



Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Govt not increasing petrol prices, says PM Shehbaz Sharif

Detailed News On Page-01

No Muslim country with Iran: envoy

Detailed News On Page-01

Punajb govt to continue Sahulat bazaar

Detailed News On Page-02



Ambassador Moghadam

'No Muslim country openly condemning US, Israel aggression'

The ambassador asserted that America and Israel can never defeat Iran, dismissing their strategies as futile. He referenced attempts to destabilize Iran through the killing of its Supreme Leader, suggesting adversaries believed such an act would plunge the country into chaos

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam delivered pointed remarks during an Al-Quds Day event hosted by the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad. He highlighted Iran's isolation in facing what he described as aggression from superpowers, particularly the United States and Israel. Ambassador Amiri Moghadam stated that not even a single Muslim country has openly criticized the aggression directed against Iran.

He emphasized that Iran stands alone in its struggle against these powers, framing it as a fight against imperialism and Zionism. The event, held to mark International Al-Quds Day—an annual occasion supporting Palestinian rights and opposing Israeli policies—provided the platform for these observations amid heightened regional tensions. The ambassador asserted that America and Israel can never defeat Iran, dismissing their strategies as futile. He referenced attempts to destabilize Iran through the killing of its Supreme Leader, suggesting adversaries believed such an act would plunge the country into chaos. Instead, he claimed the opposite occurred: the Iranian people have become more united today, rallying stronger in defense of their nation and its leadership.

Reza Amiri Moghadam concluded by predicting inevitable defeat for the US and Israel, portraying Iran's resilience as unbreakable. These comments reflect Tehran's narrative of steadfast resistance, unity in the face of adversity, and criticism of perceived silence from the broader Muslim world on issues affecting Iran. The remarks underscore ongoing diplomatic efforts by Iran to garner solidarity,

Continued on Page 06

Deadly blast rocks Tehran

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Deadly explosions rocked Tehran close to a pro-government rally attended by top officials on Friday, as Israel and Iran unleashed fresh strikes in a war that has ignited the Middle East and threatens to torpedo the world economy. Since erupting on February 28 with US-Israeli attacks on Iran, the war has cascaded throughout the region, drawn in global powers, and sparked a major oil shock. AFP journalists in Tehran reported loud blasts over the city skies, as Israel's military said it had hit more than 200 targets in western and central Iran in the past day.

Black smoke rises following an airstrike, as Iranians take part in the Al-Quds Day rally, a commemoration in support of the Palestinian people on the last Friday of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, in Tehran on March 13, 2026. Iran's state media said at least one woman was killed when blasts hit an area near a demonstration, where large crowds had gathered waving flags and brandishing banners reading "Death to America" and "Death to Israel".

Continued on Page 06

AL-QUDS DAY IN ISLAMABAD



ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of members of the Shia community took to the streets in Islamabad to mark Al-Quds Day, an annual occasion observed in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The demonstrations reflected strong support for the cause and highlighted calls for justice in Palestine. — DNA

PM confirms no increase in fuel prices

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday decided that the prices of petroleum products would not be increased this time despite the uptick in the global oil market. According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM Shehbaz was quoted as saying that prices were not being increased to reduce the burden on the common man. He said that as per his "promise", he would provide relief to the people as much as possible. "The global economy is currently under pressure due to regional tensions, which is likely to have a profound impact on Pakistan's economy," the premier said.

Continued on Page 06

Terrorists strike again

At least seven police personnel martyred in blast

Explosion in Bettani tribal subdivision leaves several officers dead; security tightened in area

BUREAU REPORT

LAKKI MARWAT: At least seven police personnel were martyred in a blast near a police vehicle in the Bettani tribal of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district, a police spokesperson said on Friday. According to the spokesperson, the explosion occurred close to a police mobile, resulting in the deaths of six officers, while one policeman sustained injuries in the incident. The injured cop was rushed to Insaafuddin Hospital but succumbed to his injuries during treatment.

Following the blast, additional police contingents were dispatched to the area to secure the site and assist in further response measures, the spokesperson added. Condemning the incident, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid tribute to the martyred police personnel and expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to their families. Pakistan has witnessed a rise in cross-border terrorist activity, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces,

Continued on Page 06

Armed Forces destroy Corps infrastructure

During the aerial operations, the oil storage site at Kandahar Airfield and its adjacent logistics infrastructure were also destroyed

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Armed Forces carried out successful airstrikes in Afghanistan, destroying the infrastructure of the 313 Corps in Kabul and the Tarawa terrorist camp in Kandahar in response to unprovoked aggression by the Afghan Taliban. Security sources said that the Pakistan Armed Forces successfully targeted four terrorist hideouts, including military installations of the Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khwarizj, during the night

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan forces down two drones; no causality

Flight operations at Islamabad Airport experienced a "brief operational adjustment"

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Security sources said on Friday that two rudimentary drones were intercepted at different locations adjacent to Rawalpindi but were successfully brought down through electronic countermeasures. Security sources said that no damage or casualties were reported and the airspace, which was temporarily closed as a

Continued on Page 06

All six US service members killed

WASHINGTON: All six crew members aboard a US military refuelling aircraft that crashed in western Iraq are confirmed to have been killed, the US military said on Friday. A US military refuelling aircraft crashed in western Iraq on Thursday, in an incident the military

Continued on Page 06

Nehal sworn-in as Sindh governor

DNA

KARACHI: PML-N Sindh president Bashir Memon was also present alongside other party leaders and workers. Hashmi took oath as the Sindh governor a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved his appointment to the post, acting on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. PM Shehbaz had forwarded a summary to the president for appointing the PML-N senior leader as the Sindh governor. According to the PM's Office, the prime minister sent the summary for Hashmi's approval as the Sindh governor to the president. The statement added that PM Shehbaz met Hashmi in Islamabad and congratulated him on his proposed appointment as the governor.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Pakistan calls for end to ME crisis

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan has reaffirmed support for the resolution of the Iran nuclear issue through peaceful means. It was expressed by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad during Security Council briefing on the 1737 Committee (Iran). The Ambassador emphasized that diplomacy and dialogue should be the guiding principles for achieving a negotiated settlement of all contentious issues in accordance with the rights, obligations and responsibilities of the parties concerned. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in the Middle East (ME), and urged all parties to show maximum restraint, avoid further escalation, institute a permanent ceasefire, and resume dialogue.

President, PM condemn attack

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have strongly condemned the terrorist attack near police vehicle in Lakki Marwat. In a statement, the President said sacrifices of law enforcement agencies are a source of pride for the nation. He expressed the nation's unwavering resolve to eradicate the scourge of terrorism. In a separate statement, the Prime Minister said sacrifices of police personnel and security forces will never go in vain.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. — Editor

Middle East crisis

Trump says Putin helping Iran govt

The behind-the-scenes maneuvering underscores the high stakes Trump, who returned to office last year promising to avoid "stupid" military interventions, faces nearly two weeks after plunging the nation into a war

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Friday said that it seems that the Russian president is helping Iran. He said however the support is at a limited scale. Trump said Putin is helping Iran because we are helping Ukraine. Meanwhile, A complex tug-of-war inside the White House is driving US President Donald Trump's shifting public statements on the course of Iran war, as aides debate when and how to declare victory even as the conflict spreads across the Middle East. Some officials and advisers are warning Trump that surging gasoline prices could exact a political cost from the US-Israeli attacks on Iran, while some hawks are pressing the president to maintain the offensive

Continued on Page 06

Turkey reports third Iranian missile interception

DNA

ANKARA: Turkey's Ministry of National Defense announced that NATO air and missile defense assets (deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean) intercepted and neutralized a third ballistic missile launched from Iran that entered Turkish airspace. No casualties or significant damage were reported. This follows similar incidents on March 4 (first interception en route to Turkish airspace)

Continued on Page 06

Civilian areas hit in Bryansk amid claims of military target

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the strike as a successful operation in his statements and nightly address, emphasizing that it hit a critical military factory manufacturing electronics for missiles that strike Ukrainian cities, villages, and civilians, and he congratulated the Armed Forces for their execution

DNA

MOSCOW: Ukrainian forces launched a missile strike on the Russian city of Bryansk using British-supplied Storm Shadow long-range cruise missiles, with reports indicating approximately seven missiles were involved in the operation. The attack targeted the Kremniy El micro-electronics plant, a key facility producing components and control systems for various Russian missile systems, including those used against Ukrainian targets. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the strike as a successful operation in his statements and nightly address, emphasizing that it hit a critical military factory manufacturing electronics for missiles that strike Ukrainian cities, villages, and civilians, and he congratulated the Armed Forces for their execution. Ukraine's General Staff confirmed the hit, releasing footage showing explosions and

fires at the industrial site, and framed it as part of ongoing efforts to degrade Russia's military-industrial capacity. Russian authorities, including Bryansk Governor Alexander Bogomaz, reported that the strike impacted civilian areas in a busy commercial district near residential buildings, shops, educational institutions, and other non-military sites in the Sovetsky District. The initial casualty figures stood at six killed and around 37-42 injured, with a teenager born in 2009 among those hospitalized in stable condition; the death toll later rose to seven according to updated statements from local officials, who provided medical aid and support to victims and their families. Moscow labeled the incident a deliberate terrorist attack by the "neo-Nazi Kiev regime," condemned it as a heinous crime against peaceful civilians, and accused Western involvement—particularly Britain—for enabling the operation

Continued on Page 06

MARCH 2026

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

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KP starts early disbursement of salaries ahead of Eid

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance, Muzzammil on Friday said keeping in view the upcoming Eid festival and in compliance with the directives of Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, the provincial Finance Department has started disbursement of March salaries from March 13. Talking to media, he said the process of salary payments would continue until March 17 so that government employees could meet their financial needs ahead of Eid. The Advisor said that in February 2024 the province did not have sufficient funds to pay even one month's salary. However, he added that by the grace of Almighty Allah the provincial government was now releasing salaries in advance without any financial difficulty.—APP

Governor condemns IED blast on police vehicle

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday strongly condemned the IED blast targeting a police vehicle in the tribal sub-division of Lakki Marwat. The Governor expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of six police personnel, including the Station House Officer (SHO), in the incident. He extended heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families and said the sacrifices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police for the establishment of peace in the country would always be remembered. Governor Kundi said such cowardly acts of terrorism could not weaken the resolve of the nation. He also prayed for the early recovery of the injured police official. He said the sacrifices of police and security forces would not go in vain and the collective struggle against terrorism would continue until its complete elimination.—APP

Meeting discuss construction of new graveyard in Hayatabad

PESHAWAR, Mar 13 (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud here on Friday, chaired a meeting regarding the construction of a new graveyard for the residents of Hayatabad. During his recent visit to Hayatabad, he was informed by residents that the existing graveyard allocated for the area has run out of space, and people are forced to take their deceased to graveyards in distant areas for burial. They demanded an immediate solution to this issue and allocation of land for the purpose. Taking notice of the situation, the commissioner convened a meeting that was attended by the Director Land Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Assistant Commissioner Matni, Tehsildar Matni and other revenue officials.—APP

FGP, Accountability Lab host public dialogue on youth entrepreneurship

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP), in collaboration with Accountability Lab Pakistan and Hamdard University Islamabad Campus, has hosted a public dialogue on the youth employment crisis and the role of entrepreneurship, bringing together policymakers, academics, development practitioners and young participants to explore practical pathways for empowering youth and creating sustainable economic opportunities in Pakistan. On the sidelines of the dialogue, participants were also briefly introduced to the book From Idea to Impact by Dr. Shahbaz Tariq, which highlights practical approaches for turning ideas into entrepreneurial initiatives.

