



Islamabad POST

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**Pakistan maintains
Balancing act at the
UN Security Council**

Detailed News On Page-08

**415 Taliban
Killed so far,
says Atta Tarar**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Bilawal Bhutto
slams US
attack on Iran**

Detailed News On Page-08



After Khamenei's assassination Iran launches retaliatory strikes against Israel, US

Iran hit with more strikes ; more attacks on US bases in theregion; Iran begins 40-day mourning; Ali Larijani, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, accuses the US and Israel of trying to plunder Iran

CENTRELINE REPORT

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced that it has unleashed a new series of large-scale retaliatory strikes against "the enemy," escalating the ongoing conflict following the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a joint U.S.-Israeli airstrike on February 28. In statements broadcast via state media and official channels, the IRGC described the operations—referred to as waves of "Operation Honest Promise 4" or "True Promise 4"—as the "most ferocious offensive" in Iran's history. The elite force claimed to have targeted U.S. military bases across the Middle East (including strikes on up to 27 locations hosting American troops), Israeli facilities in Tel Aviv, and even reported hitting the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Gulf with ballistic missiles. Casualties from these Iranian counterstrikes have been reported in Israel (at least 8-9 killed near Jerusalem), the UAE (multiple deaths and injuries in Abu Dhabi and Dubai), and other Gulf states, with explosions shaking cities like Riyadh and Doha.

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**List of Iranian
officials hit by
air strikes**

DNA

TEHRAN: List of Top Iranian Officials Reported Killed in US-Israeli Strikes 1. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: Supreme Leader of Iran 2. Ali Shamkhani: Senior advisor to

**Ayatollah Araf
to share interim
authority**

DNA

TEHRAN: Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf to share temporary authority with President Masoud Pezeshkian. Amid nationwide mourning in Iran following the reported martyrdom of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a temporary leadership structure has begun to take shape. Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf

the Supreme Leader; Secretary of the Defence Council 3. Mohammad Pakpour: Commander of the IRGC 4. Amir Nasirzadeh Minister of Defense 5. Mohammad Shirazi: Chief of the Military Bureau of the Supreme Leader 6. Saleh Asadi (or Salah Asadi): Senior intelligence official / head of emergency command intelligence 7. Hossein Jabal Amelian: Head of SPND (nuclear research) 8. Reza Mozaffari-Nia: Former head of SPND (nuclear program).

has been selected to join Iran's interim leadership council as the country prepares for a new Supreme Leader. Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf has been appointed as a member of Iran's interim governing council. He will serve alongside President Masoud Pezeshkian and the head of the judiciary as part of the temporary leadership body overseeing the country's affairs. The council is tasked with managing state matters until a new Supreme Leader is formally elected. Tehran has been gripped by grief and

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister chaired a high level meeting to review security. Field Marshal Asim Munir and DG ISI Asim Malik also present. – DNA

**Army
deployed
in Skardu
after unrest**

DNA

GILGIT: Violent protests erupted in Skardu as enraged demonstrators allegedly set fire to several public and private buildings during a rally against the reported assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Sayyed Ali Khamenei. According to police the protest initially began as a demonstration but soon turned violent with mobs attacking and torching multiple offices across the city. Thick plumes of smoke were seen rising from different locations, while panic spread among residents and business owners.

In Skardu among the buildings reportedly set ablaze was the regional sub-office of the United Nations. In addition, the Army Public School, the office of the Superintendent of Police, the Software Technology Park, and the building of the

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Middle East tensions

Political, military leaders' huddle reviews security

A key focus was the safety of Pakistani nationals in Iran. On the Prime Minister's directives, the Foreign Office briefed participants on ongoing evacuation operations, facilitated through Azerbaijan via the Astara border crossing

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired a critical high-level meeting today to assess Pakistan's regional and internal security landscape, amid escalating Middle East tensions following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in U.S.-Israeli strikes and subsequent retaliatory actions. The session, held in Islamabad, conducted an in-depth review of the prevailing regional environment, security dynamics, and Pakistan's proactive role in fostering peace and stability. Discussions included the volatile situation in Afghanistan, with detailed briefings on internal security measures to maintain law and order nationwide. A key focus was the safety of Pakistani nationals in Iran. On the Prime Minister's directives, the Foreign Office briefed participants on ongoing evacuation operations, facilitated through

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Shehbaz Sharif engages Gulf and Jordanian leaders

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held separate telephone conversations with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Jordan's King Abdullah II to address the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Middle East, triggered by recent hostilities involving Israel, the United States, Iran, and retaliatory strikes across the region. In his call with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister conveyed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the brotherly people of Bahrain amid the ongoing crisis. He prayed for

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Briefs

**415 Taliban
killed so far,
says Tarar**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar announced today that Pakistan has initiated Operation Ghazab il-Haq (translated as "Righteous Fury" or "Wrath for Justice") in response to "unprovoked firing" by Afghan Taliban forces across the Pak-Afghan border. The operation, which began late Thursday following renewed clashes along the Durand Line in sectors including Chitral, Khyber, Mohmand, Kurram, and Bajaur, involves coordinated airstrikes and ground actions targeting Taliban military installations in provinces such as Kabul, Kandahar, Paktia, Nangarhar, and others—up to 46 locations effectively hit.

**PM briefed
on Naqvi's
EU visits**

According to the briefing, participating countries in both conferences agreed to expedite the issuance of legal work permits for Pakistani citizens

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting on Sunday with Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, during which the minister briefed the PM on his recent visits to European countries and participation in key international conferences. Mohsin Naqvi informed the prime minister about his attendance at a four-country Interior Ministers' meeting held in Rome, Italy, which was also attended by the interior ministers of Italy, Spain, and Greece.

Aftermath of Iran war

Nine dead, 18 injured as US consulate attacked in Karachi

Additional personnel of law enforcement agencies deployed in area to prevent escalation

DNA

KARACHI: At least nine people were killed and 18 others injured after violence escalated during clashes between police and demonstrators protesting against US and Israeli strikes that martyred Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei outside the US Consulate in Karachi on Sunday, hospital officials confirmed. According to Edhi ambulance service, six bodies and 10 injured persons were initially shifted from MT Khan Road to the Civil Hospital Karachi. Officials at the hospital's trauma centre later confirmed that seven bodies had been brought to the facility along with 18 injured individuals. Hospital authorities said that those affected sustained injuries due to firing, baton charge, and stampede during the unrest.

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**Protests outside
diplomatic enclave
Capital's Red Zone sealed**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Protestors held a rally at Serena Chowk against the US and allies. Protestors demanded justice to those who assassinated Ali Khamenei. Meanwhile, Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Sunday issued a traffic advisory announcing the complete closure of all routes leading to the Red Zone due to security reasons. An ITP official on Sunday that all entry points towards the Red Zone have been sealed, and commuters are advised to avoid

Continued on Page 06

Khamenei killing 'cynical violation' of 'morality: Putin

Russian Foreign Ministry's Statement regarding military aggression of the United States and Israel against Iran

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday slammed the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US and Israeli strikes as a "cynical violation" of morality and law. In a letter to his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian published by the Kremlin, Putin expressed "deepest condolences for the assassination of" Khamenei, saying the killing was "carried out in a cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law." Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Ministry's Statement regarding military aggression of the United States and Israel against Iran. On the morning of February 28, US and Israeli armed forces carried out airstrikes on the territory of Iran. The scope and character of the military, political, and propaganda preparations that preceded this reckless step, including the deployment of substantial US military forces to the region, leave no doubt that this is a deliberate, premeditated, and unprovoked act of armed aggression against a sovereign and independent UN member state, in direct violation of the fundamental principles and norms of international law.

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UK declines to back US, Israel Iran strikes

DNA

LONDON: Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey on Sunday declined to explicitly back strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran, saying it was for the US to "set out the legal basis of the action it took." Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the air strikes on Saturday, Iran's state media has confirmed. Healey told the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg that Britain played no part in the strikes, but it did share the aim of the United States and other allies in the region that Iran should never have a nuclear weapon. Asked if he believed the strikes were within international law, Healey said: "It is for the US to set out the legal basis of the action that it took." Healey said Iran was retaliating in an increasingly indiscriminate way, targeting civilian airports and hotels as

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Rs 8b allocated for minority welfare: Arora

In addition, financial grants for the Hindu festival of Holi are being provided to approximately 1,400 Hindu families throughout the province

BAHAWALPUR : Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora announced that budget of the Punjab Human Rights and Minority Affairs Department has been set at Rs 8 billion, with Rs 4 billion specifically allocated for Minority Cards.

He stated that 150,000 minority families across Punjab are being issued Minority Cards strictly on merit.

In addition, financial grants for the Hindu festival of Holi are being provided to approximately 1,400 Hindu families throughout the province. The minister expressed these views while addressing a Holi celebration

ceremony held in Yazman some 30 kilometers from here today, where delegations from across the division participated enthusiastically. Children from the Hindu community presented cultural tableaux that received appreciation from the audience. During the ceremony, the minister distributed Holi grant cheques worth Rs 4.3 million among members of the Hindu community. Under the initiative of the Chief Minister, each beneficiary family received Rs 15,000 as part of the festive assistance package. Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora emphasized that the Punjab government is implementing

multiple initiatives aimed at the welfare of minority communities, ensuring protection of their constitutional and religious rights, promoting equality, and facilitating peaceful observance of religious festivals. He reiterated the government's commitment to addressing the social and economic challenges faced by minority communities through all available resources. Community representatives, including Chand Kumar, Lala Akmal Lal Bheel, Gopal Ram, Amar Lal, Raju Lal, and Babar Lal, attended the event and appreciated the government's efforts for minority welfare.

PU shines with gold, silver

LAHORE: Pakistan Shines at World Rowing Indoor Championship with Double Podium Finish one gold and one silver medal in U21 Category. Over 2200 athletes participated in the virtual event across world.

Representing Pakistan Punjab University athletes Abdul Rehman and Zarg Khan delivered an outstanding performance at the 1-Minute Sprint Event of the world Rowing Indoor virtual championship, securing remarkable achievements in the Under-21 Men categories. Gold Medal - 21-22 Lightweight Men (1 Minute). Muhammad Abdul Rehman (Pakistan) clinched 1st place with an impressive distance of 377 meters, outperforming strong competitors from France and Egypt. According to scoreboard, Luca Delval (France) claimed 374m, Youssef Abdelaziz (Egypt) 374m and Egor Marinov (AIN) 333m. This gold medal highlights Pakistan's growing dominance in indoor rowing, particularly in the lightweight category. Silver Medal - 21-22 Men (Open Category, 1 Minute)

In the Open 21-22 Men category, Zark Khan (Pakistan) secured 2nd place with a powerful performance of 385 meters. According to scoreboard, Vladislav Andersons (Latvia) 394m, Zark Khan (Pakistan) 385m, Finn Söllner (Germany) 379m, Ivo Bouchal (Czech Republic) 377m and Yi Ming Pan (China) 371m. Pakistan has won one gold and one silver medal at the World Rowing Virtual Indoor Championships. Abdul Rahman of Punjab University won the gold medal in the lightweight category. Zarg Khan bagged a silver medal in open weight. In the lightweight category, Abdul Rahman of Punjab University won the first position, France remained second and Egypt third.

In open weight, Latvia won the first position. Pakistan Punjab University's Zarg Khan got the second position and Germany got the third position.—APP

Death anniversary of Naseem Hijazi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 30th death anniversary of renowned novelist and journalist Naseem Hijazi will be observed today, March 2, with devotion and respect. Naseem Hijazi was not only a distinguished journalist and literary figure but also played a significant role through his journalism in advocating for the accession of Balochistan to Pakistan. It is widely acknowledged in various circles that he dedicated his energies and abilities to strengthening the cause of Balochistan's integration with the country. Several tribal elders in Balochistan have credited his efforts as instrumental in shaping public opinion during that critical period. He is regarded as one of the most prominent Urdu historical novelists who introduced a new dimension to historical fiction. Over the course of his literary career, he authored 27 novels. Among his most celebrated works

are Dastan-e-Mujahid, Khak aur Khoon, Shaheen, Aakhri Chattan, and Yousaf Bin Tashfeen. These works played a vital role in creating awareness among the younger generation about Islamic history and civilization.

Literary experts observe that his novels are not only engaging and impactful but also instill in readers a sense of freedom, self-respect, and national identity. His narrative style presents historical events in such a vivid manner that readers feel immersed in the era being depicted.

