



President visits Mao Zedong's hometown, pays tribute at Statue Square



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Pakistan-EU ties entering new phase of investment, growth: Haroon

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PM directs simplification of regulations, faster digitalization to boost investment

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed the relevant authorities to ensure the provision of all necessary facilities to both domestic and foreign investors in order to boost the country's exports and said that regulatory compliance processes be simplified and made more cost-effective to boost investment in the country. Emphasizing the need for stronger engagement, the prime minister also directed officials to enhance communication between the government and investors, and to expedite the digitization of systems related to licensing and other services. He was chairing a meeting to review efforts aimed at promoting investment in the country. He said that promoting invest-

ment for economic development remained one of the government's top priorities. "The establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has increased investor confidence in the country," the prime minister remarked. During the meeting, participants were briefed on various measures being undertaken to promote investment. It was noted that the share of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the country's exports stood at 3.7% during the July-March period of the current fiscal year. The meeting was informed that the government aimed to increase the share of SEZs in exports to 8% by the fiscal year 2028. Participants were further told that a Business-Ready Action Plan was being developed in consultation with the provinces.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on promotion of investment.

Qatar supports Pakistani mediation, calls for diplomatic end to regional crisis

PEAK POINT



QATAR: According to Al Jazeera, Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Dr. Majed Mohammed al-Ansari said that their position has been "clear from day one" that "any conflict in the region

should be solved on the negotiation table," and supported Pakistan's role in mediation efforts. "We do not need to expand the circle of negotiations. We support Pakistani mediation," he said. He added that they are engaging with all their respondents over reopening the Strait of Hormuz in a press briefing, according to Al Jazeera. "We believe it should have never been closed and it should be opened immediately regardless of other considerations going on in the region," he said. "We are, as I said, supportive of this and has always been in coordination with all its partners regionally and beyond over that issue. We remain in full solidarity with Pakistan in their goal as mediator." The spokesperson added that Doha would favour a "comprehensive deal" to end the conflict, following a question about reports that Iran wants to decouple the Strait of Hormuz talks from nuclear discussions. Al-Ansari stressed that Qatar's main concern was regional security.

Trump not happy with latest Iran proposal to end war, says US official

MAHPARA ZAMAN



NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump is unhappy with the latest Iranian proposal on resolving the two-month war, a US official said, dampening hopes for a resolution to the conflict that has disrupted energy supplies, fuelled inflation, and killed thousands.

Iran's latest proposal would set aside discussion of Iran's nuclear programme until the war is ended and disputes over shipping from the Gulf are resolved.

That is unlikely to satisfy the US, which says nuclear issues must be dealt with from the outset, and Trump was unhappy with Iran's proposal for that reason, a US official briefed on the president's Monday meeting with his advisers said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said the US "will not negotiate through the press" and has "been clear about our red lines" as the Trump administration looks to end the war against Iran it began in February alongside Israel.

A previous agreement in 2015 between Iran and multiple other countries including the US sharply curtailed Iran's nuclear programme, which it has long maintained is for peaceful, civilian purposes. But that deal fell apart when Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in his first term in office. Hopes of reviving peace efforts have receded since the US president scrapped a visit planned for last weekend.

Pakistan successfully conducts training launch of Fateh-II missile system: ISPR

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The Army Rocket Force Command conducted the successful training launch of the indigenously developed Fateh-II missile system, the military's media wing said on Tuesday.

In a statement, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the missile system was "equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigation aids".

It said that the training launch was aimed at training troops, validating various technical parameters and evaluating the performance of different sub-systems incorporated for "improved accuracy and enhanced survivability".

ISPR added that the launch was witnessed by senior officers from the Strategic Plans Division (SPD), Army Rocket Force Command, and the Pakistan Army, as well as scientists and engineers from "strategic organisations".

