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QUETTA VOICE

Pak Army Played Important Role In Safeguarding The Motherland: ISPR Seminar

Web Desk:

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) organized the National Security and Strategic Leadership Workshop 2026, bringing together vice chancellors, senior faculty members, deans, and registrars from more than 200 universities across Pakistan.

The workshop, held in Rawalpindi, also witnessed online participation from more than 200 universities across Pakistan.

Karachi, Peshawar, Muzaffarabad, Multan, and Quetta.

During a special session, Director General ISPR engaged with vice chancellors and senior academicians on key issues related to Pakistan's internal situation, particularly national security challenges.

Participants stated that the Pakistan Army has played a commendable role in safeguarding the country's defense, stability, and security.

They said Pakistan achieved a major victory in "Marka-e-Haq" due to the sacrifices and professionalism of the armed forces.

The participants expressed confidence that the country's defense is

in strong hands and noted that not only the people of Azad Kashmir but also those in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir take



A Participant Asks A Question From Director General (DG) of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry.

pride in the Pakistan Army.

Academicians attending the workshop said they received clear guidance on protecting students from negative propaganda and ensuring the dissemination of accurate in-

formation. They added that academia was provided comprehensive awareness regarding national security, information warfare, and challenges facing the country.

Participants termed the

coordination between academia and the armed forces a vital need of the time and highly appreciated ISPR's initiative of bringing vice chancellors and academic leaders together on a single platform.

Iran warns of new fronts as Trump doubles down

NEWS DESK:

US president says Tehran has days to reach a deal, warns of "another big hit"

Iranian army warns of 'extensive response', asks US, allies to refrain from 'strategic mistake'

Doha says Pakistan-mediated negotiations require 'more time'

UAE claims intercepting six drones launched from Iraqi soil

Iran said it will open "new fronts" against the US and allies after President Donald Trump threatened renewed attacks on Tehran, which he described as "another big hit", warning Tehran that it had limited time to strike a deal with the US.

Speaking to reporters at the construction site for the new White House ballroom, the president claimed that Tehran was "begging" to make a deal. "We're negotiating with Iran... you know how it is to negotiate with a country where you're beating them badly, they come to the table, they're begging to make a deal," he said.

"I hope we don't have to do the work, but we may have to give them another big hit. I'm not sure yet, but you'll know very soon."

"We have to make sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon," he told reporters. According to the US leader, Tehran has limited time to reach a deal with Washington.

Vance said on Tuesday the United States and Iran have made a lot of progress in their talks and neither side wants to see a resumption of the military campaign.

"We think that we've made a lot of progress. We think the Iranians want to make a deal."

Vance told reporters at a White House briefing. As the US ramps up pressure on Iran, the Iranian army warned it would "open new fronts" against the US if it resumed attacks.

"If the enemy is foolish enough to fall into the Zionist trap again and launches new aggression against our beloved Iran, we will open new fronts against it."

with new equipment and new methods," said army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia, according to Iran's ISNA news agency.

Iranian proposal

Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, also warned that any new act of aggression by the US or its allies would be met with overwhelming force.

"We announce to America and its allies: do not commit another strategic mistake or miscalculation," the commander was quoted by the state-run Press TV as saying. He warned that any renewed aggression or invasion by the enemies will be met with a "swift, decisive, powerful and extensive response".

Balochistan Security: A Terrorist Killed in Pishin Gunfight: Officials Say



From Our Correspondent:

PISHIN: A suspected militant associated with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan was eliminated during a fierce shootout with law enforcement agencies in Balochistan's Pishin district on Wednesday evening, authorities confirmed.

The high-stakes encounter involved a combined force of local police, security personnel, and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).

Ambush Leads to Mountain Pursuit
According to senior police officials, the confrontation began near the Sangar Killi area.

The Station House Officer (SHO) of the City Police Station Pishin and his team were returning from a targeted raid in Killi Karbala when their vehicle was ambushed.

Unidentified armed assailants operating on motorcycles opened fire on the police convoy. The security detail immediately returned fire, wounding one of the attackers.

Following the initial clash, the suspects retreated into the rugged, mountainous terrain of Killi Sangar.

The Standoff at the Bunker
A swift reinforcement operation was launched as district police and CTD operatives pursued the fleeing gunmen into the hills.

The situation escalated when the suspects took up defensive positions inside a hilltop bunker.

An intense, protracted gun battle ensued. During the exchange:

One militant was neutralized inside the fortified position. Logistical items seized included a Honda motorcycle and a colored copy of a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC).

Ongoing Security Operations in Pishin
The deceased insurgent was formally identified as a member of the banned TTP network. While the immediate threat was neutralized, law enforcement

agencies have not called off the operation.

Current Status: A comprehensive sweep and search operation is actively underway in the mountains of Pishin to track down escaping accomplices and secure the surrounding perimeter.

Contextual Security Concerns
Pishin district and the wider Balochistan province have faced persistent security challenges. Officials noted that the banned TTP-affiliated factions have a history of orchestrating targeted attacks against police checkpoints and security convoys in the region, keeping law enforcement on high alert.

An official investigation into the incident is currently ongoing.



"I'm saying two or three days, maybe Friday, Saturday, Sunday, something maybe early next week.

A limited period of time," he said in response to a question about the deal.

He also appeared to brush aside the growing domestic criticism of the Iran conflict, saying the war was "very popular."

"I frankly think it's very popular, but whether it's popular or not popular, I have to do it, because I'm not going to let the world be blown up on my watch, not going to happen," he added.

Trump also accused Iran of using the Strait of Hormuz as a "military weapon" for the past four decades.

"Iran has used the straits as a military weapon for 47 years, really much more than that. And that's not their strait, that's international waterway, that's not for them to do," he claimed.

Speaking about his decision to call off the attack, the president said he was an "hour away" from striking Iran, but called off the decision at the request of the Gulf states.

"We were all set to go," he told reporters.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, meanwhile, shared details about Iran's recent offer to the US.

He said the proposal called for the lifting of sanctions on Tehran, the release of Iranian frozen funds and an end to the marine blockade, Reuters reported.

The proposal also included ending the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon, the exit of US forces from areas close to Iran and damages to cover destruction caused by the war, he said.

As peace talks stall, Qatar said more time was needed to reach a deal.

"We are supportive of the diplomatic effort by Pakistan that has shown seriousness in bringing parties together and finding a solution, and we do believe it needs more time," Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said.

The UAE Ministry of Defence said the air defence systems detected and engaged six drones that "attempted to target civilian and vital areas in the country" during the past 48 hours.

The statement came two days after the attack on its nuclear plant.

US Vice President JD

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Fiscal Federalism and the Quest for Equity in Pakistan

AGHASANULLAH: Fiscal federalism forms the bedrock of governance in any federation, determining how financial resources are raised, shared, and spent to foster balanced development and social equity. In Pakistan, this relationship is constitutionally mediated through the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, a mechanism designed to rectify both vertical imbalances between the federal and provincial governments and horizontal disparities among the provinces themselves.

While the NFC Award represents a vital instrument for devolution and provincial autonomy, a critical examination reveals that its promise of equitable resource distribution is persistently undermined by deeper, systemic flaws in the country's fiscal governance.

