

Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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PM Shehbaz Sharif all praise for the bravery of forces

Detailed News On Page-01

UN chief for ending war in Gulf region

Detailed News On Page-08



Putin lauds Muslim servicemen

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Russia continues strikes on Ukraine

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russian strikes in southern Ukraine killed one woman and wounded two people, including a child, the regional military administration said on Friday. "At night, the Russians attacked Zaporizhzhia district. They carried out two strikes, destroying private houses," Ivan Fedorov, the head of the regional military administration, posted on Telegram, adding a 30-year-old woman was killed. A 10-year-old boy and a 48-year-old man were wounded in the attack, he said. Ukrainian and US negotiators will meet in the United States on Saturday in a bid to revive stalled talks on Russia's invasion, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Talks between Russia and Ukraine, brokered and pushed by the United States, have been derailed by the US-Israeli war with Iran that broke out last month.

Israel strikes Syrian govt targets

TEL AVIV: The Israeli military struck infrastructure sites belonging to the Syrian government overnight in response to attacks against Druze civilians in Sweida, the Israeli military said on Friday. The Israeli military said it targeted a command center and weapons in military compounds in southern Syria and said it will not tolerate harm toward the Druze population, adding it will continue to operate to defend them and monitor developments in the region. - APP

Kuwait shuts down refinery

Iran attack 'wipes out 17% of Qatar's LNG capacity'

Qatar Energy CEO estimates \$20bn annual revenue loss due to facility damage following Iranian attacks

NEWS DESK

QATAR: Iranian attacks have knocked out 17% of Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, causing an estimated \$20 billion in lost annual revenue and threatening supplies to Europe and Asia, QatarEnergy's CEO told Reuters on Thursday. Saad al-Kaabi said two of Qatar's 14 LNG trains and one of its two gas-to-liquids (GTL) facilities were damaged in the unprecedented strikes. The repairs will sideline 12.8 million tons per year of LNG for three to five years, he said in an interview. "I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that Qatar would be - Qatar and the region - in such an attack, especially from a brotherly Muslim country in the month of Ramadan, attacking us in this way," said Kaabi, who is also Qatar's minister of state for energy affairs. Hours earlier Iran had aimed a

Continued on Page 06

Japan PM placates Trump on Iran

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi sailed smoothly past a potential clash with Donald Trump on Thursday - although the US president whipped up a bit of a storm about Pearl Harbor. Days after lashing out at US allies including Japan for failing to heed his calls to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz, Trump praised Tokyo's efforts related to the Middle East war in vague terms. "I believe that, based on statements (which) were given to us yesterday, the day before yesterday.

Pakistan rejects Afghan Taliban claim of ceasefire violation

The ministry noted that the decision to temporarily suspend the operation was made in view of Eid al-Fitr and at the request of friendly Islamic countries

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has dismissed as "ridiculous" claims by an Afghan Taliban spokesperson alleging a violation of the temporary suspension of Operation Ghazab li-Haq, according to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. "Pakistan has not violated any ceasefire, adding that the Afghan authorities' claims are baseless and based on falsehoods," the ministry said in a statement. It said the purpose of such propaganda was to justify acts of terrorism

and suggested it could also originate from dissenting elements within the Taliban regime. "Pakistan has made clear that the temporary pause in operations will end, after which any terrorist activity or cross-border attacks will be met with a strong response," it further stated. The ministry noted that the decision to temporarily suspend the operation was made in view of Eid al-Fitr and at the request of friendly Islamic countries.



PM Albanese heckled

DNA

SYDNEY: Protesters heckled and booed Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during a visit to Australia's largest mosque. Some in Australia's Muslim and Jewish communities are angry over a fine line walked by the centre-left government since Israel began its military campaign in Gaza, expressing concern for Palestinians, repeatedly urging a ceasefire, and backing Israel's right to self-defence. Video images showed protesters interrupting proceedings about 15 minutes after Albanese and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke joined worshippers at Lakemba Mosque in western Sydney to mark the end of Ramadan. Demonstrators booed, told Albanese and Burke to "Get out!" and called them "genocide supporters", referring to Israel's killing of Palestinians in Gaza.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan's economy highly susceptible

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A recent study conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (Pide), affiliated with the Planning Commission, cautioned that Pakistan's economy is highly susceptible to any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, a key global energy passage. The study noted that even a minor global oil supply shock could swiftly lead to increased fuel costs, higher inflation, and intensified stress on Pakistan's external accounts, The News reported. Titled "Pakistan's Exposure to a Strait of Hormuz Shock: Fuel Pricing, Inflation, and External Vulnerability,"

Continued on Page 06

IMAM BUKHARI COMPLEX



SAMARKAND: As part of his visit to the Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev reviewed the completed construction work and the conditions created for visitors. With modern infrastructure, advanced exhibition technologies, and expanded capacity for tens of thousands of pilgrims, the complex has become a pearl of Samarkand and the New Uzbekistan. - DNA

Talks to Malaysian PM also

Leaders of Pakistan, Azerbaijan call for peace and dialogue

The conversation reflects the enduring strategic partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, rooted in shared cultural, religious, and historical affinities, as well as mutual support on regional security matters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday discussed the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East in phone calls with leaders from Malaysia and Azerbaijan, with all three calling for the de-escalation of the conflict. The call underscored the deep fraternal bonds between the two nations. During their warm and cordial discussion, Prime Minister Sharif conveyed heartfelt wishes to President Aliyev and the brotherly people of Azerbaijan. President Aliyev reciprocated these sentiments warmly on be-

half of the Azerbaijani people and extended similar greetings to the people of Pakistan. Both leaders prayed for greater unity within the Muslim Ummah amid global challenges. The two leaders also addressed the ongoing hostilities in Iran and the broader Gulf region, including recent incidents affecting Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Sharif reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of attacks targeting Azerbaijan—referencing the March 5 drone strikes on Nakhchivan that damaged civilian infrastructure such as the international airport and injured civilians—and

Continued on Page 06

Oil prices retreat

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices eased while bonds were nursing losses, after global central bankers sounded the alarm on inflation risks stemming from the ongoing war in the Middle East that has sent markets into a tailspin. Following a hectic week of monetary policy meetings across effectively the Group of Seven (G7) nations and others, the key takeaway for investors has been the prospect of a more aggressive policy path. Traders are no longer expecting a Federal Reserve rate cut this year, a hike from the Bank of England next month is seen as a coin toss, and sources said the European Central Bank may need to begin discussing rate increases in April and possibly tighten policy in June. "There's a lot of value in the signal," said Vishnu Varathan, Mizuho's head of macro research for Asia ex-Japan, of the hawkish rhetoric from central banks this week. "It's a messaging to markets that we are on top of this, you don't need to send yields unnecessarily higher, because... the yields are already starting to do the work for them." A rout in global bonds pushed yields to multi-month highs on Thursday, though the selloff abated in Asia on Friday. Trading of cash US Treasuries was closed due to a holiday in Japan, but futures edged marginally higher. The yield on the two-year US Treasury note, which typically reflects near-term rate expectations, had jumped as much as over 20 basis points in the previous session.

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Market driven skills key to tackling youth unemployment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Tahir Mahmood has stressed the urgent need to align Pakistan's education system with market-driven skills in order to prepare the youth for emerging economic opportunities and ensure sustainable national growth. Talking to a visiting delegation of youth here on Thursday he said that Pakistan possesses a large youth population which can become a powerful engine of economic development if equipped with modern skills demanded by the industry and global markets.

He noted that there exists a considerable gap between the skills being imparted by educational institutions and the requirements of the business and industrial sectors. Bridging this gap, he said, is essential to reduce unemployment



and improve productivity. Sardar Tahir Mahmood emphasized that universities, technical institutes, and vocational training centers should design their curricula in close consultation with the private sector so that graduates en-

ter the job market with practical and relevant expertise. He added that special attention should be given to emerging sectors such as information technology, digital services, e-commerce, engineering, and modern manufacturing. He further said that strengthening technical and vocational education would not only enhance employment opportunities for the youth but also help increase Pakistan's exports and competitiveness in the international market. The ICCI President also urged the government to encourage public-private partnerships in skill development programs and expand modern training facilities across the country to meet the growing demands of industry. He reiterated that empowering the youth with market-oriented skills is essential for building a strong economy and enabling Pakistan to effectively compete in the global knowledge-based economy.