"The forum commended [the] successful training fire of [the] indigenously developed missile of Fateh series," the statement added. According to ISPR, President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Imran brought to Pims for follow-up treatment, undergoes fourth eye procedure

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan received a fourth intravitreal anti-VEGF injection at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) and was discharged on Tuesday morning, according to the hospital spokesperson. Imran last underwent the anti-VEGF intravitreal injection on March 23. His eye ailment — right central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) — came to light in late January. His first medical procedure was carried out on January 24, and he was administered.

FO says Cambodia has agreed on early repatriation of 54 Pakistanis arrested following scam centre raid

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) said on Tuesday that Cambodian authorities had agreed on the early repatriation of 54 Pakistanis arrested following a raid on a "scamming compound".

The statement came after reports emerged that more than 200 Pakistanis were in the custody of Cambodian police in overcrowded facilities and facing a lack of basic facilities.

In the statement issued on Tuesday, the FO said that the embassy in Cambodia had actively pursued the matter with the Cambodian government.

It said that this was in line with the instructions of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar

to "take all possible actions aimed at facilitating the embassy staff were taking steps to ensure the welfare of the detained Pakistanis."



Pakistani community abroad."

"As a result of the embassy's efforts, the host authorities have agreed to the early repatriation of 54 Pakistani nationals detained in Siem Reap province. These individuals were arrested following a raid on a scamming compound," it said.

The FO added that

scam industry has ballooned in Cambodia in recent years, with thousands involved, some willingly and others forced by the organised criminal groups, experts say.

Last year, the United Nations said in a report that Asian crime syndicates behind the multibillion-dollar cyberscam industry were expanding globally, including to South America and Africa.

Syndicates have adapted, shifting operations between the most remote, vulnerable, and underprepared parts of Southeast Asia, especially in Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, and beyond, exploiting jurisdictions with weak governance and high rates of corruption, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said.

A multibillion-dollar

Forces destroy several Afghan Taliban posts in Chaman sector: Security sources



PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Security forces destroyed multiple Afghan Taliban posts in Balochistan's Chaman sector on Tuesday, said security sources. The sources said that the operation was carried out in response to "unprovoked aggression" by Afghan Taliban forces and terrorists on the border, under the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq. Security sources said the Pakistan Army effectively targeted and destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts in Chaman. The Sarshan, Al-Marjan and Edhi posts, as well as vehicles and other installations, were successfully hit, they added. They further added that security forces' determination to defend the homeland was unwavering and that the "intentions of terrorists and their patrons will be crushed".



SPORTS



Peshawar Zalmi storm into PSL 11 final after defeating Islamabad United



PEAK POINT
KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi booked their place in the Pakistan Super League (11) final with a convincing 70-run win against Islamabad United at National Bank Stadium, Karachi, on Tuesday.
 Skipper Babar Azam's blistering century, followed by a dominant bowling performance, powered table-toppers Zalmi to a resounding win over three-time champions United.
 The victory propelled the Babar-led side into the final of the ongoing eight-team tournament, while United will take on the win-

ning side of the Eliminator 1 between Multan Sultans and Hyderabad Kingsmen in Lahore on May 1 to strive for a berth in the summit clash.
 Set to chase a daunting 222-run target, the United could muster 151 before getting bowled out in 18.4 overs.
 The 2024 champions, however, got off to a flying start to the pursuit as their opening pair of Devon Conway (20) and Sameer Minhas shared a 58-run partnership, which culminated with the former's dismissal on the final delivery of the fifth over.
 Minhas was then involved in a

brief 23-run partnership for second wicket with Mohsin Riaz until being dismissed by Aaron Hardie in the ninth over.
 The right-handed opener remained the top-scorer for United with a valiant 44 off 23 deliveries, laced with seven fours and a six.
 Top-order batter Mohsin was then joined by captain Shadab Khan (six) in the middle, but the duo could knit an 18-run partnership for the third wicket as Hardie struck again in his next over, trapping the latter bow to deny United recovery.
 Mohsin followed suit in the

next over, falling victim to Sufiyan Muqem after scoring 25 off 20 deliveries, as United slipped to 100/4. His dismissal sparked a middle-order collapse as United lost four more wickets in just 23 deliveries and were consequently reduced to 126/8 in 15.1 overs.
 Experienced all-rounder Imad Wasim offered some fightback after the collapse with a 15-ball 22 before falling victim to Mohammad Basit in the penultimate over. Basit struck again in the same over, removing Salman Mirza, to round up a dominant victory for Peshawar Zalmi.

