



Islamabad POST

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Romania unveils first choral arrangement of Pakistan's anthem

Detailed News On Page-06

Kim vows 'irreversible' nuclear status

Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan wants dialogue on Ukraine issue

Detailed News On Page-01



Trump shares Shehbaz X message

Pakistan all agog to host peace talks

The prime minister however said these efforts are subject to concurrence by the US and Iran, Pakistan stands ready and honoured to be the host to facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks for a comprehensive settlement of the ongoing conflict

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed and fully supports ongoing efforts to pursue dialogue to end the WAR in Middle East, in the interest of peace and stability in region and beyond. The US President Donald Trump immediately shared PM Shehbaz message soon after it was posted on X. The prime minister however said these efforts are subject to concurrence by the US and Iran. Pakistan stands ready and honoured to be the host to facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks for a comprehensive settlement of the ongoing conflict. Meanwhile according to US media Pakistan could host a meeting between the United States and Iran later this week under a proposal now being considered, American media reported, as Washington pushes diplomacy after President Donald Trump's sudden shift from threatening Tehran to backing talks. The report said US Vice President JD Vance could attend the proposed meeting, while Pakistan, Türkiye, Egypt, and Oman are among the countries involved in mediation efforts aimed at securing a ceasefire and safe passage for ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Trump's change in tone marked a sharp shift after he warned on Saturday that he would

Continued on Page 06

FO says media to act cautiously

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Tuesday urged the media to refrain from speculation and await official announcements when asked about reports of Islamabad being a possible venue for talks between the US and Iranian representatives amid the ongoing Middle East conflict. "Pakistan, consistent with its longstanding policy, remains committed to the resolution of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East/Persian Gulf through diplomatic means and engagements," FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. "Diplomacy and negotiations often require that certain matters be advanced with discretion. The media is therefore encouraged to refrain from speculation and to await official announcements regarding decisions and outcomes," he said.

Continued on Page 06

India warns of lost-cost weight lost drugs

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's Health Ministry warned on Tuesday of the unregulated use of weight-loss drugs, as cheap generic versions of blockbuster diabetes medications such as Ozempic entered the market following patent expiry. The patent on semaglutide, the active ingredient in weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy, expired on March 20 in India, allowing local pharmaceutical companies to produce their own versions and sell them at a fraction of the original price. Several companies have already made the generic versions of the GLP-1 drugs – referring to the hormone that regulates blood glucose levels and appetite – available at popular

Continued on Page 06

Libya tows drifting Russian 'shadow fleet' tanker

DNA

CAIRO: Libyan authorities were tows a Russian tanker drifting in the Mediterranean for the past three weeks, after the vessel was damaged in a suspected sea drone attack, officials said Tuesday. The Arctic Metagaz is part of Russia's so-called shadow fleet transporting fossil fuels in violation of international sanctions over Moscow's war on Ukraine. Libya's coast guard said that the tanker, which carries liquefied natural gas, was being towed to a safe zone off the town of Zuwara on Libya's western coast. A video posted on Tuesday by Libyan authorities showed a tugboat towing

Continued on Page 06

Pak calls for dialogue to end Ukraine war

DNA

NEW YORK: Pakistan has renewed its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Ukraine. The call was made by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad while speaking during the UN Security Council briefing on Ukraine. The Ambassador urged a return to sustained, structured and meaningful negotiations, stressing that there is no military solution and that lasting peace can only be achieved through dialogue grounded in the UN Charter.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott @JaneMariottUK called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar y. Discussions focused on the evolving regional situation. – DNA

Qatar backs diplomatic efforts

No let-up in US-Israel-Iran war despite Trump wish

In a significant development inside Iran, authorities named hardline former Revolutionary Guards commander Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr as the new Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council

DNA

TEHRAN/BEIRUT/WASHINGTON: Fighting between the United States, Israel and Iran showed no signs of easing on Tuesday, even as President Donald Trump claimed "productive conversations" were underway with Tehran, an assertion repeatedly denied by Iranian officials. Israeli and US strikes continued across Iran, while Iranian forces maintained retaliatory attacks. Israel also pressed ahead with airstrikes in Lebanon, targeting areas linked to Hezbollah. Qatar's foreign ministry stated that the war "must end through diplomatic means" and expressed support for dialogue, while stressing that Iran should immediately halt its attacks on Gulf countries to allow negotiations to progress. Doha has not taken on a direct mediation role but reiterated its long-standing position that conflicts in the region can only be resolved at the negotiating table. In a significant development inside Iran, authorities named hardline former Revolutionary Guards commander Mohammad

Continued on Page 06

More than 500 civilians killed in Sudan

NEWS DESK

GENEVA: More than 500 civilians were killed in drone strikes in Sudan between January and mid-March, with the vast majority killed in the strategic Kordofan region, the United Nations said Tuesday. The UN rights office said it had noted a sharp increase in the use of drones in Sudan's civil war, underlining "the devastating impact of high-tech and relatively cheap weapons in populated areas." "According to information received, over 500 civilians were killed in such strikes from January 1 to March 15," spokeswoman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva, highlighting that "the vast majority of

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

China protests to Japan

NEWS DESK

TOKYO: China says it has protested to Japan over an alleged break-in at the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo. An individual who claimed to be a Japan Self-Defense Forces officer scaled the wall and forced his way into the embassy compound on Tuesday morning, Lin Jian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said in a news conference in Beijing. Tensions between the two Asian nations have escalated in recent months after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in November a Chinese military action against Taiwan could constitute "a survival-threatening situation" for Japan requiring the use of force. Beijing, which regards the self-governing island as part of its territory, has since stepped up diplomatic and trade reprisals against Japan.

66 dead in Columbia plane crash

NEWS DESK

BOGOTA: A Colombian military plane carrying 125 soldiers and crew members crashed on takeoff early Monday, killing at least 66 people and injuring dozens of others, officials said. The C-130 Hercules aircraft went down shortly after departure from Puerto Leguizamo, near the southern border with Ecuador and Peru, strewn burning wreckage on the jungle floor. A military source told AFP that 58 soldiers had died, along with six air force personnel and two police officers. The updated toll came shortly after the local government secretary Carlos Claros told RCN television that 33 people had died, and that efforts were being made to treat and evacuate dozens of others injured.

PTI Islamabad says

Imran's release not possible without coordinated strategy

"There is a need for organised public engagement. Peaceful and lawful public gatherings can be held on a rotational basis across districts to ensure consistent participation and visibility

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Amid efforts underway by the PTI for the release of ex-premier Imran Khan, the party's Islamabad chapter on Tuesday proposed a roadmap, saying that it would not be possible without a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy. It should be mentioned that the party had announced that registrations for a movement to release Imran, who has been imprisoned since May 2023 would begin after Eid. Mughal added that it would be difficult to overcome the current political challenges unless the party leadership presented a practical roadmap in line with the prevailing ground realities. "The first and foremost point is accountability within the party. Without holding office-bearers and ticket holders accountable for their performance

since Imran's arrest, the movement cannot progress effectively. A transparent review process and the inclusion of energetic leadership can help restore confidence among supporters," he said. Mughal suggested a six-point narrative, which included the release of all detainees, including Imran, supremacy of the Constitution and rule of law, reduction in inflation, elimination of corruption and poor governance, job creation, and improvement in law and order. He suggested communicating a unified message consistently at all levels of the party. "There is a need for organised public engagement. Peaceful and lawful public gatherings can be held on a rotational basis across districts to ensure consistent participation and visibility. Similar coordinated activities can also be arranged in

Continued on Page 06

Afghanistan announces release of detained US citizen

UAE facilitated release of US researcher Dennis Coyle, says foreign ministry

NEWS DESK / DNA

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban government announced on Tuesday that it was freeing a US national who had been detained for more than a year. The foreign ministry said the family of linguist and researcher Dennis Coyle had written to the supreme leader of Afghanistan, requesting his release for Eid. "The Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate deemed his period of detention sufficient and decided on his release," a statement read. The announcement came after a meeting of Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, US former special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, the UAE ambassador to Kabul Saif Mohammed Al-Ketbi, and a member of Coyle's family. The UAE facilitated the release, the ministry said, adding that Coyle had been reunited with his family in Kabul on Tuesday. Coyle, 64, was arrested by the Afghan authorities in January 2025, according to the Foley Foundation, which advocates for the release of Americans taken hostage or arbitrarily detained abroad. A website set up by his family, freedenniscoyle.com, said he was "legally working to support Afghan communities as an academic researcher" when he was detained.

They said he had been held in "near-solitary conditions, requiring permission even to use the bathroom, and without access to adequate medical care". Coyle first travelled to Afghanistan in the early 2000s "to survey Afghanistan's rich linguistic diversity and help Afghan communities develop resources in their own languages", they added. "Throughout his years of service, Dennis maintained a home in Kabul and built deep, meaningful relationships with the Afghan people," the website read. "Those who know him speak with profound appreciation for both the man and his work. Dennis has always embraced Afghan culture with genuine warmth - sharing cups of traditional green tea, enjoying dried fruit snacks, and engaging in the kind of heartfelt conversations that bridge cultures. "His love for the Afghan people isn't just professional; it's personal and deeply felt." Earlier this month, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States had formally placed Afghanistan on its list of countries engaged in "wrongful detentions". The Afghan authorities called that "regrettable" and pointed to talks between the two sides and previous releases with mediators from Qatar. In 2025, five American citizens were released in what the Taliban authorities said was a "goodwill gesture".

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Murree sees influx of over 70,000 vehicles during Eid

RAWALPINDI: More than 70,000 vehicles carrying tourists entered hill station of Murree during the Eid holidays, as a large number of visitors thronged the scenic resort to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. The traffic officials under the supervision of DSP Traffic Ghazi Sohail Shehzad remained present on roads to ensure smooth flow of traffic throughout the holiday period. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Murree Imran Razaq appreciated the performance of traffic police personnel for performing their duties with dedication and commitment. The CTO said that over 200 traffic officers and personnel were deployed to facilitate tourists and maintain uninterrupted traffic flow in Murree. He said that despite the heavy influx of vehicles during Eid days, no untoward incident was reported due to effective traffic management and implementation of a comprehensive traffic plan. He added that more than 11,740 tourists were provided guidance and assistance through various means during the holidays. Meanwhile, traffic police personnel performed their duties professionally during Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr, staying away from their families and working beyond routine responsibilities. The CTO also announced commendation certificates for traffic wardens and staff who demonstrated outstanding performance. **_APP**

Security of Chinese nationals discussed

LAHORE: Chinese Consul General (CG) Lahore Sun Yan on Tuesday visited the Punjab Home Department and held a meeting with Secretary Home Dr. Ahmed Javed Qazi to discuss law and order and security arrangements for Chinese nationals in the province. According to spokesperson, this was the first visit of Sun Yan to the Home Department after assuming office. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the overall security situation in Punjab and measures in place for the protection of Chinese citizens. Speaking on the occasion, the consul general said that Pakistan and China enjoyed traditional brotherly relations, adding that Lahore was a city of historical significance and he was pleased to visit it. He noted that several projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor were underway in Punjab and that Chinese nationals were working in a friendly environment in the province. He appreciated the role of the Punjab Home Department in maintaining law and order. Welcoming the consul general, Dr. Ahmed Javed Qazi said that ensuring the safety of all Chinese nationals residing in Punjab was the top priority of the provincial government. He expressed hope that the consul general's stay in Lahore would further strengthen historic ties between Pakistan and China. The secretary said that fool-proof security arrangements had been made in all industrial zones of Punjab, adding that government offices remained open for Chinese citizens and officials. He further said that the capacity of the Special Protection Unit was being enhanced for the security of Chinese nationals, while standard operating procedures issued by the federal government were being strictly followed to ensure their safe movement. **_APP**

Malaysia envoy emphasizes unity, gratitude, harmony

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

The High Commissioner extended sincere Eid greetings to all members of the mission, expressing deep appreciation for their hard work, dedication, and valuable contributions throughout the year. He described Eid ul Fitr not merely as a festive occasion but as a profound moment to reflect on the spiritual lessons of Ramadan — a month that cultivates patience, humility, compassion, kindness, discipline, and empathy. H.E. Amb. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan encouraged the staff to embrace gratitude for both personal and professional blessings, urging them to carry forward the positive values instilled during Ramadan into their daily lives and workplace. He stressed the importance of fostering a harmonious and respectful working environment, noting that unity and mutual understanding are essential to enhancing the High Commissioner's effectiveness. "As representatives of Malaysia abroad, each of you plays a vital role in projecting our nation's identity as a peaceful, respectful, and inclusive society," the High Commissioner remarked. He further highlighted that peace remains a cherished Ma-



ISLAMABAD — In conjunction with the joyous celebration of Eid ul Fitr 2026, His Excellency Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, delivered a warm and meaningful message to the Home-Based Staff and Locally Recruited Staff of the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad.

laysian value, especially amid global challenges, and called on everyone to uphold these principles while contributing positively to the workplace and the broader community. In a thoughtful gesture reflecting the spirit of sharing and care dur-

ing Eid, the High Commissioner distributed Eid food packages to all locally recruited staff as a token of appreciation and goodwill. Extending the festive greetings beyond the mission, H.E. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan conveyed warm Eid ul Fitr wishes

to the Government and people of Pakistan. He expressed gratitude for the strong bilateral relations and the warm hospitality extended to Malaysia and its representatives in Pakistan. He expressed hope for continued friendship, prosperity, and lasting peace be-

tween the two nations. The High Commissioner concluded his message with the traditional Malaysian Eid greeting: "Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Maaf Zahir dan Batin" — conveying heartfelt wishes while seeking forgiveness for any shortcomings, in

the true spirit of reconciliation and renewal. This message underscores the close and friendly ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, reinforced through cultural and festive observances at the Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad.

