



Islamabad POST

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PM Shehbaz chairs meeting to review petroleum stocks

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Tiger Woods arrested and charged in US

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Protests against Trump and war gear up

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Middle East de-escalation

Islamabad moot on ME reviews regional situation

The quadrilateral mechanism is being viewed as a key diplomatic track feeding into wider efforts to end the conflict, with a focus on consolidating regional backing for de-escalation, aligning positions ahead of any possible US-Iran talks, and facilitating dialogue

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt reviewed the evolving regional situation during a high-level quadrilateral meeting in Islamabad, the Foreign Office said on Sunday. Convened at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, the participants of the meeting discussed issues of mutual interest as well, the FO said. After the moot ended, Dar posted on X that he was pleased to welcome the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and Egypt to Islamabad for consultations. "Grateful for their presence at this critical moment, reflecting our strong fraternal ties. Our candid and constructive discussions focus on the evolving regional situation and advancing peace and stability, while strengthening our partnership and deepening cooperation across diverse domains," he posted on X. The quadrilateral mechanism is being viewed as a key diplomatic track feeding into wider efforts to end the conflict, with a focus on consolidating regional backing for de-escalation,

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US root cause of West Asia insecurity: Araqchi

DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi pointed the finger at the US as the root cause of insecurity and crisis in the West Asia region and the Hormuz Strait, saying the world must hold the US and Israel accountable for imposing an unprovoked and illegal war on Iran and the region. In a telephone conversation, Araqchi and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan talked about the latest regional developments and the consequences of the continued military aggression by the United States and the Zionist regime against Iran. The Armenian foreign minister extended his congratulations on Nowruz and expressed wishes of peace and tranquility for the people of Iran, conveying the condolences and sympathy of the Armenian

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Egypt foreign ministers gathered in Pakistan to ease Mideast tensions. Pakistan hosted the moot with a view to finding an amicable solution. - DNA

First PIA flight to London takes to skies

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The first Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) direct flight to London in six years took to the skies on Sunday afternoon after a special inauguration ceremony at Islamabad International Airport. The national flag carrier is expected to operate four weekly flights from Islamabad to London. These will be operated from Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4, according to an earlier statement issued by the PIA spokesperson.

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Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: The Israeli army announced on Sunday the death in combat of a soldier in south Lebanon. "Sergeant Moshe Yitzchak hachohen Katz, aged 22, from New Haven, Connecticut, a soldier of the 890th battalion, Paratroopers Brigade, fell during combat in southern Lebanon," a military statement said. Five Israeli soldiers have now been killed in fighting in south Lebanon since Hezbollah began

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Iran ready for ground battle

US-Israeli strikes hit Iranian Port city near Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a critical chokepoint for global oil supplies, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil passes

DNA

TEHRAN: US and Israeli strikes targeted a quay at the Iranian port city of Bandar Khamir (also referred to as Bandar Hamir or involving the Bandar Pol pier) in southern Hormozgan province near the strategic Strait of Hormuz early on Sunday, killing five people and injuring four others, according to Iranian state media. The official IRNA news agency reported that "the American-Zionist enemy carried out a criminal attack at the quay of Bandar Khamir,"

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Most of target achieved, says US VP

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US Vice President JD Vance says in an interview that the US has already accomplished the most if not all of the military objectives in Iran adding that it will soon going to be out of there. He said the war with Iran will continue "for a little while longer"

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Shehbaz lauds KSA's remarkable restraint in meeting with Saudi FM

PM Shehbaz shared with FM Faisal Pakistan's extensive diplomatic outreach during the current crisis, including mediation efforts for de-escalation and attempts to bring both the United States and Iran to the negotiating table

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the "remarkable restraint" exercised by Saudi Arabia amid the Middle East crisis in a meeting with Saudi

Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in Islamabad, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Sunday. The Saudi foreign minister called upon PM Shehbaz after the conclusion of quadrilateral ministerial meeting in Islamabad, attended by the FMs of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkiye. PM Shehbaz shared with FM Faisal Pakistan's extensive diplomatic outreach during the current crisis, including mediation efforts for de-escalation and

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Briefs

'Pak's forex reserves rise to \$21.7b'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Despite ongoing regional instability and war-related uncertainties, Pakistan is demonstrating resilience, strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals, and emerging as a credible player in diplomacy, trade, and investment. According to a post on X by Finance Minister's Advisor Khurram Schehzad, Pakistan is emerging as a key diplomatic bridge in global conflict, engaging the United States, Iran and Gulf countries to de-escalate tensions. Highlighting the successful Pakistan-IMF review, he said the programme is on track and reforms are delivering results.

