



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

EU decides to distance itself from Gulf war

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Briefs

Israel claims Larijani killed, Iran denies

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Israel's Defence Minister Katz says Iran's security chief Ali Larijani has been killed. The Israeli army also said it killed Basij force commander Gholamreza Soleimani in an attack last night. Iran has not commented on the claims yet. Director of the US's National Counterterrorism Centre, Joe Kent, has resigned over the war on Iran, saying it posed 'no imminent threat'. Israeli air strikes have rained down on three neighbourhoods in Beirut while Israeli army says it launched new attacks on the Iranian capital Tehran. Missile and drone attacks continue to target the Gulf region and beyond, with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait reporting interceptions. Lebanon's army says one soldier killed, four injured in Israeli air strike on southern Lebanon. Germany says it has no intention of joining the US-Israeli war as Europe's foreign policy chief says EU nations have "no appetite" to send forces to ensure open navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran says it has closed access "to our enemies". Visit our live tracker for the latest casualty figures from across the region.

China to provide assistance to Iran

DNA

BEIJING: China said on Tuesday it will provide humanitarian assistance to Middle Eastern countries, including Iran and Lebanon, targeted in US and Israeli strikes in the conflict now in its third week. China's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said the war had caused "grave humanitarian catastrophes" in Iran and other Middle Eastern nations. "China has decided to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. It is hoped this will help alleviate the humanitarian plight faced by the local populations," Lin told a press conference, without providing further details. "China will continue to make every effort to promote peace and stop the war ... and to prevent further spreading of the humanitarian crisis," he added. China has sought to mediate in the war, with its special envoy to the Middle East, Zhai Jun, urging de-escalation when he recently met Saudi Arabia's foreign minister for talks. China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, has also said that the war "should never have happened" and called for an end to fighting. The humanitarian aid announcement came after US President Donald Trump said he would delay a planned visit to Beijing. Trump, who postponed his planned visit to Beijing due to the war, according to the White House, has also pressured China to help Washington reopen the Strait of Hormuz. The vital sea passage, through which a fifth of global oil supplies normally pass, was effectively closed by Iran in retaliation to US and Israeli strikes. During the press briefing on Tuesday, China's foreign ministry spokesman also rejected US media reports that Trump would delay his visit to China, if the country did not assist with the reopening of Strait of Hormuz.

France refused to be part of war

US official resigns to protest war

Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel, says Kent

NEWS DESK / DNA

WASHINGTON: A senior US counterterrorism official resigned on Tuesday to protest the US-Israeli war against Iran and said the Islamic Republic posed no imminent threat to the United States. "I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran," Joseph Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Centre, said in his resignation letter to President Donald Trump. Kent - a former member of the Green Beret special forces who served multiple combat tours - said: "Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby." Kent is the first senior US official to resign from the Trump administration to protest the war against Iran. "Until June of 2025, you understood that the wars in the Middle East were a trap that robbed America of the precious lives of our patriots and depleted the wealth and prosperity of our nation," Kent said in his letter to Trump. "Early in this administration, high-ranking Israeli officials and influential members of the American media deployed a misinformation campaign that wholly undermined your America First platform and sowed pro-war sentiments to encourage a war with Iran," he said.

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Another Pakistani killed in UAE

DNA

ABU DHABI: Another Pakistani national has been killed in the UAE after falling debris from an intercepted ballistic missile struck the Banyias area of Abu Dhabi, authorities said. The Abu Dhabi government said air defence systems successfully intercepted the missile, but fragments fell in the area, resulting in the fatality. Officials urged the public to rely only on official sources and avoid spreading rumours or unverified information. The latest death brings the total number of fatalities in recent attacks on the UAE to seven, according to authorities. At least three of the victims are Pakistani nationals - one in Dubai and two in Abu Dhabi. Pakistan's Embassy in the UAE said it was "profoundly saddened" by the loss, adding that it is in close coordination with local

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Islamabad denies attack on hospital

Pakistan Armed Forces Strike terror bases in Kabul, Nangarhar: Tarar

The two sides have been in conflict for months, with Islamabad accusing its neighbor of harboring Islamist extremists who have mounted deadly cross-border attacks on its territory

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan's Armed Forces, under Operation Ghazab Lil Haq, successfully executed precision airstrikes on the night of March 16, hitting terrorism-sponsoring military installations of the Afghan Taliban regime in Kabul and Nangarhar. In a post on social media platform X, the minister stated that technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities at two sites in Kabul were successfully destroyed. He added that visible secondary explosions following the strikes confirmed the presence of large ammunition depots at the targeted locations. In Nangarhar, the Armed Forces carried out strikes on four Afghan Taliban regime-linked military sites,

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Unmanned aerial vehicle fell in Pindi

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security sources said that an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) fell on a house in Chaklala area of Rawalpindi early Tuesday morning. They said that no loss of life was reported in the incident. However, they said that the house had sustained some damage. Last week, four people were injured after a "few rudimentary" drones launched by the Afghan Taliban were intercepted in various cities of Pakistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

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Trump seeks to delay his meeting with President Xi

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is planning to delay a high stakes visit to China later in March by about a month because of the Iran war. "We've requested that we delay it a month or so," he told reporters at the White House, adding that it was important that he remained available to oversee the war. The meeting between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping is currently set to take place between 31 March to 2 April, following their last face to face talks in October last year. Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday that

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Surge in US petrol prices deepens

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: In the third week of the joint US-Israeli war against Iran, Donald Trump faces decisions that could define the rest of his presidency. But if the American commander-in-chief is grappling with a war of choice that seems in danger of spiralling in ways he can't control, those concerns are not playing out in public. In more than an hour of public remarks at the White House on Monday, he discussed his thinking on the state of the war effort - and also on Kennedy Center renovations, White House ballroom construction plans, this year's World Cup tournament, the health

Continued on Page 06

Over 36,000 Palestinians displaced

DNA

GENEVA: The UN on Tuesday urged Israel to immediately halt its dramatic settlement expansion in the West Bank, raising concerns of "ethnic cleansing" with over 36,000 Palestinians displaced in a single year. A fresh report from the United Nations rights office, looking at the 12 months up to October 31, 2025, warned that Israel's accelerating expansion of unlawful settlements and annexation of large parts of the West Bank was driving "unprecedented" displacement. "The displacement of more than 36,000 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank represented the mass

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SOLIDARITY WITH IRAN



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar met with the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghaddam and extended Pakistan whole-hearted support. - DNA

Referendum held

Pakistan, Kazak leaders discuss Afghanistan; region

The Prime Minister noted that the overwhelming turnout and support for the new Constitution reflected the trust and confidence of the people of Kazakhstan in President Tokayev's visionary leadership and reform agenda

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev this afternoon. During their warm and cordial call, the Prime Minister congratulated President Tokayev on the success of the historic constitutional referendum held in Kazakhstan, on 15 March 2026. The Prime Minister noted that the overwhelming turnout and support for the new Constitution reflected the trust and confidence of the people of Kazakhstan in President Tokayev's visionary leadership and reform agenda. He expressed confidence that the reforms would further strengthen governance, institutional stability,

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Govt suspends Pakistan Day parade

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday said it would not be holding the Pakistan Day parade and ceremonial events this year due to "austerity measures" linked to the Gulf crisis. Pakistan Day is held every year on March 23 - a public holiday - and is marked with parades, military flypasts, and cultural events across the country. But "in the backdrop of the ongoing

Continued on Page 06

European Union distances itself from the Gulf war

Speaking at a press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels Kaja Kallas emphasized that there is "no appetite" among EU member states to expand the bloc's existing naval mission, Aspides—currently focused on protecting shipping in the Red Sea from Houthi threats—to the Strait of Hormuz

DNA

BRUSSELS: The European Union has firmly distanced itself from direct military involvement in the ongoing conflict involving Iran, with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas declaring that "this is not Europe's war." Speaking at a press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels Kaja Kallas emphasized

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US, Israel want to divide Muslim nations: Russian envoy

Ambassador Khorev noted that Pakistan has not yet formally approached Russia for the purchase of Russian oil. However, he indicated openness to future discussions, stating there is a possibility that Pakistan could seek Russian energy supplies to meet its growing needs, especially given Russia's reliable export capacity and competitive pricing

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Russian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Albert P. Khorev, held a press briefing at the Russian Embassy in Islamabad, addressing a range of regional and international issues amid escalating tensions in the Middle East and ongoing global conflicts. Ambassador Khorev accused the United States and Israel of actively attempting to sow disorder and division among Muslim countries through provocative actions and policies that exacerbate regional instability. He emphasized that such efforts undermine peace and unity in the Muslim world, calling on all parties to exercise restraint. On the Gulf crisis, the ambassador stated that Russia seeks an immediate end to the escalating tensions. He urged all involved nations to prioritize diplomatic channels and dialogue to resolve disputes peacefully, warning that continued confrontation could lead to broader

instability with severe consequences for global security. Regarding recent attacks on Iran, Ambassador Khorev described them as baseless and unjustified, particularly in light of clear statements from the IAEA Director General affirming that Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons development. He reiterated Russia's support for Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy under international safeguards and condemned any military actions that violate sovereignty. Shifting to Afghanistan, the ambassador stressed that outstanding issues should be addressed exclusively through diplomatic channels. He highlighted the high risk of civilian casualties in any air strikes or military escalations, advocating for inclusive negotiations involving all stakeholders to ensure lasting stability. On energy cooperation, Ambassador Khorev noted that Pakistan has not yet formally approached Russia for the purchase of Russian oil. However, he indicated openness to future discussions, stating there is a possibility that Paki-



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Russian Federation addressing a press conference, on Tuesday. - DNA

stan could seek Russian energy supplies to meet its growing needs, especially given Russia's reliable export capacity and competitive pricing. Addressing the Ukraine conflict, the ambassador asserted that Russian military forces are in a significantly stronger position compared to Ukrainian forces.

He described Russia's actions as responsible and measured, despite massive financial and military support from Europe and the United States—amounting to billions of dollars and euros poured into Ukraine. According to him, this extensive aid has failed to alter the battlefield dynamics meaningfully, underscoring the futility of prolonging the conflict through external intervention. He added, as had been noted on numerous occasions, Russia did not view the conflict in Ukraine as a standoff between Russia and Ukraine, but rather as an indirect confrontation with the "collective West," which refuses to accept the loss of a world order based on colonial principles and Western dominance. Clearly, the conflict in Ukraine has become a powerful catalyst for a new multipolar world, the outcome of which will influence the global balance of power for years to come. "In my article published on February 24, 2026, in the Pakistani press on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the launch of the special military operation

in Ukraine, I described in detail the root causes of the crisis, as well as Russia's peacekeeping efforts between 2014 and 2022. These causes include the Kiev regime's determination to forcibly reintegrate Donbass at any cost, guided by the principle that "land is more important than people," and against the will of the Russian-speaking residents of the region. I recommend reading it," he added. The ambassador said, the Alaska Summit was one of the few constructive moments of cooperation between the two largest nuclear powers, who bear a special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. "Despite enormous external pressure, our Pakistani colleagues have maintained a balanced and consistent stance on the Ukrainian conflict. We hope they will join us in drafting this strategic document, which is intended to establish the political and legal foundation for an indivisible continental security architecture and a system of cooperation across Eurasia," the ambassador concluded.

Fertilizer strategy to boost early cotton yield

FAISALABAD: The Punjab Agriculture Department on Tuesday issued detailed fertilizer recommendations for early cotton cultivation to maximize per-acre yield and guide the farmers for improvement in productivity and profitability during the upcoming sowing season.

A spokesperson of the agriculture (extension) department said that the farmers cultivating early cotton could achieve the yields from 50 to 60 maunds per acre by adopting a balanced and soil-specific fertilizer application strategy. He said that for weak soils, the recommended dose includes two bags of DAP, four and a quarter bags of urea and one and a half bags of SOP per acre.

For medium soils, one and three-quarter bags of DAP, three and three-quarter bags of urea, and one and a half bags of SOP per acre have been advised while for fertile lands, one and a half bags of DAP, three and a quarter bags of urea and one and a half bags of SOP per acre were considered sufficient, he added.

The spokesperson further emphasized that the entire quantity of phosphorus and potash fertilizers along with one-fourth of nitrogen fertilizer should be applied at the time of land preparation to ensure optimal nutrient availability during the initial growth stages.

Highlighting the economic potential of early cotton, he advised the farmers to prioritize its cultivation on lands becoming vacant after harvesting canola, potato, peas and sugar-cane crops.