The NFC Award has, over successive iterations, progressively increased the provincial share in national revenues, thereby strengthening fiscal decentralization.

This shift has the potential to improve public service delivery by bringing resources closer to the people.

However, the effectiveness of these transfers is contingent upon a healthy national fiscal environment—a condition Pakistan has rarely met.

The nation's fiscal narrative is characterized by structural weaknesses that choke the system at its source.

A chronically narrow tax base, heavy reliance on regressive indirect taxation, and inefficient revenue mobilization by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)



mean that the total pool of resources available for distribution is perpetually insufficient.

Consequently, even a well-intentioned NFC Award framework operates within a system of scarcity, limiting its capacity to achieve genuine equity.

"Hidden Deficits" and Contingent Liabilities

Beyond revenue inadequacy, the expenditure side of the fiscal

equation presents an equally formidable challenge.

A significant portion of the federal budget is consumed by non-development expenditure, most notably debt servicing and defense. This leaves limited fiscal space for development spending, which is crucial for long-term economic growth and for addressing regional inequalities.

The paper notes

that the fiscal year 2024-25 saw a nine-year low in the consolidated budget deficit, partly due to provincial surpluses.

However, this superficial stability masks the underlying reality that the cost of servicing past debt continues to crowd out investments in the human and physical infrastructure needed to level the playing field among provinces. A major contribution of the research

is its identification of "hidden deficits" and contingent liabilities as critical yet often overlooked sources of fiscal stress. Beyond the conventional budget deficit, factors such as off-budget expenditures, subsidies to loss-making public sector enterprises, and implicit guarantees

Cycle of Short-Term Fixes Rather Than Long-Term Solutions

obligations create a precarious financial reality. This lack of transparency in accounting for risks—from natural calamities to the collapse of state-owned corporations—exposes the federation to unpredictable fiscal shocks.

The failure to consolidate and disclose these contingent liabilities means that the true scale of fiscal vulnerability is rarely debated in parliament or under-

stood by the public, perpetuating a cycle of short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions.

To break this cycle, the paper argues for a fundamental shift from one-dimensional, crisis-driven fiscal management to a multi-dimensional, institutionally anchored approach.

It recommends a suite of reforms that move beyond the NFC Award itself to

strengthen the entire fiscal ecosystem.

Key among these are the establishment of an Independent Fiscal Council (IFC) to provide unbiased analysis of fiscal policy and budget assumptions, thus reducing political discretion and enhancing evidence-based decision-making.

Furthermore, it calls for strengthening the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework by linking it to Public Service Agreements (PSAs) that tie resource allocation to measurable outcomes, ensuring that provincial transfers under the NFC Award translate into tangible improvements in education, health, and infrastructure.

In conclusion, the National Finance Commission Award is an essential but insufficient instrument for achieving fiscal equity in Pakistan. Its effectiveness is inextricably linked to the overall health of the nation's public finances.

As the research paper demonstrates, persistent issues such as a narrow tax base, unsustainable debt service, and opaque contingent liabilities undermine the very resources that the NFC Award is meant to distribute equitably.

Moving forward, the focus must broaden from negotiating provincial shares to implementing deep-rooted institutional reforms.

By enhancing revenue mobilization, ensuring fiscal transparency, and prudently managing debt and liabilities, Pakistan can create an environment where the NFC Award can fulfill its constitutional promise—fostering a resilient, balanced, and truly equitable federation.

Forced Marriage in Islam: A Clear Violation of Women's Rights and Human Dignity

By Musavir Durrani

Forced marriage remains one of the most damaging cultural practices in parts of the Muslim world today. Despite being justified in the name of honor, tradition, or family unity, Islam itself strictly forbids forcing any woman, or man, into a marriage they do not want. Islamic teachings make consent the

core of marriage, while coercion makes a marriage *batil* (invalid).

The Qur'an Clearly Forbids Forced Marriages. Allah states in Surah An-Nisa:

"O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

(Qur'an 4:19) This verse was revealed to abolish the jahiliyyah practice of controlling or forcing women into marriages.

Islam replaced oppression with dignity, choice, and responsibility.

Prophetic Example: Forced Marriages Declared Invalid

A woman once came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



complaining that her father had married her without her permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the full right to reject or accept the marriage, proving that consent is mandatory.

Hadith References: Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 5138.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1419. These narrations all confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the woman to annul her forced marriage.

One narration even states that she chose to remain married but wanted to teach women that fa-

thers have no right to force their daughters.

Parents Can Advise, But They Cannot Force.

Islam highly respects parents, but marriage choice is not their right. They can guide, suggest, and advise, but they have ab-

solutely no power to force their child into marrying someone. Even if parents think they "know what is best," they cannot override the choice of their daughter or son.

The final decision always belongs to the person getting married.

Statements such as: "If you don't marry this one, who will marry you?" "You have no choice." "Do it for family honor." "You must obey your parents."

These are pure emotional manipulation, and Islam does

not allow it. Emotional or Psychological

Pressure is Also Haram. Forced marriage is not only when someone is physically pressured. Even emotional, mental, or family pressure

counts as force. Any Nikkah done under fear, pressure, or

threats is invalid (*Batil*) in Islam. This ruling is based on multiple hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) annulled marriages done without consent.

Modern Forced Marriages, A New Way of Burying Women Alive. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury baby

girls alive. Today, many scholars say: "We no longer bury women in the ground, we bury their dreams on the day of their Nikkah."

When a girl is forced into a marriage, pressured emotionally, or told she has no other choice, we destroy her life while she is still alive. This is the new form of burying women alive, and Islam came to end this injustice completely.

Forced marriage has no place in Islam. It is against the Qur'an, against the Sunnah, and against the dignity that Islam

gives to every woman and man. Parents must love, support, and guide, but never control or force marriage decisions.

"Allah gave women this right, and no one can take it away".

First of hundreds of detained Gaza flotilla activists arrive in Israel

NEWS DESK: Israeli authorities have begun detaining hundreds of activists seized from a Gaza-bound flotilla at the southern port of Ashdod on Wednesday, a rights group said, after Israeli forces intercepted their vessels at sea.

The Global Sumud Flotilla set sail from Turkey last week in the latest attempt by activists to breach Israel's blockade of the Palestinian territory, after Israeli forces intercepted a previous convoy last month.

Israeli authorities said 430 activists aboard the flotilla were en route to Israel, while rights group Adalah said some had already arrived at Ashdod port and were being held there.

"These acts are a direct extension of Israel's policies of collective punishment and starvation of Palestinians in Gaza," the Israeli foreign ministry dismissed the operation as a publicity stunt serving Hamas.

"Another PR flotilla has come to an end. All 430 activists have been transferred to Israeli vessels and are making their way to Israel, where they will be able to meet with their consular representatives," a spokesman from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said late on Tuesday.

"This flotilla has once again proved to be nothing more than a PR stunt at the service of Hamas," the spokesman added.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier denounced the flotilla as "a malicious scheme designed to break the blockade we have imposed on Hamas terrorists in Gaza".