Marathoner Amin Mukaty's six-star dream accelerates in London



PEAK POINT
LAHORE: In the world of endurance running, where discipline meets obsession, Pakistan's Amin Mukaty is steadily carving out a historic path, one that could soon make him the country's first athlete to conquer all World Marathon Majors. At the London Marathon 2026, Mukaty delivered a performance that was less about spectacle and more about precision, the hallmark of a runner chasing something far greater than a single finish line. Clocking 2:45:02 on one of the world's most demanding courses, the Karachi-based marathoner demonstrated tactical maturity, controlled pacing, and mental resilience, qualities that define elite long-distance runners. But for Mukaty, London was never just another race. It was another step toward history. Mukaty has already completed Berlin Marathon, Chicago Marathon, and Boston Marathon, alongside appearances in the Istanbul Marathon and now London. With just two races remaining, New York City Marathon and Tokyo Marathon, Mukaty stands on the brink of achieving the coveted six-star distinction awarded to runners who complete all World Marathon Majors. "The goal is to finish all six majors sub-three," Mukaty said, outlining a goal that blends ambition with discipline.

ITF Men's Futures M-15 tournament continues



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD, Apr 28 (APP): The Flair Travel ITF Men's Futures M-15 (Leg-1) tournament continued here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Tuesday.
 This tournament is being organised in memory of Khawaja Iftikhar Ahmad, a respected former tennis player of the continent, in recognition of his valuable contributions to the sport and his lasting legacy in regional tennis history.
 Iftikhar holds the unique distinction of being the one and only player to be ranked No. 1 in pre-1947 India and subsequent-

ly No. 1 in Pakistan tournament is Leo Borg of Sweden, currently ranked ATP 483, while the second seed is Samir Hamza Reguig of Algeria, awarded the ATP Presidential Medal of 844.
 On day 1 of the main draw, Pakistan's junior player Abu Bakar Talha delivered an impressive performance. Entering a tournament through a wild card, he defeated Nepal 6-3, 3-2 (ret) to qualify for the second round. This remarkable win highlights the young player's potential and marks a proud moment for Pakistan tennis.
 Another Pakistani Player Muhammad Abid Ali Akbar Khan won their Match and Qualified for the 2nd Round.
 Top seed of the

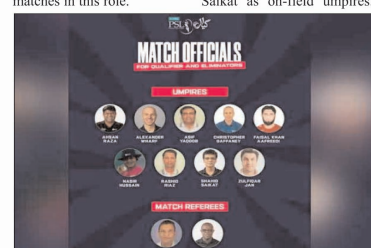
Pakistan men's team pre-series camp for tour of Bangladesh to begin from today



PCB reveals Match officials for PSL 11 qualifier and eliminators

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board on Tuesday confirmed the match officials for the key knockout fixtures of Pakistan Super League Season 11, including the Qualifier, Eliminator 1, and Eliminator 2. For the Qualifier on 28 April between Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United at National Bank Stadium, experienced official Sir Richard Richardson—a member of the ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees—will head the Playing Control Team. This fixture will mark his final appearance of the season after officiating in 10 matches. On-field umpiring duties for the Qualifier will be handled by Christopher Gaffaney and Alexander Wharf, both part of the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires. Faisal Khan Aafreedi will serve as the third umpire, while Zulfiqar Jan has been assigned as the

fourth umpire.
 For the Eliminator matches, Roshan Mahanama will oversee proceedings as match referee. Notably, he has officiated across all 11 PSL seasons and has accumulated 127 matches in this role.
 Eliminator 2, scheduled for 1 May between the winner of Eliminator 1 and the losing side of the Qualifier, will feature Ahsan Raza and Shahid Saikat as on-field umpires.
 In Eliminator 1, featuring Hyderabad Kingsmen and Multan Sultans in Lahore, on-field umpiring will be conducted by Shahid Saikat and Asif Yaqoob. Rashid Riaz will act as the third umpire, while Nasir Hussain will take