Subsidized essentials' sale continues in sahulat bazaars following CM Maryam's vision

Chief Minister Punjab said that in Lahore, 10 permanent Sahulat Bazaars and 15 'Sahulat On-The-Go' Bazaars are functional. She added that relief is not just a slogan; it must be visible, measurable, and accessible

DNA

LAHORE: In accordance with the vision of Chief Minister Sharif, sale of essential food items at affordable prices continues in Sasta & Sahulat Bazaars in the province. As per her directions, cleanliness, check and balance, and quality standards are being strictly monitored in Sahulat Bazaars. She appreciated people for their record-breaking purchases from Sahulat Bazaars; and commended the administration, PERA Force,

and 'Suthra Punjab' teams for their excellent arrangements to ensure public convenience. She directed the authorities concerned to establish more Sahulat Bazaars in Lahore for the purpose. Chief Minister Punjab termed 52.4% participation of women in 'Sahulat On-The-Go' as commendable, and congratulated Chairman Punjab Sahulat Bazaar Authority, Afzal Khokhar, on this excellent initiative. She noted that more than 90% consumers have appreciated accessibility of markets and the sense of security felt by them there. She



said that shopkeepers also appear largely satisfied with the affordable rent of stalls and the provision of basic infrastructure. She highlighted that 'Sahulat On-The-Go' has demonstrated excellent performance in terms of product quality and accessibility. She added that Punjab Sahulat Bazaar is an active relief platform where need for expansion and improvement is addressed through data analytics. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif noted that operations of Punjab Sahulat Bazaar Authority (PSBA) received 339 complaints from across Punjab;

and said that in Sahulat Bazaars, 82% of the prices were cheaper, and 88% consumers were satisfied with the quality and freshness of products. She added that in traditional Sahulat Bazaars, 91% of the shopkeepers were satisfied with the affordable rents, while over 85% 'Sahulat On-The-Go' dealers are satisfied with the affordable rent and infrastructural support. She underscored that in Sahulat Bazaars, 72.6% buyers are men and 26.2% are women. Chief Minister Punjab said that in Lahore, 10 permanent Sahulat Bazaars and 15

'Sahulat On-The-Go' Bazaars are functional. She added that relief is not just a slogan; it must be visible, measurable, and accessible. She flashed that over 80% satisfaction levels across all categories of Sahulat Bazaars indicate genuine public value. She expressed that 'Sahulat Bazaars' are creating a structured business environment for small traders, because relief markets cannot function if shopkeepers do not see business potential. She noted that there are 49 permanent Sahulat Bazaars fully functional in the province, besides 15 'Sahulat On-The-Go' units and 11 temporary Ramadan Bazaars.



ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas exchanging views with Pakistan Peoples Party leader Chaudhry Riaz.

Indian BJP regime subjecting Kashmiris to atrocious vengeance

The APHC also appealed to the United Nations and other human rights organizations to play their role in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that frustrated by the steadfast stand and patience shown by Kashmiris in the face of Indian state terrorism for their inalienable right to self-determination, India is subjecting them to atrocious vengeance. APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a statement issued in Srinagar, said that India is an occupier and Kashmir is not an integral part of India but an internationally recognized dispute. He said the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir will never allow the RSS-backed BJP regime to impose its devilish Hindutva agenda in the territory. He stressed that despite killings, torture, random ar-

rests, demolition of properties, termination of Kashmiri employees and harassment, the day is not far when India will be forced to quit Jammu and Kashmir as a result of Kashmiris' uncompromising stand. India has turned the occupied territory into the most militarized zone in the world, and its over one million troops are trampling everything under their jackboots, he added. The APHC said that besides using brute force, conspiracies are also being hatched to snatch the identity, culture and resources of the Kashmiris. Since 5th August 2019, the BJP regime has been hell-bent on destroying everything and turning Kashmir into a graveyard. However, the re-

silient Kashmiris are showing great courage, determination and steadfastness to counter Hindutva forces, he maintained. He said that Kashmiris have yet again proved that their passion for freedom is invincible and indomitable. He added that the great resistance shown by Kashmiris has frustrated India, which is now brutalizing them with atrocious vengeance. He said Kashmiris have defeated India's designs and the day is not far away when they will break the shackles of slavery and force India to quit. The APHC also appealed to the United Nations and other human rights organizations to play their role in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.—DNA

Pakistan Day's afforestation

PESHAWAR: At sunrise on March 23, thousands of hands across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will reach into the soil, especially of students, farmers, soldiers, government officials, and ordinary citizens, as each planting a small sapling that carries a large hope of a greener future for Pakistan. To mark Pakistan Day on March 23, the provincial government has set an ambitious target of planting one million trees in a single day, transforming the national celebration into a powerful symbol of environmental responsibility towards combating climate change.—APP

Matric exams in KP to begin March 31

PESHAWAR: The annual matriculation examinations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will commence on March 31, with several reforms being introduced to strengthen transparency in the examination system. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shehab Ali Shah while chairing an online meeting to review preparations for the matric examinations directed the relevant authorities to ensure transparency, discipline and better facilities for students during the conduct of examinations. The meeting was attended by chairmen of all educational boards in the province, divisional commissioners and the Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. Officials of the Education Department briefed the meeting in detail about

the arrangements for the upcoming examinations. The meeting was informed that multiple reforms were being introduced this year to make the examination system more transparent and effective. According to the briefing, three papers across all educational boards will be marked through e-marking, while the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Peshawar will conduct e-marking for six papers. It was further informed that examinations across the province would be conducted under a cluster-based system, which is being implemented with full preparations. Authorities have been directed to ensure the availability of water, electricity, CCTV cameras and other necessary facilities at all

examination halls. Newly graduated individuals are also being included in the examination staff this year and are currently undergoing training. Strict measures have been taken to prevent cheating, and only staff with proven integrity and transparent performance will be assigned responsibilities. Section 144 will be imposed around examination centres, while effective arrangements have been made to prevent the entry of cheating materials. The meeting was also told that under a rotation system, examination staff would be changed after two to three papers to further ensure transparency. In addition, answer sheets of all boards are being standardized for e-marking.—APP

Eid shopping rush peaks in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: A massive surge of shoppers has gripped markets and shopping centers across Faisalabad as the people intensified preparations for the upcoming Eidul Fitr 2026. The commercial hubs have started witnessing extraordinary crowds and vibrant trading activity during the last decade of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak commenced. A survey conducted across the city revealed that the festive spirit has significantly increased commercial activity in major bazaars, shopping plazas and roadside stalls where the families are thronging to purchase clothes, jewelry, shoes, cosmetics, bangles and other accessories for Eid celebrations. The rush has particularly intensified as the holy month enters its third Ashra which is traditionally considered the peak period for Eid shopping. Major commercial centers of the city including Jhang Bazaar, Rail Bazaar, Katchery Bazaar, Aminpur Bazaar, Montgomery Bazaar and Chinot Bazaar remained packed with shoppers throughout the day and late into the night which is reflecting the growing excitement associated with the upcoming festival. Similarly, modern shopping destinations such as D-Ground Commercial Area, Kohinoor City, Susan Road markets, Sitara Mall, Lyallpur Galleria and various shopping plazas along Canal Road also experienced a remarkable influx of visitors.—APP

Government of Pakistan

DAANISH UNIVERSITY TRUST
Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training

PRE-QUALIFICATION NOTICE

Daanish University Trust, M/o FE & PT invites sealed applications from well-reputed and experienced Firms, having an established office in Islamabad or Rawalpindi and duly registered with the relevant Income Tax and Sales Tax authorities, for the Provision of Goods and related Services for Daanish University Trust for FY 2025-26 & 2026-27.

- i. Supply of IT Equipment, including Repair and Maintenance Services
- ii. Supply of Machinery Equipment, including Repair and Maintenance Services
- iii. Supply of furniture & fixtures, including Repair and Maintenance Services
- iv. Supply of Stationery / Non-Stationery and Miscellaneous Items

2. Interested firms may apply for one or more lots. Each applicant shall submit a bid security of Rs. 500,000 for each lot applied for. The bid security must be submitted in original hard copy in favour of DDO M/o FE&PT. Detailed pre-qualification documents and guidelines for participation are available on the websites of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (www.mofept.gov.pk) and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (www.ppra.org.pk).
3. Applications must be submitted through the PPRA e-Procurement System (EPADS) available at www.eprocure.gov.pk in accordance with the prescribed procedure and must be submitted on or before March 31, 2026 at 02:00 p.m. Applications will be opened on the same day at 02:30 p.m. in the presence of applicants or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. Applications submitted through email or any other electronic means shall not be entertained. A pre-bid meeting will be held on March 16, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the office of the undersigned.
4. The procuring agency reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 (as amended from time to time).

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Tel: 051-9103915

PID(1)7535/25



National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12/Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-4
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- Dantt Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Indonesia's D-8 Chairmanship Bringing together students from Indonesia, Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A discussion session focusing on the role and future of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation was held at the National Library of Pakistan in Islamabad. The event, titled "Towards the D-8 Summit: The Relevance of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation Amid Global Challenges," was organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad in collaboration with the International Institute for Regional and International Studies (IIRIS), said a release issued here on Friday. The session brought together Indonesian students studying at the International Islamic University Islamabad and Pakistani students from several prominent universities, including Quaid-i-Azam University, National Defence University, Bahria University, Riphah International University, and the National University of Modern Languages. The gathering served as an academic platform for dialogue on the relevance of the D-8 in addressing emerging global economic challenges. The event opened with remarks from Shafiqat Rasool, President of IIRIS, who welcomed diplomats, speakers, and students from both Pakistan and Indonesia. He highlighted the importance of academic engagement in strengthening multilateral cooperation and fostering mutual understanding among member states of the D-8. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. M. Saeed Uzzaman, Head of the Department of International Relations at the National University of Modern Languages in Rawalpindi. His presentation, titled "Reinvigorating the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation: The Strategic Role of Pakistan-Indonesia Collaboration," emphasized the potential of the D-8 to emerge as a dynamic South-South economic bloc. Dr. Uzzaman argued that the organization could significantly expand its impact if member states enhance intra-D-8 trade, address connectivity



gaps, strengthen logistics and maritime integration, and improve institutional capacity. According to him, such initiatives could raise intra-D-8 trade to over USD 500 billion, contribute to a combined GDP of USD 8-10 trillion, and create more than 50 million new jobs, across member countries. During the session, Donny Ardiwidha, First Secretary for Political Affairs at the Indonesian Embassy, presented a talk titled "The Strength of D-8 Countries in Global Competition." He highlighted the strategic geographical positions of D-8 member states, noting that they are located along three major global trade routes: the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, and the Bosphorus Strait. Ardiwidha emphasized that the combination of strategic location and strong human capital gives the D-8 countries the potential to act as a stabilizing force in the global economy. "D-8 is a small group with a big impact," he remarked. Another pres-

entation was delivered by Rahmat Hindarta Kusuma, Coordinator for Information, Social, and Cultural Affairs at the Indonesian Embassy. He provided an overview of Indonesia's chairmanship of the D-8 for the 2026-2027 period, highlighting its central theme, "Navigating Global Shifts: Strengthening Equality, Solidarity, and Cooperation for Shared Prosperity". Under Indonesia's leadership, the organization will prioritize five key areas including economic and trade integration, development of the halal economy, blue economy and green transition, Connectivity and digital transformation and institutional reform are major to enhance the economic integration between members. Kusuma also announced that a special session on Palestine would be included in the agenda of the upcoming D-8 Summit, reflecting Indonesia's commitment to humanitarian values and international solidarity. The session concluded

with an interactive question-and-answer segment in which students and scholars exchanged views with the speakers on the future of D-8 cooperation and the role of youth and academia in strengthening economic partnerships among member states. This event marked the second session in a broader discussion series on the D8 under Indonesia's chairmanship. The first session was held the previous week at the Indonesian Corner and featured Noor Fatima, Chairperson of the Department of International Relations at the International Islamic University Islamabad. The final session of the series is scheduled to take place after the Eid al-Fitr holiday. Through initiatives such as these discussions, the Indonesian Embassy and its partners aim to encourage academic dialogue and youth engagement, strengthening intellectual and diplomatic connections between Pakistan and Indonesia while promoting the broader goals of the D8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

CDA reviews progress of new sectors uplift

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday reviewed the progress of development work in several new sectors of the Federal Capital and directed officials to expedite the process of handing over possession of developed plots to owners. The meeting was chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa at the CDA headquarters. It was attended by senior officials including Member Administration and Estate Talat Mehmood, Member Finance Tahir Naeem, Member Planning and Design Dr. Khalid Hafiz, Member Engineering Syed Nafasat Raza and Member Environment Esfandyar Baloch. During the meeting, the CDA chairman instructed officials to ensure that possession of plots in completed sectors is handed over to allottees at the earliest. Officials briefed the meeting on the development status of Sector C-14, stating that work on basic infrastructure has been completed while more than 95 per cent of electricity

supply arrangements are in place. Installation of light poles on main roads and signboards on streets has also been completed, while landscaping and horticulture work along main roads is progressing rapidly. The chairman directed officials to install digital information boards at the entrance points of the sector and personally visit the site to review development activities so that the formal process of handing over possession could begin. Regarding Sector C-15, officials informed the meeting that sub-base work was under way on around 37 streets. They added that the process of obtaining a no-objection certificate (NOC) for a railway bridge in the sector was in progress and that services of a consultant for its design would soon be acquired. The meeting also reviewed development work in Sector E-12. Officials said sub-base work on roads in sub-sectors 1 and 2 was nearing completion, while work on roads surrounding the commer-

cial centre was advancing at a fast pace. Progress on electricity supply in the sector was also described as satisfactory. Development activities in Sector I-12 were also discussed, with officials informing the meeting that most of the work in the sector was nearing completion. Work on a service road there is expected to begin soon. The CDA chairman also directed officials to ensure the timely installation of signboards on roads and streets in all sectors and ordered the preparation of e-maps to identify plot locations in newly developed areas.

He further instructed authorities to resolve electricity issues in Park Enclave, ensure road carpeting and remove encroachments.

