



Islamabad POST

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Britain to continue supporting Pakistan economic reforms

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Spanish PM hits back at Donald Trump

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Ishaq Dar talks to the Canadian FM

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Recipe for disaster

Pak condemns India-Canada nuclear pact

Pakistan reiterates that civil nuclear cooperation must be governed by a non-discriminatory, criteria-based approach applicable equally to all states that are not parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has noted with serious concern the conclusion of a long-term uranium supply agreement between India and Canada, valued at approximately CAD 2.6 billion, along with announced cooperation in small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced nuclear reactor technologies. The Spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tahir Andrabi said on Wednesday that the agreement, signed between Canada's Cameco Corporation and India's Department of Atomic Energy, provides for the supply of nearly 22 million pounds of uranium ore concentrate from 2027 to 2035. This arrangement represents yet another country-specific exception in the field of civil nuclear cooperation.

It is particularly ironic given that India's 1974 nuclear test was conducted using plutonium produced in a reactor supplied by Canada for peaceful purposes, which directly led to the establishment of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and selective global export controls. He said, India had neither placed all its civilian nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards nor undertaken any binding commitment to do so under this arrangement. Several facilities remain outside international inspection, and it remains unclear what concrete non-proliferation assurances accompany this agreement. The strategic consequences are equally troubling: assured external uranium supplies

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Ishaq Dar talks to Canadian FM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a productive telephone conversation this evening with Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Anita Anand. The two leaders reviewed the positive momentum in Pakistan-Canada relations and explored avenues to deepen economic cooperation in key sectors such as agriculture, clean energy, and critical minerals. They highlighted the potential for expanded trade and investment, recognizing Canada's abundant resources and Pakistan's growing market opportunities. FM Anand expressed appreciation for the vibrant Pakistani diaspora in Canada, which plays a vital role in fostering people-to-people connections and contributing to both societies. Both sides underscored the importance of nurturing these cultural and community links to further solidify bilateral engagement. The ministers agreed on

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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami led by Ameer e Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naem ur Rehman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Islamabad, 5 March 2026. - DNA

Shehbaz, Malaysian PM discuss Middle East

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Thursday, 5 March, 2026 Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia, spoke on telephone earlier this afternoon. The Prime Minister expressed his serious concern over the ongoing escalation in the Middle East, following Israel's attacks against Iran and the subsequent attacks against brotherly Gulf countries. He emphasized on the imperative of upholding respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, as enshrined in the UN Charter and international law and urged all parties to exercise

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SBP seen holding rates steady

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is expected to hold its key policy rate steady at a policy review on Monday, a poll showed, as rising global energy prices and regional tensions cloud the inflation outlook and limit the room for cuts. All 10 analysts expect the SBP to hold the rate at 10.5%, after policymakers held the rate in January. The SBP has cut the key rate by a cumulative 11.5% since mid-2024, from a record high of 22%. Escalating Middle East tensions after the US and Israel attacked Iran have raised the risk of disruption to shipping through the Strait of

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Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

Army destroys Taliban brigade headquarters

Security forces targetted as many as 41 positions linked to the Afghan Taliban and the Fitna al-Khawarij

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistani Army has successfully destroyed the 205 Corps Brigade Headquarters of the Afghan Taliban in Kandahar, according to security sources. In the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, the Pakistani forces also targeted Taliban ammunition depots, further weakening the militants' operational capabilities. The operation is part of continued efforts to eliminate insurgent and extremist threats in the region. Security forces targetted as many as 41 positions linked to the Afghan Taliban and the Fitna al-Khawarij during the night between March 4 and 5,

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Russia urges Pak, Afghanistan to exercise restraint

DNA

MOSCOW: The Russian Foreign Ministry voiced deep concern today over the intensifying armed clashes along the Afghan-Pakistani border, which have entered their second week amid reports of widespread fighting involving aircraft, heavy artillery, and ground forces across the disputed Durand Line.

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Briefs

Meeting with Imran still a distant dream

FAISAL SHIEKH

ISLAMABAD: A meeting with incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan remained out of reach for the party on Thursday, while jailed party leaders called on the government to reconsider its approach toward the former premier. On Wednesday, PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja had issued a list of six people for a meeting with Imran. The list had included MNAs Shahid Khattak, Shabbir Ali Qureshi, Javed Waraich, Adil Bazai, Sohail Sultan, and also Major (Retd) Fayyaz Ahmed. The list was sent to the jail authorities as per the direction of the apex court. However, on Thursday, Qureshi told Dawn that when he, alongside other PTI leaders, reached Adiala jail, they were not allowed to meet Imran.

Centre orders monitoring of petrol stations

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Centre on Thursday asked all the provincial governments to ensure physical inspection and monitoring of retail petrol stations through respective deputy commissioners to avoid hoarding of petroleum products for undue profiteering. The government also appointed Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, a grade-22 officer of the Pakistan Administrative Service, as Petroleum Division secretary - a post lying vacant for the past couple of months. Shaikh, a former secretary of finance and planning, was working as the national food security secretary. In an announcement, OGRA said the government had assured the public that the country currently held sufficient stocks of petroleum products to meet national demand and there was no need for panic buying or hoarding.

US, Israel strikes hit two more schools

Iran claims to have struck US oil tanker

In response to the broader crisis sparked by US-Israeli strikes on Iran, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth urged Israel to "press on until the end" during talks with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN: The escalating US-Iran conflict took a dramatic turn in the Persian Gulf on March 5, 2026, as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed to have struck a US-flagged oil tanker in the northern Gulf, setting it ablaze with missiles. The IRGC asserted that the vessel was targeted amid ongoing maritime confrontations, reiterating Iran's "complete control" over the Strait of Hormuz—a vital chokepoint through which about one-fifth of global oil transits. Iranian state media reported the tanker burning, warning that passage remains under Tehran's wartime authority, with threats to attack non-compliant ships. This follows claims of hitting multiple tankers (over 10 in some reports) and declaring the strait effectively closed, paralyzing commercial traffic for days and spiking oil prices. In response to the broader crisis sparked by US-Israeli strikes on

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Iranian drones hit Azerbaijan airport

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Azerbaijan on Thursday summoned the Iranian envoy after two people were wounded in drone hits on an airport and near a school. The attacks around midday involved at least two drones that crossed from Iran into Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhichevan, which borders Iran and is separated from mainland Azerbaijan by Armenia, said a foreign ministry statement. "One drone fell on the terminal building of Nakhichevan Airport, while another drone fell near a school building in the village of Shekerabad," the ministry said, damaging the airport and wounding two civilians.

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Trump administration keeps 'boots on ground' option open

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said deploying US ground troops into Iran is not part of the current military strategy, but declined to rule out the option entirely

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The White House has acknowledged that the Donald Trump administration is deliberately avoiding categorical statements on Iran, as doing so could limit the president's flexibility in a fast-evolving security environment. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said deploying US ground troops into Iran is not part of the current military strategy, but declined to rule out the option entirely. "It's not part of the current plan, but I'm not going to remove an option for the president that is on the table," she said. Leavitt suggested that previous administrations had sometimes narrowed their strategic space by prematurely dismissing potential actions before fully assessing how unfolding developments might alter the situation. The present approach, she indicated, is designed to preserve maximum latitude for decision-making. The calibrated message reflects a broader doctrine in US national security policy: maintain ambiguity to strengthen deterrence while avoiding premature escalation.

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US-India naval ties in focus amid Iran conflict

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A former senior adviser to the US Secretary of Defence, has claimed that the US Navy is increasingly relying on Indian ports for docking and unloading operations due to escalating tensions with Iran. Former US Army Colonel Douglas Macgregor's remarks, made in a recent interview on One America News, have sparked discussion on social media, particularly in South Asia, highlighting what some view as a potential shift in US military logistics away from traditional Persian Gulf bases, according to a media report. He argued that threats to US installations in the Gulf had prompted this pivot towards Indian facilities, suggesting the move formed part of broader American operations potentially linked to conflicts involving Iran.

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WATER JUST GOT BETTER!!

MURREE SPARKLETS

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Junaid reviews energy logistics challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to assess emerging logistical challenges facing Pakistan's trade, particularly in the energy sector, amid evolving geopolitical tensions in the region. The 11-member committee, constituted on the directives of the Prime Minister to formulate a comprehensive response strategy aimed at safeguarding Pakistan's maritime trade interests, has been tasked with submitting its recommendations within two days, said a press release issued here. Speaking on the occasion, Chaudhry noted that Pakistan's ports possess significant untapped potential to attract international shipping lines for transshipment operations, which could also ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the country's maritime sector. The meeting reviewed potential risks and opportunities for the country's maritime sector in light of shifting global trade routes

and disruptions in key international waterways. He said the initiative reflected the government's proactive approach to protecting Pakistan's maritime interests while capitalizing on changing global trade dynamics. Chaudhry concluded saying that with coordinated planning and timely policy decisions, Pakistan can transform its ports into key transshipment and logistics hubs, strengthening the country's position in global maritime trade while ensuring long-term economic sustainability. The participants deliberated on possible opportunities arising from the reported closure of major international shipping corridors and discussed measures to strengthen Pakistan's position as a viable alternative transit and transshipment destination. The committee also reviewed proposals for amendments to relevant rules and regulations if required aimed at facilitating international transshipment operations through on-dock and off-dock terminals to enhance efficiency and ease of doing business. Special focus was placed on fully leveraging the potential of Gwadar Port as a regional

transshipment hub and positioning it as an alternative of regional instability. Chairman of Port Qasim Authority, Karachi Port Trust, Gwadar Port Authority also attended the meeting through zoom and briefed on the current operational readiness, highlighting available capacity for container transshipment, bulk cargo handling, and refueling services. Members of the committee include Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Vice Admiral (R) Iftikhar Ahmed Rao, the secretaries of the ministries of maritime affairs, commerce, and petroleum and natural resources, Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Director General of the National Logistics Corporation (NLC), Member (Customs) FBR, Additional Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, and Senior Technical Adviser at the Ministry of Commerce. Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani also made an insightful contribution during the meeting, emphasizing the need for the committee to present solid, practical, and time-bound recommendations to effectively address the emerging challenges facing Pakistan's maritime trade.

Over 3000 students get laptops at KU

KARACHI: The University of Karachi is the largest university in the country in terms of student enrollment, with more than 47,000 students currently studying. Under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme, the KU received a total of 12,000 applications, out of which 3,064 students were selected to receive laptops. KU's Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi while addressing the laptop distributions ceremony held at the KU's Chinese Teachers Memorial Auditorium on Thursday, emphasized that whether it is education, medicine, or military strategy, every sector today revolves around technology, and modern technology plays a crucial role in all of them. The KU VC Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi said that while everyone has desires, real success lies in making those desires a reality, which requires continuous hard work, dedication, and determination. Through these qualities, one can achieve their goals. Advising the students who received laptops, he urged them not to simply store the laptops but to use them practically for academic and research purposes. He remarked that students should be grateful to the government of Pakistan and the Prime Minister, who, despite financial challenges, provided laptops to students so they could meet modern requirements and stay aligned with technological advancements.

On this occasion, Senator Nihal Hashmi, member of the PM Laptop Distribution Committee, said that students of any country are its most valuable asset, as it is from among them that future thinkers, politicians, scientists, and distinguished professionals in various fields emerge. Speaking to the students, he said that today's youth are fortunate because modern technology has made global access easier for them. He added that if students use this facility positively, they can achieve excellence in knowledge, research, and innovation. APP

Fire prevention plan for Margalla Hills reviewed

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday reviewed preparedness measures to prevent forest fires in the Margalla Hills ahead of the upcoming fire season, with officials emphasizing improved monitoring, coordination and staffing. The meeting, held at CDA headquarters, was chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa and attended by officials from the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, the Ministry of Climate Change and other relevant departments. During the meeting, officials reviewed existing arrangements and preparedness plans to respond to fire incidents in the Margalla Hills National Park area. The CDA chairman said the purpose of the meeting was to assess preparations in line with standard operating procedures before the onset of the fire season. Officials informed

the meeting that the process of temporarily hiring additional staff ahead of the fire season would be completed soon. Authorities also briefed participants that existing fire lines were being cleared and monitoring mechanisms would be further strengthened. The meeting was told that the number of monitoring pickets would be increased and responsibilities of staff formally assigned to ensure more effective surveillance of vulnerable areas. Officials added that safety equipment, including fire balls and fire extinguishers, was already available. Randhawa directed that staff from the CDA, the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and the district administration should operate as a coordinated unit. He also instructed officials to prepare clear job descriptions for all relevant personnel. The CDA chairman emphasized that the measures were aimed at preserving the natural beauty

and greenery of the Margalla Hills. He also called for training programmes to enhance the capacity of emergency and disaster management staff so they could be deployed effectively during emergencies. He further directed authorities to develop a coordinated strategy with neighbouring districts to prevent the spread of fires into the federal capital. The meeting also reviewed the ongoing tree plantation campaign in Islamabad. Officials said trees taller than six feet were being planted during the drive to improve survival and growth rates. Students from schools, colleges and universities, along with civil society groups and the corporate sector, have also been involved in the plantation campaign, the meeting was informed. Officials said the initiatives were aimed at protecting Islamabad's environment and enhancing the capital's green cover. APP