Police chalked out security plan

SARGODHA: A comprehensive and foolproof security plan has been finalized to ensure peaceful observance of Eid-ul-Fitr congregations and Chand Raat celebrations across the district. According to police sources, stringent security arrangements have been made for 512 Eid congregations throughout Sargodha as per orders of DPO Muhammad Suhail Ashraf. More than 2000 police officers and personnel will be deployed to perform duty during Eid days.

The police have assigned specific duties at 499 mosques and 101 Imambarahs to ensure effective monitoring and swift response. Elite Force teams will remain actively engaged in continuous patrolling across the district. Special security measures have been implemented at sensitive locations, including the installation of walk-through gates, metal detectors, and CCTV cameras to enhance surveillance and public safety.

In addition, 59 pickets have been established across the district to maintain strict checking on Chand Raat, while 12 patrolling Squads will remain on the roads to ensure law and order. Extra security arrangements have also been made for graveyards, parks, and other sensitive public places to prevent any untoward incident.—APP

Attock police arrested five criminals

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Police ATTOCK Khurd during a crack down launched against anti state elements have arrested five criminals along with recovery of gold mining machinery and drugs worth rupees millions from their possession here on Thursday. Police Spokesperson says that police station ATTOCK Khurd led by newly joined SHO Malik Mohammad Naeem conducted raid on the illegal mining of gold along the left verge of Indus river. The police squad

took into custody gold mining machinery, instruments from the possession of four accused namely Malik Sajjad son of Zahoore Ahmed hailing from village Boota, Tehsil ATTOCK, Abbas Khan son of Nisar Ahmed, Aziz Ali son of Murad Ali residents of Charsada, KPK and Wajid Ali son Rahim Khan of Swabi who were digging and mining the crude gold from the Indus River without any lawful permission. Meanwhile, police also arrested an inter provincial drugs smuggler identified as Abdul Wahab son of Waris Khan resident of Peshawar

along with recovery of hashish of six kilograms from the cavities of Ford wagon skilfully concealed in the packets of tomatoes. Later on, cases were registered against all these criminals and investigation are underway. The District Police Officer ATTOCK Sardar Movaran Khan also appreciated the police efforts with the direction to eradicate the menace of narcotics from the society protecting the youth at all costs. Furthermore, the interprovincial smuggling of drugs in the bordering district ATTOCK should be strictly monitored without any discrimination.

HEC grants formal approval to SBBU

NAWABSHAH: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad has achieved another significant milestone in the field of education. Owing to the visionary leadership and dedicated efforts of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Madad Ali Shah, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad has granted formal approval to launch a PhD program in the Department of Information Technology at the university. This approval will mark a major enhancement in the institution's academic and research activities. For the effective initiation of PhD program, additional funding, modern laboratory equipment, and more faculty members will be required. In this regard, efforts are underway to seek full support from Sindh Higher Education Commission. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Madad Ali Shah congratulated the faculty members of the Information Technology department, including Dr. Meraj Nabi Bhatti, Dr. Asif Wagan, and Dr. Marina Mari. VC said that the university's primary objective is to promote quality higher education and research, particularly in the field of Information Technology. He said that, under the mission of Shaheed Mohtama Benazir Bhutto, the introduction of doctoral programs at the university will not only provide students with advanced academic and research opportunities but will also help strengthen the standard of higher education for youth of the region and across Sindh.—APP

APHC slams Indian aggression

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that India's claims of "normalcy" in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir are nothing but a façade, asserting that the territory remains one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas in a statement in Srinagar said Kashmiri people continue to live under fear, repression, and systematic human rights violations while the Modi regime is peddling normalcy propaganda to mislead the international community. He said the ground situation is marked by daily cordon and search operations, arbitrary arrests, killings and the use of draconian laws. He urged the international community to take serious notice of the situation and allow access to United Nations observers and international human rights organizations to assess the realities on the ground. Meanwhile, amid a complete shutdown in Ladakh, protest rallies were held in Leh and Kargil where protesters urged India to grant their political rights and raised slogans in favour of their demands. On the other hand, at the session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the International Muslim Women's Union expressed grave concern over the shrinking civic space in occupied Jammu and Kashmir following the August 2019 actions. The organization's representative Sobia Shawl on the occasion said that fundamental freedoms, including expression, assembly, and political participation, are being systematically curtailed in the territory.



ISLAMABAD: A view of dark clouds in the sky during rainy weather, in the Federal Capital.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Congratulates PM

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed gratitude over issuance of 5G spectrum license, and congratulated Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his entire team over this remarkable achievement. She noted that with the grace and blessing of Allah Almighty, Pakistan is taking lead in the fast-paced race of digital technology. She said that the launch of 5G spectrum will not only help students but will also promote IT business in the country. She highlighted that Punjab Artificial Intelligence roadmap has been issued; through which, they are going to establish world's first AI Delivery Unit. She added that the launch of 5G will make faster implementation of Artificial Intelligence roadmap possible.

Security tightened for Pakistan Day

ABBOTTABAD: Hazara Police have deployed over 10,000 personnel across eight districts after finalizing a comprehensive security plan for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr, and Pakistan Day celebrations, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara Nasir Mahmood Satti said on Friday. The deployment, made on the directives of IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed, includes operational staff, traffic wardens, Elite Force, SSU, lady police, Special Branch, and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel. DIG Satti reviewed district-wide security arrangements and termed them

satisfactory, stating that Hazara Police are fully prepared to tackle any emergency situation. He added that a traffic management plan has also been devised to ensure smooth flow of vehicles and facilitate tourists during the festive days. Directing District Police Officers (DPOs) to personally monitor the implementation of the security plan, the DIG emphasized enhancing security at major mosques, Imambarahs, and other sensitive locations. He also instructed SDPOs and SHOs to conduct regular visits to markets, shopping malls, and religious

places, and to carry out search and strike operations with the assistance of bomb disposal units and sniffer dogs. CTD and Special Branch officials have been directed to keep a close watch on suspicious individuals and those listed in the Fourth Schedule. Strict action has been ordered against aerial firing, fireworks, drifting, and one-wheeling during Chand Raat and Eid, with violators to be arrested. The DIG further directed police officers to visit personnel deployed at police stations, check posts, and other duty points during Eid to boost their morale.—APP

Govt urges people to save petrol

ISLAMABAD: The government has appealed to the public to adopt measures to save petrol and diesel in order to avoid the risk of the availability of petroleum products being affected in the coming days. The appeal was made during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, which focused on the implementation of fuel-saving and austerity measures in light of the rapidly deteriorating regional situation. It was emphasized that readiness is required to cope with every possible scenario, and approaches must be adapted according to changing circumstances. The meeting emphasized carpooling should be adopted to save fuel and transportation should be conducted collectively. Unnecessary travel should be avoided and that commuting should be limited to save fuel. In his remarks, the Prime Minister said all relevant departments should remain prepared for emergency measures until the situation improves.—APP



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23rd March

Pakistan Resolution Day



On the auspicious occasion of Pakistan Day, I extend my heartiest greetings to all citizens of Pakistan.

Indeed, Pakistan Day is a landmark event in the glorious history of our country, when back in 1940 a historic Resolution was passed, which once and for all defined the goal of achieving a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. In just over seven years from this momentous day, the dream of independence was realised and our beloved country – Pakistan – came into being. While celebrating this day, we pay tribute to our elders for their extraordinary sacrifices.

My Dear Countrymen! The prevailing global and regional geo-strategic environment has a profound impact on the region as well as Pakistan, which demand unity in our ranks, judicious utilization of valuable resources and added focus on indigenous capabilities. Certainly, we can surmount all challenges by drawing inspiration from our glorious past and following in the footsteps of our forefathers. Let us recommit ourselves to contribute wholeheartedly to the progress of the country by reinvigorating the spirit of resilience, hard work, patriotism and unflinching faith in a brighter tomorrow. I take this opportunity to thank all countrymen for their support to the Defence Forces of Pakistan, as indeed PAF, all along especially during testing times and want to reassure that, as always, PAF, in perfect synergy with Sister Services, will spare no effort for the defence of motherland.

May Allah Almighty grant us strength to ensure invincible aerial defence of Pakistan, Aameen!

Pakistan Air Force Zindabad!
Pakistan Paidabad!