Pakistan U-16 team shows fight but fall narrowly to Russia





Experts seek fast-track EV transition, policy stability to shield Pakistan from energy shocks

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Energy experts and policymakers at a consultation called for an urgent coordinated policy action to electrify Pakistan's transport sector, warning that geopolitical tensions along with oil market volatility has exposed the country's fragile energy security framework. The consultative on "Transport energy Security Amid Geopolitical Shocks" was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Tuesday. Dr. Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director (Research), SDPI, said that

the ongoing global crisis is "a reminder not only of oil market instability but also of a fragile global supply chain." He noted that Pakistan's energy challenge is primarily a macroeconomic issue, as oil imports remain the largest component of the import bill. He stressed that transport being the largest oil-consuming sector must be the starting point for reform. He urged policymakers to treat the crisis as an opportunity to push government sensitization and integrate transport electrification into upcoming federal and provincial budgets. He suggested that a replacement



strategy for existing vehicles, particularly motorbikes that account for nearly 40% of petrol consumption, alongside budgetary mechanisms and incentives such as trade-in schemes and pooled financing with banks and industry. Engineer Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Senior Research

Associate and Head of Energy Unit at SDPI, emphasized that electrification is critical in the context of Middle East conflict and their spillover effects. He cautioned that Pakistan's vulnerability lies in disrupted supply chains, not just oil price fluctuations, making energy diversifica-

tion imperative. Dr. Naveed Arshad, Director, LUMS Energy Institute, pointed out that Pakistan has witnessed a rapid solar boom driven largely by private investment. He maintained that nearly all solar installations in Pakistan are downstream (consumer-driven), unlike other countries where grid-based generation dominates. He suggested leveraging this momentum for EV adoption through grid upgrades, charging infrastructure expansion, and regulatory reforms. He also stressed that highly regulated transport policies are stifling innovation, calling

for simplified frameworks and incentives to enable EV ecosystem growth. Prof. Dr. Aazir Anwar Khan, Integrated Engineering Centre of Excellence (IECE) at the University of Lahore, urged Pakistan to learn from China by integrating energy, EVs, and battery industries into a unified strategy. He recommended local manufacturing of EVs and batteries, noting that Pakistan has strong engineering talent. He further argued that EVs should be treated as a separate industrial category rather than conventional automobiles.

Pakistan urged to lead push for first woman UN Secretary-General

PEAK POINT

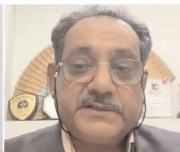
ISLAMABAD: In the backdrop of Pakistan's key role in the 2026 selection process for the UN Secretary-General, experts and policy makers here on Monday called for a wide ranging transparent national strategy, institutional reforms, and global coalition-building to ensure the appointment of first-ever woman Secretary-General of the United Nations. The call was made at a webinar, titled: "One for 8 Billion: Advancing Women's Leadership in the UN Secretary General Selection", hosted jointly by Sustainable Development