The US on Tuesday sanctioned four people associated with the Global Sumud Flotilla and accused them of being "pro-terrorist".

Around 50 ships had departed from southwestern Turkey on Thursday. A website tracking the flotilla's location later showed several vessels being intercepted west of Cyprus.

Nine Indonesian citizens who were part of the flotilla "have all been reported arrested by Israel", a spokeswoman for Indonesia's foreign ministry said, citing information dated Wednesday.

Indonesia called on Israel to immediately release all vessels and crew members, adding that "every diplomatic channel and consular measure will continue to be fully utilised".

Saad Edhi, the son of prominent social worker Faisal Edhi and the grandson of late philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi, is among the activists detained. Indonesian newspaper Republika earlier said two of its journalists were among the nine Indonesians detained.

Organisers said the flotilla also included 15 Irish citizens, including Margaret Connolly, sister of President Catherine Connolly.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Wednesday said Israel had arrested South Korean nationals in international waters, calling the action way out of line.

In a cabinet meeting, Lee said the South Korean citizens had been detained for reasons not valid under international law, questioning whether such actions could be allowed to pass without protest.

Lee said he believed many European countries were willing to arrest Netanyahu under International Criminal Court warrants, but that Seoul must make its own judgment on the matter.

On Tuesday, Pakistan and nine other countries issued a joint statement condemning Israel's interception of the flotilla. The joint statement by the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Maldives and Spain was shared by the Foreign Office on the social media platform X.

It said that the ministers "condemn in the strongest terms the renewed Israeli assaults against the Global Sumud Flotilla, a peaceful civilian humanitarian initiative aimed at drawing international attention to the catastrophic humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people".



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Colosseum selfies and 'Melody' toffee: Modi meets Meloni in Rome

NEWS DESK: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni took selfies at the Colosseum and admired the view over Rome ahead of talks focused on trade on Wednesday in a video posted on X. Meloni also thanked Modi for bringing along a G20 packet of "Melody"

toffees on his visit, with the two seen laughing over the present — a play on their names.

Wrapping up a tour of Europe, Modi landed in Rome on Tuesday for the first bilateral visit by an Indian prime minister to Italy in 26 years.

Modi previously visited Italy for a G20 meeting in 2021 and a G7 summit in 2024.

In a joint opinion in Italy's *Corriere della Sera* daily, the two said they wanted to "reach and exceed the €20 billion (\$23bn) target for trade between Italy and India by 2029".

Particular sectors of interest would include defence, aerospace, car parts, clean technologies and textiles, they said. "We aim to forge a powerful synergy between Italian design, manufacturing excellence, and world-class supercomputers... and India's rapid economic growth, engineering talent, scale, and innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem," they said.

Bilateral trade between Italy and India was €14.25bn last year, according to the Indian embassy to Italy. Later on Wednesday, the two leaders will hold bilateral talks at Villa Pamphili, a 17th-century villa to the west of the city centre.

Modi on X said he would also visit the Rome headquarters of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) "strengthening India's commitment to multilateralism as well as global food security".

Opening talks, both were quick to laud their countries' special ties as they extended their treaty of "friendly cooperation".

Putin, quoting a Chinese phrase, told Xi: "A day apart feels like three autumns," adding that relations had reached an "unprecedentedly high level" despite

unfavourable external factors", Russian media footage showed.

Putin, Xi hail 'unyielding' ties in China talks after Trump visit

NEWS DESK: President Xi Jinping hailed China and Russia's "unyielding" ties in talks with Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, as the pair met to underscore their alliance days after US President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing.

Putin was received by Xi outside Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People in much the same fashion as Trump last week, complete with chanting children and military fanfare.

But the language was much warmer, with Xi telling the Russian leader Beijing and Moscow have "continuously deepened our political mutual trust and strategic coordination with a resilience that remains unyielding", according to Chinese state media.

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unfavourable external factors", Russian media footage showed.

In an apparent swipe at the United States, Xi warned of "unilateral and hegemonic countermeasures running rampant" in the world.

Xi said the countries should focus on a long-term strategy and promote a "more just and reasonable" global governance system, according to Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

"The reason China and Russia relations have reached this level is because we have been able to deepen political trust and strategic cooperation," Xi said at the start of his meeting with Putin.

Putin said their relations were helping ensure global stability and stressed that Russia remained a reliable energy supplier amid Middle East disruption.

"The comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation between Russia and China in the new era is an example of international relations in the modern world," Putin told Xi.

21 killed as heavy rains drench China

NEWS DESK: Torrential rain continued across southern and central China on Tuesday with at least 21 people killed in widespread flooding that also closed schools and businesses, and disrupted transport and power supplies, authorities said.

China's weather agency said areas of Jiangxi, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Guangdong and Hainan faced a high risk of rain-related disasters, including landslides, flash floods and severe urban flooding and waterlogging.

Authorities said they have allocated 150 million yuan (\$22.4 million) for disaster relief and launched emergency responses in several affected areas.

Many residents in Jingzhou, a city in central Hubei, were knee-

deep in water and able to catch fish swimming in the streets, according to images posted on Chinese video platform Douyin. Some cars were nearly completely submerged on roads surrounded by residential and commercial buildings.

Ten people were confirmed dead after a pickup truck carry-

ing 15 farm workers fell into a flooded river in China's southwestern region of Guangxi amid heavy rain, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

In separate incidents, heavy rain and flooding killed four people in southwestern Guizhou province, four others in southern Hunan province, and

three in a low-lying village in central Hubei province, CCTV said. A number of people remain missing.

Schools, businesses and transport services have been suspended, and authorities are relocating residents in some parts of Hubei and Hunan, state media reported. Reuters

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (right) take a selfie at the Colosseum in Rome, Italy, on Tuesday.

Israeli occupiers establish new illegal settlement outpost in West Bank's Hebron

NEWS DESK: Israeli occupiers began establishing an illegal settlement outpost in a village in the Masafar Yatta region of Hebron governed in the southern occupied West Bank under the protection of the army, a Palestinian official said on Wednesday.

Khalil Hathaleen, head of the Umm al-Khair village council, told Anadolu that occupiers had "started building a new settlement neighbourhood in the middle of the village by installing caravans, erecting fences, and paving roads".

Hathaleen explained that the new outpost cuts Umm al-Khair into two sections and blocks roads used by students and residents.

He said Umm al-Khair "has been subjected to a fierce and ongoing campaign by occupiers, adding that construction of the settlement neighbourhood had accelerated since midnight with the aim of "tightening pressure on residents and displacing them."

"The goal is to expel the people, but we are staying here," he said.

Activist Ahmad Hathaleen said occupiers began placing caravans in the middle of the Palestinian community overnight.

He added that the new outpost "seizes dozens or even hundreds of dunams of Umm al-Khair land," despite residents obtaining a ruling from an Israeli court months ago declaring it illegal.

He said the establishment of the outpost divided Umm al-Khair into northern and southern sections "to impose further pressure on Palestinians in preparation for their displacement."

The attacks come amid escalating occupier violence in the West Bank. The Palestinian Colonisation and Wall Resistance Commission documented about 1,637 attacks by the occupiers in April.