Air Chief Marshal
Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI(M), HJ
Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force





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MARCH

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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- Shifa International 4603666



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- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

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Pakistani energy leader showcases energy model

The 6th China LNG Conference, held from March 18 to 20, 2026, at the National Convention and Exhibition Center in Tianjin, proved to be a landmark event in the global LNG industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani energy leader has unveiled a comprehensive vision for sustainable energy transition, highlighting off-grid solutions, LNG integration, and renewable innovation as key pillars for future energy security. Speaking at the 6th China LNG Conference, Owais Mir, CEO of Dynamic Energy Automation Group, emphasized that energy diversity and supply chain independence are now central to addressing global energy challenges. He noted that for countries like Pakistan one of the world's most populous nations balancing rising demand with limited domestic resources requires a strategic mix of fuels and technologies. Mir pointed out that despite rapid population growth, Pakistan's natural gas consumption has remained rel-

atively stagnant over the past decade, underscoring structural inefficiencies and supply constraints. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), introduced over the past 10 years with support from international partners including China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has become a crucial "bridge fuel" in the country's evolving energy mix. However, he stressed that the future lies beyond conventional systems. "Off-grid energy solutions are no longer optional they are essential for resilience, especially in regions vulnerable to supply disruptions," Mir said. He introduced innovative concepts such as LPG-air mix systems and virtual LNG, which can replicate natural gas characteristics and deliver energy to areas without pipeline infrastructure. Highlighting practical implementation, Mir shared examples of off-grid plants in remote, high-altitude regions of Pakistan that supply gas to thousands of consumers

independently of traditional networks. These systems, he explained, not only enhance energy access but also reduce vulnerability to geopolitical shocks and supply chain interruptions. Mir also underscored the importance of integrating renewables into the gas value chain. His company is actively developing bio-LNG projects by combining agricultural biomass with existing gas infrastructure through advanced technologies such as pyrolysis. This hybrid model supports decarbonization while enabling carbon credit generation and rural economic development. Drawing attention to global climate risks, Mir linked recent extreme weather events to broader energy and environmental challenges, urging faster adoption of cleaner fuels. He called for stronger collaboration between developing countries and energy leaders like China to unlock financing

opportunities, including green climate funds, CEN reported. "An integrated approach combining LNG, LPG, and biomass can deliver both energy security and sustainability," he concluded. The conference reinforced the growing importance of flexible, decentralized energy systems as the global LNG industry moves toward a low-carbon and resilient future. The 6th China LNG Conference, held from March 18 to 20, 2026, at the National Convention and Exhibition Center in Tianjin, proved to be a landmark event in the global LNG industry. Under the theme "Win-win Cooperation, Intelligent Creation for the Future Leading the LNG Industry Toward a Sustainable Future," the conference brought together over 1,100 representatives from more than 30 countries and regions.

ICT Police Dolphin Force holds flag march

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Dolphin Force conducted a late-night flag march in various areas of the federal capital to ensure security ahead of Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr. An official told APP on Friday that the flag march was carried out under the supervision of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, Qazi Ali Raza, covering multiple areas of the capital. He said the purpose of the flag march was to instill a sense of security among citizens and demonstrate the preparedness of Islamabad Police. SSP Operations Qazi said Islamabad Police remained fully active to protect the lives and property of citizens, adding that effective security arrangements had been made across the capital for Eid-ul-Fitr.—APP

DPM Dar offers prayers at Masjid al-Nabawi

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar visited the holy city of Madinah Munawwarah and offered prayers at Masjid al-Nabawi. "After attending the Consultative Ministerial Meeting of 12 Foreign Ministers, and holding other sideline bilateral and quad lateral meetings, I reached Madinah Munawwarah before magrab last night. I paid my respects at Jabl Uhud and presented Salam at Masjid al-Nabawi Sharif to Aaqajan SAWW on arrival," the deputy prime minister wrote on his X handle. "My prayers have been for peace and prosperity of Pakistan, continued progress and well-being of our nation, for strength, unity, and resilience across the Muslim Ummah, and for wisdom and cooperation within the international community in these challenging times, and for lasting peace and shared prosperity for all," he added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: An eye catching view of seasonal flowers full blooming on a green belt, in the Federal Capital.

Motorway police return over Rs5.3m

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have returned more than Rs5.3 million to passengers as part of an ongoing nationwide crackdown against overcharging and overloading, launched on March 15 on the directives of Inspector General Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry. According to an NHMP spokesperson, the recovered amount was refunded to passengers at various locations after taking action against public service vehicles involved in overcharging. The spokesperson said that over 21,000 challans have also been issued against passenger vehicles for violations including overloading, overcharging, and incomplete travel documents during the campaign. He added that, in line with austerity and fuel conservation measures, more than 32,000 vehicles have been fined so far for violating the newly imposed speed limits since March 12. He added that citizens could register their complaints directly with motorway police officers, through the helpline 130, or via the official social media handle @NHMP for prompt redressal. The NHMP officers are also actively engaged in creating awareness among commuters at toll plazas across the country regarding road safety and compliance with the revised speed limits.—APP

CDNS touches Rs 1 trillion savings inflows

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has attained Rs 1 trillion in savings inflows from July 1st to March, 18th of the current fiscal year 2025-26, achieving over 76.92 Percent its annual target and reflecting steady progress in promoting a savings culture in the country. According to officials, the CDNS has set an overall savings inflows target of Rs1.3 trillion for FY 2025-26. The inflows recorded so far indicate encouraging public participation in national savings schemes during the first half of the fiscal year. Similarly, the CDNS has fixed a target of Rs50 billion for

investments in Islamic savings instruments during the current fiscal year to support the growth of the Islamic economy, a senior CDNS official told APP on Thursday. Sharing details of previous performance, the official said National Savings had set an annual target of Rs1.65 trillion for FY 2024-25, alongside a Rs170 billion target for Islamic finance investments, both aimed at strengthening the savings culture and expanding Shari-ah-compliant financial options. In response to a question, he said the CDNS realised Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds during FY 2023-24, surpassing 100 per cent of the annual target. National Savings had set a target of Rs1.7 trillion for

that year, and exceeding it was an encouraging sign of public confidence. The CDNS had also achieved its target of Rs1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in FY 2022-23, which was Rs200 billion higher than the Rs1.3 trillion target set for FY 2021-22. The savings target for FY 2021-22 was later reviewed upward to Rs1.4 trillion in view of market trends and the objective of further improving the national savings culture. The official said institutional reforms were underway in the CDNS, with new initiatives, innovations, and policy measures being introduced to enhance efficiency and expand outreach across the country.—DNA

Sweet Eid, gentle breeze A rare cool ease welcomes festive seas

ISLAMABAD: A refreshing spell of cool weather has set the tone for Eid celebrations in the federal capital, bringing a sense of comfort and calm after days of unusual early heat, and adding a special charm to the festive atmosphere. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, a westerly weather system has influenced large parts of the country, bringing rain, cloud cover and a welcome drop in temperatures. The change has not been limited to Islamabad alone, as cooler conditions have been observed across Pakistan, offering widespread relief. This year's Eid carries an added sense of nostalgia and gratitude, as the festival arrives in relatively cooler weather after many years of coinciding

with intense summer heat. For many, the return of Eid in milder conditions has made the occasion feel more enjoyable and spiritually uplifting. Residents across Islamabad have embraced the shift with visible relief and joy. In F-7, shopkeeper Mohammad Rafiq shared with APP that the gentle breeze made preparations easier and brought back the feel of more pleasant festive seasons. In G13 a housewife Saba told APP that Ramzan special prayers along with household preparations had become far more comfortable, calling the weather a blessing at such a meaningful time. At mosques, worshippers welcome the calm and cool conditions, with many describing the

timing as perfect for Eid gatherings and prayers. Markets in capital including Aabpara, G-11, I-10, Karachi company, Jinnah Super and all other have also seen increased activity, as families step out to shop and celebrate without suffering from the oppressive heat. Parks and open spaces, including those in F-11, have turned lively as families enjoy the fresh post rain environment. Social media, too, reflects the collective mood, with users expressing gratitude for a festive season made more memorable by the rare cool spell. The Pakistan Meteorological Department expects the pleasant weather conditions to persist over the next few days, promising a comfortable Eid for citizens across the country.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

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KARATE

BOXING

KICKBOXING

TAEKWONDO

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War at the speed of AI

Zaid M. Belbahi

THE conflict between the US, Israel and Iran has entered a devastating new phase. On Feb. 28, the world witnessed a moment that signaled a clear shift in the dynamics of war and the nature of modern conflict. Artificial intelligence, once a tool of science and digital transformation, is now a weapon of war, deployed in real-time and at an industrial scale against human targets. We are experiencing the first AI war and its implications for humanity are profound. On the Israeli side, the military is deploying Habsora, an AI-driven targeting system capable of generating airstrike recommendations faster than any human analyst. One Israeli intelligence source described the system as turning military operations into a "mass assassination factory," where the focus has shifted from precision to sheer volume.