In addition to his literary accomplishments, Naseem Hijazi remained active in journalism and boldly expressed his views on national and communal issues. He began his journalistic career with Daily Zamana in Karachi and later contributed to several newspapers. Apart from Daily Tameer and Daily Tanzeem, he also launched his own newspaper, Daily Kohistan, which left a significant mark on the jour-

nalistic landscape. His journalistic services promoted seriousness and purposefulness in Urdu journalism. According to experts, Naseem Hijazi was not merely a writer but also an active participant in the Pakistan Movement. Through both journalism and practical struggle, he worked to advance the cause of Pakistan's creation. His contributions to the accession of Balochistan to Pakistan are particularly noted, as he played a role at both political and journalistic levels in mobilizing public opinion and fostering awareness in favor of Pakistan.

Literary and political circles maintain that through his pen and practical efforts, Naseem Hijazi strengthened the spirit of attachment between Balochistan and Pakistan, which later contributed to the consolidation of national unity. Observers emphasize that the younger generation can better understand national history by acquainting themselves with his ideas and struggles.



ISLAMABAD: People are buying vegetables at G-10 Sunday weekly bazaar in the Federal Capital. — Online

Army deployed after violent protests

GILGIT: Violent protests erupted in Skardu earlier today as enraged demonstrators allegedly set fire to several public and private buildings during a rally against the reported assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Sayyed Ali Khamenei. According to police the protest initially began as a demonstration but soon turned violent with mobs attacking and torching multiple offices across the city. Thick plumes of smoke were seen rising from different locations, while panic spread among residents and business owners. In Skardu among the buildings reportedly set ablaze was the regional sub-office of the United Nations. In addition, the Army Public School, the office of the Superintendent of Police, the Software Technology Park, and the building of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) were also attacked during the unrest. The extent of damage is still being assessed. In Gilgit, protesters set fire to the UN Military Observer Group and UNDP sub offices. In Skardu, in response to the deteriorating law and order situation, the Pakistan Army has been deployed in Skardu under Article 245 of the Constitution. According to Gilgit-Baltistan Police, the deployment aims to provide military support to civil authorities to restore order and ensure the protection of public and private property.—APP

Man held for extorting money from vendors

RAWALPINDI: Ganjmandi Police have arrested a man accused of collecting extortion money from roadside cart vendors in the area and recovered Rs 3,000 allegedly taken from them. According to a police spokesman, the suspects who were involved approached vendors and forcibly demanded money in the name of allowing them to set up their carts. Acting swiftly on complaints, the police registered a case and apprehended the accused. The First Information Report (FIR) states that the arrested individual used to visit pushcart stalls and collect money unlawfully under the pretext of granting permission to operate.—APP

Teachers, students rally in solidarity with armed forces

SUKKUR : A large rally was organized by Taluka Education Officers, Sukkur City, to express solidarity with the Pakistan Armed Forces and support Operation Ghazab-ul-Haq. The rally began at Minara Road and concluded at Sukkur Press Club after marching through various routes here on Sunday. Teachers, school students, and a large number of citizens participated, carrying national flags and placards with slogans in favor of the armed forces. Participants chant-

ed "Pak Fauj Zindabad" and "Pakistan Paindabad," while national songs and anthems echoed through the streets. Addressing the gathering, speakers emphasized that there would be no compromise on the defense of the motherland and that no harm would be allowed to come to Pakistan's soil. They stated that no matter how the enemy appears, Pakistan's brave security forces Army, Air Force, and Navy along with the nation's people, will thwart all malicious designs.

Speakers highlighted that in Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsous, Pakistan's forces effectively responded to and repelled aggression from a much stronger enemy, India. They added that in Operation Zarb-ul-Haq, professional and steadfast actions against Afghan militants continue on every front, with the entire nation standing shoulder to shoulder with its forces. They noted that the sacrifices of Pakistan's armed forces are a source of pride for the entire nation.—APP

Upgradation, beautification plan for Data Darbar reviewed

LAHORE: A meeting on Sunday reviewed the ongoing upgradation and beautification plan for the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh with a focus on preserving its spiritual sanctity while enhancing facilities for devotees. Punjab Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Nabeel Javed chaired the meeting and was briefed in detail on infrastructure improvements, aesthetic enhancements and arrangements aimed at facilitating thousands of daily visitors to the historic shrine. He emphasized that the shrine remains a central symbol of Punjab's Sufi

heritage and spiritual identity, and directed that all development initiatives be executed with utmost care to maintain its religious and architectural character. Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr Ehsan Bhutta informed the participants that new calligraphy panels featuring Quranic verses, Hadith and selected poetry were being finalized after comprehensive review to ensure both artistic quality and reverence. He added that beautification measures were being aligned with the shrine's historical legacy and traditional design. The meeting was

attended by Director General Religious Affairs Auqaf Shahid Kalyani, Khateeb of Data Darbar Maulana Ramzan Sialvi, Principal Jamia Hajveria Muhammad Razaq, Director Madina Foundation Aslam Tareen, NESPAK representative Adil Nazir, Director Projects Auqaf Rafiq Wattoo, calligrapher Irfan Qureshi and other officials. Participants reiterated that all works would be completed in a phased manner, ensuring that devotional activities continue smoothly while safeguarding the sanctity and heritage of the shrine for future generations.—APP



RAWALPINDI; SSP Investigation Nasir Ali Khan giving letter of appreciation to SHO Police Station City Rana Abdul Rehman during a ceremony. DNA Photo

PBF calls for cash-flow-based lending for SME growth

With over 5.2 million businesses operating across manufacturing, services and trade sector, he mentioned, the SMEs contribute nearly 40 percent to Pakistan's GDP and employ more than 80 percent of the non-agricultural labour force. Despite their dominant role in the economy, SMEs receive less than seven percent of private sector credit, one of the lowest ratios in South Asia

LAHORE: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Sunday urged policy-makers and financial regulators to introduce prudential regulations to encourage cash-flow-based lending and unlock the immense potential of Pakistan's small and medium enterprise (SME) sector. PBF President Khawaja Mehboob-ur-Rehman, while talking to a traders/SMEs delegation here, stated that Pakistan's future prosperity will not come from a handful of large corporations but from hundreds of thou-

sands of small enterprises, which produce, innovate and employ. "If we want truly inclusive and sustainable growth, empowering SMEs is not optional; it is essential," he remarked. With over 5.2 million businesses operating across manufacturing, services and trade sector, he mentioned, the SMEs contribute nearly 40 percent to Pakistan's GDP and employ more than 80 percent of the non-agricultural labour force. Despite their dominant role in the econ-

omy, SMEs receive less than seven percent of private sector credit, one of the lowest ratios in South Asia. According to PBF data, he said, private sector financing in Pakistan stands at approximately 6.5 percent of GDP, reflecting a structural weakness in financial intermediation. The number of SME borrowers is estimated at around 295,000, with outstanding SME financing at approximately Rs 686 billion that is far below the potential, and indicative

of vast untapped opportunities. Khawaja Mehboob highlighted that strict collateral requirements remain a major obstacle for small businesses, even those with strong market potential and viable business models. He called on banks to shift their assessment frameworks away from asset-heavy collateral models towards evaluating cash flows, revenue streams, business viability, and market positioning. "It is time for the entire banking

industry to move towards expanding cash-flow-based lending, where financing decisions are tied to a business's revenue capacity rather than physical assets alone," he added. The PBF President further recommended expanding low-collateral financing schemes, establishing dedicated desks for SME clients, and simplifying procedures, particularly for women-owned enterprises to ensure more inclusive access to credit.—APP

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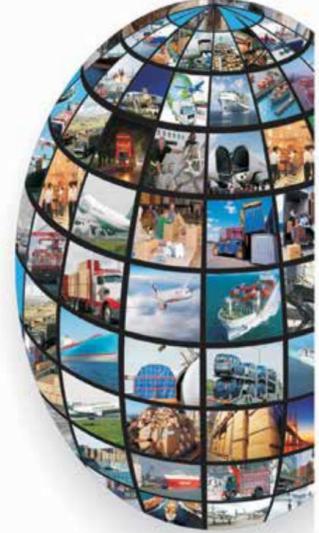






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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01/Bosnia National Day

March 03/Bulgaria National Day

March 06/ Ghana Independence Day

March 12/Mauritius National Day

March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20/Tunisia Independence Day

March 21/Namibia National Day

March 25/Greece National Day

March 26/Bangladesh National Day

March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Interior Secretary inspects several check posts

During the briefing, it was informed that strict monitoring of the entry and exit points of the Federal Capital, Islamabad, is being ensured through police pickets. The vehicles and motorcycles entering the Federal Capital, Islamabad, are being checked to deal with any untoward incident

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Interior, Capt @ Muhammad Khurram Agha, visited the check posts established at various locations in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. On this occasion, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Inspector General (IG) Islamabad Police, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi and other relevant officers were also accompanying him. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, while giving a detailed briefing regarding the arrangements and operations made for the safety of citizens at the check posts said that comprehensive measures are being taken for the protection of life and property of the citizens of the Federal Capital, Islamabad. In this connection, Islamabad Police personnel are deployed 24/7 at all check posts for the safety of citizens. During the briefing, it was informed that strict monitoring of the entry and exit points of the Federal Capital, Islamabad, is being ensured through police pickets. The vehicles and motorcycles entering the Federal Capital, Islamabad, are being checked to deal with any untoward incident. During the briefing, it was informed that the pro-



cess of affixing M-Tags on vehicles and motorcycles entering the Federal Capital, Islamabad, is ongoing. All check posts of the city are being monitored through CCTV cameras of Islamabad Safe City and modern technology. Federal Secretary for

Interior, Captain @ Muhammad Khurram Agha, directed the officers of the police and district administration to remain alert at all times and perform their professional duties wholeheartedly. He directed that no negligence regarding law and order and

security in the Federal Capital, Islamabad, will be tolerated at any cost. On this occasion, the resolve to improve the law and order situation and make the Federal Capital, Islamabad, the safest city was also reaffirmed.

Capital sees surge in date purchases during Ramazan

ISLAMABAD: The demand for dates has surged in the federal capital following the onset of the holy month of Ramazan, as residents throng markets to purchase the staple item traditionally used to break the fast. Retailers across the city have reported a sharp increase in sales compared to previous months, with a noticeable rush in major commercial hubs and weekly bazaars. Traders attribute the surge to the religious significance of dates during Ramazan, as many people follow the Sunnah of breaking their fast with dates and water. Popular varieties include Aseel, Irani, Ajwa, Mabroom and Mozafati. Prices vary by quality and origin, with premium imported dates fetching higher prices, while locally sourced varieties remain comparatively affordable. Vendors at Aabpara Market and Karachi Company said that a wide variety of local and imported dates is available

this year. Anwar, a shopkeeper at Balochistan Dry Fruit Shop, told APP that Iranian Mozafati dates are currently the top-selling variety. "People are buying Iranian Mozafati the most. Mabroom and Ajwa are also in demand, but Ajwa is expensive and not everyone can afford it," he said. According to him, prices start from around Rs 400 per kilogram and can go up to Rs 5,600 per kilogram, depending on the type and quality. Iranian Mozafati dates are being sold at approximately Rs 1,200 per kilogram. While many customers consider the rates reasonable, some have expressed concern over the rising prices of premium varieties and urged the authorities to monitor the market to prevent profiteering. Talking to APP, a retailer at G-9 Markaz said that customers prefer quality during Ramazan, even if prices are slightly higher. "Sales have more than dou-

bled compared to regular months," he added. Customers, however, shared mixed views about the ongoing trend. Inam, a resident of G-9, said that buying dates during Ramazan is a cherished tradition for his family. "We make sure to have good-quality dates for Iftar. It's a Sunnah and also healthy, so we don't compromise on quality," he said. Another customer, Gulmina, expressed concern over the price hike in premium varieties. "Last year, Ajwa was more affordable. This time, the prices seem higher, so we are opting for Mozafati instead," she said, adding that despite budget constraints, dates remain an essential item on her Ramazan shopping list. Wholesale dealers said supplies from major date-producing areas have been increased to meet seasonal demand, with stocks replenished regularly to avoid shortages, particularly during peak hours before Iftar.—APP

Ramazan playgrounds ignite Islamabad youth revolution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the capital, youth and families are turning to sports on upgraded playgrounds this Ramazan season across parks and grounds to address screen addiction, inactivity, and health issues during fasting routines through government improvements, fitness apps and community tournaments. "Government sports official Imran Malik told APP: "We upgraded more than 20 public grounds this year with better turf and lighting". Islamabad's younger generation, often occupied with mobile screens, is increasingly using outdoor sports facilities revived over the past year, supported by social media trends and local initiatives. Facilities from F 9 Park to G 10 grounds and Bhara Kahu tracks to Margalla hills hiking trails now see steady crowds for jogging and running, along with other games like football, cricket, and basketball as well, especially after Maghrib prayers, en-

couraged by popular social media fitness challenges and increased trend in educational institutes, i.e., schools, colleges and universities etc. Parents notice the change. "My son used to spend hours on games, but now plays football here and shares his progress online," says Ayesha Khan, speaking to APP while watching her child practice at F9 park. A 19-year-old footballer at G13 Markaz ground said, "My college physical education teacher motivated me and these improved fields make it easier to keep going, especially during Ramazan. Women and girls in Islamabad are also embracing revamped playgrounds for evening cricket, badminton, and jogs after Maghrib prayers. Mothers and daughters in comfortable clothes scrimmage under bright lights, spurred by local fitness influencers. "These spots let us stay fit without worry," says 35-year-old Fatima Raza from I-8, practicing basketball at a nearby ground. Ramazan events have drawn around 500 participants daily. A local

Imam e Masjid commented: "These spaces help build community spirit after night prayers, offering healthy alternatives to staying indoors," said Maulana Usman from Jamia Masjid in G 9. Health experts support the trend. "Combining fasting with physical activity helps manage weight and stress; we've seen potential to reduce conditions like diabetes by 20 percent in similar groups," said Dr Faisal Rehman, sports medicine specialist at Polyclinic Hospital, to APP. Vendors near parks and grounds report benefits. "Footfall from players and families has increased sales by 35 percent during Ramazan, mainly drinks and snacks," said Abpara market shopkeeper Imran Ahmed. A local fitness influencer added: "My Ramazan 5K challenge has engaged over 10,000 people using these grounds," said Sara Qureshi, 22, from I-8. Plans include more women-focused areas and facilities for children with special needs. These playgrounds are helping Islamabad promote healthier habits during the holy month.