IWT abeyance could trigger regional consequences

MULTAN: Experts on legal and geopolitical affairs have warned that any retaliatory hydro-politics in South Asia could have catastrophic consequences for millions of people in a region already facing ecological stress and food insecurity. Speaking to APP on Thursday, the analysts referred to India's unilateral announcement placing the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance following a deadly attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, that killed 26 tourists. India blamed cross-border militants for the assault, though the claim remains unproven. Dr Asif Saffar, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), termed the word "abeyance" ambiguous, noting that it does not appear in the treaty's text nor is it recognized under established principles of international law "There is a humanitarian and ecological cost to turning rivers into weapons," he said. He added that under international legal frameworks including the Indus Waters Treaty, Geneva Protocol I (Article 54), and the UN Watercourses Convention deliberately disrupting water flows to harm civilian populations could amount to a war crime. Dr Noraiz Arshad, also from BZU's Department of Political Science, cautioned that attempts to use water as leverage could intensify conflict, endanger millions, and undermine a legal framework that has largely preserved water-sharing arrangements for over six decades. He said such actions would reflect a political choice rather than a legal necessity, calling the situation a critical test for international law at a time of rising nationalism. Prudence and respect for legal commitments must prevail to prevent further harm," he remarked. APP

Efforts afoot to eliminate hepatitis by 2030, NA told

He emphasized that hepatitis generally spreads through infected blood transfusions, unsafe syringes and the use of contaminated razors or medical instruments, and clarified that it does not spread through water

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Nelson Azeem Thursday informed the House that the government is taking the issue of hepatitis very seriously and has initiated several measures to control the disease across the country. Replying to a Calling Attention Notice in National Assembly, he said the virus particularly affects individuals who are already suffering from Hepatitis B, adding that people between the ages of 18 and 40 are more vulnerable. Nelson Azeem expressed hope that with sustained efforts and coordinated measures, Pakistan will be able to eliminate Hepatitis B and C by 2030. He said that the government has en-

gaged with international agencies and donors to develop a coordinated strategy to combat the disease. Nelson Azeem said efforts are underway to develop vaccines and injections against the virus, with trials currently in progress. He said that the government has also launched a birth-dose vaccination program for Hepatitis B so that children can develop immunity against the disease from an early age. Nelson Azeem said that awareness campaigns are being conducted nationwide. Vaccination is being provided to girls aged 9 to 14, while awareness lectures are being delivered in schools and information is being disseminated through the media. Basic Health Units (BHUs) and rural health

centers are also playing a role in educating the public and encouraging vaccination. He said the government is strengthening the blood transfusion monitoring system to prevent infected blood from being used. Nelson Azeem said the private clinics are also being monitored to ensure the safe use of syringes and other medical equipment. Dental clinics, which can also pose a risk of infection, are being brought under stricter regulatory oversight. He emphasized that hepatitis generally spreads through infected blood transfusions, unsafe syringes and the use of contaminated razors or medical instruments, and clarified that it does not spread through water. APP



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, received H.E. Geir T. Tonstol, Country Director of the International Labour Organization at the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad. APP

Rs 89,000 fine imposed on sweet shopkeepers

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The district administration has launched a crackdown against sweet and bakery shops, imposing a total fine of Rs 89,000 after several violations were found during inspections. According to the administration, Assistant Commissioner Syed Muhammad Arslan, along with a team from the Halal Food Authority, visited various sweet and bakery shops in the tehsil. During the operation, both the shops and their food production units were thoroughly inspected. They observed several violations during the inspections, including the absence of expiry dates on sweets, sohan halwa, and bakery items, poor hygiene conditions, and workers operating without wearing caps and aprons. In addition, workers were found to have poor personal hygiene, and in some places food items were kept directly on the floor without proper covering. The inspection team also found the use of China salt, stale and unhealthy cooking oil, accumulation of dirty water in kitchens, presence of flies, and the use of contaminated utensils. Authorities imposed fines on the shop owners for these violations, totaling Rs 89,000. The district administration has said that no compromise would be made on citizens' health, and strict action would continue against those involved in the preparation or sale of substandard or harmful food items. APP

Punjab CM Rehmat Card' for 50,000 helpless families

LAHORE: For the first time in Pakistan, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has developed a transparent digital system for the government sponsorship of widows and their orphans. In this regard more than 50,000 helpless families would be helped in the first phase. Under this initiative, it has been decided to introduce 'Chief Minister Punjab Rehmat Card' for widows and orphans in Punjab. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved 'Rehmat Card' for widows and children deprived of the

love of their parents. Under this program, direct financial assistance of up to one lakh rupees will be provided to deserving families. The Chief Minister Punjab Rehmat Card will become an economic shield for more than 50,000 helpless families in the first phase, while the project will be formally launched immediately after Eid. Under this program, widows will be provided with Rs 100,000 and orphans with Rs 25,000. The Chief Minister Punjab Rehmat Card can be applied for through mobile application, web portal, call center

and through Zakat Office. Provincial Special Assistant for Ushr and Zakat Rashid Nasrullah gave a detailed briefing on the Chief Minister Punjab Rehmat Card project. On this occasion, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that widows in Punjab are no longer needy, but it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that widows get dignified rights, not charity. Every individual has full rights over the resources of Punjab and all resources will be utilized to ensure that the rights are given to the deserving. APP

2,000 people enter Pak via Taftan border due to Iran conflict: Bugti

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti announced that 1,979 individuals, including 37 families of diplomats, have entered Pakistan through the Taftan Border Crossing as tensions continue in neighboring Iran. In a statement shared on X, Sarfraz Bugti said the provincial government has placed all relevant departments on high alert and is fully prepared to respond to any developments arising from the evolving regional situation. Sarfraz Bugti said that the influx of people including Pakistani citizens and foreign nationals continues through the Pakistan-Iran border.

Authorities are providing all necessary assistance and facilities to those arriving at Taftan. The provincial government has directed administrative and security institutions in border areas to ensure that the movement and processing of incoming individuals remain organized, secure, and efficient. Immigration officials, security personnel, and district administration teams are operating around the clock to prevent difficulties for those entering the country. According to the chief minister, 37 families of diplomats are among the nearly 2,000 individuals who have crossed into Pakistan so far. All ar-

rivals are being provided with guidance, logistical support, and essential services, while the provincial government continues to closely monitor the situation. Sarfraz Bugti confirmed that the Balochistan government is in constant coordination with federal authorities to ensure adequate resources are available to manage any emergency scenario effectively. He emphasized that providing assistance on humanitarian grounds remains a key priority. Authorities said that they will continue monitoring the situation at the Taftan crossing as arrivals from Iran persist amid ongoing regional tensions. APP



INVITATION TO e-BID

PROCUREMENT OF LAPTOPS

Ref. No.: EXIM/PROC/IT-03/2026

Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (Pak EXIM), established by the Government of Pakistan as the official Export Credit Agency with the objective to promote, expand and facilitate diversification of the export base of Pakistan, and to encourage businesses by providing financial instruments/facilities to work on import substitution products, etc., invites bids through e-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS) from reputable companies/firms duly registered with tax and other relevant authorities, for procurement of laptops.

- Bidders submitting their bids must be appearing on Active Taxpayers List issued by Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Government of Pakistan, at the time of submission of bids and must be registered with FBR for Sales & Income Tax.
- e-Bidding documents as per regulations, containing detailed terms & conditions, method of procurement, procedure for submission of bids, bid security/declaration, bid validity, opening of bids, evaluation criteria, clarification/rejection of bids, performance guarantee, etc., can be downloaded by the interested bidders from PPR, Pak EXIM and EPADS' websites free of cost. Prospective bidders may request clarification on any aspect of the bidding documents 'till 19th of March, 2026.
- Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions provided in the e-bidding documents and EPADS portal, must be submitted via EPADS only, on or before 31st of March, 2026, at 1100 Hrs (PST). Bids will be opened on the same day at 1130 Hrs (PST) via EPADS only. Manual bids shall not be accepted. This notice is also available on EXIM Bank, PPR and EPADS' websites: www.eximbank.gov.pk | [https://ppra.gov.pk](http://ppra.gov.pk) | [https://eprocure.gov.pk](http://eprocure.gov.pk)
- Notification of the Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) constituted in terms of Rule 48 of PPR 2004 is provided on EPADS' Website.

Head of Procurement Committee, EXIM Bank of Pakistan (Pak EXIM), Office No. 510-512, 5th Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad, Pakistan. Phone: +92-(0)51-917-0184.

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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



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- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
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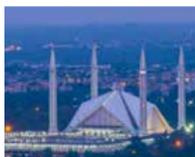
Hospitals

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- MH.....561116
- Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
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- Shifa International 4603666



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- Met Office.....9250360-6
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- TMA.....5770886
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Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
- Potohar Town.....9209224
- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



RAWALPINDI: Ambassador Morocco to Pakistan Mohammad Karmoune distributing iftar package among the needy persons, at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. DNA

100,000 laptops procured for PM Youth Laptop Scheme: Wajiha

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajiha Qamar on Thursday informed the Senate that under the PM Youth Laptop Scheme-IV, 100,000 laptops have been procured at a total cost of Rs 16,801.230 million. Replying to various questions during Questions Hour, the minister said the laptops were procured through an open competitive bidding process in accordance with the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules. The entire procurement process was conducted transparently and competitively, and in full compliance with PPRA regulations, she added. She said the quota for Balochistan had been increased from 14 percent to 18 percent under the PM Laptop Scheme, while five percent share (2.5 percent each) had been allocated to

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and the Virtual University (VU). Responding to another question, Wajiha Qamar said the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) had already advertised 565 vacant teaching posts of different cadres through the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) for regular recruitment, and the process was underway as per the prescribed procedure. Evening shifts had also been introduced in various institutions due to increased student enrolment and population growth in the federal capital, she added. She said a separate package was also being provided to staff teaching during the evening shift, adding that local teachers had also been engaged for this purpose. The minister said 12 new institutions had been established and a letter had been written to the Ministry of Finance

seeking sanction for teacher posts. To a separate question, she said the government had taken several initiatives to address the issue of out-of-school children within the jurisdiction of the federal capital. As per the 7th Population Census, the total number of out-of-school children in the country stood at 25.73 million, she added. Responding to another question, the minister said there were 946 Non-Formal Education (NFE) centres operating under the administrative control of the Ministry of Federal Education. Around 30,394 students were enrolled in these NFE centres with 1,076 teachers, she said. Meanwhile, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar told the House that education and health had been devolved subjects under the 18th Constitutional Amendment. However, certain matters such as research centres had

been retained in Islamabad, he added. Earlier, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Thursday informed the Senate that the Prime Minister has constituted a committee, headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, to scrutinize bills related to the charters of private universities before presenting both houses of the parliament. Speaking on the floor of the Senate, the minister said the committee would review all proposed legislation concerning the establishment of private universities. After thorough vetting, the bills would be transmitted to the House for consideration and passage. Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry also requested the chair to defer the three bills related to private universities that were listed on the agenda.—DNA

National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB)

ISLAMABAD: A cutting-edge Intelligent and Internet of Things (IoT) Smart Glasshouse recently established at the National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB) has started enabling scientists to test crops under simulated heat, drought, and cold conditions, marking a new step in developing climate-resilient crop varieties in Pakistan. "The facility marks a major leap forward for agricultural research," Dr Muhammad Ramzan Khan, Principal Scientific Officer at NIGAB, a specialized department of the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), a Wealth Pakistan official said. With climate change posing growing risks to food production, the intelligent glasshouse is positioning Pakistan to develop stronger crops, conserve resources, and support a more resilient agricultural system, he said. The facility was established under the Sino-Pak Agricultural Breeding Innovations for Rapid Yield Enhancement initiative.