Pak adopts calibrated approach amid global fuel price surge

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad on Tuesday said that while global fuel prices have surged sharply in recent weeks, Pakistan has adopted a measured and calibrated approach to balance fiscal sustainability with public relief. Fuel prices, particularly diesel and petrol, have increased significantly across both developed and emerging economies, with several countries witnessing hikes ranging between 27 to 71 percent or more, compared to Pakistan's relatively moderate increase of around 22 to 24 percent,

the advisor wrote on his social media account X. Khurram Schehzad noted that many countries, especially in emerging markets, have passed on the global price shocks more aggressively to consumers, whereas Pakistan has attempted to cushion the impact through a balanced pricing strategy. Highlighting the taxation structure, he said that the retail tax on petroleum products in Pakistan stands at about 25 percent — 16 percent on diesel and 33 percent on petrol — which is lower than the regional average of around 35

percent. He added that Pakistan is currently maintaining zero percent sales tax on petroleum products, compared to the standard 18 percent rate. Khurram Schehzad said that Pakistan's approach reflects a careful balance between maintaining fiscal discipline and minimizing the burden on the public, amid limited global space for prolonged subsidies. He observed that the broader international trend indicates a shift towards price rationalisation, as most economies are increasingly unable to sustain long-term fuel subsidies. **—APP**

Procurement of wheat from small growers ordered

The chief minister emphasised that these measures would help protect the interests of small farmers, ensure market stability, and strengthen the province's food security system

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah directed the Food Department to immediately start fumigation of the godown and start the procurement of the new wheat crop, with a special focus on purchasing wheat from small growers who had received government seed subsidies. He issued these directives while presiding over a joint meeting of the Agriculture and Food Departments at the CM House, said a news release on Monday. The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Food Makhdoom Mehboob Zaman, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Secretary to CM Asif Jameel Sheikh, Secretary Food Abbas Naich, DG Agriculture Allah Waryo Rind, Director Food Allah Dino Channa, and other officials. The chief minister emphasised that the government's priority was to support small farmers and ensure transparency in wheat procurement and stock management. During the meeting, Food Minister Makhdoom Mahboob Zaman told the chief minister that over 1.3 million tons of wheat stock was available until July 2025, most of which has already been released to the market, while a small stock of wheat is still remaining. Taking notice of the remaining stock, the chief minister directed the Food Department to immediately dispose of the remaining wheat to stabilise the market and create storage space for the upcoming wheat procurement. Murad Ali Shah also instructed officials to ensure fumigation and cleanliness of all wheat godowns so that the grain is stored safely and hygienically. Discussing procurement for the new wheat crop, the chief minister directed the food departments to begin preparations immediately and ensure that the procurement process starts without delay. He further decided that wheat procurement should prioritise small growers, particularly those who had received seed subsidies from the Sindh government. The chief minister was informed that the government had provided seed subsidies to around 1.3 million small farmers owning between one and 25 acres of land, and the Agriculture Department maintains a comprehensive database of these growers. Murad Ali Shah directed that bardana (gunny bags) distribution should be carried out strictly according to the verified farmers' data, ensuring that small farmers receive priority in the procurement process. The CM also instructed the Agriculture and Food Departments to jointly formulate a clear and transparent procurement policy to ensure fair distribution of bardana, smooth wheat procurement, and efficient management of existing wheat stocks. The chief minister emphasised that these measures would help protect the interests of small farmers, ensure market stability, and strengthen the province's food security system. **—DNA**

Globally popular mangoes at risk due to India's IWT violation

MULTAN: South Punjab, particularly the districts of Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh and Khanewal, is widely regarded as the hub of the country's mango production, producing some of the world's finest varieties known for their distinctive sweetness, aroma and texture. These mangoes are not only a source of national pride but also contribute significantly to Pakistan's export economy by earning valuable foreign exchange each year. The mango industry also sustains thousands of livelihoods, supporting orchard owners, farm labourers, seasonal pickers, transporters and online sellers. During peak season, mango gifting becomes both a cul-

tural tradition and a commercial activity, further boosting trade and creating income opportunities for fruit merchants and digital entrepreneurs. However, growers have expressed serious concerns over potential violations of the Indus Waters Treaty. Under the World Bank-brokered agreement, Pakistan has rights over the waters of three major rivers. Farmers fear that upstream water control measures, including dam construction and flow regulation by India, could reduce downstream water availability, directly affecting agriculture in South Punjab. Mango orchards, which require consistent

and adequate irrigation, are particularly vulnerable. Any disruption in water supply may lead to lower yields, reduced fruit quality and long-term damage to trees that take years to mature. Prominent orchard owner Shahid Hameed Bhutta voiced concern over the situation, saying that the region has produced world-class mangoes for generations and any disruption in water supply could harm both production and the global reputation of Pakistani mangoes. He urged international institutions to take notice of the issue. Another grower, Malik Arif Kalroo, highlighted the broader economic im-

pact, stating that the mango industry supports thousands of families, from labourers to traders and exporters, and any reduction in water flow would directly affect livelihoods across the region. Malik Umar Hayat from Nawabpur also warned of long-term risks, stressing that water is the backbone of agriculture in South Punjab and that unresolved issues could impact food security and economic stability. Growers emphasized that adherence to international agreements such as the Indus Waters Treaty is essential for maintaining regional balance. The treaty, long seen as a successful model of water-sharing, is

now facing renewed scrutiny amid rising tensions. They warned that failure to take timely measures could have far-reaching consequences. A decline in mango production would not only impact the national economy but also deprive global consumers of a fruit closely associated with South Punjab's cultural identity. For centuries, mangoes from Multan and surrounding areas have symbolized heritage, flavour and prosperity. Growers cautioned that this legacy now stands at a critical juncture, dependent on both natural resources and responsible adherence to international commitments. **—APP**

Doorstep delivery of free TB medicines in Punjab

The chief minister also directed the authorities concerned to ensure the provision of the best possible medical treatment to the injured passengers, emphasizing that no effort should be spared in their care

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said the Punjab government was delivering free medicines to Tuberculosis (TB) patients at their doorsteps across the province as part of ongoing efforts to eliminate the disease. In her message on World TB Day, she expressed her commitment to eradicating tuberculosis, stressing that its elimination was vital for ensuring a healthy Punjab. She highlighted that early diagnosis and effective treatment can save lives and called for enhanced public awareness about the disease. The chief minister said the government was providing free diagnostic and treatment facilities, including medicines and PCR tests, at public hospitals. Under the DOTS strat-

egy, complete treatment was being ensured free of charge at district and tehsil hospitals, while lady health workers are actively engaged in identifying cases at the household level. She added that program were underway to deliver free medicines at home for patients suffering from TB, hepatitis, and heart diseases, noting that public cooperation was essential to achieve the goal of eliminating TB. CM Maryam Nawaz said special centers were being established for drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) patients who did not respond to standard treatment. She acknowledged the role of community health workers, civil society organizations, researchers and private healthcare institutions in supporting timely

diagnosis and continuity of care. Reiterating the government's commitment, she said the eradication of TB remained a key priority under Punjab's broader public health agenda. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed deep grief over the death of five passengers in a collision between a bus and a car in Sialkot. She extended heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families and prayed for the departed souls. The chief minister also directed the authorities concerned to ensure the provision of the best possible medical treatment to the injured passengers, emphasizing that no effort should be spared in their care. **—APP**

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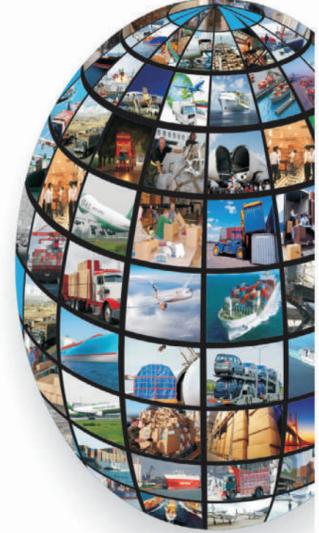






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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

OGRA trains oil industry on digital track & trace system

Shahzad Iqbal, Chairman OGRA underscored the critical role of digital transformation in enhancing transparency, operational efficiency and real-time monitoring of petroleum product movement nationwide



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), in collaboration with the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), has conducted a comprehensive industry-wide training session on its Digital Platform, marking a significant step towards the implementation of a track and trace system for petroleum products across Pakistan. Held at OGRA's Head Office in Islamabad, the

session drew participation from over 200 industry representatives, with a large number joining virtually. Senior officials from OGRA and PITB were also present. The training focused on equipping stakeholders with practical understanding of the OGRA Digital Platform, a flagship initiative aimed at digitising the country's oil supply chain. The system integrates key operational areas including import and export management, production and stock reporting, sales and dispatch monitoring, and real-time data connectivity across re-

fineries, storage depots and retail outlets. In his opening remarks, Shahzad Iqbal, Chairman OGRA underscored the critical role of digital transformation in enhancing transparency, operational efficiency and real-time monitoring of petroleum product movement nationwide. He noted that the initiative would significantly strengthen regulatory oversight, improve service delivery and support data-driven decision-making within the sector. Technical experts from PITB led detailed sessions on various modules of the platform, including refinery

operations, oil marketing company dashboards, stock and sales reporting, transit tracking, trip generation and ERP integration. The interactive session also enabled participants to raise operational queries and share feedback, which was addressed by OGRA and PITB teams. OGRA reaffirmed its commitment to modernising Pakistan's oil sector through technology-driven reforms and continued engagement with industry stakeholders to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the digital system.

Initial hearing mandatory in contempt of court proceedings

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has held that conducting an initial hearing in contempt of court proceedings is mandatory, and that framing charges without such a hearing is contrary to law. The Court partially set aside the relevant orders of the Sindh High Court. The judgment was delivered by a three-member bench headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, with Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi as members. According to the detailed written judgment approved for reporting, the appeal was filed by Hira Rauf, who contended that the Sindh High Court had failed to correct-

ly interpret Section 17(3) of the Contempt of Court Ordinance, 2003, and had fixed a date for framing of charges without providing an opportunity for a preliminary hearing. During the proceedings, counsel for both sides conceded that no initial hearing had been conducted prior to initiating contempt proceedings, which is a legal requirement. The Supreme Court clarified that under Section 17(3), it is obligatory for the court to provide the alleged contemnor an opportunity for an initial hearing. Only if the court is satisfied that a prima facie case exists can it proceed to frame charges. The Court observed that this es-

sential requirement had not been fulfilled in the present case, constituting a clear legal defect. On this basis, it set aside the Sindh High Court's orders dated October 30, 2024, and November 19, 2024, to the extent of the contempt proceedings.