The timely sowing and proper input management could significantly enhance farm income and contribute to overall agricultural growth in the province, he added.—APP

Commissioner reviews Indus Highway progress

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Kohat Motasim Billah Shah on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting via video link to review progress on the Indus Highway and discuss measures for better traffic management and enforcement. He directed the National Highway Authority to utilize all available resources to ensure timely completion of the project without compromising on quality. NHA officials assured that construction activities are being carried out in line with approved standards and schedules. The meeting was attended by commissioners, deputy commissioners, DIGs, district police officers, representatives of the National Highway Authority, and project consultants from Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. Participants were briefed on construction progress, traffic flow strategies, and enforcement of cargo weight limits aimed at ensuring safe and smooth transportation along the highway. Officials noted that work on the project is advancing at a steady pace, alongside efforts to regulate traffic and curb overloading. Following the session, the Commissioner, along with Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Hamid Iqbal and NHA officials, visited various sections of the highway to inspect ongoing work, traffic conditions, and compliance with load regulations, issuing necessary directives on the spot.—APP

KP govt to plant one million saplings on Pakistan Day

Officials emphasized that if every citizen takes responsibility for nurturing even a single tree, the initiative could lay the foundation for a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Pakistan

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is set to mark Pakistan Day with a historic afforestation drive, aiming to plant a record one million saplings across the province in a single day. The plantation campaign will be formally launched at 9 a.m. on March 23, simultaneously across all districts under the vision of a "Green Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." Spokesperson for the Department of Climate Change, Forests, Envi-

ronment and Wildlife, Latif ur Rehman, told APP that the initiative is being carried out on the directives of Secretary Junaid Khan, in line with the Chief Minister's special vision to promote environmental sustainability. He said the initiative would be a first-of-its-kind record in Pakistan's history, symbolizing both environmental stewardship and national unity. The government has decided to transform this year's Pakistan Day into a "green pledge" to en-

sure a sustainable future for coming generations. Highlighting the urgency of the initiative, he noted that climate change has emerged as a major global challenge, with Pakistan among the most affected countries. Tree plantation, he added, is vital for improving air quality, maintaining ecological balance, and ensuring sustainable development. For the campaign, saplings are being supplied to all districts from official forest nurseries. The

plantation drive will continue uninterrupted until the last sapling is planted. To ensure transparency and effective monitoring, a dedicated software application and a central control dashboard have been established. Through this system, real-time data, including photos and live videos of plantation activities, will be transmitted to the central monitoring unit. Offline data upload options have also been introduced for remote areas with limited in-

ternet access. The campaign will witness active participation from government departments, educational institutions, district administrations, motorway police, Pakistan Railways, local communities, and the armed forces, making it a broad-based national effort. Officials emphasized that if every citizen takes responsibility for nurturing even a single tree, the initiative could lay the foundation for a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Pakistan.—DNA

Sindh accelerates digital governance drive as CM oversees e-stamping expansion

Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said the reform was part of a broader strategy to modernise governance in Sindh through digital systems that enhance transparency, efficiency and ease of access for the public

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah launched an expanded push for digital governance in the province, describing technology-driven reforms as central to building a transparent, efficient and citizen-centric government, as he presided over the signing ceremony for the e-Stamping system. The ceremony held at CM House was attended by Provincial Ministers Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho and Syed Sardar Shah, SACM Ali Rashid, Spokespersons Nadir Gabol and Buland Junejo, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, and Senior Member Board of Revenue Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi, Secretary to CM Asif Jameel, Secretary U&B Abbas Baloch, Secretary IT Zulfikar Nizamani, Dr Sarosh Lodhi, President Sindh Bank Anwar Shaikh and Deputy CEO Asad Shah, along with senior officials. The ceremony marked the signing of a Master Service Level Agreement and Service Order between the Board of Revenue Sindh and the Sindh Information Technology Company (SITC) for the continued rollout and expansion of the e-Stamping platform – an initiative aimed at digitising government documentation, eliminating fake stamp papers and simplifying services for citizens. Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said the reform was part of a broader strategy to modernise governance in Sindh through digital systems that enhance transparency, efficiency and ease of access for the public. "In just five months since SITC took over the system, more than 730,000 challans have been processed and Rs12.8 billion collected through the e-Stamping platform transparently and efficiently," he said. Murad Ali Shah said the significance of the reform went beyond revenue generation, noting that the system was helping eliminate long-standing irregularities in documentation. "The e-Stamping system is helping eliminate the mafia of fake stamp papers, end the practice of backdated documentation and free citizens from standing in long queues outside government offices," he said. The CM said that the next phase of the initiative would introduce a fully

paperless system, enabling citizens to generate stamp documents online directly from their laptops or mobile devices. "This reform is not simply a technological upgrade – it is about restoring trust between the government and the people of Sindh," the chief minister said. Murad Ali Shah noted that Sindh, being Pakistan's most urbanised and economically dynamic province, required modern governance tools to effectively manage its large population and economic activity. He said the provincial government had established SITC to serve as the institutional driver of digital transformation across departments. He commended the leadership and technical team of SITC for rapidly implementing key reforms and urged provincial ministers and administrative secretaries to actively collaborate with the organisation to modernise their departmental systems. Referring to the recently approved Government-to-Government (G2G) framework, the chief minister said departments could now directly engage with SITC through service level agreements and MoUs, eliminating lengthy procurement procedures and accelerating project implementation. "This streamlined framework will allow departments to resolve their technological challenges quickly and significantly accelerate the pace of digital transformation," he said. Murad Ali Shah also outlined several upcoming digital initiatives being developed by SITC, including the launch of Sindh Pay, a unified digital payment platform that will allow citizens to pay government taxes, fees and other charges directly through mobile devices. He said the government was also establishing a dedicated provincial data centre to ensure that sensitive government and citizen data remain securely hosted within Pakistan. The chief minister further revealed that the provincial government was exploring the responsible use of artificial intelligence to provide round-the-clock digital assistance to citizens in English, Sindhi and Urdu regarding government services. He said digital reforms were also being extended to education and public administration, including the introduction of secure digital verification of student records at public universities to curb fake degrees, digitisation of property tax systems, and paperless

issuance of domicile and PRC certificates. "The days when citizens had to run from office to office for basic services are coming to an end," the chief minister said. "Our goal is to bring government services directly to the people – wherever they are. During the ceremony, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Information Technology Ali Rashid also briefed the chief minister on the initiative, stating that digital technology represented the future of governance and would ensure faster, transparent and hassle-free public services. He said the e-Stamping system would significantly reduce corruption, streamline government processes and improve citizen convenience. Earlier, CEO SITC Zainul Abidin Shah briefed the chief minister on the organisation's mandate to promote digital excellence and transparent governance. He explained that the transition to e-Stamping was designed to eliminate fake stamp papers, fraudulent backdated stamps and revenue leakages associated with manual transactions. He added that SITC had already introduced an AI-based chatbot providing trilingual support in Sindhi, Urdu and English to assist citizens using the system. The briefing also outlined a roadmap for future digital initiatives, including the development of a Sindh Citizen Super App, which will integrate more than 130 government services into a single digital platform, and the establishment of a provincial government data centre to secure Sindh's digital infrastructure. The CM said that the collaboration between the Board of Revenue and SITC represents a major step toward establishing a data-driven, technology-enabled governance framework aimed at improving transparency, boosting revenue collection and delivering faster public services across Sindh. At the conclusion of the meeting, Member (RS&EP) Board of Revenue Safdar Ali Bughio and Sindh Information Technology Company CEO SITC Zainul Abidin signed the Master Service Level Agreement and Service Order between the Board of Revenue, Sindh and the Sindh Information Technology Company (SITC) for the expansion of the e-Stamping platform.



HYDERABAD: Gypsy girls are filling their pots with clean drinking water from a tap in Husseinabad.

Syedaal offers condolences to bereaved families in Quetta

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan visited Quetta to offer Fatiha on the demise of Malik Saifullah Bazai, grandfather of Member of the National Assembly Malik Adil Khan Bazai and father of Member of the Provincial Assembly Malik Naeem Khan Bazai. He met the bereaved family at their residence, offered Fatiha for the departed soul, and expressed his heartfelt sympathies. The Deputy Chairman spent time with family members, consoling them in their moment of grief. Expressing his condolences, Syedaal Khan said that parents were among life's most precious blessings, whose love and affection were selfless and everlasting. He added that the loss of a parent created an irreplaceable void, though death remains an inevitable reality for every human being. Paying tribute to the deceased, he described him as a pious, dignified, and noble individual whose absence will always be deeply felt. He prayed that Allah Almighty grant the departed soul a high place in His mercy and bless the family with patience and strength to bear the loss. Meanwhile, the Deputy Chairman also visited the residence of Balochistan Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar to offer condolences on the demise of his uncle. He expressed deep sympathy with the bereaved family and offered Fateha. He said that the loss of a close relative is an irreparable tragedy that could not be adequately expressed in words, and he prayed for the forgiveness of the deceased and strength for the family to endure the loss with patience. Later, Syedaal Khan visited the residence of Deputy Secretary Local Government, Balochistan, Ayub Qureshi, to offer condolences. He offered prayers for the departed soul and expressed solidarity with the grieving family. The Deputy Chairman described the late Ayub Qureshi as a hardworking, honest, and dedicated officer who discharged his professional duties with utmost responsibility, adding that his services would be remembered with great respect.—APP

Governor KP briefed on tax collection, growth

He also stressed the importance of further improving tax recovery, promoting digital tax filing and strengthening engagement with the business community to broaden the tax base

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday briefed by officials of the Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar on tax collection, performance of zonal offices and revenue targets during a meeting held at Governor House Peshawar. Chief Commissioner RTO Peshawar Muhammad Taqi Qureshi gave a detailed presentation to the Governor on overall tax collection, growth trends and performance of various tax zones across the province. Principal Secretary to Governor, Zubair Arshad, was also present on the occasion. During the briefing, it was informed that the tax collection system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa compris-

es seven zones, including Taxpayer Zone, Corporate Zone, Withholding Zone, Mardan, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Refund Zone. The Governor was told that the province generated approximately Rs 247 billion in tax revenue during the fiscal year 2024-25. Officials further apprised that during the fiscal year 2025-26, sales tax has recorded a growth of 27 percent, while income tax has grown by 9 percent, with an overall tax growth of 16 percent so far. It was expressed confidence that the province would achieve the International Monetary Fund (IMF) target of 19 percent growth by the end of the current fiscal year. The Governor was also informed that un-

der Section 40-D, sales tax is being applied on locally manufactured products in the erstwhile FATA/PATA regions as well as on their supply at local and non-local levels. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor appreciated the efforts of RTO Peshawar in enhancing tax collection in line with IMF targets and emphasized the need to make the tax system more transparent and efficient. He said that improving the tax system and increasing revenue are vital for the province's development. He also stressed the importance of further improving tax recovery, promoting digital tax filing and strengthening engagement with the business community to broaden the tax base.—DNA



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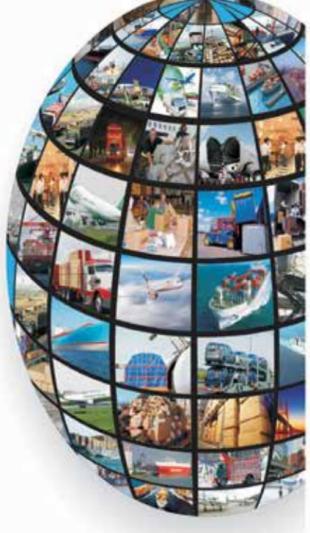






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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
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- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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- Motorway Police.9270601-20
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- Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



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- 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

Khurram highlights strong macroeconomic improvement

Referring to global commodity trends, the adviser said international oil prices had softened, with Brent crude easing to around US\$102 per barrel and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) to US\$ 95. Oil futures at backwardation, indicating investor expectations for a decline ahead back to around US\$ 60 range

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad on Tuesday highlighted a series of positive macroeconomic developments, signaling improved stability and resilience in Pakistan's economy despite ongoing external and regional challenges. Pakistan recorded a current account surplus of US\$ 427 million in February 2026 (the largest since March 2025), the advisor posted on his official

handle "X". He said foreign direct investment (FDI) also registered a 24 percent month-on-month increase during the same period while the workers' remittances continued their upward trajectory, rising 5 percent month-on-month and 11 percent year-on-year during the first eight months of FY2026.

Meanwhile, the IT and technology sector exports reached US\$ 365 million in February 2026, up 19 percent year-on-year, and nearing US\$ 3 billion cumulatively during the eight months, showing a growth of 20. He said the country's foreign exchange re-

serves had reached a four-year high, with better import coverage providing additional stability to the economy.

On the industrial front, large-scale manufacturing (LSM) recorded double-digit growth in January 2026, expanding around 12 percent month-on-month and 11 percent year-on-year, while cumulative growth stood at approximately 6 percent during the first seven months of the fiscal year.

Referring to global commodity trends, the adviser said international oil prices had softened, with Brent crude easing to around US\$102 per barrel and West

Texas Intermediate (WTI) to US\$ 95. Oil futures at backwardation, indicating investor expectations for a decline ahead back to around US\$ 60 range He said Pakistan had successfully secured energy supplies for March and most of April, improving fuel stock availability and ensuring smooth and sustained economic operations, supported by conservation and austerity measures. Despite external and regional challenges, the advisor stressed that strengthening macro fundamentals are helping build buffers and a stronger foundation to face future challenges with greater resilience.