Unlike traditional greenhouses, the intelligent glasshouse can design the environment according to the specific

needs of crops, allowing scientists to grow plants faster and more efficiently. The facility covers 2,640 square feet and uses IoT technologies such as artificial intelligence, sensors, programmable logic controllers, and data analytics to control climate, humidity, carbon dioxide, light, and water in real time, said official documents. The IoT-based glasshouse integrates genomics, digital agriculture, and sustainable food production, it said adding, "It represents a paradigm shift from conventional breeding to data-driven, climate-smart, and precision agriculture". The smart glasshouse contains eight independently programmable chambers that allow scientists to simulate extreme environmental conditions. "This allows researchers to test how crops respond to climate stress and identify stronger, more resilient varieties," it added. The facility is equipped with smart full-spectrum grow lights and auxiliary flood lights to support plant growth. It also includes an automated shading system. "Automated internal shading for each individual chamber allows us to maintain ideal growing conditions

without manual intervention," it further said. Major crops including wheat, rice, cotton, canola, tomato, potato, and strawberry are already being grown and studied at the facility. Through genome-assisted speed breeding, scientists can significantly shorten crop development timelines by producing multiple crop generations within a year. The glasshouse aims to reduce the time required to develop new crop varieties from around 10 years to five years. According to Dr Ramzan, researchers can now achieve four to eight generations of crops annually, accelerating breeding cycles and helping scientists release improved varieties more quickly. Research activities have already produced encouraging results. Scientists have screened 244 rice lines for heat tolerance and conducted speed breeding on 400 wheat lines. Gene-edited sugarcane, tomato, and potato plants have also been successfully acclimatized under controlled conditions. In addition to crop breeding research, the facility also includes vertical and horizontal aquaponics systems.—APP

Rescue 1122 Murree conducting practical emergency training

The spokesman said keeping educational institutions prepared for any emergency "remains a top priority of Rescue 1122, and the programme will continue in a sustained manner"

MURREE: Rescue 1122 Murree is running an intensive School Safety Programme across private and government educational institutions, providing students, teachers and school management with practical training to handle emergencies effectively. During the programme, Rescue experts conduct mock drills covering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid for severe injuries, controlling excessive bleeding, fracture management, safe transfer of casualties and other essential emergency procedures. Students are also taught safe evacuation techniques in case of fire, earthquake, or any sudden incident. A Rescue 1122 spokesman said on Wednesday, "The initiative aims to ensure that, in any emergency, people present at the scene can continue organised and timely rescue efforts until professional teams arrive, helping safeguard lives." He noted that prompt first aid can significantly reduce fatalities in accidents. The spokesman said teachers were also being given specialised briefings on preparing emergency response plans, ensuring safe student transfers, identifying emergency exits and the proper use of fire safety equipment. Heads of participating institutions welcomed the initiative, saying such practical training fosters confidence and a sense of responsibility among students. The spokesman said keeping educational institutions prepared for any emergency "remains a top priority of Rescue 1122, and the programme will continue in a sustained manner."—APP

Bodies to scrutinize bills on private varsities' charters, Senate told

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Thursday informed the Senate that the Prime Minister has constituted a committee, headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, to scrutinize bills related to the charters of private universities before presenting both houses of the parliament. Speaking on the floor of the Senate, the minister said the committee would review all proposed legislation concerning the establishment of private universities. After thorough vetting, the bills would be transmitted to the House for consideration and passage. Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry also requested the chair to defer the three bills related to private universities that were listed on the agenda.—APP

MoIB fact checker declares ports closure notification fake

ISLAMABAD: The MoIB on Thursday clarified that a social media notification alleging temporary closure of Pakistani ports was fabricated. In a statement posted on its official handle X, the ministry's fact-checking team confirmed no such notification had been issued by the Cabinet Division or the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, dismissing the circulating claim as false. The fact-checker further noted that the fake notification falsely claimed entry points to all ports in Pakistan had been ordered shut until March 10, 2026, due to the security situation.—APP

927 heavy vehicles booked on lane violations

ISLAMABAD, Mar 05 (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has intensified its crackdown against heavy traffic violating designated lanes on IJP Road, taking action against 927 vehicles during the past month. An ITP official told APP on Thursday that special enforcement teams conducted operations at various points on IJP Road to ensure the strict implementation of lane discipline. He said 53 heavy vehicles involved in overspeeding on the fast lane were impounded and shifted to police stations during the crackdown. All enforcement activities are being personally supervised by Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (Retd) Hamza Humayun. CTO Hamza Humayun said lane violation is a serious breach of traffic laws, and heavy vehicle drivers must strictly follow lane discipline.—APP

AIOU signs academic collaboration agreement with BU

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and Bahria University (BU) on Thursday signed an agreement to promote higher education in the country and provide students with modern digital facilities. The MoU was signed by Vice Chancellor AIOU, Professor Dr Nasir Mahmood and Rector Bahria University, Vice Admiral Abid Hameed. The partnership aims to promote distance and online education in line with modern requirements and to provide students with easier access to quality educational facilities. Under the agreement, both universities will promote the use of digital technology and online platforms so that students can benefit from improved opportunities to pursue education from home, said a news release issued here. On this occasion, the Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood said that AIOU has facilities including video recording system, a modern data center and a high-capacity printing press and the university can also extend cooperation in these areas. The Rector of Bahria University, Vice Admiral Abid Hameed said that in the present era digital technology plays a key role in promoting education; therefore, modern online facilities will help provide students with greater educational opportunities. He added that this partnership would not only strengthen academic ties between the two institutions but would also help reinforce the system of distance and online education in the country.—DNA

37 shopkeepers held for overpricing, sends 32 to lockup

ISLAMABAD: The district administration arrested 37 shopkeepers and shifted 32 of them to lockups during inspections across markets in the federal capital to ensure implementation of the official price list. The spokesman of ICT administration said the district administration is following a policy of strict action to enforce the government price list in Islamabad. The administration stated that relief measures were being ensured not only in Ramadan facilitation bazaars but also in other markets of the city. In this regard, Assistant Commissioners visited different areas and checked shops selling food and other daily items. During the inspections, action was taken against shopkeepers who were found charging prices higher than the rates fixed by the administration. In one operation, the Assistant Commissioner City conducted an inspection in Cafe Iram Market in Sector G-6, where seven shopkeepers were arrested for overcharging customers. Authorities said the shopkeepers were taken into custody after violations of the official price list were confirmed. In other parts of the city, six shopkeepers were arrested in Sector G-10, while eight arrests were made in Sarai Kharboza. In Barakahu, teams detained five shopkeepers during inspections of local markets. Further action was taken in other sectors. Four shopkeepers were taken into custody in Pakistan Town, while four arrests were made in Sector I-8. In Sector G-8, officials arrested two shopkeepers during price monitoring visits. According to the district administration, 32 shopkeepers were shifted to lockups during these operations. Authorities said the action was taken after shopkeepers were found violating the official rates. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Memon said assistant commissioners would continue surprise visits to markets to ensure implementation of the government price list. He said monitoring teams have been directed to maintain regular inspections during the holy month of Ramadan to facilitate citizens and ensure sale of daily items at government approved rates. The deputy commissioner said enforcement of the price list cannot be ensured without public cooperation. He urged residents to support the administration by reporting shops that sell items without displaying the official rate list. He appealed to citizens to inform the authorities if any shopkeeper refuses to display the price list or charges prices higher than the official rates. Officials said inspections would continue across the city and further action would be taken against those who do not follow the government price list. The administration added that monitoring teams would keep visiting markets to ensure that shopkeepers comply with the notified rates.—APP

Briefs

30
firefighters
control
Margalla
Hills fire

ISLAMABAD: A fire that broke out in the Margalla Hills near Margalla Avenue was brought under control at 4:15 a.m. after an overnight response by rescue teams. According to the district administration, 30 firefighters from the Environment Directorate took part in the operation to stop the spread of flames in the hills. The incident was reported in the Margalla range along Margalla Avenue. Rescue teams reached the site and continued efforts throughout the night to contain the fire. Officials said firefighters moved through the hills to reach affected areas and worked for several hours to stop the spread. A spokesperson for the district administration said the operation continued until 4:15 a.m., when teams managed to bring the fire under control. The response involved coordinated efforts by firefighters who remained active at the site during the night. Authorities stated that the fire was contained before it could extend further across the hill range. After the major flames were controlled, teams started a cooling process to prevent any remaining heat from reigniting the fire. The spokesperson added that staff members were still present at the location to monitor the area and ensure the cooling process continues. Officials said the teams would stay on site until there is no risk of the fire starting again. The monitoring is continued in the affected area to prevent any further loss.—APP

3-member
car lifters
gang held

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit (AVLU) of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested three members of an organised car lifters gang and recovered five stolen vehicles worth rupees four million during a successful operation in the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that the arrested gang members, identified as Nauman Rashid, Muhammad Irfan, and Fakhar Alam, had previous criminal records and were involved in more than eight car theft cases. During initial investigation, the accused confessed to their involvement in multiple car theft incidents in different areas of the capital. The official said the suspects were wanted by Aabpara, Margalla, Shahzad Town and Industrial Area police stations in several cases of vehicle theft. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq said the organised gang was arrested through an effective strategy adopted by the Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit. He said Islamabad Police would continue indiscriminate action against active car lifter gangs.—APP

927 heavy
vehicles
booked

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has intensified its crackdown against heavy traffic violating designated lanes on IJP Road, taking action against 927 vehicles during the past month. An ITP official told APP on Thursday that special enforcement teams conducted operations at various points on IJP Road to ensure the strict implementation of lane discipline. He said 53 heavy vehicles involved in overspeeding on the fast lane were impounded and shifted to police stations during the crackdown. All enforcement activities are being personally supervised by Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (Retd) Hamza Humayun. CTO Hamza Humayun said lane violation is a serious breach of traffic laws, and heavy vehicle drivers must strictly follow lane discipline. He warned that strict action would continue against those violating traffic rules. He added that special checkpoints of Islamabad Traffic Police have been deployed on IJP Road to monitor traffic flow and take action against lane violations.—APP

Ksrelief completes
winterization initiative

Through this coordinated effort, the initiative successfully benefited more than 151,236 individuals, reaffirming Ksrelief's continued commitment to alleviating winter-related hardships and improving the well-being of vulnerable populations across Pakistan, while strengthening humanitarian cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully completed its large-scale Winterization Initiative in Pakistan, distributing 22,000 Winter Kits to vulnerable communities across the country under its annual winter support program. Under this humanitarian initiative, 22,000 Winter Kits were distributed among residents of 28 of the coldest and snow-bound districts nationwide. The assistance targeted regions severely affected by harsh winter conditions, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as selected areas of Punjab and Sindh experiencing low temperatures during the winter season. Each Winter Kit included two polyester quilts, warm shawls for men and women, and winter clothing for children and adults, helping families cope with extreme weather conditions and reducing winter-related vulnerabilities. The project was implemented in close coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), the Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department (RRSD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Gilgit-Balti-



stan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), local administrations, and Hayat Foundation to ensure transparency, coordination, and effective

delivery of assistance. Through this coordinated effort, the initiative successfully benefited more than 151,236 individuals, reaffirming Ksrelief's continued commitment to alleviating winter-related hardships

and improving the well-being of vulnerable populations across Pakistan, while strengthening humanitarian cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Ahsan inaugurates CEEC
Pakistan regional hqs

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the newly established Regional Headquarters of China Energy Engineering Corporation (CEEC) Pakistan during a visit to the company's office. The minister was received by Managing Director Wang Hui Hua and other senior company representatives. The visit coincided with the Chinese Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. Senior Advisor Dr. Hassan Daud Butt noted that the Regional Headquarters will oversee ongoing initiatives and actively participate in project implementation across the region. CEEC currently operates more than 10 subsidiaries in Pakistan, reinforcing its operational capacity. The company regards Pakistan as a key investment destination. Managing Director Wang Hui Hua highlighted CEEC's role in advancing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), including the Suki Kinari and Azad Pattan Hydropower Projects. He noted that the company has undertaken a significant share of CPEC power generation projects, contributing to Pakistan's energy security and economic growth. Wang said the fully constructed headquarters demonstrates confidence in Pakistan's economic future and a long-term commitment to local partnerships. Minister Iqbal commended CEEC's sustained investment and strategic contributions, noting that the expanding presence reflects the depth of Pakistan-China relations, marking 75 years of diplomatic ties and 13 years of CPEC cooperation. He emphasized Pakistan's efforts to promote sustainable economic growth through policy measures and structural reforms, with the energy sector as a key pillar under the URAAN Pakistan program.—DNA

Footwear industry
delegation discuss
issues with Jam

ISLAMABAD: A delegation representing Pakistan's leather and footwear industry on Thursday called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and discussed export potential of the sector, challenges faced by the domestic industry and regulatory concerns related to the import of used footwear. During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the strong potential of Pakistan's footwear industry to expand exports and contribute more significantly to the country's export basket. Industry representatives noted that Pakistan possesses substantial manufacturing capacity and skilled labor, which can support increased production for both domestic consumption and international markets, according to press release issued by commerce ministry. The delegation emphasized that Pakistan's annual footwear consumption is estimated at around 550 million pairs, while the country has an installed production capacity of nearly 700 million pairs annually, indicating significant potential for both domestic supply and export expansion. However, they noted that a considerable portion of this capacity remains underutilized due to market distortions created by the growing influx of used footwear imports. The industry representatives informed the Minister that approximately 30-40 percent of the domestic market is currently being met through imports of used footwear. Many of these imports, they explained, include branded shoes entering the market at extremely low declared values under the category of used clothing, which creates unfair competition for local manufacturers. In this context, the delegation proposed the introduction of a separate Harmonized System (HS) code for used footwear, which is currently classified under the broader category of used clothing and accessories. They explained that the existing classification makes it difficult for regulators to properly track footwear imports, assess accurate valuation, and implement sector-specific regulatory measures. During the discussion, the Joint Secretary (Tariff) of the Ministry of Commerce apprised the Minister that the proposal to create a separate HS code for used footwear has been placed on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the Tariff Policy Board.—DNA

Ramazan
festivities
continue

ISLAMABAD: The festivity of Ramazan continues with great momentum in bazaars, markets, and shopping malls as people rush to shop, prepare iftar tables and women remain actively engaged in making arrangements for iftar and Eid preparations. Ramazan brings lively markets filled with families shopping for iftar and Eid, vendors selling traditional foods and women engaged in preparations, the scene captured in a report by a local news channel. During Ramazan, the air is filled with the aroma of traditional foods and the buzz of shoppers, reflecting the joy and excitement of the holy month, said another citizen from Peshawar. Many women visit markets during Ramazan, carefully selecting ingredients for iftar. Tailor shops see long queues as women get traditional clothes stitched or altered for Eid celebrations. The combination of shopping, meal preparations, and arranging home decoration keeps women fully engaged throughout the day, while nearby mosques are filled with worshippers offering prayers and engaging in community activities. Apart from shopping, women also enjoy exploring street stalls and food markets, tasting seasonal treats and sharing ideas for festive arrangements with friends and family through social media apps.—APP