Researcher Antony Loewenstein, who has studied the system extensively, has warned that it represents a fundamental rupture in the ethics of modern warfare, with the logic of efficiency displacing the logic of proportionality. It is the same system that was battle-tested in the rubble of Gaza, which has now been repurposed for strikes against Iran.

Meanwhile, Israel's cyber operations offer a chilling glimpse into the future of warfare. In the search for Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Israeli warplanes reportedly hacked into Tehran's vast network of traffic cameras, turning everyday surveillance systems into precise targeting tools.

Iran has not remained passive in this AI war. It has responded with drone strikes across the Gulf and, as former FBI cyber official Cynthia Kaiser warned, may resort to targeting hospital systems in the US and allied countries with ransomware, a tactic Tehran has employed before. Furthermore, Iran's hypersonic Fattah missiles, which have reportedly breached Israeli air defenses, are equipped with AI systems that enable them to self-correct their trajectory mid-flight, while reaching speeds approaching Mach 5. In this new age of warfare, it is not just the weapons that have become smarter, the entire theater of conflict has been redefined by the relentless advance of AI.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this new era is the political crisis it has sparked within the US. Just one day before the offensive began, the Pentagon blacklisted Anthropic, the AI company behind the Claude model that is embedded in Palantir's Maven Smart System on classified military networks and which was instrumental in selecting the first 1,000 targets. Anthropic had refused to allow its technology to be deployed for fully autonomous lethal weapons, a decision that sparked a sharp response from the Pentagon, which issued a "supply chain risk" designation against the company.

The dispute is far from settled. Despite the blacklisting, Palantir CEO Alex Karp has confirmed that Claude is still being used in military operations in Iran as the Pentagon has not phased it out. The designation, meanwhile, has turned out to be narrower than initially threatened. Ac-

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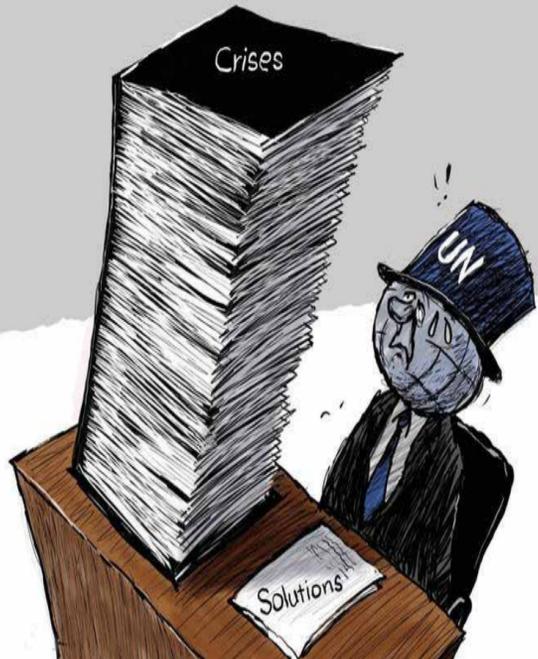
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ording to Anthropic, it applies only to military contracts, not to the company's broader commercial business. And the tech industry has mobilized in response, with groups representing hundreds of companies filing an amicus brief in court calling for a pause on the designation — a sign of how deeply the confrontation has rattled Silicon Valley.

The episode also exposed fault lines within the industry itself. When Sam Altman of OpenAI publicly volunteered his company's AI for military use, the backlash was swift and severe, forcing a rapid and embarrassing retreat. The reputational damage has lingered.

What was once a debate confined to ethics committees and tech conferences has now migrated to the front lines, shaping military decisions and straining international relations. This AI ethics dilemma, long treated as a distant hypothetical, is now an urgent and irreversible reality.

For the Middle East, this conflict is not a distant theater. It is happening in the neighborhood. Within days of hostilities beginning, three Amazon data centers in the UAE and Bahrain were damaged in Iranian drone strikes. The attack was not random. It was a message. AI infrastructure, the very foundation upon which the Gulf states have staked their economic future, is a legitimate military target. However, amid these ambitious technological strides, a stark contrast emerges. The Gulf states — Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar foremost among them — have invested hundreds of billions of dollars to secure their positions as leaders in the global AI race.

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, for example, has allocated \$40 billion to AI, founding Humain, its national AI company, in partnership with Nvidia, which supplied 18,000 of its cutting-edge Blackwell chips. The UAE, meanwhile, is constructing a 26-sq. km AI campus in Abu Dhabi, the largest in the world outside the US, in collaboration with OpenAI, Oracle, Nvidia and Cisco. As such, the attacks on AI infrastructure are endangering the Middle East's reputation as a safe place for data storage.

In this new age of warfare, the entire theater of conflict has been redefined by the relentless advance of AI.

Qatar has also launched its own national AI initiative, Qai, backed by the Qatar Investment Authority. With the Middle East and North Africa region's technology spending projected to hit \$169 billion this year, these investments represent a long-term, strategic commitment to shaping the region's future. Yet, despite these vast ambitions, these nations now find themselves caught in the crossfire of a war they did not initiate.

The lesson the region must draw is that AI is no longer merely an economic opportunity. It is a security imperative and a dangerously unprotected one. The Gulf states must urgently extend their defense doctrines to cover digital and AI infrastructure as critical national assets, equivalent in strategic value to oil fields or desalination plants. This means hardened facilities, redundant connectivity and active air and cyber defense around AI assets. The drone attack on UAE and Bahrain data centers should be a watershed moment. What is unfolding between Iran and Israel is not simply a Middle Eastern conflict. It is a live demonstration of what warfare and power look like in the age of AI. The first AI war is unfolding in the MENA region and those nations that recognize this shift and act now will shape the future.

The Iran War Paradox: Israel Gains, America Bleeds

Qamar Bashir



Iran has undoubtedly suffered immense losses. Its military infrastructure has been degraded, key leadership figures targeted, and economic systems disrupted. Strategic assets—ranging from oil facilities to logistical networks—have been hit repeatedly. Civilian hardship is mounting, and the country's economic backbone is under unprecedented strain. In terms of physical destruction, human casualties, and systemic disruption, Iran stands as one of the primary victims of the conflict. Yet, paradoxically, Iran has also demonstrated a degree of endurance that complicates the narrative of defeat

AS the conflict enters its third week—approaching the twentieth day—an urgent and uncomfortable question is beginning to surface across policy circles, media debates, and public discourse: Who is the real beneficiary of this war? Beyond the fog of propaganda, beyond the daily casualty figures and battlefield claims, a clearer geopolitical picture is emerging—one that challenges conventional narratives and exposes a deeply asymmetric outcome.

At first glance, the war appears to be a brutal contest between the United States and Iran, with Israel positioned as a frontline ally. Yet, when the layers are peeled back, a different reality unfolds. Israel, despite limited direct losses, appears to be achieving long-standing strategic objectives. The United States, on the other hand, is bearing the overwhelming burden—militarily, economically, and diplomatically—while Iran, though heavily damaged, occupies a complex middle ground as both victim and resilient actor. Iran has undoubtedly suffered immense losses. Its military infrastructure has been degraded, key leadership figures targeted, and economic systems disrupted. Strategic assets—ranging from oil facilities to logistical networks—have been hit repeatedly. Civilian hardship is mounting, and the country's economic backbone is under unprecedented strain. In terms of physical destruction, human casualties, and systemic disruption, Iran stands as one of the primary victims of the conflict. Yet, paradoxically, Iran has also demonstrated a degree of endurance that complicates the narrative of defeat.