The Supreme Court further directed that the contempt petition shall remain pending, and if the concerned court intends to proceed, it must first provide an opportunity for an initial hearing in accordance with the law and then determine whether a prima facie case of contempt is made out. The appeal was accordingly allowed subject to these conditions.--APP

Turkish varsity fair to be held in Islamabad, Lahore

ISLAMABAD - The Turkish University Fair 2026 is scheduled to take place in Islamabad and Lahore, bringing together a range of higher education institutions from Türkiye and offering students in Pakistan access to information on international study opportunities. The event will be held on 30 March 2026 at the Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, followed by a second session on 01 April 2026 at the Nishat Hotel, Lahore, with participation expected from students, educators, and academic institutions across both cities. Organized under the Maarif Agency with the support of the Turkish Maarif Foundation and the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, the fair aims to strengthen academic engagement between Pakistan and Türkiye. According to the organizers, around 20 universities from Türkiye are expected to participate. In addition to student engagement, the fair is also designed to facilitate institutional interaction. Representatives from Pakistani schools and universities will have the opportunity to meet their Turkish counterparts through structured sessions, focusing on potential collaboration areas such as student mobility, academic partnerships, and joint initiatives. Previous editions of the Turkish University Fair have recorded significant attendance from students and educators, indicating a growing interest in higher education opportunities in Türkiye. Organizers note that this year's edition builds on that momentum while further expanding institutional participation. Türkiye has increasingly emerged as one of the most preferred destinations for international students, recognized among the top global study hubs due to its diverse academic offerings, internationally accredited universities, and comparatively accessible education system. Its student-friendly environment, cultural diversity, and strong scholarship opportunities continue to attract students from across the world, positioning the country as a competitive and appealing option for higher education. Türkiye currently hosts over 380,000 international students from more than 180 countries.--APP

Russian philosopher delivers lecture

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Russian philosopher Professor Dr Aleksandr Dugin on Tuesday highlighted Pakistan's strategic significance in the evolving global order, stressing its pivotal role within the Islamic world and Eurasian geopolitical landscape. The lecture, titled "Eurasianism and Pakistan's Strategic Location," was organized by the Consortium for Asia Pacific and Eurasian Studies (CAPES) in collaboration with Russia's Tsargrad Institute under its Distinguished Lecture Series, said a press release. Dr. Dugin is one of the most renowned and influential philosopher in contemporary Russia, often dubbed as "Putin's brain" by Western media. The online session was attended by a large number of academics, practitioners, media representatives, and students, and was moderated by Dr. Gul-i-Ayesha Bhatti, Director Eur-

asia Chapter CAPES. During his address, Dr Dugin stated that the contemporary global order is seeing a fissure in the unipolar order in place since the 1990s. The rise of civilizational states, with an emphasis on civilizational identity, in different regions of the world shall lead to the break-down of unipolarity and rise of multipolarity, according to him. He added that the decline of globalism and liberalism coupled with an alternative rise of civilizationism and religious eschatology across the globe is paving the way for rise of a technocentric civilizational world order. All non-Western states and civilisations now try to find their own set of vision about the world, including society, politics, ethics and values, science, etc. He noted that Pakistan is an important actor in the Islamic civilization

by virtue of its strategic location, alliances, and status as a nuclear weapons state. According to him, Pakistan has adopted a cautious approach during the ongoing fissures in the international system. During the concluding remarks, President CAPES Dr Khuram Iqbal emphasised that Pakistan represents itself as a modern Islamic republic driven by foreign policy centered on the country's national interests at a time of turbulence when each country is left to fend for itself. Pakistan's efforts, however, are resisted by two major challenges, namely threat of terrorism and opposition by Taliban regime in Afghanistan to resolve the issue, and the Hindutva-led government in India that has actively attempted to preclude Pakistan from any initiative aimed to collective regionalism in Eurasia and Asia-Pacific.--APP

Dacoit gang busted, 3 handcuffed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have intensified their crackdown against criminal elements, putting three members of an organized robbery gang in handcuffs during an operation in the federal capital. An official told APP on Tuesday that Humak Police Station conducted a successful action against a gang involved in multiple street crime incidents. He said that the police recovered snatched mobile phones and cash worth hundreds of thousands of rupees from the possession of the arrested suspects. The official added that weapons along with ammunition used in the crimes were also recovered from the accused. He said the arrested suspects confessed to their involvement in multiple incidents of snatching cash, mobile phones and other valuables at gunpoint. DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq directed officers to ensure that all legal requirements are fulfilled to bring the accused to justice. He said that indiscriminate action against those depriving citizens of their valuables would continue, adding that Islamabad Police were taking strict measures to maintain law and order.--APP

ANF arrests six suspects in five operations

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has arrested six suspects, including a woman, and seized 16.28 kilograms of narcotics worth more than Rs1.9 million in five operations conducted across the country. According to an ANF spokesperson, the operations targeted domestic, inter-provincial and international drug trafficking networks. In Hyderabad, officials recovered 12 kg of hashish from a woman near a shopping mall and took her into custody. In a separate operation near a railway station on Multan Road in Lahore, 92 capsules containing 530 grams of methamphetamine (ice) were seized from a vehicle, and two suspects were arrested. At Islamabad International Airport, ANF personnel intercepted a passenger travelling to Abu Dhabi and recovered 600 grams of hashish concealed in his shoes. In inter-provincial operations near the Islamabad Toll Plaza, 2.4 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle, and one suspect was apprehended. In another action at the same location, 750 grams of methamphetamine were seized from a vehicle, and the accused was arrested. The spokesperson said cases had been registered against all arrested individuals under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997 (CNSA), and further investigations were underway.--APP

US, China, UK remain top 3 destinations of export

Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US\$ 463.708 million during the current year, compared to US\$ 490.873 million last year, whereas the exports to Türkiye stood at US\$ 132.512 million against US\$ 194.748 million

ISLAMABAD: The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first eight months of the fiscal year 2025-26, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK). Total exports to the US during July-February 2025-26 were recorded at US\$ 4.156 billion against the exports of US\$ 4.011 billion during July-February 2024-25, showing an increase of 3.61 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). China ranked second, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$1.692 billion against the exports of US\$ 1.698 billion last year, showing a nominal decrease of 0.35 percent. UK remained the third-largest export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US\$ 1.441 billion during the period under review against the exports of US\$ 1.443 billion, SBP data revealed. Among other major trading countries, Pakistani exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood at US\$ 1.424 billion against US\$ 1.415 billion last year, while the exports to Germany were recorded at US\$ 1.108 billion from US\$ 1.135 billion last year, data said. During July-February 2025-26, the exports to Holland were recorded at US \$979.789 million against US\$ 1,002.406 million, whereas the exports to Italy stood at US\$ 790.848 million against US\$ 749.444 million. Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at US\$ 1,049.904 million against the exports of US\$ 795.621 million, while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US\$ 236.411 million against US\$ 595.841 million last year. The exports to Bangladesh stood at US\$ 478.148 million against US\$ 526.350 million. Similarly, the exports to France during the period under review were recorded at US\$ 360.578 million against US\$ 374.580 million, while the exports to Belgium stood at US\$ 370.053 million against US\$ 384.252 million.--APP

Rs 990m proposed to boost agri equipment production

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research has proposed a Rs990 million project to accelerate the adoption of smart farming technologies and strengthen indigenous agricultural machinery development. The project, titled "Establishment of Digital and Precision Agriculture Mechanisation Facility at National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC)," will be implemented by the Agricultural Engineering Institute (AEI), NARC, Islamabad, according to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan. Planned for implementation over five years from July 2026 to June 2031, the initiative aims to advance agricultural mechanisation and promote precision and smart farming technologies. The proposal aligns with key national development frameworks, including the 5Es Framework, the 13th Five-Year Plan, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the National Agriculture Innovation and Growth Programme (NAIGP). It is designed to promote resource-efficient farming technologies, support smallholder-focused mechanisation, strengthen the National Agricultural Research System, encourage import substitution and support agri-SMEs and local manufacturers. Under the project, three key facilities will be upgraded, including a design lab, a prototype workshop and a testing lab. The design lab will be modernised with advanced technologies such as 3D scanning, computer-aided design (CAD), modelling and simulation tools. The prototype workshop will be digitised through the installation of Computer Numerical Control (CNC), Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM), laser-cutting and testing facilities to enhance machinery development and evaluation. The initiative will also support the development of advanced agricultural equipment using artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and robotics. A dedicated UAV and agricultural robotics manufacturing and integration facility will also be established under the project. As part of its research and development activities, at least five prototypes of different agricultural machines will be locally designed, developed and tested. Capacity building is another key component of the initiative. At least 10 training activities, including workshops, training sessions and farmer field days, will be organised to impart technical knowledge and skills to farmers, manufacturers and researchers. The proposed facility is expected to support value-added production systems, create technical employment opportunities and strengthen local manufacturing capacity. More than 500 stakeholders, including farmers, manufacturers and researchers, will benefit through training and knowledge-sharing initiatives, contributing to capacity building and talent retention in the agricultural research system.--APP

Briefs

WAPDA
allocates
Rs 94m for
75 schools

ISLAMABAD: The Water and Power Development Authority has approved 94.23 million rupees for 75 schools in the Diamer Basha Dam project area to keep them running for the next three years and support girls' education in Diamer district, it said on Tuesday, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The funding will support about 2,250 girls in Chilas, Tangir and Darel under the Community-Based Accelerated Learning Schools programme, according to a WAPDA statement. The schools, operated with the READ Foundation, had faced closure because of a funding shortfall. WAPDA said the money would come from its contingency budget. The programme will be overseen jointly by WAPDA, the Gilgit-Baltistan education department and the READ Foundation. Separately, WAPDA approved 29.5 million rupees for the rehabilitation of five government schools in Tangir and Darel, including furniture, stationery, other basic facilities and two coaster buses for students, the statement said. The rehabilitation plan was proposed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Scouts and will be carried out under the joint supervision of WAPDA, the Gilgit-Baltistan education department and the scouts.—APP

PEC launches
Global
Engineering
Freelance
Initiative

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), in collaboration with Aspire Pakistan, has announced the launch of the PEC Global Engineering Freelance Initiative, a major step aimed at preparing Pakistani engineers for the rapidly expanding global digital economy. The program, scheduled from April 13-17, will provide structured online training to help engineers explore international freelancing opportunities and develop skills needed to work beyond geographical boundaries. A total of 5,000 seats have been allocated for the initiative, which is open to PEC registered engineers, early-career professionals, and engineers seeking additional income streams through global platforms. The initiative reflects the changing nature of the engineering profession, where digital technologies are enabling professionals to contribute their expertise worldwide. Through live online learning sessions, participants will receive guidance on understanding freelancing opportunities in engineering, navigating international freelance platforms, building strong engineering portfolios, and learning practical strategies to secure their first freelance project. The program will also provide personalized career assessment using AI-enabled profiling to evaluate participants' technical skills, digital capabilities, and professional interests, helping them identify suitable freelance pathways. Chairman PEC, Engr Waseem Nazir, said that the Global Engineering Freelance Initiative is a forward-looking effort to prepare Pakistani engineers for the future of the profession. He stated that the engineering field is rapidly moving toward digital and remote work environments, and it is essential for Pakistani engineers to adapt to these global trends.—APP

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naeem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum suit for dissolution of marriage etc
Case title: Madiha Amjad vs Yasir Mahmood, son of Gharib Khan, residence: House No. MCD/319, Islampura Mohalla, Dina, District Jhelum. (currently residing abroad). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 31.03.2026 at 09:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.



ISLAMABAD: A large numbers of people enjoying pleasant weather at Khanpur Dam.

PBN praises civil,
military roles in
Iran conflict

Leadership acknowledged for boosting Pakistan's global stature.
Business community supports Pakistan's involvement in US-Iran talks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Business Network (PBN) Omar Butt on Tuesday commended the country's civil and military leaders for their diplomatic handling of the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, stating that their approach has enhanced Pakistan's global standing and helped mitigate economic risks. He praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir for what he called "principled and courageous" navigation through a highly complex regional crisis. He noted that Pakistan's focus on dialogue and neutrality has

allowed it to become a credible mediator during a time of increased tensions. Omar Butt mentioned that Pakistan is positioning itself at the forefront of mediation efforts, with signs that Islamabad may soon host direct talks between top US and Iranian officials. This initiative has involved high-level outreach, including contacts between military leadership and Washington, along with parallel engagement with Tehran. The business leader emphasized that the stakes for Pakistan's economy are still high. The country shares a 900-kilometer border with Iran and depends heavily on Gulf shipping lanes for energy imports, sourcing about

90 percent of its oil from the region. Any further disruption to these routes could increase fuel prices, boost the import bill, and add inflationary pressures at a time when Pakistan remains under an IMF stabilization program. He also highlighted that millions of Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries face potential risks if the conflict intensifies, underscoring the connection between regional stability and household income. According to Butt, Pakistan's focus on diplomacy has helped sustain some economic stability, allowing trade and investment to continue despite external uncertainties. He suggested that Pakistan's evolving

mediatory role could boost its international credibility and deepen cooperation with global partners. Pakistan's external position remains vulnerable to oil price fluctuations and currency pressures, with policymakers closely monitoring the situation. Contingency plans are being developed to handle potential spikes in energy costs and safeguard foreign exchange reserves. Continued de-escalation could help lower inflation and boost market confidence, especially in energy-dependent sectors. Nonetheless, he warned that a prolonged conflict could undermine recent macroeconomic stabilization efforts and hinder economic recovery.

OGDC commences oil
production from Pasakhi-13

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) on Tuesday announced the suc-

cessful commencement of oil production from its development well Pasakhi-13, marking a historic milestone as Pakistan's first successful horizontal oil well in a clastic reservoir (Lower Goru - A Sand).

Located in the Hyderabad district of Sindh province, Pasakhi-13 is currently producing 460 barrels of oil per day (BPD). The well was drilled to a measured depth of 2,966 meters, including

a 546-meter horizontal section. Advanced geo-steering technology enabled precise navigation within a narrow three-meter drilling window, ensuring optimal placement within the reservoir's sweet spot.