COMSTECH to strengthen coop with IAEA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development aimed at expanding scientific cooperation for sustainable development in Africa, Coordinator General of OIC-COMSTECH, Prof Dr Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary held high-level and productive meetings at the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria, resulting in key agreements to jointly implement health and food security initiatives in African countries. During the visit, Prof Choudhary met with Ms Najat Mokhtar, Deputy Director General of the IAEA's Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, and Mr Jean-Pierre Cayol, Department Programme Coordinator, to review ongoing cooperation and explore new avenues of collaboration under the existing

Memorandum of Understanding between OIC and IAEA. The meeting was also attended by Pakistan's Ambassador Muhammad Kamran Akhtar and Dr Riaz, Technical Lead from the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. Both sides agreed to launch collaborative projects in Senegal, Nigeria, and Uganda, focusing on two major priority areas. The first initiative aims to strengthen radiation therapy and diagnostic services in nuclear medicine through the expertise of leading Pakistani institutions, including the Nuclear Institute for Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine (NURI). The second area of cooperation involves the application of nuclear radiation technology for post-harvest treatment to reduce food losses in the tar-

geted African countries, with technical support from Pakistani institutions. Discussions also emphasized enhanced cooperation and knowledge sharing in the fields of healthcare and food security. It was further proposed to engage the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Solidarity Fund to support and strengthen the implementation of the initiative. The participants agreed that Pakistan's technical expertise and institutional excellence would be utilized for capacity building and human resource development in partner countries. The meeting marked an important step toward expanding OIC-IAEA collaboration aimed at promoting sustainable development, improving healthcare services, and enhancing food security across Africa.—DNA

Two bike lifters in handcuffs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested two members of a bike lifter gang during a targeted operation in the jurisdiction of Korla police station, recovering 10 stolen motorcycles along with cash and weapons. An official told APP on Sunday that the arrests were made as part of an ongoing crackdown against criminal elements involved in motorcycle theft across the federal capital. He said the Korla police team apprehended two wanted accused, identified as Ibrahim Khan and Khuram Hussain, who were involved in multiple bike lifting incidents. The official said police recovered 10 stolen motorcycles, cash, and weapons with ammunition from the possession of the arrested suspects. During the initial investigation, the accused confessed to committing several motorcycle thefts in different areas of Islamabad, he added. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said ICT Police were taking all possible measures to protect the lives and property of citizens and that strict action would continue against those involved in street crime. He urged citizens to cooperate with police and immediately report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station or through the emergency helpline "Pucar-15"—APP

Two years on the run, Minor's abductor finally in custody

Islamabad Police reiterated their commitment to protecting minors and taking firm action against those involved in abduction and child marriage cases

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have taken custody of a proclaimed offender accused of abducting a 13-year-old girl and forcibly marrying her two years ago, after he was detained by Bahawalnagar Police. An official told on Sunday that the accused, identified as Ahsan Ali, was wanted in case No. 670/24 registered at Noon Police Station, Islamabad. He said the accused allegedly lured the minor girl from the jurisdiction of Noon police station and took her to Bahawalnagar, after which he switched off his mobile phones and went into hiding. The official said Bahawalnagar Police, during routine checking, identified Ahsan Ali as a proclaimed offender wanted by Islamabad Police and immediately contacted Noon Police for further legal action. He said a police team from Islamabad reached Bahawalnagar to take custody of the accused and bring him back to face legal proceedings. The official said strict laws exist regarding marriage with minor girls, and the police would prepare a strong challan to ensure the accused receives maximum punishment under the law. The victim's family demanded strict legal action against the accused, urging authorities to ensure justice for the minor girl. Islamabad Police reiterated their commitment to protecting minors and taking firm action against those involved in abduction and child marriage cases.—APP

ITP issues advisory as all routes to Red Zone sealed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Sunday issued a traffic advisory announcing the complete closure of all routes leading to the Red Zone due to security reasons. An ITP official told APP on Sunday that all entry points towards the Red Zone have been sealed, and commuters are advised to avoid travelling in that direction until further notice. He said traffic personnel have been deployed at key intersections to guide motorists and ensure smooth flow on alternate routes. The official urged citizens to cooperate with traffic police and follow official instructions to avoid inconvenience. For further information, citizens may contact the Police Emergency Helpline "Pucar-15" or the Traffic Helpline 1915.—APP



گیس کے استعمال میں لازم ہے احتیاط





گیس کا تھن والو بند کریں



بجلی کا سوئچ آن آف نہ کریں



کھڑکیاں اور دروازے کھول دیں



گھڑیں معیاری گیس آلات کا استعمال یقینی بنائیں



انٹرنل ہاؤس انڈائنڈ گیس معیاری پائپ کا استعمال اور لیک سے بچنے کے لیے ڈاؤن ٹاؤ ماؤنٹینگ یقینی بنائیں



ماچس یا لائٹرز ہارنٹ نہ کریں

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PID/L/2404-D/25

Briefs

NA
Committee
Chairman
seeks global
intervention

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Water Resources, Ahmad Atteeq Anwer, MNA, has urged the international community to take action against what he described as direct violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) by India. He called on global community to take notice and help ensure compliance with the decades-old water-sharing agreement. In an interview with APP, the Chairman said that Pakistan intends to raise the matter at international forums and pursue the case through the Permanent Court of Arbitration to seek legal remedy under the provisions of the treaty. The Chairman said the committee had conveyed the gravity of the situation to the international community, stressing that India was "using water resources as a weapon." Stressing the need for regional peace and economic stability, the Chairman said India must be pressed by the international community to comply with the Indus Waters Treaty. The Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, governs the use of waters from the Indus River system between the two neighboring countries. It is widely regarded as one of the most enduring water-sharing agreements in the world, having survived multiple periods of political and military tension. The Chairman emphasized that Pakistan would engage with friendly nations that maintain strong diplomatic ties with India, urging them to play a constructive role in encouraging compliance with the treaty.—APP

PAL to hold
special event
honouring
women
writers

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) will hold a special literary event on Wednesday, March 4, to honour distinguished women writers in recognition of their valuable contributions to literature, in connection with the upcoming International Women's Day. Talking to APP, a spokesperson for PAL said that the Academy regularly hosts an informal weekly session titled "Chai, Baatain aur Kitaaben" (Tea, Talks and Books) every Wednesday. This week's session will be dedicated to prominent Pakistani women writers who have made significant contributions to the literary world. The forthcoming session is themed "Asr-e-Hazir Ki Pakistani Khawateen Ahle-Qalam: Takhleeqi Baseerat aur Samaji Shaor" (Contemporary Pakistani Women Writers: Creative Insight and Social Consciousness). Sharing further details, the spokesperson said participating women authors will present their creative works and share their perspectives on the evolving role of women in literature and society. The event is scheduled to take place from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and is free and open to literary enthusiasts, scholars, and members of the public. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet, engage, and network with prominent women writers.—APP

DIG conducts
citywide
security
review

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Police Muhammad Jawad Tariq, accompanied by SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza, conducted a citywide review of security arrangements during Sehri and Taraveeh hours across the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that the DIG visited various sensitive locations, including mosques and key security points, to assess preparedness during early morning Sehri timings and late night Taraveeh prayers. He said DIG Tariq met officers deployed on duty and directed them to ensure heightened vigilance during peak religious hours.—APP

ICCI President, South African
envoy firm to promote trade ties

Pakistan-South Africa enjoy vast potential to boost trade, investment ties: Envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Acting High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan, H.E. Rudolph Pierre Jordan said that South Africa is a land of infinite possibilities and one of Pakistan's largest trading partners in Africa, offering an investor-friendly environment supported by progressive policies and a young, energetic workforce. He expressed these views while addressing an interactive session at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), which was attended by ICCI Executive Members and representatives from the trade and industrial sectors. Highlighting the historic and cordial relations between Pakistan and South Africa since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1994, the Acting High Commissioner underscored the vast potential for expanding bilateral trade and investment. He showcased South Africa's diversified economy and pointed to promising opportunities in renewable energy, mining technology, automotive manufacturing, agro-processing, logistics, pharmaceuticals, tourism, metal products, machinery, and equipment. He noted that as Africa's most industrialized economy, South Africa enjoys preferential access to major global markets through multiple trade agreements, offering a strategic gateway for Pakistani businesses seeking expansion into the African continent. Emphasizing that "the sky is the limit," he called for enhanced sector-specific collaboration through business-to-business (B2B) linkages, exchange of trade delegations, and institutional partnerships to unlock untapped potential. In his welcome address, President ICCI, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, stated that South Africa, being one of the leading and most diversified economies in Africa, holds a central place in Pakistan's "Look Africa" Policy. He remarked that Pakistan views South Africa not only as a valued trade partner but also as a gateway to the broader African market. He observed that while bilateral trade between



the two countries has shown encouraging growth trends, it remains well below its true potential. At present, trade is largely concentrated in sectors such as textiles, rice, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery, and agricultural products. However, given the size, diversity, and complementarities of both economies, there exists substantial scope to enhance trade volumes through diversification, value addition, and stronger private-sector collaboration. He further emphasized that improved connectivity and deeper engagement with the African region under Pakistan's Look Africa Policy would enable Pakistani exporters and investors to es-

tablish a stronger and more sustainable footprint across the continent. He expressed ICCI's commitment to working closely with the South African High Commission to organize sector-specific interactions, webinars, trade delegations, and business matchmaking initiatives to facilitate meaningful partnerships. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub termed the session highly productive, stating that it provided valuable insights into South Africa's investment climate, trade priorities, and areas of mutual cooperation. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, in his vote of thanks, described the visit as reflective of the growing importance of economic engage-

ment between Pakistan and South Africa and their shared commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation. The participants, including former President Mian Shaukat Masood, actively engaged in a question-and-answer session. Prominent attendees included Executive Members Sanaullah Khan, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Imran Minhas, Ishaq Sial, Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, Chairman Inter-Regional Coordination Committee Kashif Zahir, and Chairman ICCI Standing Committee on ASEAN Affairs Chaudhry Mohammad Ali, along with other members of the business community.