Policy Institute and Southern Voice. Shaista Parvez Malik, the Convener of Parliamentary Taskforce for SDGs and Member of the National Assembly, highlighted that the issue is fundamentally about 'power and process, not merit'. She urged stakeholders to move beyond advocacy and develop a concrete, time-bound action plan



to influence the 2026 selection. She suggested formulating a coordinated roadmap involving the Government of Pakistan, diplomatic missions, and UN representatives to actively support a female candidate and ensure transparency in the selection process. Dr. Shafiqat Munir, SDPI Deputy Executive Director (Policy), empha-



sized that the primary barrier to women's leadership at the UN is not lack of capable candidates but the entrenched gender profiling of roles within the global system. Citing the example of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific under Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, he noted that women leaders across UN systems,



particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, have demonstrated strong leadership. Dr. Munir suggested shifting from gender-based assumptions to a systematic profiling of leadership roles, alongside broader UN reforms to dismantle structural biases in decision-making processes. Emphasizing sustained advocacy combined with institu-

tional reform, he said that while global momentum for a woman Secretary-General is growing, achieving this milestone will require coordinated action at national, regional and international levels. Humaira Mufti, the Secretary for National Commission on the Status of Women, underscored the need for alignment with Pakistan's official foreign policy before launching advocacy efforts. She suggested that Pakistan must identify and formally endorse strong female candidates while simultaneously engaging regional blocs such as the G77, OIC, and Asia-Pacific groupings to build consensus.

Opinion & Editorial

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Rupture and thaw

Hezbollah's refusal to be part of the ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel has come as a spanner in the works. The truce was brokered last week in Washington, as Iran and the US were haggling for a dialogue in Islamabad. The decision of the pro-Iran group not to be part of the truce deal is a setback to efforts for congeniality among the arch foes. The war casualties in Lebanon have surpassed 2500, with more than 1.6 million displaced by Israeli attacks. Hezbollah's Secretary General Naim Qassem has apparently taken a high-moral ground, as he claims that talks with the Jewish state is a 'negation of dignity', vowing to continue 'defensive resistance'. Hezbollah, nonetheless, has come up with its own five conditionalities: halt to the aggression; Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories; release of detainees; return of residents to all their places; and reconstruction. This pronouncement has coincided with fresh onslaught on Hezbollah's infrastructure in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley, as well as areas in southern Lebanon, broadening the scope of destruction and dealing a lethal blow to all the hopes for a thaw in one of the most volatile frontiers in the Middle East. This rupture is fraught with serious consequences.

A long week

Arifa Noor
THEY came, they talked and they left, only to return within a day. That was true of the Iranians who were to fly in from DC but last-minute changes to their plans meant they never got on the plane. Some of them were said to be held up in Islamabad's Serena Hotel but there was little information available about them. Perhaps, even in this age of musbat (positive) reporting, one can say that the stalemate continues, though those in the know insist there is slow and steady progress behind the scenes. They have been reporting this positively for weeks now so the rest of us muggles can only hope for the best and point out that the ceasefire is still in place. But none of us can forget that the Strait of Hormuz is still closed and blockaded, supply lines are disrupted and the lack of trust can cause an accident, which may lead to a resumption of hostilities. But in the meantime, all the roads still lead to Pakistan.

The Iranians returned here twice over the weekend, while the Americans, too, were nearly here again. Neither one of the two warring countries nor the others waiting for the conflict to end can stop praising Pakistan. Indeed, be it local television or social media — domestic and international alike — every platform is full of Pakistan, its geopolitical role and relevance. There are stories galore and multiple

WhatsApp forwards on how Pakistan and its field marshal gained President Donald Trump's attention and approval as well as Iran's trust. And 'middle power' is now used in sentences about Pakistan as frequently as 'off-ramp' was last year during the May hostilities in South Asia. Indeed, Pakistan is the new middle power on the world stage, no longer dysfunctional and no longer isolated.