The violence has coincided with a continued Israeli military escalation in the occupied territory since the Gaza war, including killings, arrests and raids on cities and towns involving human searches and property destruction.

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Many residents in Jingzhou, a city in central Hubei, were knee-



President Xi Jinping (right) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) talk during their meeting in Beijing, China, on Wednesday.



People wade through floodwaters in a village in China's southwestern region of Guizhou on Tuesday.



A flooded street in a village in China's southwestern region of Guizhou on Tuesday.

University of Turbat Observes Black Day, Holds Protest Walk Over Disappearance of Gwadar University VC and Colleagues

News Desk
TURBAT: The University of Turbat (UoT) joined universities across Balochistan in observing a Black Day and organizing a protest walk against the disappearance of Gwadar University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Syed Manzoor Ahmed, Lecturer Dr. Irshad Baloch, and their driver, Hatim.

The protest brought together faculty members and administrative staff who called for the immediate, safe, and dignified release of the missing individuals. Participants urged the government and relevant authorities to take urgent measures to ensure their recovery and return to their families.



Addressing the gathering, speakers highlighted the growing concern among family members, students, academics, and the wider community over the disappearance of the senior educationists. They noted that such incidents not only

create uncertainty within academic institutions but also pose serious challenges to the advancement of higher education in Balochistan. The participants praised the significant contributions of Prof. Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir, Dr. Syed Manzoor Ahmed, and

Dr. Irshad Baloch toward strengthening higher education, research, and academic excellence in the province. They described their services to the education sector as invaluable and lasting. The protest concluded with a renewed expression of solidarity with the affected families.

Participants reiterated their appeal for the immediate and safe recovery of the missing academics and their driver, emphasizing the need for humanitarian consideration and swift action from the concerned authorities.

Deputy Commissioner Elias Kabzai Reviews Polio Campaign Progress During Field Visit in Sibi

SIBI: Deputy Commissioner Sibi, Elias Kabzai, conducted a field visit to Gharzeb Abad and several adjoining areas on the third day of the ongoing anti-polio campaign.

Assistant Commissioner Sibi Mansoor Ali Shah, N-Stop Officer Dr. Shehzada Kamran, and other concerned officials accompanied him during the visit. During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner met with various polio teams and reviewed the progress of the campaign, team performance, and vaccination coverage. He checked the vaccines carried by the teams and thoroughly examined their tally sheets and official records to ensure trans-

parency and efficiency in the field operations. Deputy Commissioner Elias Kabzai also visited homes to verify whether children had been administered polio drops.

While interacting with parents, he stressed the importance of vaccinating children during every anti-polio campaign to protect them from the crippling disease. The Deputy Commissioner further inspected children roaming in the streets and immediately directed the on-site polio teams to administer polio drops to all eligible children without delay. He emphasized that the complete eradication of polio remains the government's top priority.

ity and that strict field monitoring is being carried out to achieve this national objective. Speaking on the occasion, Elias Kabzai stated that even a single child missing the polio vaccine could pose a serious risk to public health. He instructed all teams to ensure 100 percent door-to-door coverage so that no child is left unvaccinated.

He also directed the relevant officials to closely monitor team attendance, performance, and vaccine availability throughout the campaign. Special instructions were issued to immediately reach missed children and vaccinate them to help make District Sibi completely polio-free.



NAB Balochistan Holds Anti-Corruption Awareness Seminar at Tameer-e-Nau Public College Quetta

QUETTA: National Accountability Bureau Balochistan organized an awareness seminar at Tameer-e-Nau Public College on the topic, "NAB's Working Mechanism and the Role of Students in Eliminating Corruption."

The seminar was part of NAB's ongoing anti-corruption awareness campaign aimed at educating young students about the harmful effects of corruption and encouraging collective efforts for building a corruption-free society.

NAB Officials highlighted the role of youth in fighting corruption. A delegation of NAB Balochistan officers led by Deputy Director Khuram Shehzad interacted with students and faculty members, discussing NAB's vision, mission, and the critical role students can play in combating corruption. Director Colleges Muhammad Hussain Baloch and Principal Abid Maqsood were also present along with a large number of students.

Addressing the participants, Deputy Director Khuram Shehzad emphasized that young students are key agents of positive change in society. The seminar identified nepotism, bribery, favoritism, misuse of influence, and discrimination as various forms of corruption, expressing concern that such practices have become increasingly common in society.



Participants were encouraged to raise awareness against corruption and promote values such as transparency, honesty, and accountability. Speakers stressed that students, as responsible members of society, can play a

major role in laying the foundation for a corruption-free Pakistan. An awareness walk was organized after the seminar. During the walk, Director Colleges Muhammad Hussain Baloch and Principal Abid Maqsood appreciated the efforts of NAB Balochistan and assured their full cooperation in future anti-corruption campaigns.

At the conclusion of the seminar, NAB officials presented a commemorative shield to the college principal. An anti-corruption awareness walk was also organized on the college campus, attended by NAB officers, college administration, professors, and a large number of students.

Deputy Commissioner Farida Tareen Reviews Construction Work on Murad Ali to Dambri Road Project in Sohbatpur

SOHBATPUR: Deputy Commissioner Sohbatpur, Farida Tareen, paid a detailed visit to the under-construction Murad Ali to Dambri Road project, where she inspected the ongoing development work and reviewed the pace, quality, and transparency of the project.

During the visit, Executive Engineer Roads, Jahangir Khan Khoso, briefed the Deputy Commissioner on various aspects of the project, including construction progress, the quality of materials being used, and challenges being faced during implementation.

Farida Tareen emphasized that providing basic facilities to the public is the government's top priority in line with the vision of Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

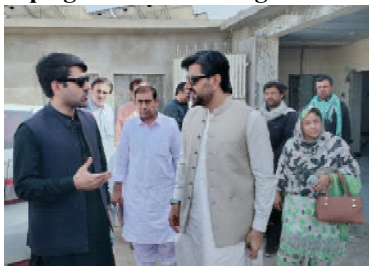
She issued clear directives to ensure that all development projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe and that no compromise is made on construction quality so the projects remain durable and sustainable. The Deputy Commissioner further stated that the completion of the 0.9-kilometer black top road from Murad Ali to Dambri will provide

road would not only improve transportation facilities for local residents but also help farmers and landowners transport their agricultural produce to markets in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Farida Tareen ultimately boosting their income and strengthening the local economy. She directed the concerned authorities to further accelerate the pace of work, immediately resolve all technical and administrative hurdles, and ensure the timely completion of the project so that the public can

Provincial Coordinator Inam-ul-Haq Qureshi Chairs Polio Campaign Review Meeting in Barshore

BARSHORE: Provincial Coordinator for the Emergency Operations Center, Inam-ul-Haq Qureshi, chaired an important meeting regarding the ongoing anti-polio campaign in the newly established district of Barshore. Deputy Commissioner Barshore, Khalid Shams, was also present on the occasion. The meeting was attended by CCO Syed Kaleemullah, ACO Aziz Ahmed Kakar, UNICEF Team Leader Shapour Salman, and N-Stop Barshore. Dr. Maryam, along with other concerned officials.