ISLAMABAD: A tourist enjoying Parasailing Fly Boat at Khanpur Dam.

Police
performance
during
Ramzan, Eid
lauded

ISLAMABAD: Assistant Inspector General (AIG) Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Warrak chaired a meeting and appreciated officers and personnel for their exemplary performance during the holy month of Ramzan and Eid ul Fitr. An official told APP on Tuesday that the meeting reviewed overall performance, particularly security arrangements and duty deployments during Ramzan and Eid, and commended the dedication shown by officers and jawans. He said the AIG appreciated the arrangements for Fajr and Taraweeh prayers as well as security measures at Ramazan bazaars, terming them effective and well-coordinated. He said Muhammad Sarfraz Warrak encouraged officers to continue performing their duties with the same spirit, commitment and professionalism in the future. The official added that the officers were directed to maintain high standards of vigilance and ensure the safety and convenience of citizens during all public occasions.—APP

Eid accidents down
63% as ITP issues
3,400 challans

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) recorded a significant 63 percent reduction in road traffic accidents during Eid ul Fitr holidays while issuing over 3,400 challans in a comprehensive enforcement drive across the federal capital. An official told APP on Tuesday that total accident calls during Eid holidays 2026 dropped to 23 compared to 64 reported during Eid holidays 2025, showing a 63 percent reduction. He said non-fatal accidents decreased from 17 to 7, reflecting a 59 percent decline, while fatal accidents dropped from 5 to 1, marking an 80 percent reduction. He said that alongside improved traffic management, a special enforcement campaign was launched to ensure road safety and smooth traffic flow in the city. During the campaign, a total of 3,439 challans were issued for various traffic violations. The official said that one-wheeling topped the list of violations with 723 challans, followed by 716 challans issued to motorcyclists for not wearing helmets. He said 699 vehicles were fined for being without or un-patterned number plates, while 223 challans were issued for careless driving, 153 for illegal parking, 132 for lane violations, and 115 for driving without a licence. He added that 74 challans were issued for seat belt violations and 68 for tinted glasses. During the Eid holidays, the police also impounded 1,272 vehicles and motorcycles, including 1,147 motorcycles and 125 other vehicles, while five FIRs were registered against serious violations. He said special traffic deployment was arranged at major markets, parks, graveyards, recreational spots, and entry and exit points of the city to manage increased traffic load during Eid days. Strict action against over-speeding, one-wheeling, lane violations, and illegal parking contributed to improved road safety and a reduction in accidents. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad Hamzah Humayun appreciated the performance of traffic officers and thanked citizens for their cooperation. He said that adherence to traffic rules was essential to prevent accidents and save precious lives. He urged road users to use helmets, wear seat belts, avoid over-speeding, and strictly follow traffic laws for their own safety as well as for others. Islamabad Traffic Police reiterated its commitment to continuing enforcement and awareness campaigns to reduce traffic violations and protect human lives on the roads of the federal capital.—DNA

Pindi returns
to life as
residents
return after
Eid holidays

RAWALPINDI: After three days of less activity during the Eid holidays, Rawalpindi is once again bustling with life as thousands of residents returned to the city after celebrating Eid in their hometowns. Markets, which were presenting deserted look, began to open. Huge rush was observed at bus stations and railway station, which served as major hubs for mass transit. As people flocked to these stations to return, a heavy flow of passengers was witnessed, with the Rawalpindi railway station packed with travelers eagerly welcomed by their loved ones. Pakistan Railways recorded unprecedented earnings from passenger trains during the three days of Eid, with revenue reaching Rs. 110.0 million on the first day, Rs. 170.0 on the second, and over Rs. 200.0 million on the third day. Overall during the past week, Pakistan Railways earned more than Rs.1.0 billion from passenger trains, says a spokesman of Pakistan Railways.—APP

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Allies Lost, Trust Gone

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

THE spectacle of power, when divorced from prudence, often descends into isolation. In the contemporary theatre of international politics, the United States remains a formidable actor, yet its present leadership appears increasingly estranged from the very alliances that once amplified its influence. America may not be alone, but its president stands out in solitude. The distinction is neither rhetorical nor trivial; it reflects a growing divergence between the enduring strength of a nation and the faltering credibility of its leadership. The erratic cadence of policymaking—decisions announced with flourish only to be revised or contradicted in after-hours pronouncements—has unsettled even the most steadfast allies. Diplomacy thrives on consistency, on the assurance that commitments made today will endure tomorrow. When policy becomes a moving target, trust erodes, and with it the delicate architecture of alliances. This erosion is not confined to transient political discomfort; it strikes at the very reputation of the United States as a reliable partner. Reputations in international affairs are not easily repaired. They are built over decades and can be diminished within moments of impulsive governance. Historians and scholars of international relations will, in due course, examine this period with particular scrutiny. They will ask why a leader, presiding over one of the most powerful nations in history, found himself rebuffed and even disregarded by traditional allies. The answer lies not merely in policy disagreements, but in the manner in which those policies were conceived and pursued. The paradox is striking: a leader projecting strength abroad while simultaneously diminishing the confidence of those whose cooperation is indispensable. The pursuit of accolades, notably the aspiration for the Nobel Peace Prize, further illustrates this contradiction. Peace is seldom the product of ambition for recognition; it is the outcome of restraint, patience, and a measured understanding of global complexities. When the quest for such honours appears intertwined with aggressive posturing, it invites scepticism rather than admiration. The dissonance between declared intentions and observable actions becomes too stark to ignore. Equally disconcerting are the expansive ambitions that have surfaced in recent discourse. The notion of acquiring territories such as Greenland, or orchestrating the apprehension of foreign leaders and bringing them to the United States to assert control over their national resources, reflects a worldview more attuned to coercion than cooperation. Such propositions, even when framed as strategic considerations, resonate poorly in a world increasingly conscious of sovereignty and international law. They evoke an era many believed had been consigned to history, thereby alienating partners who view such ambitions as destabilising. Compounding this unease are the controversies that have cast long shadows over the credibility of leadership itself. The appearance of Trump's name in the Epstein files, and the perception—rightly or wrongly—of vulnerability to external pressure or blackmail, particularly in relation to Israel, has further deepened mistrust among allies. In international politics, perception often carries



as much weight as reality; even the suggestion of compromised autonomy is sufficient to erode confidence. Allies are less inclined to follow a leader whose decisions may be influenced by factors beyond transparent statecraft. Simultaneously, a moral and political re-evaluation is unfolding within allied countries. The reported letter by British lawmakers to their Prime Minister, expressing regret over Britain's historical role in the establishment of Israel, is indicative of a broader shift in perspective. It reflects an awakening conscience that questions long-held policies and their consequences. Within this evolving context, actions perceived as endorsing or facilitating aggression—particularly in relation to Iran—have intensified discomfort among Western partners. The convergence of these sentiments has further distanced them from American policy under its current leadership. The ongoing tensions involving Iran have thus become a focal point of divergence. While the United States has sought to exert pressure and, at times, adopt a confrontational posture, key allies have exhibited marked reluctance to align themselves with such an approach. This reluctance is not merely tactical; it stems from a fundamental disagreement over both the necessity and the morality of the course being pursued. When alliances falter in moments of crisis, it is often because the underlying trust has already been compromised. The internal dissent within the United States adds another layer of complexity. The resignation of a senior official, who publicly questioned the justification for military action and asserted that no imminent threat existed, is emblematic of a broader dissent within the administration itself. Such acts of protest are not routine bureaucratic occurrences; they are signals of profound disagreement at the highest levels of governance. When those entrusted with national security express dissent, it inevitably reverberates beyond domestic borders, further eroding international confidence. Moreover, the economic ramifications of these policies cannot be overlooked. The prospect of disrupted oil supplies and the consequent pressure on global markets has alarmed not only adversaries but allies as well. Energy security remains a shared concern, and actions that jeopardise it tend to isolate rather than unite. The burden of such policies, both financial and strategic, ultimately falls upon the very nation that seeks to assert its dominance. Perhaps most telling is the waning willingness of allied nations to commit their military resources. Armies are not instruments to be deployed at the behest of another's ambitions without clear purpose or shared conviction. The hesitation of allied forces reflects a rational calculus: that participation in a conflict lacking coherent objectives or legitimacy carries risks disproportionate to any potential gains. This reluctance, in turn, affects the morale of the American military, which draws strength not only from its capabilities but also from the solidarity of its partners. In the final analysis, the present moment serves as a cautionary tale about the limits of unilateralism. Power, when exercised without regard for partnership, becomes self-defeating. The United States retains immense capacity, but its effectiveness is intrinsically linked to the trust and cooperation of its allies. When that trust is undermined, even the greatest power finds itself diminished. America endures, as it has through many trials, but the path to restoring its standing will be neither swift nor simple. It will require a recommitment to the principles that once underpinned its leadership: consistency, moral clarity, respect for international norms, and an appreciation of the value of alliances. Until then, the paradox will persist—of a nation that is not alone, yet a leader who stands increasingly so.

Is Iran Winning This War?

Qamar Bashir



This non-committal posture is deliberate. From Tehran's perspective, the United States has already escalated the region into chaos—damaging infrastructure, destabilizing allies, and contributing to disruptions in global energy flows. Having triggered this environment, Washington now appears eager to de-escalate. But Iran's stance is clear: it will not allow the United States to exit the conflict without consequence, without concessions, and without accountability. This raises a critical and uncomfortable question. If Iran's leadership has not formally acknowledged negotiations, and if there is no official confirmation...

WHAT once appeared to be an abstract geopolitical forecast has now taken the shape of unfolding reality. In early 2024, Chinese-Canadian analyst Jiang Xueqin advanced a controversial thesis—"The Iran Trap." His argument was dismissed by many as speculative: Donald Trump would return to power, initiate a major confrontation with Iran, and ultimately entangle the United States in a costly, unwinnable war that would weaken its global standing. Two elements of that prediction have already materialized. The third—strategic failure—is now emerging gradually, not through collapse, but through erosion.

The war, which began on February 28, 2026, quickly escalated into one of the most intense confrontations in modern Middle Eastern history. The United States, alongside Israel and supported by regional partners, launched extensive aerial and naval operations targeting Iranian military infrastructure, energy networks, and strategic facilities. Initial expectations in Washington were rooted in the belief that overwhelming force would compel Iran into submission or at least force it to negotiate from a position of weakness.

But the war did not follow that script. Iran absorbed the shock and responded with calculated resilience. It refused to surrender, refused to slow its retaliation, and instead demonstrated a sustained capacity to respond through asymmetric means. Missile strikes, drone operations, and regional disruptions transformed the battlefield into a prolonged contest of endurance. The conflict shifted from a display of technological superiority to a test of strategic patience.

For the first time in decades, Israel faced sustained retaliatory pressure that tested both its defensive systems and civilian morale. Reports of public frustration—including direct confrontations with political leaders—revealed growing discontent with a war that appeared to lack a clear exit strategy. The psychological balance of the conflict began to shift.

On March 23, 2026, President Donald Trump announced a five-day pause in planned strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure, particularly power grids. He described ongoing contacts as "very good and productive," signaling a potential diplomatic breakthrough. However, Iranian officials quickly dismissed these claims, denying any formal or informal negotiations and labeling such statements as misleading narratives intended to influence global markets.

According to Iranian spokespersons, this announcement by the United States—framed as a diplomatic opening—was not driven by genuine intent for peace, but rather by economic pressure. They argued that rising oil prices, triggered by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz,

were causing severe strain not only on Europe but also on the United States and the global economy. In their view, Washington's signaling of negotiations was a calculated attempt to cool oil markets and temporarily ease economic pain, rather than a reflection of substantive progress. Iranian officials further warned that such unilateral messaging would be short-lived, and that once the immediate market reaction subsides, tensions would likely escalate again—driving oil prices upward once more. This perspective highlights a deeper layer of the conflict, where economic warfare and perception management are as critical as military operations.

At this stage, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has expressed conditional willingness to engage in negotiations, but only within a clearly defined framework. Any dialogue, he has emphasized, must focus strictly on the nuclear issue, must be fair, and must ensure a win-win outcome that preserves Iran's sovereignty, dignity, and national integrity. Yet, notably, Iran's official channels have not confirmed any ongoing talks, nor acknowledged any tangible progress, even as U.S. leadership continues to project optimism.

This non-committal posture is deliberate. From Tehran's perspective, the United States has already escalated the region into chaos—damaging infrastructure, destabilizing allies, and contributing to disruptions in global energy flows. Having triggered this environment, Washington now appears eager to de-escalate. But Iran's stance is clear: it will not allow the United States to exit the conflict without consequence, without concessions, and without accountability.