RAWALPINDI: Workers are busy in repairing lights installed at center path of Double

NHMP returns over Rs 0.9m to passengers on overcharging

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has returned more than Rs 0.9 million to passengers during a nationwide crackdown against overcharging and overloading launched on March 15 on the special directives of Inspector General Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry. According to an NHMP spokesman, the special campaign is being carried out across the country to ensure protection of passengers' rights and strict enforcement of traffic laws, particularly during the ongoing travel season. During the campaign, authorities took ac-

tion against 908 vehicles for overloading and 382 public service vehicles (PSVs) for overcharging passengers, while the excess fare amounting to over Rs 0.9 million was recovered and returned to commuters at various locations. The spokesman said that strict enforcement was also carried out against violations of traffic regulations and safety requirements. As many as 767 PSVs were fined for operating without route permits, while 401 vehicles were penalized for having expired route permits. Similarly, 594 PSVs were challaned for lack-

ing fitness certificates, while 351 vehicles were penalized for having expired fitness certificates, reflecting the NHMP's zero-tolerance policy towards unsafe public transport. He said that citizens could lodge complaints regarding overcharging or other violations through the NHMP helpline 130 or via its official social media handle @NHMP for prompt action. The spokesman further added that in line with austerity measures and fuel conservationist policies, more than 20,000 vehicles have been fined so far for violating the newly imposed speed limits. - APP

5 year plan to cut edible oil imports

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has proposed a Rs1.65 billion five-year project to promote oilseed cultivation and reduce the country's reliance on imported edible oil. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project titled "The National Crop Diversification and Import Substitution Program (Oilseeds)" is planned for implementation across the country from July 2026 to June 2031. The initiative focuses on boosting domestic oilseed production through climate-smart agriculture, modern seed systems, farmer training, and improved value chains. According to the proposal, the program will implement cluster-based crop diversification and develop farmer field demonstration hubs and digital advisory systems to help growers adopt modern practices. The plan also includes strengthening the national seed system through enhanced breeder, foundation, and certified seed production to improve yields and profitability of priority oilseed crops. - APP

AIOU organizes session on Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH)

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has organized an important intellectual session on Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH), highlighting the importance and necessity of studying the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Speaking on the occasion, Chairman, Department of Seerat Studies, Dr Shah Moeen-ud-Din Hashmi stated that understanding Islam in its true spirit, gaining knowledge of Allah's attributes and access to the true message of the Holy Qur'an is not possible without studying the Seerat of the Prophet (PBUH). He emphasized that the blessed life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is in fact a practical interpretation of the Qur'an, without which a complete and correct understanding

of Islam cannot be achieved. In his lecture titled "The Need and Importance of Studying Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH)", he stressed that Seerat not only forms the foundation of Islamic knowledge but also presents a comprehensive code of life for humanity. He noted that in the present era, when the Muslim Ummah is facing various intellectual, social, and moral challenges, the teachings of Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) have gained even greater significance. Dr Hashmi further stated that if individuals and societies align their lives with the principles of Seerat, they can build a balanced and exemplary society and achieve success in both this world and the Hereafter. He urged students to study Seerat

deeply and make it a part of their practical lives. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Librarian Syed Ghulam Kazim Ali, in his vote of thanks said that the holy month of Ramadan is a blessed and sacred period with a special connection to Allah Almighty. He remarked that although a sense of sadness is felt at the end of this sacred month, there is gratitude that the Seerat lecture series was successfully organized during Ramadan with this being its fourth and final session. He reaffirmed the commitment to continue organizing such academic and intellectual events in the future so that students may have more opportunities to seek guidance from the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).-DNA

Crackdown on fares overcharging ahead of Eid

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Farhan Aslam has ordered strict action against fares overcharging and overloading by public transporters ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, directing authorities to ensure relief for commuters. Following the directives, he issued special instructions to the Education Wing of the City Traffic Police (CTP) and field officers to intensify enforcement and awareness efforts at bus terminals across the district. The move comes in line with directions of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Traffic Punjab Muhammad Waqas Nazir, who has also called for strict action against violations to facilitate commuters during the Eid rush. According to a CTP spokesman on Tuesday, teams of the Education Wing met transporters, terminal managers and drivers and warned them against overcharging passengers or violating prescribed limits. They were also sensitised about the legal consequences of non-compliance. The CTO directed that all transport operators must prominently display approved fare lists at bus stands and inside vehicles. He added that terminal owners had been instructed to ensure checking of passengers and their luggage in view of security concerns. Farhan Aslam said transporters should refrain from overcharging to avoid legal action, adding that special squads had been constituted alongside a helpline to curb violations. - APP

Police arrest injured robber

RAWALPINDI: Police arrested an injured robber after an exchange of fire in the Waris Khan area late at night when two motorcyclists opened fire on a police party. According to a police spokesman, one accused identified as Imran was arrested in an injured condition while his accomplice managed to escape. The police also recovered a stolen motorcycle and weapons from the arrested suspect. He said the arrested accused is a habitual offender previously involved in robbery and motorcycle theft cases and was wanted by police for his involvement in a recent robbery incident in Waris Khan, where a citizen was deprived of valuables while dropping children at school. The spokesman said the suspects resorted to firing when signalled to stop by the police. The motorcycle used by the accused was found to have been stolen a few days ago from the jurisdiction of Banni police station. The injured accused was shifted to hospital for medical treatment, while efforts are underway to arrest the fleeing suspect. Senior police officers reached the scene along with a heavy police contingent soon after the incident. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani appreciated the performance of SP Rawal, SDPO Waris Khan and the police team for bravely confronting the suspects and recovering the stolen motorcycle and weapons. "Those attacking citizens and police will not escape the law", he reaffirmed. -APP



Public Procurement Regulatory Authority

Procurement Notice



URAAAN PAKISTAN

Invitation for Prequalification

For subsequent Framework Agreement(s)

1. The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) has sufficient funds from its own resources toward the expenditure of the Procurement of Toners for Printers Photocopiers & Fax Machines and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contracts for Procurement of Toners for Printers Photocopiers & Fax Machines.
2. PPRA intends to prequalify suppliers for Invitation to Bid(s), and sign the framework agreement(s) with the pre-qualified bidder(s) for subsequent bidding process.
3. The objective of the intended Open framework agreement(s) is the on-demand supply / on need basis of toners for printers photocopiers and fax machines through subsequent mini competition/call of contract(s) and with successful pre-qualified bidders, and the purpose of this Prequalification Notice is to provide the information to enable the potential applicants to decide whether or not to respond to this Prequalification Notice.
4. PPRA will pre-qualify prospective Applicants from amongst those who will have submitted their applications / proposals in accordance with the requirements of the procuring agency (PPRA) to supply toners for Printers Photocopiers & Fax Machines through Open Framework Agreement.
5. The applicants fulfill / qualifies the eligibility and qualification criteria shall be prequalified / shortlisted as a prequalified applicants for a period of three years, and an open Framework Agreement(s) will be signed with them for provision of the items/goods (Procurement/supply of required quantity of Printers Photocopiers & Fax Machines through Open Framework Agreement as per approved specifications). All Prequalified applicants shall have to submit their financials proposals/quotations, on as and when required basis/on-demand, and the call-off Contract shall be issued accordingly to lowest quoted qualified bidder(s)/most advantageous bid.
6. The Supplier shall abide by all terms and conditions stipulated therein. PPRA during the term of Framework Agreement(s) may require prequalified bidders to submit their financials proposals/quotations, on as and when required /on-demand basis. Prices are not a part of the Open Framework. Pricing will be obtained through the Competitive Order Process. A competitive ordering process must be used to select a supplier to provide the said goods/services.
7. Where the procuring agency has to make similar procurements at different intervals in a defined period of time and it expects better prices because of economies of scale, it may enter into a framework contract at specified prices during that defined period.
8. Framework Contracts shall be concluded following open competitive bidding with one or more bidders to provide a range of goods over a defined period of time not exceeding three years.
9. An open Framework Agreement in accordance with Rule 16 A of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 shall be executed with all pre-qualified suppliers / firms for a period of three years. During the period of Framework Agreement, only those pre-qualified firms shall be issued "Call off Contract / Request for Quotation" notices for the said procurement, within a specified time, whenever the demand arises / as and when required basis.
10. For each call off order/quotations, PPRA shall call up quotations in sealed envelope on demand / as and when required basis, as annexed (Form E) to this document from the successful pre-qualified applicants / suppliers / bidders on its panel and award the work to the supplier who has quoted the lowest rates. In case, if the lowest quoted supplier refuses to supply the required quantity of procurement in full, then the second lowest bidder / most advantageous bidder will be asked to supply the remaining quantity on the price quoted by the lowest quoted bidder and so on.
11. Applications should be submitted manually in hard copy form. Detailed Pre-qualification documents, containing requirements, terms and conditions, are available with the procuring agency and may be obtained by interested bidders during office hours.
12. The Pre-qualification documents / proposals, prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in the Pre-qualification Documents, must be submitted to the PPRA in the office of the Admin Expert, 1st Floor, F.B.C Building, G-5/2, Islamabad, on or before **03-04-2026 at 11:30 AM**. The Applications will be opened on the same day at **12:00 Noon** at the same venue.
13. Pre-qualification documents along with terms and conditions for bidding can be obtained free of cost from the PPRA website i.e. www.ppra.org.pk or from the office of the undersigned during office hours.
14. Only the prequalified applicants shall be entitled to participate in the procurement proceedings and it is expected that Open Framework Agreement(s) will be signed between the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority and the pre-qualified bidder(s) in February 2026 for the period of 03 Years. In accordance with the provision of Rule 16 (5) of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) may on need basis pre-qualify new supplier(s) during continuity of the framework agreement.
15. Prequalification process is open for all the national Applicants subject to fulfilling the eligibility requirements mentioned in the respective Prequalification Documents. Interested Applicants may seek further information/clarification from PPRA. A complete set of Prequalification Documents may be accessed by interested Applicants through the PPRA Website or the office of undersigned.

(SARMAD USMAN)
Admin Expert
1st Floor, FBC Building, Sector G-5/2, Islamabad, Pakistan
051-9216995

PID (I) 7629/25

Briefs

Pak envoy thanks Iran govt for facilitating smooth transit trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu on Tuesday thanked the Iranian government for extending full facilitation to Pakistan's trade to Iran, as well as transit trade through Iran, during challenging times. The ambassador, in a statement on his X timeline, said that the land borders between Pakistan and Iran were working optimally and Green Channels at various border points were functional, supporting the swift movement of commodities on both sides. He said at the same time, Pakistan was also extending the best possible cooperation to Tehran to ensure that the bilateral trade remains unaffected by ongoing developments. Ambassador Tipu said the issues of congestion were also being addressed through mutual efforts. The embassy was in touch with both the official and the private stakeholders in Pakistan as well as in Iran for immediate trade facilitation, he added.—APP

IG Tariq chairs high-level meeting

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad, Muhammad Jawad Tariq chaired a high-level meeting to review Eid-ul-Fitr security arrangements and crime prevention measures in the federal capital. An official told APP on Tuesday that the meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt, SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza, SSP Security, zonal Superintendents of Police (SP) and SP Capital Patrol. The DIG Tariq directed officers to ensure foolproof security at markets, Masjids and recreational spots during Chand Raat and Eid days. He instructed that all patrolling units must remain visible in the field and that patrolling should be made more effective and purposeful. Muhammad Jawad Tariq also directed that checking at entry and exit points of the city be further tightened. He ordered a crackdown against aerial firing, hooliganism and one-wheeling to maintain law and order during Eid. The DIG Tariq said special police squads, foot patrols, bicycle patrols and horse-mounted teams should be deployed at recreational spots and crowded areas. He further directed that foolproof security and body searching must be ensured at Mosques during Eid congregations. The DIG Tariq instructed officers to engage with neighborhood committees during Eid holidays and launch awareness campaigns advising citizens to secure their homes properly before leaving and ensure adequate lighting arrangements.—APP

Hytera team visits Safe City

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Hytera Communications Corporation visited the Safe City Islamabad and met DG Safe City/DIG Traffic Muhammad Haroon Joya to discuss improvements in police communication systems. An official told APP on Tuesday that during the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on enhancing Islamabad Police's internal communication network and introducing modern technological solutions. The Hytera team briefed the DIG on advanced communication systems and potential reforms aimed at making police operations more efficient and coordinated. Muhammad Haroon Joya emphasized the importance of a modern, reliable communication infrastructure in ensuring effective policing and timely response. Both sides agreed to explore further collaboration to upgrade communication systems on modern lines, enhancing the operational efficiency of Islamabad Police.—APP

Pollen surge triggers eye irritation across twin cities

Doctors recommend staying indoors between mid-morning and early evening when pollen counts peak, keeping windows closed and using air conditioning. People with severe or persistent symptoms should consult a doctor before using eye drops.

DNA

RAWALPINDI :Pollen levels in Rawalpindi and Islamabad have climbed to dangerous levels, with Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital warning that the seasonal surge is driving a rise in painful eye allergies across the twin cities. The Pakistan Meteorological Department has recorded 14,695 pollen particles per cubic metre of air in Islamabad's H-8 sector. Counts in G-6 and E-8 stood at 5,510 and 5,391 respectively. Paper mulberry, the dominant allergen, accounted for 14,558 particles and was classified as very high. The pollen season typically runs from mid-March through April. Prof. Dr. Inam Ul Haq, senior consultant at Al-Shifa Trust Eye

Hospital, said the high concentration of airborne pollen is triggering allergic conjunctivitis, in which the eyes become red, itchy and inflamed. He advised residents going outdoors to wear protective or large-frame sunglasses to block pollen from reaching the eyes. He said pollen allergies commonly cause burning, itching, redness, tearing, swelling and sensitivity to light. People with existing allergies or asthma should also consider using air purifiers indoors. He added that pollen allergy is one of the most common conditions among patients visiting the hospital. The Ministry of Health estimates that around 120,000 residents, or about 30 percent of the population in the twin cities, suffer from allergic rhinitis. Hospitals, including Benazir Bhutto Hospital in Rawalpindi, report a sharp rise in allergy cases each year.