Its ability to disrupt shipping lanes, influence regional proxies, and impose costs on its adversaries has elevated its image as a power capable of asymmetric resistance. While materially weakened, Iran has not collapsed—nor has it surrendered strategic leverage. In contrast, the United States finds itself in an increasingly precarious position. The financial cost alone is staggering, with estimates suggesting expenditures approaching \$1 billion per day when accounting for military deployments, logistics, and operational support. Thousands of American personnel have been deployed across vast distances, stretching supply lines and complicating sustainment efforts. Casualties—both fatalities and injuries—are mounting, further intensifying domestic scrutiny. More critically, the United States is experiencing a profound erosion of its global image. Long regarded as a stabilizing force and architect of a rules-based international order, Washington now faces accusations of unilateralism and overreach. The perception that it is enforcing its will through military dominance rather than diplomacy is damaging its credibility, particularly among allies and neutral states. This reputational decline is most visible in the Middle

East itself. U.S. bases across the region have come under sustained pressure, with several reportedly damaged or rendered less operational. Gulf states—once reliable partners—are increasingly questioning the value of hosting American military infrastructure. Rather than ensuring security, these bases have become potential targets, exposing host nations to heightened risks.

The economic repercussions are equally severe. The disruption of the Strait of Hormuz—through which approximately 20% of global oil supply flows—has triggered a sharp spike in energy prices, with increases of up to 40% in some markets. Oil prices exceeding \$100 per barrel have strained global economies, particularly those heavily dependent on imports. Supply chains have been disrupted, inflationary pressures intensified, and growth trajectories derailed.

For many countries, the consequences are existential. Energy shortages are forcing governments to ration fuel, shut down industries, and curtail public services. Universities are closing, businesses are scaling back operations, and entire sectors are slowing to a crawl. The global economy—already fragile—is now facing a contraction driven by the very lifeblood of modern industry: energy. The Gulf states themselves are among the hardest hit. Nations such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain are grappling with a multifaceted crisis. Oil production facilities and refineries have been damaged or shut down. Airports and critical infrastructure have come under attack. Expatriate populations—the backbone of their economies—are fleeing in large numbers, creating labor shortages and economic instability.

Air traffic, once heavily routed through hubs like Dubai and Doha, is being diverted elsewhere, further eroding revenue streams. Tourism has collapsed, trade has slowed, and investor confidence has weakened. These economies, built on connectivity and stability, are now facing unprecedented disruption. And yet, amid this widespread devastation, Israel appears remarkably insulated. Its casualty figures remain comparatively low, and its infrastructure has sustained minimal damage relative to the scale of destruction elsewhere. More importantly, Israel is advancing its strategic objectives with striking effectiveness.

For years, Israel has sought to weaken regional adversaries, particularly Iran and its network of allies. This conflict has provided the conditions to do precisely that. Iranian capabilities are being systematically degraded. Regional actors are destabilized. The geopolitical focus has shifted away from Israel's own actions, allowing it greater operational freedom.

In Gaza, military operations continue with reduced international scrutiny. In the West Bank, territorial encroachments are accelerating. In southern Leba-

non, intensified strikes are being justified under the pretext of countering militant threats. With global attention diverted to the broader war, Israel is pursuing multiple objectives simultaneously—military, territorial, and political. Perhaps most significantly, Israel has succeeded in shifting the burden of the conflict onto the United States. Washington is now the face of the war, absorbing the financial costs, diplomatic backlash, and strategic risks. Israel, while deeply involved, operates with a degree of insulation that allows it to reap benefits without bearing proportional costs.

When the hierarchy of impact is assessed, a stark picture emerges. Iran, in terms of physical destruction and economic damage, ranks among the most affected. The United States follows closely, bearing immense financial costs and suffering a decline in global standing. The Gulf states, once pillars of regional stability, are experiencing severe economic and security disruptions. The broader international community is grappling with energy shortages and economic contraction. At the very bottom of this hierarchy—least affected, yet most strategically advantaged—stands Israel. This reality demands a fundamental reassessment of strategy, particularly in Washington. The United States must confront a difficult truth: it is investing enormous resources in a conflict that is yielding limited direct benefits while enabling another actor to achieve its long-term objectives.

History offers sobering lessons. From Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan, prolonged engagements driven by strategic overconfidence have resulted in costly outcomes and lasting reputational damage. The current trajectory risks repeating those patterns, with potentially even greater global consequences.

The path forward requires clarity, courage, and a willingness to recalibrate. Continuing down the current course in the name of credibility or face-saving would only deepen the quagmire. Instead, a strategic pivot—grounded in national interest rather than inertia—is essential. De-escalation, diplomatic engagement, and a redefinition of objectives must replace open-ended military commitment. The United States must ask not only how to win the war, but whether the war, as currently structured, is worth winning at all.

As the twentieth day approaches, the answer to the central question becomes increasingly clear. This is not a balanced conflict with shared gains and losses. It is a war in which one actor is quietly consolidating advantage while others bear the visible costs. Recognizing that reality is the first step toward changing it.

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Security for One, Suspicion for Others

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



History offers sobering lessons. The tragic episode of Iraq stands as a stark reminder of how fear, when shaped by flawed intelligence and amplified by political will, can lead to catastrophic consequences. The assertion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction became the moral and strategic justification for a war that dismantled...

THERE are moments in the life of nations when questions, long suppressed beneath the weight of power and narrative, rise with an urgency that cannot be ignored. Today, one such question confronts the conscience of the international order; is it the exclusive right of the United States of America to live in security, sovereignty, and independence, while the same aspirations in other nations are treated with suspicion, hostility, or even force? The United States has, over decades, constructed for itself one of the most formidable arsenals known to mankind. It justifies this accumulation as a necessary shield for its security and sovereignty. Yet, paradoxically, it continues to view with deep apprehension the efforts of other states to develop similar means of defence. This contradiction lies at the heart of much of the instability that defines contemporary global politics. If America claims the right to protect itself through strength, can it, in good faith, deny that same right to others? And if it harbours fears of potential threats from nations that possess or seek to possess such capabilities, is it not reasonable that those nations, in turn, might perceive an even greater threat from America itself?

History offers sobering lessons. The tragic episode of Iraq stands as a stark reminder of how fear, when shaped by flawed intelligence and amplified by political will, can lead to catastrophic consequences. The assertion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction became the moral and strategic justification for a war that dismantled a state, cost countless lives, and destabilized an entire region. Yet, in the aftermath, it was acknowledged that no such weapons existed. The question that lingers, unanswered and perhaps unanswerable, is whether the immense human and material losses inflicted upon Iraq were ever justly accounted for. Can such a breach of trust be easily forgotten, or does it not cast a long shadow over every subsequent claim made in the name

of global security? It is equally perplexing that the United States does not exhibit the same degree of apprehension towards several of its allies—countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Australia, and India—many of which possess significant military capabilities, including advanced and, in some cases, nuclear weapons. Why are these arsenals perceived as stabilizing, while similar capabilities in other nations are deemed destabilizing? Is the distinction rooted in objective criteria, or does it arise from the fluid and often subjective boundaries of geopolitical alignment? Recent developments further underscore these contradictions. The inability of the United States to persuade its allies to join a military confrontation against Iran has evidently created a moment of strategic discomfort. Instead of introspection, however, there appears to be a tendency to redirect attention towards new theatres and new narratives, with countries like Pakistan being drawn into the discourse of suspicion. Such shifts not only strain diplomatic relations but also risk undermining the very alliances that have been carefully cultivated over decades. Within the American policy establishment itself, there are voices of dissent and uncertainty. Some officials have expressed reservations about the justification for military action, even to the extent of resigning from their positions. Others continue to articulate concerns about emerging threats from the capabilities of various nations. This divergence raises an important question; which voice represents the true measure of American policy—the cautionary voice that urges restraint, or the alarmist one that amplifies fear? A nation as influential as the United States cannot afford ambiguity in matters that carry global consequences. If the logic of pre-emptive fear were to be universally applied, it would lead to an absurd and dangerous conclusion—that every nation must disman-

tle the capabilities of every other nation to ensure its own safety. Such a path would not lead to peace but to perpetual conflict. The only viable alternative is the recognition of mutual security, grounded in respect for sovereignty and a commitment to dialogue over domination. Pakistan's case is particularly instructive in this regard. Since its inception, Pakistan has maintained a relationship with the United States that has often been characterized by cooperation and alliance, even in the most challenging of circumstances. From the Cold War to the war on terror, Pakistan has stood alongside America, sometimes at great cost to itself. To now cast Pakistan as a source of threat is not only inconsistent with historical reality but also detrimental to the prospects of a constructive partnership. It is worth reflecting on whether the analyses guiding such perceptions are themselves free from bias or external influence. In the complex theatre of international politics, narratives are often shaped by interests that are not immediately visible. Misjudgments, when left uncorrected, can harden into policy, with consequences that extend far beyond the intentions of those who formulate them. The world today stands at a delicate juncture, where the choices of powerful nations will determine whether the future is defined by cooperation or confrontation. For the United States, this is a moment to reaffirm its commitment to the principles it has long championed—justice, fairness, and respect for the sovereignty of all nations. Security, in its truest sense, cannot be achieved through the accumulation of weapons alone, nor through the perpetuation of fear. It must be built upon trust, understanding, and a willingness to see the world not as a collection of adversaries, but as a community of shared destiny. For God's sake, let this world remain a cradle of peace, not a battleground of suspicion. And let reason prevail over fear, before fear once again leads humanity down a path from which return is both painful and uncertain.