Qureshi stated that the eradication of polio is a collective national responsibility and effective measures against the disease are essential. He appreciated the dedication of frontline polio workers who go door-to-door and street-to-street to administer life-saving polio drops to children. He emphasized that society must en-

courage and support these workers in their efforts. Speaking during the session, Deputy Commissioner Khalid Shams appealed to parents not to hide

their children from polio workers and to ensure that every child receives protective polio drops. He said that religious scholars, tribal elders, politicians, and the media have all played an important role in the fight against polio. The Deputy Commissioner further stressed that no child should remain deprived of polio vaccination, as complete immunization is vital for eliminating the disease.

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants reaffirmed their commitment to working together for the eradication of polio from District Barshore and across Pakistan.



to be a milestone in the area's development. She noted that the benefit from this important facility at the earliest possible time.

Zhob Model Higher Secondary School Visit: Commissioner Reviews Academic and Technical Performance

ZHOB: Commissioner Zhob Division, Asif Ali Farukh, conducted a detailed visit to the Model Higher Secondary School Zhob to review its academic, administrative, and technical activities. During the visit, he inspected various classrooms and directly inter-

acted with students by asking questions to assess their academic performance and the overall quality of teaching. The Commissioner appreciated the teaching methodologies of the institution's staff and expressed confidence that

technical education would play a key role in empowering the youth. School Principal Taza Khan Nasir briefed the Commissioner about the overall performance of the institution, student enrollment, teaching staff, academic and extracurricular activities, and the challenges be-



ing faced. The Commissioner expressed satisfaction over the overall performance of the school and stated that the Model Higher Secondary School Zhob is a role model institution in terms of educational standards and discipline in the region.

Balochistan Minister Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa Reviews Progress of BSDI Development Projects Across Province

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Communications and Works, Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa, stated that the ongoing development projects under the Balochistan Sustainable Development Initiative (BSDI) are of great importance and will bring revolutionary changes to the province's infrastructure while positively impacting overall development and public welfare.

He expressed these views while chairing a high-level meeting held to review the progress of development projects under BSDI Phase-I and Phase-II across Balochistan. The meeting was attended virtually via Zoom by chief engineers from all six zones, relevant officers, superintending engineers, technical advisors, district engineers, and other



concerned officials. During the meeting, Executive Engineers of Roads and Buildings from every district presented detailed briefings on the progress of BSDI projects, including the pace of construction work, quality standards, and completion status. Addressing the participants, Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa emphasized that all BSDI projects are crucial for public welfare and strengthening the province's infrastructure. He said the comple-

tion of these projects would improve road networks and building infrastructure in every district, leading to enhanced development activities and better public facilities. The provincial minister issued strict directives to all district engineers and relevant officials to ensure effective monitoring of ongoing development projects and to utilize all available resources for their completion within the stipulated timeframe. He warned that negligence or poor performance in develop-

ment projects would not be tolerated under any circumstances, adding that several engineers had already been suspended for negligence in their duties. He further clarified that strict action would be taken against any compromise on project completion, construction quality, or technical standards. Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa also announced that special monitoring teams are being formed to ensure transparency and oversight of BSDI and other ongoing development projects in the province. These teams will inspect projects in their respective zones and submit detailed reports to the Secretary's Office to further improve transparency, quality, and implementation speed. The provincial minister reiterated that the Government of Balochistan is giving top priority to the timely and high-quality completion of development projects in order to achieve sustainable development, strong infrastructure, and public prosperity across the province.

Govt set to approve Rs3.5tr development plan

NEWS DESK: The government is scheduling meetings of the Annual Plan Coordination Committee (APCC) and the National Economic Council (NEC) in the first week of June to clear a consolidated national development programme of more than Rs3.5 trillion and a macroeconomic framework envisaging an economic growth rate of 4.1 per cent with an elevated inflation rate of 8.5pc for the next fiscal year.

Informed sources said the APCC meeting, to be presided over by the planning and development minister, was being scheduled for June 3.

It to be followed by the NEC meeting, led by the prime minister, on June 3.

The schedule hints that presentation of the federal budget to parliament may slip to the second week of June from the first week, as earlier contemplated by the authorities concerned.

The delay in the APCC and NEC meetings, earlier planned for May 20 and 22, is being attributed to the prime minister's availability before Eidul Azha because of his other pressing engagements.

Schedules APCC, NEC meetings early next month.

The two forums generally review economic and development performance during the outgoing fiscal year and set targets for the following year and provincial budgets.



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Neither the finance minister nor the central bank could give reasons for keeping the deputy governor position vacant.

Dr Inayat Husain holds dual nationality, and the central bank law bars the appointment of dual nationals as governor and deputy governor.

Given his experience and significant role within the SBP, the government and the SBP

governor would retain him for a new five-year term. When Dr Husain was originally appointed, there was no restriction on the appointment of dual nationals.

SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed also declined to comment on the matter earlier this month.

Two deputy governors are currently serving at the central bank. Saleem Ullah is responsible for finance, inclusion and innovation, while Muhammad Amin Khan Lodhi is responsible for monetary policy and research.

The finance ministry proposed about a dozen amendments to the SBP Act in December 2024, including ending the dual nationality ineligibility, but these amendments could not pass through cabinet scrutiny.

The ministry had proposed allowing dual nationals to serve as governor and deputy governor, amending Section 13 of the SBP Act, which currently disqualifies any person holding dual nationality from serving in these roles.

Panel seeks answers on vacant post

NEWS DESK: A parliamentary panel on Tuesday asked the government to explain the reasons for keeping a key position of deputy governor at the central bank vacant for the past one and a half years, as it also expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of the debt office.

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance instructed both the finance ministry and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to submit details about when former deputy governor Dr Inayat Husain com-

pleted his term, when the central bank governor sent a panel of candidates to fill the post, and why the post remains vacant.

Senator Talha Mehmood raised the issue of vacant positions, including the director general of debt at the finance ministry. The matter came up during a vote on the Exim Bank amendment bill, which the standing committee approved to bring the law in line with the State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) Act. The International Monetary

Fund has imposed the condition to bring the laws of ten entities in line with the SOE law.

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Govt invites expressions of interest for sale of three major Discos

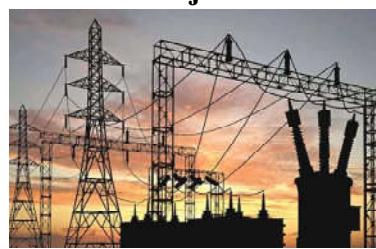
NEWS DESK: The Privatisation Commission on Tuesday invited expressions of interest (EOIs) from local and international investors for the much-delayed sale of three of the country's most viable electricity distribution companies (Discos).

The deadline for submitting EOIs for the partial or full sale of the Discos falls in the first quarter of the next fiscal year. The three companies are Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (Gepco), and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco).

The three are considered the most viable Discos among the 11 electricity distribution companies originally carved out of the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) in 1998.

The divestment aimed to improve service quality through private-sector management practices. The plan was supposed to be completed within five years but failed to take off over the following three decades.