Prof. Dr. Inam Ul Haq

Prof. Inam Ul Haq said climate change is worsening the problem. Warmer springs and reduced rainfall allow pollen to remain in the air for longer periods. Summer has expanded from about 150 to 180 days, while spring has shrunk from roughly 45 days to nearly 10 days, reducing the rainfall that historically cleared pollen from the atmosphere. A study published on February 2, 2026, in the International Journal of Biometeorology, analysing 16 years of pollen data in Islamabad, found that higher temperatures and rising air pollution are increasing pollen concentrations and extending the allergy season. Doctors recommend staying indoors between mid-morning and early evening when pollen counts peak, keeping windows closed and using air conditioning. People with severe or persistent symptoms should consult a doctor before using eye drops.

SSP Qazi reviews security

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza visited Haji Camp to review security arrangements and assess deployment in the area. An official told APP on Tuesday that during the visit, he met police officers and personnel deployed on duty and inspected the overall security measures in place. SSP Qazi directed the officers to remain alert and perform their duties with responsibility and professionalism, ensuring effective security at the site. Qazi emphasized that maintaining law and order and ensuring public safety remained the top priority of Islamabad Police.—APP

China's rainwater harvesting offers example

ISLAMABAD: As climate change and rapid urbanisation put growing pressure on water resources, rainwater harvesting is drawing renewed attention in Pakistan. China's experience in collecting, storing and reusing rainwater in cities, dry rural regions and difficult terrain offers practical ideas that could be adapted locally, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday. In urban areas, China has promoted the "sponge city" approach through national policy, encouraging the use of permeable pavements, green roofs, wetlands and rainwater storage facilities to absorb and manage stormwater. Beijing and Shanghai have both expanded such systems as part of broader efforts to reduce waterlogging, improve rainwater use and strengthen urban resilience. In drier rural parts of north-western China, especially Gansu, rainwater harvesting has long been used to support drinking water supply, supplemental irrigation and ecological restoration. Local programmes and technical studies describe the use of storage tanks, field-side collection systems, terraces and micro-catchments to make better use of limited and seasonal rainfall. China also offers examples of terrain-specific systems. In Lhasa, sponge-park projects use permeable surfaces, sunken green areas and storage capacity to manage concentrated rainfall in a high-altitude environment. In mountainous Guangxi, villages have used diversion channels and water tanks to collect rainwater for domestic supply. Pakistani water experts say similar ideas could be useful locally. Muhammad Ashraf, former chairman of the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad arranged a special Iftaar. The High Commissioner Dato Azahar bin Mazlan and the embassy officials took part in the exercise. DNA

Int'l law experts declare Kashmir "test case"

The international legal order possesses the hammer of self-determination as a jus cogens norm, yet states continue to control the nails," noted Altaf Hussain Wani in his opening remarks

ISLAMABAD: A seminar on Kashmir and the right to self-determination concluded today with urgent calls for the international community to address the "systemic failure" of the United Nations (UN) to enforce its own binding resolutions. Moderated and presided over by Altaf Hussain Wani, Permanent Representative of the World Muslim Congress (WMC), the event brought together leading jurists and scholars to examine the 77 year gap between international legal obligations and the political paralysis surrounding the disputed territory, said a press release here on Tuesday. The distinguished panel featured Amelie d'Hasusen, PhD candidate at Geneva University; Robert Fitina, Canadian writer and international affairs analyst; Ronald Barnes; Dr. Sajjad Latief; and Naila Altaf Kani, PhD Scholar at NUML. Collectively, they dissected the status of seventeen binding UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir, adopted between 1948 and 1971, including Resolution 47's mandate for a plebiscite that remains unimplemented. "The international legal order possesses the hammer of self-determination as a jus cogens norm, yet states continue to control the nails," noted Altaf Hussain Wani in his opening remarks. Panelists emphasized that the 2019 abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution represented not merely a domestic constitutional alteration but a "fundamental challenge" to the international legal framework governing the dispute. Ms. d'Hasusen analyzed the erga omnes nature of self-determination obligations under Common Article 1 of the 1966 Human Rights Covenants, while Dr. Latief examined the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to occupying powers in the region. Robert Fitina and Ronald Barnes explored the geopolitical vetoes that have rendered the Security Council "effectively defunct" on Kashmir, leaving legally operative decisions to "gather dust in UN archives." Ms. Kani presented pathways forward, including potential reference to the International Court of Justice and renewed multilateral pressure through the Human Rights Council. The seminar concluded that the UN's failure in Kashmir represents not a failure of the law itself, but of the political will to enforce it. Referencing the late Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali's description of his homeland as a "country without a post office," participants warned that without immediate remedial action, the silence on Kashmir portends grave consequences for other self-determination movements worldwide, from Palestine to Western Sahara.—DNA

OIC-COMSTECH, UMS launch advanced midwifery training

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The OIC-COMSTECH, in collaboration with The University of Modern Sciences, has announced the launch of an Advanced Midwifery Clinical Skills Training Program aimed at enhancing maternal and neonatal healthcare services in Tharparkar. Sindh The training program is specifically designed for female candidates from Tharparkar, particularly from Taluka Chachro and Dahili, including certified midwives and those who have appeared in final examinations of midwifery courses. According to the COMSTECH, the initiative will be conducted at the Indus Medical College Hospital, Tando Muhammad Khan, and is scheduled to run from mid-April to the end of May 2026. This fully funded program covers tuition, accommodation, and meals,

reflecting a strong commitment to capacity building in underserved regions. The last date for submission of applications is March 31, 2026. The primary objectives of the training include improving clinical competencies in safe delivery practices, strengthening emergency obstetric and neonatal care, promoting community-based maternal and child healthcare awareness, and building capacity in nutrition and emergency response. This initiative has been undertaken as a follow-up to the two-day medical camp held in Chachro, Tharparkar, where the urgent need for skilled maternal healthcare providers was identified. Commenting on the initiative, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator OIC-COMSTECH, stated: "Improving maternal and child health in underserved regions like Tharparkar is a priority for OIC-COMSTECH. This training program is a

direct outcome of our engagement at the grassroots level during the recent medical camp in Chachro. By equipping local midwives with advanced clinical skills, we aim to ensure safer deliveries, reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, and empower communities through sustainable healthcare interventions. Equally important is raising awareness about maternal mental health, particularly postpartum depression, which often goes unrecognized in remote communities. Through this initiative, we also aim to sensitize healthcare providers to identify and support mothers facing such challenges, ensuring holistic care for both mother and child." He further emphasized that OIC-COMSTECH will continue to partner with national institutions to expand such impactful initiatives across marginalized areas of Pakistan and other OIC member states.

IRSA releases 88,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 88,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 65,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1451.86 feet which was 51.86 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 30,600 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam

was 1142.92 feet, which was 92.92 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 16,800 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 33,100, 34,200, 23,800, and 3,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 1,800 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Former APP DG laid to rest

ISLAMABAD: Former Director General of the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and former senior bureaucrat of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Mufti Jamiluddin Ahmed, was laid to rest here on Tuesday at the H-8 graveyard. He passed away on Sunday at the age of 84 after a prolonged illness. A large number of dignitaries, family members, colleagues, and students attended the funeral prayer to pay their last respects to the deceased, who had a distinguished career in public service, media, and academia. Among those present were former Federal Secretary Information and Broadcasting Ashfaq

Ahmed Gondal, former Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Muhammad Saleem Baig, senior analyst and anchorperson Mateen Haider, Chairman Department of Arabic National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Dr. Muhammad Abu Bakar Bhutta, and former senator Farhatullah Babar, along with officers, faculty members, and students of NUML. Mufti Jamiluddin Ahmed had a long and illustrious career spanning several decades. During his service in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, he held key positions and represented Pakistan in important media-related diplomatic assignments abroad. He served as

Press Counselor at the Pakistan Embassy in Germany and later as Press Minister at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, India. In 2002, he was appointed Director General of the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), the national news agency. In this role, he supervised the news service and worked with journalists and editors across the country. Following his retirement from government service, he joined the NUML, Islamabad, where he served as Professor and Head of the Department of Mass Communication. He remained actively engaged in teaching, mentoring students, and promoting research in media

studies. He also remained linked with journalism and wrote for national newspapers. During this period, he worked with English-language newspapers The News and Dawn in Islamabad. The deceased is survived by three sons and two daughters. Talking to state run news agency, Senior analyst and anchorperson Mateen Haider paid rich tribute to Mufti Jamiluddin Ahmed, describing him as a compassionate teacher and an inspiring mentor who always extended full support to his students. He said a large number of students attended the funeral, reflecting the deep respect and affection they had for him.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 142

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

How Pakistan's Fuel Crisis Threatens the Nation's Food Supply

DR. HAMID MASOOD DVM, MPhil, PhD

PAKISTAN currently maintains sufficient fuel reserves, but prolonged conflict could disrupt supply chains, threatening agricultural production and food availability. Ensuring energy stability is therefore critical to safeguarding the nation's food security and preventing potential shortages. Agriculture, the backbone of Pakistan's economy, is highly energy intensive. Farmers rely on diesel and electricity for irrigation, running pumps, tractors, and other machinery. Livestock and poultry production also depend on consistent fuel supply for heating, ventilation, feed processing, and transport. When fuel becomes scarce or prohibitively expensive, operational costs soar, and productivity suffers. For instance, a broiler or layer farm may see feed costs increase drastically because transportation of raw materials and finished products becomes erratic. Similarly, small-holder farmers struggle to irrigate crops efficiently, leading to lower yields and crop losses. The ripple effect extends to food processing industries, cold chains, and markets, ultimately hitting the consumer with higher food prices.

The fuel crisis also threatens Pakistan's ability to achieve food self-sufficiency. With energy costs rising, farmers may reduce acreage, delay planting, or shift to less energy-intensive crops, compromising both quality and quantity. Poultry and dairy sectors, which already operate on thin margins, are particularly vulnerable. This could increase reliance on imports, putting further pressure on the economy and foreign reserves. Addressing this challenge requires a multi-pronged approach: prioritizing fuel supply for agriculture, promoting renewable energy solutions like solar-powered irrigation, and improving efficiency in transport and logistics. Policymakers must recognize that energy security and food security are inseparable. Failing to do so risks not just higher prices at the market but a long-term threat to the nation's nutrition and economic stability. In conclusion, Pakistan's fuel reserves provide temporary relief, but prolonged conflict could jeopardize both energy and food security. Shifting toward sustainable, water-based energy—through projects like the Kalabagh Dam—offers a viable path to strengthen our energy independence and safeguard agricultural production. By investing in renewable infrastructure today, Pakistan can ensure a resilient and secure food future for generations to come.



Hiding the truth could spell disaster for region

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth appears to have little patience for questions that do not conform to his preferred style of declaring unsubstantiated victories, whether against South Americans or in the Middle East. In a charged press conference on Friday, Hegseth did more than attack journalists for questioning his unverified claims about the course of the war in the Middle East. He singled out CNN, introducing a troubling dimension to the conversation. "The sooner David Ellison takes over that network, the better," he said. Ellison, a close ally of President Donald Trump and a strong supporter of Israel, is widely considered the front-runner to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery, CNN's parent company. If there was any lingering doubt that such acquisitions are driven by political and ideological considerations, Hegseth's remarks dispelled it. Such statements reflect a broader shift in how the media is viewed by segments of the US ruling class, particularly under the Trump administration. During both of his presidential terms, Trump has invested much of his public discourse not in unifying the nation but in deploying deeply hostile language against journalists who question his policies, rhetoric or political conduct. The long-standing alignment between political power, corporate interests and media narratives seems to be fracturing. The American media entered this confrontation with little public trust to begin with — though for reasons that have little to do with Trump's political agenda. A 2025 Gallup poll found that only 28 percent of Americans trust the mass media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly, one of the lowest levels in decades. Historically, this mistrust has coexisted with Americans' skepticism toward their government — any government, regardless of political orientation. But what is unfolding today appears qualitatively different. The long-standing alignment between political power, corporate interests and media narratives now seems to be fracturing under the weight of widespread public distrust. This responsibility does not apply only to journalists in the US or across the Western world. It applies equally to journalists throughout the Middle East. After all, it is our region that is being drawn into wars not of its own making and it is our societies that have the most to gain from a just and lasting peace. This struggle is not merely about journalistic integrity or even about truth-telling as an ethical imperative. It is about the fate of entire societies whose futures are deeply interconnected. In our region, we either rise together or fall together. Governments across the Arab and Muslim world warned against the military adventurism now engulfing the Middle East long before the current escalation. Their warnings went largely unheeded and the consequences are now unfolding. At this moment, journalists, intellectuals and people of conscience must speak the truth in all its manifestations, using every available platform and opportunity. For that reason, gratitude is owed to the courageous individuals who continue to speak truth to power, to those who insist on unity during moments deliberately engineered to produce division, and to those who understand that honest journalism is not merely a profession. It is a moral obligation.

USA Allies Abandon the Sinking Ship

Qamar Bashir



The anticipated internal uprising never materialized, and instead Iran consolidated its domestic front while sustaining operational capabilities, thereby dismantling the central premise of Washington's strategy which had relied on internal collapse as much as external force. The second shock came not from Tehran but from Washington's allies, as the United States, having initiated the conflict without broad consultation, expected automatic alignment from NATO and Asian partners but encountered hesitation, distancing, and reluctance..