Randhawa said providing modern residential facilities to citizens in Islamabad remained a top priority for the CDA, adding that obstacles hindering development work would be removed to ensure timely possession of plots for residents.—DNA

Digital CNIC now legally equal to physical card

ISLAMABAD: The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has formally declared that the Digital Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) available through its PakID mobile application, held the same legal status as the physical CNIC. The authority expressed concern that several offices and service providers were still refusing to accept digital identity credentials and insisting on physical cards or photocopies, an approach NADRA says violates the prevailing legal framework. In a statement issued on Friday, NADRA clarified that under the National Database and Registration Authority Ordinance 2000, the authority was empowered to maintain the national citizen database and issuance of identity credentials in both physical and digital forms. This legal mandate was further reinforced by the newly notified NADRA Digital Identity Regulations 2025, which formally recognized digital identity credentials as fully valid. Regulation 9, titled "Legal Recognition of Digital Identity Credentials", explicitly states that any digital identity document issued or authorized by NADRA carries the same legal status, validity, and evidentiary value as a physical credential. Regulation 10, "Acceptance of Digital Identity Credentials", requires all public authorities, regulated entities, and organizations demanding proof of identity to accept NADRA-issued digital credentials without exception. The digital identity suite includes the Digital CNIC, dematerialized CNIC, NICOP, and POC, all accessible through the PakID (NADRA Digital Identity Platform). NADRA emphasized that digital identity adoption could significantly reduce the circulation of photocopied ID documents, thereby protecting citizens' personal data and limiting risks of identity theft and misuse. The authority urged all government departments, public institutions, financial entities, telecom operators, and private service providers to align their procedures with the updated regulations and issue clear instructions to their field offices. Citizens who encounter refusal of Digital CNIC acceptance have been encouraged to file complaints through NADRA's official channels so corrective action can be taken. Reaffirming its commitment to secure and technology-driven identity management, NADRA noted that the shift toward digital credentials is a key step in modernizing public services and enhancing data protection standards across Pakistan.—APP

8 held of robbery, motorcycle theft gangs

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police apprehended eight suspects belonging to four gangs allegedly involved in robbery, bike theft and housebreaking incidents, recovering six stolen motorcycles, cash, mobile phones and weapons. According to a police spokesman on Friday, the arrests were made during separate operations conducted in the Potohar and Rawal divisions. In the Potohar Division, the Westridge

Police rounded up a two-member gang and recovered two stolen motorcycles, six mobile phones worth over Rs150,000, cash amounting to Rs45,500 and weapons from their possession. In another action, the Cantt Police apprehended two members of another gang of bike lifters, recovering two stolen two-wheelers and Rs 24,500 in cash. Similarly, in the Rawal Division, the New Town

Police detained three members of a gang of robbers and motorcycle thieves, seizing a snatched bike, weapons and Rs 44,000 obtained from the sale of snatched mobile phones. The Ganjmandi Police also apprehended a suspect involved in motorcycle theft and other stealing incidents and recovered a stolen motorcycle and a mobile phone from him.—APP

Edu reforms on the cards to regulate foreign boards

ISLAMABAD: Executive Director, Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC), Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, on Friday said significant reforms were underway in Pakistan's education regulatory framework for registration of foreign boards. In an interview with APP, Dr. Mallah, who also holds the office of Chairman Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA), and also a member of the ad-hoc committee for revival of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, explained that under the IBCC Act, foreign examination boards operating in Pakistan must be regulated by the IBCC. Following the development of a regulatory framework, 15 standards were approved by the Board of Governors, while several international boards have already been registered, he informed. According to him, six foreign boards have so far been regulated, which would offer A-Level-equivalent qualifications and the IGCSE equivalent to matriculation in Pakistan. Other approved organizations include Pearson Edexcel, International

Baccalaureate, and Learning Resource Network. The well-known Cambridge Assessment International Education is currently in the process of registration. He said the regulation of foreign boards became necessary after issues surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Pakistan needed clarity on how foreign examination bodies conducted their exams and who regulated them. With IBCC oversight, the curriculum, fee structures, and compliance with Pakistan's cultural and religious sensitivities could now be monitored. Dr. Mallah also highlighted ongoing digital reforms within IBCC as part of the government's Digital Pakistan vision. The organization is automating internal processes including accounts, human resources, and office operations. A new system is also being introduced to simplify the attestation process for students. Under a pilot project with the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, students would no longer be needed to visit both their examination board and IBCC separately for document

verification. Instead, the board's database would be linked directly to IBCC through an online portal. Students would submit their application at IBCC, which would verify records digitally and complete attestation in one place. The system was expected to be launched before Eid, he added. Discussing his role as Chairman of EIRA, Dr. Mallah said Islamabad currently has more than 1,500 private schools, most of which fell into the low-fee category. Only about five per cent were elite schools charging higher tuition, while more than 75 per cent charged less than Rs 5,000 per month. He noted that several reforms had been introduced to ease procedures for private schools. Registration, which was previously granted for one year, would now be valid for three years. Moreover, the registration and renewal process had been fully digitized through the PEIRA portal, eliminating manual applications. The authority had also fixed March and April as the official months for school registration and renewal each year to streamline the process.—APP

Kashmiri bangles craze spreads from online to traditional shops

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiri bangles are in high demand in both online and traditional shops because of their beautiful designs, wide variety of colors and same size availability, making them easy for customers to choose and match with different outfits and along with other cities, there is also a big craze for Kashmiri bangles in Hyderabad. With growing demand, many shops in Hyderabad and other cities are stocking a wide range of styles, from traditional glass bangles to modern designer sets, making it easier than ever for buyers to find the perfect match for their Eid celebrations, media reports added. This Eid, the streets of Hyderabad and other cities are buzzing with the vibrant colors of Kashmiri bangles. Resham Gali Shahi Bazar of Hyderabad has become the go-to spot for shoppers looking for bangles that match perfectly with their festive outfits. Shopkeepers report that this year's trend, with bangles in 25 to 30 different colors has created a huge surge in demand. "People are loving the variety," said a shopkeeper in Kasham Gali. "From soft pastels to bright, bold shades, we are witnessing more customers than ever. This year, our sales have literally shoot up because of these colorful bangles." Girls shopping for Eid shared their excitement as well. One customer said, "I love how easy it is to find bangles that match my dress. The colors are so vibrant, and they are all the same size, so there's no hassle at all." Another added, "I bought three sets already! Everyone at home is asking from where I got them." Other shopkeepers in nearby cities have also noticed the craze spreading fast.—DNA

Aleem condemns terrorist incident in Lakki Marwat

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications and President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, Abdul Aleem Khan has strongly condemned the tragic terrorist incident in Lakki Marwat, stating that the enemy country is making malicious attempts to disturb the peace of the homeland. He emphasized that the nation and security institutions together will foil such conspiracies, said a press release issued here on Friday. Abdul Aleem Khan expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of the SHO and Police Personnel in the unfortunate incident and paid rich tribute to the martyrs. He stated that the brave personnel of the Pakistan Army and Police are rendering great sacrifices for the peace and stability of the country, and these sacrifices will never go in vain. The minister further said that in the fight against terrorism, the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces and law enforcement agencies and anti-state elements will not be allowed to succeed under any circumstances. Aleem Khan also prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and the speedy recovery of the injured and said that may Allah Almighty grant patience and courage to the families of the martyrs to bear this loss.—APP

3,500 cops for Friday prayers, Youme-Quds rallies

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police deployed over 3,500 officers and personnel across the federal capital to ensure security during Friday congregations and Youme-Quds processions. An official told on Friday that comprehensive and foolproof security arrangements had been made throughout the city. He said strict security measures had been put in place around Faisal Mosque as well as other mosques and imambargahs, while special security arrangements had also been made for Youme-Quds rallies. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that checking at all entry and exit points of the city had been further tightened and special checkpoints had been established. He added that effective police patrolling was continuing across the city to maintain law and order. The DIG reiterated that ensuring the protection of citizens' lives and property remained the top priority of Islamabad Police.—APP

PTA successfully concludes 5G spectrum auction

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has successfully concluded the Assignment Stage of the Next Generation Mobile Services (NGMS) / 5G Spectrum Auction, marking another key milestone toward the rollout of 5G services in Pakistan. During the Assignment Stage, the specific frequency positions within the auctioned spectrum bands were finalized to enable efficient network planning and deployment by participating operators. In the 2600 MHz band, Jazz secured 70 MHz, while Zong and Ufone obtained 60 MHz each. In the 3500 MHz band, Ufone secured 120 MHz, while Jazz and Zong acquired 50 MHz each, with 60 MHz remaining unsold. The auction generated a total of \$509.6 million (approximately Rs. 142.6 billion) for the national exchequer. Jazz secured spectrum worth \$239.38 million, Ufone \$156.75 million and Zong \$113.47 million. With the completion of the assignment stage, operators can now proceed with network planning and deployment, paving the way for the gradual rollout of 5G services in Pakistan.—APP

Briefs

Pakistan faces rain, wind, thunderstorms

ISLAMABAD: A westerly weather system is set to sweep across large parts of Pakistan from Friday night, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) warned, unleashing widespread rain-wind-thunderstorm, snowfall over high mountains and isolated hailstorms that are expected to persist through early next week. The PMD said a westerly wave is likely to approach the northwestern parts of the country on Saturday evening and is expected to persist until Monday morning. Under the influence of this system, partly cloudy to cloudy weather with chances of moderate rain-wind-thunderstorm and snowfall over high mountains, along with isolated hailstorms, is expected in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Shangla, Battagram, Buner, Malakand, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Khyber, Mohmand, Peshawar, Bannu, Swabi, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera, Bajaur, Orakzai, Kurram, Kohat, Hangu and Dera Ismail Khan from Friday night to Sunday morning. Similar weather conditions are also expected in parts of Balochistan including Zhob, Barkhan, Chaman and Ziarat, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir during the same period. Rain-wind-thunderstorm with isolated hailstorms is also forecast in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Talagang, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Sargodha, Mianwali, Sheikhpura, Gujrat, Khushab, Mandi Bahauddin, Lahore, Sialkot, Narowal, Faisalabad, Jhang, Chiniot, Bhakkar, Layyah and Dera Ghazi Khan with occasional gaps from Friday night to Sunday morning.—APP

BJP regime pursuing 'atrocious revenge' on Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference stated that India, frustrated by the resilience and patience shown by Kashmiris in their pursuit of the inalienable right to self-determination despite what it calls state repression, is now subjecting them to severe retaliatory actions. According to Kashmir Media Service, a spokesman for the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a statement issued in Srinagar, said that India is an occupying power and that Kashmir is not an integral part of India but an internationally recognized dispute. He stated that the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir would never allow the RSS-backed BJP regime to impose what he described as its Hindutva agenda in the territory. He added that despite killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, demolition of properties, termination of Kashmiri employees, and continued harassment, the day is not far when India will be forced to quit Jammu and Kashmir due to the unwavering and uncompromising stand of the Kashmiri people. Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas said India has turned the occupied territory into one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world, with more than a million troops deployed across the region. He alleged that the forces are suppressing the people and violating their basic rights. The APHC spokesman said that apart from the use of force, attempts are also being made to undermine the identity, culture, and resources of Kashmiris. He claimed that since 5 August 2019, the BJP-led government has intensified measures aimed at changing the situation in the territory, but Kashmiris continue to show resilience, determination, and steadfastness. He said the people of Kashmir remain firm in their demand for freedom and that their resistance has frustrated India. The APHC also appealed to the United Nations and international human rights organizations to play their role in resolving the Kashmir dispute.—APP

COMSTECH, Chinese embassy vow to enhance cooperation

The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to deepening cooperation in science, technology, and innovation and agreeing to maintain regular communication to implement the discussed initiatives

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH, Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary in a meeting with Minister Counsellor at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Islamabad, Xu Hangtian discussed expanding collaboration in science, technology, education, and innovation between China and the OIC member states. During the meeting Dr. Choudhary appreciated the continued cooperation between COMSTECH and Chinese institutions and emphasized the importance of strengthening scientific and technological partnerships between China and the OIC countries. Minister Counsellor Xu Hangtian welcomed the COMSTECH delegation and reaffirmed China's

commitment to expanding collaboration with COMSTECH in the fields of science, technology, health, and innovation. During the meeting, both sides reviewed several successful joint initiatives undertaken between COMSTECH and Chinese partner institutions. These included the COMSTECH-HUCM Technicians Training Programs held in 2024 and 2025 aimed at building technical expertise in traditional medicine, the COMSTECH-Ningbo Technicians Training Program conducted in 2025 focusing on advanced laboratory and biomedical technologies, and a 19-day certificate course on Applied Biomedical Artificial Intelligence organized jointly by COMSTECH and Ningbo University for researchers from OIC member states. Both sides appreciated the impact of these initiatives in strengthening human

resource capacity across OIC countries. They also discussed the establishment of the COMSTECH-Zhejiang Joint Laboratory to promote collaborative research in traditional Chinese medicine, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and biomedical sciences. CG COMSTECH also informed the Chinese side about plans to establish an OIC-COMSTECH Office in Beijing to facilitate closer coordination with Chinese universities, research institutions, and technology organizations. The meeting acknowledged recent visits of Chinese delegations to COMSTECH during 2025-2026, which helped identify new opportunities for collaboration in training programs, research partnerships, and technology transfer. The participants also discussed the upcoming visit of a 27-member Chinese delegation to COMSTECH scheduled for April 2026.