The transaction offers investors an opportunity to acquire be-



tween 51pc and 100pc shareholding, along with management control, in each of the three distribution companies.

The initiative forms part of the government's broader economic reform agenda aimed at improving efficiency, strengthening service delivery, attracting foreign and domestic investment, and promoting sustainable growth in Pakistan's power sector, the Privatisation Commission said.

Fesco, Gepco and Iesco collectively serve more than 14 million consumers across major industrial, commercial and urban centres of Punjab, the Islamabad region, and parts of Azad

Jammu and Kashmir.

The three Discos operate extensive electricity distribution networks covering key economic corridors and represent strategically important assets within Pakistan's energy landscape.

The Privatisation Commission said the process would be undertaken in a transparent, competitive and investor-friendly manner in accordance with international best practices.

Interested parties may participate individually or as part of a consortium, subject to the qualification criteria outlined in the Request for Statement of Qualification (RSOQ)

documents. According to the EOI notice, separate submissions are required for each Disco.

The deadlines for submission are July 7, 2026, for Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco), August 6 for Gujranwala Electric Power Company (Gepco), and September 7 for Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco).

An online investor briefing will also be conducted jointly by the Privatisation Commission and the financial adviser to highlight investment opportunities, transaction structure, and procedural requirements for interested investors.

Inflation projected to hit 12.2% in May

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's headline inflation is projected to rise to 12.2 per cent in May 2026 as mounting fuel and food prices outweigh relief from lower electricity charges, according to Optimus Capital Management.

The brokerage expects the National Consumer Price Index (NCPI) to increase by about 1% in May, while the NCPI is projected at 8.4% YoY, indicating persistent underlying pressures.

The transport index is expected to surge nearly 9.5% MoM, primarily due to an anticipated 9.5% increase in domestic fuel prices. Although international oil prices have declined monthly, fuel prices in

Pakistan remain elevated because of higher premiums and Inland Freight Equalisation Margin (IFEM) adjustments. As a result, energy inflation is expected to reach about 39% YoY.

Optimus noted the housing index may provide partial relief, projecting a 1.2% monthly decline mainly due to lower electricity tariffs. However, this is unlikely to offset the broader inflationary impact from transport and food categories. The report, authored by Optimus analyst Yasin Iqbal Kodvavi, also highlighted that the cushion previously provided by easing food inflation is fading. Food inflation is projected to rise by about 1.5% MoM and

nearly 9% YoY, driven largely by higher wheat and wheat flour prices, both expected to increase by nearly 7% monthly. Rising transportation costs, higher fertilizer prices and fluctuating procurement policies are contributing to the increase. Fresh milk and milk products are also expected to rise by about 2.7% MoM.

Optimus warned that persistent geopolitical uncertainty and elevated energy prices remain major risks. Higher fuel costs will continue feeding into broader sectors, while adverse weather, rising logistics costs and normalising trade flows could further accelerate food inflation. The report added that recent auction

yields by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reflect market expectations of sustained inflationary pressures and potential monetary tightening. Given the upcoming federal budget, the ongoing IMF programme and broader macroeconomic challenges, analysts expect the SBP to maintain a cautious stance and potentially hike interest rates by an additional 50/100 basis points in the coming months.

"The main reasons are higher fuel prices, up almost 9.5% MoM, and rising food costs, up almost 1.5% MoM. Even though global oil prices have come down slightly compared with last month, prices in Pakistan remain high because of higher premiums and transportation costs," Kodvavi told The Express Tribune.

"Wheat and wheat flour prices are likely to increase by around 7% over the month, while milk and milk products may also become more expensive. These increases are linked to higher transportation costs, expensive fertilizer and changing procurement conditions."

Looking ahead, the inflation outlook remains uncertain. Fuel prices could stay elevated amid ongoing global tensions, while food prices may continue to rise due to higher logistics and fertilizer costs, along with weather-related conditions, Kodvavi anticipated.



Pakistan can buy Russian oil

NEWS DESK: Pakistan is among the countries that could benefit from a new United States temporary licence allowing selected energy-importing nations to access Russian oil, diplomatic sources told Dawn.

The US has introduced a 30-day general licence issued by the US Department of the Treasury to ease immediate supply pressures in global crude markets and provide relief to energy-vulnerable countries.

They noted that Pakistan has not previously imported Russian crude at scale and may lack the refining infrastructure required to process such shipments.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on a social media post released on Monday that his depart-



ment is issuing a temporary 30-day general licence to "provide the most vulnerable nations with the ability to temporarily access Russian oil currently stranded at sea."

"This extension will provide additional flexibility, and we will work with these nations to provide specific licences as needed," he wrote in



post on X. "This general licence will help stabilise the physical crude market and ensure oil reaches the most energy-vulnerable countries."

Bessent added that the licence will also help reroute existing supply to countries most in need by "reducing China's ability to stockpile discounted oil."

Neymar included in Brazil's World Cup squad after injury struggles

NEWS DESK: Neymar has been named in Brazil's squad for next month's World Cup, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Monday, handing the forward a chance to return to international soccer's biggest stage after an injury-disrupted cycle.

The 34-year-old, Brazil's all-time leading scorer, comes back following a prolonged absence due to a series of injuries that kept him out for much of the qualifying campaign, as the five-time champions pursue a record-extending sixth title.

As dozens of journalists gathered at Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Tomorrow for a ceremony featuring music acts and celebrity guests, all eyes were on Ancelotti's decision on whether to include Neymar in the squad.

The 66-year-old Italian, who took charge of Brazil's men's national team last year, had not previously called up the former Barcelona and Paris St Germain player.



He told Reuters earlier this month that Neymar's inclusion would be based on fitness and form, not sentiment.

"We evaluated Neymar throughout the year and noticed that recently he has been playing consistently and has im-

proved his physical condition," Ancelotti said at a press conference on Monday.

"He has the same role and responsibilities as everyone else, but he is an experienced player. It's true that in some positions we prioritised experi-

ence."

Neymar, who has 79 international goals but has not featured for Brazil since 2023, has faced questions about his fitness and form following an injury-marred spell at Al Hilal and an underwhelming return

to his boyhood club Santos last year.

The forward said on Sunday he was satisfied he had done all he could to prove he was fully fit and deserved a place in the squad.

"Physically, I feel great. I've been improving with every

game," he told reporters after Santos' 3-0 defeat to Coritiba.

Loaded offense, few surprises. The rest of Brazil's squad was largely retained from the qualifying campaign and recent friendlies, with the likes of Vinicius Jun-

ior, Raphinha, Matheus Cunha and Endrick shouldering attacking duties alongside Neymar.

Real Madrid striker Rodrygo, defender Eder Militao and Chelsea winger Estevao were left out due to injuries. Chelsea's forward

Bruno Guimaraes, Casemiro, Danilo Santos, Fabinho, Lucas Paqueta, For-

wards: Endrick, Gabriel Martinelli, Igor Thiago, Luiz Henrique, Matheus Cunha, Neymar, Raphinha, Rayan, Vinicius Jr.

Joao Pedro, midfielder Andrey Santos who had been called up on previous occasions, also surprisingly missed the final squad.