OIC
institutions
stress scientific
cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Leading institutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Thursday emphasized the urgent need for stronger scientific collaboration, knowledge sharing and policy innovation to help member states build resilience against the growing impacts of climate change. The call was made during a webinar titled "Strategies for Building Resilience in Changing Climate," jointly organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTC), OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO). The event brought together policymakers, researchers and development experts from OIC member states to deliberate on collective strategies for strengthening climate resilience and advancing sustainable development.—APP

SECP proposes referral
incentive programmes

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Thursday proposed the introduction of referral incentive programmes to encourage greater investor participation in the capital market. Under the proposed framework, existing investors will be able to refer new clients to securities brokers, according to press release issued by SECP. The proposed structured referral programmes will be introduced through amendments to the Securities Brokers (Licensing and Operations) Regulations, 2016. In this regard, SECP has published a concept paper proposing the relevant regulatory amendments. Under the proposed framework, brokers will be allowed to engage their existing clients (referrers) to introduce new investors through structured referral programmes. These programmes will operate under clearly defined terms and conditions specified by SECP to ensure transparency and investor protection. The incentives

offered under such programmes will be non-cash, such as commission discounts, trading credits, or similar benefits. These incentives will be capped and time-bound for both the referrer and the new client. Brokers will also be required to clearly define the responsibilities, benefits, and conditions of the referral programme, while remaining responsible for resolving any disputes arising under the scheme. Referral incentive programmes are widely used in many international markets, including the United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Such programmes typically offer benefits such as trading coupons, commission waivers, and reward points to encourage investor outreach. SECP's proposed framework seeks to align Pakistan's capital market practices with international standards while maintaining appropriate regulatory oversight and investor protection.—APP

Dry spell to
persist in
plains

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Thursday forecast that dry weather accompanied by an increasing temperature trend is likely to persist in most plain areas of the country over the coming days. According to the PMD, the country is already experiencing abnormally high temperatures and dry weather conditions in most parts. Based on the latest atmospheric outlook, no significant rainfall is expected in the plains, while daytime temperatures are likely to gradually increase across the country during the coming week. The PMD said that daytime temperatures are expected to remain 6-8C above normal in the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Punjab and northern

parts of Balochistan. Meanwhile, temperatures in southern Balochistan and Sindh are also expected to remain 5-7C above normal, with night temperatures are also likely to increase during the period. However, partly cloudy to cloudy weather with chances of light to moderate rain-wind-thunderstorm is forecast for several districts of upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand, Kohistan, Buner, Mansehra, Abbottabad and Malakand, as well as in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir on March 6-7 and again from March 9-11, with occasional gaps. The department indicated that rain-wind-thunderstorm may also occur in Islamabad, the Pothohar region, Murree, Galliat and adjoining areas on March 10 and 11. The Met Office warned that the prolonged dry spell may place severe stress on water resources and seasonal crops, particularly the wheat crop in rain-fed areas. The rising temperature trend could also increase evaporation ratio and water demand in many parts of the country. The farmers have been advised to ensure timely irrigation where available, use water resources judiciously, and manage their crops in accordance with prevailing weather conditions. The general public and relevant authorities have also been urged to take necessary measures to manage water resources and mitigate potential impacts on agriculture.—APP

Pakistan urges stronger
climate coop at Arctic circle

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Masood Malik warned that Pakistan remains among the countries most vulnerable to climate change as he addressed the Arctic Circle Rome Forum, calling for stronger global cooperation and science-based solutions to tackle the accelerating impacts of melting glaciers and extreme weather. Speaking at the forum's plenary session titled "View from Pakistan: Climate & Poles," the minister highlighted the country's exposure to climate-induced disasters, including glacier melt, rising sea levels and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Musadik Malik also partici-

pated in a panel discussion on "Science Diplomacy for the Third Pole," where he stressed the need for closer collaboration between scientists and policymakers and urged the international community to advance climate justice and shared research initiatives to address environmental risks affecting mountain and polar regions. On the sidelines of the forum, Pakistan's embassy in Rome arranged meetings for the minister with a number of international leaders and officials, including Olafur Ragnar Grimsón, chairman of the Arctic Circle and former president of Iceland; Katrín Jakobsdóttir, chair of the Polar Dialogue and former Icelandic prime minister;

Greenland's Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt; Canadian Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mona Fortier; Norwegian State Secretary Eivind Vad Petersson; and former EU ambassador for Arctic affairs Marie Anne Coninx. The minister also met Italy's Minister for Universities and Research Anna Maria Bernini and Marco Rusconi, director of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. During his visit, Musadik held academic engagements at Sapienza University of Rome, where discussions with senior faculty focused on expanding research collaboration and academic linkages with Pakistani institutions.

In his remarks and meetings, the minister proposed several initiatives aimed at strengthening international climate cooperation, including the creation of a "Virtual Green University" to connect researchers and students worldwide, a "Climate Risk Capital Fund" to support climate-tech entrepreneurs, and the concept of "Green Intellectual Property" to promote equitable access to climate innovation. Musadik Malik also visited the Italian National Research Council (CNR), where he met President Andrea Lenzi and held discussions with scientists on biodiversity, cryosphere research and environmental sustainability.—DNA

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The risks of Iran's military escalation against Gulf states

HASSAN AL-MUSTAFA

LET us imagine the following scenario: When US and Israeli forces struck Iranian territory on Saturday, the Iranian forces limited their response to targeting Israeli and US naval vessels at sea – nothing more. What would have happened then? In that case, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, along with Jordan and Iraq, would have remained outside the circle of military targeting. These countries would have responded as they did during the 12-day war between Tehran and Tel Aviv in June 2025, when they unequivocally and without exception condemned the “Israeli aggression” against Iranian territory, describing it as a violation of sovereignty and international law. Similarly, what if the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had occurred at a time when relations between Iran and its Arab neighbors were positive? Statements of condemnation would undoubtedly have been issued denouncing the targeting of the supreme leader, condolences would have been conveyed and there would have been widespread official and popular Islamic and Arab sympathy. From the very first day, its missiles and drones were directed toward all Gulf states without exception. Let us recall that when the helicopter carrying former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi crashed in May 2024, Gulf states dispatched envoys to offer condolences. King Salman sent Minister of State Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz to lead a high-level Saudi delegation and personally convey the Kingdom's condolences. Such a hypothetical scenario would have worked in Iran's favor, strengthening its political, humanitarian, security and negotiating position, and presenting Tehran to Arab and international public opinion as a wronged state subjected to military attack by external powers and targeted by a far-right government in Israel. Iran, however, squandered this reservoir of political strength and sweeping sympathy. From the very first day, its missiles and drones were directed toward all Gulf states without exception, including Oman, which had been mediating negotiations. Omani Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaidi worked until the last moment to prevent war, supported the Iranian narrative and rejected statements casting doubt on Iran's positions. Yet even Oman saw its ports attacked and vessels targeted in its waters. Ali Larijani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, wrote on X, addressing the Gulf states: “We do not believe in, nor do we intend, to attack you.” He added: “However, when the bases located in your countries

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are used against us, and when the United States relies on these forces to carry out operations in the region, then we will target those bases.” He further stated: “These bases are not part of the land of those countries; rather, they are American soil.” In these remarks, Larijani misses the mark. Countries in the region, foremost among them Saudi Arabia, have explicitly declared that they will not allow their territories, airspace or territorial waters to be used as launch points for strikes against Iran. Secondly, the Iranian attacks have not been confined to what Tehran considers US bases at Al Udeid, Al Dhafra and Juffair, but have instead extended to civilian, economic, diplomatic and tourist targets. Is there a US military base in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province? Are energy facilities in Ras Tanura, the Burj Al Arab hotel or the airports of Kuwait and Dubai “American soil?” Beyond that, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps targeted the US Embassy in Riyadh, in the Diplomatic Quarter, disregarding international conventions. The escalation against Saudi Arabia represents dangerous conduct that could push the region into a spiral of violence, which Riyadh neither seeks nor desires and is striving by all means to avoid. The escalation against Saudi Arabia represents dangerous conduct that could push the region into a spiral of violence. For this reason, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a strongly worded statement expressing its “rejection and condemnation in the strongest terms of the flagrant Iranian attack that targeted the US Embassy building in Riyadh.” It affirmed that “this cowardly and unjustified attack flagrantly contravenes all international norms and laws, including the 1949 Geneva Convention and the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which grant immunity to diplomatic premises and personnel, even in cases of armed conflict.” The statement was precise in its wording, offering messages that Iranian officials would do well to read carefully. Riyadh considered that “this flagrant Iranian behavior, which comes despite the Iranian authorities' knowledge that the Kingdom has affirmed it will not allow its airspace or territory to be used to target Iran, will push the region toward further escalation.” It reiterated its “full right to take all necessary measures to protect its security, territorial integrity, citizens, residents and vital interests, including the option of responding to the aggression.” To date, Saudi Arabia has not exercised the option of “responding to the aggression,” as it seeks to halt the war between Israel and the US on one side and the Iranians on the other. It is working to spare the Gulf region the catastrophic repercussions of continued confrontation or its expansion, as diplomacy remains the only viable and safe exit for all parties. Riyadh possesses considerable patience, grounded in strength, rationality, forward-looking calculation and restraint from emotional or impulsive reactions. However, if Iran continues targeting the Kingdom and other Gulf states, if civilian casualties occur and if energy supplies, security and the economy are affected, then other options may emerge. These are options Iran should not compel its neighbors to adopt. They will seek to preserve the fragile security that, if it were to collapse, would leave Iran itself as the greatest loser, deepening its isolation, draining its capabilities and stalling its development at a time when Saudi Arabia seeks peace for the Iranian people and all peoples of the region.

The Iran War That Turned Against Trump

Qamar Bashir



The economic logic is straightforward but devastating. When fuel becomes more expensive, the cost of transporting goods—from food to consumer products—increases. Airlines raise ticket prices, trucking companies pass on their fuel surcharges, and shipping costs climb. These increases ripple outward, affecting nearly every product and service used by ordinary citizens. Inflationary pressures intensify, eroding household purchasing power and deepening public frustration. For political leaders, the consequences are immediate

THE decision to plunge the United States into a direct confrontation with Iran—taken at the urging and strategic direction of Israel—has triggered a chain of events that few in Washington appear to have fully anticipated. What was originally conceived as a swift military operation designed to cripple Iran's capabilities and compel regime change has instead evolved into a widening regional conflict whose consequences are now rippling through military, political, and economic systems across the globe. Inside the United States, the mood has shifted from early confidence to growing anxiety as policymakers, military planners, and the public begin to reckon with the scale of the unfolding crisis. From the earliest hours of the conflict, Iran responded with an intensity that surprised even seasoned defense analysts. Waves of drones and missiles targeted American and allied installations throughout the Middle East. Several facilities used by U.S. forces experienced direct hits or operational disruption, forcing commanders to reassess their logistics and operational posture across the region. While Washington maintains that the majority of its capabilities remain intact, the attacks have nevertheless exposed the vulnerability of a military architecture heavily dependent on forward bases and allied infrastructure. These bases—spread across the Gulf and the broader Middle East—serve as the backbone of American air and naval power projection. They are critical for refueling aircraft, replenishing munitions, and maintaining sustained combat operations. Once they became targets, the operational calculus changed dramatically. Aircraft carriers, naval task groups, and combat aircraft that had been positioned for sustained operations suddenly faced logistical strain. War planners who assumed a short campaign now confront the reality of an adversary capable of prolonged resistance. Compounding the strategic difficulty has been the hesitation of several allied countries to allow their territory or bases to be used as launch platforms for the campaign. Spain publicly declined to allow its bases to be used for offensive operations against Iran, while Britain clarified that it would not join offensive strikes and imposed restrictions on the use of its installations. Several Gulf states adopted a posture of neutrality, unwilling to risk retaliation by becoming direct participants in the conflict. Even allies who expressed rhetorical support have quietly avoided deeper involvement, reflecting their fear that the war could spread across the region. This reluctance among partners has further constrained Washington's options. Modern warfare, especially for expeditionary forces like those of the United States, depends not only on military power but also on the political willingness of allies to provide territory, logistics, and legitimacy. When that support becomes uncertain, the operational environment becomes far more complex. Inside the United States itself, the political atmosphere is rapidly evolving. Members of Congress from both parties