During the discussions, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Choudhary proposed the nomination of a permanent representative from the Chinese Embassy to COMSTECH to enhance coordination and follow-up on joint initiatives. He also suggested expanding joint training programs for scientists and technicians from OIC member states in collaboration with Xinjiang Medical University in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical sciences. Minister Counsellor Xu Hangtian welcomed the proposal in principle and requested that a formal proposal be shared with the embassy. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to deepening cooperation in science, technology, and innovation and agreeing to maintain regular communication to implement the discussed initiatives.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General of COMSTECH Iqbal Choudhary meets Dr. Maen Khreasat Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. DNA

KPK told to stand united

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday warned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaff in Khabar Pakhtoonkwa (KPK) to fully implement the federal government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and act with seriousness, stressing that while our armed forces sacrifice their lives for national security, laxity or defiance would not be tolerated. While speaking to a news channel, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said while there might be debates about terrorism, KPK should recognize the sacrifices of the armed forces, noting that more than 8,200 personnel have been martyred in the fight against terrorism in the province. He emphasized that this reflects the active and ongoing role of the military in ensuring national security. He added that this time, instead of politics, everyone should collectively play their role. The federal minister urged KPK to stand united and allow operations to proceed in line with the federal government's anti-terrorism policy.—DNA

PM nominates Isphanyar Bhandara as Committee for Minority Rights Commission's member

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly (MNA) Isphanyar Bhandara has been nominated by the Prime Minister as a member of the Parliamentary Committee for the appointment of the Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities Rights. As the parliamentary representative of Pakistan's least numerous minority communities, many of whom live in distant parts of the country, his inclusion



in this committee carries particular significance, said a notification issued here on Friday. It underscores the principle that every community, regardless of its numbers or geographic distance from the center, deserves to have its voice reflected in decisions concerning minority rights and representation. The nomination also reflects the Prime Minister's emphasis on inclusive governance and his commitment to ensuring that all communities have a place in Pakistan's democratic process.

Red Zone access restricted

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Friday issued a traffic advisory informing citizens about road closures and diversions around the Red Zone, announcing that Margalla Road would remain open as the only route for entry into the high-security area. An official told APP that several key roads across the federal capital would remain closed or partially closed due to security arrangements. He said that all routes leading to Iran Avenue would remain closed, while Chand Tara Flyover from Srinagar Highway to Serena Chowk would also remain shut for traffic Simi-

larly, Suhrawardy Road from Aabpara would remain completely closed for both incoming and outgoing traffic. The official further said that Jinnah Avenue from Rajab Tayyab Erdogan Flyover up to Kulsum Plaza Chowk, Seventh Avenue Bridge, and Fazal-e-Haq Road up to Geo Chowk would remain closed. He added that the road from Haji Camp Chowk to Islamabad Chowk would remain completely closed, while IJP Road from Gandam Godam to Fakir Aipee Road would also remain closed. Likewise, the service road from NESCOM towards I-10 would remain closed, and both sides of I-8 to IJP Double Road would remain completely closed for traffic. The official said that Club Road from Rawal Dam Chowk to Kashmir Chowk and Park Road from Shehzad Town to Musharraf Chowk would remain partially closed on one side. Citizens have been advised to use alternate routes and avoid unnecessary travel during the restrictions. They should also leave earlier than usual to avoid inconvenience. For further information, citizens may contact Pucar-15 or the Traffic Helpline 1915, while the latest traffic updates are also available on Islamabad Traffic Police FM 92.4.—APP

Pakistan launches new feeder shipping service

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry announced on Friday the launch of a new feeder shipping service from Karachi Port to the United Arab Emirates, marking a key step toward transshipment capabilities. In a statement, Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL), which is KPT's major business partner, will be supported by a dedicated feeder service linking Karachi with the UAE ports of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, strengthening maritime connectivity for Pakistan's trading community amid evolving regional shipping dynamics. Junaid Chaudhry said the new service establishes a regular shipping link between Karachi and two of the region's key transshipment hubs, enabling Pakistani importers and exporters to maintain reliable access to global container shipping networks. "The service will call at KGTL, part of AD Ports Group's international operating arm, Noatum Ports. The first vessel of the service arrived at KGTL on the evening of 11 March, officially marking the start of regular operations," the minister added. Junaid Chaudhry noted the new feeder link supports supply chain continuity through KGTL and helps ensure Pakistan's trade maintains dependable access to international markets. Cargo routed through Fujairah and Khor Fakkan will benefit from seamless connectivity to re-

gional and international shipping networks, supported by the UAE's advanced logistics infrastructure. Containers can be efficiently transferred via integrated road and rail corridors to major commercial hubs and logistics centres across the UAE. Talking on the new feeder service, Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed (Retd.), Chairman, Karachi Port Trust said, "The introduction of this feeder service further enhances Karachi Port's connectivity with key regional hubs and supports Pakistan's growing trade requirements and added "Strengthening maritime links with the UAE will help facilitate smoother cargo movement while providing greater flexibility for the country's trading community as per the vision of Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry." Khurram Aziz Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL), said, "The commencement of this feeder service reflects KGTL's continued commitment to strengthening Pakistan's maritime connectivity and supporting the country's trading community. By linking Karachi directly with major UAE transshipment hubs, this service provides importers and exporters with reliable access to global shipping networks while reinforcing the role of Karachi Gateway Terminal as a key gateway for international trade.—APP

M Naqvi condemns bomb attack

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the bomb explosion that occurred near a police vehicle in Lakkhi Marwat, terming it a cowardly act of terrorism targeting the nation's brave security forces. The interior minister paid rich tribute to the six police personnel — including the Station House Officer who embraced martyrdom in the attack. He expressed deep sorrow and heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs, acknowledging their immense sacrifice for the country. "The brave young men of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have sacrificed their today for the peaceful tomorrow of the nation," Naqvi said, reaffirming the government's resolve to continue the fight against terrorism. He added that the officers and personnel of the provincial police force have rendered unforgettable sacrifices in the war against terrorism. "Our martyrs are our pride, and their great sacrifices will always be remembered," the interior minister said.—APP

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Why the GCC must avoid entanglement in the US-Israel war on Iran

DR. TURKI FAISAL AL-RASHEED

TUCSON, Arizona: As US President Barack Obama left his country's embassy in Dublin in his fully armored limousine, his convoy hit an unexpected snag. The vehicle's underside scraped on a simple ramp and became stuck at the gate – a multimillion dollar machine defeated by an ordinary piece of pavement. The image is hard to forget – enormous investment, but poor design for real world conditions. Our region risks making the same mistake if we pour money into “exquisite” defenses that fail at the critical moment. The US Defense Innovation Unit, created in 2015 by then Defense Secretary Ash Carter, was meant to prevent exactly that kind of failure in the military domain. It was designed to break through Pentagon bureaucracy and connect the armed forces with fast-moving technologies from Silicon Valley, shifting from slow, traditional contractors to agile private firms. In reality, this has meant experimenting with autonomous systems, microsatellites, and artificial intelligence, while fighting the inertia, over-centralization, and rent-seeking that often plague big defense programs. The core lesson is simple: if you do not reform how you buy and use technology, you end up with very expensive systems that are not fit for the next war. That next war is now unfolding over our heads. The ongoing US-Israel war on Iran has exposed a dangerous vulnerability in the US-led missile-defense architecture in the Middle East. Iran has executed a sequenced, systems-level campaign that, in a matter of days, blinded and degraded core elements of the US missile-defense network in our region. This tactical success has strategic consequences. It accelerates the depletion of high-end interceptors, exposes critical bases and energy infrastructure, and destabilizes key partners such as Jordan. It also erodes US deterrence credibility in the Indo Pacific, because the same finite interceptor stockpile is supposed to help defend Taiwan and Japan. In other words, the Middle East is consuming systems that Washington also counts on for other theaters – a risk Gulf policymakers must factor into any calculation about escalation. Iran's approach follows a three-step logic familiar from suppression of enemy air defenses, but applied to missile defense. First, “kill the eyes” by striking early warning radars. Second, “kill the aim” by targeting fire control radars that guide interceptors. Third, “destroy the batteries” by hitting the launchers themselves. Each step attacks a different dependency in an integrated system. Once enough eyes and aim points are removed, the remaining batteries operate in a fog, with compressed and uneven timelines for detection, classification, and engagement. There is no safe “rear area” if long range missiles and drones can reach radars



in places like Jordan, which many once assumed were relatively secure. For years, the US doctrinal concept in the Gulf has been layered missile defense: early warning from the AN/FPS 132 in Qatar and space-based sensors; upper tier defense by THAAD guided by AN/TPY 2 radars; lower tier coverage by Patriot PAC 3; and a maritime layer from Aegis equipped destroyers. On paper, this looked robust. In reality, Iran has shown how quickly a determined adversary can degrade it, especially when it can attack multiple layers at once. Worse, Tehran is exploiting a cost exchange crisis. Cheap drones and relatively low-cost ballistic missiles are being mixed in large salvos, forcing defenders to fire interceptors that cost millions of dollars per shot at any track that might be lethal. The political and moral cost of a single “leaker” – a missile that gets through and causes mass casualties – pushes commanders to “engage everything.” Over time, that is a losing game, especially for states that rely heavily on imported interceptors and have limited local production capacity. For Saudi Arabia, this is not an abstract debate. Vision 2030 rests on three inter-linked pillars: diversifying the economy, transforming the Kingdom into a global investment hub, and building an “ambitious nation” with secure, resilient infrastructure. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is pursuing an ambitious energy transition, aiming to source around half of its power from renewables by 2030 and to build more than 100 GW of new solar and wind capacity while maintaining its role in oil and gas. All of this depends on the basic condition: physical security for legacy oil facilities, new gas and petrochemical projects, and a rapidly expanding network of renewable plants, industrial zones, and transmission corridors. The 2019 Abqaiq-Khuras attacks were an early warning. Iran and its proxies temporarily knocked out roughly half of Saudi crude production and about 5 percent of global daily supply, despite existing air defenses. Today, the Kingdom's new “air defense shield” – a mix of Patriot, THAAD, and AN/TPY 2 radars to protect Riyadh, Eastern Province oil facilities, and key military sites – is partly dependent on the same regional sensor and interceptor web that Iran is now degrading. As US high-end interceptors are consumed to defend bases across the Gulf, there is growing pressure on the availability and prioritization of defensive assets for Saudi energy and power infrastructure, especially if the conflict widens. This creates a dangerous trap for the Gulf Cooperation Council. A scheme appears to be unfolding in which the US and Israel, driven by their confrontation with Iran, risk pulling the Gulf deeper into a direct clash with Tehran without fully accounting for our long-term security and development priorities. External actors know that their war with Iran, one way or another, eventually end. They also know that a prolonged Gulf-Iran confrontation would drain our resources, destabilize our societies, and open the door to deeper foreign intervention under the pretext of “assistance.” We have seen this movie before. During the Iran-Iraq war, “disaster capitalism” thrived on chaos, arms sales and reconstruction contracts, while regional states paid the human and economic cost. The most dangerous outcome of escalation today is not necessarily regime change in Tehran, but the possible disintegration of the Iranian state into prolonged anarchy. That would unleash refugee flows, militia spillover and sustained disruption in energy markets, directly threatening Saudi stability, Vision 2030, and the security of the entire Gulf.

Iran's Asymmetric Trap for America

Qamar Bashir



Iran's strategy appears to be based on a simple but powerful calculation: if the country cannot defeat the United States and Israel in conventional warfare, it can still make the war so economically costly that continuing it becomes politically unsustainable. By targeting energy infrastructure and maritime traffic, Iran is effectively expanding the battlefield from the Middle East to the global economy. The financial consequences are already significant. Since the escalation began, global stock markets have experienced sharp volatility. Analysts estimate that more than one trillion dollars in market value has been wiped out across...