"Some of the players who were with us this year won't be happy with this list. I'm sorry, and I want to thank every one who was with us," Ancelotti said.

Brazil will open their World Cup campaign against Morocco on June 13 in New Jersey.

They also face Haiti and Scotland in Group 'C'.

Fakhar Zaman, Saim Ayub ruled out of upcoming ODI series against Australia

NEWS DESK: Opening batters Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub have been ruled out of the upcoming one-day international (ODI) series against Australia, scheduled to begin on May 30, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said on Wednesday.

According to a press release issued by the cricket board, both

players are "currently recovering from injuries and have been advised to continue their rehabilitation programmes under the supervision of the PCB medical panel".

"Consequently, they have been ruled out of selection for the ODI series," it added.

The cricket board wished both players a speedy recovery and

said it looked forward to seeing them return to competitive cricket at the earliest opportunity.

It added that further updates regarding the squad and player fitness would be shared in due course.

The Australian men's cricket team is scheduled to tour Pakistan for a three-match ODI series.

According to the schedule announced, the visitors will arrive in Islamabad on May 23 and face the Green Shirts in the first ODI at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on May 30.

The second and third ODIs of the series will be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on June 2 and 4, respectively.



Pakistan hosts first FIFA World Cup launch event at U.S. Embassy

NEWS DESK: A prestigious launch event related to the upcoming FIFA World Cup was held at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, bringing together prominent figures from sports, government, and various sectors of society.

Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, President of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Mohsen Gilani, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, and Lahore Qalandars Chief Executive Atif Rana were among the distinguished guests in attendance.

Addressing the ceremony, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan Natalie A. Baker said it was an honor that the first special FIFA World Cup-related event was being hosted in Pakistan. She expressed happiness over the positive progress being witnessed in the promotion and development of football in the country and noted that Pakistan is playing an important role in the FIFA World



Cup. Natalie Baker highlighted that Pakistan is manufacturing world-class footballs for global use, while the FIFA World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico will be the biggest in history featuring 48 teams for the first time. She said the United States is fully prepared to welcome fans from around the world and celebrate the historic tournament in a grand manner. She added that

sports, particularly football, serve as a powerful bridge to strengthen ties and understanding among nations and people across the globe. Speaking on the occasion, PFF President Mohsen Gilani said football is helping deepen relations between Pakistan and the United States. He described the FIFA World Cup as one of the greatest events in the world, adding that FIFA unites nations on a single platform through the spirit of the

game. Mohsen Gilani further stated that Pakistan's women's football team recently participated in a FIFA event for the first time and secured a victory, calling it a historic milestone for the country. He also revealed that Pakistan Football appointed a woman manager of the men's national football team for the first time, terming it a significant step towards women empowerment in sports.

'We're here solely to play football'

NEWS DESK: The South Korean sports team to visit the South in eight games batted away questions Tuesday about the prospect of South Koreans cheering his side, saying: "We are here solely to play football."

Naegohyang head coach Ri Yu Il brushed off questions about what he thought about the prospect of South Koreans cheering his side during Tuesday's pre-match press conference. "I'm not sure whether similar questions will continue to come up," he said. "But we are here solely to play football."

"Simply put, we will focus only on each match," he added. "Therefore, the issue of the supporters is not

something I, as a coach, or our players need to concern ourselves with.

"We will concentrate exclusively on the game." No emotion. The Seoul government has provided US\$200,000 to support South Korean civic groups planning to cheer both teams at the match.

According to local media, civic groups have been discussing cheering guidelines with the authorities, because waving North Korean national flags in public

is prohibited under the national security law.

In past such events held in the South, civic groups instead waved flags depicting the Korean Peninsula.

Both Ri and the team captain, Kim Kyong Yong, sat through the press conference without showing any emotion, and their answers were translated by a North Korean interpreter.

Kim said: "We will give our all to repay the trust and expectations of our people and our parents and families."



Ronaldo, 41, to lead Portugal in his sixth World Cup

NEWS DESK: Veteran Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo will lead his country into the 2026 World Cup this summer after coach Roberto Martinez named the 41-year-old in his squad on Tuesday.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United star, now at Saudi Arabian side Al-Nassr, is set to appear at a record sixth World Cup.

Portugal and Ronaldo, the all-time leading men's international scorer with 143 goals, have never won the competition. Ronaldo could face former Barcelona rival Lionel Messi, who is also set to play at a sixth World Cup after leading Argentina to glory four years ago in Qatar.

Spanish coach Martinez selected a 26-man squad with no major surprises, including Ronaldo's Al Nassr team-mate Joao Felix, and also named goalkeeper Ricardo Velho as



an extra player in the group. Paris Saint-Germain stars Vitinha, Joao Neves, Nuno Mendes and Goncalo Ramos are also included in a strong squad, along with Manchester United playmaker Bruno Fernandes and a contingent from Manchester City, including Bernardo Silva.

Martinez said he would not need to manage five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo in

a special way because of his age. "In my experience, at a World Cup, a player doesn't follow the pattern of club form, age-related performance or anything like that," Martinez told reporters.

"The focus is our group. All of them are focused, they're prepared for the demands of a World Cup and we just need to manage day by day." Ronaldo said last year that this World Cup

would be his last. He was left in tears last weekend after defeat by Gambia Osaka in the AFC Champions League Two final, but Martinez said an emotionally draining season would not affect him this summer.

"I think that coming into the national team set-up brings new energy and allows you to completely switch off from what happened during the season," said the coach.

Opp rifts ahead of anti-govt protest

NEWS DESK: Major opposition political parties are gearing up for protests against the government over the rising inflation on Friday but they are unable to join hands as Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP), Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), announced their separate plans, highlighting lack of unity among their ranks.

Some of the parties openly expressed their lack of trust on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the main opposition party, and hence decided to stay away from its protest call. Separate protests are being planned over inflation and governance issues.

TTAP, whose main alliance includes PTI, is additionally focused on demands related to former prime minister Imran Khan's incarceration and access to medical treatment. However, despite overlapping anti-government rhetoric and shared criticism over governance and



economic conditions, efforts toward a joint opposition protest front appear unlikely, exposing continuing mistrust and fragmentation within the opposition

camp. The latest protest call came from TTAP, which announced nationwide demonstrations on May 22 following a late-night alliance meeting attended

by PTI leaders and allied opposition figures on Monday. The announcement came after meetings with Imran Khan and demands regarding his medical treatment were not

facilitated. Separately, PTI-F chief Fazlur Rehman had already announced protests over inflation and economic conditions during a rally in Karachi on

May 15, while JI chief Naeemur Hafiz Naeemur Rehman has also filed a constitutional petition against rising fuel prices and taxes on Tuesday and announced a nationwide protest movement starting May 22 against inflation. Despite the convergence of protest timelines, senior leaders from both JUI-F and JI indicated they were not considering participation under a joint protest umbrella led by TTAP or PTI-backed forces.

Senior JUI-F leader Kamran Muraza said it was better that each party conduct its own protest, explaining that JUI-F still had "trust issues" with PTI. He said that in past political engagements, including cooperation on constitutional matters such as the 26th Amendment, his party had participated in joint processes, did everything PTI asked them to, but later felt it was unfairly blamed after those developments concluded.