Khurram Schehzad said foreign exchange reserves have been rising for thirty-three consecutive weeks and have reached 21.7 billion dollars. He said Pakistan's shipping sector has gained expanded access through the Strait of Hormuz. He added that Pakistan has strengthened its fuel security buffers, with stock cover improving from 3.5 weeks towards four weeks despite global disruptions.

Govt refutes reports of 'complete lockdown' on weekends

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The information ministry on Sunday refuted a notification about a "complete and comprehensive lockdown" across the country on weekends, stating it was fake. In a post on its "fact checker" account on X, the ministry shared the notification being circulated on social media, with "fake" over it. "Avoid sharing fake news and false posts. Be a responsible citizen and only trust verified sources," the ministry said in its post. The undated fake notification falsely quoted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as directing the enforcement of several additional measures in "view of the continuing Gulf oil crisis".

PTI drops 'Imran release force' plan

Party shifts to broader political movement, rules out force structure

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has abandoned a proposal to form an "Imran Khan Release Force" following internal resistance and legal concerns, in a setback to hardline elements within the party. Before Ramadan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi had announced the creation of a dedicated force aimed at mobilising supporters for the release of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan. The plan included administering an oath to volunteers and formally registering members before launching an organised campaign. However, the proposal soon ran into resistance from within the party. PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan, who termed the

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Report says Bushra Bibi has vision issues

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: After PTI founder, former first lady, Bushra Bibi is also facing vision problems, media reported, quoting her medical report. According to the report, she was examined by eye specialist Dr Arif Khan at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) a day earlier. The findings indicate that

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A diplomatic convergence: a positive signal for ME peace

“At the same time, there is another dimension that cannot be ignored. Iran's policy of supporting proxy groups in various countries has long been a source of concern for the West and regional actors alike. While Iran may view these relationships as strategic assets, they contribute to instability and mistrust”

OPINION

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



THE recent meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and Egypt has emerged as a significant and timely development in an increasingly volatile Middle Eastern landscape. At a time when geopolitical tensions are running high and conflicts risk spiraling into broader confrontations, this gathering carries the promise of restraint, dialogue, and a renewed commitment to peace. The joint stance adopted by these influential countries sends a strong signal that diplomacy, not coercion, must guide the future of the region. At the heart of the meeting was a clear and unequivocal message: the path forward lies in dialogue. The foreign ministers collectively rejected the use of force as a tool of policy and called upon all parties to refrain from coercive means. This consensus is particularly noteworthy given the diversity of interests and strategic alignments among these nations. Their ability to converge on such a fundamental principle reflects both the gravity of the current situation and a shared understanding that continued escalation would have disastrous consequences for the entire region. A major highlight of the discussions was the strong condemnation of recent attacks on Iran, which were termed unjustified and destabilizing. Equally, the ministers denounced attacks on Gulf countries, emphasizing that no nation should be subjected to aggression. This balanced approach is crucial. By condemning all forms of aggression regardless of

the target the participating countries avoided the pitfalls of selective outrage and demonstrated a principled commitment to international norms. Pakistan, in particular, played a leading role in shaping this narrative. Its stance was firm yet measured, advocating for de-escalation while emphasizing respect for sovereignty. This is precisely the kind of leadership expected from Pakistan, especially given its status as the only nuclear power in the Muslim world. With such capability comes responsibility, and Pakistan appears to be stepping up by promoting stability rather than confrontation. An important aspect of the meeting was the recognition of the restraint shown by Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait. Pakistan lauded their patience and calculated responses, which have so far prevented the conflict from escalating further. In a region often marked by rapid retaliation and tit-for-tat actions, such restraint deserves acknowledgment. It highlights that even in the face of provocation, measured responses can help contain crises rather than inflame them. The meeting also indirectly addressed the broader question of power politics and the misuse of strength. There is a growing concern globally that powerful nations often act unilaterally, assuming they can impose their will without consequences. This approach has repeatedly proven flawed. The situation with Iran is a case in point. Attempts at regime change widely believed to have been a strategic objective of the United States have not succeeded. Nor were they likely to. Iran is not Venezuela; it has deep-rooted institutions, a resilient political structure, and significant regional influence. On the issue of Iran's nuclear program, the discussion becomes even more nuanced. There is a widely accepted principle in international law: every country has the right to access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Iran is no exception. Deny-