have begun questioning the strategic purpose of the war. Media commentators and policy analysts are asking what the ultimate objective is—whether it is regime change, deterrence, or simply punishment. Even the president's own public statements have hinted at a reassessment. After initially projecting confidence in the military campaign, Donald Trump acknowledged in later remarks that Iran had signaled a willingness to talk and that diplomatic channels could be reopened. This shift reflects a growing realization that the conflict may not be as controllable as originally assumed. Iran's strategy appears to rely not on conventional military parity but on asymmetric endurance. Years of sanctions forced Tehran to accept that it could not compete with the United States in traditional air and naval warfare. Instead, it invested heavily in missile technology, drones, underground facilities, and decentralized command structures. Many of its most important missile centers are buried deep beneath mountains or fortified bunkers, rendering them extremely difficult to destroy even with advanced bunker-busting munitions. As the war drags on, the economic consequences are beginning to reverberate far beyond the battlefield. One of the most dramatic developments has been Iran's declaration that the Strait of Hormuz—the narrow maritime corridor through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes—will be closed to commercial shipping except vessels carrying Chinese flags. Whether fully enforceable or not, the announcement alone has sent shockwaves through global energy markets. Oil prices surged almost immediately. Markets reacted with alarm to the prospect that even partial disruption of shipping through Hormuz could remove millions of barrels of oil per day from global supply chains. The result has been a rapid rise in crude prices, which is already being felt at gasoline stations across the United States and Europe. Higher oil prices inevitably translate into higher transportation costs, and those costs cascade through the entire economy. The economic logic is straightforward but devastating. When fuel becomes more expensive, the cost of transporting goods—from food to consumer products—increases. Airlines raise ticket prices, trucking companies pass on their fuel surcharges, and shipping costs climb. These increases ripple outward, affecting nearly every product and service used by ordinary citizens. Inflationary pressures intensify, eroding household purchasing power and deepening public frustration. For political leaders, the consequences are immediate. Rising gasoline prices have historically been among the most sensitive indicators of public discontent in the United States. When voters see the cost of filling their cars jump dramatically, the issue quickly becomes political. Analysts already warn that if the conflict continues to disrupt oil markets, the economic backlash could undermine the administration's domestic support and influence the outcome of upcoming midterm elections. Beyond the economic sphere lies an even deeper con-

cern: the potential for the conflict to ignite wider instability. Israel has already expanded its operations into neighboring theaters such as Lebanon, attempting to suppress rocket attacks from Hezbollah. Meanwhile, reports indicate that Kurdish opposition groups are being encouraged to challenge the Iranian government, raising the possibility of internal unrest inside Iran itself. Such strategies carry enormous risk. History has repeatedly shown that arming or empowering insurgent groups can produce unintended consequences, sometimes turning yesterday's proxy into tomorrow's adversary. In the streets of American cities and towns, ordinary citizens are grappling with a mixture of fear and uncertainty. Many worry that a prolonged war could provoke retaliatory actions or terrorist incidents far from the Middle Eastern battlefield. Others question whether the United States had sufficient justification to launch the attack at a moment when diplomatic negotiations—mediated by Oman—were reportedly making progress toward a nuclear agreement. According to diplomatic sources involved in those talks, Iran had indicated a willingness to dilute highly enriched uranium by mixing it with lower-grade material, effectively reducing its weapons potential while allowing continued civilian nuclear activity. Negotiators believed a framework agreement was within reach. If true, the abrupt shift from diplomacy to war has left many observers wondering whether a peaceful solution was abandoned prematurely. The result is a conflict that now appears increasingly difficult to control. What began as a calculated show of force has become a contest of endurance between a global superpower and a regional state determined to resist. United States still possesses overwhelming military superiority, yet military power alone cannot easily resolve the complex political and economic dynamics now unfolding. For that reason, voices calling for diplomacy are growing louder. Even those who supported the initial strikes increasingly acknowledge that negotiations may be the only realistic path toward de-escalation. Wars often begin with confidence and resolve, but they end through dialogue and compromise. At this critical juncture, the choice facing Washington is stark. Continuing down the path of escalation risks widening the conflict, destabilizing global markets, and entrenching hostility across the region. Reopening diplomatic channels, by contrast, offers at least the possibility of limiting the damage and preventing the war from spiraling into a broader catastrophe. History may ultimately judge this moment not by the missiles fired or the targets destroyed, but by whether leaders possessed the wisdom to step back from the brink and rediscover the power of diplomacy before the costs became irreversible.

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

Rethinking the ‘multipolar world’

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



China's rise is often cited as the clearest evidence that the global balance is shifting. Beijing's economic weight, technological ambition, and expanding diplomatic footprint have altered the calculations of states across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China has sought to bind distant regions to its markets...

FROM Washington to Beijing and Moscow to New Delhi, a familiar refrain now echoes in official statements and policy debates: the world has entered a multipolar era. The phrase is repeated so often that it risks becoming a slogan rather than a serious description of how power is organized in international politics. It suggests a clean break from the long shadow of American predominance after the Cold War and implies that global influence is now evenly distributed among several centres. Yet, slogans are rarely a substitute for careful judgement. A closer look at how power is actually exercised today reveals a picture that is more uneven, more contested, and far less settled than the rhetoric implies. Even within the United States, the language of a “post-unipolar” world has gained ground. During the second term of Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke openly about the return of great-power rivalry and the need to compete across multiple fronts. Such admissions from Washington are striking, given that for three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, American officials largely spoke the language of leadership rather than rivalry. The United States may no longer enjoy the same margin of superiority it once did, but it remains the only country with truly global military reach, unmatched financial clout, and a network of alliances that spans continents. Declaring the end of American primacy does not, by itself, make it so. China's rise is often cited as the clearest evidence that the global balance is shifting. Beijing's economic weight, technological ambition, and expanding diplomatic footprint have altered the calculations of states across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China has sought to bind distant regions to its markets and supply chains. Its growing naval presence in the Indo-Pacific has also unsettled established assumptions about maritime dominance. Yet, China's power has limits. Its economy faces structural strains, its political system generates anxieties among partners wary of overdependence, and its security reach remains largely regional. Influence gained through trade and investment does not automatically translate into political loyalty, as several countries have discovered when economic ties failed to shield them from diplomatic pressure.

Russia, too, is often placed in the list of poles that define the new order. Moscow's ability to disrupt European security, demonstrated most starkly by its war in Ukraine, has forced the West to rethink long-held assumptions about stability on the continent. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has combined military force with energy leverage and information campaigns to punch above its economic weight. Yet, Russia's standing rests heavily on coercion rather than attraction. Its economy is smaller than those of several middle powers, and prolonged confrontation with the West has narrowed its room for manoeuvre. If power is measured not only by the ability to coerce but also by the capacity to set agendas and offer public goods, Russia's claim to being a stable pole in a multipolar world looks fragile. India presents a different case. Its growing population, expanding economy, and increasingly confident diplomacy have placed it at the centre of debates about the future balance of power in Asia. New Delhi's careful navigation between major powers reflects an ambition to maximise autonomy rather than align fully with any camp. Partnerships with Washington, participation in groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and continued ties with Moscow all point to a foreign policy designed to keep options open. Yet, India's influence is still constrained by domestic challenges, uneven development, and limited military reach beyond its immediate neighbourhood. It is an emerging centre of power, but not yet one that can shape outcomes across multiple regions on its own. Beyond these headline players, a host of middle powers — from Turkey and Brazil to Saudi Arabia and Indonesia — have grown more assertive in pursuing their own interests. Their diplomacy is often pragmatic, transactional, and guided less by ideology than by immediate gains. This trend has weakened the old habit of lining up behind one great power or another. However, greater room for manoeuvre does not necessarily amount to the emergence of a stable multipolar system. What is taking shape instead is a crowded field in which influence is unevenly distributed and constantly contested. In such a setting, the absence of a clear hierarchy does not guarantee balance; it can just as easily produce volatility. Another feature often overlooked in celebratory accounts of multipolarity is the persistence

of Western institutional power. The United States and its allies continue to shape global finance, trade norms, and security arrangements through bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. While these institutions face criticism for reflecting outdated power structures, they remain central to how crises are managed and resources mobilised. Efforts by China and others to build parallel mechanisms have had mixed success. The result is not the replacement of one order by another, but the layering of new arrangements atop old ones. For countries like Pakistan, the debate over multipolarity is not an abstract exercise. It shapes choices about trade, security partnerships, and diplomatic priorities. A world with several centres of influence can offer greater room for manoeuvre, but it also demands sharper judgement. Playing multiple sides carries risks when rivalries harden and pressure to choose increases. The temptation to see multipolarity as a licence for hedging must be balanced against the need for coherence and credibility in foreign policy. Flexibility without strategy can quickly become drift. Perhaps the greatest danger in treating multipolarity as an established fact lies in the complacency it encourages. If power is assumed to be evenly spread, states may underestimate the continuing weight of dominant players or overestimate their own ability to shape outcomes. The current international landscape is better described as transitional: the old certainties have eroded, but a new equilibrium has yet to settle. Rivalries coexist with interdependence; cooperation on climate, health, and finance sits uneasily alongside sharpening geopolitical competition. In such a fluid environment, labels can mislead as much as they clarify. The language of a “multipolar world” may capture a sense of change, but it obscures the unevenness and instability of the present moment. Power today is dispersed in some areas, concentrated in others, and exercised through tools that range from military force to technology standards and control over supply chains. Rather than taking comfort in a tidy phrase, policymakers and analysts would do better to grapple with the messy realities beneath it. The task is not to announce the arrival of a new order, but to navigate a prolonged period of flux in which influence is contested, alliances are fluid, and outcomes remain uncertain.

Briefs

Pakistan
condemns
India-Canada
nuclear pact

FROM PAGE 01
effectively release India's domestic reserves for military use, enabling the expansion of its nuclear arsenal, fissile material stockpiles, and deepening asymmetries in South Asia's strategic balance. In this context, the arrangement also undermines Canada's commitment to the international non-proliferation regime and its corresponding obligations under that framework. 'Pakistan reiterates that civil nuclear cooperation must be governed by a non-discriminatory, criteria-based approach applicable equally to all states that are not parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Selective exceptions diminish the credibility of the global non-proliferation framework and risk further destabilizing regional and global peace and security'.

Ishaq Dar
talks to
Canadian FM

FROM PAGE 01
the value of sustained high-level exchanges and regular dialogue to maintain and accelerate the upward trajectory in relations. The conversation also touched on evolving regional and global developments, particularly in the Middle East. DPM/FM Dar emphasized the need for dialogue, diplomacy, and strict adherence to international law to achieve de-escalation, protect civilians, and promote lasting stability across the wider region amid ongoing tensions. The call reflects the shared interest of Pakistan and Canada in advancing constructive partnerships and contributing to global peace and prosperity.

Trump administration
keeps...

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For now, officials emphasize that no ground deployment is under consideration, but the administration is keeping its options open as events evolve. Her remarks came during the first White House briefing since the launch of "Operation Epic Fury", a joint US-Israeli campaign of air and naval strikes against Iran that began on Feb 28. The strikes have targeted military and security infrastructure and eliminated Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several senior Iranian commanders.

US-India
naval ties in
focus amid...

FROM PAGE 01
However, New Delhi has termed these reports "baseless and fabricated". In a post on X, the MEAFact-Check account of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said the claim that Indian ports are being used by the US Navy are fake and false. Official US-India defence cooperation, strengthened through frameworks such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), is focused on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific rather than direct involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts.

Iran claims
to have...

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Iran, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth urged Israel to "press on until the end" during talks with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz. Hegseth emphasized unwavering US support, stating the joint campaign is "just getting started" and aimed at destroying Iran's missile and naval capabilities without nation-building. He highlighted accelerating US force deployments and air superiority gains. Separately, Tehran denied launching a ballistic missile toward Turkey after Turkey's defense ministry reported NATO systems intercepting one over the Mediterranean, having crossed Iraq and Syria. Iran called the allegation baseless, respecting Turkish sovereignty.

Real Sociedad edge rivals Athletic to reach Copa del Rey final

Mikel Oyarzabal's Late Penalty Sends Real Sociedad Past Athletic Bilbao 1-0, Secures 2-0 Aggregate Win and Books Copa del Rey Final Clash With Atletico Madrid in Seville on April 18

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain: Mikel Oyarzabal slotted home a late penalty to fire Real Sociedad into the Copa del Rey final with a 1-0 win over Basque rivals Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday, securing a 2-0 aggregate semifinal triumph. American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo has turned La Real's fortunes around since arriving in December and his side will face Atletico Madrid in the Seville final on April 18, after they ousted Barcelona. Already holding a 1-0 lead from the first leg at Athletic's San Mames, Real Sociedad produced a sturdy display at the Reale Arena to knock out the 24-time winners. "Very proud of what the boys have done, over the past two months, it's pretty amazing," said Matarazzo. "Our first match was on the fourth of January... and we just reached the cup final. "The football we're playing is effective and we want to continue... we're in the final and we want to win it."

Real Sociedad have now not lost in their last 10 derby clashes at home against Athletic, whom they beat in the 2020 final, and rarely looked like letting their advantage slip. "I think having the one goal advantage helped, we managed the tempo well," Real Sociedad defender Jon Martin told Movistar. "We didn't want a lot to hap-



pen, and we did well." La Real had the better of a tense first half, with Carlos Soler coming closest. The midfielder's free-kick, flying toward the top corner, was tipped over by Athletic goalkeeper Alex Padilla. Matarazzo's team had more of the ball and forced the visitors back, albeit without carving out many more openings.