He suggested that similar concerns persisted in later developments as well, contributing to continued mistrust between the two sides despite overlapping opposition positions against the government.

Responding to questions about the absence of a joint opposition platform, PTI Sindh provincial President Haleem Adil Sheikh argued that political parties should at least unite on public issues such as inflation and governance, regardless of wider political disagreements.

He said TTAP had previously attempted to build broader coordination on economic issues, and that Achakzai had earlier conveyed to Fazlur during a meeting that while parties could differ on other political matters, they should at least make a joint announcement on the issue of inflation.

Plea filed in IHC against Bushra Bibi's 'solitary confinement'

NEWS DESK: The issue of alleged solitary confinement of Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi has also reached the Islamabad High Court, where her daughter Mubashra Khawar Ma-neka filed a petition challenging her mother's confinement in Adiala jail.

In the petition, the superintendent and deputy superintendent of Adiala jail, Inspector General of Punjab Prisons and chairman of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) have been made respondents.

The petitioner contended that family meetings with Bushra Bibi had been prohibited and that no court had ordered her solitary confinement.

The petition said

that keeping Bushra Bibi in solitary confinement was illegal and amounted to an excessive use of powers under the prison rules of the country. It argued that under the prison rules, no prisoner could be kept in solitary confinement for more than 14 days at a time.

Referring to the United Nations Nelson Mandela Rules, the petition said that indefinite solitary confinement was against human dignity and international standards governing the treatment of prisoners.

The plea further said that Bushra Bibi underwent surgery on her right eye in April and was shifted to hospital twice after suffering pain in the operated eye.

However, prison authorities allegedly neither informed her family or lawyers about the nature of the illness and treatment nor shifted her to hospital for proper diagnosis.

According to the petition, the PTI founder informed his lawyers that Bushra Bibi was being kept in solitary confinement round the clock at Adiala jail. It was further alleged that lawyers were being prevented from visiting her.

The petition requested the high court to declare Bushra Bibi's solitary confinement illegal and in violation of Articles 9 and 14 of the Constitution.

PPP leaders say 'premature' to comment on 28th Amendment

NEWS DESK: Amid reports about a possible new constitutional amendment that could roll back certain functions de-vol-v-ed to the provinces, a PPP senator on Tuesday said the party had not received any draft of the purported 28th Amendment.

Addressing a press conference to share details of President Asif Ali Zardari's China visit, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla said it was "premature" to comment on the matter as they had yet to see a proposal for the amendment.

His statement echoed similar remarks by the PPP chairman, who said his party was not aware of any such development.

nor did the prime minister approach President Zardari in this regard.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar had also recently ruled out any amendment being tabled without

consultation with the ruling partners.

Besides Mr Mandviwalla, the president's spokesperson Murtaza Solangi and Presidency Press Secretary Daniyal Gillani were also present.

Mandviwalla insists party yet to receive draft of constitutional tweaks

Speaking about the president's visit to China, they said the president signed five memorandums of un-

derstanding (MoUs) and one agreement, spanning the defence, agriculture, healthcare, industrial cooperation and technology sectors.

Describing the commissioning ceremony of the Pakistan Navy's first Ha-nger-class submarine in Sanya, Mr Solangi said its strategic significance was comparable to the Pakistan-China JF-17

Thunder fighter aircraft project.

He also highlighted the president's visit to Shao-shan, the hometown of Chairman Mao Zedong in Hunan.

Senator Mandviwalla, meanwhile, re-called a new cultural initiative aimed at promoting Pakistani films and television productions in China.

He said the Legend of Maula Jatt's commercial release in China was scheduled for May 21 and 22.

Discussing MoUs signed during the visit, he said an MoU on seawater desalination was

signed to establish a five million gallons per day (mgd) desalination plant aimed at helping address Karachi's water shortage.

Another MoU focused on agricultural technology cooperation was reached with one of China's largest tea companies, he added.



Govt announces Eidul Azha holidays from May 26-28



NEWS DESK: The federal government on Wednesday announced a three-day public holiday from May 26-28 (Tuesday to Thursday) to mark Eidul Azha.

According to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division, shared by state-run APP on the social media platform X, Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif declared May 26 to 28 as "public holidays on the occasion of Eidul Azha".

Pakistan will observe Eidul Azha on May 27 (Wednesday), the Rucia-Hilal Committee announced after sighting the Zillhaj moon on Sunday.

The announcement was made after moonighting testimonies were received from

Karachi and other cities of Sindh, Mardan, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and some other areas.

Celebrated on the 10th of Zillhaj, Eidul Azha marks the culmination of Haj, one of the five pillars of Islam.

Saudi Arabia is also set to mark the first day of Eidul Azha on May 27, Saudi Gazette reported.

Pakistan, China share 'converging vision' on regional and global issues, says DPM Dar

NEWS DESK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said Islamabad and Beijing shared a "converging vision" on regional and global matters.

"Pakistan and China share a converging vision on regional and global issues," said Dar while addressing the Senate.

A Chinese delegation was present in the visitors' gallery to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

"We are committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter in a world facing complex challenges," the foreign minister said.

Dar stressed that cooperation between Pakistan and China at the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and other international forums had been "vital in defending the interests of developing countries and promoting global peace".

During his address, Dar said he will be accompanied by PM Shehbaz Sharif on his



state visit to China from May 23 to 26, during which they will also attend celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of Pak-China ties.

During the visit, they would engage with the Chinese leadership, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, besides business-to-business (B2B) meetings.

"We would also have meetings of two very important mechanisms: Pakistan-China Political Forum and CPEC Joint Consultative Mechanism," Dar said, adding that a large multi-

party parliamentary delegation from Pakistan would be attending many of these meetings.

Dar highlighted the joint initiative by the two neighbours to "promote peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East,

noting that it reflected a "shared sense of responsibility as peace-loving nations to contribute to global security and stability".

Recalling his visit to China in late March, Dar said, "We came up with a five-point initiative for a peace plan in the conflict, and this has

been accepted and endorsed by dozens of countries on the globe".

Dar noted he had been in "constant touch" with China's FM Wang Yi and other colleagues from the region throughout the Middle East conflict that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

The deputy PM observed that over the past 75 years, the relationship between Islamabad and Beijing has "grown from strength to strength into a robust economic and strategic partnership".

"From the

Karakoram Highway to Gwadar Port, the symbols of Pak-China friendship are spread all across Pakistan's geography," Dar remarked.

He added that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stood "as a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative and a shining example of shared vision for regional connectivity and prosperity".

Stressing that CPEC has played a key role in transforming Pakistan's economic landscape, Dar said Islamabad looked forward to its next phase, CPEC 2.0, "focusing on industrialisation, agriculture, IT and socio-economic development".

"We are confident that the benefits of the Pak-China partnership will reach every citizen of Pakistan," the deputy premier said, recalling the two countries' efforts in 2013 to "overcome" loadshedding in Pakistan.

"China gave massive support in eliminating the outages and loadshedding in Pakistan. We will always remain grateful to China."