This raises a critical and uncomfortable question. If Iran's leadership has not formally acknowledged negotiations, and if there is no official confirmation of talks, then who exactly is Washington engaging with? Reports have mentioned possible intermediaries such as Brett McGurk and other diplomatic figures, yet the absence of Iranian confirmation introduces ambiguity. While it may seem far-fetched, the possibility cannot be entirely dismissed that the United States may be interacting with non-authoritative or secondary channels, rather than the core decision-making leadership in Tehran.

Such uncertainty underscores the fragility of the diplomatic process. Meanwhile, Iran continues to assert that its nuclear program remains fully compliant with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It has reiterated its willingness to allow inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), while firmly maintaining that uranium enrichment is its sovereign right. This dual posture—cooperation without concession—has strengthened Iran's negotiating position.

The broader geopolitical consequences are equally

significant. Europe, having reduced dependence on Russian energy, is now heavily reliant on Middle Eastern supplies routed through the Strait of Hormuz. With that corridor under threat, energy prices have surged, supply chains have tightened, and political pressure has intensified across European capitals. The global economy has reacted sharply to every development—oil prices, shipping costs, and stock markets now fluctuate in direct response to battlefield events and diplomatic signals.

At its core, the conflict has exposed a fundamental imbalance—not in military strength, but in strategic approach. The United States and Israel have relied on conventional superiority—air dominance, naval strength, and precision strikes. Iran, by contrast, has leveraged asymmetric warfare, combining missile capabilities, drone networks, cyber tools, and regional influence to offset its disadvantages. Its ability to project force and sustain pressure has reshaped perceptions of power.

This is precisely the dynamic envisioned in the "Iran Trap"—a scenario in which a superpower becomes entangled in a conflict where traditional advantages fail to yield decisive outcomes.

As negotiations—acknowledged or otherwise—move closer, the balance of power has shifted. Iran now enters this phase as a confident and strengthened actor, capable of negotiating from a position of resilience. If sanctions are lifted, Iran could rapidly emerge as a revitalized economic and regional force, leveraging its energy resources and strategic geography.

Yet, the implications extend beyond Iran. History shows that unresolved conflicts often lead to new entanglements. Some analysts speculate that if this confrontation stabilizes without a clear resolution, geopolitical tensions may shift to other regions, including Cuba. While such scenarios remain hypothetical, they underscore a broader risk: the danger of moving from one strategic quagmire to another without learning from the first.

The lesson is unmistakable. Power alone does not guarantee victory. Military superiority does not ensure control. In a multipolar world defined by complexity, resilience and adaptability can challenge even the most dominant forces. The Iran conflict is no longer just a regional war—it is a defining test of global power, credibility, and strategic limits. What began as an assertion of dominance may ultimately redefine it.

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

The Kindleberger Trap

THE Kindleberger Trap is a concept from international political economy. It is named after economist Charles Kindleberger. It describes a dangerous situation. A dominant global power; a hegemon, is either unwilling or unable to maintain international stability. At the same time, no other nation is ready to step in and fill the void. During the interwar period (1920s–1930s), Kindleberger argued that the United States failed to replace Great Britain as the global stabilizer. The result was a collapse in global cooperation. No nation provided essential public goods. These included a lender of last resort, an open market for distressed goods, or a stable reserve currency. This vacuum led to trade wars and competitive devaluations. It ultimately contributed to the Great Depression and World War II.

After World War II, the United States emerged as the undisputed hegemon. It possessed half the world's industrial capacity and the sole atomic arsenal. Crucially, unlike after World War I, the US consciously embraced Kindleberger's logic. It provided global public goods through the Bretton Woods system, and established the dollar as the reserve currency. Establishment of UN, Creation of World Bank and setting-up IMF helped in bringing stability. The Marshall Plan rebuilt Europe; underwriting security through NATO and maintaining open markets, the US filled the leadership vacuum left by Britain.

Over the past six decades, US hegemony has been challenged. The challenges came from strategic overreach, economic shifts, and emerging powers. The Vietnam War eroded domestic consensus. The 1973 oil crisis revealed vulnerability to non-state actors. The 2003 Iraq War was launched without a UN mandate. It severely damaged US credibility. It drained resources and fuelled regional instability. Meanwhile, China rose as a manufacturing powerhouse and cred-

itor nation. This created a multipolar economic landscape. The 2008 financial crisis accelerated this shift. It undermined faith in US-managed capitalism.

Today, the US-Israel war with Iran represents a critical accelerant of hegemonic decline. The US is acting unilaterally outside international law. It has alienated European allies and Gulf partners. It has demonstrated an inability to secure decisive victory. The conflict has exposed US military overstretch. It has triggered oil price shocks that weaken global faith in dollar stability. It has forced nations like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China to seek alternative security arrangements. This hastens the transition toward a fragmented, multipolar order.

Does a US-Israel attack on Iran constitute a misuse of hegemonic power? The answer depends on how one defines the legitimate role of a hegemon. Proponents might frame it as necessary enforcement of international order. They argue a nuclear-armed Iran would destabilize the Middle East. It would threaten oil supplies. It would undermine the non-proliferation regime. In this view, the hegemon uses its unique military capacity to prevent a larger catastrophe. It exercises leadership rather than abusing it. However, critics contend; and their argument carries more weight, that a unilateral attack is a clear misuse of hegemonic power. The US is not providing the global public goods that Kindleberger identified. These include stability, rule of law, and a lender of last resort. Instead, the US is acting outside international law. It likely lacks UN Security Council authorization and imposing massive regional instability. Such an action would shatter the very norms the hegemon claims to uphold. This is precisely where the Kindleberger Trap becomes relevant. The US is pursuing unilateral military action. It alienates allies and ignores multilateral institutions. It prioritizes one nation's security over

collective stability. In doing so, it abandons its role as a cooperative stabilizer. The resulting chaos would include oil shocks, proxy wars, and a fractured global response. This would mirror the 1930s dynamic: a hegemon unwilling to act as a responsible steward, with no alternative power ready to fill the void. Rather than preventing disorder, such an attack would accelerate the leadership vacuum. It would push the world closer to the very trap Kindleberger warned against.

Despite US-Israel claims of victory, Iran has proven resilient. It is utilizing a "Decentralized Mosaic Defence." Iran retains indigenous drone and missile capabilities. This forces the US to depote critical air-defence assets. Instead of collapsing, Iran has expanded its retaliation. It has struck Gulf energy infrastructure. It has critically struck the Diego Garcia base 4,000 kilometers away. This demonstrates a capability to hit London. It fundamentally alters European risk calculations. With no clear US exit strategy and a 75 percent probability of ground invasion, the conflict is escalating toward a war of attrition. A decisive victory is not in sight. However, the greatest danger is, if US hegemony breaks down without a cooperative framework to take its place, the world risks sliding into the chaos of the 1930s. A vacuum would emerge. No power, whether China, the EU, or a coalition of states, may yet be capable or willing to provide global public goods. These include open markets, maritime security, and a lender of last resort.

It is obvious that the tectonic plates of power are shifting. The economic tremors have started showing up. Countries are forced to realign to save themselves from huge damages. Economic strangulation, domestic instability, and geopolitical entrapment are no longer problems just for developing countries like Pakistan. Instead, the stronger powers will have to pay a higher price.

Dr. M Ali Hamza



Despite US-Israel claims of victory, Iran has proven resilient. It is utilizing a "Decentralized Mosaic Defence." Iran retains indigenous drone and missile capabilities. This forces the US to deplete critical air-defence assets. Instead of collapsing, Iran has expanded its retaliation. It has struck Gulf energy infrastructure

Briefs

Pakistan all agog to host peace talks

FROM PAGE 01
hit Iran's power plants if the Strait of Hormuz was not reopened within 48 hours. According to CNN, the move towards talks followed warnings from Gulf allies that striking civilian infrastructure in Iran could trigger a dangerous escalation. Even so, the prospect of diplomacy remains uncertain. Iran has denied any negotiations with the United States, while CNN said sources were not aware of any direct talks between Washington and Tehran since the outbreak of the war, despite Trump's claims that discussions were advancing. Sources cited by the network said the United States had shared a 15-point proposal with Iran through Pakistan. The demands reportedly included a permanent ban on Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, limits on its defence capabilities, a cessation of support for proxies and recognition of Israel's right to exist. Trump also said Washington wanted possession of Iran's highly enriched uranium, which he claimed was buried beneath the Isfahan nuclear site struck during a US bombing raid in June.

FO says media to act cautiously

FROM PAGE 01
The FO spokesperson's statement came after several international media outlets, suggested that Islamabad could serve as a venue for potential direct talks between US and Iranian representatives in the coming days. The claim gained traction because of US President Donald Trump's hint on Monday at discussions with Iran in the next few days. However, there has been no official confirmation from Pakistan, the US or Iran regarding any such arrangement. Earlier, Andrabi said in reply to a query "If the parties desire, Islamabad is always willing to host talks." He recalled that Pakistan had consistently advocated for dialogue and diplomacy to promote peace and stability in the region.

Imran's release not possible...

FROM PAGE 01
other provinces and regions," Mughal said. He also suggested mobilising the youth as a "major focus" which was the main force for change. "Young people must be encouraged to participate constructively in democratic processes beyond social media," he added. Mughal claimed that an effective media and communication strategy was essential. "Social media influencers and responsible journalists should be engaged to promote the agenda and ensure accurate information reaches the public. Grassroots workers who actively contribute on the ground should be recognised," he added. He also suggested that the overseas community should be mobilised to amplify the message globally and provide organisational and financial support within legal frameworks.

No let-up in US-Israel-Iran war...

FROM PAGE 01
Baquer Zolqadr as the new Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council. He replaces Ali Larjani, who was killed in recent US-Israeli strikes. Zolqadr, a veteran IRGC figure and senior hardliner, is expected to adopt a tougher stance on security and foreign policy. The Iranian Red Crescent Society reported severe damage to civilian infrastructure from the US-Israeli campaign, including 498 schools and 281 medical facilities (with some reports citing around 275 pharmaceutical, medical and emergency centres). Overall, more than 81,000 civilian units – including homes, commercial buildings and aid facilities – have been affected, according to the humanitarian organisation.

Romania unveils first choral arrangement of Pakistan's anthem

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a historic cultural gesture marking Pakistan Day, the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad has officially launched the world's first choral arrangement and professionally prepared choral score of Pakistan's national anthem, the Qaumi Tarāna. Geographic Reference. The landmark initiative, realized by Romania's renowned National Chamber Choir "Madrigal – Marin Constantin," stands as a tribute to Pakistan's rich musical heritage and a symbol of deepening friendship between the two nations. The ambitious project, part of the Madrigal Choir's broader "Diplomacy – The Anthems of the World" program, reimagines Pakistan's national anthem—originally composed as an orchestral piece—for a polyphonic choir. The arrangement distributes the melody across soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, carefully preserving the solemn character and musical complexity of the original work.

Composed in 1949 by Ahmed Ghulam Ali Chagla with lyrics penned in 1952 by renowned Urdu poet Hafeez Jalandhari, the Qaumi Tarāna was first broadcast on Radio Pakistan on August 13, 1954. Its first multi-voice recording followed in 1955, performed by eleven prominent Pakistani singers. The new choral interpretation by the Madrigal Choir builds upon this tradition, offering a refined rendition that highlights the anthem's expressive depth. Translating the anthem for choir presented significant artistic challenges.

The original orchestral composition encompasses approximately 38 distinct tones and was scored for around 21 instruments, resulting in a wide tonal range and complex harmonic progression. The anthem's structure, which unfolds through continuously evolving musical phrases without a repeated refrain, added further complexity. Music & Audio. Additionally, the highly Persianized Urdu lyrics



demanded precise articulation and coordinated pronunciation in a choral setting. Through extensive preparation and rehearsal, the Madrigal Choir successfully transformed these orchestral elements into balanced, singable vocal lines, creating a performance that honors the anthem's musical integrity while showcasing the expressive power of collective vocal interpretation.

Dr. Dan Stoenescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, stated that his country was honored to bring to fruition this truly historic cultural

project that would forever link the two nations. He noted that for the first time, Pakistan's national anthem would have a dedicated choral arrangement and a professionally prepared choral score, made possible through the remarkable artistry of the National Chamber Choir "Madrigal – Marin Constantin" of Romania. He emphasized that this initiative stood as a testament to the power of culture and music to build bridges between peoples and to celebrate the shared values of friendship, respect, and artistic excellence.

As part of the initiative, the official album of the choral arrangement and the newly prepared choral score are being formally presented by Ambassador Stoenescu to Pakistan's highest authorities, including President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousef Raza Gillani, and Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir. The ceremonial presentation symbolizes the spirit of friendship and cultural dialogue between Romania and Pakistan.