THE war involving Iran, Israel, and the United States has evolved into one of the most consequential geopolitical confrontations of the modern era. What began as a calculated military campaign by Israel and the United States against Iranian targets has expanded into a conflict whose consequences are spreading far beyond the battlefield. Energy infrastructure, routes, financial markets, and global political alliances are all now entangled in the crisis. Far from slowing down, Iran has steadily widened the warfront. Instead of responding only with direct military retaliation against Israel or U.S. bases, Tehran has pursued a broader strategy aimed at increasing the global cost of the conflict. In recent weeks, multiple energy facilities and shipping routes across the Gulf region have been struck, signaling Iran's determination to ensure that the war's economic burden is shared by the entire international system. Several major oil and energy installations across the Gulf have been affected. Tankers traveling near the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding Gulf waters have been hit or damaged, sending shockwaves through global energy markets. Energy depots and refinery infrastructure in regional states have also been targeted, including facilities near Oman's coastal industrial zones and oil storage depots linked to export terminals in the wider Gulf region. Reports from maritime security monitoring agencies suggest that several commercial tankers have been damaged or set ablaze since the escalation began, forcing shipping companies to reconsider routes and increase insurance premiums dramatically. The strategic significance of these attacks is enormous. The Strait of Hormuz remains the world's most critical energy chokepoint. Approximately 20 percent of global oil consumption—around 20 million barrels per day—passes through this narrow waterway. Even limited disruptions can send energy markets into turmoil. Already, insurance premiums for tankers operating in Gulf waters have surged, and several major shipping companies have begun rerouting vessels to avoid high-risk areas. Iran's strategy appears to be based on a simple but powerful calculation: if the country cannot defeat the United States and Israel in conventional warfare, it can still make the war so economically costly that continuing it becomes politically unsustainable. By targeting energy infrastructure and maritime traffic, Iran is effectively expanding the battlefield from the Middle East to the global economy. The financial consequences are already significant. Since the escalation began, global stock markets have experienced sharp volatility. Analysts estimate that more than one trillion dollars in market value has been wiped out across major global exchanges, reflecting investor fears of a prolonged con-

flict that could destabilize energy supplies and disrupt trade routes. Rising oil prices have already begun feeding inflation pressures across many economies. The economic impact extends far beyond financial markets. Higher oil prices translate directly into increased transportation costs, higher food prices, and inflation across developing economies. Countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia—whose economies depend heavily on imported fuel—are particularly vulnerable. Even European economies, still recovering from earlier energy shocks, face renewed financial strain if energy markets remain unstable. What makes this conflict particularly striking is the contrast in military resources between the opposing sides. The United States alone spends more on defense than any country in history. Its annual military budget now exceeds \$850 billion, larger than the combined defense spending of the next several countries. When the military budgets of NATO allies and Israel are included, the Western alliance commands a defense expenditure approaching \$1 trillion annually. Israel itself spends roughly \$24–25 billion each year on defense, maintaining one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the Middle East. Its arsenal includes advanced fighter jets, missile defense systems such as Iron Dome and Arrow, and a sophisticated intelligence network. In comparison, Iran's military budget is dramatically smaller. Estimates place Iran's annual defense spending between \$20 billion and \$30 billion, a fraction of what the United States spends alone. Yet despite this enormous disparity, Iran has managed to create a formidable deterrence capability by focusing on asymmetric warfare. Over the past four decades, Iran has invested heavily in missile technology, drone development, cyber warfare, naval mines, and fast attack boats designed specifically for Gulf waters. Rather than attempting to build aircraft carriers or large conventional fleets, Iran developed tools that exploit geography and economic vulnerabilities. This approach has proven particularly effective in the narrow waterways of the Gulf. Iran's arsenal includes thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as large numbers of armed drones capable of striking targets across the region. Combined with naval tactics involving swarms of fast boats and remotely controlled vessels, these capabilities make it extremely difficult to secure commercial shipping routes during wartime. Military experts have long warned that escorting every tanker through the Strait of Hormuz would be an almost impossible task. Thousands of vessels pass through the corridor annually. Protecting them from drones, missiles, and naval mines across hundreds of miles of sea lanes would require enormous naval resources even for the United States Navy.

Another striking development in the conflict has been the political messaging emerging from Washington. During a speech delivered at a midterm election rally, the President of the United States declared that the United States had already won the war. According to the speech, Iranian military assets—including radar systems, aircraft, ships, and missile infrastructure—had been destroyed, and the conflict had effectively been decided. However, events on the ground appear to contradict that narrative. Iranian missile and drone strikes continue across the region, and attacks on energy infrastructure and shipping routes have not subsided. Instead of ending, the conflict appears to be expanding. For many observers, the declaration of victory may represent an attempt to create a political exit from a war whose strategic objectives have become increasingly unclear. Wars often begin with precise goals, but as they evolve, controlling the escalation becomes more difficult. In this case, the timeline of the war may no longer be determined solely by Washington or Tel Aviv. Iran's strategy appears aimed at prolonging the conflict until economic pressure and political realities force its adversaries to reconsider their position. At the diplomatic level, Iranian leaders have outlined several conditions they consider necessary for peace. These include recognition of Iran's right to pursue peaceful nuclear research, the withdrawal of certain foreign military forces from the region, and compensation for damages caused during the conflict. Whether these demands will form the basis of negotiations remains uncertain. The broader lesson emerging from this confrontation is profound. Military superiority alone does not guarantee strategic control. Economic leverage, asymmetric warfare, geographic advantages, and political endurance can fundamentally reshape the dynamics of modern conflict. The war that began with the expectation of overwhelming military dominance is now evolving into a contest of endurance and economic pressure. Global markets, energy supplies, and political alliances are all being tested. If the current trajectory continues, the decisive question may no longer be whether the United States can win the war militarily, but whether it can find a way to end it without triggering even greater global instability. And in a remarkable reversal of expectations, the timing and terms of peace may ultimately be shaped not by the world's most powerful military alliance—but by the resilience and strategic calculations of the nation it set out to defeat.

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Former MD, SRBC
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Between illusions of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Middle East

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy

This assumption shaped Donald Trump's decision to resort to force rather than diplomacy. The wager was clear: Israeli-American strikes against Iran's leadership and military infrastructure would either trigger an uprising or at least leave Iran weakened and preoccupied with its internal crises, to the point where it could no longer threaten the region. This conflict may not produce a new regional order as much as it may prolong the life of the region's crises. But weakening Iran does not necessarily stabilize region

IT is hardly an exaggeration to say that the latest US-Israeli war with Iran may have pushed the Middle East into its most dangerous phase since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. More than another regional clash, it has exposed the limits of American power, the reach of Israeli deterrence, Iran's position in the regional balance, and the resilience of the Gulf security structure. At the same time, the war has demonstrated that talk of a “new Middle East” does not necessarily mean a more stable one. It may instead signal a region that is more exposed, more fragmented and more volatile. This conflict may not produce a new regional order as much as it may generate broader instability and prolong the life of the region's crises rather than resolve them. The core problem with the American vision accompanying this war lies in an assumption that has been repeated since the Iraq war: that toppling, or severely weakening, the center of hostile power will automatically pave the way for a regional order more compatible with American interests. This assumption shaped Donald Trump's decision to resort to force rather than diplomacy. The wager was clear: Israeli-American strikes against Iran's leadership and military infrastructure would either trigger an uprising or at least leave Iran weakened and preoccupied with its internal crises, to the point where it could no longer threaten the region. This conflict may not produce a new regional order as much as it may prolong the life of the region's crises. But weakening Iran does not necessarily stabilize the region. Iran is not merely a regime to be removed and replaced. It is a state with strong institutions, a complex social fabric and influence across several Arab arenas. Its collapse could open the door to even larger problems. In practice, the war quickly moved beyond the framework of limited strikes and evolved into a multifront regional conflict. Iranian attacks have expanded to include Israel, American bases and targets across the Gulf. The consequences were immediately reflected in global energy markets, maritime routes and international trade. Major pipelines, terminals and refineries were suddenly placed at risk, with disruptions or partial shutdowns reported at vital sites in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Iraq

and Bahrain. Meanwhile, the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil trade passes, has come under enormous pressure. The larger point is that the Middle East is shaped not only by military balances but by the vulnerability of the global economy to Gulf instability. Any major disruption there quickly reaches prices, shipping, insurance and financial markets. In the Gulf, the war has exposed the fragility of a security model built for decades on American protection. US bases are no longer seen only as shields but also as magnets for danger. That doubt, which has been deepened by the war, had roots in earlier shocks, including the 2019 attack on Saudi Aramco, when the heart of Saudi energy infrastructure was struck without a direct American military response. The central question is no longer simply whether Washington can protect the Gulf, but whether reliance on Washington now also increases Gulf exposure. This shift was visible even before the current war, including in the Saudi-Iran detente brokered by China in March 2023. Yet this war has not merely halted this quiet diplomatic track, it has exposed its limits. No matter how significant diplomatic de-escalation may be, it cannot erase the realities of military geography. As long as American bases remain in the Gulf and Iran continues to perceive its security as existentially threatened, Gulf states will remain within the line of fire, whether they wish to be or not. Therefore, the most realistic expectation is not a Gulf rupture with Washington but rather a redefinition of the relationship – less automatic reliance, more realistic expectations, greater efforts to build strategic room for maneuver with powers such as China and Russia, and perhaps stronger investments in local defense capabilities. Meanwhile, despite the heavy blows it has suffered, Iran does not appear likely to disappear from the region's emerging strategic landscape. It may emerge militarily weaker, internally strained and less capable of projecting influence abroad in the same way as before. But that does not mean it will vanish from the equation. On the contrary, Iran may seek to compensate for its losses through its traditional strategy: asymmetric war-

fare, expanding the costs of conflict for its adversaries, and using geography, energy, economics and maritime chokepoints as alternative tools of deterrence. Iran's strategy is not based solely on direct military confrontation but also on exposing the fragility of the American-led regional security system and turning the US military presence in the region into a burden for its allies. No matter how significant diplomatic de-escalation may be, it cannot erase the realities of military geography. This inevitably raises questions about Israel's position in the new regional landscape. Israel will clearly emerge from the war having reaffirmed its intelligence and air superiority and its ability to strike deep inside Iran. Yet such superiority does not automatically translate into a stable regional order under Israeli leadership. A weaker Iran could, paradoxically, heighten Arab anxiety about an Israel that appears more unconstrained. The regional map is therefore not simply weak Iran versus strong Israel, but a triangle of an injured yet enduring Iran, a stronger yet unsettling Israel and a wealthy but less confident Gulf. Between these three poles, other regional actors will maneuver according to their interests. Turkey will seek openings, Egypt will try to prevent regional chaos and protect trade and energy routes, and Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen will remain arenas where the conflict reverberates. Beyond the region, war in Iran absorbs American attention and resources, creates space for Russia and China elsewhere, and risks weakening Ukraine by diverting US focus and support. In that sense, it may further erode America's ability to manage multiple major crises at once. For all these reasons, talk of a new Middle East requires caution. What is emerging is not a stable new order but a more fluid region in which American deterrence looks less absolute, Gulf confidence in outside protection is weaker and military pressure on Iran has not produced a safer balance. The war has not created a new Middle East. But it has shattered many assumptions behind the old one.

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Briefs

'No Muslim country openly...'

FROM PAGE 01
particularly from allies like Pakistan, which has been praised in prior statements for its principled stance during recent conflicts.

Deadly blast rocks Tehran

FROM PAGE 01
"These attacks are out of fear, out of desperation," said Ali Larjani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, who attended the rally to mark Quds Day. "One who is strong wouldn't bomb demonstrations at all. It's clear that it (the enemy) has failed," said Larjani in a speech broadcast on state TV. President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also attended the rally, while images on Iranian media showed the head of the judiciary being interviewed just as a blast occurred. Foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei vowed Iran's military would teach the US and Israel "an unforgettable lesson".

Civilian areas hit in Bryansk...

FROM PAGE 01
through specialists handling the missiles' operation, targeting, and intelligence support. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a detailed statement highlighting that such high-tech weapons require foreign expertise, holding Britain and other NATO backers fully responsible for the civilian deaths and injuries. The statement further accused London of entangling itself in escalation by positioning as a leading European hawk and Russia's adversary, violating international norms in pursuit of geopolitical aims.

Trump says Putin helping...

FROM PAGE 01
against the Islamic Republic, according to interviews with a Trump adviser and others close to the deliberations. Their observations to Reuters offer a previously unreported glimpse inside White House decision-making as it adjusts its approach to the biggest US military operation since the 2003 Iraq war. The behind-the-scenes maneuvering underscores the high stakes Trump, who returned to office last year promising to avoid "stupid" military interventions, faces nearly two weeks after plunging the nation into a war that has rattled global financial markets and disrupted the international oil trade.

Turkey reports third Iranian...

FROM PAGE 01
and March 9 (second, which entered airspace before being downed). Ankara has demanded clarification from Tehran on these "provocative" incidents, amid fears of escalation drawing NATO further into the conflict. Earlier interceptions involved systems like the US Navy's SM-3 missiles from Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. Trump claims Iran is "about to surrender" in G7 call. According to Axios (citing officials from three G7 countries briefed on a virtual G7 leaders' meeting Wednesday), US President Donald Trump told allies that Iran is "about to surrender." He reportedly boasted about the war's progress under "Operation Epic Fury," claiming massive damage to Iranian targets and suggesting few officials remain in Tehran with authority to decide on continuing the fight. Trump has made similar optimistic statements in recent interviews, saying the war could end "any time I want it to end" due to "practically nothing left" to target, while insisting on unconditional surrender. US CENTCOM reports deaths in refueling aircraft crash in Iraq.