THERE is an old maritime warning that when a ship begins to sink, the first to flee are those who once thrived aboard it, and today that metaphor has taken on a striking geopolitical meaning as the United States, which entered its confrontation with Iran with confidence bordering on certainty, now finds itself navigating isolation, resistance, and strategic overstretch. At the outset of the conflict, President Donald Trump projected overwhelming dominance, presenting Iran as a weakened and sanctioned state that would collapse under pressure, with expectations that a rapid military campaign would dismantle its command structure, neutralize its capabilities, and ignite internal unrest leading to regime change aligned with U.S. and Israeli interests. The numerical disparity appeared to support this belief, with U.S. defense spending estimated at roughly \$877 billion compared to Iran's far smaller military budget, creating the impression that the outcome was predetermined, yet wars are not decided by budgets alone and within weeks the narrative began to fracture as Iran neither collapsed nor fragmented but instead demonstrated resilience, cohesion, and strategic adaptability. The anticipated internal uprising never materialized, and instead Iran consolidated its domestic front while sustaining operational capabilities, thereby dismantling the central premise of Washington's strategy which had relied on internal collapse as much as external force. The second shock came not from Tehran but from Washington's allies, as the United States, having initiated the conflict without broad consultation, expected automatic alignment from NATO and Asian partners but encountered hesitation, distancing, and reluctance, with European nations emphasizing that they had never been consulted nor mandated to participate in escalation, signaling not just diplomatic caution but a deeper fracture in alliance cohesion. Countries that once followed Washington's lead are now recalibrating their positions based on economic risk, domestic pressure, and strategic autonomy, leaving the United States increasingly alone in a conflict it had expected to lead with coalition backing. This reluctance is rooted in tangible global consequences, as the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supply flows, has become a central pressure point, with disruptions driving energy prices upward, insurance costs surging dramatically, and global markets experiencing volatility with trillions of dollars temporarily wiped from valuations during peak escalation, transforming what was intended as a controlled military engagement into a global economic shockwave. Iran, far from being incapacitated, has leveraged this vulnerability by signaling its ability to disrupt shipping lanes and energy flows, compelling major economies to engage directly with Tehran to secure safe passage for their vessels, marking a significant shift in which nations are negotiating with Iran rather than isolating it, while within the United States analysts have begun warning of potential shortages in energy-linked sectors, industrial inputs, and essential goods, raising concerns about inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions

that could impact everyday life. Yet perhaps the most consequential development lies in the expansion of the battlefield beyond Iran's borders through the activation, or credible threat of activation, of Iran's regional allies across Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and beyond, where networks cultivated over decades now provide Tehran with strategic depth and the ability to exert pressure across multiple fronts simultaneously. Armed groups aligned with Iran have already demonstrated their capacity to strike U.S. bases, logistical hubs, and allied infrastructure, creating a scenario in which American interests are no longer confined to a single theater but are exposed across a vast geographic arc encompassing land, sea, and air domains. This transforms the conflict from a bilateral confrontation into a broader regional contest in which the United States must defend a wide array of assets while its adversaries exploit asymmetry, mobility, and endurance. Layered onto this expanding pressure is a critical but often underestimated vulnerability: logistics. The United States has deployed one of its largest naval buildups in the region, including advanced aircraft carriers such as the USS Gerald R. Ford and USS Abraham Lincoln along with accompanying fleets of destroyers, frigates, and support vessels, projecting formidable firepower across the Arabian Sea and the broader Gulf region. However, the sustained presence of such naval power depends not only on military strength but on continuous logistical support, including fuel, food, water, ammunition, maintenance, and personnel rotation, all of which rely on secure supply lines originating from regional bases, ports, and allied infrastructure. This is where Iran's strategy introduces a decisive complication, as Tehran has signaled that any ports, docking facilities, shipping routes, or regional bases that provide logistical support to U.S. naval forces could be considered legitimate targets, effectively extending the battlefield to include the entire supply chain that sustains American military presence. By threatening or targeting these logistical nodes through missiles, drones, and allied proxy actions, Iran can impose a form of indirect pressure that does not require direct confrontation with U.S. naval assets but instead aims to degrade their operational sustainability over time. If supply routes become unsafe or politically untenable for host nations, the ability of these massive naval formations to maintain prolonged deployment in contested waters becomes increasingly constrained, turning what appears to be overwhelming power into a complex logistical challenge. In strategic terms, this represents a shift from confrontation to attrition, where the objective is not necessarily to defeat U.S. forces outright but to make their continued presence costly, vulnerable, and politically difficult to sustain. As Iran's regional allies intensify pressure on U.S. installations and supply corridors while maritime threats disrupt shipping and energy flows, the United States finds itself forced to allocate resources toward defense, protection, and logistics rather than offensive dominance,

gradually eroding the advantages of scale and technology. This dynamic raises critical questions about sustainability, as prolonged exposure to multi-front pressure tests not only military capabilities but also political will, economic resilience, and alliance cohesion. Domestically, these pressures are beginning to influence public discourse, as rising economic uncertainty, market instability, and the perception of strategic overreach contribute to growing skepticism about the objectives and necessity of the conflict. As support becomes more conditional and debates intensify over national interest versus geopolitical alignment, the space for escalation narrows while the urgency for diplomatic resolution increases. At the same time, Iran's negotiating posture reflects confidence shaped by battlefield endurance and regional leverage, with demands framed not as concessions but as prerequisites for de-escalation, underscoring a reversal in expectations from the early days of the conflict. The broader implication is that the traditional model of power projection, built on overwhelming force and reliable alliances, is being tested by a combination of resilience, asymmetric strategy, and regional interconnectedness, where the ability to sustain pressure over time becomes as important as the ability to deliver decisive strikes. Observers in major powers such as China and Russia are closely studying these developments, analyzing the interplay between military capability, logistical vulnerability, alliance dynamics, and economic impact to refine their own strategic doctrines in an increasingly multipolar world. At this juncture, the United States faces a critical choice between continued escalation, with its attendant risks and uncertainties, and strategic recalibration that acknowledges the changing nature of global power and conflict. The assumption that superiority guarantees success has been challenged, and the expectation of automatic alliance support has been replaced by a reality of selective engagement and strategic autonomy among partners. In this environment, the metaphor of the sinking ship resonates not as a prediction of collapse but as a warning about miscalculation, where confidence without adaptability can lead to isolation, and where the true test of power lies not only in its projection but in its sustainability. As the conflict evolves, one conclusion becomes increasingly difficult to ignore: this is no longer a narrow confrontation but a widening contest shaped by endurance, logistics, alliances, and perception, and if Iran chooses to further activate its regional networks while maintaining pressure on supply chains and economic lifelines, the United States may find that the challenge it faces is not simply defeating an adversary but navigating a complex and expanding environment in which the cost of engagement continues to rise and the path to resolution becomes ever more uncertain.

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

Shadows of War and the Unraveling World Order

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Encouraged perhaps by this inertia, Washington and Tel Aviv appear to have miscalculated the resolve of Tehran. Iran's response, far from symbolic, has been forceful and expansive, exceeding expectations and altering the calculus of the conflict. In prior conflicts, the United States relied upon the predictable support of its allies, particularly among European nations

THE present moment in world affairs bears a strange and unsettling resemblance to those rare passages of history when events move with such velocity and unpredictability that even seasoned observers are left grasping for certainty. What once seemed improbable now unfolds with alarming regularity, as though the restraints of caution and collective wisdom have quietly dissolved. The ongoing confrontation involving Iran, Israel, and the United States has become emblematic of this dangerous transformation. It was long assumed that any escalation involving Iran would follow a familiar script; measured retaliation, symbolic missile strikes, and eventually a reluctant return to negotiation under a tacit understanding of limits. Yet the current crisis appears to have defied those precedents. The tragedy of Gaza, wherein Israel acted with direct force and the United States with tacit endorsement, has already secured its place among the darkest episodes of modern history. The moral outrage expressed by the international community, though widespread, proved ineffectual; condemnation was abundant, but decisive intervention conspicuously absent. In a striking and morally resonant development, recent voices within the United Kingdom itself have begun to confront the deeper historical roots of this enduring conflict. In early March 2026, nearly forty-five cross-party parliamentarians, including members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, addressed an open letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Among the signatories were figures such as Layla Moran, Nadia Whittome, and Carla Denyer, reflecting a rare convergence of opinion across political divides. The letter called upon the British government to formally acknowledge and apologise for its historical role in Palestine between 1917 and 1948. At the heart of this appeal lies the legacy of the Balfour Declaration and the subsequent British Mandate, culminating in Britain's withdrawal from Palestine on the eve of the creation of Israel in 1948. The signatories argue that Britain, in its imperial exercise of authority, disregarded established principles of international law, denied the Palestinian Arabs their right to self-determination, and assumed a prerogative it did not possess—the power to dispose of a land and its people. The enduring consequences of those decisions, they

contend, continue to reverberate through the present crisis, shaping a conflict that has yet to find resolution. Encouraged perhaps by this inertia, Washington and Tel Aviv appear to have miscalculated the resolve of Tehran. Iran's response, far from symbolic, has been forceful and expansive, exceeding expectations and altering the calculus of the conflict. In prior conflicts, the United States relied upon the predictable support of its allies, particularly among European nations. This time, however, the response has been markedly different. Traditional partners such as United Kingdom and others in Europe have exhibited an unusual reluctance, offering neither unequivocal support nor active participation. This divergence signals not merely a tactical hesitation but perhaps a deeper fatigue with protracted entanglements in distant conflicts. Equally significant is the stance of the Gulf states. Historically aligned with American strategic interests, these nations now find themselves directly exposed to the repercussions of war. Their hesitation to assist Washington reflects a pragmatic reassessment of their own vulnerabilities. The theatre of conflict has shifted closer to their shores, and with it, the costs of alignment have become immediate and tangible. Reports of Iranian strikes on installations associated with American interests in the Gulf, and the apparent inability of the United States to shield them effectively, have further complicated the narrative. Whether exaggerated or not, such accounts contribute to a perception of eroding deterrence. Likewise, the portrayal of Israel's vaunted defence systems as faltering under sustained pressure has emboldened adversaries and unsettled allies. Perhaps the most consequential development has been Iran's to close the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow passage through which nearly a fifth of the world's oil supply transits. The mere prospect of such a disruption has sent tremors through global markets, underscoring the fragile interdependence of modern economies. Though American officials assert that the United States, now a significant energy producer, is less vulnerable than in previous decades, the broader global implications remain profound. The financial burden of this conflict is already substantial. According to Kevin Hassett, director of the White House National Economic Council, the United States has expended approximately \$12 billion since the onset of hostilities.

Early estimates suggested that over \$5 billion was consumed by weapons expenditure in the initial week alone. Amid this turmoil, questions surrounding the objectives of the war remain disconcertingly fluid. What began as an effort to curtail Iran's nuclear ambitions has gradually expanded to encompass its missile capabilities and, more recently, its oil infrastructure. Such shifting goals risk entangling the conflict in an open-ended trajectory, devoid of a clear and attainable conclusion. Beyond the immediate theatre, the reverberations of this crisis are being felt in South Asia. The evolving alignment between India and Israel, coupled with their reported support to Afghanistan, presents a complex challenge for Pakistan. Under the Taliban administration, Afghanistan increasingly appears not as a conduit of stability but as a source of asymmetric threats. The troubling perception that its most consequential "exports" to Pakistan consist of suicide bombers and weaponized drones casts a long shadow over regional security. For Pakistan, the convergence of these dynamics demands heightened vigilance. The persistence of cross-border militancy, coupled with the possibility of opportunistic actions by India under the pretext of broader geopolitical tensions, presents a precarious scenario. While Pakistan has thus far responded with measured resolve, the fluidity of the situation necessitates both strategic foresight and national unity. In the final analysis, the unfolding crisis reveals a world in transition, where established patterns no longer hold and traditional alliances are subject to reconsideration. The desire of the United States and Israel to disengage from the conflict, even as it tightens its grip upon them, illustrates the paradox of modern warfare; that once unleashed, it resists easy containment. For the Gulf states, the moment offers both peril and opportunity—a chance to recalibrate their strategic alignments in light of hard-earned lessons. History will ultimately judge the choices made in these turbulent times. Yet one truth is already evident; in an interconnected world, the consequences of conflict cannot be confined to distant battlefields. They ripple outward, reshaping economies, alliances, and the very fabric of international order. Whether wisdom will prevail over impulse remains an open question, upon which much of the world's future now depends.

Briefs

US official resigns to protest war

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"This echo chamber was used to deceive you into believing that Iran posed an imminent threat to the United States, and that should you strike now, there was a clear path to a swift victory," he said. "This was a lie and is the same tactic the Israelis used to draw us into the disastrous Iraq war that cost our nation the lives of thousands of our best men and women," Kent said.

Another Pakistani killed in...

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authorities to extend all possible support to the bereaved family and facilitate the repatriation process at the earliest. "We are profoundly saddened by the tragic loss of a Pakistani national in Abu Dhabi's Baniyas area due to falling debris following the interception of a missile," the embassy said. "In this hour of grief, we share in the family's pain and offer our deepest condolences and prayers."

Pakistan Armed Forces...