But in the excitement of being the new kid on the geopolitical block, most Pakistanis, along with foreign commentators, have forgotten that this is a neighbourhood we are very familiar with. The country has circled this block time and again. Occasionally with civilians in charge but mostly with military dictators ruling the roost, Pakistan has punched above its weight — compared to its size and economy — at many key moments of (Western) history. Post-9/11, Gen Pervez Musharraf was feted around the world, especially in Washington. That is why, inside the country, there is some wariness about the excitement surrounding this moment of international glory. It is not just because of history but also living experience. In the past few days, Islamabad went through a crippling lockdown where commuting was a hassle; people without personal vehicles had to pay heavy fares to get to work, and perishables became expensive as supplies

were disrupted. In addition, educational institutes were shut in places and working people were thrown out of hostels, even if they didn't have leave. The daily-wage earner's plight is unimaginable. This continued for a week with no information about when it would end — because the Iranians and Americans wanted to figure out if they wanted to talk and this allowed the government to bask in the glory of being an emerging power, or a middle power or just relevant, paying no heed to the citizens' discomfort.

It is becoming harder to think of ourselves as 'citizens' because somehow the word is associated with rights that the state seems to be stripping us of, one constitutional amendment at a time. Consider that a journalist was picked up under Peca as we hosted the Iranians; he was presented in court in handcuffs — not the first one and definitely not the last — while the government feted visiting journalists with a fancy dinner. Channels celebrated an article on social media about 'Pakistanis' as many absorbed the news of another hike in petrol prices, while navigating longer commutes due to roadblocks. Iran and the US were discussed endlessly, while the destruction of katchi abadis was ignored by most of the media, which couldn't stop waxing lyrical about the feel-good moment and playing patriotic songs.

Courtesy Dawn

The problems beyond science

Muhammad Hamid Zaman

The idea of science-based policy in a society is a relatively simple one. Let rigorous science generate evidence for what works and what does not, and then incorporate those findings in a policy to benefit society. Of course, it is much easier said than done. Scientific findings can be murky and different studies can contradict each other. Research funded by for-profit entities can be biased and steer researchers in a direction that are good for the companies, but not necessarily the public. Thinking only about the good of the majority may mean minority groups that are vulnerable or historically marginalised may continue to suffer. Lately, pushback through misinformation on issues ranging from vaccines to climate change has further undermined the foundational ideas of science-based policy.

And then there is something else. A complete disregard for scientific findings and predictions, which are not disputed on merit or ethics, but simply because there is no interest in pursuing them. In 2019, when an HIV outbreak in rural Sindh made international headlines, many in the public health sector of the country had warned that this was unlikely to be an anomaly. In fact, infectious disease researchers had been warning about micro epidemics in other parts of the country, including southern Punjab. In 2024, when a cluster of patients were infected with HIV at the dialysis unit at Nishtar Hospital in Multan due to criminal negligence, public health practitioners had warned once again about other likely outbreaks. We now know that they were right. Another outbreak, this time in Taunsa, has affected several hundred children who were given the disease by those who were entrusted to treat them. The BBC report that uncovered the awful tragedy in Taunsa is difficult to watch. Those children, whose lives have been permanently altered, are not some distant people; they are our own children.

Courtesy Tribune

FinMin says economy set to grow around 4% this fiscal year



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday said Pakistan's economic growth will be about four per cent this fiscal year while speaking at the EU-Pakistan High Level Business Forum in Islamabad, according to Radio Pakistan.

He noted that this represents a significant improvement over the previous fiscal year, adding that the country has been consolidating gains in terms of macroeconomic indicators.

Aurangzeb mentioned that our current account surplus was a little over one billion dollars in March this

year, expressing satisfaction over IT exports, the positive trajectory of value-added segments, as well as an increase in remittances.

He added that the country's foreign exchange reserves are expected to reach around \$18 billion by the end of June, providing an import cover of three months.

Also addressing the forum, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan underscored that the European Union remains Pakistan's largest export destination, with the GSP Plus framework playing a pivotal role in expanding market access and improving standards.

Under the GSP+ scheme, eligible countries are required to implement 27 international conventions covering human rights, labour rights, environmental protection, and good governance. In exchange, the European Union reduces import duties to zero on more than two-thirds of the tariff lines applied to its exports. Pakistan is currently one of eight countries that

benefit from this scheme. However, Khan stressed that the future of this partnership lies beyond trade, focusing on investment, technological collaboration, and integration into global value chains.