Watkins goal earns Villa win at Lille, Bologna and Roma draw

Watkins Gives Aston Villa 1-0 Win Over Lille; Bologna And Roma Draw 1-1, Porto Beat Stuttgart 2-1 While 10-Man Panathinaikos Edge Real Betis With Late Penalty in Europa League Action



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, FRANCE: Aston Villa came away from Lille with a 1-0 win thanks to Ollie Watkins' goal in the first leg of their Europa League last-16 tie on Thursday, while Bologna and AS Roma played out a 1-1 draw in the all-Italian clash. Porto won 2-1 at VfB Stuttgart and Panathinaikos beat Real Betis thanks to a late penalty after playing the final half hour with 10 men.

Watkins netted his first European goal of the season and Villa take a slender lead back home for next Thursday's second leg. The only shot on target in a cagey opening half came late on with Romain Perraud's effort from distance which Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez failed to hold, but defender Pau Torres was there to clear before Lille could take advantage. Moments earlier Villa had another escape

when Lille striker Olivier Giroud was unable to direct his glancing header goalwards from close range. Villa took the lead six minutes into the second half when Ezri Konsa sent a long ball forward which Emiliano Buendia headed on for Watkins to send a looping header over the keeper. Amadou Onana hit a curling shot from outside the area which clipped the top of the upright as Villa pushed for a second, with Martinez making a save at the other end from Matias Fernandez-Pardo.

In Italy, Bologna went in front five minutes after the break when Jonathan Rowe made a mazy run into the box before laying the ball off to Federico Bernardeschi who whipped a first-time shot in off the far post.

Donyell Malen hit the post for Roma minutes later, and it was his poked pass which set up Lorenzo Pellegrini for the 71st-minute equalizer, with the substitute firing into an empty net. Malen had a deflected shot come off the post and Roma's Martin Vitik sent a header from a free kick hit the crossbar as neither side could find a winner.

Porto took the lead through Terem Moffi in the 21st minute, Moffi playing a neat one-two with Borja Sainz before rifling his shot into the corner of the net. Six minutes later 18-year-old Rodrigo Mora doubled the lead, leaping to volley home Zaidu Sanusi's cross from the left.

Stuttgart pulled one back five minutes from the break, Deniz Undav capitalizing on a deflected pass with a half-volleyed shot on the turn. Angelo Stiller thought he had levelled for the hosts with 20 minutes left but the goal was disallowed for offside. Panathinaikos went down to 10 men with Anass Zaroury picking up a second yellow card and their keeper Alban Lafont kept Betis at bay with a number of fine saves before the hosts netted the winner with two minutes left. Diego Llorente was sent off after earning a second booking for a foul on Karol Swiderski and Vicente Taborda made no mistake from the penalty spot.

NEOM concedes at the death for the second week in a row

RIYADH: The Saudi Pro League returned for Matchday 26, with the table beginning to take its final shape as the season enters its final quarter. The title contenders kick off on Friday and Saturday, but Thursday's action focused on a clash between upper mid-table sides NEOM and Al-Taawoun, alongside three relegation-battlers — Al-Najma, Damac and Al-Khoolod — attempting to improve their standings. In Tabuk, NEOM played out a 2-2 draw with Al-Taawoun, this season's surprise package under the returning Pericles Chamusca. After a brilliant start to the campaign that saw them spend much of the season in the top four, a poor run of just one win in their last eight games has followed.

Al-Taawoun's late equaliser was vital in their bid to maintain a spot in the top five. With Al-Itihad lurking just three points behind and yet to play this weekend, every point matters for the Wolves of Qassim. Regardless, it has become a painful second half of the season for Chamusca's side, as they now sit 12 points behind the top four. After a heroic performance from Luis Maximiano against Al-Nassr last weekend, NEOM were unfortunate to leave Riyadh empty-handed after conceding at the death. There were still plenty of positives from the defeat, as Christophe Galtier's squad appear to have finally hit second gear this season. Calm and collected against Al-Nassr, they repeated the same approach against Al-Taawoun. Knowing

their opponents thrive on space in the transition, NEOM prevented them from accessing wingers Marin Petkov and Biel, leaving star striker Roger Martinez isolated for most of the match. Amadou Koné and Abdoulaye Doucouré did their part to disrupt the centre of Al-Taawoun's block, with the former driving forward and the latter drifting in between the lines to create the opener. In the 23rd minute, Al-Taawoun's defence were pulled apart as Luciano Rodríguez met Doucouré's precise through ball to slot home. NEOM maintained their composure throughout the match, but it took a wonder strike from Martinez to bring the visitors level in the 70th minute, the Colombian producing a superb strike from distance.

It only took six minutes for NEOM to respond. Saïd Benrahma broke down the Al-Taawoun defence once again, releasing Alexandre Lacazette for a powerful finish to restore the hosts' lead. Despite the strong performance from NEOM, they ultimately fell victim to another late setback. Substitute Mohammed Al-Kuwaykibi surged down the flank in stoppage time before cutting inside and curling a precise finesse shot beyond Maximiano to salvage a point. Elsewhere, Damac continued their resurgence under Fabio Carrille with a 3-1 victory over Al-Najma, who remain rooted to the bottom of the table. The win moves Damac six points clear of Al-Riyadh in the relegation zone, while Al-Najma sit 14 points from safety with eight matches remaining. — Agencies

Alexander Zverev becomes fifth player to reach All Masters 1000 semi finals

CALIFORNIA: Alexander Zverev described it as a 'very special' moment after becoming only the fifth player in history to reach the semi-finals of all nine ATP Masters 1000 tournaments, following his impressive run at Indian Wells. The German fourth seed cruised past Frenchman Arthur Fils with a convincing 6-2, 6-3 victory to secure his place in the last four of the California-based event for the first time. By completing the set of Masters 1000 semi-final appearances, Zverev joins an exclusive group alongside tennis legends Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic, and Andy Murray. "It's very special to be one of five players in history to ever do it," Zverev said. "For sure, yeah, it's something that I'm very proud of." Zverev has previously claimed titles at five of the nine Masters 1000 events, but a Grand Slam victory has so far eluded him despite three final appearances. In the semi-finals, Zverev faces world number two Jannik Sinner, a formidable challenge given the Italian's current form. Sinner, the reigning Wimbledon champion, advanced with ease after a swift 66-minute 6-1, 6-2 triumph over American Learner Tien. Sinner, who has yet to lift the Indian Wells trophy, is seeking his first title of 2026 after a semi-final exit at the Australian Open and a quarter-final defeat in last month's Qatar Open. Meanwhile, Zverev will hope to overturn a five-match losing streak against Sinner and take a significant step towards claiming the prestigious California title. — Agencies

PTF selects U-12 teams for ITF Asia regional event

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) has selected the national boys and girls teams to participate in the ITF Asia 12 & Under Team Competition - South Asia Regional Qualifying Event, scheduled to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from April 11 to 18, 2026. According to a press release issued by the PTF on Friday, the trials for the selection of the national teams were conducted from March 9 to 11 at the PTF Tennis Complex, Islamabad. A total of eight boys and five girls were invited to participate in the trials on the basis of their national rankings and recent performances. Following the trials, the federation announced the final squads. The boys team comprises Muhammad Aayan, Muhammad Faizan and Mustafa Uzair Rana, while M. Ibraheem Hussain Gill has been named as reserve player. The girls team includes Shahnoor Umer, Shahreen Umer and Wajeha Fatima, with Dua Yousaf Qureshi selected as reserve. President PTF and Secretary General PTF congratulated the selected players and expressed confidence in their abilities, wishing them the best of luck for the upcoming competition and success in their future tennis careers. — APP

Multan ready to host PSL Season-XI matches from April 1

MULTAN: The historic city of saints was gearing up to host matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season-XI, with the Multan Cricket Stadium set to stage four matches starting from April 1. Preparations for the mega cricket event were reviewed at a joint meeting of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and district administration chaired by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Nauman Siddique. During the meeting, officials were given a detailed briefing on arrangements related to team security. — APP

Chairman Senate felicitates people of Nepal on successful elections

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani on Friday extended his warm felicitations to the people of Nepal and the leadership of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) following the party's success in the recent parliamentary elections. In his message, the Chairman Senate said the success of the RSP reflects the trust and confidence of the people of Nepal in democratic values and in a new generation of leadership committed to transparency, accountability, and public service. He noted that Balendra Shah, as a young leader, has inspired many citizens through his reform-oriented approach, innovative governance style, and dedication to addressing public issues, particularly through his role in local governance and urban development. The Chairman of the Senate observed that the rise of young leadership in democratic politics is an en-

couraging sign for strengthening institutions and ensuring responsive governance. He expressed hope that under Balendra Shah's leadership, the RSP would contribute positively to Nepal's democratic consolidation, socio-economic progress, and institutional development. Highlighting the cordial relations between Pakistan and Nepal, the Chairman of the Senate said both countries enjoy longstanding friendly ties founded on mutual respect, shared regional interests, and cooperation in regional and multilateral forums. He expressed confidence that parliamentary and people-to-people contacts between the two countries would continue to expand in the years ahead. The Chairman Senate also conveyed his best wishes for the prosperity of the people of Nepal and for the continued strengthening of democratic governance in the country. — APP

Abelenda fires BN Polo to thrilling win in National Open Championship

The pace remained intense in the third chukker. Lao Abelenda secured his sixth goal of the match with another 30-yard penalty conversion

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The second day of the 5th President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2026 for the National Open Polo Championship - Finale witnessed a high-octane encounter, with BN Polo defeating FG Polo by 8-6. The tournament is sponsored by Sarsabz and co-sponsored by Kingdom Valley. Lao Abelenda was the standout performer for BN Polo, showcasing exceptional skill to score six goals. He was well-supported by teammates Tito Ruiz Guinazu and Ibrahim Khalil, who contributed one goal each. Despite a spirited effort from FG Polo, where Mekayial Sami scored three goals, Rauli Laplacette two, and Marcos Rivarola one, the team fell just short of the target. The match opened with aggressive play from BN Polo. Lao Abelenda dominated the early phase, successfully converting three 30-yard penalties. FG Polo stayed in the hunt through Rauli Laplacette, who found the



goalposts with a crisp field goal. By the end of the first chukker, BN Polo held a 3-1 lead. The pace remained intense in the third chukker. Lao Abelenda secured his sixth goal of the match with another 30-yard penalty conversion. FG Polo began their comeback attempt as Rauli Laplacette scored a field goal and Mekayial Sami converted a 30-yard penalty to reduce the deficit to 8-5. In the fourth chukker, FG Polo launched a late offensive. Mekayial Sami was the focal point, converting two more 30-yard penalties to bring the score closer. However, BN Polo's defensive structure held firm in the closing minutes, preventing any further breakthroughs to secure their 8-6 victory. The prestigious event was attended by Mian Abbas Mukhtar (Director, Fatima Group), officials from Kingdom Valley, Club Secretary Major (R) Adil Sultan Rao, and a large number of polo enthusiasts and families. The match was officiated by umpires Nicanor Bruz Tachetti and Facu Retamar.

At least seven police personnel...

FROM PAGE 01
which share a border with Afghanistan, since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in 2021. In response to the escalating terror incidents, Pakistan launched "Operation Ghazab lil-Haq," during which at least 641 Afghan Taliban fighters have been killed in strikes conducted along the border and inside the neighbouring country. According to Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, over 855 Afghan Taliban fighters have been injured, 243 checkpoints destroyed, 42 captured, and 219 tanks, armoured vehicles, and artillery guns eliminated.

Armed Forces...

FROM PAGE 01
between March 12 and 13. During the aerial operations, the oil storage site at Kandahar Airfield and its adjacent logistics infrastructure were also destroyed, the sources said. In another airstrike, the Sherinaw terrorist camp in Paktia province was also targeted, security sources added. They said that Operation Ghazab Lil Haq will continue until its objectives are achieved.

PM confirms no increase...

FROM PAGE 01
He said that because of timely policy-making, austerity measures by the government and financial discipline, efforts were being made to deal with this situation effectively. The premier further added that provincial governments were also supporting the Centre in its austerity measures, which was welcome. He said that due to the efforts of the diplomatic and economic teams, adequate quantities of crude oil were available for the country's needs. "The federal and provincial governments are working together to ensure that no one is charged more than the price set by the government," he said. He prayed that the global situation would improve and that the prices of petroleum products would stabilise.

Nehal sworn-in...

FROM PAGE 01
Sources said a day earlier that Tessoro left for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, and plans to stay in the country for a few days. Before his departure, the outgoing governor thanked protocol staff and officials who came to the airport to see him off. A spokesperson for MQM-P stated that the party was not taken into confidence by the federal government regarding the decision.