ing this right outright would set a dangerous precedent and undermine the framework of global nuclear governance. However, this right comes with responsibilities. Transparency, compliance with international agreements, and confidence-building measures are essential to ensure that peaceful intentions are not misinterpreted. At the same time, there is another dimension that cannot be ignored. Iran's policy of supporting proxy groups in various countries has long been a source of concern for the West and regional actors alike. While Iran may view these relationships as strategic assets, they contribute to instability and mistrust. The combination of advanced nuclear capabilities and active proxy networks creates a perception of a potentially dangerous mix, one that alarms not just Western powers but also neighboring states. If Iran seeks broader acceptance and reduced tensions, it may need to reassess this aspect of its foreign policy. The meeting also sheds light on a deeper, more structural issue within the Muslim world: the lack of unity. Despite frequent references to the concept of the "Ummah," the reality is starkly different. The Muslim world today is fragmented, divided by political rivalries, sectarian differences, and competing national interests. Institutions such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Arab League have largely failed to play meaningful roles in resolving major conflicts. Their ineffectiveness has been particularly evident in recent crises, including the situation involving Iran. This raises an important question: do these organizations still serve a purpose? There is a growing argument that they either need comprehensive reform or should be replaced by more effective, action-oriented groupings. Instead of large, unwieldy bodies that struggle to reach consensus, there may be merit in creating smaller coalitions of committed countries willing to take concrete steps toward peace

and stability. The recent meeting of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and Egypt could be seen as a step in this direction: a pragmatic alignment of states that are serious about addressing regional challenges. Another dimension that warrants careful consideration is the evolving relationship between Pakistan and the United States. If current developments suggest that Washington is taking a more supportive stance toward Pakistan, it should not be misinterpreted as a fundamental shift in US policy. Historically, US engagement with Pakistan has been shaped by strategic interests, often fluctuating with changing geopolitical priorities. Any present alignment may well be temporary, driven by immediate concerns rather than long-term commitments. This is particularly relevant in the context of Pakistan's nuclear program. The United States has consistently maintained a cautious, and at times critical, position on nuclear proliferation. There is little reason to believe that this stance has fundamentally changed. Therefore, Pakistan must tread carefully. It should avoid overreliance on transient diplomatic goodwill and instead focus on strengthening its own strategic autonomy. In this context, Pakistan's role as a responsible nuclear state becomes even more important. Being a nuclear power is not just about deterrence; it is also about setting an example in conflict resolution and regional cooperation. The gathering of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and Egypt represents more than just a diplomatic event; it is a statement of intent. It signals that key players in the Muslim world are willing to take responsibility for regional stability. It also highlights the need for a more realistic and pragmatic approach to international relations, one that recognizes the limits of force and the value of dialogue. Whether this initiative will lead to lasting peace remains to be seen, but it is undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

Bugti lays foundation of welfare institution in Kuchlak

KUCHLAK: Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has reaffirmed that the provision of quality education remains the top priority of the provincial government, emphasizing that education is the key driver of development and progress.

Speaking at a ceremony in Kuchlak to lay the foundation stone of a welfare educational institution, Sarfraz Bugti said that nations prioritizing education achieve lasting success.

He highlighted government efforts to strengthen the sector, including the reopening of 3,200 previously closed schools across the province.

Sarfraz Bugti pledged that no public school in Balochistan would remain closed, reiterating his commitment to uninterrupted access to education for all.

The chief minister welcomed the role of philanthropists in supporting educational initiatives, noting that their contributions complement government efforts and play a vital role in social uplift.

He praised Daud Khan Khilji, head of the welfare institution, for his dedication to promoting education and assured full government support for its growth.

As part of the ceremony, Sarfraz Bugti distributed uniforms among students, underscoring the government's commitment to grassroots education. The ceremony was attended by provincial ministers Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, members of the provincial assembly including Zarak Khan Mandokhail, Ali Madad Jattak, and Malik Naem Khan Bazai, Senator Shahzaib Khan Durrani, tribal elders, and a large number of residents.—APP

Businessmen call on Sindh Governor

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi held an important meeting with an 18-member delegation of businessmen led by Mirza Ishtiaq Baig at the Governor House on Sunday.