China Space Agency
confirms Pakistani
astronaut for 2026 flight

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani astronaut will join a short-term mission aboard the China Space Station in 2026 as a payload specialist, conducting scientific experiments on behalf of Pakistan, according to a statement issued on Friday by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). The announcement came as CMSA unveiled its 2026 spaceflight plans, which include two crewed missions and one cargo resupply flight to the orbiting station, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Saturday. Astronauts from the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions are also expected to

participate in upcoming missions as China expands international cooperation in human spaceflight. Under the arrangement, the Pakistani astronaut will undertake a short-duration mission during a crew rotation period, serving as a payload specialist responsible for conducting scientific research and microgravity experiments. The research will cover areas such as materials science, biological studies, and space technology applications, supporting Pakistan's growing interest in space science and innovation. The development follows an agreement signed between China and Pakistan

in 2025 on the selection and training of Pakistani astronauts. The selection process for the Pakistani astronaut mission is progressing smoothly, according to the China Manned Space Engineering Office (CMSEO). CMSEO indicated that the Pakistani astronaut is expected to fly aboard a future Shenzhou mission for a short visit. During crew handovers, the station typically accommodates six astronauts for several days, allowing time for experiments, technical work, and outreach activities. China's space station, completed in 2022, operates as a long-term orbital laboratory supporting

research in microgravity and space medicine. The inclusion of a Pakistani astronaut marks a significant step in Pakistan-China strategic cooperation and makes Pakistan among a limited number of countries that have sent astronauts into space. Earlier, on February 12, China successfully launched Pakistan's PRSC-E02 remote-sensing satellite along with six other satellites into orbit during an offshore mission in Guangdong province, further strengthening bilateral collaboration in satellite development, Earth observation, and space-based research.—DNA

AI-powered
'Safe Tourism
App' unveiled

MURREE: The Murree Police have launched a "Safe Tourism App" in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz Sharif, transforming traditional policing into a smart, technology-driven security system for tourists. District Police Officer (DPO) Murree Dr Muhammad Raza Tanveer told reporters on Sunday the application, developed to international standards, would serve as a 24/7 "Virtual Tourist Guide". He said the platform "integrates multiple departments including Police, Rescue 1122, District Administration, Traffic Police, Motorway Police and the Meteorological Department into a single digital interface". "The app ensures immediate access to emergency services and provides live weather and traffic updates," Dr Tanveer said. He added that a "Virtual Women Police Station" had been incorporated to prioritise the safety of women and families, while an AI-powered chatbot offers instant guidance on navigation, conditions and routes. To strengthen accountability, a "Text to DPO" facility has been introduced, enabling tourists to lodge complaints or emergencies directly via WhatsApp. The app also features a "Smart Tourism Directory" listing police stations, hotels, hospitals, workshops and verified recreational sites with GPS-enabled live locations. Dr Tanveer emphasised that the initiative "seeks to safeguard Murree's tradition of hospitality through modern technology. Our goal is to ensure tourists return home with pleasant memories".—DNA

Police net 31
lawbreakers;
Drugs, weapons
seized

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 31 accused in multiple operations across the federal capital and recovered narcotics, liquor, and illegal weapons from their possession. An official told APP on Sunday that police teams from Karachi Company, Shalimar, Golra, Sangiani, Industrial Area, Humak, Nilore, Bhara Kahu, and Shahzad Town police stations conducted coordinated actions against criminal elements. He said 17 accused involved in various criminal activities were apprehended during routine and targeted operations. Police recovered 110 grams of hashish, 145 grams of heroin, 421 grams of ice, 210 bottles of liquor, and 10 pistols with ammunition from the possession of the arrested accused.—APP

Margalla Hills fire
under control after
overnight effort

ISLAMABAD: A fire that broke out on the Margalla Hills was brought under control after an overnight operation, with 34 firefighters taking part in the response. Officials said the blaze affected areas falling within the limits of Islamabad and Punjab, prompting immediate action by rescue and environment teams. According to the district administration, rescue teams remained active throughout the night to stop the fire from spreading further. Firefighters from the Environment Directorate led the operation and worked for several hours in difficult terrain. The administration confirmed that the fire was fully controlled at around 2:15 am. A spokesman for the district administration

said that coordinated efforts by all departments helped contain the situation. No loss of life was reported during the operation. The cause of the fire was not immediately confirmed. Officials added that although the flames have been extinguished, staff remain present at the site to carry out cooling activities. This step is being taken to prevent any chance of the fire reigniting. Monitoring of the affected area is continuing as a precaution. The administration urged citizens to report any signs of fire in forest and hill areas without delay. Authorities also stressed the need for public cooperation to protect natural areas from fire incidents, especially during dry weather conditions.—DNA

Iran attack risks pushing
global economy into recession

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Business Network President Omar Butt has warned that an attack on Iran could immediately raise global crude oil prices by up to \$20 per barrel, placing severe pressure on developing economies and directly threatening Pakistan's economic recovery. He added that nearly five million Pakistanis work in Gulf countries, and remittances remain a key pillar of the economy. If regional tensions escalate or employment opportunities are disrupted, the government's \$41 billion remittance target could be jeopardised. Financial experts believe that fears of war could push global stock markets down by one to two percent, while investors may shift toward safe-haven assets such as the US dollar

and gold. Emerging market currencies could face volatility, and foreign portfolio outflows may intensify. If the Strait of Hormuz remains closed for an extended period, the global economy could slip into recession, making it even more difficult for Pakistan to meet the fiscal targets under its ongoing \$7 billion IMF program. Butt urged responsible nations to prevent the world from sliding toward a third world war. He stressed that policymakers in Pakistan must prepare contingency plans, including building strategic reserves, diversifying energy supplies, and closely monitoring external sector indicators. Proactive steps, he said, could help cushion shocks and maintain investor confidence during heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

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Turkiye and EU's 'Made in Europe' plan

ANDREW HAMMOND

THE EU is scheduled to announce on Wednesday, after seven postponements, its new "Made in Europe" plan. As much as the package has divided the EU and delayed the announcement, concern has spread much more widely, including to Middle Eastern nations such as Türkiye.

In recent decades, Türkiye and some other Middle Eastern countries have increasingly become key parts of European supply chains as part of the "nearshoring" economic phenomenon in industries including automobiles, machine manufacturing, steel and defense. Türkiye is engaged in a significant lobbying campaign alongside other non-EU nations that might be affected, including the UK, to influence the big EU announcement and be included in the geographical scope of the "Made in Europe" initiative.

This new plan, part of a broader Industrial Accelerator Act to be unveiled on Wednesday, is the latest phase of the EU's Clean Industrial Deal, which aims to boost the bloc's global competitiveness and may become the signature policy of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's second term of office. The proposal will introduce elements of European preference in EU aid and public procurement to European-made content in strategic sectors such as renewables, batteries, vehicles, and steel. With key competitors such as the US and China increasingly challenging EU businesses, France seeded the idea a few years ago to steer major contracts toward European industrial and tech champions. While this has proven controversial within the EU and beyond, it has since gained traction, with the final package imminent.

European Commissioner for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy Stéphane Sejourne wrote an article in February asserting that "without an ambitious, effective and pragmatic industrial policy, the European economy is doomed to be just a playground for its competitors. We must establish, once and for all, a genuine European preference in our most strategic sectors."

However, the "Made in Europe" package has divided the 27 EU member states, with multiple delays in finalizing the initiative over several months. Skeptical governments include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovakia. They have warned that the plan could have significant, unintended "consequences for effective competition, price and quality levels, and effects on businesses."

Moreover, according to a leak in December, the bloc's largest economy, Germany, has lobbied for a "Made with Europe" rather than "Made in Europe" approach. This "Made with Europe" alternative, which is more favored by much of the global business community, including in Türkiye and potentially other



Middle Eastern nations, would see EU preferences more limited in time, and defined broadly to include products made in countries with which Brussels has a trade and/or economic partnership deals, and/or are otherwise "likeminded partners." The "Made in Europe" package has divided the 27 EU member states, with multiple delays in finalizing the initiative over several months. For instance, Türkiye is advocating that accords such as the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Cumulation of Origin agreement allow for the geographical scope of "Made in Europe" to be extended beyond the EU and and European Free Trade Agreement – Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein – to include other nations key to EU supply chains. Companies are joining countries in these lobbying campaigns as the potential alternative would be relocating manufacturing back to the EU which would take much time and money. Moreover, Türkiye also asserts that signatories of the Barcelona Declaration should be included in "Made in Europe" on the basis of a rules-of-origin provision in international trade whereby products from one country of origin can have value added to it in another as if it were native to that country. According to Türkiye, this would allow for a product designed in an EU country, manufactured in Barcelona Declaration signatory country, and assembled in a third system country, to benefit from "Made in Europe" provisions. While the overall "Made in Europe" package is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, a hint of what may be announced is shown in the automotive plan announced by the European Commission last December. This shifts the focus of incentives and financial support in the sector toward an increasingly "Made in Europe" emphasis. As the commercial pressure from foreign-made car brands on the European market increases, especially from China, Brussels has established special incentives to protect the automotive sector, including tax breaks. This is founded on a 70 percent domestic production requirement within the EU. This and wider European Commission announcements, such as the Clean Industry Agreement, the Automotive Industry Action Plan, and the automotive package, are based on intent to strengthen local industrial capacity. This includes compliance with EU criteria in environmental, social, and technological areas. The development of clean manufacturing technologies is another pillar. Decarbonization of the automotive industry through the EU Net-Zero Industry Act and the Industrial Acceleration Act requires car makers to have a 40 percent low-emission fleet by 2030 and 75 percent by 2035. This also applies to industries such as automotive supply and automotive steel manufacturing industries. Moreover, a new European Critical Raw Materials Center is being established to ensure the supply of critical raw materials and reduce external dependence. This will perform joint purchasing and stocking of critical raw materials and support not only the automotive industry, but also battery manufacturing, defense, and AI chips industries. New battery and battery conversion investments will be supported. Taken together, despite all these controversies, the package has too much momentum to be stopped in its tracks. The devil will be in the detail of the big announcement for Türkiye and other Middle Eastern nations as they finalize their EU lobbying campaigns.

A Narrow Corridor between War and Talks

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Iranian commentary has grown unusually candid. Analysts close to the establishment now describe American objectives as layered and cumulative: first, to impose fresh limits on enrichment; second, to erode Iran's missile arsenal; third, to constrain its network of regional partners; and finally, to leave the Islamic Republic structurally weaker over the long term. In Tehran's telling, Israel's role in this equation is central. Israeli leaders, they argue, no longer view the American presence as leverage for diplomacy but as the opening phase of a wider campaign to undermine Iran's...

THE steady arrival of American warships, aircraft and missile defence systems in the Gulf has stirred familiar unease in Tehran. Yet this time, the anxiety is accompanied by a sharper, more layered reading of Washington's intentions. Iranian officials and analysts no longer see the buildup as theatre or mere signalling. Nor do they expect a ground war. The prevailing assessment is that the United States is preparing the ground for a short, punishing military operation designed to degrade Iran's missile capabilities, weaken its deterrence, and recalibrate the regional balance after the brief but consequential confrontation with Israel in June 2025.

From Tehran's perspective, the issue extends beyond the nuclear file. The strikes that followed Iran's direct attack on Israel marked a turning point. For the first time, the Islamic Republic crossed a line it had long avoided, and while the costs were not negligible, the regime emerged with its core military infrastructure intact. Iranian strategists believe this outcome alarmed Washington and Tel Aviv alike. In their reading, the present military deployments are meant to reverse that outcome and restore a measure of deterrent dominance that was dented by Iran's ability to strike and survive.

Iranian commentary has grown unusually candid. Analysts close to the establishment now describe American objectives as layered and cumulative: first, to impose fresh limits on enrichment; second, to erode Iran's missile arsenal; third, to constrain its network of regional partners; and finally, to leave the Islamic Republic structurally weaker over the long term. In Tehran's telling, Israel's role in this equation is central. Israeli leaders, they argue, no longer view the American presence as leverage for diplomacy but as the opening phase of a wider campaign to undermine Iran's capacity to strike back in any future conflict.

Each new deployment, whether in the Gulf or the eastern Mediterranean, is interpreted through this lens. Yet despite the pressure, there is little appetite in Tehran for capitulation. The lesson drawn from the June war is not that restraint spared Iran, but that the ability to impose costs forced an early halt to hostilities. The idea that the Islamic Republic might accept far-reaching concessions under threat of force cuts against the grain of the worldview of Ali Khamenei and the security establishment that surrounds him. With the country already under severe domestic strain, from economic hardship to social discontent, yielding under pressure is framed not as prudence but as an invitation to deeper vulnerability.

Against this backdrop, Iran's strategic debate has taken a striking turn. For decades, its leaders spoke the language of defence even as they built tools for retaliation. Now, senior military figures are openly describing a shift towards a more forward-leaning posture. The emphasis is no longer solely on absorbing a blow and responding in kind, but on shaping the battlefield from the outset. This rhetoric is matched by hints that Tehran may not confine any future confrontation to narrow, bilateral exchanges. Instead, the leadership has begun to signal that a new conflict would be met with region-wide pressure, spreading the costs across multiple theatres.