Founded in 1963 by the legendary conductor Marin Constantin, the Madrigal – Marin Constantin National Chamber Choir has become an emblem of musical excellence and cultural diplomacy. Renowned for its distinctive sound, non-vibrato technique, stereophonic stage placement, and imposing costumes, the ensemble has performed thousands of concerts on some of the world's most prestigious stages and received numerous international awards. Music & Audio

The world-premiere choral arrangement of Qaumi Tarāna forms part of the program "Diplomacy – The Anthems of the World," initiated in 2021 by the Madrigal Choir, dedicated to promoting cultural diplomacy and international dialogue through music. Through this artistic tribute, Romania expresses its profound respect for Pakistan's history, identity, and national values, reaffirming the shared belief that culture and music can bring nations closer together.

Peshawar Zalmi strengthen squad with new foreign signing

"We welcome Brian John Bennett from Zimbabwe to the Zalmi family," says franchise owner Javed Afridi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former champions Peshawar Zalmi have brought in Zimbabwean player Brian Bennett for the 11th season of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), set to take place from March 26 to May 3. The addition was announced by Zalmi owner Javed Afridi through a post on his social media platform X. "We welcome Brian John Bennett from Zimbabwe to the Zalmi family," Afridi wrote. The right-handed batter has been a formidable performer for Zimbabwe in international limited-overs cricket. He has played 58 T20Is, scoring 1,888 runs at a healthy strike rate of 143.68, including 12 fifties

and one century. Bennett was also the sixth-highest run-scorer in the recently concluded ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, held in India and Sri Lanka. He amassed 292 runs in six matches at an average of 146.00 and a strike rate of 134.56, with three half-centuries to his name. The 22-year-old is set to make his debut not only in the PSL but also in any overseas franchise league. Earlier, Zalmi also signed Bangladesh opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who became the third Bangladeshi player to join the squad, alongside Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam. The upcoming PSL season marks a landmark edition as the league expands to eight teams. New entrants Hyderabad Kingsmen and

Rawalpindi join the fray, with a total of 44 matches to be played over 39 days. In a significant shift from initial plans, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has scaled back the tournament's logistics. Matches will now be held exclusively at two venues—Karachi and Lahore—and played behind closed doors. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi announced the revised arrangements during a media conference, explaining that the decisions followed a joint meeting with franchise owners and consultations with the Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, who serves as the Patron-in-Chief. Six cities, including Multan, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad, had originally been in contention to host matches.

LHC sustains objection on plea against acquittal of PM Shehbaz

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday sustained an objection on the maintainability of a petition filed against the acquittal of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his sons in a Rs16bn money laundering case. LHC Chief Justice Aalia Neelum heard the plea filed by a young lawyer as an "objection case". The office of the LHC's registrar had objected to the maintainability of the petition, questioning the locus standi (the right to bring a legal action to a court) to agitate the matter. During the hearing, the chief justice asked the petitioner's counsel, Amir Saeed Rawn, how his client was an aggrieved party in the matter.

Foreign players start arriving

LAHORE: The HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 is set to commence on March 26 amid unprecedented circumstances, with several overseas players having arrived in Lahore to join their franchises for the tournament. The 11th edition, running until May 3, features eight teams competing in 44 matches, but the event has undergone significant revisions due to a severe fuel crisis triggered by the ongoing conflict in West Asia involving Iran, the United States and Israel. Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza, a key retention for Lahore Qalandars, Australian batter Marcus Labuschagne (direct signing for debutants Hyderabad Kingsmen), fast bowler Riley Meredith, Sri Lankan wicket-keeper-batter Kusal Perera, and New Zealanders Devon Conway and Mark Chapman have reached Lahore. Bangladeshi contingent including Mustafizur Rahman, Nahid Rana and Parvez Hossain Emon are expected late tonight, with PCB officials anticipating the arrival of nearly all foreign players by Tuesday night.

The tournament's format has been reshaped following government directives on energy conservation. Initially scheduled across six venues—including debuts for Faisalabad and Peshawar—the PCB scaled operations to only Lahore (Gaddafi Stadium) and Karachi, each hosting 22 matches. All games will be played behind closed doors until the regional conflict concludes, with the opening ceremony cancelled as part of austerity measures. The fuel shortage stems from disruptions in global oil supplies, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, prompting nationwide restrictions on movement, school closures, work-from-home policies and extended holidays. —APP

More than 500 civilians...

FROM PAGE 01

these civilian deaths were documented in three states in the Kordofan region." Sudan's southern Kordofan region is currently the fiercest battlefield in the three-year war between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The vast region connects RSF strongholds in the western Darfur region with the army-controlled east. Near-daily drone strikes have killed dozens at a time across the region, where the army has sought to stem an RSF advance, pushing the paramilitaries back toward Darfur and away from the capital Khartoum. "In the first two weeks of March alone, information received shows that over 277 civilians were killed, over three-quarters of whom were killed in drone strikes," Hurtado said. She said that the "deadly attacks have continued in the past week, as the holy month of Ramadan came to a close."

India warns of lost-cost weight...

FROM PAGE 01

Indian pharmacies with prices per one weekly dose starting at \$15. "With the recent introduction of multiple generic variants of GLP-1-based weight loss drugs in the Indian market, concerns have emerged regarding their on-demand availability through retail pharmacies, online platforms, wholesalers, and wellness clinics," the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a statement on Tuesday. "These drugs, when used without proper medical supervision, may lead to serious adverse effects and related health risks." Developed by the Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk in 2017, Ozempic is a medicine initially approved for use in diabetes treatment that later became known globally after demand surged for its weight-loss effects.

Libya tows drifting...

FROM PAGE 01

the slowly moving tanker with a thick rope. The tanker is seen tilting on one side, with a blackened hull from a fire. The National Oil Corp. in Libya said over the weekend that it was collaborating with Italian energy company Eni to safely bring the damaged tanker to the shore to avert an environmental crisis. The Libyan company said that it has taken "all procedures ... to reduce environmental risks and prevent any potential leakage or negative impacts." Russian authorities said that the Arctic Metagaz was hit and badly damaged by Ukrainian naval drones near Malta's waters. All 30 crew members were rescued. Ukraine hasn't commented. The tanker was hit with a drone earlier this month. The Libyan Maritime Authority said at the time that the tanker experienced "sudden explosions, followed by a massive fire," while it was about 240 kilometers (150 miles) off the Libyan city of Sirte.

Pakistan, Romania, Bahamas explore trilateral cooperation

The Pakistan Romania Business Council continues to play a key role in promoting bilateral trade and investment, while such engagements are expected to pave the way for broader multilateral economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Romania and the Bahamas on Tuesday explored avenues to enhance trilateral trade and investment cooperation, with a focus on key sectors including energy, infrastructure and information technology. The discussion took place during a meeting between Atif Farooqi, Advisor and COO of the Pakistan Romania Business Council, and Asad Ur Rehman, Honorary Consul of the Commonwealth of Bahamas in Pakistan. During the meeting, both sides underscored the importance of strengthening business linkages and facilitating knowledge sharing to unlock new economic opportunities among the three countries. They expressed keen interest in promoting collaboration across diverse sectors to boost trade volumes and investment flows. Speaking on the occasion, Atif Farooqi highlighted the growing potential for trilateral cooperation, terming the engagement a significant step towards building stronger economic partnerships among Pakistan, Romania, and the Bahamas. The Pakistan Romania Business Council continues to play a key role in promoting bilateral trade and investment, while such engagements are expected to pave the way for broader multilateral economic cooperation. —DNA

Pakistan Hockey has burst into the limelight, both on and off the field

MONITORING DESK

ALTHOUGH not much was right over the last 15 years, the recent events and their consequences were largely unforeseen. It started immediately after Pakistan's participation in the second leg of the Pro League in Australia. The results weren't unexpected. Against Germany and Australia, ranked third and fifth respectively, the then 14th-ranked Pakistan lost all four matches. The issue of non-payment of players' dailies had become the norm. But this time, as soon as the players returned to Pakistan, they complained of poor treatment. Captain Ammad Shaheel Butt blamed the team management and the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), stating that there were no hotel bookings for them on their arrival in Australia. The players were roaming the streets for hours. Later, they were lodged in substandard accommodations, where the rooms had to be shared between four or five players. "We had to prepare our own food, and clean rooms, utensils and toilets. In all previous tours, meals were arranged through official hotel bookings. This is the first time in history that we were told to manage our own food within the daily allowance," the team captain said. He simply declared that the players wouldn't work with the team management: head coach Tahir Zaman, assistant coaches Usman Sheikh and Zeeshan Ashraf and video analyst Nadeem Lodhi. It set alarm bells ringing. Pakistan had to depart for Ismailia, Egypt, in less

than a week for the all-important World Cup qualifiers. Unable to feature in the FIH World Cup's previous two editions, the Pakistan hockey team have finally qualified for the next one, to be played in Belgium and the Netherlands in August. It's been a rocky road but it's a first step... Enough is enough: Finally, the powers that be, who should have acted much earlier, took decisive steps. On the directive of the prime minister – the ex-officio patron-in-chief of the PHF – the federation's president Tariq Bugti and the secretary-general Rana Mujahid tendered their resignations. An ad hoc setup, with the federal secretary of the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) ministry, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, as its president, was announced. In a quintessential Tariq Bugti act, the outgoing president had slapped a two-year ban on Captain Ammad Butt, his last act in office. The ad hoc president lifted the ban as his first act. The entire team management was changed. The new coach, World Cup-winner Khawaja Junaid has had numerous coaching assignments with the national senior and junior teams, without achieving anything notable. His assistant, Azfar Yaqoob, is a newcomer. The experienced Sultan Ashraf took on the duties of video analyst. In a wonderful gesture, Mohsin Naqvi, the president of the Pakistan Cricket Board (the only self-financed sports body in Pakistan), met the members of the hockey team. He lamented the mistreatment of the players during the Australian tour. The players received cheques of one million rupees each, which Naqvi had previously announced as a reward for their second position at the Nations Hockey Cup.

Controversy Mars Pakistan's Fighting Display in SAFF U-20 Opener



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Under-20 team produced a spirited and courageous performance but were left frustrated by a controversial refereeing decision and a stroke of misfortune as Bangladesh secured a 2-0 win in their SAFF U-20 Championship Group 'B' opener.

Despite the scoreline, Pakistan matched Bangladesh stride for stride for large parts of the contest, displaying intensity, discipline, and belief. The young Pakistani side looked determined to make a mark and even appeared to have fought their way back into the game, only to see their efforts denied at a crucial moment. Bangladesh broke the deadlock in the 50th minute when debutant Ronan



Benjamin Sullivan converted a free-kick. Pakistan responded strongly and thought they had equalised in the 60th minute through a well-placed header by Najeibullah, but the referee controversially ruled out the goal, leaving players and officials stunned. The setback proved costly as Bangladesh capitalised on the momentum, with Sullivan doubling the lead in the

67th minute to seal the victory – a result that hardly reflected Pakistan's resilience and overall performance. Pakistan will now face arch-rivals India on March 26 in a must-win encounter, with their hopes of reaching the semi-finals hanging in the balance. The team will also be relying on other results, particularly India defeating Bangladesh, to keep their qualification chances alive

Briefs

Deadly attacks in Iraq raise fears of widening regional war

BAGHDAD: Airstrikes targeting a site belonging to Iraq's Shiite Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in the western province of Anbar killed at least 14 fighters, including a senior commander, while a separate missile attack in the Kurdistan region has further underscored the widening spillover of the regional conflict. Security and health sources told Reuters early on Tuesday that the strike on the PMF killed Saad Al-Bajji, the group's Anbar operations commander, along with several of his companions, and wounded around 30 others. The PMF confirmed the deaths in a statement and accused the United States of carrying out the attack, saying a US airstrike targeted a command headquarters during a security meeting attended by senior personnel. The PMF, known in Arabic as Hashd Al-Shaabi, is an umbrella network of mostly Shiite paramilitary factions formally integrated into Iraq's state security forces. Several of its constituent groups are aligned with Iran, and Tehran-backed factions have repeatedly targeted US bases in Iraq since the outbreak of the US-Israeli war on Iran in February. In a separate development on Tuesday, Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region accused Iran of launching a deadly missile attack on its peshmerga forces.—APP

Iran energy minister downplays threat of attack

TEHRAN: Iran's energy minister said he believed the country was less vulnerable than others in the region to any attacks on its energy infrastructure, in an interview with state TV broadcast on Tuesday. "We produce electricity in a spread out way in several places, unlike the countries of the Arabian Gulf or the Zionist regime, where production is centralized and very vulnerable," Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said, referring to Iran's Gulf neighbors and Israel. "We have more than 150 power plants across the country," he added, as the Middle East war dragged into its fourth week. His remarks came days after US President Donald Trump threatened to strike Iran's energy infrastructure if it did not reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane through which a fifth of global crude oil transits. In a bombshell announcement on Monday, Trump said the US had engaged in "very good" talks to end the war, though Iran denied any dialogue had taken place.—APP