The delegation was held on economic issues and matters of mutual interests. They emphasized promoting investment, improving the business environment and achieving sustainable economic stability.

A review of possibilities for enhancing industrial and commercial activities and increasing exports also came under consideration.

Governor Sind Nehal Hashmi said that the economic recovery vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is being appreciated globally.

He said that PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has always introduced business-friendly policies. Agreement reached on a joint strategy for economic recovery, increased investment and job creation.

The Governor assured investors of a favorable environment, facilities and full protection.

The delegation expressed full confidence in government policies and emphasized strengthening public-private sector linkages.

Promoting simplicity and austerity is the need of the hour, Hashmi said adding that in current circumstances, austerity was a collective responsibility.—APP



Islamabad: Foreign Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

KP govt intensifies crackdown against property tax defaulters

Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday has accelerated its province-wide action against property tax defaulters, sealing multiple units and recovering substantial amounts in outstanding dues during an ongoing special campaign.

DNA

PESHAWAR: Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has accelerated its province-wide action against property tax defaulters, sealing multiple units and recovering substantial amounts in outstanding dues during an ongoing special campaign. According to official sources, enforcement actions have been stepped up in several districts, targeting chronic defaulters who failed to clear their liabilities despite repeated notices.

Under the supervision of Excise and Taxation Officer Fawad Iqbal

Khan, a focused drive was launched in Nowshera to recover dues from major defaulters. Legal action was initiated against those who did not respond to multiple notices. During operations in the Jehangira locality, several defaulting units were sealed, while approximately Rs300,000 was recovered in a single day and deposited into the government exchequer. Similarly, Excise and Taxation Officer Muhammad Khalid Khan led enforcement efforts resulting in the sealing of multiple properties in Mardan. The operation yielded a notable recovery of over Rs2.14 million within one day, which has been

duly deposited into the government treasury. Meanwhile, in Mansehra, action was taken against properties over non-payment of UIP tax, with several units sealed during the drive. In Peshawar, authorities conducted operations in the Karkhano Market area, sealing multiple units belonging to property tax defaulters. The officials reiterated that the campaign against defaulters will continue vigorously across the province. The department have advised the property owners to clear their outstanding dues promptly to avoid legal action and inconvenience.

Rs1.28b for boosting livestock, arid agriculture in Thar

ISLAMABAD: A Rs1.28 billion project has been proposed to strengthen livestock, horticulture and sustainable ecosystem management in the Thar desert region through research, technology transfer and community capacity building. The project is titled Thar Community Actions for the Management of Sustainable Ecosystem, Livestock, Land and Livelihood (THAR CAMELL), according to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan. The five-year initiative will run from July 2026 to June 2031. It will be implemented by the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) at the PARC-Arid Zone Research Institute (AZRI) Umerkot, covering the Umerkot district and 30 union councils of Tharparkar in Sindh, a part of the Thar desert region. The project aims to support agricultural innovation, livestock genetic improvement, disease control systems, sustainable natural resource management and technology transfer to farming communities. It also focuses on value addition for exports, including a dehydration plant, dried vegetables and Ber for export, while

introducing modern technologies under the E-Pakistan initiative, such as modern diagnostics, genotyping and Radio Frequency Identification systems. The initiative will particularly target poor Thari communities to support poverty reduction and strengthen local livelihoods. As part of its empowerment strategy, the project plans to build capacity and train more than 2,000 farmers. Environmental interventions include afforestation, arid horticulture and rainwater recharge through TARAI, which contribute to climate resilience in desert ecosystems. Among the project's key objectives is the establishment of livestock and horticulture research institutes at PARC-AZRI Umerkot to improve livestock productivity, enhance genetic improvement of indigenous breeds, strengthen disease diagnostics and control, and develop demonstration sites for arid horticulture. The initiative also aims to build community capacity for sustainable ecosystem management and livelihood improvement. According to the document, the project will convert 180 acres of wasteland into productive land and de-

velop infrastructure for location-specific research and demonstration activities at the project site. Research activities will cover livestock, range, land and water management and arid horticulture, supported by the provision of machinery and field implements for research and field operations. The project will also promote silage making for livestock and establish facilities for soil, water and plant analysis, livestock services, animal insemination and biotechnology laboratories to support advisory services for researchers, extension workers, NGOs and local farming communities. These services will help provide proper fertilizer recommendations to enhance agricultural crop productivity by up to 30-35%, while strengthening research and infrastructure facilities in the region. According to the document, the initiative aligns with national priorities, including the 5Es Framework, the 13th Five-Year Plan, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the National Agriculture Innovation and Growth Programme (NAIGP).—DNA