He pointed to vast opportunities across sectors, including mining, tourism, renewable energy, agriculture modernisation, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and infrastructure. He particularly emphasised the untapped potential of regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Paktunkhwa and Balochistan, rich in natural resources and investment prospects.

Inviting European partners to explore Pakistan's tourism sector, he noted the country's unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, offering high-value investment opportunities.

The forum, scheduled for April 28-29, serves as a major platform to deepen trade and investment cooperation and to bring together a large number of participants, including government representatives.

Pakistan-EU ties entering new phase of investment, growth: Haroon

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday said Pakistan and the European Union were entering a renewed phase of partnership focused on investment, innovation, and sustainable growth, as the country strengthens reforms and enhances its global economic standing. Addressing the inaugural session of EU-Pakistan Business Forum, he said "This is not just another conference, but a moment to shape the future of Pakistan-EU cooperation," He noted that the strong participation reflects growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic direction. The SAPM paid tribute to the leadership of the prime minister, adding that his government has successfully stabilized the economy, restored



investor confidence, and enhanced Pakistan's credibility on the global stage through consistent and decisive policies. Highlighting Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability, he emphasized that the country continues to promote dialogue and cooperation, reinforcing its role as a responsible and forward-looking nation. Haroon underscored that the European Union remains Pakistan's largest export destination, with the GSP Plus framework playing a pivotal role in expanding market access and improving standards.

President visits Mao Zedong's hometown, pays tribute at Statue Square

PEAK POINT

SHAOSHAN (HUNAN): President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday visited Shaoshan, the hometown of Chairman Mao Zedong, where he laid a wreath at the statue of China's revolutionary leader at Statue Square and paid tribute to him.

The president was received by Li Jiyang, Senior party leader of Xiangnan People's Congress and Zhang Xihui, Director of the Shaoshan Administration Bureau of Hunan Province, who apprised him of the life and struggle of Chairman Mao Zedong, highlighting his early years in Shaoshan and the influences that shaped his political thought.

President visits Mao Zedong's hometown, pays tribute at Statue Square

He was also briefed on the role of the memorial institutions in preserving historical material and promoting public understanding

of China's revolutionary history. Following the wreath-laying ceremony, President Zardari visited the Mao Zedong Memorial Museum, where he was briefed on the life, thought and political legacy of the founding leader of the People's Republic of China. He reviewed historical artefacts, archival material and exhibits documenting key phases of China's revolutionary history.

President visits Mao Zedong's hometown, pays tribute at Statue Square President Zardari paid tribute to Chairman Mao Zedong's role in China's historical transformation and acknowledged his contribution to the country's struggle, unity and development.

He noted that the preservation of such sites offered insight into the forces that shaped modern China and underscored the importance of historical memory in national progress.

Naqi congratulates nation on successful training test of locally developed Fatah-II Missile

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqi has expressed heartfelt congratulations to the nation on the successful training test of the locally developed Fatah-II missile system.

In his statement, the minister termed the achievement a remarkable milestone, crediting it to the exceptional capabilities of Pakistan's scientists and engineers.

He said that the successful training launch of the Fatah-II missile system reflects the country's growing strength in indigenous defense technology.

Mohsin Naqi described the development as a significant advancement in the defense sector, emphasizing that it highlights the professional excellence and dedication of Pakistan's scientific community.

Pakistani seafarers set sail on norwegian-flagged ships under fresh MoU: Junaid Anwar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Norway, allowing Pakistani seafarers to serve aboard norwegian-flagged vessels.

Hailing the MoU as a significant step forward for Pakistan's maritime workforce, Junaid Chaudhry in a statement on Tuesday said it would boost employment opportunities and strengthen bilateral maritime cooperation. The MoU, signed by Pakistan's Ambassador to Norway Saadia Altaf Qazi and Director General Shipping and Navigation, Alf Tore Sorheim, provides recognition of training



and certification for Pakistani seafarers enabling them to work on vessels registered under the Norwegian flag.