Pakistan forces...

FROM PAGE 01
precaution, had now been reopened. Earlier, the Pakistan Airports Authority said in a post on X — that has since been deleted — that flight operations at Islamabad International Airport experienced a "brief operational adjustment". The statement had come after multiple media outlets reported that Islamabad International Airport had been closed for flights. In a later statement, however, the authority said that reports circulating about the closure of Islamabad's airspace were "baseless". "Flight operations at Islamabad International Airport are continuing without interruption and all flights are operating according to schedule," it said.

All six US service...

FROM PAGE 01
said involved another aircraft but was not the result of hostile or friendly fire. The deaths add to the seven US service members who have already been killed as part of US operations against Iran which began on February 28. "The circumstances of the incident are under investigation. However, the loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire," a statement from US Central Command said.

Briefs

SECP annuity products to strengthen retirement income security

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved several new annuity products to strengthen retirement income security and support the development of Pakistan's annuity market. The approved products include life-contingent annuities, deferred annuities, annuities with guaranteed payments, and hybrid annuity structures combining guaranteed and lifetime income benefits. These products will help retirees convert their accumulated savings into a regular and predictable income stream after retirement, reducing financial uncertainty in later years. The decision follows consultations with stakeholders in the insurance sector and addresses a key gap in Pakistan's retirement framework. Traditionally, retirement savings products in the country have focused mainly on the accumulation of savings during a person's working life, while limited options have been available to convert those savings into steady post-retirement income. This gap has increased financial risks for retirees, particularly in the context of rising life expectancy and persistent inflation. The newly approved annuity products are designed to provide flexible retirement income options. Life-contingent annuities provide payments for the lifetime of the annuitant, while deferred annuities begin payments after a specified deferral period. Annuities with guaranteed payments ensure regular income for a fixed period, and hybrid annuity structures combine guaranteed payments with lifetime income benefits.—APP

Iran Guards vow 'stronger' response than in Jan

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the country's military, warned on Friday that any new protests against the authorities would be met with a stronger response than in January, when several thousand people were killed. "The evil enemy, failing to achieve its field battle goals, is once again pursuing the instillation of fear and street riots," the Guards said in a statement broadcast on TV, promising "a stronger blow than on January 8" in the event of new unrest.

The warning comes two weeks into Iran's war with the United States and Israel in which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says one of the aims is to "create, for the Iranian people, the conditions to bring down" the Iranian government.

US President Donald Trump has also called for Iranians to rise up and overthrow their government.

In December, protests against the high cost of living in Iran turned into a broad protest movement against the authorities.

It reached its peak on January 8 with what Iranian authorities called "riots" blamed on "terrorists" working on behalf of Israel and the United States.

The official death toll from Iranian authorities stands at more than 3,000, with the government saying the vast majority were members of security forces or passers-by.—APP

Israel warns Lebanon over Hezbollah activity

JERUSALEM: Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz on Friday said Lebanon will suffer increasing damage to its infrastructure as Israel targets Hezbollah, after the military destroyed a bridge over the southern Litani river. "This is just the beginning and the Lebanese government and the State of Lebanon will pay an increasing price in damage to Lebanese national infrastructure used by Hezbollah terrorists due to terrorist activity and launches at the State of Israel," Katz said at a meeting with army top brass.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Ministry of Climate Change Aisha Humera Moriani with participants during Youth Climate Catalysts "Driving Climate Action Together" ceremony in the Federal Capital.

Call for institutional changes to ensure real justice for women

In Pakistan, Senator Bushra Butt said, access to justice is anchored in constitutional guarantees of equality before law, dignity, and due process. Institutional reforms have focused on strengthening both the reach and responsiveness of justice systems

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for renewed efforts to dismantle the discrimination and legal obstacles that continue to limit women's and girls' rights worldwide. "When women cannot access justice, the objective of gender equality and women's empowerment weakens at its core," Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, the Pakistani delegation leader, told the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) being held at the UN headquarters in New York. Speaking in a general debate on the theme "strengthening access to justice for all women and girls", she cited Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first Muslim woman elected prime minister, as telling the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that discrimination against women begins to erode when women are empow-

ered to claim their rights. "This Session's theme calls upon us to translate that moral clarity into institutional reality — to ensure that laws protect, systems respond, and justice reaches every woman and girl without discrimination or access barriers," Senator Bushra Butt said. The Commission is meeting in New York through 19 March with ministers, feminists, and civil society in attendance. In Pakistan, Senator Bushra Butt said, access to justice is anchored in constitutional guarantees of equality before law, dignity, and due process. Institutional reforms have focused on strengthening both the reach and responsiveness of justice systems. More than 480 specialized Gender-Based Violence Courts are operational in the country, complemented by legal aid, family courts, ombudsperson mechanisms, laws to protect women's rights and

integrated protection services designed to deliver justice to women and girls, she said. "Women now constitute approximately 21% of the judiciary and 17% of prosecution services, with increasing presence in policing," the Pakistani delegation leader said, adding female judges serve at High Courts and the Supreme Court — shaping gender-sensitive jurisprudence at the highest levels. Yet, Sen Bushra Butt noted that structural barriers persist across the world for women and girls, from discriminatory norms to economic constraints. "Addressing these requires integrated action: repealing discriminatory laws; investing in gender-sensitive judicial infrastructure; expanding digital and legal aid services; and embedding legal literacy to empower women to claim their rights." Describing access to justice as a

bridge between rights promised and rights realized, she said, "If laws exist but cannot be accessed, justice is theoretical. If institutions exist but do not include women, justice is partial. If barriers remain unaddressed, equality remains aspirational." Senator Bushra Butt called for moving from symbolic commitment to structural transformation. "For when women trust the law, democracy deepens; when institutions serve women equally, societies become inclusive; and when justice is accessible to every woman and girl, equality ceases to be an ideal — and becomes reality." In her opening remarks, Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, said that ending violence against women and girls is "its own imperative and an accelerator" for other development goals. Noting that this is an evolving challenge, she pointed to the impact of conflicts and

fast-moving technology. Further, women's organizations are seeing their resources decline as rates of violence rise. "The gains of the past turn out to be more fragile than we had hoped," she said. Against this background, Ms. Bahous thanked the many Member States who have partnered with the UN to improve global standards on preventing violence against women and girls. "Your engagement of men and boys, your guarantee of survivor-centered justice and services for survivors, and your embrace of strong and autonomous women's rights movements" have led to transformative success, she said. Among other examples, Ms. Bahous highlighted the Spotlight Initiative which helped launch 540 legal and policy reforms, with campaigns reaching 385 million people.—Agencies

New feeder shipping service from Karachi to UAE: Junaid

ISLAMABAD, Mar 13 (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry announced on Friday the launch of a new feeder shipping service from Karachi Port to the United Arab Emirates, marking a key step toward transshipment capabilities. In a statement, Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL), which is KPT's major business partner, will be supported by a dedicated feeder service linking Karachi with the UAE ports of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, strengthening maritime connectivity for Pakistan's trading community amid evolving regional shipping dynamics. Junaid Chaudhry said the new service establishes a regular shipping link between Karachi and two of the region's key transshipment hubs, enabling Pakistani importers and exporters to maintain reliable access to global container shipping networks. "The service will call at KGTL, part of AD Ports Group's international operating arm, Noatum Ports. The first vessel of the service arrived at KGTL on the evening of 11 March, officially marking the start of regular operations," the minister added. Junaid Chaudhry noted the new feeder link supports supply chain continuity through KGTL and helps ensure Pakistan's trade maintains dependable access to international markets. Cargo routed through Fujairah and Khor Fakkan will benefit from seamless connectivity to regional and international shipping networks, supported by the UAE's advanced logistics infrastructure. Containers can be efficiently transferred via integrated road and rail corridors to major commercial hubs and logistics centres across the UAE.—DNA

Induction stoves fly off shelves in India due to gas shortage fear

CHENNAI: Indian households are rushing to buy electric induction stoves, draining stocks online and in stores, amid fears of a potential cooking gas shortage tied to the Middle East conflict. India, the world's second-largest importer of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), has invoked emergency powers to boost supplies for households even as availability tightens for commercial users including canteens, hostels and restaurants. Meanwhile, consumers are buying electric cooking appliances as a precaution, with some households worried about refill delays and higher prices. Checks by Reuters on Thursday showed several induction stove models were unavailable on Amazon, Walmart-backed Flipkart, Eternal's Blinkit and Zepto, while some offline chains said fresh supplies were still days away. Induction stove sales on Amazon India have jumped more than 30-fold, while rice cookers and electric pressure cookers are up fourfold, a company spokesperson said. Kitchen appliances maker TTK Prestige said demand for induction stoves had surged far beyond supply. "There is a threefold surge (in demand)," CEO Venkatesh Vijayaraghavan told Reuters. The company has raised its production capacity to 100 percent from about 70 percent before the start of the war, and increased staffing by roughly 15 percent. It also plans to raise prices of induction stoves in the June quarter to offset any higher costs. Induction stoves accounted for about a tenth of TTK's 25.30 billion rupees (\$274.52 million) standalone revenue in 2024-25. Online shopping platforms also showed models from Butterfly, Havells India and Bajaj Electricals marked as "currently unavailable." Google Trends showed search interest for induction stoves hit a record high on March 12, while some restaurant chains, including Wow Momo and California Burrito, said they were exploring induction stoves as a contingency plan. Anand Rathi analyst Manish Valecha said large kitchen appliance makers with domestic assembly and strong distribution, including TTK Prestige, Butterfly and Stove Kraft, are best placed to benefit from the surge in induction cooktop demand. But reliance on imported components could pose supply risks if the spike persists, he added. TTK Prestige will switch from sea shipments to airlifting components sourced from China and Southeast Asia, absorbing higher costs to ensure supplies if disruptions persist, Vijayaraghavan said. The Middle East conflict has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf, raising costs and tightening oil and gas supplies from the Middle East. On Thursday, the Suezmax tanker Shenlong reached Mumbai with Saudi crude, becoming the first crude carrier to arrive in India from the Middle East since the war between Iran and the United States and Israel erupted in late February, LSEG data showed.—APP

Pakistanis youth take lead on climate action as UK steps up support

DNA

Islamabad: Pakistan's next generation of climate leaders took centre stage in Islamabad as the British High Commission and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) convened the Youth Climate Catalysts, a high-energy showcase of innovation, diplomacy, and youth-led climate solutions. The event brought together young innovators, experts, and community voices, to support youth leadership for a more climate resilient future. The event is supported by the British High Commission under the UK-Pakistan Green Compact and implemented by OPM. At the Innovation Souq, young entrepreneurs unveiled climate-tech tools, renewable energy models, circular economy solutions, and AI powered climate applications, offering practical ideas ready for real world adoption. While presenting her project ezGeyser, Sana Khattak one of the innovators and Co-Founder of ezGeyser Smart

Thermostats shared that she works to reduce natural gas and LNG wastage from geysers, helping lower carbon emissions through smarter energy use. She further shared, "We have been given a platform, an opportunity to showcase our work, people are asking questions, showing interest in our work, youth is inspired which is quite encouraging and it is also helping us to get more contacts and sales, I can see the future of my business aligned with the future of Pakistan." Diplomacy Lab immersed participants in a fast paced climate negotiation simulation, giving them the chance to understand the dynamics, tensions, and opportunities that shape global climate outcomes. Anna Ballance, the British High Commission Climate Expert, said: "Young Pakistanis are driving the ideas and energy needed to tackle climate change head on. The UK is investing in their leadership because a resilient, greener Pakistan will be built by this generation — through innovation, community action, and a clear vision for a safer future." "I am here to learn from youth, the Ministry of Climate Change and

Environmental Coordination places young talent at the centre for driving the climate actions together" said Aisha Humera Chaudhary, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. She further expressed her feedback, "I am really glad to visit the projects today, it is a moment of pride to see youth taking responsibility and thinking for community oriented solutions. Now it's our duty to further nurture these initiatives under supportive policies!" In Meet the Leader, emerging climate leaders sat down with senior experts for a candid conversation about the future of climate policy, green jobs, and the role of youth in driving national and global change. Pakistan is among the most climate vulnerable countries. With more than 64% of Pakistanis under 30, the event underscored the urgency, and opportunity of unleashing youth leadership at scale. Held during Ramadan, the gathering also highlighted climate action as a shared moral responsibility, not just a technical challenge.