Climate change hits mango produce

MULTAN: South Punjab's world-famous mango industry is facing a serious setback this season, as climate change has impacted the production of Summer Bahisht Chauns, one of the most prized mango varieties in Pakistan. Farmers across key mango-growing districts including Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Muzaffargarh, and Khanewal are witnessing unusual crop damage, threatening both livelihoods and export quality. According to local growers, the first week of March brought an unexpected rise in temperature, which disrupted the natural flowering and fruit-setting process. While mango trees produced a considerable amount of blossom (locally called "boor"), the critical stage of fruit formation failed to occur properly. Experts attribute this to poor cross-pollination, as fluctuating weather conditions hindered the natural pollination cycle. "As the temperature suddenly increased, the flowering appeared healthy, but the conversion into fruit was badly affected," said progressive farmer Shahid Hameed Bhutta. "Instead of developing into mangoes, a large portion of the blossom turned into 'bator', a harmful formation that does not produce fruit and continues to damage the plant."—APP

Over 2,500 adolescent girls trained as PMAA

ISLAMABAD: University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore, in collaboration with Pakistan Martial Arts Association (PMAA), has launched a large-scale self-defence training initiative for adolescent schoolgirls across the Lahore Division to boost grassroots sports development and youth empowerment. The Adolescent Self-Defence Workshops Program, currently underway in Lahore, Sheikhupura and Kasur, has already trained more than 2,500 students from 30 schools. The initiative uses martial arts as a structured sporting discipline to enhance physical fitness, agility, and mental resilience among young participants, while equipping them with essential self-defence techniques, said a press release issued here Sunday.

Designed as a comprehensive sports-based training

program, the workshops focus on practical combat skills, situational awareness, and confidence-building exercises. Sessions are being conducted under professional supervision by certified instructors of PMAA, ensuring technical precision and safety standards in all activities.

The training is led by Chief Trainer Anwar Mohiuddin, also President of PMAA alongside a team of experienced martial arts coaches including Abdullah Munir, Muhammad Shakil, Alizae Ijaz, Nimra Nadeem, Hanzala Mohiuddin, Meerab Butt, Ahmed Ali, Mubashir Butt, Javeria, Ayesha Khalid, and Mian Abad. Their curriculum integrates elements of discipline, reflex development, controlled sparring and core aspects of modern martial arts training, making it both physically engaging and strategically

enriching young athletes. UHS Vice Chancellor Ahsan Waheed Chatter highlighted the importance of sports in shaping confident and capable youth. He noted that the initiative reflects a growing recognition of martial arts as a vital component of youth sports, particularly for girls. "This initiative reflects the vision of CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, which aims to ensure that every girl in Punjab is trained and skilled in self-defence. This is a strong step toward building a safer, stronger, and more empowered society."

Prof Dr. Sidrah Saleem, Director of UHS Research and Development Center, emphasised that participation in sports such as martial arts plays a crucial role in adolescent development. "Self-defence education is an essential component of adolescent development. By initiating these workshops, UHS is investing in the future of our daughters, ensuring they grow with strength, confidence, and independence. This initiative reflects UHS's broader vision of youth empowerment, aimed at building resilience, courage, and leadership in the next generation." Chief Trainer Anwar Mohiuddin said, "Martial arts is not merely a sport; it is a life-saving necessity.—APP

When rainbow meets sunshine, Galiyat becomes living postcard

THANDYANI: A gentle spell of rain followed by rainbow and radiant sunshine has transformed the lush hills of Galiyat into a scene of rare beauty, drawing visitors from across the province to witness nature in its most enchanting form. From Thandyani to Nathiagali, Bagnot to Ayubia, the Galiyat valley is alive with movement and colour after last night rain. The overnight showers have washed the landscape clean, leaving behind glistening leaves, emerald slopes, and air so fresh it seems almost untouched. At dawn, a soft mist lingers over pine-covered hills, slowly lifting as golden sunlight filters through drifting clouds. Streams, now fuller and clearer, wind through the valleys like ribbons of glass, reflecting the sky above. Every corner offers a picture-perfect moment. "This weather has created something magical," said Khayam, a local tour guide at Thandyani in Abbottabad. "It's not something we see every day in Thandyani where balance of rain and sunshine makes everything feel alive." Families picnic under open skies, children laugh as they play along walking tracks, and couples stroll hand-in-hand through rain-washed meadows. Photographers pause at every turn, trying to capture fleeting rainbows stretching across