This shift carries obvious risks. Some Iranian politicians and commentators caution against treating war lightly, warning that bravado can become a substitute for strategy. Others argue that Washington's aim is not prolonged confrontation but a limited show of force, and that misreading such intentions could trigger a spiral that neither side controls. Yet these warnings sit uneasily alongside a broader sense within the regime that the present moment is unusually perilous. In past crises, Tehran balanced maximalist rhetoric with careful calibration. Today, the leadership appears more willing to accept risk, convinced that survival itself is at stake.

Diplomacy, meanwhile, continues in a narrow corridor. Indirect talks in Geneva have produced what officials describe as guiding principles for further engagement, and there are signs of cautious movement on technical issues. Iran has indicated a willingness to consider limited steps on enrichment levels and to permit selective access to sites. But the red lines remain firm. The missile programme, which Tehran credits with preventing far greater damage in the last conflict, is deemed non-negotiable under duress. Nor is there any readiness to dismantle regional partnerships to meet American or Israeli demands.

For a broader opening to emerge, Iranian officials argue, the United States would need to offer meaningful sanctions relief backed by assurances that go beyond past experience. In return, Tehran would have to accept intrusive monitoring by an international body it increasingly distrusts. That body, the International Atomic Energy Agency, occupies an awkward place in the current standoff. Its director-general, Rafael Grossi, has presented the Geneva process as a fragile but real opportunity, stressing that technical verification can still provide a foundation for wider agreement. In Tehran, however, perceptions have hardened. The strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities in June, followed by American action against three sites, have rein-

forced the belief that inspections and technical disputes can be used to justify pressure rather than build confidence. While the IAEA's leadership insists on its neutrality, many within Iran now view the agency as part of a political choreography that leads, ultimately, to coercion. This suspicion has narrowed the space for compromise, even on matters where technical accommodation might once have been possible. The scenario that many analysts now consider most plausible is therefore a short, intense confrontation: larger in scale than the June fighting but still limited in duration and scope. Such an outcome, fraught as it would be, carries a bleak logic for both sides. Washington could claim to have degraded Iran's military and missile capabilities without becoming mired in a prolonged war. Israel could argue that Iran's capacity to strike back has been curbed. Tehran, for its part, could absorb significant damage, retaliate enough to demonstrate resolve, and avoid concessions it considers politically fatal.

This grim equilibrium reflects the political calculus in Washington as well. For Donald Trump, a brief but forceful campaign could be presented as decisive action, followed by renewed pressure for negotiations on terms more favourable to the United States. The risk, of course, is that even a limited exchange can escape its intended boundaries. Once missiles fly and ships are struck, the logic of escalation takes on a momentum of its own. Hovering over all of this is the fear in Tehran that military pressure will be paired with efforts to deepen internal strain. Iranian elites speak openly of a blended approach in which covert action, economic pressure and information campaigns are combined with targeted strikes to exploit moments of vulnerability. In such a scenario, the threat is not merely physical damage but internal fragmentation. Deterrence becomes harder to manage when the battlefield extends into society itself.

This is the narrow passage in which diplomacy now struggles to survive. On one side stand military preparations and hardened red lines; on the other, a deep reservoir of mistrust shaped by years of broken agreements and punitive measures. Technical fixes may still offer temporary pauses, but the underlying confrontation remains unresolved. Both Washington and Tehran appear to be preparing for a clash they claim not to seek, convinced that the costs of yielding are greater than the costs of risking a short war. In that calculation lies the most unsettling lesson of the current moment: the space for restraint is shrinking, even as the dangers of misjudgement grow.

Strategic Siege: Is Pakistan Being Surrounded

Qamar Bashir



The Taliban's return to power reshaped the region yet again. Instead of ushering in stability for Pakistan, however, cross-border militancy intensified. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), operating from Afghan soil, escalated attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Islamabad responded with cross-border airstrikes against militant sanctuaries

GEOPOLITICS has never been governed by sentiment. Not religion, not shared history, not cultural brotherhood—only interests. The unfolding realignments across South Asia and the Middle East illustrate this truth with striking clarity. Alliances are shifting, rivalries are recalibrating, and Pakistan finds itself increasingly positioned at the intersection of competing strategic designs. The roots of today's complexity stretch back to 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Pakistan became the frontline state in a U.S.-backed campaign to counter Moscow. Billions of dollars in American and Saudi assistance flowed through intelligence networks to arm and train Afghan fighters. The mobilization of religious ideology was not incidental—it was strategic. Fighters from across the Muslim world converged in Afghanistan. By 1989, the Soviet withdrawal marked a Cold War victory for Washington and its partners. But militant infrastructures rarely dissolve once their immediate utility ends. The Taliban emerged in the 1990s from the ashes of war, establishing control over Kabul in 1996. Pakistan was among the few nations to recognize their regime. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, however, the same Taliban became the primary target of American military intervention. The subsequent 20-year war cost over \$2 trillion and claimed more than 170,000 lives before the U.S. withdrawal in August 2021.

The Taliban's return to power reshaped the region yet again. Instead of ushering in stability for Pakistan, however, cross-border militancy intensified. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), operating from Afghan soil, escalated attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Islamabad responded with cross-border airstrikes against militant sanctuaries. While tactically decisive, these actions strained relations with Kabul and risked civilian backlash. Instead, Pakistan with its deep intelligence roots in Afghanistan, had the option to adopt the same tactics which Afghanistan is using by infiltrating Pakistani Taliban in Pakistan and killing innocent people mostly by detonating human bombs in Mosque. This could have been a more discrete way to weed out the menace of TTP. History suggests that purely kinetic responses can produce unintended strategic consequences. Airstrikes may eliminate immediate threats, but they can also deepen mistrust and create diplomatic openings for rival powers. In geopolitics, tactical victories can sometimes yield strategic setbacks. By intensifying overt military pressure, Islam-

abad may have inadvertently accelerated Kabul's search for diversified partnerships. That diversification is perhaps the most striking development. The Taliban government, ideologically committed to Islamic governance, has increasingly explored diplomatic and economic engagement beyond traditional Islamic partners. India reopened diplomatic channels in Kabul and expanded humanitarian assistance. Israel has pledged billions of dollars of aid to Kabul in alignment with India. This is a profound geopolitical entanglement: an Islamic Emirate seeking expanded engagement with a Hindu-majority India and a Jewish-majority Israel, even as tensions simmer with neighboring Muslim Pakistan.

This underscores a fundamental principle of realpolitik: states pursue survival and leverage, not theological alignment. Religious brotherhood and shared culture matter, but only when they coincide with national interest calculations. Facing economic collapse, frozen reserves, and diplomatic isolation, Kabul seeks diversification. India offers infrastructure and access. Israel offers technological cooperation and strategic outreach. Ideology yields to necessity. For Pakistan, however, the optics intensify concerns of encirclement. On its eastern border, India remains a strategic competitor, particularly over Kashmir. On its western frontier now stands an Afghanistan willing to engage Islamabad's rivals. To the southwest lies Iran, itself navigating tense relations with the United States. This evolving geometry fuels perceptions of a tightening strategic ring. An additional dimension complicates matters further: Bagram Airbase. During the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, Bagram served as the largest American military installation in the country, with dual runways capable of handling heavy aircraft and advanced surveillance platforms. Its geographic location—approximately 500 kilometers from China's Xinjiang region—made it strategically significant. U.S. President Donald Trump publicly criticized the abandonment of Bagram in 2021, arguing that retaining the base would have preserved American leverage, particularly in the context of intensifying U.S.-China rivalry. Bagram's proximity to Central Asia, Iran, and western China positions it as more than a counterterrorism platform—it is a potential springboard in great-power competition.

While direct American military reentry into Afghanistan appears unlikely in the near term, evolving regional alignments could create indirect pathways of influence. The strengthen-

ing of India's presence in Kabul, combined with Israel's strategic engagement in broader Asian geopolitics, introduces analytical possibilities. Washington maintains deep defense partnerships with both New Delhi and Tel Aviv. If Afghanistan continues diversifying toward these actors, space may gradually reopen for U.S. strategic leverage—without formal troop deployments. Interestingly, geopolitics often unfolds through indirect channels. For Washington, containing China remains a central strategic priority. For India, Afghanistan offers westward strategic depth. For Israel, expanded regional engagement broadens diplomatic influence. For Kabul, diversified partnerships reduce isolation. For Pakistan, however, these convergences heighten strategic anxiety.

For Israel, extending its engagement with Kabul through India would provide a strategic foothold in South Asia and enhance its capacity to deter Pakistan from aligning with Turkey and Saudi Arabia in any configuration perceived as intimidating to Israel. Such cooperation could be viewed as a counterweight to a potential alignment involving Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and nuclear-armed Pakistan, which some analysts argue might aim to exert strategic pressure or encirclement against Israel. Simultaneously, the Persian Gulf remains heavily militarized. The U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain deploys advanced naval assets, while Iran has invested in ballistic missiles, drones, and anti-ship systems designed to offset conventional asymmetry. China, importing substantial Gulf energy supplies, and Russia, expanding ties with Tehran, both observe carefully. Any escalation between Washington and Tehran would reverberate in Pakistan. The country already hosts approximately 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees. A major Iran conflict could trigger further displacement, compounding economic strain amid IMF-backed reforms and domestic political polarization. Internally, Pakistan faces political turbulence, including debates surrounding the incarceration of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and federal-provincial tensions. External pressure combined with internal division magnifies vulnerability. Yet one broader truth emerges from this complex web: strategic encirclement is not solely a product of adversarial design.

Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan

Briefs

Iran launches retaliatory...

FROM PAGE 01
The IRGC vowed that "the hand of revenge of the Iranian nation will not let go" of those responsible for Khamenei's "martyrdom," promising "severe, decisive, and regrettable punishment" for the "murderers" and aggressors. Officials emphasized that the attacks would continue with unrelenting force until the "lesson-giving" retribution is delivered, warning that "land and sea will become the graveyard of the terrorist aggressors." Meanwhile, Iran has begun 40 days of mourning after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in ongoing attacks by the United States and Israel, according to Iranian state media. Top security officials were also killed in Saturday's strikes, along with Khamenei's daughter, son-in-law and grandson. The killings mark one of the most significant blows to Iran's leadership since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Ayatollah Arafati to...

FROM PAGE 01
uncertainty since Iranian state media confirmed the martyrdom of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in what was described as joint US and Israeli attacks. Authorities declared him a "martyr" and announced a seven-day public holiday along with a 40-day national mourning period. State media further claimed that Khamenei's daughter, son-in-law, and grandson were also martyred in the strikes. Details of the reported strikes according to Iranian state news agencies, the Supreme Leader was martyred during joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

Nine dead, 18 injured...

FROM PAGE 01
The protesters had gathered outside the US Consulate and attempted to move towards the premises, pelting stones, after which police resorted to shelling and force to disperse the crowd. Rescue officials earlier reported multiple injuries as clashes intensified in the high-security zone. Meanwhile, traffic movement in the area was severely affected due to the protest. Authorities closed the road from Sultanabad leading towards Mai Kolachi, causing significant traffic congestion.

Political, military...

FROM PAGE 01
Azerbaijan via the Astara border crossing. Reports indicate dozens of Pakistanis, including students, have already been safely repatriated in initial phases, with efforts continuing amid the crisis. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Mohsin Naqvi, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Ali Perwaiz Malik, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi, and senior civil and military officials.

Shehbaz Sharif...

FROM PAGE 01
the priority and security of Bahrain's citizens following Iran's retaliatory missile attacks on several Gulf countries, including Bahrain, which hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. PM Sharif emphasized the need for restraint, strict respect for international law, and an urgent push toward dialogue and diplomacy to de-escalate tensions and restore peace and stability. Similarly, in discussions with his brother His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, the Prime Minister expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the escalation sparked by Israeli attacks on Iran, followed by Iran's counterstrikes targeting Jordan and other brotherly nations. The leaders exchanged views on the evolving regional dynamics, with Pakistan highlighting the risks of broader conflict and advocating for immediate diplomatic efforts to prevent further violence.