Athletic defender Aitor Paredes made a last-ditch block to keep former Valencia midfielder Soler at bay, and Goncalo Guedes drilled into the side-netting. Ernesto Valverde's side improved in the second half and began to threaten La Real, again without finding a clear sight of goal. Alejandro Berenguer fizzed a shot wide af-

ter Inaki Williams fed him on the edge of the box. Los Leones were missing dangerous Spanish winger Nico Williams, who is sidelined indefinitely with a groin problem. The match was decided from the penalty spot when Athletic's Inigo Ruiz de Galarreta grabbed a fistful of Yangel Herrera's shirt as he tried to jump in the box.

After a VAR review the referee awarded a spot-kick and Spain striker Oyarzabal coolly sent Padilla the wrong way in the 87th minute. Mikel Vesga might have levelled on the night for Athletic in stoppage time as they pushed forward with urgency but Real Sociedad stopper Unai Marrero saved well with his leg to help book his team's flight to Andalusia. "It was a hard-fought game, a Basque derby," said Valverde.

"We had a clear chance at the end, we could have got back into the game but it wasn't to be." Icelandic striker Orri Oskarsson could have extended La Real's lead at the death but nodded against the post, although it did not matter in the end. "It feels terrible, it's a shame, we wanted to reach that final in Seville, I don't even know what to say," Athletic striker Williams told Movistar. "(For the penalty) there's that kind of grabbing in every box, every corner, and it's very difficult (to take)."

Misbah-ul-Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed named in revamped Pakistan men's selection committee

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has officially updated its selection panel, confirming the inclusion of two former captains, Misbah-ul-Haq and Sarfaraz Ahmed, as members of the national men's selection committee.

The revision to the committee's composition was posted on the PCB's official website, reflecting a significant overhaul following the recent resignation of esteemed former umpire Aleem Dar. Dar stepped down from his selector role just three days ago. The new-look committee now comprises four members. Alongside Misbah and Sarfaraz, the panel retains the services of former fast bowler Aqib Javed and Asad Shafiq. Dar's departure comes amid reports of internal discord. Sources indicate that the multiple-time ICC Umpire of the Year felt increasingly marginalised during selection meetings.



He is understood to have been particularly opposed to the inclusion of Babar Azam, Shadab Khan and Usman Khan in the squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. Furthermore, Dar reportedly championed the case of wicket-keeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan, advocating for his promotion to the crucial number six batting position. He argued that if the committee was willing to persist with inconsistent performers, Rizwan merited the same level of confidence and opportunity.

Insiders suggest that the committee's internal dynamics contributed to Dar's disillusionment. During deliberations, Aqib Javed is said to have consistently aligned his views with those of then-head coach Mike Hesson. Meanwhile, Misbah-ul-Haq, who was already a member at the time, reportedly remained silent on key decisions. This perceived absence of robust debate and independent thinking left Dar feeling isolated and his in-

England have belief to take down India in semi-final, says Brook

MUMBAI: England are drawing confidence from a run of tight victories ahead of their Twenty20 World Cup semi-final against India, captain Harry Brook said, adding that his team's resilience would be a key factor on Thursday at the Wankhede Stadium. England's route to the last four has not all been smooth sailing, with the two-time champions advancing after wins over Sri Lanka, Pakistan and New Zealand, against whom they needed 43 runs off the final 18 balls to get over the line. "We've won tight games, which in World Cups prove to be very important, and we've got a lot of confidence going into the deeper parts of the game," Brook told reporters on Wednesday. "We've won games, which we probably shouldn't have won, and it just feels like we've never really been out of any game so far, which holds you in good stead in these world competitions." Brook's own form has underpinned that message. The 27-year-old struck a 50-ball hundred to lift England past Pakistan in Hallekele. "I don't believe that we need a perfect game to win the competition. The games that we have won have been nowhere near perfect, and we still managed to get the wins convincingly in some of them, and then tight in the other games," Brook said. "It's just the unity that we've had to be able to get across the line, the belief that everybody's shown throughout the games and the calmness that we've had when the bowlers have stood at the top of the mark. "I do believe that India were favorites from the start of the competition, as they should be on their home soil, with home crowds and knowing the venues better than anyone else," said Brook. "But T20 is such a fickle game, anything can happen." Former captain Jos Buttler's form has been scrutinised, with the opener making only 62 runs in seven matches. Buttler hit for an extended period in the nets on Wednesday. "I think leaving him [Buttler] alone is probably the best thing to do. - Agencies

Promoting innovative decarbonization solutions in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT: A training session was organized in Tashkent to strengthen national capacity to implement Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement and the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM). The event, organized by the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Uzbekistan, was attended by representatives of ministries and agencies, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, and international experts. This project, funded by the Japanese government, aims to promote innovative decarbonization solutions in Uzbekistan and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by improving energy efficiency in public facilities and public transportation. Detailed information was provided at the event about the international mechanism under the relevant article of the Paris Agreement. International experts exchanged views on other countries' methods and discussed the priority areas for Uzbekistan - renewable energy, resource efficiency, and industrial potential. During the interactive part of the event, the country's institutional readiness was assessed, and a preliminary action plan was developed. According to experts, this initiative creates a foundation for Uzbekistan's active entry into the international carbon market. - APP

Sisi stresses maintaining strategic petroleum reserves

CAIRO: President Abdel Fattah El Sisi stressed the utmost importance of maintaining secure strategic reserves of petroleum products for various uses in order to ensure supply of required quantities of gas to the electricity sector for both citizens' consumption and the needs of productive sectors. President Sisi also underlined the necessity of securing the funding and financial allocations needed to complete energy sector projects, considering energy security a fundamental pillar of national security. He made the remarks during a meeting with Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli, Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy Mahmoud Esmat and Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Karim Badawi. Presidential Spokesman Mohamed el-Shennawy said, the meeting reviewed the latest developments regarding surplus savings in renewable and petroleum energy products, as well as action plans, scenarios and alternatives in the electricity and petroleum sectors to secure equivalent fuel supplies and ensure continued of electricity generation. The talks also reviewed ongoing coordination with all relevant state bodies to secure power supply and guarantee the sustainability and stability of the electricity current. It was noted that new renewable energy capacities totaling 2,500 megawatts will be added to the national

grid before next summer. The spokesman added that the President also followed up on efforts to enhance preparedness to secure gas supplies for the electricity sector to address any emerging developments, especially in light of the ongoing war in the region and its negative economic repercussions, including impacts on prices, especially petroleum product prices. In this context, President Sisi reviewed the government's action plan to ensure providing electricity sector's needs of petroleum products and regular pumping of gas supplies to the national power grid, in a way that guarantees sustainable and stable electricity supply nationwide and reduces losses.

The meeting also addressed developments in Egypt's production rates of gas, oil and condensates, the status of dues owed to foreign companies and repayment efforts, the map of recent exploration achievements, exploratory drilling activities, ways to attract related investments, and refining activities.

The minister of petroleum referred to a plan to develop and maximize the benefit from existing oil refineries to boost production and added value while reducing the fuel import bill. He affirmed that maintaining safety at projects, ensuring asset integrity, safe operations and compliance with environmental standards are non-negotiable principles of the petroleum sector. - APP

Army
destroys
Taliban
brigade...

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security sources said. They added that the actions were carried out in areas close to the Pak-Afghan border, including Chaman, Zhob, Kila Saifullah, and Nushki sectors. Security sources reported that the operations caused casualties and material losses to the militants, though exact details were not immediately available. Security officials added that actions under Operation Ghazab lil-Haq will continue until all designated objectives are achieved.

Russia
urges Pak...

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Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stated that ongoing hostilities have caused casualties on both sides, including among civilians and returning Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran. The conflict, concentrated in Pashtun tribal areas spanning provinces like Nangarhar, Kunar, Khost, Paktia, and Paktika, has displaced nearly 66,000 Afghans according to UN agencies, with heavy shelling and explosions continuing to spark fear among border communities. "We are concerned about the ongoing fighting along the Afghan-Pakistani border," Zakharova said. "In recent days, there have been reports of armed clashes involving aircraft and heavy weapons across virtually the entire border area inhabited by Pashtun tribes.

Shehbaz,
Malaysian...

FROM PAGE 01
restraint, end hostilities and resolve their differences through diplomacy and dialogue. The two leaders agreed that restoration of peace and a swift return to normalcy was essential, but this could be achieved only through exercise of maximum restraint by all parties involved. In this regard, they agreed to work together and coordinate their positions on a regular basis. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also briefed Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on recent developments in the context of Afghanistan. He especially shared the efforts being undertaken to secure Pakistan against terrorist elements, while eradicating terrorism from the region and beyond.

SBP seen
holding...

FROM PAGE 01
Hormuz and pushed oil-and-gas prices higher, adding to Pakistan's import bill and inflationary pressures. Analysts expect inflation to average 6%-8% in coming months but warned higher oil prices could push it up further. "Energy prices should dictate the policy rate trajectory. Inflation could average around 7% during the second half of FY26," AKD Securities analyst Muhammad Aliv said. Pakistan's heavy reliance on imported fuel leaves it vulnerable to global price shocks. "Higher oil prices widen the trade deficit and pressure the rupee," Waqas Ghani, head of research at JS Capital said.

Iranian
drones...

FROM PAGE 01
The ministry said it had summoned Iranian envoy in Baku to express "strong protest" over the attack, which "contradicts the norms and principles of international law and contributes to rising tensions in the region. "Azerbaijan reserves the right to take appropriate retaliatory measures," it added. Iran has long expressed concern that Israel - a close ally of Azerbaijan and a key arms supplier - could use Azerbaijan territory to stage attacks. Last June, Azerbaijan reassured Iran that it would not allow its territory to be used for attacks against Tehran after Israel launched a large-scale strike on Iranian targets. Tehran has historically been wary of separatist sentiment among its ethnic Azerbaijani minority, which makes up around 10 million of Iran's 83 million citizens.

Pakistan plans private helicopter operations to support tourism

"It is extremely necessary. So far, only military aviation has been looking after helicopter operations, and they mainly provide services for rescue missions," he said.

ISLAMABAD: In a major development for tourism and rescue operations in Pakistan's remote mountainous regions, private helicopter services are expected to become operational for the first time in the country's history by April-May this year, President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan Major General (Retd) Irfan Arshad said on Thursday. In an exclusive interview with APP, Irfan said the initiative would help improve access to Pakistan's high-altitude areas while strengthening rescue capabilities for climbers and trekkers. "It is extremely necessary. So far, only military aviation has been looking after helicopter operations, and they mainly provide services for rescue missions," he said. He noted that the absence of private helicopter services had

long limited opportunities for tourism safaris, transportation and logistical support for mountaineers and expedition teams heading to Pakistan's northern peaks. Highlighting regional comparisons, Arshad said countries like Nepal had already developed a strong private helicopter sector. "In Nepal, there are around 13 helicopter aviation companies. Few operate two helicopters, few three, and few even up to ten," he said. Expressing optimism about Pakistan's progress, he said both the government and the armed forces were supportive of the initiative. "We have made considerable progress. The government is serious about this initiative, and the army is also supporting the process," he added. He said efforts were underway through the

Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence to facilitate private companies entering the helicopter services market. According to Irfan, private operators would be allowed to conduct both rescue missions and tourism-related activities. "They will have permission for rescue operations as well as tourism safaris and other specialised programmes, including support for certain agencies," he said. He expressed hope that by April-May this year, around five to six helicopters from the private sector would begin operations. "The initiative includes helicopters from different institutions. Few government entities will also provide services on a commercial basis along with private companies," he explained. He further said that few foreign companies had

also shown interest in the initiative. "There are different institutions, including government ones, that will provide services, and some direct private companies are also coming. One Italian company and one Nepali company are expected to join," he added. He said the services would not only improve rescue capabilities but also open new opportunities for mountain tourism in Pakistan. "They will carry out rescue operations and develop various tourism programmes. Safaris to iconic peaks such as K2, Broad Peak and Nanga Parbat will also be introduced," he said. Irfan added that the launch of private helicopter services would help make Pakistan's world-renowned mountains more accessible to international tourists and mountaineers. - APP

Briefs

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.41 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.42. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.1 and Rs 280.55, respectively. The price of the Euro against the Rupee decreased by Rs 0.30 to close at Rs 323.99 from the previous day's close of Rs 324.29, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged at Rs 1.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.72 and closed at Rs 372.39 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.11. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham gained 01 paisa to close at Rs 76.08, while the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant and closed at Rs 74.42.—APP

Gold price
falls by Rs
2800 per tola

LAHORE: Gold prices have gone into reverse gear in the domestic and international markets for the third consecutive day. After falling by \$28 per ounce in the global market, it has fallen to \$5144. According to All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association, gold per tola in Pakistan has fallen by Rs. 2800 to Rs. 537,162. The price of 10 grams of gold has decreased by Rs. 2410, after which it has become Rs. 460,529 per ten grams of gold. Likewise, the price of silver per tola has decreased by Rs. 194 to Rs. 8810. It should be noted that yesterday, gold per ounce in the global market had fallen by \$100 to \$5,172, while in the local bullion market, gold per tola had fallen by Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 5,39,962. On Wednesday, the price of 10 grams of gold had decreased by Rs. 8,573, after which one tola of gold had become Rs. 462,930, while the price of silver per tola had increased by Rs. 100 to Rs. 9,004.—APP