green hillsides. "I visited Thandyani before, but I have never seen it beautiful like this," said Haseeb Khan, a visitor from Peshawar. "The rain makes everything come alive, and when the sun comes out, the whole valley seems to glow in colours." In Ayubia, the energy is equally vibrant where tourists from Punjab were also seen in substantial numbers where they are exploring forest trails, while families gather near the famous chairlift, eager for panoramic views of the revitalized landscape. Among them was Zeeshan Khan, who arrived early Sunday with his family. For him, the trip was more than a getaway but was a chance to reconnect with nature. As his family prepared to hike the scenic Miranjani-Nathia Gali trail, Zeeshan paused to take in the moment as sunlight breaking through clouds, cool winds brushing past, and the distant echo of laughter. "Ayubia feels magical after the last night heavy rain," he said, watching his son play nearby. "It's not just about travel but it's about making memories." Across the region, similar scenes unfold in Galiyat. Friends trek through forest paths, families share simple meals, and the aroma of chapli kebabs and freshly grilled barbecue fills the crisp mountain air. For local businesses, the surge in visitors

has brought renewed hope. Hotels are nearing full occupancy, roadside tea stalls are bustling, and handicraft vendors are welcoming a steady stream of customers. "This is the season we wait for," said Sajid Abbasi, a shopkeeper in Nathia Gali. "When tourists are happy, everyone benefits." Officials saw the growing influx as a promising sign for the region's tourism future. Efforts are underway to restore hiking trails, develop natural sites, and expand eco-tourism infrastructure to attract both local and international visitors. Yet, even as plans for development take shape, the true charm of Galiyat lies in its simplicity. Back in Thandyani, as evening settles over the lush green hills, the golden light fades into soft twilight. The sounds of the day is laughter, footsteps, distant chatter blend into a quiet serenity. For visitors like Haseeb and Zeeshan, it is these simple, fleeting moments that linger the longest in memories. Still, authorities advised tourists to remain cautious. While the rains enhance the valley's beauty, they also make mountain roads slippery and increase the risk of landslides. Travelers are encouraged to stay informed and follow safety guidelines. Despite this, the mood remains overwhelmingly joyful.—DNA



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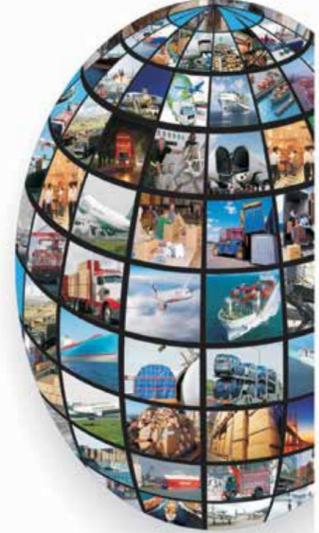






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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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- Rescue (Police).....15
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- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police...9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
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- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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- WASA Rawalpindi...5555489
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- 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



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- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

PIDE warns oil shock threatens Pak's fiscal stability

Government keep the primary balance at the center of fiscal management, strengthen tax administration, improve compliance, reduce leakages, accelerate digital monitoring of high-yield sectors, and create fiscal space by curbing non-essential current expenditures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has released a new policy viewpoint titled Managing Oil Shocks: Pakistan's Fiscal Risks and Policy Choices, authored by Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Registrar/Professor of Economics at PIDE; Dr. Shahzada M. Naem Nawaz, Professor of Economics at PIDE; and Anna Riaz, Research Economist at PIDE, warning that rising global oil prices pose a serious threat to Pakistan's fiscal stability and ongoing consolidation efforts. The study finds that the latest oil price shock, driven by escalating geopolitical tensions in the Gulf region, especially the Israel-US-Iran conflict and disruptions in petroleum supply routes, could significantly weaken the government's fiscal position and reduce its ability to maintain macroeconomic stability. According to the report, Pakistan's budgeted federal primary surplus of Rs. 1,706 billion, equivalent to 1.3 percent of GDP, is highly vulnerable to external oil shocks. Un-