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destroying logistics hubs, ammunition depots, and technical infrastructure associated with the targets. Tarar said the strikes were carried out with precision, targeting only those facilities used by the Afghan Taliban regime to support its multiple terror proxies, including Fitna Al Khawarij and Fitna Al Hindustan. He added that the accompanying footage clearly shows the nature of the targeted infrastructure. The statement said the Taliban regime's propaganda cannot befool Afghans or the international community about its heinous actions in supporting and sponsoring terrorism in the region.

Unmanned aerial vehicle...

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The development came amid Operation Ghazab lillah, which was launched on the night of February 26, following unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban from across the border. The ISPR said the drones were intercepted through "soft and hard kills" and did not reach their intended targets. "However, the debris from these drones resulted in injuries to two children in Quetta and a civilian each in Kohat and Rawalpindi," the military's media affairs wing said.

Pakistan, Kazak leaders...

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and national development in Kazakhstan. While fondly recalling President Tokayev's visit to Pakistan last month, the Prime Minister assured the President that Pakistan was actively following up on the decisions taken during that visit. In this regard, he said that the two sides would meet soon, to firm up proposed MoUs and agreements. President Tokayev reiterated his invitation to the Prime Minister to undertake an official visit to Kazakhstan not later this year, which was accepted.

Govt suspends Pakistan...

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Gulf oil crisis and the consequent austerity measures announced by the government, it has been decided that the Pakistan Day Parade and associated ceremonial events shall not be held" next Monday, a statement issued by the PM Office said. Instead, the day will be marked with "dignity and reverence through a simple flag hoisting ceremony", it added.

Dubai Basketball Beat Crvena Zvezda, Coach Honors City

Dubai Basketball beat Crvena Zvezda in ABA League as head coach dedicates win to the city

DUBAI: Dubai Basketball delivered one of the strongest performances of the season with a 114-91 victory over Crvena Zvezda in Round 3 of the ABA League in Sarajevo. Dubai showcased their highest-scoring game this season against Serbian giants. As Dubai's home games have been relocated to Europe, robbing them of their usual atmosphere, Dubai's head coach, Jurica Golemac, dedicated the performance to the UAE, the city of Dubai and the club's fans. Speaking after the game, Golemac emphasized the significance of the team's performances for the community the club represents. "Every victory, every play is for the UAE, for the city of Dubai, and for our fans," said Golemac. "As we always say: one city, one team. Everything we do is for Dubai." The team once again showcased their offensive firepower, controlling the game from the opening quarter and maintaining their rhythm throughout the night in front of a lively 5,000-strong crowd at Zetra Arena. Dubai set the tone early with an explosive first quarter, producing 37 points in the opening ten minutes to establish a 37-25 lead. Strong shooting and fluid offensive execution helped Dubai quickly build mo-



mentum, with Dzanan Musa leading the early scoring effort. Crvena Zvezda briefly responded early in the second quarter, cutting the deficit to single digits, but Dubai

quickly regained control. A balanced offensive display combined with increased defensive pressure allowed the team to steadily extend the lead, heading into halftime with a comfortable 63-43 advantage. The Emirati side continued to dominate after the break, stretching the lead to as much as 30 points in the third quarter and entering the final ten minutes with a commanding 90-63 margin. With the result effectively decided, Dubai maintained its offensive rhythm in the closing stages, surpassing the 100-point mark with five minutes remaining before sealing a convincing 114-91 victory. Six Dubai players finished the night in double figures, highlighting the team's balanced scoring effort. Dwayne Bacon led the way with 21 points, while Musa added 18. Mfondu Kabengele contributed 15 points, Kosta Kondic scored 14, Filip Petrushev added 13, and Davis Bertans finished with 11. Dubai Basketball will now turn their attention to their next challenge as they travel to Belgrade to play against reigning ABA League champions Partizan in the EuroLeague.

Baseball: US bullpen shines in WBC semifinal win over Dominican Republic



MIAMI: Cy Young Award winner Paul Skenes tossed 4-1/3 innings of one-run ball, and the U.S. bullpen was virtually flawless the rest of the way in a tense 2-1 semifinal win over the Dominican Republic at the World Baseball Classic. Junior Caminero's second-inning solo home run was the only scoring that the Dominican Republic's super-

star batting lineup could muster in front of 36,337 at Miami's loanDepot park as the United States advanced to its third straight WBC final. Manager Mark DeRosa's squad turned the game around with solo home runs from Gunnar Henderson and Roman Anthony in the top of the fourth, while five U.S. relievers yielded just two hits and a walk as they combined for 4-2/3 shutout frames. Tampa Bay Rays infielder Caminero broke the ice with his blast to left center field off Skenes' high sweeper over the outside corner of the plate. Henderson tied it with his big fly to right center off Dominican starter Luis Severino before Anthony delivered a 421-foot go-ahead bomb to center field against reliever Gregory Soto (0-1). Julio Rodriguez prevented Aaron Judge from adding to the U.S. total in the fifth when he robbed the New York Yankees superstar of a home run at the wall behind center field. Pittsburgh Pirates ace Skenes (2-0) left the mound with one out and two on in the fifth before reliever Tyler Rogers got his team out of danger by getting Juan Soto to ground into a double play. "It makes it a lot easier to be a starting pitcher when you can get to the fifth inning. That's the nature of this tournament," Skenes said. "The innings are limited for starting pitchers, and you can hand the ball off pretty confidently that the bullpen's going to get the job done, and they've done a great job."

U.S. reliever David Bednar pitched out of a one-out jam with runners on second and third, striking out Fernando Tatis Jr. and Ketel Marte back-to-back to end the seventh inning. Closer Mason Miller struck out Geraldo Perdomo on a contentious called strike to seal the win and send his team into Tuesday's championship game against the winner of Monday's semifinal between Italy and Venezuela. Dominican Republic skipper Albert Pujols did not dwell on the umpire's call after the game, instead paying tribute to his players for a performance of which their country "should feel proud." - APP

MCC comments on Salman Agha's run-out in Bangladesh ODI



LAHORE: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has clarified the rules surrounding the run-out controversy involving Pakistan batsman Salman Ali Agha in a recent One Day International in Dhaka. According to MCC, Salman Ali Agha was indeed run out as per the laws of cricket. During the incident, Salman was outside the crease while the ball was still in the crease. MCC further explained that a batsman is not allowed to pick up the ball without permission from the fielding side.

The club added that a collision between players does not automatically render the ball dead, although, in the spirit of cricket, Bangladesh could have chosen to withdraw their appeal. MCC confirmed that the umpires' decision was fully in line with the rules, leaving no alternative course of action. The controversy arose when Bangladesh captain Mahdi Hasan Miraz ran out Salman at the non-striker's end. Salman Ali Agha reacted angrily and briefly left the field in protest. Following the incident, ICC issued a level-one code of conduct penalty against Salman, awarding him one demerit point for breaching the player conduct code. - DNA

Neymar Jr left out as Brazil refresh squad ahead of 2026 FIFA World Cup

Brazil's all-time leading scorer with 79 goals has not featured for the national side since sustaining a serious knee injury in Oct 2023

RIO DE JANEIRO: Neymar Jr has been omitted from Brazil's latest squad as head coach Carlo Ancelotti continues preparations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The five-time world champions are scheduled to face France on March 26th in Boston before taking on Croatia on March 31st in Orlando. The fixtures form part of Brazil's build-up to the tournament, which will be hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada. Neymar's absence follows concerns over his fitness after the 34-year-old missed a recent match for Santos FC due to muscle fatigue. Ancelotti had intended to assess him during that fixture but ultimately decided against including the forward, citing a lack of full match readiness. Brazil's all-time leading scorer with 79 goals has not featured for the national side since sustaining a serious knee injury in October 2023. Despite returning to club football last year, he has struggled to maintain consistent form and fitness. Ancelotti stressed that the door remains open, stating Neymar could still feature at the World Cup if he regains full condition. "Neymar can be at the World Cup if he's 100%," Ancelotti said. "I didn't call him up because he's not 100%. Neymar has to be training and playing."

The player, meanwhile, admitted to feeling disappointed but vowed to remain focused on his recovery and performances. In Neymar's absence, Brazil have turned to youth and fresh attacking options, recalling Endrick and handing a first call-up to Igor Thiago. Brazil will also face Egypt in June before opening their World Cup campaign against Morocco on June 13th.

Brazil squad:
Goalkeepers: Alisson (Liverpool), Bento (Al-Nassr), Ederson (Fenerbahce)
Defenders: Wesley (AS Roma), Alex Sandro (Flamengo), Douglas Santos (Zenit St Petersburg), Marquinhos (Paris St Germain), Gabriel Magalhaes (Arsenal), Bremer (Juventus), Danilo (Flamengo), Ibanez (Al-Ahli), Leo Pereira (Flamengo)
Midfielders: Andrey Santos (Chelsea), Casemiro (Manchester United), Danilo (Botafogo), Fabinho (Al-Ittihad), Gabriel Sara (Galatasaray)
Forwards: Endrick (Olympique Lyonnais), Igor Thiago (Brentford), Luiz Henrique (Zenit St Petersburg), Rayan (Bournemouth), Joao Pedro (Chelsea), Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal), Matheus Cunha (Manchester United), Raphinha (Barcelona), Vinicius Jr (Real Madrid). - APP

Sahibzada Farhan, Fatima Sana among nominees for ICC's Player of the Month

The right-handed opener broke the record for the most runs in a single edition of the tournament, surpassing Virat Kohli's previous tally of 319 runs set in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2014

KARACHI: Pakistan's opening batter Sahibzada Farhan and women's cricket captain Fatima Sana have been included among the nominees for the ICC's Player of the Month award for February 2026. Farhan enjoyed a remarkable run with the bat during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, finishing as the tournament's highest run-scorer. The right-handed opener broke the record for the most runs in a single edition of the tournament, surpassing Virat Kohli's previous tally of 319 runs set in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2014. Farhan amassed 383 runs at an impressive strike rate of 160.25 while averaging 76.60. The Pakistan opener also registered two centuries during the tournament - against

Namibia and Sri Lanka - becoming the first batter to score two hundreds in a single edition of the Men's T20 World Cup. His prolific form helped Pakistan reach the Super 8 stage of the competition, where they narrowly missed out on a place in the semi-finals. Meanwhile, Fatima Sana delivered a string of impressive all-round performances against South Africa, despite her side narrowly losing both the ODI and T20I series 2-1. Her tour de force came in the first T20I, where she smashed a brilliant 90. She followed this up with an unbeaten 47 and figures of 2 for 12 in the third match, a performance that earned her the Player of the Match award. Sana

also contributed significantly in the 50-over format, striking a crucial 52 and claiming two important wickets in the second ODI. Across the entire tour, she took four wickets in the ODI series and two in the T20Is. The other nominee in men's cricket, England's Jacks, played a vital role in his side's run to the T20 World Cup semi-finals with impactful performances with both bat and ball. The 27-year-old scored 194 runs at a strike rate of 173.21 and claimed 11 wickets at an economy rate slightly above eight. His outstanding performances earned him four Player of the Match awards, the most by any player in a single edition of the Men's T20 World Cup.

Jacks delivered particularly crucial performances in the Super 8 stage against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, helping England finish top of Group 2. USA pacer Van Schalkwyk also impressed with the ball during the tournament, emerging as one of the leading wicket-takers. The right-arm fast bowler claimed 13 wickets during the campaign. He made an immediate impact in USA's opening match against India, picking up four wickets. Van Schalkwyk produced identical figures of 4/25 against Pakistan later in the group stage, further highlighting his consistency. Apart from his wicket-taking ability, the pacer also maintained an impressive economy rate of 7.76 throughout the tournament. - APP

EU distances itself from the Gulf war

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She reiterated that while the EU is not a party to the war, "Europe's interests are directly at stake," particularly in safeguarding critical global energy and trade routes disrupted by tensions in the region. The comments come amid mounting pressure, including from US President Donald Trump, for international allies to contribute to securing the Strait of Hormuz - a vital chokepoint for roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply - following Iran's actions that have led to blockades and surges in energy prices. Kallas noted discussions on alternative approaches, such as replicating a UN-brokered Black Sea grain deal model to restore oil and gas flows, and she had consulted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the idea. However, she stressed that any shift in Aspidese's mandate requires unanimous support from the 27 member states, with several - including Germany and Italy - expressing strong reservations against offensive operations or deeper entanglement.

Trump seeks to delay his...

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Beijing and Washington are in talks over "the timing and related matters of President Trump's visit to China". China also rejected any connection between the delayed meeting and issues around the Strait of Hormuz - a critical waterway for global energy shipments from the Gulf. "We have noted that the US side has publicly clarified these false reports by the media, stating that the relevant reports are completely wrong, and emphasised that the visit has nothing to do with the issue of the open navigation of the Strait of Hormuz," Jian said.

Surge in US petrol prices deepens

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of a Republican congressman and a host of other unrelated topics. It was classic Trump, as unscripted and wide-ranging as ever. This past weekend, he played golf at his Florida resort. And on his Truth Social website, he devoted nearly as much time to railing about the Supreme Court as he did to discussing the Iran War. While Trump may be interested in other topics, he is confronting a lesson previous American presidents have learned the hard way - that war can consume a presidency whether they want it or not. And evidence continues to mount that a war that Trump had previously said was "already won" and "very complete" now has a timeline that could stretch for weeks or even longer.