Kyrgyz edu
ministry,
JICA discuss
strategic
partnership

BISHKEK: The ministry of education of Kyrgyz Republic host the meeting with representatives of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). According to the ministry, Deputy Minister of Education Lira Samykbaeva and JICA Headquarters Senior Advisor on Education Murato Toshio participated in the meeting. The parties discussed prospects for cooperation in education. In particular, ministry representatives proposed strengthening the development of inclusive education in schools, both through improving infrastructure and training specialists working with children with special educational needs. It was also proposed to upgrade the facilities of vocational schools and introduce elements of inclusive education into the vocational training system. Particular attention was paid to improving the qualifications of teachers and experts involved in the development of methodologies and standards, as well as to issues of analyzing and monitoring the quality of education. Lira Samykbaeva noted the significant experience of the Japanese education system. She thanked the agency for its support and opportunities for collaboration within the framework of international programs. In turn, Murato Toshio reported that JICA is developing a five-year strategic plan, in which education is considered one of the priority areas. After analyzing the submitted proposals, key areas of collaboration with the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic will be determined.—APP

CDWP okays 7 projects worth
Rs123b, sent 4 to ECNEC

The agenda included projects from education and training, governance, health, higher education, information technology, physical planning and housing, power and water sectors aimed at strengthening infrastructure and improving public service delivery

ISLAMABAD: The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on Thursday approved seven development projects worth Rs15.174 billion and recommended four major projects costing Rs108.16 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration. The meeting, chaired by Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives/Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Prof Ahsan Iqbal, reviewed 11 development projects with a total estimated cost of Rs 123.334 billion, said a news release. The meeting was attended by the Chief Economist, Vice Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), members of the Planning Commission, federal secretaries, heads of provincial Planning and Development departments and senior representatives from relevant ministries and provincial governments. The agenda included projects from education and training, governance, health, higher education, information technology, physical planning and housing, power and water sectors aimed at strengthening infrastructure and improving public service delivery. The forum approved a project titled "Establishment of Daanish School at Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Haveli-Kahuta)" worth Rs4,687.703 million. The CDWP directed the authorities concerned to rationalize the project cost in line with pre-

viously approved PCI of Daanish Schools. While reviewing the proposal, the deputy chairman emphasized the importance of expanding access to quality education in underserved areas. He directed the Ministry of Education to provide a year-wise breakup and operational expenditure details of all Daanish Schools. The ministry was also asked to share future financial requirements with the Finance Division for the upcoming budget and three-year projections to ensure transparency in operational commitments and smooth functioning of these institutions. Two revised projects related to the health sector were presented during the meeting.

The project titled "Upgradation of DHQ Hospital District Hafizabad" worth Rs7,931.330 million was recommended to ECNEC for consideration. During discussion, Ahsan Iqbal observed that the project falls within the provincial domain as it is located in a major city of Punjab. He emphasized that such initiatives should ideally be financed by the provincial government in line with constitutional responsibilities. The forum noted that the federal government had already extended financial support beyond its mandated share. It was decided that any additional financial liability would be borne by the Government of Punjab, which would also reimburse excess funds released by the Centre. Another pro-

ject titled "National Health Support Programme (KP Component)" worth Rs1,335 million was approved after detailed deliberations. The CDWP approved a project titled "Prime Minister's Scheme for Enabling Youth with Physical Challenges at HEIs through Electric Wheelchairs, Laptops for Blinds, Audio-Visual Aids - HEC" worth Rs1,846.410 million. The deputy chairman directed the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to ensure that the facility is extended strictly to full-time enrolled students of public sector universities to ensure that the targeted beneficiaries receive maximum support. A revised project titled "Land Records Management Information System in the Rural Areas of ICT, Islamabad" worth Rs185.691 million was also approved. The project aims to digitize land records in rural areas of Islamabad Capital Territory to improve transparency, efficiency and service delivery. Two projects related to physical planning and housing were approved by the forum. These include "Construction of Admin Block of Supreme Court Branch Registry at Quetta - New" worth Rs231.604 million and "Pakistan Audit and Accounts Academy (PAAA) Islamabad - Revised" worth Rs3,106.030 million. The projects are expected to strengthen institutional infrastructure and enhance administrative capacity in the public sector. Three projects related

to the power sector were discussed during the meeting. Two projects, "Electricity Distribution Efficiency Improvement Project HESCO funded by World Bank" worth Rs19,016.811 million and "Electricity Distribution Efficiency Improvement Project (PESCO)" worth Rs30,255.810 million, were recommended to ECNEC for further consideration. The projects aim to improve electricity distribution efficiency and reduce system losses. Another project titled "Hydropower and Renewable Energy-II, Gilgit-Baltistan" worth Rs3,781.476 million was approved by the forum. The initiative seeks to promote renewable energy and improve electricity access in the region A revised project titled "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irrigated Agriculture Improvement Project" worth Rs50,956.294 million was recommended to ECNEC for approval. The project would be financed through World Bank funding and farmers' contribution and aims to improve irrigation efficiency and water management across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including merged districts. It includes rehabilitation of thousands of community watercourses, installation of high-efficiency irrigation systems, construction of water storage tanks and capacity-building of water users associations to promote sustainable agricultural practices.—DNA

UK defense
minister
heads to
Cyprus amid
ME war

LONDON: Britain's defense minister John Healey is headed to Cyprus, a defense source told AFP, after a drone strike on a UK air base on the Mediterranean island. Healey was due to arrive later Thursday, the source said. The visit comes after the runway of the Royal Air Force (RAF) base at Akrotiri came under attack by an Iranian-made unmanned drone on Monday. Starmer said Tuesday the UK was sending "helicopters with counter drone capabilities" and a warship, HMS Dragon, to Cyprus as Britain continued "defensive operations" in the region. HMS Dragon is one of the Royal Navy's six Type 45 air defense destroyers. It is fitted with a Sea Viper missile system able to launch eight missiles in under 10 seconds and guide up to 16 missiles simultaneously, Britain's defense ministry said. The helicopters are Wildcat helicopters equipped with Martlet missiles that can destroy drones. On Wednesday, Cyprus's High Commissioner to the UK Dr. Kyriacos Kourou, said Cypriots were "disappointed" at the level of information-sharing with residents after RAF Akrotiri was hit and further drones intercepted. "Let's say the people are disappointed, the people are scared, the people could expect more," he told the BBC's Newsnight program. Starmer initially refused to have any role in the US-Israeli war with Iran but later agreed to a US request to use two British military bases for a "specific and limited defensive purpose.—APP

China raises
defense
budget by 7pc
for 2026

BEIJING: China said on Thursday its defense budget, the world's second largest after the United States, will increase by seven percent in 2026, in line with expectations but slightly below last year's. Beijing plans to spend 1996 trillion yuan (\$276.8 billion) on defense — around three times less than the US military budget. The increase in military spending for the year was announced in a finance ministry budget report that was published on the sidelines of the annual "Two Sessions" political conclave. It marks a degree of continuity as Beijing pursues a sweeping anti-graft purge of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that included the ousting of top general Zhang Youxia in January. Analysts told AFP the budget would finance military salary increases, training, drills around Taiwan, cyberwarfare capabilities and advanced equipment purchases, among other things. China has maintained a steady increase in military spending of around seven to eight percent each year since 2016. The United States is the world's biggest military spender, shelling out \$997 billion in 2024 compared with China's \$314 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). China claims its defense policy is solely aimed at protecting its territory, which it says includes self-ruled Taiwan.—APP

Blasts
echo over
Doha and
Abu Dhabi
injuring 6

DOHA: Another round of explosions were heard over the Qatari capital Doha on Thursday, AFP journalists reported. Doha has been targeted by waves of Iranian drones and missiles since Iran launched a sprawling retaliation campaign across the Gulf in the wake of the US and Israeli attacks against Iran. Qatar's defense ministry said on Thursday its military was working to intercept an incoming missile attack as loud blasts reverberated across Doha and smoke was seen over the city. "The Ministry of Defense of State of Qatar announces that State of Qatar has been subjected to a missile attack," it said in a statement. "Air Defense systems are intercepting the missile attack," it added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Robert Jan Siegert, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Pakistan called on Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik.

Kim claims
progress toward
nuclear-armed navy

SEOUL, South Korea: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected his new destroyer for two straight days ahead of its commissioning and observed a test of cruise missiles fired from the warship, vowing to accelerate the nuclear-armed navy, state media said Thursday. The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim, during his visits to the western shipyard of Nampo on Tuesday and Wednesday, also inspected the construction of a third destroyer of the same class as his 5,000-ton warship, the Choe Hyon, first unveiled in April 2025. Kim has hailed the development of Choe Hyon as a significant advancement toward his goal of expanding the operational range and preemptive strike capabilities of his nuclear-armed military. State media says the ship is designed to handle various weapons systems, including anti-air and anti-naval weapons, as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles. South Korean military officials and experts say Choe Hyon was likely built with Russian assistance amid deepening military ties, but some have raised doubts about whether it's ready for active service. North Korea unveiled a second destroyer of the same class in May last year, but it was damaged during a botched launching ceremony at the northeastern port of Chongjin, triggering a furious reaction from Kim, who called the failure "criminal." North Korea has said the new destroyer, named Kang Kon, was relaunched in June after repair, but outside experts have questioned whether the ship is fully operational. After observing Choe Hyon's sea trials on Tuesday, Kim said the ship met operational requirements and called it a symbol of the country's expanding naval capabilities. He called for building two warships a year over the next five years of the same or higher class as the Choe Hyon. Kim came back Wednesday to observe a test launch of cruise missiles from the Choe Hyon. State media published photos of him watching from shore as several projectiles rose from the vessel in plumes of white smoke and described the weapons as "strategic," a term used for nuclear-capable systems.—APP

FBR launches e-Bilty to curb smuggling

The contract signed initiates a comprehensive assessment and technical design phase. The selected consulting firm is tasked with analyzing international best practices, evaluating high-level ICT infrastructure needs, reviewing the legal and policy framework, and delivering a detailed system architecture and implementation roadmap

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Thursday initiated the development of a National Cargo Tracking System (CTS) and an integrated e-Bilty mechanism aimed at digitizing the monitoring of goods movement across Pakistan, improving tax compliance and curbing smuggling. The contract-signing ceremony was held at the FBR headquarters to launch the design phase of the project, which officials described as a major step in the organization's digital transformation and modernization agenda. The project, financed by the World Bank under the Pakistan Raises Revenue Program (PRRP), is spearheaded by the National Targeting Center (NTC). It aims to replace the traditional, manual, and paper-based goods transport document, locally known as the "Bilty", with a centralized, technology-driven electronic transport waybill (e-Bilty). Currently, the reliance on manual checks by multiple agencies and paper documentation causes significant bottlenecks, prolongs transit times for legitimate traders, and creates opportunities for tax evasion and smuggling. The envisioned CTS platform will enable the real-time tracking of commercial cargo

from the point of origin to the destination. By generating an e-Bilty with a unique, instantly verifiable QR code, the system will allow Customs enforcement teams to efficiently segregate compliant from non-compliant cargo. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Chairman FBR Rashid Mahmood Langrial said that the initiative is a cornerstone of our broader vision for a digital and transparent economy. "By integrating the CTS with existing systems like WeBOC, STRIVE (Sales Tax Real-time Invoice Verification), and the Anti-Smuggling Portal, we are closing the loopholes that allow for fake sales tax invoices and mis-declaration of goods. This ensures a level playing field for honest businesses and secures the nation's revenue," Rashid added. The Chairman said that the design phase was expected to be completed within a few months, while the full project implementation could take up to three years, and the reform programme includes three major interventions: production monitoring at manufacturing sites, digital invoicing for commercial transactions, and cargo tracking for the physical movement of goods. "Once these

components are integrated, we will have visibility over production, invoicing and movement of goods. When all legitimate economic activity is on the system, the only items left outside it will be smuggled goods, making them easier to identify," he said. The Member Customs Operations Syed Shakeel Shah said "The goal is to facilitate trade by minimizing en-route physical inspections and delays. The CTS will empower our officers with risk-based data, transforming our operational enforcement from manual roadblocks to intelligent, digital monitoring." The contract signed initiates a comprehensive assessment and technical design phase. The selected consulting firm is tasked with analyzing international best practices, evaluating high-level ICT infrastructure needs, reviewing the legal and policy framework, and delivering a detailed system architecture and implementation roadmap. This blueprint will pave the way for the eventual nationwide deployment of the CTS, bringing Pakistan's logistics and transit trade regulations in line with global standards.—DNA

Canada PM can't
rule out military
participation in Iran war

CANBERRA, Australia: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Thursday that he couldn't rule out his country's military participation in the escalating war in the Middle East. Carney's visit to Australia this week has been overshadowed by expanding war in the Middle East, sparked by a massive US-Israeli strike on Iran that killed its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Speaking alongside local counterpart Anthony Albanese in Canberra, Carney was asked whether there was a situation in which Canada would get involved. "One can never categorically rule out participation," he said, while stressing the question was a "hypothetical" one. "We will stand by our allies," said Carney, adding that "we will always defend Canadians." Carney had said the US-Israeli strikes on Iran were "inconsistent with international law." However, he supports the efforts to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon — a position that Canada takes "with regret" as it represented "another example of the failure of the international order." The Canadian leader reiterated on Thursday his call for a "de-escalation" of the conflict. Carney's trip is part of a multi-country tour of the Asia-Pacific aimed at reducing reliance on the United States — a hedge against what he has described as a fading US-led global order. The Australia leg of the tour is aimed at bringing in investment and deepening ties with a like-minded "middle power" partner.—APP