Briefs

Efforts afoot to keep Syria out of regional war: President

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa said Friday he is working to keep his country away from conflict, against the backdrop of the Middle East war, stressing that his government is on good terms with all regional countries. In a speech delivered after the Eid Al-Fitr prayer in the presidential palace in Damascus, Sharaa said: "We are calculating our steps with extreme precision and working to keep Syria away from any conflict."

"It is important to remember that Syria has always been an arena of conflict and strife during the past 15 years and before that, but today it is in harmony with all neighboring countries regionally and internationally," he said.

He added that Syria stood "in full solidarity with the Arab states."

War in the Middle East erupted after the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, to which Tehran responded by targeting Israel and carrying out attacks on US embassies and interests, as well as energy facilities and civilian targets in Gulf states.

The war spread to Lebanon, Syria's neighbor, with Israel conducting large-scale strikes in response to attacks by Hezbollah, and to Iraq, where bases of Iran-aligned Iraqi armed factions have been hit by air raids.

After Syria had been, for all the years of the conflict that ravaged it, an arena of competition for international powers, the country has thus far remained at a distance from the regional escalation.—APP

Russian strikes on S Ukraine kill woman

KYIV: Russian strikes in southern Ukraine killed one woman and wounded two people, including a child, the regional military administration said on Friday "At night, the Russians attacked Zaporizhzhia district. They carried out two strikes, destroying private houses," Ivan Fedorov, the head of the regional military administration, posted on Telegram, adding a 30-year-old woman was killed. A 10-year-old boy and a 48-year-old man were wounded in the attack, he said. Ukrainian and US negotiators will meet in the United States on Saturday in a bid to revive stalled talks on Russia's invasion, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Talks between Russia and Ukraine, brokered and pushed by the United States, have been derailed by the US-Israeli war with Iran that broke out last month.—Agencies

Kim's daughter drives tank

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's teenage daughter drove an army tank with her father sitting behind her in photos from state news agency KCNA on Friday, with analysts suggesting she may be training to succeed him. Kim's daughter, known as Ju Ae and believed to be around 13 years old, has been making increasingly frequent public appearances with her father in recent months. In the latest photos, she is seen looking out the driver's hatch with an expression of intent focus and her hair blowing, while her grinning father leans against the turret and three uniformed military officers sit on the hull. Earlier this month, she was seen at a firing range aiming a rifle, and on a separate occasion was photographed shooting a handgun. There has been no official confirmation by the North of her name or age. Kim on Thursday supervised a drill of a new type of tank, which demonstrated superior offensive and defensive capabilities against drones and anti-tank missiles, according to the KCNA report.—APP

Why Pakistani farmers are suing German companies?

"Our focus must be on building resilience and adaptation. To prepare our farmers to face this crisis, to prepare our fishermen, the people living in the mountains. We need to build their capacity and ensure that our own local governance has improved

NEWS DESK

DADU, PAKISTAN - Inayatullah Laghari stands on his toes to point at a faint line on the school wall, a watermark left by the floodwaters that had submerged the building and the surrounding villages during the catastrophic floods in Pakistan four years ago. For him, it is a reminder of just how high the water rose in his village of Baid Sharif in Dadu district of Sindh, the worst-hit Pakistani province, where agriculture is the mainstay for millions of farmers like Laghari. The 40-year-old farmer walks over to a patch of road nearby, an area that hadn't come underwater in 2022. Whatever harvest Inayatullah was able to res-

cue from his flooded storage room was kept on the patch, as he slept beside the pile for a month to keep it safe. "I had made up my mind that if the water rose any higher, I would throw all the stock onto the school roof that was still above water and pray the water didn't reach there," he says. "Thankfully, I didn't have to do that, but most of what I rescued got spoiled later on." Devastating floods were a climate disaster in a country that contributes less than 1 percent to global carbon emissions. Pakistan's government attributed the disaster to the country's vulnerability to climate change, with the minister of climate change, Sherry Rehman, calling the floods a "climate-induced humanitarian

disaster of epic proportions" while the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described it as "monsoon on steroids". Today, Laghari is among 39 Pakistani farmers from Sindh, the worst-hit province, who have taken two German companies, RWE and Heidelberg Materials, to court over their greenhouse gas emissions, which they say contributed to the historic deluge in 2022. RWE, with headquarters in Germany's Essen town, is one of Europe's largest electricity producers. Heidelberg Materials, based in the German city of the same name, is one of the world's largest manufacturers of building materials. The two companies are among 178 industrial producers worldwide respon-

sible for 70 percent of global carbon emissions, according to data from Carbon Majors, a climate change think tank that tracks historical emissions from the world's largest oil, gas, coal, and cement producers. Saage-Maab said neither company has any ground operations in Pakistan, but the lawsuit argues that despite the absence of physical proximity, the effect of the greenhouse gases they emit in Germany is felt thousands of kilometres away. She says the farmers' lawsuit has a strong chance of proceeding to trial.

For her, she said, the significance of the case lies in helping define how responsibility for climate harm can be calculated and assigned,

not just in courtrooms, but also in future political negotiations dealing with climate finance. The case is inspired by a Peruvian farmer who, in 2015, sued RWE on similar charges. While a German court dismissed that case in 2025, it also ruled that companies can, in principle, be held liable for specific climate-related harms caused by their carbon emissions. After a fire tore through a garment factory in Karachi in 2012, killing more than 250 workers, one of the survivors and relatives of the victims filed a lawsuit in Germany in 2015 against KiK, a company that sourced a large portion of its products from the Pakistani factory. The petitioners argued that the company failed to en-

sure basic fire and building safety standards. While the case was rejected on procedural grounds, it led to KiK paying compensation to the victims and helped prompt debates around corporate accountability in global supply chains. In 2023, Germany introduced a supply chain law aimed at addressing human rights violations by companies operating abroad. Nasir Mansoor, general secretary of the National Trade Union Federation, told Al Jazeera the farmers' lawsuit is Pakistan's first cross-border climate litigation.

"There needs to be accountability," he said. "We need to knock on their doors and tell them that whatever you're doing, it's causing us to suffer over here in Pakistan."



NEW YORK: Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi with President Donald Trump after participating in meeting at the Japan-US Summit.