ISLAMABAD: Players posing for a picture on the occasion of Ramdan Golf Clinic Hosted at The Club Eighteen organized by Reliance Golf. – DNA

Pakistan cricket's lack of T20 evolution exposed

"It is like other teams are playing on the moon and we are on earth," says former player Kamran Akmal

SPORTS DESK

KANDY: Pakistan's shortcomings were laid bare during their lacklustre T20 World Cup campaign which ended Saturday when the team failed to reach the semi-finals. From the captain Salman Agha, who was criticised for not being a T20 player, to slow batting rates and the use of all-rounders not up to the job, Pakistan were shown to be behind the times in the rapid-fire format. Former wicketkeeper-batsman Kamran Akmal believes there is a huge gulf in standard between Pakistan and the top sides such as India, West Indies, South Africa and England. "Other teams have evolved to the demands of Twenty20 cricket, but neither our team nor our players meet those standards," Akmal told AFP. "It is like other teams are playing on the moon and we are on earth. We only beat

smaller teams but lose to top teams." Pakistan had high hopes for the T20 World Cup after sweeping Australia 3-0 in a pre-tournament series. They boasted a quintet of spinners that should have been suited to the turning pitches in Sri Lanka where they played all their matches. But they received a rude awakening in their first match against the Netherlands when only they squeezed home by three wickets in the final over thanks to Faheem Ashraf's 11-ball 29. Like most of his predecessors at World Cups, Agha blundered in the pressure-cooker match against India, which only went ahead after the Pakistan government U-turned on a boycott just days before the encounter. Pakistan's captain Salman Agha looks on during the 2026 ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup Super Eights match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Pallekele International Cricket

Agha won the toss and asked India to bat. The decision backfired badly as Pakistan conceded 175 and were hammered by 61 runs. Agha inexplicably held back his mystery spinner and chief weapon Usman Tariq to the 11th over, by which time opener Ishan Kishan had scored his match-shaping 77 and India were well on their way to a winning total. "How on earth did you bowl at a venue which was suited to batting first," questioned former Pakistan player Basit Ali. "After India scored 175 our batters failed to handle the pressure of a chase." Agha also held back Tariq's second over against England, after he took a wicket in his first, allowing captain Harry Brook to build a sparkling match-winning century. "It was weak captaincy from Agha," said Akmal, who also took aim at the head coach Mike Hesson and the selectors. "We were also not helped by head coach

Mike Hesson, who has an obsession for bit-and-pieces all-rounders who were neither complete bowlers, nor good batters." Pakistan's insistence in sticking with the out-of-sorts Babar Azam did nothing to help their shaky batting. The star batsman's slow scoring at number four interrupted the side's rhythm. He was dropped for the final match against Sri Lanka on Saturday where Pakistan finally posted a total in excess of 200, but it proved too little too late as New Zealand progressed on net run rate. "We are all fans of Azam but he disappointed us by not adapting to the demands of T20 cricket," said one Pakistan fan, Saud Baloch, who resigned from his job in the United Arab Emirates to go to the World Cup. "The whole Pakistan fandom is not only disappointed but angry. "But we know nothing will change and we will continue to mourn such defeats in future."

Khamenei killing 'cynical...

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, Major carriers from the Middle East, Europe, Asia-Pacific and the US announced widespread cancellations. FlightAware said more than 19,000 flights had been delayed globally and more than 2,600 were canceled as of Sunday. Thousands of flights have been delayed or canceled in the biggest disruption to global air transport since the Covid pandemic as airlines suspend services to the Middle East following the US and Israeli attacks on Iran.

UK declines to back...

FROM PAGE 01
well as military bases. "We have strengthened the UK defenses in the region, we are active in regional defense operations," he told Sky News. He said UK aircraft were operating from bases in Qatar and Cyprus and were intercepting drone attacks on bases and allies.

Army deployed...

FROM PAGE 01
Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) were also attacked during the unrest. The extent of damage is still being assessed. In Gilgit, protesters set fire to the UN Military Observer Group and UNDP sub offices. In Skardu, in response to the deteriorating law and order situation, the Pakistan Army has been deployed in Skardu under Article 245 of the Constitution. According to Gilgit-Baltistan Police, the deployment aims to provide military support to civil authorities to restore order and ensure the protection of public and private property.

PM Shehbaz postpones...

FROM PAGE 01
the recent US-Israel military 10strikes on Iran that began on February 28, 2026, resulting in the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Iran's retaliatory missile attacks on US-linked bases and allied sites in the Gulf region (including Dubai, Doha, Bahrain, and Kuwait)—the Prime Minister prioritized national security and regional stability. A new date for the visit will be determined through mutual consultations with Russian authorities at an appropriate time.

Protests outside diplomatic...

FROM PAGE 01
travelling in that direction until further notice. He said traffic personnel have been deployed at key intersections to guide motorists and ensure smooth flow on alternate routes. The official urged citizens to cooperate with traffic police and follow official instructions to avoid inconvenience. For further information, citizens may contact the Police Emergency Helpline "Pucar-15" or the Traffic Helpline 1915.

Malaysia condemns West Asia attacks, urges UN action

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia has issued a strong condemnation of a series of military strikes that rocked West Asia on Friday, targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran and several other nations in the region. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the attacks as a grave violation of international law that threatens to plunge an already volatile region into deeper chaos. In an urgent statement released this evening from Wisma Putra, the ministry confirmed it was reacting to attacks against Iran and subsequent retaliatory strikes affecting Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar. "Malaysia strongly condemns the attacks against Iran and the subsequent retaliatory attacks against several countries in the region... on 28 February 2026," the statement read. Putrajaya framed the military actions as a direct affront to the foundational principles of international order, arguing they violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected nations. The ministry specifically pointed to the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. "Such unilateral military measures risk further destabilising an already fragile region and endangering civilian lives," the press release stated, emphasizing the potential for the conflict to spiral out of control. – DNA

Marco to stay with LA

CALIFORNIA: German midfielder Marco Reus has extended his contract with the LA Galaxy through December 2027. The Galaxy announced the extension Saturday for the 36-year-old Reus, who joined the Major League Soccer club in August 2024 after 12 successful years with Borussia Dortmund. Reus immediately played an important role in the Galaxy's surge to their league-record sixth MLS Cup championship in late 2024, and he has been largely outstanding when healthy during his stateside tenure. He has 22 goal contributions in 42 matches, including five goals and nine assists last season. "Marco brings an incredible level of quality, experience and leadership to our group," Galaxy general manager Will Kuntz said in a statement. "His professionalism and standards elevate everyone around him, both on the pitch and in the locker room. We're excited that Marco will continue to be a part of the Galaxy family." – APP

Pakistan beat China in hockey world cup qualifier

DNA

CAIRO: In a thrilling opening match of the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers in Ismailia, Egypt, Pakistan's men's national hockey team secured a hard-fought 5-4 victory over China on March 1, 2026. The high-scoring encounter showcased intense action from both sides, with Pakistan edging out their opponents in a nail-biting finish. The Green Shirts displayed strong determination and skill throughout the game. Both teams performed admirably, engaging in end-to-end play that kept spectators on the edge. Pakistan's players excelled in key moments, converting opportunities effectively while defending resiliently against China's aggressive attacks. The match highlighted the team's improved coordination and fighting spirit. This win marks a promising start for Pakistan under the leadership of head coach Khawaja Junaid, in what is the

first major international tournament following recent changes in the national hockey management. Junaid's tactical approach and motivational guidance appeared effective right from the outset, helping the team overcome a competitive Chinese side. The qualifiers in Ismailia feature tough competition, with Pool B including Pakistan, China, Malaysia, and Austria. The top four teams from the overall tournament will earn qualification spots for the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup, co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands. With this opening triumph, Pakistan has boosted its position significantly and demonstrated bright chances of advancing further. The victory not only provides crucial points but also builds momentum for upcoming matches against Malaysia and Austria. Fans back home celebrated the result as a sign of revival for Pakistan hockey, a nation with a storied legacy in the sport. The team will aim to maintain this form to secure one of the coveted World Cup berths

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"Such unilateral military measures risk further destabilising an already fragile region and endangering civilian lives," the press release stated, emphasizing the potential for the conflict to spiral out of control. With tensions at a critical peak, the Malaysian government made an urgent appeal to all parties involved to exercise maximum restraint. The ministry warned that any further escalation could have consequences far beyond West Asia, potentially destabilizing global security and economic stability. – DNA

For how long Iran war will continue?

Perhaps cautious about upsetting already strained relations with Trump, many nations abstained from commenting directly or pointedly on the joint strikes but condemned Tehran's retaliation

DNA

BRUSSELS: How long will it last? Will it grow? What will the conflict and the reported death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei mean to us – and to global security overall? Those questions echoed across the Middle East and the planet Saturday as world leaders reacted warily to US and Israeli strikes on Iran. US President Donald Trump said on social media that Khamenei was dead, calling it "the single greatest chance for the Iranian people to take back their country." Iranian state media said early Sunday the 86-year-old leader had died without elaborating on a cause. Israeli officials previously told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity that Khamenei was dead. And Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a televised address, said there were "growing

signs" that Khamenei had been killed when Israel struck his compound early Saturday. The apparent demise of the second leader of the Islamic Republic, who had no designated successor, would likely throw its future into uncertainty – and exacerbate already growing concerns of a broader conflict. The UN Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting. Perhaps cautious about upsetting already strained relations with Trump, many nations abstained from commenting directly or pointedly on the joint strikes but condemned Tehran's retaliation. Similarly to Europeans, governments across the Middle East condemned Iran's strikes on Arab neighbors while staying silent on the US and Israeli military action. Other countries were more explicit: Australia and Canada expressed open support for the US strikes, while Russia and China responded with direct criticism.

The US and Israel launched a major attack on Iran on Saturday, and Trump called on the Iranian public to "seize control of your destiny" by rising up against the Islamic theocracy that has ruled the nation since 1979. Iran retaliated by firing missiles and drones toward Israel and US military bases in the Middle East. In a statement, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called on the US and Iran to resume talks and said they favored a negotiated settlement. They said their countries didn't take part in the strikes on Iran but are in close contact with the US, Israel and partners in the region. The three countries have led efforts to reach a negotiated solution over Iran's nuclear program. "We condemn Iranian attacks on countries in the region in the strongest terms. Iran must refrain from

indiscriminate military strikes," they said. "Ultimately, the Iranian people must be allowed to determine their future," they said. Later, at an emergency security meeting, Macron said France was "neither warned nor involved" in the strikes. He called for intensified efforts for a negotiated solution, saying "no one can think that the questions of Iran's nuclear program, ballistic activity, regional destabilization will be settled by strikes alone." The 22-nation Arab League called the Iranian attacks "a blatant violation of the sovereignty of countries that advocate for peace and strive for stability." That coalition of nations has historically condemned both Israel and Iran for actions it says risk destabilizing the region. Morocco, Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates denounced Iranian strikes targeting US military bases in the region including in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Emirates.

Briefs

UK urges citizens in ME to shelter in place

LONDON: The UK Foreign Office on Sunday urged British citizens in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to "shelter in place" amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East. The Foreign Office "now advises against all but essential travel to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE," it said on X in its latest update. "If you are a British national in those countries, you should shelter in place and register your presence," the ministry added. The US embassy in the Jordanian capital Amman on Sunday urged staff to avoid the embassy compound, citing a risk that it could come under attack. "The US Embassy in Jordan has instructed all Mission personnel to continue to shelter-in-place and avoid the US Embassy Amman compound, as it may be targeted," it said in a statement. It comes a day after the kingdom said a number of ballistic missiles were intercepted, as Iran retaliated with strikes across the region following US and Israeli attacks.