"This MoU will open new avenues for our seafarers, allowing them not only to secure employment on international vessels but also to gain exposure to advanced maritime practices," Junaid Chaudhry said.

The minister noted that the pact marks the first such arrangement between the two countries, reflecting growing ties.

Traders slam harassment, illegal action of tax collection Deptt

ABDUL SALAM BAITAB

BANNU: The trader community of Bannu has drawn a clear line for tax-collecting departments, stating that no one will be allowed to cross their limits. It has been declared mandatory for authorities to first take the Chamber of Commerce into confidence instead of approaching traders directly. An announcement was also made to soon meet the Chief Secretary for the resolution of issues. According to details, an extraordinary meeting of the Bannu Chamber of Commerce was held regarding the increase in municipal committee rents, taxes imposed by the Excise Department and other institutions, and taxes on signboards. The meeting was chaired



by Malik Khalid Khan, Senior Vice President Sibghatullah, Vice President Hikmatullah Jan, General Secretary Ghulam Qibaz Khan, and Office Secretary Pir Noor Muhammad Shah were also present. Leaders of various trader organizations participated in the meeting and presented their concerns. Secretary Ghulam Qibaz Khan presented the agenda and urged traders to remain connected with the Chamber for the resolution of their issues.

Punjab Accused of Withholding HIV Data as 84,000 Cases Reported Nationwide

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: A serious transparency crisis has surfaced in Pakistan's public health system after allegations that the Government of Punjab is not fully sharing HIV data with federal authorities, raising concerns that incomplete reporting could undermine disease control efforts despite expanded testing and surveillance systems. During a high-level briefing, Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal disclosed that Pakistan has significantly expanded its HIV response, increasing screening from 37,944 tests to more than 374,000 and treatment centers from 49 to 97. However, gaps in provincial data, particularly from Punjab, are preventing a clear national picture from emerging. The controversy intensified when



journalists directly questioned the minister, claiming that Punjab's reporting to the National Institute of Health remains incomplete, with instances of "nil" entries in surveillance systems. The allegation suggests that critical epidemiological data may not be reaching central databases, limiting the ability of health experts to track and respond to the disease effectively. The minister did not deny the issue and acknowledged that data is not coming from all areas. He also admitted coordination gaps between provincial and federal systems, stressing that without real

time and transparent data sharing, public health responses, including prevention, screening and treatment, cannot function effectively. Pakistan currently has 84,000 registered HIV cases, with around 61,000 patients receiving treatment, while approximately 24,000 individuals are missing from follow up care. Experts warn that incomplete provincial reporting could mean the real scale of the epidemic remains hidden, especially when estimates suggest that as many as 369,000 cases may exist nationwide. Although the minister maintained that there is

no deliberate attempt to hide data, the absence of a unified national dashboard and inconsistent provincial reporting have intensified calls for reform. Health authorities admitted that the current system depends too heavily on fragmented inputs rather than a structured and enforceable data-sharing mechanism. The federal ministry has pledged to address the issue, stating that efforts are underway to ensure that complete data from all provinces, including Punjab, is integrated into the national system. Officials stressed that transparency is essential not only for policymaking but also for maintaining credibility with international partners and ensuring effective use of health resources.

Farewell ceremony in honour of HC Ibrar Hussain Khan held

SPECIAL REPORT

NAIROBI: Officers and staff of Pakistan High Commission Nairobi conducted a farewell ceremony in honour of HE High Commissioner of Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Kenya, Mr. Ibrar Hussain Khan. The commercial counsellor Adeela younis, Defence Attache Col Inam khatak and Shoaib Mansoor, Head of Chancery spoke on the event. Head of Pakistan's community in Kenya also spoke on the



event. The officer and community mentioned the success stories of his excellency's tenure in diplomacy, trade and defence related matters!