Pakistan marks Int'l Day of Forests with focus on economy and sustainability

ISLAMABAD: Today, Pakistan joins the global community in observing the International Day of Forests, highlighting the vital role forests play in sustaining life, supporting livelihoods, and securing a resilient future for generations to come. This year's theme, "Forests and Economies," underscores that forests are not merely natural landscapes but key drivers of economic and social well-being. Across the country, millions depend on forests for food, firewood, and income. These ecosystems support farmers, safeguard water sources, shelter wildlife, and help communities adapt to the growing challenges of climate change. In rural areas especially, forests are deeply woven into daily life. Families rely on them for cooking fuel, timber for small-scale enterprises, and wild fruits and plants that supplement household nutrition. Their importance extends far beyond greenery—they are a lifeline. According to official estimates, forests in Pakistan cover approximately 4.1 million hectares, accounting for nearly 5 percent of the country's land area. However, around 11,000 hectares are lost annually, making conservation and expansion efforts increasingly urgent. Even in urban centers, green spaces and forested areas play a critical role by improving air quality, reducing heat, and providing safe recreational spaces for children. Recognizing this, the government—through the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination in collaboration with provincial authorities—has launched several initiatives aimed at increasing forest cover and restoring degraded land.—DNA

EPS Center cooperation discussed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Head of the Pakistan EPS Center, held a meeting with OEC regarding the Employment Permit System (EPS) and the points-based selection system. The main topic of the meeting was the efforts of both institutions to expand the dispatch of Pakistani workers in the future. During the meeting, the Center Head responded to questions frequently raised by job seekers as follows. 1. Low Referral Ratio for Pakistani Job Seekers Under the Employment Permit System (EPS), employers receive referrals of job seekers through the computerized system operated by the competent local employment center for each workplace. Based on employers' labor demand, three times the number of workers to be hired are recommended, and the employer makes the final selection of workers with whom to conclude labor contracts. No other institution or individual is involved in this process. Workplaces in Korea tend to prefer workers with a higher level of Korean language proficiency in order to facilitate early adaptation, improve productivity, and prevent industrial accidents.—APP

Six Philippine firms explore Saudi partnerships

JEDDAH: Six Philippine companies, part of a delegation that visited Saudi Arabia, explored investment and commercial opportunities in the local market, focusing on the food industry and personal care products sectors, according to Vince Liwanag, commercial attache at the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh, who spoke to Al-Eqtisadiah. These companies own major manufacturing facilities in the Philippines and are already exporting their products to the Saudi market. In this context, the commercial attache explained that one of the companies specializing in personal care products is already present in the Kingdom through its branches in Riyadh and Dammam.—APP

Iranian diaspora marks Nowruz with heavy hearts

PARIS: When Iran erupted in nationwide protests at the end of 2025, Shayan Ghadimi's mother returned to the country from Paris to see the uprising for herself. Her absence—and the struggle to stay in touch through the bloody crackdown that followed and now the Iran war—hang over the family. Like many Iranians outside the country, they will mark the normally festive Persian new year, known as Nowruz, with heavy hearts—or not at all. Ghadimi's 70-year-old mother had watched the early protests on TV. "We could see the market closed, the people in the street. She said, 'I want to be there,'" Ghadimi, 41, said as she prepared to serve lunches in the spice-scented restaurant she runs in Paris. "Now, she is all alone at home, with no way to stay in contact, watching the sky. I cannot imagine the state she is in," Ghadimi said. An Iranian cultural center in Paris that last year organized music events for Nowruz says it's in mourning. In the United States, some Iranian American communities also canceled or scaled back festivities. Nowruz, or "new day" in Farsi, coincides with the spring equinox and is celebrated from Afghanistan to Turkiye. Iranians of diverse faiths mark Nowruz—which is rooted in Zoroastrian tradition dating back millennia—despite occasional efforts by hard-liners to discourage it. Shakiba Edighoffer, out grocery shopping for Nowruz, said she and Iranian friends are on a "kind of emotional roller coaster" as the war rages. Israel and the United States are attacking Iran's leaders and military while the Islamic Republic fires missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states. "You hear news about this or that leader of the Islamic Republic being eliminated... about executions or bombings," the makeup artist said. With communications largely severed, trying to find out how family and friends are faring under bombardments is a stressful ordeal. "I had a friend who managed to connect very briefly on Instagram a few days ago, but I think it's been about 20 days now since the war started, and that was really the only time I was able to speak with him a little," Edighoffer said. Celebrating Nowruz with family and friends "helps us cope, at least a little, with the psychological pressure," she said. "All these oppressors want is for us to be sad, to forget our millennia-old Persian and Iranian traditions. We must not give them that victory." Some of the diners who come to Ghadimi's restaurant for flame-grilled kebabs and spiced rice hope the war will bring a new dawn. Other can't see past the deaths and destruction wrought by Israeli and US strikes. "I have people in tears. I have people who cry for joy. They say, 'Did you see? They are coming. We are going to be saved.' Others say, 'Our country is being destroyed,'" she said. Since her mother returned to Iran in January, they've only managed to speak to each other twice. "Quite honestly, I don't try anymore. Because it stresses me out, if I try calling and can't get hold of her," she said. "My sister calls 100 times a day and can't reach her.—APP

Denmark, Italy warn Iran war could trigger migrant influx

COPENHAGEN: The prime ministers of Denmark and Italy have called for tougher border controls, warning that the war in the Middle East could trigger an influx of migrants and refugees into the European Union. Mette Frederiksen and Giorgia Meloni wrote in a joint letter that Europe "cannot risk a repeat" of 2015-2016, when hundreds of thousands of people arrived—many fleeing the civil war in Syria. The two leaders, who have drastically reduced immigration in their countries, called on the European Commission to adopt a 458-million-euro (\$527-million) humanitarian aid package, in part to slow population movements toward the bloc. "The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is increasingly

worrying in a number of domains, spreading in a region already hosting large numbers of displaced people," the pair wrote in a letter to EU leaders dated Wednesday but obtained by AFP on Thursday. "We cannot risk a repeat of the refugee and migratory flows to the EU which we saw unfold in 2015-2016. "This would not only be a humanitarian catastrophe for the people directly affected but will also risk impacting on the security and cohesion of our Union." They called for funding to help countries in the Middle East to deal with those affected by the conflict, which started with a bombardment of Iran by the United States and Israel in late February, before they try to come to

Europe. The two leaders added that Europe needed to "be prepared and take the necessary steps if the situation develops." "We cannot afford to be taken by surprise as in the past. This means further strengthening our borders," they said. Frederiksen, Meloni and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten held an informal meeting with several other EU countries and the European Commission to discuss "innovative" ways to limit immigration to Europe in light of the war in the Middle East, Meloni's office said. In early March, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz warned that a possible collapse of Iran could have "far-reaching consequences" including on migration.—APP



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Briefs

Iran attack 'wipes out...

FROM PAGE 01 series of attacks at Gulf oil and gas facilities after Israeli attacks on its own gas infrastructure. State-owned QatarEnergy will have to declare force majeure on long-term contracts for up to five years for LNG supplies bound for Italy, Belgium, South Korea, and China due to the two damaged trains, Kaabi said. "I mean, these are long-term contracts that we have to declare force majeure. We already declared, but that was a shorter term. Now it's whatever the period is," he said.

Leaders of Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01 expressed Pakistan's full solidarity and unwavering support for the brotherly Azerbaijani people during these difficult times. Both leaders emphasized the urgent need for immediate de-escalation in the region and advocated for dialogue and diplomacy as the primary means to resolve all outstanding issues peacefully.

PM Albanese heckled

FROM PAGE 01 "Dear brothers and sisters, keep calm a little bit," one of the organisers told the crowd, urging people to sit down and stop filming the exchange. "It is Eid. It is a joyful day." A security guard was seen tackling one heckler to the ground before escorting him away. "Shame on you!" yelled protesters who followed Albanese and Burke when they left. The mosque event was "incredibly positive", Albanese said later, despite the incident.

Pakistan's economy...

FROM PAGE 01 the study by Ahsanul Haq Satti and Shahzada M Naem Nawaz provided a comprehensive, scenario-based assessment of how global energy disruptions ripple through Pakistan's economy. It stated that nearly 20% of the world's petroleum supply, around 20 million barrels per day, passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a critical artery for global energy flows. Any disruption, whether geopolitical or logistical, can trigger immediate oil price spikes.

