshop Equips Public Information Officers on Right to Information Implementation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Transparency International Pakistan (TI Pakistan), in collaboration with the Pakistan Information Commission, organized a training workshop for Public Information Officers (PIOs) on the implementation of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The workshop focused particularly on Section 5 – Proactive Disclosure, as part of ongoing efforts to enhance transparency, accountability, and access to information in Pakistan. The event brought together PIOs from various federal departments. Key speakers included Mr. Shoab Ahmed Siddiqui, Chief Information Commissioner, Pakistan Information Commission; Mr. Kashif Ali, Executive Director, TI Pakistan; Mr. Awaz Nawaz, Additional Secretary, Department of Information and Culture, Punjab; and other senior officials from the Punjab Information

Commission and Government of Punjab. Addressing the participants, Mr. Shoab Ahmed Siddiqui highlighted the role of PIOs in upholding citizens' constitutional right to information under Article 19-A. Mr. Kashif Ali emphasized the need for proactive disclosure as a tool for reducing information gaps and promoting good governance. Dr. Mehboob Qadir, former Chief Information Commissioner, Punjab, and Mr. Ijaz Hassan Awan, Information Commissioner, elaborated on legal provisions and key exemptions under the RTI Act, offering clarity on enforcement. Mr. Muhammad Malik Bhulla, Chief Information Commissioner, Punjab, shared the province's experience with RTI implementation and stressed the importance of building a culture of transparency. Participants actively engaged in interactive sessions, discussing practical challenges and sharing insights for effective implementation of the law.