KSA's pop-up retail boom just getting started

RIYADH: Short-term retail concepts are gathering pace across Saudi Arabia's consumer market, with over 1.5 million small and medium enterprises operating in the Kingdom. It is forecast they will increase their contribution to the country's gross domestic product from 20 percent to 35 percent by the end of this decade. The pop-up scene and experiential retail market, which is present in the food and beverages sector and has extended to the fashion and accessory space, has an estimated value of \$1.2 billion across the GCC, according to Ken Research. As this niche sector of retail booms, Ken Research points to Saudi Arabia as one of the top three key markets driving growth. While pop-ups have long been used internationally as a social media marketing concept, their growing presence in the Kingdom can be traced back to a larger shift in the retail ecosystem as a whole. For many entrepreneurs, pop-ups offer a way to leverage their brand's creative identity, reach new customers, and build a presence through the trend without the financial constraints of a permanent retail store.—APP

Asian stocks fall as Iran war keeps oil at \$100

SINGAPORE: Asian stocks slumped on Friday, poised for a second straight weekly decline as fast-dwindling hopes of a resolution to the US and Israel's war with Iran kept oil prices aloft, casting a shadow over global markets and spurring inflation fears. The US dollar has become the safe-haven of choice during the tumult, putting most other currencies under pressure. The dollar was set for a second consecutive week of gains and is up 2 percent since the war broke out at the end of February. The yen hit its weakest level since July 2024 at 159.69 per US dollar on Friday as Japan warned that it was ready to take action to protect against yen declines. It was last at 159.41. Analysts said the bar for intervention is higher this time around as any intervention now could prove futile in the face of the relentless dollar buying. In Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares slipped 1 percent, on course for a 2.2 percent decline for the week. Japan's Nikkei fell 1.4 percent, while tech-heavy South Korean stocks slid nearly 2 percent. European futures point to a slightly higher open but may struggle to hold those gains on weak sentiment. Oil prices remained close to \$100 per barrel level, although they eased a bit on Friday after US issued a 30-day license for countries to buy Russian oil and petroleum products currently stranded at sea.—APP

Briefs

Pakistan's domestic power sources cushion LNG supply risk

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan's growing reliance on domestic power, including solar and wind energy, nuclear reactors, coal and hydropower, has reduced its vulnerability to global LNG supply disruptions, Federal Minister for Energy Awaiz Leghari told. The war in the Middle East threatens shipments from Qatar, the world's No 2 producer after the US which supplies most of Pakistan's imported LNG, used to fuel power plants during peak electricity demand. "Pakistan has been steadily increasing its reliance on indigenous energy resources, and about 74% of our electricity generation now comes from local sources," noted Leghari, adding the government aims to raise that above 96% by 2034. The figures have not been previously reported. "The people-led solar revolution, and earlier decisions to invest in nuclear, hydropower and local coal have all played a role in increasing Pakistan's self-reliance," he added. The country has long struggled with electricity shortages and historically faced hours of daily load shedding during peak summer demand. It now has surplus generation capacity after adding coal, LNG and nuclear plants, while demand growth has slowed and the use of rooftop solar has surged, at times exceeding grid demand in some hubs. Outages still occur in parts of the country due to theft, line losses and financial constraints, rather than a lack of power.

PNSC vessels carrying oil reach Karachi

DNA

KARACHI: Marking a rather positive development amid fuel shortage concerns across the globe as well as in Pakistan, two vessels carrying 100 million to 120 million litres of oil reached Karachi, the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) officials said on Friday. The two ships, they added, reached Karachi under the protection and escort of the Pakistan Navy in the aftermath of the recent attacks on vessels in the region. Expressing gratitude to the PN for the safe transfer of the ships, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar said that they have requested the Foreign Office to reach out to Iran for the release of two vessels stuck in the Persian Gulf. The development comes as the PN launched Operation Muhafiz-ul-Bahr to safeguard national shipping and maritime trade amid rising regional security threats and potential disruptions to critical sea lanes.

UNSC debates Iran nuclear programme

Pakistan stresses diplomacy only way forward

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council on Wednesday debated Iran's nuclear programme amid rising tensions in the Middle East, with Pakistan telling the 15-member body that an enduring situation lies in embracing diplomacy rather than abandoning it "for short-sighted policies." "It is clear that dialogue, diplomacy and constructive engagement remain the only viable way forward. And yet, diplomacy has been forfeited in favour of military means," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations (UN), said during a discussion on the UN 'Committee 1737', which oversees international sanctions on Iran regarding its nuclear and missile programmes. "The developments since last June as well

as the ongoing situation that started with the unprovoked and unwarranted attacks on Iran have deeply impacted the context of Iran nuclear file," he said. Regretting the breakdown of diplomacy on the Iranian nuclear issue, the Pakistani envoy said the validity of the fundamental principles and the multilateral spirit that led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, remained intact as also the consensus adoption of resolution 2231 in 2015. (But President Donald Trump, during his first term announced in 2018 the withdrawal of the United States (US) from JCPOA, terming it a "horrible," "one-sided" deal that failed to protect US national security interests.) "More than ever, and even during the current conflict and heightened tensions, it is clear that an enduring solution lies in em-

bracing those time-tested principles rather than abandoning them for short-sighted policies," Ambassador Asim Ahmad said. The JCPOA, he said, was a "unique instrument", manifestation of an approach based on dialogue, diplomacy and pragmatism, highlighting that it was the outcome of painstaking and arduous, yet constructive negotiations that charted a roadmap to comprehensively address the concerns of the parties based on reciprocal actions and thus embodying peaceful resolution of disputes that is at the heart of the UN Charter. "Pakistan lent its support to the negotiated settlement of the issue, and it remains our core position till today", he added. "We have condemned all use of force, targeting of civilian infrastructure, and strikes on nuclear sites under IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards", the Pakistani envoy said,

pointing out that strikes against nuclear facilities carried huge environmental and safety risks for the local population and people all around the region. He warned against disrupting IAEA's crucial verification mandate, saying that the agency is responsible for verifying compliance with respective nuclear safeguards obligations of Member States in an objective, impartial and credible manner on technical grounds. "The IAEA should be enabled to fulfill this statutory function and its verification activities in Iran should resume unimpeded," the Pakistani envoy said. Pakistan, he said, calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities in the Middle East, and urged all parties to show maximum restraint, avoid further escalation, institute a permanent ceasefire, and resume dialogue. "All our efforts aim in that direction", he said.

Synagogue set on fire in Holland

NEWS DESK

AMSTERDAM: Dutch police on Friday said they were investigating a fire that erupted in a synagogue in Rotterdam overnight, without resulting in any injuries. "The fire burned for a short moment before going out on its own. No one was injured," the police said on social media of the blaze that erupted at 3:40 am (0240 GMT) at a synagogue on A.B.N. Davidplein. An unverified video showing an explosion near a building resembling the targeted synagogue circulated on social media on Friday, which police were using in their probe. "There is no place in Rotterdam for antisemitism, intimidation, violence or hatred toward religious communities," city mayor Carola Schouten told Dutch news agency ANP. Scouten said the incident had caused "a great deal of anxiety among our Jewish fellow citizens."



JEDDAH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salam. Field Marshal Asim Munir was also present on the occasion. - DNA

Pakistan among 60 countries facing US forced labour probe

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has initiated investigations into what it considers unfair trade practices in 60 economies, including Pakistan, according to a press release issued by the USTR on March 12. According to the statement, the investigations will focus on whether governments have failed to impose and effectively enforce bans on the importation of goods produced with forced labour. The economies subject to the investigations include many major US trading partners including the European Union, China, Japan, India, Mexico, South Korea, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan, Pakistan, and Vietnam. This comes as Pakistan and the US expressed a desire to enhance economic cooperation last month during a meeting in Washington between Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and US Commerce Secretary Howard A. Lutnick. This probe may open the door to potential penalties such as new tariffs as President Donald Trump seeks to replace duties struck down by the Supreme Court. Economists noted that the 29pc tariff on Pakistan last year saw immediate hurdles as the US is, by a significant margin, Pakistan's biggest market, and may not be fully replaceable for Pakistani businesses. Ambassador Jamieson Greer, President Trump's US Trade Representative, noted that "despite the international consensus against forced labour, governments have failed to impose and effectively enforce measures banning goods produced with forced labour from entering their markets". Greer correlated this directly with the health of the American economy, stating that "American workers and firms have been forced to compete against foreign producers who may have an artificial cost advantage gained from the scourge of forced labour". He also highlighted that the goal of the investigation is to see whether "foreign governments have taken sufficient steps to prohibit the importation of goods produced with forced labour and how the failure to eradicate these abhorrent practices impacts US workers and businesses". Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 is intended to address unfair foreign practices that affect US commerce and allows the US Trade Representative, under Section 302(b), to self-initiate investigations into foreign government actions deemed unjustifiable, unreasonable, or discriminatory. The investigations were launched after consultations with the inter-agency Section 301 Committee and relevant advisory committees.

PSX range bound as oil surge, IMF delay dampen sentiment

"People don't want to take exposure over the weekend," says analyst



ISLAMABAD: Stocks at the bourse remained rangebound on Friday as elevated oil prices and worsening regional tensions kept investors cautious ahead of the weekend, while uncertainty over a delayed staff-level agreement (SLA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) added to risk aversion. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index closed at 153,866.16 points, down 555.27 points, or 0.36%, from the previous close of 154,421.43. The index traded between a high of 155,002.1 (up 580.67 points, or 0.38%) and a low of 152,780.79 (down

1,640.64 points, or 1.06%). "Oil prices, due to geopolitical tensions, are the prevalent reasons. Higher oil prices can cause another potential price hike in fuel prices, which will push inflation," said Ahfaz Mustafa, CEO of Ismail Iqbal Securities. "This, along with a 2-day break, is causing investors to wait and watch the developments over the weekend before taking any fresh positions. Delay in the SLA is also causing nervousness," he added. "People don't want to take exposure over the weekend," concurred AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. Oil prices headed for weekly gains, even after the United States issued a 30-day licence allowing countries to buy Russian oil and petroleum products stranded at sea in an attempt to ease supply concerns. Brent futures for May rose 10 cents (0.1%) to \$100.56 a barrel by 0400 GMT, on track for about a 9% weekly increase, while WTI for April slipped 16 cents (0.2%) to \$95.57 but was still poised for a 7% weekly gain. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the move was aimed at stabilising energy markets roiled by the US-Israeli war on Iran, though analysts said it had not resolved broader supply constraints. Both benchmarks surged more than 9% on Thursday to their highest levels since August 2022. On Wednesday, Iran's new supreme leader,

Mojtaba Khamenei, said Iran would fight on and keep the Strait of Hormuz shut as leverage against the United States and Israel. Iran's military command said oil could hit \$200 a barrel, as three more ships were attacked in the blockaded Gulf. - APP

Pakistan driver killed by missile debris in UAE: shattering hopes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: For days, Nazar Ali told his daughter-in-law a gentle lie: authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had confiscated all mobile phones and her husband, Mu-reeb Zaman, would call home as soon as he got it back. In reality, Zaman, a 40-year-old Pakistani driver who had spent eight years working in the UAE to lift his family out of poverty, had already been killed by missile fragments during an aerial interception over Abu Dhabi amid an escalating conflict in the Middle East. The conflict began on Feb. 28 after the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran following weeks of escalating tensions between Tehran and its regional adversaries. The attacks triggered retaliatory drone and missile strikes by Iran targeting commercial and US-linked interests across the Gulf region, prompting air defense systems in several countries to intercept projectiles in the skies above major cities. As interceptors met incoming missiles over the Emirati capital that night, falling debris struck Zaman, ending years of work he hoped would secure a better future for his five children in one of Pakistan's most volatile regions. "I found out the same day because nowadays it is the age of the Internet," Ali, Zaman's father, told Arab News during a condolence gathering at his residence last week. "I myself was in the market at that time when I received the news [of his death], but I did not tell the family." Zaman had been supporting three households in his hometown in Pakistan's northwestern Bannu district, including

the family of his late younger brother. The region, located in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa near the Afghan border, has witnessed a surge in militancy and counterinsurgency operations in recent years. The 40-year-old was one of millions of Pakistani migrant workers in Gulf countries whose remittances are a vital source of foreign exchange for Pakistan's fragile economy. He is also among the first reported Pakistani casualties of the recent escalation. Two Pakistani nationals have been killed so far in aerial interceptions in the UAE, while another Pakistani died last week in a similar incident in Iranian waters off Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, according to authorities. Zaman's life abroad was measured in long-distance phone calls and carefully saved earnings, while his wife, four daughters and one son lived in a single room at their family home in Bannu. "He used to say that 'When I come on Eid, God willing, I will build a room for you'," Ali, his grieving father, said. For Zaman, working in the UAE represented an escape from the insecurity and economic hardship that have long plagued his hometown, where militant attacks targeting security forces and civilians have periodically disrupted daily life. Family members said he had hoped to return home for the upcoming Eid Al-Fitr holiday, encouraged by military operations against militant groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that had raised hopes of greater stability in the region. Adnan Gul, Zaman's nephew, remembered his uncle as a warm and optimistic man who often spoke about building a better future for his family. "His wish was to have a good home, a settled family, and a good, peaceful life," Gul said.

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