Qatar says 'supports all diplomatic efforts' to end Iran war

DOH: Qatar said on Tuesday that it supports all diplomatic efforts to end the war with Iran after US president Donald Trump announced there had been communication between Washington and Tehran. "We support all diplomatic efforts within this framework, whether through official or unofficial channels and contacts," Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said. "I wish to emphasize here that there are currently no direct Qatari efforts underway regarding mediation between the two parties," he added. Qatar also said Tuesday that the Middle East war had stretched the Gulf states' security system beyond breaking point as Iran presses its aerial campaign against neighboring countries. "The most important outcome of this war is the breakdown of the security system in the Gulf region," Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said. "The Gulf states — which have been working closely and in parallel to ensure their security — are in need of a post-war re-evaluation of what a shared regional security framework truly entails," he added.—APP

Pak embassy in Manila celebrates 86th national day ceremony

The ceremony drew strong participation from the Pakistani community in the Philippines, including families who gathered early in the morning at 7:30 am to join the celebrations with patriotic fervor



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Embassy in Manila Celebrates 86th National Day with Flag-Hoisting Ceremony Manila, Philippines – March 23, 2026 – The Embassy of Pakistan in the Philippines held a dignified flag-hoisting ceremony at Pakistan House in Makati City to commemorate the 86th National Day (Pakistan Day) of Pakistan. Her Excellency Ambassador Dr. Asima Rabbani personally raised the Pakistani national flag, symbolizing national pride and unity. Messages from the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister,



and Foreign Minister of Pakistan were also read out during the event, highlighting the significance of the occasion and Pakistan's ongoing journey since the historic Lahore Resolution of 1940. The ceremony drew strong participation from the Pakistani community in the Phil-

ippines, including families who gathered early in the morning at 7:30 am to join the celebrations with patriotic fervor. Pakistan Day on March 23 annually marks the adoption of the Lahore Resolution in 1940, which laid the foundation for the creation of Pakistan. This year's event in Manila re-

flected the close and friendly ties between Pakistan and the Philippines, as well as the vibrant Pakistani diaspora's contribution to the host country. The Embassy continues to strengthen bilateral relations and support its community abroad through such cultural and national observances.

Kazakh national food exports may hit \$ 50–80m

ASTANA: Traditional Kazakh foods such as kazy (horsemeat sausage), kumys (fermented mare's milk), kurt (dried cheese curds), and boursaks (fried dough) are not only staples of festive tables but also part of everyday life. Now, they are increasingly becoming part of Kazakhstan's export potential, Qazinform News Agency learnt from the Trade and Integration Ministry. According to experts at QazTrade, with systematic support, exports of Kazakh national products could reach 50–80 million US dollars by 2028. Russia and China remain the main destinations, driven by strong demand from Kazakh diaspora communities, over 2 million in Russia and significant populations in China. In Russia, kurt and kumys are especially popular, while in China's Xinjiang region, demand for halal meat and delicacies is growing. The global halal food market is currently valued at 2.1 trillion US dollars and expanding at about 7% annually. Exports of traditional dairy products such as kumys, shubat (camel milk), and ayran (fermented yogurt drink) are steadily increasing: 13.4 million US dollars in 2024 and 17.3 million US dollars in 2025 – a growth of 29.4%. The main challenge remains the short shelf life of fresh kumys (3–5 days), making long-distance exports difficult. Producers are now developing solutions such as pasteurized kumys (lasting up to 30 days) and freeze-dried kumys powder (saumal), which is already being exported to China in small volumes. "Nomadic gastronomy" as a brand: This emerging export direction is often described as "nomadic gastronomy" – cuisine of the steppe culture based on natural meat and dairy products. What is everyday food for Kazakhs is becoming a culinary discovery abroad. QazTrade CEO Aitmukhammed Aldazarov noted: "Global demand for functional foods and superfoods is rising, and the traditional Kazakh diet fits perfectly. For example, kurt is rich in micronutrients, while products like tary (millet) and talkan (roasted barley flour) are gaining recognition at trade missions and international fairs. Even abroad, Kazakh restaurants and cafés are popularizing these foods – such as the 'steppe cappuccino' made from tary, which is already appearing in the U.S." Meanwhile, production of kumys continues to grow within Kazakhstan.—APP

Muscat sees moderate to heavy rainfall

MUSCAT: The Muscat Governorate witnessed moderate to heavy rainfall today due to ongoing weather conditions affecting the Sultanate of Oman. The rainfall led to overflowing valleys and streams across several areas. Amid continued rain, the National Emergency Management Committee has urged the public to exercise extreme caution, particularly around water channels, sewage systems, and electrical facilities. Residents are also advised to avoid going to sea or engaging in marine activities and to strictly follow safety instructions to prevent accidents.—APP

Europe dangerously unprepared for worsening wildfires

The European Commission will propose a new strategy on Wednesday aiming to strengthen early efforts to prevent and reduce fire risk. Blazes destroyed 1.03 million hectares of forest across the European Union in 2025, the highest level since records began

ROME: Europe is dangerously unprepared to tackle a growing wildfire crisis, and must overhaul its fleets of firefighting aircraft and step up investment, according to a report. The paper – commissioned by Portugal-based Avincis, which leases firefighting planes and helicopters – said the increased risk across southern Europe was down to climate change, falling rural populations and build-ups of burnable vegetation. Wildfires that typically rage from early June to mid-September were breaking out earlier and later in the year, the report drawn up by consulting firm Lead by Thought said. Blazes were also spreading northwards, added the paper that will be presented at the Aerial Fire Fighting Conference in Rome on Wednesday. A total of 1,100 hectares burned in Sweden last year, a rise of more than 120 percent above the recent average,

Airlines cancel more flights as ME conflict escalates

DUBAI: Global air travel remains severely disrupted after the war in Iran forced the closure of major Middle Eastern hubs, including Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, stranding tens of thousands of passengers. Greece's largest carrier has canceled flights to Tel Aviv, Beirut and Amman until April 22, and to Irbil and Baghdad until May 24. Flights to Dubai have been canceled until April 19 and to Riyadh until April 18. Latvia's airBaltic said all flights to Tel Aviv had been canceled until April 29. All flights to Dubai stand canceled until October 24. The Canadian carrier has canceled all flights to Tel Aviv until May 2 and to Dubai until March 28. The Spanish airline has canceled all flights to Tel Aviv until April 10. Air France has canceled Tel Aviv and Beirut flights until March 28 and Dubai and Riyadh flights until March 24, including the March 25 departure from Dubai. KLM suspended flights to Riyadh, Dammam and Dubai until May 17 and to Tel Aviv until April 11. The Hong Kong airline has extended the cancellation of all passenger flights to and from Dubai and Riyadh until May 31. It has, however, added extra flights to London between March 21 and March 28 due to increased demand. It will also operate three extra pairs of passenger flights for Paris and Zurich, respectively. The US carrier has canceled its New York-Tel Aviv flights until May 31 and Tel Aviv-New York flights until June 1. The restart of its Atlanta-Tel Aviv route has been delayed, with flights to Tel Aviv paused until August 4 and from Tel Aviv until August 5. The Israeli carrier said operational constraints are preventing regular flights from Israel, except in rare, exceptional cases, and that it is continuing efforts to bring passengers home. The airline has also urged authorities to open Ramon Airport near Eilat. The UAE airline said it was operating a reduced flight schedule following a partial reopening of regional airspace. The UAE carrier said it was operating a limited commercial flight schedule between Abu Dhabi and select destinations. The Finnish carrier has canceled its Dubai flights until March 29 and Doha flights until July 2, while continuing to avoid the airspace of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Israel. Saudi budget airline Flynas has extended its suspension of flights to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Syria until March 31. IAG-owned British Airways has extended cancellations of flights to Amman, Bahrain, Dubai and Tel Aviv until May 31 and to Doha until April 30, while adding flights to Bangkok and Singapore. Flights to Abu Dhabi remain suspended until later this year. The Indian airline has suspended operations to Doha, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dammam, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah until March 28. Japan Airlines has suspended scheduled Tokyo-Doha flights until March 31 and Doha-Tokyo flights until April 1. The Polish airline said all its flights to Dubai stand canceled until March 28 and to Tel Aviv until May 31. It has also canceled flights to Riyadh until April 30 and to Beirut from March 31 to April 30. The German airline group, which includes Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Swiss, Brussels Airlines and ITA Airways, has suspended flights to Tel Aviv through April 9, and to Beirut, Dubai, Amman, Irbil and Abu Dhabi until March 28. Flights to Tehran are suspended through April 30 and to Riyadh until April 5. The Malaysian carrier has suspended all flights to Doha until March 28. The low-cost airline has pushed back planned launches of its Tel Aviv and Beirut services to June 15, from April 1 and April 4, respectively. It has canceled all Dubai flights through April 8. Turkish Airlines has canceled its Iran, Iraq, Amman, Beirut, Kuwait, Bahrain, Doha, Dammam, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah flights until April 13. Flights to Riyadh have been canceled until March 24. The carrier said it would operate a revised limited number of flights until March 28. Singapore Airlines said it will extend the suspension of its Singapore-Dubai flights until April 30, and add services between Singapore and London Gatwick from March 31 to October 24, and on the Singapore-Melbourne route from March 29 to October 24 to meet higher demand. Turkish Airlines has canceled most Middle East flights until the end of March. SunExpress, its joint venture with Lufthansa, has canceled flights to Dubai and Bahrain until March 23. Vietnam's flag carrier has planned to cancel 23 flights per week across several domestic routes from April. The low-cost airline has suspended flights to Israel until March 29, and to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amman and Jeddah from mainland European destinations until mid-September.—DNA

More than 500 civilians killed in drone strikes in Sudan: UN

GENEVA: More than 500 civilians were killed in drone strikes in Sudan between January and mid-March, with the vast majority killed in the strategic Kordofan region, the United Nations said Tuesday. The UN rights office said it had noted a sharp increase in the use of drones in Sudan's civil war, underlining "the devastating impact of high-tech and relatively cheap weapons in populated areas." "According to information received, over 500 civilians were killed in such strikes from January 1 to March 15," spokeswoman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva, highlighting that "the vast majority of these civilian deaths were documented in three states in the Kordofan region." Sudan's southern Kordofan region is currently the fiercest battlefield in the three-year war between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The vast region connects RSF strongholds in the western Darfur region with the army-controlled east. Near-daily drone strikes have killed dozens at a time across the region, where the army has sought to stem an RSF advance, pushing the paramilitaries back toward Darfur and away from the capital Khartoum. "In the first two weeks of March alone, information received shows that over 277 civilians were killed, over three-quarters of whom were killed in drone strikes," Hurtado said. She said that the "deadly attacks have continued in the past week, as the holy month of Ramadan came to a close." She highlighted in particular the March 20 attack, on the first day of the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, on the El-Daen Teaching Hospital in East Darfur state, which killed 70 people, including 13 children, and injured 146 others. "The hospital, including its emergency, maternity and paediatric units, are fully out of operation – further constraining desperately needed access of many in the area to the right to health," Hurtado said. "Widening drone attacks are spilling across Sudan's borders, with serious risk of further escalation carrying regional consequences," Hurtado warned, referring to drone strikes on the Chadian border after an earlier RSF ground offensive.—APP

China bringing patents from varsities to market

BEIJING: Over the past three years, China has seen a significant rise in the industrialisation of invention patents from its universities and research institutions, according to an official from the nation's top intellectual property regulator. Hu Wenhui, Deputy Commissioner of the China National Intellectual Property Administration, announced at a news conference on Monday that from 2023 to 2025, about 80,000 patents were successfully brought to market as part of a patent commercialisation initiative. According to chian daily report, by the end of 2025, the industrialisation rates for invention patents from universities and research institutions reached 10.1% and 17.2%, respectively. "These figures represent a substantial improvement from before the campaign," Hu noted. He also highlighted that the commercialisation push has spurred industrial innovation, with many tech-focused small and medium-sized enterprises benefiting from holding high-quality patents.—APP

EU, Australia strengthen ties with Free Trade MoU

BRUSSELS: The European Union (EU) and Australia on Tuesday announced the conclusion of negotiations for an ambitious and balanced Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and agreed to launch formal negotiations for the association of Australia to Horizon Europe, the world's largest funding programme for research and innovation. With these steps, the EU and Australia are delivering mutually beneficial outcomes and further reinforcing their already close relations in a time of geopolitical uncertainty. The deal is expected to expand trade and investment, open new markets and lower costs for consumers. It must still be approved by the European Council and ratified by both sides' parliaments before entering into force. Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese said the agreement was comprehensive, balanced and commercially meaningful, and would remove tariffs on key Australian exports. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, stated, "These agreements put in place lasting, trust-based structures to support peace and security through strength; driving prosperity through rules-based trade, and working together to uphold global institutions. We are committed to building a cleaner, more digital future for our citizens, workers and businesses. And we are sending a strong signal to the rest of the world that friendship and cooperation are what matter most in times of turbulence.—APP

Briefs

Ex-Finance Minister calls for measured ethanol policy

Miftah Ismail says evaluating ethanol blending is fine, but policy changes must be made carefully

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister and Awam Pakistan Party (APP) leader Miftah Ismail has urged a careful, thoroughly researched approach to Pakistan's ethanol blending policy to reduce oil prices. Miftah cautioned against making "hasty" decisions without proper assessment, adding that exploring the feasibility of ethanol blending is reasonable, but any policy adjustments should be considered carefully. He noted that if ethanol production proves commercially viable, sugar mills would naturally move into the sector. "They will get one more market and hope the price of ethanol will increase," he added. Discussing the possible impact on oil marketing companies, Miftah said outcomes would depend largely on government policy. If firms are mandated to blend a fixed percentage, such as 10% ethanol, and given a set price, many could procure ethanol at lower rates and retain the margin as profit. The former finance minister suggested that the Ministry of Petroleum, in collaboration with Pakistan State Oil and representatives of the sugar industry, could quickly conduct a basic assessment. "This can be studied within a couple of days, after which options can be worked out," he said.