Aramco rises nearly 3% as Gulf stocks fall on ME tensions

RIYADH: Saudi Arabian Oil Co. shares rose nearly 3 percent in intraday trading on March 1, outperforming regional markets as escalating tensions in the Middle East weighed on Gulf equities. The stock climbed as much as 3.2 percent to SR25.76 (\$6.87) before easing slightly to SR25.64, up 2.72 percent from the previous close of SR24.96, according to Tadawul data. More than 12 million shares were traded, with turnover exceeding SR306 million as of 12:20 p.m. Saudi time. The gains came even as most Gulf markets declined after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, triggering retaliatory attacks and raising fears of a broader regional conflict. The Kingdom's benchmark Tadawul All Share Index dropped as much as 4.6 percent in early trading, putting it on track for its sharpest intraday fall since April, Reuters reported. Elsewhere in the region, Boursa Kuwait suspended trading as a precautionary measure. Oman's main index trimmed losses to 1.5 percent after falling more than 3 percent earlier, while Bahrain's benchmark slipped 0.6 percent. Qatar's market was closed for a bank holiday. Investors are now closely watching oil markets, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route that carries about 15 million barrels of crude per day, nearly 30 percent of global seaborne oil trade. "The most immediate and tangible development affecting oil markets is the effective halt of traffic through the Strait of Hormuz," said Jorge Leon, senior vice president and head of geopolitical analysis at Rystad Energy.—APP

Pope appeals for end to spiral of violence

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo said on Sunday that he is following events after US-Israeli strikes against Iran with "deep concern" and made an impassioned appeal to stop what he called a "spiral of violence." "I address a heartfelt appeal to the parties involved to assume the moral responsibility to stop the spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable abyss," said the pope. "Stability and peace are not built through mutual threats or through weapons... but only through reasonable, genuine, and responsible dialogue," the pope said during his weekly address to pilgrims in St. Peter's Square after a Sunday prayer.—APP

Asian oil buyers assess stockpiles, ME alternatives

The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, connecting the Gulf to the Arabian Sea, and on a typical day, tankers carrying the equivalent of 20 percent of global oil consumption pass through it with cargoes from producers such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, as well as the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar

LONDON: Asian governments and refiners rushed to assess oil stockpiles as well as alternative shipping routes and supplies as the Iran conflict disrupted shipping in the crucial Strait of Hormuz, with oil prices expected to rise when trading resumes on March Asia will feel the biggest impact from any disruption in Middle East oil supply as it buys two-thirds of its crude from the Gulf, with half of the top global importer China's supply and 90 percent of Japan's coming from the region. The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, connecting the Gulf to the Arabian Sea, and on a typical day, tankers carrying the equivalent of 20 percent of global oil consumption pass through it with cargoes from producers such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, as well as the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar. Japanese shipping firms said they are halting operations around the Strait of Hormuz, although Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said Tokyo had not received any reports of an immediate impact on supply for Japan. However, Indian state refiners have already started scouting for alternative

supplies, two refining officials said, declining to be identified. India, the world's No.2 oil importer, has been increasing imports from the Middle East to replace Russian crude. "Our team is already engaged with other suppliers," one of the officials said, adding that Indian state refiners have reserves of 20 days of crude and liquefied petroleum gas, which is sufficient if the situation eases in the coming days. June Goh, senior analyst at Sparta Commodities, said oil prices would likely trade higher, with the impact tempered by an expected increase in production from the OPEC+ producers group. She noted that oil infrastructure was not yet affected. "The industry is currently grappling with a slowdown in shipping activity via the Strait of Hormuz due to insurability, not an outright blockade," she said. Several tanker owners, oil majors and trading houses have suspended crude, fuel and liquefied natural gas shipments via the Strait. The South Korean government will offer petroleum from its stockpiles to local industries if any supply disruptions are prolonged, the industry ministry said

in a statement on March 1 following an emergency meeting. An official from a local refiner said South Korea's oil stockpiles held jointly with state-run Korean National Oil Corp. can last seven months. "We are checking if any vessels are still allowed to sail through the Strait now," he added. "But if the Strait of Hormuz is closed... we will seek spot supplies in Asia. We need to see which countries release such spot supplies then," he said. South Korean refiners HD Hyundai Oilbank and GS Caltex said they are monitoring the situation. Hyundai Oilbank said it has yet to halt oil loadings in the Middle East. China has bulked up its crude stockpiles in recent months, with imports hitting a record in December. In Taiwan, oil and liquefied natural gas suppliers are proceeding with shipments as scheduled, the economy ministry said, adding that the portion of oil and gas imports from the Middle East has been decreasing annually.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people from slum area receiving food for Iftar.

Oman reaffirms commitment to HRs mechanisms

GENEVA: The Oman reaffirmed its commitment to engaging positively and constructively with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, underscoring its firm belief in multilateral cooperation and adherence to the principles enshrined in the Basic Law of the State. This came in a statement delivered by First Secretary Sarah Abdullah Al Balushi of Oman's Permanent Mission to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva at the conclusion of the high-level segment of the Council's sixty-first session, during the general debate. Oman noted that the review of its national report under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism reflected the level of its positive engagement, enhancing national efforts to protect, preserve and promote human rights. The statement highlighted that the United Nations system is currently facing a sensitive phase due to a funding crisis affecting its ability to carry out its mandates, alongside a decline in multilateral diplomacy. It warned that some initiatives are increasingly being formulated and managed outside the UN framework, which may undermine the effectiveness of collective international action. Oman stressed the importance of enabling international institutions to fulfill their assigned roles, activating their decisions and strengthening confidence in their efficiency and effectiveness to uphold the principles of justice and the rule of law. The statement further pointed out that global developmental imbalances remain among the primary drivers of conflicts, wars and violations, and represent major obstacles to respecting and promoting human rights, compounded by a weakening culture of dialogue among nations and peoples. Reaffirming its longstanding approach, Oman pledged to continue consolidating dialogue, promoting stability, supporting regional and international cooperation, and resolving disputes through peaceful means. It emphasized its role as a trusted mediator that fosters conducive environments for serious negotiations and strengthens confidence in sustainable peace processes — contributing to security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East and beyond.—APP

Business community demands elimination of terrorism menace

FAISALABAD: President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Farooq Yousaf Sheikh condemned the repeated cross-border attacks from Afghanistan and continuation of terrorism inside Pakistan through hybrid and proxy warfare and termed it as intolerable, demanding concrete and decisive measures to eliminate the menace once for all. Welcoming Pakistan's successful military response to the recent Afghan aggression, he said that persistence of such hostile actions had made it imperative to adopt firm strategies to safeguard national security and ensure lasting peace in the region. He alleged that Afghanistan had effectively turned into a colony of India, from where suicide attackers were being dispatched to orchestrate bloodshed in Pakistan. Expressing grave concern, he said that terrorists were targeting mosques and educational institutions, which reflected their intent to push the region back into the Stone Age.—DNA

Romania to host AI & Big Data conference

BUCHAREST: The third edition of the AI & Big Data Conference - Regional AI Valley will be organised on March 6, in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, an event that will bring together over 70 international leaders in the fields of technology, finance, defence and public administration, and academia Organised by AmCham Romania, AmCham Moldova and AmCham Ukraine, together with ANIS Romania, ATIC Moldova and IT Ukraine Association, the conference aims to strengthen regional cooperation in the field of AI and Big Data and to contribute to the creation of a regional platform for cooperation in the field of AI on the eastern flank of the European Union. At the opening of the conference, the official panel, which will have as guests, Deputy Prime Minister Oana Gheorghiu, Moldova's Minister of Economy and Digitalisation Eugen Osmoșescu, and Governor of the National Bank of Moldova Anca Dragu, will address regional strategic cooperation in the field of AI, the economic impact of new technologies and alignment with European and transatlantic priorities. International experts will take the main stage, including Louise Gunsjo (IBM Vice President & IBM Quantum Ambassador), Nadiia Vasylieva (MIT), Joe Weiss (Palo Alto UK), Fahed Bizzari (Bellamy Alden AI Consulting), along with professors Haim Levy (Ben-Gurion University) and Eugen Dimant (University of Pennsylvania), who will address the impact of artificial intelligence on decision-making, institutional adaptation and how the human-AI interface transforms economic and organisational structures. The agenda continues with specialised parallel sessions, structured on three strategic pillars. The AI in Policy & Defence session brings together government officials, representatives from regulators, the defence sector and the NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) ecosystem — alongside leaders from global companies such as Google, Cisco, Microsoft and Thales — to discuss artificial intelligence governance, dual-use innovation and strategic resilience. The AI in Business session brings together leaders from global companies such as Google, IBM, UiPath, Amazon, Microsoft, Vodafone, Oracle and Adobe, along with founders and investors from the regional ecosystem, to analyse how artificial intelligence accelerates business growth, optimises operations and redefines business models in industry and commerce. The AI in Finance session brings together leaders from banking, fintech and consulting — including representatives from maib (Moldova Agroindbank), Citi Institute, Visa, Deloitte, ING Romania, SAS and Cisco — to discuss how artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics are transforming financial security, decision-making, and the development of new products and services in the financial industry. This edition, AI & Big Data Conference - Regional AI Valley is sought to strengthen Bucharest's positioning as a regional hub for strategic dialogue on artificial intelligence, digital security and data-driven economic transformation.—APP

PIAF slams fuel price hike as crushing burden on industry

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, who is also President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the petrol price increase of almost Rs8 per litre and diesel hike of Rs5 per litre, effective immediately for the next 15 days, will escalate operational costs for industries that are already struggling with inflation and high energy tariffs

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has strongly criticized the federal government's latest decision to raise petrol and diesel prices, warning that the move will place additional financial pressure on businesses, transport operators, and consumers across the country. PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, who is also President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the petrol price increase of almost Rs8 per litre and diesel hike of Rs5 per litre, effective immediately for the next 15 days, will escalate operational costs for industries that are already struggling with inflation and high energy tariffs. Faheemur Saigol noted that Pakistan imports around 85 percent of its petroleum requirements, making the country highly sensitive to fluctuations in global oil prices. "While we understand that fuel pricing is influenced by

international market trends, sudden and repeated hikes create uncertainty for businesses and disrupt planning. Industries, transporters, and consumers bear the brunt of such volatility," he said. He added that the cumulative effect of these fortnightly revisions is particularly concerning for small and medium enterprises, which have limited capacity to absorb rising input costs. "Without stable energy pricing, manufacturers face higher production expenses, which are ultimately passed on to consumers, further fueling inflation," Saigol warned. PIAF Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal emphasized that continuous fuel price increases are unsustainable and could slow down economic recovery. "Transport costs are a major component of the overall cost of doing business. Every hike in petrol and diesel adds to logistics expenses, impacting supply chains and market

prices. If unchecked, these increases will make goods less competitive domestically and internationally," he said. Mughal urged the government to consider alternative measures, including targeted subsidies for critical sectors and strategic planning to stabilize domestic fuel prices, rather than passing on every fluctuation in global oil rates directly to consumers. According to him, clear communication and long-term energy planning are crucial to maintain industrial stability. PIAF Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry highlighted the cascading effects of rising fuel costs on households and essential services. "Higher fuel prices immediately translate into increased transportation fares, elevated costs of goods, and pressure on daily household budgets. This affects purchasing power, dampens consumer demand, and puts additional strain on the overall economy," he said.—DNA

PGMEA, SBP partner to promote financial literacy

SIALKOT: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between SBP Banking Services Corporation (Sialkot Office) and Leather Product Development Institute (LPDI), a main project of Pakistan Gloves Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PGMEA) Sialkot. Senior Vice Chairman (SVC) PGMEA Matloob Ahmed Qureshi and Chief Manager SBP-Sialkot Waqas Kashif Bajawa officially signed the MoU.

It is worth mentioning that Leather Product Development Institute (LPDI) is the flagship project of Pakistan Gloves Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PGMEA), and this MoU marks an important step towards institutional collaboration. This partnership aims to promote Financial Literacy, SME Financing, Islamic Banking, Digital Financial Initiatives, Banking on Equality, Women Empowerment, Financial Inclusion for underserved Communities. Through joint seminars, workshops, and awareness sessions, both institutions will work together to strengthen financial knowledge and support economic growth in the region.—APP

AI, minerals to be new drivers of eco growth

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik said on Sunday that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and minerals would be new drivers of growth and sources of influence as global economic and trade landscape is changing under new world order in the making. Talking to mediapersons here, he said, regionalism and bilateral trade agreements have become preferred policy choice. In prevailing scenarios, he added, countries are seeking to invigorate industry to reduce reliance; protect their economies; enhance economic security and ensure job creation. Malik predicted that about 60 percent of jobs in advanced economies and 40 percent globally will be either enhanced, eliminated or transformed. He said, in an AI-dominated world, developing countries will have to fight on two fronts one to benefit from AI while protecting job market, asserting that new changes will have long lasting impacts. Thus Pakistan needs to adapt to new realities and find innovative solutions. He said now countries are cognizant of this reality and have started to identify new win-win opportunities; devise innovative policies; explore new avenues of cooperation; and pursue partnerships that drive diversification.—APP

Marine insurance companies considering canceling, repricing policies in ME

RIYADH: Marine insurance companies are considering canceling or repricing policies in the Middle East, according to the Financial Times. This comes after the US and Israeli strikes on targets inside Iran, followed by missile attacks and retaliatory military actions in several countries in the region. Marine brokers expect insurance premiums for ships to rise by up to 50 percent, given the region's classification as a "war zone." Ship owners are considering rerouting their vessels to avoid the Strait of Hormuz and reduce risks to crews and cargo. Regarding oil prices, a rise is expected as 20 percent of global oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz, amid concerns about continued tensions in the region. Air traffic in the Middle East was severely disrupted after several countries closed their airspace completely or partially, while regional and international airlines suspended or rescheduled flights. On the morning of March 1st, the Iranian capital, Tehran, witnessed several large explosions following Israel's announcement of what it described as a "preemptive strike.—APP

Briefs

Protesters rally across US against US-Israeli strikes

DNA

WASHINGTON: Demonstrators flooded streets in major US cities over the weekend to protest the joint US-Israeli military strikes on Iran, which began Saturday and killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The operation, described by President Donald Trump as aimed at regime change and eliminating Iran's nuclear and missile threats, involved massive airstrikes on Tehran and other sites. Israel reported follow-up attacks Sunday targeting air defenses and regime facilities in the capital's heart. In retaliation, Iran launched missiles at Israel and US-linked sites across the Middle East.