China prioritizes
energy, diplomacy
over Iran support

BEIJING: China has expressed its anger over Israeli-US strikes on Iran but, despite hits to its oil imports, will not risk its interests by confronting Washington and helping its long-standing partner, analysts say. The war in the Middle East has sparked global fears of an energy supply crunch, with traffic in the vital Strait of Hormuz blocked. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Wednesday they had "complete control" of the waterway as it kept up its missile and drone barrages across the Gulf. China, a net importer of oil, is one of several major Asian economies that depend on the narrow strait for energy. However, experts say strategic stockpiles will help Beijing endure short-term disruptions, allowing it to pursue other diplomatic priorities. Looming ahead is a high-stakes summit in China between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump, which the White House says will begin on March 31. "The Iran crisis is unlikely to derail the Trump-Xi summit unless the United States launches a sweeping crackdown on Iran-China (oil) flows," Dan Wang, China Director for the Eurasia Group, told AFP. "Beijing views Iran as a strategic partner rather than a military ally," said Wang. "China also values its relationship with other Gulf states, making direct military support beyond rhetoric highly unlikely," he added. Beijing has ramped up its diplomatic presence in the Middle East in recent years, notably brokering a 2023 deal between longtime rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia to restore ties. Tehran was later added as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a geopolitical and economic bloc anchored by Beijing and Moscow. China has also grown heavily reliant on the region for powering its huge economy. Its own crude production accounts for only about 30 percent of domestic demand, according to analytics firm Kpler, with the gap covered by vast shipments of foreign oil. The Middle East was the source of 57 percent of China's direct seaborne crude imports in 2025 — 5.9 million barrels per day (mbd) — Kpler said. Of those, 1.4 mbd came from Iran. Although China depends on imports to meet energy demand, it has also carefully prepared for unexpected disruptions. "Thanks to years of sustained stockpiling, China now holds roughly (1.2 billion barrels) of onshore crude inventories," Kpler analyst Muyu Xu wrote. Those reserves are "equivalent to about 115 days of its seaborne crude imports," Xu said. "The sheer scale of China's overall crude stockpiles provides a meaningful buffer, enabling both the country and its refiners to comfortably weather short-term supply disruptions from the Middle East and the resulting price spikes. Beijing said on Sunday it "firmly opposes and strongly condemns" the US-Israeli strikes that killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "The most urgent task is an immediate cessation of military operations and preventing a spread and spillover of conflict," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a news conference this week. She noted that one Chinese citizen was killed in Tehran as a result of the conflict. However, analysts say that energy needs and a reluctance to be drawn into a conflict with Washington will prevent Beijing from converting strong rhetoric into concrete action.—DNA

Briefs

Israel to attack Iranian missile sites'

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israel's war in Iran is entering a second phase that will see its fighter jets attacking ballistic missile sites buried deep underground, two sources familiar with Israel's military campaign said. The joint air assault with the US in Iran is nearing the end of its first week after opening salvos killed the country's leaders and set off a regional war with Iranian attacks in Israel, the Gulf and Iraq, and Israeli attacks in Lebanon. Israel's military says it has hit hundreds of Iranian missile launchers above ground that could target Israeli cities. The second phase will include bunkers storing ballistic missiles and equipment, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject. One said Israel aimed to neutralise Iran's ability to launch aerial attacks at Israel by the end of the war, which was also focused on taking out the Islamic Republic's leadership. A military spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on its attack plans. The military has previously asserted that it and the US military took control of much of Iran's airspace in the opening days of the attacks. In a statement on Thursday, the military said that, overnight, the Air Force struck "an underground infrastructure site used by the Iranian regime to store ballistic missiles and storage sites for missiles intended for use against aircraft."

IHC asks PTI founder's lawyer to file separate plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday directed the lawyer of the founder of PTI and Bushra Bibi to file a new miscellaneous petition to remove the registrar officer's on appeals in toshakhana-II case. Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro heard the case. During hearing, Barrister Salman Safdar said that the office had raised some objections, but I did not file the appeal on time. Salman Safdar said that the sentence was decided on December 20, and the appeals were filed on December 29. While filing the appeals, a certified copy of the decision was attached with the appeals. The office did not tell us anything about the objections. He said that when we filed the application for suspension of sentence, we were told on February 14, that there was an objection to your appeals. Salman Safdar said that the established principle is that once an appeal is filed, it will be said to have been filed on time.

Envoy Jane Mariott says

Britain to continue supporting Pakistan economic reforms

Finance Minister Discusses Economic Reforms and Regional Economic Outlook with British High Commissioner



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting with the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Mariott CMG OBE, who called on him at the Finance Division today. The meeting focused on regional developments, Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook, progress on economic reforms, and avenues for

strengthening bilateral economic cooperation. The Finance Minister briefed the High Commissioner on the government's proactive approach to managing potential economic implications arising from evolving regional developments. He shared that the Prime Minister has constituted a high-level committee comprising key federal ministries and the State Bank of Pakistan to closely monitor developments and undertake daily stock-taking of critical sectors, particularly energy supplies and global commodity markets.

Senator Aurangzeb emphasized that Pakistan currently maintains adequate reserves and supply arrangements, noting that the government is undertaking scenario planning and sensitivity analysis in case the regional situation persists. The government is also reviewing energy conservation measures and coordinating with provincial authorities to ensure prudent resource management while avoiding unnecessary market panic. The Finance Minister also shared that Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators are showing signs of stabilization and recovery. He noted that economic growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal year reached 3.7 percent, with improvements in large-scale manufacturing and resilience in the agriculture sector. Ms. Jane Mariott appreciated the government's commitment to economic reform and reiterated the United Kingdom's continued support for Pakistan's efforts toward macroeconomic stability and long-term growth. She noted that the UK remains a strong partner in Pakistan's development and economic transformation, including through support for reform initiatives, private sector engagement, and technical cooperation. The High Commissioner also discussed the importance of promoting investor confidence, particularly in key sectors such as mining and minerals development. Both sides exchanged views on the importance of ensuring stability, good governance, and sustainable development in resource-rich regions to attract international investment and promote inclusive economic growth. The Finance Minister welcomed the United Kingdom's continued engagement and support for Pakistan's reform agenda. He emphasized that Pakistan is committed to maintaining policy consistency, strengthening governance frameworks, and creating a conducive environment for domestic and foreign investment. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-UK economic cooperation and maintaining close coordination on economic and development priorities.

First polio case of 2026 confirmed in Sindh

NEOC reports wild polio in a four-year-old child from Bello UC in Sujawal

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication (NEOC) today confirmed the first wild polio case of 2026 in a four-year-old child from Bello Union Council, Sujawal district, Sindh. The case was reported through the polio surveillance network and confirmed by the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad. The Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) is already analysing the best response to tackle and prevent further transmission. Despite challenges, eradicating the global public threat of polio in Pakistan and worldwide is within reach, and the PEI continues to intensify its efforts to leave no child behind. Since 1994, thanks to polio vaccines, Pakistan has reduced polio cases by 99.8% - from 20,000 estimated cases in the early 1990s to 31 in 2025. In 2026, Pakistan has already implemented a nationwide polio campaign that protected over 45 million children, while the next national campaign is planned in April.

Govt assures petroleum stock; strict action against hoarders

Teams of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) are actively monitoring the situation in the field. Inspections are being conducted at oil depots and retail outlets to ensure smooth supply of petroleum products and to prevent any malpractice

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government has assured the public that the country currently holds sufficient stocks of petroleum products to meet national demand and there is no need for panic buying or hoarding. In view of the prevailing geopolitical situation, authorities are closely monitoring the petroleum supply chain to ensure uninterrupted availability of products across the country. The existing stock position remains comfortable and well within the prescribed requirements. It has been emphasized that strict action will be taken against any individual or entity found involved in illegal hoarding or storage of petroleum products at unauthorized locations, particularly at places other than duly li-

censed oil depots and retail outlets of OMCs. Reports have indicated that certain elements may attempt to hoard petroleum products for profiteering during such circumstances. To curb such practices, all Provincial Chief Secretaries have been requested to direct DCs to carry out inspections within their respective jurisdictions. Any premises found involved in illegal storage of petroleum products will be sealed and action will be taken in accordance with the law. Meanwhile, teams of OGRA are actively monitoring the situation in the field. Inspections are being conducted at oil depots and retail outlets to ensure smooth supply of petroleum products and to prevent any malpractice. The public is advised not to pay attention to rumors and to continue normal consumption patterns, as the petroleum supply situation in the country remains stable.

Govt weighs Covid-style remote work, online classes to save energy

Reduced office attendance, remote work for corporate and IT sectors also under consideration, say sources

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is reportedly considering online classes among other measures under the "national action plan" to bring changes to work and education routines across the country in a bid to conserve energy and streamline operations. According to sources privy to the development, along with digital learning, measures such as reduced office attendance, remote work for corporate and IT sectors, and other energy-saving initiatives could be implemented starting March 2026. Similar sorts of measures were adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Officials revealed that educational institutions may conduct online sessions starting

in March 2026 to reduce energy consumption and physical attendance. Similarly, the corporate sector is exploring the possibility of allowing employees to work online for two days a week. Telecom and IT companies are also reportedly evaluating a similar schedule. Government offices may implement a policy requiring only essential staff to be physically present, with the rest working remotely. Various proposals, including shared rides for office staff and online services for potential employees, are also being considered to further minimise energy usage. The initiatives aim to balance operational efficiency with energy conservation, while also promoting flexible working arrangements across both public and private sectors.

India reach T20 World Cup final

T20 World Cup 2026 final to be played on March 8 at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad

DNA

AHMEDABAD: An explosive half-century by in-form opener Sanju Samson, backed by a disciplined all-round bowling display, helped India secure a narrow seven-run victory over England in the second semi-final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. India will now play against New Zealand on Sunday. England played and chased the target well however they could not achieve the target in the allotted overs.

Saudi assurance on oil shipments lifts PSX

"Stocks staged a recovery at PSX amid institutional activity on easing fuel supply fears," says expert

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Stocks climbed on Thursday as institutional buying returned on easing fuel-supply fears after Saudi Arabia assured Pakistan of facilitating crude shipments via the Red Sea port of Yanbu, while higher global oil prices and optimism over an expected International Monetary Fund (IMF) tranche supported sentiment. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 161,210.67 points, up 5,433.46 points, or 3.49%, from the previous close of 155,777.21. During the session, the index climbed to an

intraday high of 161,476.84, gaining 5,699.63 points, or 3.66%, and saw an intraday low of 156,250.28, up 473.07 points, or 0.3%. "Stocks staged a recovery at PSX amid institutional activity on easing fuel supply fears after Saudi oil supplies through the Red Sea port," said Ahsan Mehanti, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Arif Habib Commodities. "Higher global crude oil prices, expected release of IMF tranche and upbeat economic data played a catalyst role in bullish activity at PSX," he added. Pakistan on Wednesday sought an alternative oil supply route through Saudi Arabia's Red Sea port of Yanbu after Iran announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Dealy in LG polls in Capital ECP summons interior minister

The term of the last local government in Islamabad expired in February 2021, and since then, elections have been delayed under various pretexts. As a result, around 2.5 million residents of Islamabad continue to face issues ranging from water shortages to unpaved streets

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday summoned Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi over the delay in local government elections in the federal capital. The term of the last local government in Islamabad expired in February 2021, and since then, elections have been delayed under various pretexts. As a result, around 2.5 million residents of Islamabad continue to face issues ranging from water shortages to unpaved streets. A five-member ECP bench - headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja - took up the issue of delay in holding local government elections in Punjab and Islamabad, a press release issued via the ECP said. During the hearing, Raja was informed that the secretary of the interior ministry had been sent three letters by the ECP, in which he was asked for "the demarcation of the town corporation, the number of union councils in each town corporation, the provision of the maps of the town corporations, as well as necessary amendments in the ordinance". However, ECP received no response from the ministry. In response, the Islamabad chief commissioner said that no such letter had been received, and added that the secretary

of the interior ministry was in a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "In his place, the additional secretary appeared before the ECP," the press release read; however, the ECP took strict notice of the secretary's failure to respond, directing that he should be served a contempt notice. The ECP further directed the Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to appear at the next hearing. The Islamabad chief commissioner said that maps of the town corporation would be provided to the ECP within a week. The ECP then set a deadline of March 12 in the matter. Local govt polls in Punjab The five-member bench also took up the matter of the delay in local government elections in Punjab, as per the press release. In this regard, Punjab chief secretary and secretary local government, appeared before the ECP. During the hearing, the Punjab chief secretary informed the ECP that the provincial government has provided "local government delimitation rules, demarcation order, which contains the number of union councils in town corporations, municipal corporations, municipal committees and tehsil councils, to the ECP". The secretary also informed ECP that "maps and other relevant data will be provided to the ECP by March 12, after which the provincial government will issue a notification on more election rules".



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