Putin lauds Muslim servicemen



DNA

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a warm congratulatory message to the Muslim community of Russia on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, the joyous festival marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. In his official greeting, President Putin offered sincere congratulations and highlighted the profound spiritual significance of the holiday. "I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Russia's Muslims on Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan," the message stated. "For centuries, this holiday has embodied believers' aspirations for moral excellence, mercy, and compassion,

At the United Nations Pakistan accuses India off 'weaponizing water'

The event, held at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme of 'Water and Gender Equality', was organized by the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the UN and co-hosted by Pakistan among other countries

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Describing water as the lifeblood of its agrarian economy, Pakistan has told a special event at the United Nations (UN) that India's unilateral suspension of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty amounts to an assault on its civilization and long-term economic stability. "We are an agrarian society, which practically exists at the nexus of water and agriculture," Dr. Musadik Malik, Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, underscored in a video message to the high-level event commemorating the World Water Day. The event, held at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme of 'Water and Gender Equality', was organized by the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the UN and co-hosted by Pakistan among other countries. It coincided with the launch of the annual UN's World Water Development Report. Dr. Musadik Malik warned against politicizing water, taking note of the dark clouds of conflict gathering over the regions. "All of a sudden, given the geopolitics or the plates of geopolitics shifting, taking this opportunity to unilaterally and illegally putting (the) Treaty into abeyance, we believe that

politicizing water is an attack on our civilization. It's an attack on our livelihoods—It's an attack on our economic growth." The minister hoped that better sense would prevail, as "to us, this is a water rights day and this is a women's rights day." Dr. Musadik Malik's sharp words drew a response from Indian Ambassador Parvathani Harish who, as expected, repeated his government's stance of directly linking the Treaty's suspension to Pakistan's alleged failure to end cross-border terrorism. But a Pakistani delegate Aleena Majeed hit back, accusing India of weaponization of water for narrow political gains, jeopardizing the lifelines of millions. In his video message, the minister also said amid shifting geopolitical dynamics, such an abrupt and unilateral move is not only unjustified and illegal but also undermines a longstanding framework of cooperation. "For us, water is nature. Water is humanity. Water is our civilization. For us, water is agriculture. We are an agrarian society, which practically exists at the nexus of water and agriculture," he said. Approximately 25 to 30 percent of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is linked to agriculture, while nearly half of its workforce depends on the sector for employment. Pakistan's food security, he stressed, is entirely tied to agricultural productivity, making water management

a matter of national survival and prosperity. The minister pointed out that more than 61 percent of women's employment is connected to agriculture, underscoring the direct relationship between water access, women's empowerment, and economic well-being. Dr. Malik also drew attention to the human and social costs of climate-induced disasters in Pakistan. He said that over the past four major floods, nearly 6,000 people have lost their lives, around 20,000 have been injured or disabled, and approximately 40 million people have been displaced. Among them were about 20 million school-going children. If displaced for even three months, he noted, this results in an estimated 1.8 billion lost school days. He stressed that, as in many parts of the world, women remain among the most vulnerable during such crises. "When we fight for water rights, we are also fighting for women's rights," he remarked. The minister highlighted Pakistan's policy commitments, including the integration of gender inclusion and community participation in the country's climate strategies. He said that Pakistan's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC III) clearly outline the role of women in climate action and sustainable development. Emphasizing the importance of youth engage-

ment, he said the government is advancing several initiatives under a broader "Green Revolution," with water management forming a key pillar of these efforts. Dr. Musadik Malik said Pakistan is promoting innovative ideas and business opportunities for young people, particularly in sectors related to agriculture, climate resilience, and environmental sustainability. He said that efforts are also underway to mobilize financing for climate-related ventures, with a commitment to ensuring that at least 50 percent participation in these initiatives comes from women. Additionally, he announced the development of a joint research framework focused on agriculture, water, and climate issues, which would be advanced through a new platform called the "Green Virtual University." Reacting to Dr. Malik's comments about India's efforts to deprive Pakistan of its share of waters, Harish, the Indian ambassador, accused Islamabad of violating the spirit of the Treaty by launching, without providing any evidence, cross-border terror attacks. Exercising her right of reply, Aleena Majeed, a second secretary at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, challenged the Indian envoy's logic, saying no provision of the Treaty permits unilateral suspension or modification or so-called "abeyance".

China welcomes Pakistan-Afghan temporary ceasefire

APP

BEIJING: China welcomes the temporary ceasefire agreement reached by Pakistan and Afghanistan, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. Lin made the remarks at a regular press briefing yesterday after the two countries announced the suspension of military operations during the Eid al-Fitr holiday. Lin said China hoped that both countries would remain calm and restrained, resume peace talks promptly, achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible, resolve differences through dialogue, and jointly maintain peace and stability between the two countries and in the region. China appreciated the efforts made by relevant Islamic countries, and has been mediating the conflict via its own channels, said Lin, while adding that China was willing to continue playing a constructive role in this regard.

Pakistan saves over \$27 million in CASA-1000 talks

The EPC Contractor, M/s Hitachi-Cobra JV, had escalated its Care & Custody claim to approximately USD 32.9 million for Pakistan and USD 28.5 million for Tajikistan, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Energy (Power Division)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has secured a major financial success in the CASA-1000 project, saving over US\$ 27 million after successfully negotiating down contractor claims. The

EPC Contractor, M/s Hitachi-Cobra JV, had escalated its Care & Custody claim to approximately USD 32.9 million for Pakistan and USD 28.5 million for Tajikistan, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Energy (Power Division). The high-level meeting was held on March 9-10, in Ludvika, Sweden, which was attended by Additional Secretary Power Division Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah and Managing Director of National Grid Company (NGC) Altaf Hussain. The parties agreed to cap the total Care & Custody cost at US\$ 9.0 million (shared between Pakistan and Tajikistan) up to February 2028, resulting in savings of over US\$ 27 million for Pakistan, while ensuring the health, integrity, and operational readiness of critical HVDC assets during the interim period. A limited extension of up to three months beyond February 2028 has also been agreed upon, if required, subject to 5% monthly escalation. The CASA-1000 Project, linking Central Asia with South Asia for electricity trade, has faced delays due to geo-political situation in Afghanistan. Consequently, commissioning of the HVDC system is now expected by September 2027, requiring interim Care & Custody arrangements. - DNA

Gaza girls face rising risks, mental health emergency

UNITED NATIONS: More than two years of unrelenting violence, displacement and loss have pushed children and young people in Palestine into what one United Nations (UN) official has described as a "profound mental health emergency", with girls facing heightened risks, including a resurgence in child marriage. "We have more than one million children in Gaza who need mental health and psychosocial support services," Sima Alami, adolescent and youth programme officer at the UN agency for sexual and reproductive health, United Nations Population Fund, told UN News, an international media outlet. According to UNFPA data cited by Ms. Alami,

96 per cent of children in Gaza feel that death is imminent. "This reflects the depth of fear and trauma they experience daily," she stressed. Among adolescents and youth, often overlooked in humanitarian crises, the psychological toll is equally severe. Some 61 per cent suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 38 per cent from depression and 41 per cent from anxiety. "Alarmingly, one in five adults contemplates suicide almost daily," she added. "This is not merely psychological distress," Ms. Alami said. "It is a widespread mental health emergency." Within this crisis, girls are among the most vulnerable. In Gaza, child marriage, which was previously on the decline, has resurged sharply. Rates

had fallen from 25.5 per cent in 2009 to 11 per cent in 2022, but are now rising again as families struggle to survive. A recent UNFPA study found that 71 per cent of respondents in Gaza reported increased pressure to marry girls under 18. In a short monitoring period alone, more than 400 marriage licenses were issued for girls aged 14 to 16 in emergency courts, but the figures are likely underreported. "Some families see marriage as a survival strategy amid displacement, poverty and insecurity," Ms. Alami explained. Others believe it offers protection in overcrowded shelters or helps ease economic hardship following the collapse of livelihoods.- DNA

'Force of the law' must prevail, urges UN chief



Guterres was speaking to reporters outside the European Council in Brussels, where he briefed regional leaders on the importance of continuing multilateral cooperation between the European Union (EU) and UN

UNITED NATIONS: The United States and Israel must end their bombing campaign before it spirals out of control, while Iran needs to stop attacking Gulf neighbours who have played no direct part in the war rolling the Middle East and beyond, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said. Guterres was speaking to reporters outside the European Council in Brussels, where he briefed regional leaders on the importance of continuing multilateral cooperation between the European Union (EU) and UN. He said the United States and Israel need to end their assault on Iran before it spirals "completely out of control", leading to more civilian suffering, especially in least developed nations where the consequences of rising energy prices and supply chain bottlenecks could have "tragic consequences." Attacks in recent days by Israel and Iran on natural gas fields and other energy infrastructure in the Gulf have seen prices rise sharply for consumers, while multiple countries have called on Tehran to stop attacks and threats to shipping in the vital Strait of Hormuz off the Iranian coast. Guterres urged Iran: "Stop attacking your neighbours; they were never parties to the conflict. The Security Council has condemned these attacks," and has also ordered the reopening of the Strait. - DNA

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