Explosions rocked Dubai (UAE), Doha (Qatar), Manama (Bahrain), and Kuwait—home to US military bases or allied nations—escalating fears of wider war. Iranian state media claimed strikes on 27 US bases and Israeli targets. A coalition of groups, including the Palestinian Youth Movement, Democratic Socialists of America, Code Pink, and The People's Forum, organized protests in cities like Washington DC (near the White House), New York (Times Square), Los Angeles (City Hall), Portland, Chicago, Boston, and more. Chants and signs condemned the attacks as "illegal war" and "aggression," calling for de-escalation and an end to US involvement. Hundreds gathered in DC Saturday, denouncing civilian casualties (including reports of a school strike killing over 100). Protesters urged Congress to act on war powers amid ongoing strikes.

President Zardari felicitates Bosnian leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, extended his warmest felicitations to Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Dr Denis Bećirović on the auspicious occasion of their Independence Day. The similar felicitations were extended to the two members of Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency Zeljko Komsic and Zeljka Cvijanovic. In his letters, the president highlighted that Pakistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoyed close and historic relations founded on mutual trust, goodwill and shared understanding. President Secretary at Media Wing said in a press release. "President Zardari expressed his confidence that the friendly bilateral ties between the two nations would continue to grow and deepen in the years ahead, to the mutual benefit of the people of both countries," the press release added.

Middle East situation

Pak maintains delicate balancing act in UNSC

Ambassador Ahmad made clear that Pakistan's concern extends beyond any single capital. Instead, it is focused on the security architecture of the entire Gulf region — home to millions of Pakistani expatriates and a region with which Islamabad maintains deep political, economic and security ties

DNA

NEW YORK: Pakistan struck a delicate balance at a tense UN Security Council meeting on Saturday, condemning unwarranted attacks on Iran, expressing solidarity with Gulf states, and urging an immediate return to negotiations and diplomacy. The Council's emergency session examined the repercussions of the US and Israeli air strikes on Iran and laid bare the deep divisions within the 15-member body over the escalating crisis. Speaking at the meeting, Pakistan's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, outlined Islamabad's growing concern as the situation in the Middle East becomes more complex with each new development. "Pakistan condemns the initiation of unwarranted attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran, in violation of international law," the ambassador said. At the same time, he stressed that Pakistan also "condemns the attacks against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and stands in solidarity with all these brotherly countries." He warned that, at a time when renewed diplomatic efforts were underway, such actions would "undermine the peace and stability of the entire region, with far-reaching consequences." Ambassador Ahmad made clear that Pakistan's concern extends beyond any single capital. Instead, it is focused on the security architecture of the entire Gulf region — home to millions of Pakistani expatriates and a region with which Islamabad maintains deep political, economic and security ties. This dual condemnation — of strikes on Iran and of attacks



on Gulf states — illustrates the fine line Pakistan is walking. It cannot afford to alienate Tehran, a neighbor with whom it shares a sensitive border and a complex security equation. Nor can it distance itself from Gulf partners that host large Pakistani communities and play a critical role in Pakistan's economy. The envoy's emphasis on mediation and dialogue further underscored this balancing act. "We particularly laud Oman's role in facilitating and mediating dialogue between Iran and the United States," he said, aligning Pakistan firmly with diplomatic efforts rather than military blocs. In another pointed observation, he lament-

ed that "diplomacy has once again been derailed as these attacks have happened right in the middle of negotiations," warning that "these military actions undermine dialogue and further erode trust that was already in short supply." Islamabad's legal framing was equally deliberate. The ambassador reminded the Council that "the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are inviolable and sacrosanct," stressing that the Charter "prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of states."

This formulation allows Pakistan to oppose unilateral or pre-emptive military actions without directly isolating any particular power beyond the immediate incidents. At the humanitarian level, Pakistan sought to humanise the crisis. Ambassador Ahmad offered condolences to "civilians caught in the middle of these violent acts," specifically mentioning "school children in Iran" and the family of a Pakistani national killed in the United Arab Emirates. In doing so, Islamabad reinforced its message that ordinary people — Iranians, Arabs and Pakistanis alike — are the real victims of escalation. The strategic anxiety was also explicit. "We are deeply alarmed at the risk of regional conflagration," the ambassador said, noting that the "safety and well-being of millions of our compatriots in the countries of the region is also our top priority."

Ultimately, Pakistan's message was straightforward but urgent: "Pakistan calls on all sides to immediately halt escalation and urgently resume diplomacy with a view to achieving a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the crisis." Whether the balance Islamabad seeks to maintain can endure will depend not only on its own diplomatic agility, but also on whether the region itself steps back from the brink.

Bilawal condemns US attack on Iran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned Israel's attack on Iran. According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP Chairman termed the Israeli aggression against Iran a grave escalation with dangerous implications for regional peace and stability. He said the Israeli attack appeared to be an attempt to divert global attention from the ongoing atrocities in Gaza. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called upon the international community to take notice of the blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity committed by Israel. He urged the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to take all possible measures to halt Israeli aggression against Iran.

KWSSIP accelerates pipeline work

DNA

KARACHI: DThe Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project (KWSSIP) on Friday stepped up work on the K-IV pipeline at Nipa to complete it within the stipulated timeline, with teams now aiming to lay two major pipes a day. Officials of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KW&SC) said pipeline installation along the K-IV route was underway on a shared 2.7-kilometre stretch with the BRT Red Line, adding that despite technical and safety constraints, the project had entered its final phase.

KW&SC Chief Executive Officer Ahmed Ali Siddiqui apologised for the disruption caused by excavation work to residents, shopkeepers, commuters and especially students in the area, and said all possible steps were being taken to finish the job on time. Project spokespersons said excavation was being carried out to a depth of six metres in an area already congested due to BRT construction, as well as underground KW&SC water and sewerage lines, SSGC pressure lines and K-Electric cables

Afghan Taliban violates 2020 Doha peace agreement

The Afghan Taliban had committed not to allow their fugitive members, including Al-Qaeda, TTP, Daesh, or any other terrorist organizations to use Afghan soil for cross-border terrorism

DNA

PESHAWAR: Showing no regards for international pacts and bilateral relations, the Afghan Taliban regime has violated all commitments and pledges made under the Doha Agreement, signed on February 29, 2020, in Qatar. Under the agreement, the Afghan Taliban had pledged that Afghan territory would not be used by any terror group or individual to threaten the security of other countries, including Pakistan. However, the security and diplomatic experts reiterated that the Afghan Taliban regime have failed to dismantle terrorist training camps and prevent militant groups from operating inside Afghanistan.

The Afghan Taliban had committed not to allow their fugitive members, including Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Daesh, or any other terrorist organizations to use Afghan soil for cross-border terrorism. The experts claimed that instead of curbing such nefarious activities, terrorist networks have regrouped in Afghanistan under the nose of Afghan Taliban and intensified attacks against Pakistan. Former ambassador Manzoorul Haq termed the repeated violations of the Doha agreement a serious breach of international obligations, stating that Pakistan has all the right to take defensive measures for security of its people in response to cross-border terrorism.

He said no sovereign country can allow that its people and security forces should be targeted by terrorists and suicide bombers. Following the hasty withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 and the collapse of the government of Ashraf Ghani, he said Pakistani officials contend that militant and terrorist groups found space to reorganize and strengthen their networks in Afghanistan. He maintained that terrorism-related incidents and suicide attacks planned from Afghan territory have increased, posing significant security challenges for Pakistan. Despite diplomatic engagements, including talks held in Istanbul, he said that Kabul has not provided written assurances guaranteeing that Afghan soil will not be used against Pakistan.

FBR misses collection target

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) missed its projected collection target by a staggering Rs429 billion during the first eight months of 2025-26. However, the collection recorded an 11 per cent increase to Rs8.121 trillion during July-February FY26, compared with Rs7.334tr raised in the same period last year, according to provisional figures. The FBR had set a revenue collection target of Rs8.550tr for 8MFY26. The revenue shortfall is primarily attributed to a slowdown in domestic sales tax collection, suspension of super tax and several other factors. The February collection grew by 12pc to Rs944bn from Rs844bn in the corresponding month last year. However, the collection fell short of the monthly target of Rs1.029tr by Rs85 bn. Records 11pc YoY rise to Rs8.121tr; income, sales tax collection falls The IMF, in its last review, has already revised down the FBR's annual tax collection target by Rs-150bn. In FY25, FBR missed its collection target by nearly Rs163bn, even after two downward revisions and raised Rs11.737tr against the revised target of Rs11.900tr. However, the collection reflects a year-on-year growth of 26.19pc from Rs9.301tr in FY24. The FBR issued Rs386bn in refunds and rebates to taxpayers during 8MFY26, up from Rs352bn a year earlier, an increase of 9.65pc. Income tax collection reached Rs3.956tr during 8MFY26, recording a shortfall of Rs-142bn against the Rs4.098tr target. However, a 12pc increase was recorded compared to Rs3.525tr in the corresponding period last year. Similarly, the sales tax collection totalled Rs2.783tr, recording a shortfall of Rs245bn against the Rs3.028tr projection, though it marked a 10pc rise over last year's Rs2.530tr. Customs duty collection stood at Rs850bn, against the Rs898bn target, resulting in a shortfall of Rs48bn. However, it grew by 5pc compared to Rs813bn last year. In contrast, the Federal Excise Duty collection reached Rs532bn, surpassing the projected target of Rs526bn and growing by 14pc from last year's Rs467bn. According to the FBR, income tax collection will improve further once the super tax is collected. This improved revenue collection performance is not incidental but reflects the structural impact of the FBR's reforms, especially its enhanced enforcement measures and its coordinated effort to realise revenue stuck in litigation.

India beat West Indies

Powell and Holder power West Indies to strong finish with unbeaten 76-run fifth-wicket stand

SPORTS DESK

KOLKATA: Sanju Samson's sparkling unbeaten 97 took India to a five-wicket win over the West Indies in Kolkata on Sunday to set up a T20 World Cup semi-final against England. Samson hit 14 fours and four sixes in his brilliant 50-ball knock in the winner-takes-all last Super Eights match to thrill 67,000 fans at a pulsating Eden Gardens. The victory, which marked India's second in the stage, propelled them into the semi-finals alongside South Africa, who topped Group 1 by winning each of their three fixtures. Set to chase a daunting 196-run target, the home side comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and four balls to spare, courtesy of Samson's sensible knock. The right-handed opener oversaw India's successful pursuit with an unbeaten half-century, top-scoring with 97 off 50 deliveries, studded with 12 fours and four sixes.

He was supported by middle-order batter Tilak Varma, who remained the second-best run getter with a 15-ball 27, while captain Suryakumar Yadav and all-rounder Hardik Pandya chipped in with 18 and 17, respectively. For West Indies, Shamar Joseph and Jason Holder bagged two wickets each, while Akeal Hosen made one scalp. India captain Suryakumar Yadav's decision to field first backfired as the Caribbean side accumulated 195/4 in their 20 overs. West Indies got off to a solid start to their innings, with captain Shai Hope and experienced Roston Chase putting together 68 runs until the former fell victim to Varun Chakravarthy on the fifth delivery of the ninth over.

Pakistan issues advisory on situation in Middle East

All Pakistani nationals residing in the Gulf region are strongly advised to exercise utmost caution, remain indoors where possible, avoid unnecessary travel, and strictly adhere to the instructions and advisories issued by the respective host governments

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In view of the evolving regional situation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has activated its Crisis Management Unit (CMU) to closely monitor developments and extend all necessary assistance. The CMU is operational 24/7. For information or emergency assistance, please contact the CMU: +92-51-9207887 All Pakistani nationals residing in the Gulf region are strongly advised to exercise utmost caution, remain indoors where possible, avoid unnecessary travel, and strictly adhere to the instructions and advisories issued by the respective host governments. For facilitation of Pakistani nationals abroad, emergency contact details of Embassies and Consulates are provided below:

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+98-9107648298 (mobile)
Pakistan Consulate, Zahidan
+98-54-33223389
+98-9046145412 (mobile)
Pakistan Consulate, Mashhad
+98-9107625302 (mobile)
+98-9371807175
Saudi Arabia
Embassy of Pakistan, Riyadh
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+966(0)114884111 (landline)
+966(0)114884222 (landline)
+966 57 628 4980 (mobile)
+966 56 050 5030 (mobile)
Pakistan Consulate General Jeddah
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+966(0)126692371 (landline)
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