der a moderate shock scenario, where oil prices rise to \$100 per barrel, the primary surplus could decline to Rs. 1,002 billion. In a severe scenario of \$120 per barrel, it may fall further to Rs. 821 billion, while in an extreme case of \$144 per barrel, it could shrink to just Rs. 781 billion. At the same time, the fiscal deficit may widen from the budgeted Rs. 6,501 billion, or 5.0 percent of GDP, to as high as Rs. 7,517 billion, or 5.8 percent of GDP, reflecting a sharp rise in fiscal stress. The report argues that oil shocks affect Pakistan not only through a larger import bill, but also by intensifying inflation, increasing pressure on the exchange rate, slowing economic activity, and weakening confidence across the economy. As an oil-importing country with deep structural dependence on external energy markets, Pakistan remains highly exposed to fluctuations in global crude prices. The study notes that past episodes of elevated oil prices have consistently translated into imported inflation, external account pressures, subsidy burdens, and deterioration in fiscal buffers. Historical patterns presented

in the report show that when Brent crude exceeded \$110 per barrel in earlier periods, inflation in Pakistan remained in double digits, while periods of lower oil prices brought temporary macroeconomic relief. PIDE stresses that the fiscal consequences of oil shocks go beyond fuel pricing decisions. They also emerge through lower revenue collection, increased energy-sector support requirements, exchange-rate pressures, and broader contingent liabilities. The report highlights that petroleum levy collections and subsidy expenditures have long remained central to Pakistan's fiscal response during oil price pressures. However, with the country currently operating under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility and facing strict fiscal targets, the room for discretionary reduction in the petroleum levy is limited. This makes the federal primary balance the most important indicator for assessing whether Pakistan can absorb an external oil shock without undermining debt sustainability and stabilization gains. The study's scenario-based fiscal risk analysis for FY2026 presents a sobering picture. Even

under a moderate oil shock, Pakistan's fiscal position weakens considerably due to the already prevailing FBR revenue shortfall. In more severe and extreme scenarios, the pressure becomes even more intense, with inflation rising, growth slowing, and fiscal buffers eroding further. The report makes clear that while higher inflation may generate some nominal revenue gains, these are far outweighed by the increased energy import bill, subsidy risks, and broader macroeconomic strain. In response, PIDE calls for a disciplined and forward-looking policy strategy. The report recommends that the government keep the primary balance at the center of fiscal management, strengthen tax administration, improve compliance, reduce leakages, accelerate digital monitoring of high-yield sectors, and create fiscal space by curbing non-essential current expenditures. At the same time, it emphasizes the need to protect social protection spending and high-impact development priorities, while continuing to invest in infrastructure, productivity, and export-supporting sectors so that fiscal adjustment does not come at the cost of long-term resilience and growth.

No Child Left Behind' campaign gains momentum

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital is witnessing a significant breakthrough in the "No Child Left Behind" initiative as the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training begins to see the fruits of its "Carpet Coverage" campaign. Following several days of rigorous field operations across various Union Councils in Islamabad, authorities have successfully identified 3,646 out-of-school children, said a press release issued here Sunday. This data, managed through the Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFEMIS), highlights a nearly even gender distribution, with 1,862 boys (51%) and 1,784 girls (49%) currently categorized as "identified but not yet enrolled."

The identification process has been a collaborative effort involving multiple organizations, with the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) leading the charge by identifying 2,877 children. Other contributors include JTT with 433 children, the National Education Foundation (NEF) with 157, and BECS with 85. Organizations such as Muslim Hands and Sunbeams also played a role, identifying 78 and 37 children respectively, identified OOSC. These figures represent the baseline for a targeted intervention to bring these children into the formal and non-formal academic folds.