Over 36,000 Palestinians displaced

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expulsion of Palestinians on a scale previously unseen, amounting to unlawful transfer that is prohibited under international humanitarian law," the report said. Alongside "the extensive displacement of Palestinians in Gaza," it "appears to indicate a concerted Israeli policy of mass forcible transfer throughout the occupied territory, aimed at permanent displacement, raising concerns of ethnic cleansing." The report pointed to the advancement or approval by Israeli authorities of 36,973 housing units in settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and around 27,200 in the rest of the West Bank. Also during the 12-month-period, "an unprecedented 84 settlement outposts were established across the occupied West Bank, bringing the total number to more than 300," the report said. In addition to roughly three million Palestinians, more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements and outposts in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law. Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel triggered the Gaza war.

Briefs

Iran war may push 45m people into acute hunger by June

GENEVA: Tens of millions more people will face acute hunger if the Iran war continues through to June, according to analysis from the World Food Programme released on Tuesday. An extra 45 million are projected to be pushed into acute hunger because of rises in food, oil and shipping costs, pushing the global tally above its current record level of 319 million, Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme Carl Skau told reporters in Geneva.—APP

PSX turns bullish, gains 837 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 837.50 points, a positive change of 0.56 percent, closing at 150,016.16 points compared to 149,178.66 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 260.428 million shares with a traded value of Rs 17,205 billion, against 298.270 million shares valuing Rs 20,185 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization decreased to Rs 16.793 trillion from Rs 16.825 trillion a day earlier. Out of 475 active companies in the ready market, 223 advanced, 182 declined, and 70 remained unchanged. The Bank of Punjab topped the volume chart with 32,250 million shares, followed by K-Electric Limited with 18,076 million shares and WorldCall Telecom with 17,871 million shares. The top gainers included Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which rose by Rs 234.62 to close at Rs 24,522.00, and PIA Holding Company Limited, which gained Rs 150.00 to settle at Rs 16,200.00. On the losing side, The Thal Industries Corporation Limited declined by Rs 58.03 to close at Rs 636.18, while Shield Corporation Limited fell by Rs 49.85 to close at Rs 850.28. In the futures market, turnover stood at 124.467 million shares with a traded value of Rs 5.910 billion, compared to 90.270 million shares worth Rs 7.738 billion in the previous session.—APP

Gold price increases by Rs 1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 1,000 and was sold at Rs 523,762 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs 522,762 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 857 to Rs 449,041 from Rs 448,184, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 785 to Rs 411,635 from Rs 410,850. The rates of per tola silver increased by Rs 128 to Rs 8,569 from Rs 8,441, whereas that of ten grams silver rose by Rs 110 to Rs 7,346 from Rs 7,236. The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$ 10 to US\$ 5,010 from US\$ 5,000, while that of silver went up by US\$ 1.28 to US\$ 80.85, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.27 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.30. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.25 and Rs 280.30, respectively. The price of the Euro against the Rupee increased by Rs 1.41 to close at Rs 320.95 from the previous day's close of Rs 319.54, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)—APP

PM okays PARC restructuring to ensure food security

The agricultural research would be connected with industry to ensure practical application, the meeting was informed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting held under chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Tuesday, in-principal granted approval for the restructuring of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) aiming to transform it into a modern, high-performing institution to strengthen Pakistan's agriculture sector and ensure food security.

Chairing a high-level meeting on the matters of Ministry of National Food Security and Research and PARC, the prime minister directed authorities to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan with a defined timeline. He emphasized that agricultural research played a critical role in increasing productivity, boosting exports, and addressing food security challenges, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema,



Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Husain, Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik, Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaulah, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistants to PM Haroon Akhtar, Tariq Bajwa, PM Coordinator on Agriculture Ahmad

Umair and other senior officials. The prime minister also instructed that PARC should be developed along the lines of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), turning it into a world-class research organization aligned with modern agricultural needs.

The officials briefed the meeting on reform agenda aimed at making PARC more effective and responsive. Key reforms included improving governance structures, hiring top-tier researchers, enhancing international collaboration, strengthening coordination

with provincial governments, and introducing clear performance benchmarks. As part of the restructuring, all existing research centers under PARC would be consolidated into five Centers of Excellence. These centers will focus on high-yield seed develop-

ment, livestock breeding, precision agriculture, farm mechanization and the use of artificial intelligence and food processing to enhance agricultural exports. The agricultural research would be connected with industry to ensure practical application, the meeting was informed.

SECP tightens oversight of SOEs

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued show cause notices to 41 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for failing to submit their annual audited accounts and annual returns. Hearings for the non-compliant entities have been scheduled, according to SECP press release issued here on Tuesday. The action is part of SECP's ongoing efforts to improve transparency, strengthen corporate governance and support the government's reform agenda aimed at enhancing accountability in the SOE sector. The SECP found that 33 SOEs have not filed their annual audited accounts, while 26 companies have failed to submit their annual returns. In addition, seven companies have not held their Annual General Meetings. In total, 66 show because notices have been issued to 41 companies. Following due process of law, the Commission will conclude the proceedings and issue penalty orders after adjudication. The names of the non-compliant SOEs will be published on the Commission's website. Copies of the orders will also be shared with the relevant Principal Accounting Officers and the Director General of the Central Monitoring Unit. Separately, the State Life Insurance Corporation has not submitted its audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024. The SECP has written to the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation directing immediate submission of the accounts. The Commission has warned that regulatory action will follow if the requirement is not met. The review also identified governance gaps in board composition. 48 SOEs currently have no female representation on their boards despite SECP regulations requiring the presence of women directors. The Commission is writing to the Principal Accounting Officers of the relevant ministries to raise the matter with board nomination committees to ensure the appointment of female directors. In addition, four SOEs are operating without appointed Chief Executive Officers. The SECP has advised the concerned entities to fill these positions at the earliest. Copies of the communication are also being shared with the Principal Accounting Officers and the Central Monitoring Unit. To strengthen oversight, the SECP has developed a comprehensive enforcement plan to monitor financial reporting and governance practices of SOEs. The Commission is also establishing a dedicated wing at its head office to oversee compliance and monitoring of state-owned enterprises.—DNA

Israel strikes Tehran, Beirut as Iraq pulled deeper into Mideast war

War in the Mideast has sent oil costs soaring, and prices resumed their climb on Tuesday as several countries pushed back against US President Donald Trump's demand that they help secure the Strait of Hormuz, while Iran continued to target crude-producing neighbors

TEHRAN: Israel launched a wave of strikes on Tehran and Beirut on Tuesday while attacks in Baghdad drew neighboring Iraq deeper into the Middle East war that has sparked economic turmoil across the globe. The Iranian capital, under near-daily bombardment since a joint US-Israeli attack started the war on February 28, was hit by what the Israeli military said were strikes on "terror regime infrastructure." The war, now in its third week, has killed hundreds and quickly spread to include Iranian strikes on Gulf nations as well Israeli bombardment of Lebanon. Lebanese state media reported Tuesday that Israeli strikes at dawn hit a residential building in Beirut's southern suburbs, a stronghold of the pro-Iranian armed group Hezbollah. Authorities in Lebanon said more than one million people have registered as displaced since March 2, with more than 130,000 people staying in upwards of 600 collective shelters. The nation was drawn into the war when Tehran-backed Hezbollah militants struck Israel over the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day of the conflict. The regional war has also steadily pulled Iraq further into the fighting, after the country has long been a proxy battleground between the United States and Iran. A drone and rocket attack targeted the US embassy in Baghdad early Tuesday, while a strike killed four people at a house reportedly hosting Iranian advisers. The strikes on the complex came hours after air defenses thwarted a rocket attack at the embassy and a drone sparked a fire at a luxury hotel frequented by foreign diplomats in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone. War in the Mideast has sent oil costs soaring, and prices resumed their climb on Tuesday as several countries pushed back against US President Donald Trump's demand that they help secure the Strait of Hormuz, while Iran continued to target crude-producing neighbors. Traffic in the Gulf waterway through which a fifth of global crude oil passes has been severely disrupted by the war. Repeated attacks on oil infrastructure — including strikes on major fields in the United Arab Emirates and southern Iraq — have contributed to the unrest in the markets. Global oil prices have surged more than 40 percent since the US and Israel began their strike and the impact has been felt globally. Australia's central bank hiked its key interest rate Tuesday, pointing to "sharply higher fuel prices" driven by the US-Israel war on Iran.—APP

ICCI President hosts 'Pakistan Investment Potential Summit' Pakistan possesses massive untapped investment potential: Ilyas

Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, Chairman Faisal Town Group, said that Pakistan is a resilient and hardworking nation capable of achieving sustainable growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prominent business leaders and policymakers highlighted Pakistan's vast investment opportunities and emphasized the pivotal role of the real estate sector in driving economic growth at the Pakistan Investment Potential Summit held in Islamabad. The summit was hosted by President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood, bringing together leading figures from the business community to deliberate on strategies for enhancing investment and economic development. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism and renowned business leader Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that Pakistan possesses massive untapped investment potential, particularly in the real estate, tourism, and hospitality sectors. He noted that Pakistan's diverse natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and historical treasures can significantly contribute to the national economy if properly promoted and supported with modern infrastructure. He stressed the need to build investor confidence through consistent policies, improved facilities, and investor-friendly regulations to attract both domestic and international investment. Chief Guest Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, Chairman Faisal Town Group, said that Pakistan is a resilient and hardworking na-

tion capable of achieving sustainable growth. He emphasized that policy stability, clarity of direction, and strong private sector participation are essential for unlocking the country's economic potential. He noted that with effective collaboration between the government and the business community, Pakistan can harness its investment opportunities and move towards prosperity. He added that the sector also plays a vital role in employment generation and urban development while contributing significantly to economic activity and investment. In his opening remarks, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President ICCI, stated that Pakistan enjoys strong economic potential due to its strategic geographic location, young population, and expanding infrastructure network. He said the objective of the summit was to create a constructive dialogue among business leaders and policymakers to identify practical measures that could attract investment and accelerate economic growth. Sardar Tahir Mehmood also presented a brief case study on the role of infrastructure corridors in shaping urban expansion and investment opportunities. He explained that around the world cities expand along major connectivity routes, and similar trends are emerging in Pakistan with the development of highways, airports, and economic corridors, creating new zones for investment and urban growth. President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Usman

Shaukat, stressed the importance of simplifying regulations, improving the ease of doing business, and encouraging overseas Pakistanis to play a more active role in the country's economic development through investment. Zohair Majeed, Director Faisal Town Group, highlighted the importance of the real estate sector as a major contributor to economic activity and employment generation in Pakistan. He stated that the sector not only provides housing solutions but also stimulates investment, supports numerous allied industries, and serves as a key driver of economic momentum. The summit also featured a panel discussion on Pakistan's investment climate, emerging sectors for economic growth, and the importance of infrastructure development in shaping new economic corridors across the country. Participants observed that major infrastructure projects, expanding connectivity networks, and rapid urban development are creating new investment opportunities in sectors such as tourism, real estate, services, and industry. They emphasized that with consistent policies and investor-friendly reforms, Pakistan can attract both domestic and international investors and unlock its vast economic potential. The summit was attended by a large number of renowned business leaders of the region, particularly from the real estate sector. Among others present were ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, and members of the ICCI Executive Committee.

Termez to held Uzbek - Russia strategic partnership moot

TASHKENT: On March 30-31, Termez will host the Uzbekistan-Russia: A Strategic Partnership in the Eurasian Space Conference. The event will be organized by the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Valdai Discussion Club.

The conference will bring together prominent experts from government agencies, analytical and research centers, and business circles in Uzbekistan and Russia. ISRS Director Eldor Aripov, Surkhandarya region's Hokim Ulugbek Kasimov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Bobur Usmanov, First Deputy Minister of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan Oleg Pekos, Director of the Institute of Macroeconomic and Regional Studies under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan Umid Abidkhodiyev, and others will take part in the event.

The Russian delegation will include Mikhail Galuzin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Alexei Yerkhov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Uzbekistan, Andrey Bystritsky, Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club, Fyodor Lukyanov, Research Director of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club, Timofei Bordachev, Program Director of the Valdai Discussion Club, Herman Lerner, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of Tatarstan, and others.