CERT warns 'hostile actors' could exploit supply chains

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: CERT cautioned that all hardware deliveries should be treated as potential security risks and subjected to strict inspection protocols. It further warned that unverified software updates could introduce hidden backdoors into the national digital infrastructure, posing long-term security threats. The advisory also flagged vendors with unknown ownership structures as a significant risk factor, urging institutions to ensure transparency and due diligence in procurement processes. It noted that reliance on a single supplier could create systemic vulnerabilities, where a breach in one entity might disrupt entire sectors such as the national power grid or banking network. Institutions have been directed to adopt tamper-proof mechanisms and tracking systems for transporting sensitive equipment.

Cabinet committee maintains close watch on energy supplies

The Committee undertook a forward-looking assessment of the national petroleum supply outlook, reviewing stock availability of crude oil and refined petroleum products across the energy value chain



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Committee to Monitor Petrol Prices was held today under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, following the Eid holidays, to review the energy supply situation and assess developments in global oil and gas markets amid evolving geopolitical conditions. The Committee undertook a forward-looking assessment of the national petroleum supply outlook, reviewing stock availability

of crude oil and refined petroleum products across the energy value chain. Members were informed that overall inventories remain at comfortable levels, supported by secured import arrangements and ongoing production. Supply lines from import terminals to refineries, storage installations, and retail outlets were reported to be operating in a stable and orderly manner, ensuring continuity of supply across the country. Members were also briefed on inbound logistics and maritime operations supporting fuel supplies, noting that cargo inflows continue as scheduled and petrol cargoes for March

and now for April have largely been secured, with additional shipments planned to further strengthen supply buffers. Refineries are operating at regular production levels, with efforts underway to maintain optimal throughput and ensure efficient processing of incoming crude. A detailed review of national stocks and international energy market conditions was presented, highlighting notable movements in global benchmarks. The Committee assessed emerging global price signals and their transaction implications, noting that the Government is actively evaluating price divergence between international and domestic markets

to support balanced and timely policy calibration. The meeting placed particular emphasis on operational readiness across the domestic energy chain. The Committee underscored that refineries must continue operating at optimal throughput levels to sustain supply stability and reduce systemic vulnerabilities. The meeting also included a detailed assessment of international energy market trends and geopolitical developments impacting global supply dynamics. The Committee also reviewed ongoing government-to-government (G2G) engagements aimed at strengthening supply resilience and mitigating risks. Members were briefed on diversified sourcing strategies and logistical arrangements with key partner countries, to secure crude and refined products, enhance storage and transshipment options, and ensure flexibility in procurement and financing mechanisms. These coordinated efforts are aimed at reinforcing energy security and safeguarding supply continuity under evolving market conditions. Chairing the meeting, the Finance Minister underscored that proactive planning, diversified procurement strategies, and close coordination among stakeholders have enabled Pakistan to maintain a stable domestic supply position despite global volatility. He directed all relevant authorities to continue vigilant monitoring of international developments, stock levels, and supply chain dynamics to ensure timely and coordinated policy responses.

Oil rises as global markets assess supply risks

Brent futures rise \$1.06, or 1.1%, to \$101 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate climbs \$1.58, or 1.8%, to \$89.71

DNA

KARACHI: Oil prices rose in early trade on Tuesday on supply fears, as Iran denied it had held talks with the United States to end the war in the Gulf, contradicting President Donald Trump, who said a deal could be reached soon. Brent futures rose \$1.06, or 1.1%, to \$101 a barrel at 0001 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) climbed \$1.58, or 1.8%, to \$89.71. Crude futures dropped more than 10% on Monday, after Trump said he had ordered a five day delay to attacks he had threatened on Iran's power plants, adding the US had held productive talks with unnamed Iranian officials that had produced "major points of agreement". "By shelving the plan to strike Iranian power plants for five days, the US effectively sucked much of the 'war premium' from the oil price," said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade. "Today's moderate bounce is just the market finding its footing in the mud. Traders are aware that while the missiles are on hold, the Strait of Hormuz is still far from a clear waterway." The war has all but halted shipments of about one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas through the Strait of Hormuz. However, two tankers bound for India sailed through the strait on Monday. Tehran rejected the claims of contact with Washington, dismissing them as an attempt to manipulate financial markets, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had launched new attacks on US targets and denounced Trump's comments as "worn out psychological operations." "Even with a possible decrease in tensions after (Monday's) announcement from President Trump, we expect a price floor of \$85-\$90 and a natural drift back to the \$110 range until the Strait of Hormuz is restored," Macquarie said in a note. It added that if the strait remains effectively shut until the end of April, Brent could still reach \$150 per barrel. Fighting has damaged energy infrastructure across the region. In the latest attacks, a gas company office and a pressure reduction station were hit in Iran's central city of Isfahan, while a projectile also struck a gas pipeline feeding a power station in Khorramshahr, the Iranian semi-official Fars news agency reported. The United States has temporarily waived sanctions on Russian and Iranian oil already at sea to ease shortages. Industry sources said traders have offered Iranian crude to Indian refiners at a premium to ICE Brent following Washington's move.

PSX advances as easing Middle East war fears boost sentiment

Rise driven by investor optimism surrounding the potential easing of geopolitical tensions, says analyst

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The equity market rose on Tuesday as hopes of easing Middle East tensions lifted sentiment, while reports that Pakistan may be playing a mediating role between the United States and Iran added support. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index closed at 152,207.89 points, up 1,225.99 points, or 0.8%, versus the previous close of 152,740.37. During the session, the index traded between a high of 157,442.68, up 4,702.31 points, or 3.08%, and a low of 153,382, up 641.63 points, or 0.42%. "The market opened on a positive note, driven by investor optimism surrounding the potential easing of geopolitical tensions and further supported by Pakistan's perceived geopolitical relevance following media reports suggesting the country may be mediating between the United States and Iran," said Huzaifa Riaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited. US President Donald Trump said on Monday he had ordered a five-day postponement of any military strikes against Iranian power plants, citing what he de-

scribed as "very good and productive" conversations over the past two days about a "complete and total resolution of hostilities in the Middle East". Iran's Fars news agency later reported there had been no direct communication with the United States or through intermediaries, citing an unnamed source, while also quoting Deputy Speaker Ali Nikzad as saying there would be no talks and that the Strait of Hormuz would remain effectively closed. Asian equities rose on the headlines as hopes of de-escalation briefly strengthened, with Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Taipei and Manila higher, though gains pared as trading progressed. Oil prices, after plunging on Monday, edged up again as the outlook remained uncertain. Analysts said market direction would remain tied to Middle East developments, with investors also watching post-Ramadan participation and upcoming inflation data. AKD Research said any de-escalation could trigger a sharp rebound as valuations had turned more attractive, with forward price-to-earnings at 6.6 times. Arif Habib Limited Research put the market at a price-to-earnings ratio of 7.5 times and a dividend yield of around 6.8%.

PDMA issues alert for heavy rain

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh chief secretary directed all provincial commissioners and relevant authorities to stay high alert during wet spell. The port city, along with Thatta, Badin, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Dadu, Kashmore, Jacobabad, and Larkana, are expected to receive rain and thunderstorms on March 25, 26, 28, and 29, the Met Office said. In the wake of said rain forecast, the PDMA instructed its staff to remain on high alert with all necessary machinery ready. As per the alert, strong winds and hail may damage weak

structures and solar panels, while temperatures are expected to drop. Residents have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel. Tourists and travellers are urged to take precautions, and farmers are advised to protect crops in advance. The rain alert was issued in compliance with the orders of Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, who chaired a meeting on the weather forecast earlier in the day. During the meeting, he directed all commissioners, deputy commissioners, and assistant commissioners to remain in the field for the next seven days. He instructed the district administrations and local bodies to be fully mobilised. Authorities have been ordered to ensure machinery for water drainage is available and operational, maintain traffic flow, and remove hazardous billboards. Public awareness campaigns and all precautionary measures are to be completed ahead of the predicted weather events. The Met Office on Monday issued a countrywide rain forecast, warning of wet weather, strong winds, thunder, and lightning across many regions from March 24 to 30. As per the forecast, a western weather system is expected to enter parts of Balochistan today (March 24) and intensify by the night of March 27.

Punjab 'mulls' early market closures

Sources say provincial government is also considering moving schools to hybrid mode

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab government is weighing a series of measures, including extending school holidays and curtailing market hours, sources said, in a bid to tackle an emerging energy crisis driven by global fuel supply disruptions due to the Middle East conflict. The sources told Geo News on Tuesday that the Punjab Energy Department submitted fresh recommendations to the provincial authorities, proposing fuel rationing on the pattern of the federal government to manage limited resources. The proposed steps come as Pakistan grapples with rising petroleum prices and supply constraints triggered by disruptions in global oil flows amid escalating tensions in the Middle Eastern countries, including the closure of key shipping routes, mainly the Strait of Hormuz.

Among the key proposals is the extension of holidays in educational institutions until April 15, along with the introduction of a hybrid learning system in schools to reduce energy consumption. Currently, the schools are observing holidays till March 31. The department has also suggested introducing a coupon-based or digital system to ensure the equitable distribution of petrol and diesel. It further proposed limiting fuel supply to vehicles on specific days as part of broader rationing efforts.

ADB announces financial support

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Tuesday announced a financial support package to help its developing member countries (DMCs) mitigate the economic and financial impacts resulting from the conflict in the Middle East. "ADB will deliver rapid, flexible, and scalable assistance to help countries manage immediate pressures and strengthen long-term resilience, notably fast-disbursing budget support and trade and supply chain finance to secure the import of essential goods, now including oil," said ADB President Masato Kanda, according to statement by the bank. "This builds on our strong track record of supporting Asia and the Pacific through periods of global uncertainty," Kanda added. ADB has ample resources to safeguard existing and planned operations, while expanding emergency support in line with DMC needs, including utilizing its counter-cyclical lending buffer.

North Korea's Kim vows 'irreversible' nuclear status



DNA

NORTH KOREA: North Korea will never give up nuclear weapons, leader Kim Jong Un said, indicating that it will soon designate South Korea the "most hostile state", according to a state media report on Tuesday. Kim also told the country's legislature in a policy address on Monday that the United States was committing "state terrorism", in an apparent reference to its military attacks on Iran. "We will continue to firmly consolidate our status as a nuclear-armed state as an irreversible course, while aggressively stepping up our struggle against hostile forces," Kim told the Supreme People's Assembly. "We will, in line with the mission entrusted

by the Constitution of the Republic... further expand and advance our self-defensive nuclear deterrent," Kim said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). While the United States and Israel have insisted that their attacks on Iran are to stop the Islamic republic from developing nuclear weapons - an aim Tehran denies - Pyongyang is thought to be light years ahead by comparison. Despite years of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, the Chinese ally is estimated to have dozens of nuclear warheads and the fissile material for many more. It has also unveiled increasingly sophisticated delivery systems, including new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that can launch with little warning. Kim, a day after his reappointment as head of the authoritarian nation's highest policymaking body, the State Affairs Commission, also did not mince words about his southern neighbour. "We will designate South Korea as the most hostile state and deal with it by thoroughly rejecting and disregarding it," Kim said. The announcement came despite repeated overtures by President Lee Jae Myung, a doveish leader who took office in June, for dialogue without preconditions. Pyongyang has ignored these gestures. Pyongyang will "make it pay mercilessly - without the slightest consideration or hesitation - for any act that infringes upon our Republic", Kim added.

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