The event aims to strengthen the strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Russia, with an emphasis on promising areas of cooperation in the trade-economic, investment, transport, and technological spheres. The participants will focus on ensuring security and stability in Eurasia, developing industrial cooperation, investment, and digitalization, as well as transport connectivity and the formation of international trade infrastructure.—APP

Japan to strengthen screening of foreign investments

TOKYO: The Japanese government decided Tuesday to strengthen screening of foreign investments in the country by setting up a cross-ministerial, U.S.-style panel to prevent leakage of critical technologies and intelligence. Through a revision of the foreign exchange and trade law, the government of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi seeks to ensure that it can identify foreign investments considered risky in terms of national economic security. Takaichi had called for the establishment of a Japanese version of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States when she ran in the presidential election of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in the fall. Establishment of the panel was also included in the ruling coalition agreement signed by the Japan Innovation Party in October. In her policy speech to parliament in February, Takaichi stressed the new entity would improve the effectiveness of screening of inbound direct investments. The screening by the envisioned panel will involve the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the National Security Secretariat at the Cabinet Office. The foreign exchange and trade law stipulates that the government must pre-screen foreign investors when they acquire a certain level of shares in companies engaged in critical businesses related to national security, such as aviation and electricity. Under the draft amendment, the screening will also be conducted when another foreign company acquires a foreign company that already holds shares in a Japanese company. If the security risk is deemed particularly high, such as when an investment is made by a company that has previously violated the foreign exchange and trade law, the government will be able to review the company's activities even in industries not currently covered by the law. Japanese investors recognized as being under the influence of a foreign government would also be considered "foreign investors," according to the draft. In the United States, CFIUS is authorized to decide whether investments in the country by foreign companies pose security risks. If the committee identifies problems with such investments, it can advise the president to block them. In recent years, CFIUS was involved in examining the bid by Nippon Steel Corp. to acquire United States Steel Corp.—AGENCIES

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Briefs

Nigeria suicide attack kills 23

Fighters from Boko Haram and rival jihadist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have recently stepped up attacks in northeastern Nigeria

MAIDUGURI: Multiple explosions staged by suspected suicide bombers rocked the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri, killing at least 23 people and wounding more than 100 others, police said Tuesday. "Preliminary investigation reveals that the incidents were carried out by suspected suicide bombers," police spokesman Nahum Kenneth Daso said in a statement. "Regrettably, a total of twenty three (23) persons lost their lives, while one hundred and eight (108) others sustained varying degrees of injuries," he added. The blasts, which struck on Monday evening, came after an attack on a military post overnight Sunday to Monday, which authorities blamed on suspected jihadists. Combined with the attack on the military position the evening prior and a mosque bombing in December, the assaults have wrecked a peaceful stretch in the city, which had become a relative oasis of calm as Nigeria's long-running insurgency was pushed to the rural hinterlands. Fighters from Boko Haram and rival jihadist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have recently stepped up attacks in northeastern Nigeria. Their 16-year campaign to establish a caliphate in the country has killed more than 40,000 people and displaced around two million. An AFP reporter at a city hospital on Monday evening saw dozens of wounded people seeking treatment from Monday's blasts, as well as multiple bodies covered by sheets on the sidewalk outside. Police said in the early Tuesday morning statement that "normalcy has been fully restored in the affected areas" and that security forces have increased their "presence and surveillance across Maiduguri and its environs to prevent any further occurrences." - APP

Saudi, Egyptian leaders talk

El-Sisi also affirmed Egypt's condemnation of repeated Iranian attacks on the Kingdom and its support and solidarity with it against any threat to Saudi sovereignty and security

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received a phone call from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Monday, the Saudi Press Agency reported. During the call, the two leaders reviewed current developments and discussed the dangerous military escalation taking place in the region. El-Sisi also affirmed Egypt's condemnation of repeated Iranian attacks on the Kingdom and its support and solidarity with it against any threat to Saudi sovereignty and security.

Pakistan tanker transits Strait of Hormuz on Iran-approved route

Pakistani-flagged Karachi has sailed through narrow gap between two Iranian islands of Larak and Qeshm, says report

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani-flagged tanker has become the latest vessel to navigate the Strait of Hormuz by sailing closely along the Iranian coastline, indicating that vessels may now require Tehran's approval for safe passage through the world's most critical oil chokepoint amid escalating regional tensions. The US-Israeli war on Iran is in its third week, with at least 2,000 people dead and no end in sight. The Strait of Hormuz — which carries 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas — remains largely closed off, with US allies rebuffing President Donald Trump's request for help to reopen the critical waterway, spiking energy prices

and fears of inflation around the world. According to vessel-tracking data, the Pakistani-flagged Karachi sailed through a narrow gap between the two Iranian islands of Larak and Qeshm with open signals on Sunday, before tracking the coast into the Gulf of Oman. Meanwhile, two bulk carriers took the same route on Monday morning, openly signalling that they were transiting through the chokepoint even as other ships prefer to switch off transponders for safety. Two India-flagged liquefied petroleum gas tankers also transit the strait in the early hours of Saturday, while a Gambia-flagged general cargo ship just exited the waterway on Tuesday. "Sporadic signals placed the three vessels near Larak, but the full route could not be determined because of electronic interference that scrambles informa-

tion coming from vessels in the region," the publication reported. Harrison Prétat, deputy director and fellow with the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, believes that if the route continues to be used successfully, it could mean a traffic control system is being imposed by Iran. "That could mean Tehran attacks vessels or uses mines on the traditional route — while maintaining a free channel for friendly tankers on the other side," the publication stated. Since US and Israeli attacks began more than two weeks ago, Iran has targeted several vessels in and around the Strait of Hormuz, effectively restricting traffic through the critical waterway. The disruption has left some ships stranded inside the Per-

sian Gulf while others have been unable to enter, creating an unprecedented shock to energy trade. "This creates a system in which the Strait is not formally closed, yet transit increasingly depends on political understandings with Tehran," analysts at JPMorgan Chase & Co, including Natasha Kaneva, said in a note. Under normal conditions, vessels rarely sail so close to Iran due to security concerns. Standard navigation routes also direct ships exiting the strait towards the opposite side of the channel, although at least one vessel using the traditional path was attacked last week. "We could be seeing the start of a verification process by Iran, whereby ships must be approved to transit via the Strait of Hormuz by calling between Larak and Qeshm," said Martin Kelly.

Diamer Basha Dam project offers new jobs

DNA

GILGIT: The Diamer Basha Hydropower Project has announced 18 driver vacancies for residents of District Diamer as construction work on the mega dam continues. The project is owned by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), with the main construction contract awarded to the Power China-FWO joint venture, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. According to the announcement, the vacancies are for driver positions linked to the project. Applicants with valid driving licences and relevant experience can apply through Central Testing Services by March 30. The recruitment is part of ongoing efforts to create employment opportunities for communities in the project area, according to the project statement. Diamer Basha Dam is being built on the Indus River about 40 kilometres downstream of Chilas. WAPDA says the project is expected to be completed in 2030. Once finished, it is expected to have a gross water storage capacity of 8.1 million acre-feet, help irrigate 1.23 million acres of land, and generate 4,500 megawatts of electricity, with annual output of about 18 billion units.

Gilani's Land Cruiser purchase Senate Secretariat responds to queries on

Secretariat says media reports on purchase are misleading and incorrect



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A Land Cruiser for Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani was bought in May 2025 during the 2024-2025 financial year through a "transparent procurement process" as part of a comprehensive vehicle replacement programme, the secretariat said. A spokesperson said that the acquisition also included the replacement of vehicles for the chairpersons of standing committees, the Senate Deputy Chairman, the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Secretariat. The spokesperson further clarified that the vehicle in question had been delivered in March, 2026, whereas the payment was made from the previous year's budget savings in May, 2025. "The Senate Secretariat's attention was drawn to certain media reports regarding the purchase of a Land Cruiser for the Chairman of the Senate, Gilani. These reports are misleading, factually incorrect, and appear to be based on incomplete information and mala fide intentions," the spokesperson said. "The Senate Secretariat categorically rejects these baseless insinuations and urges media organisations to exercise due diligence and professional responsibility in reporting matters related to state institutions." Commenting on the media reports, a senator, belonging to the treasury benches, requesting anonymity, regretted that the purchase was needless in such a national scenario, wherein over 70 million people live below the poverty line amid soaring inflation.

Cancer patients in Sindh lack complete treatment

Patients suffer as no single public hospital in province offers full cancer treatment

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Cancer patients across Sindh, including Karachi, are facing serious difficulties as no public sector hospital in the province provides complete cancer treatment for all types under one roof. Due to this gap, patients are forced to visit multiple facilities for surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy, while many terminally ill individuals lack access to proper palliative care to relieve their suffering. The News reported. Health officials and oncologists say the fragmented system of cancer care means patients are frequently referred from one hospital to another, delaying treatment and increasing the financial and emotional burden on families already struggling with the disease. Pakistan records more than 180,000 new cancer cases every year, according to health experts, with Sindh accounting for a significant proportion due to its large population and better diagnostic facilities that detect cancers more frequently than other regions. Despite Karachi being Pakistan's largest city and the healthcare hub of the province, no single government hospital currently provides complete cancer care, including surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and palliative care services. As a result, patients often begin treatment at one institution but are referred elsewhere for other components of therapy. A recent case involving a 55-year-old man from Hyderabad diagnosed with stomach cancer illustrates the ordeal faced by many families seeking treatment.

Pakistan supports Unama renewal

Security Council resolution urges Afghan Taliban to take "immediate, concrete measures" against terror

DNA

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council on Monday unanimously extended the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan mandate for three months, with all 15 members, including Pakistan, backing the move as Islamabad flagged a surge in cross-border terrorism from Afghan soil. Speaking at the adoption of the resolution on the mandate renewal of Unama, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, said Pakistan supported the three-month extension. He said Pakistan backed Unama's role in promoting "peace, security and stability" in Afghanistan, which is facing multiple challenges, including terrorism, human rights

concerns, narcotics and shrinking humanitarian aid. He also commended China for its role as penholder, calling its efforts to build consensus "sincere", and welcomed the unanimous adoption of the resolution. Turning to security, Jadoon said Pakistan has consistently maintained that the "foremost" challenge in Afghanistan is the deteriorating situation and the "exponential rise" in terrorism emanating from its territory. He said elements within the Taliban regime were "actively collaborating" or providing a "permissive environment" to groups including TTP, BLA, Majeed Brigade, Daesh-K, Al Qaeda and ETIM. These groups, he said, operate with impunity and are responsible for cross-border attacks on Pakistani civilians, law enforcement personnel and critical infrastructure.

Hundreds of migrants vanishing in droves

"It's a strategy of silence," said Matteo Villa, a researcher focusing on migration and data at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies think tank

NEWS DESK

ROME: Bodies washing ashore day after day. Phone calls from relatives going unanswered. Migrants' tents abandoned overnight. Migrants trying to reach Europe are vanishing in droves in what are known as "invisible shipwrecks" but governments responsible for search and rescue are withholding information about what they know. The beginning of 2026 ranks as the deadliest start to any year for people trying to cross the Mediterranean — an unprecedented 682 confirmed missing as of March 16 — according to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration. But the real death toll is almost certainly much higher. Human rights groups are increasingly struggling to verify tolls as Italy, Tunisia and Malta have quietly restricted information on migrant rescues and shipwrecks along the deadliest migration route in the world. The news barely makes headlines, in part because the lack of transparency prevents journalists from confirming reports. "It's a strategy of silence," said Matteo Villa, a researcher focusing on migration and data at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies think tank. The organization Refugees in Libya and other human rights groups have been sounding the alarm since late January, reporting more than 1,000 people missing after Cyclone Harry hit the region. But authorities have not confirmed, denied or corrected those reports. In the weeks that followed the cyclone, more than 20 decomposing bodies washed ashore in Italy and Libya while other human remains were spotted floating in the middle of the sea. For the families of missing migrants, not knowing their fate is excruciating. "Europe should know that these people who got drowned in the sea have family members, have dreams, have passions," Josephus Thomas, a migrant from Sierra Leone and community leader in Tunisia's coastal town of El Amra, told AP. Sparse information means fewer deaths recorded. Even the UN's migration agency is increasingly unable to verify cases of migrants who die in what is known as "invisible shipwrecks" because of the growing lack of information. Last year, at least 1,500 people were reported missing whose fates IOM could not confirm, said Julia Black, who leads the organization's Missing Migrants Project. The issue persists in 2026. "We started a new secondary data set of what we are calling unverifiable cases because it's just become so many," Black said. For this year, they already have more than 400 missing they could not verify. Many humanitarian organizations that previously filled some of the information gaps are no longer able to do so because of the global wave of funding cuts and government-imposed restrictions across the region.

Trump was warned of likely Iranian retaliation on Gulf allies

Pre-war intelligence did not guarantee Iran's response but flagged it as possible, says source

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump was warned that attacking Iran could trigger retaliation against US Gulf allies despite his claims on Monday that Tehran's reaction came as a surprise, said a US official and two sources familiar with US intelligence reports. Pre-war intelligence assessments did not say that Iran's response was "a guarantee, but it certainly was on the list of potential outcomes," said one source, who, like the other two, requested anonymity to discuss the issue. The president twice on Monday said that Iran's retaliatory strikes against Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait were a surprise, the first time at a Kennedy Center board

meeting in the White House. "They (Iran) weren't supposed to go after all these other countries in the Middle East," he said. "Nobody expected that. We were shocked." Trump's assertion followed other administration claims that have not been backed by US intelligence reporting, such as that Iran would soon have a missile capable of hitting the US homeland and that it would need two to four weeks to make a nuclear bomb and would then use it. Those allegations and an imminent threat posed by Iran to the US and its forces in the region have been among the varying reasons that Trump and some top aides have given to justify his decision to join Israel in launching their air war against Iran on February 28. Trump was also briefed ahead of the operation that Tehran would likely seek to close the economically vital Strait of Hormuz, according to two other sources familiar with the matter.



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Cuba plunged into blackout

HAVANA: Officials in Cuba reported an islandwide blackout Monday as deepening energy and economic crises continue to strain a crumbling power grid. It marked the third major outage in four months. A separate blackout just over a week ago affected western Cuba, leaving millions without electricity. President Miguel Diaz-Canel warned Friday that the island has gone more than three months without oil shipments, relying instead on solar power, natural gas and aging thermoelectric plants. Cuba has blamed the crisis on a US energy blockade, while US President Donald Trump warned in January of tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to the island. - APP