The Federal Education Secretary Nadeem Mahub has underscored that this progress is a vital component of a broader three-year rolling plan, which has set an initial target of enrolling 25,000 children in its first phase. The strategy prioritizes placement within FDE-run government institutions; however, in areas lacking public schools, the ministry is prepared to utilize community schools. By partnering with non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the ministry aims to ensure that no child in the capital is denied their right to an education due to a lack of access or resources.—APP

Call for educational reforms and character building

RAWALPINDIA : Master Trainers Workshop jointly organized by Rooh Forum and the All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association (APPSMA) in Rawalpindi underscored the importance of educational reforms, modern teaching methodologies, and character building among students. The workshop, held at Emblem Higher Secondary School, Satellite Town here Sunday, was chaired by Colonel (R) Syed Murtaza Ali Shah. Prominent educationists and participants included Abrar Ahmed Khan, Amir Anwar, Dr. Ejaz Mahmood, Agha Shahab Maqsood, Mrs. Sakina Taj, Mrs. Fatima, Syed Adil Ali Shah, and Professor Muhammad Zeeshan. Speakers at the event stressed the need for a collaborative approach to improving the education system, emphasizing the adoption of modern technology and effective teacher training programs. They noted that the role of educational institutions should extend beyond academic achievement to include character development, leadership skills, and the promotion of religious and national values. The integration of the Quran, Sunnah, and Allama Iqbal's philosophy into educational curricula was also highlighted as a key component in shaping responsible and well-rounded individuals. The workshop concluded with a collective commitment from participants to advance educational reforms and promote modern training practices aimed at developing a disciplined, skilled, and competent generation.—DNA



A vendor displays strawberries on his cart to attract the customers

Pakistan experts join Phewa Dialogue 2026 in China

ISLAMABAD: South Asian experts, including participants from Pakistan, took part in the Phewa Dialogue 2026 held in Chengdu, China, bringing together scholars and policymakers to deliberate on regional development challenges in the context of climate change and governance. Held under the theme "South Asian Development under Climate Change and Governance," the Dialogue was jointly organized by the China Center for South Asia Studies and Tribhuvan University, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Saturday. It brought together leading academics, policy experts, and practitioners to exchange perspectives, strengthen mutual understanding, and explore pathways for

sustainable development in South Asia. Among the Pakistani participants, Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), delivered a keynote address on the first theme. He highlighted climate change as a shared and pressing challenge for South Asia, affecting economies, livelihoods, and ecosystems across the region. He stressed that as climate challenges transcend national borders, their solutions must be rooted in regional cooperation. He called for joint efforts in climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy collaboration, sustainable agriculture, and enhanced regional trade integration to build a resilient

regional economy. Akram also underscored the importance of policy harmonization, knowledge sharing, and coordinated disaster management mechanisms to effectively respond to environmental challenges. He further highlighted the role of academic institutions, businesses, civil society, and youth in advancing sustainable development and fostering innovation across South Asia. Launched in 2024 in Pokhara, Nepal, the Phewa Dialogue is a China-led initiative designed to promote dialogue and collaboration among South Asian countries. The 2026 edition marked its second edition, highlighting increasing regional engagement on common economic and environmental challenges.—DNA

\$10m project launched in AJK to bring OOSC into classrooms

ISLAMABAD: A new initiative has been launched in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to expand educational opportunities for thousands of children in the region. The initiative titled "Out of School Children Project" is supported by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and was signed on January 19, 2026, according to documents available with Wealth Pakistan. The \$10 million initiative marks an important step toward improving access to education in the region. The project will be implemented by the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of the Government of AJK and is expected to become operational soon. The project focuses on identifying out-of-school children and connecting them with learning opportunities through improved school facilities, community outreach, and targeted enrollment campaigns. By strengthening institutional capacity, the initiative is designed to support schools in both enrolling and retaining students more effectively. According to official documents, the project is currently at a preparatory stage, with financial and physical progress to begin once implementation starts. Once underway, the program is expected to contribute to higher literacy levels and support broader educational development goals across the region. Experts view such focused efforts as an important step toward expanding access to education and creating more inclusive learning environments in Pakistan. With targeted interventions, improved access, and enhanced resources, the initiative is expected to help address existing gaps and open up new pathways for children, particularly in remote and underserved areas.—APP

NUST emerges as Pakistan's top performer

ISLAMABAD: While reinforcing its position as the premier university of Pakistan, the National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST) has made significant headway in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026, reflecting its commitment to academic excellence and global competitiveness. One of the most prominent achievements this year is NUST's remarkable leap in the subject of Computer Science, ascending 50 positions globally from 164th in 2025 to 114th in 2026. In addition, the university has retained its first position in Pakistan in the broad subject area of Engineering & Technology. NUST also continues to feature distinctly across multiple disciplines, featuring distinctly among the world's top institutions. It has been ranked

among the top 150-200 globally in key Engineering and Computing fields, while maintaining a consistent presence in the top 300-350 categories across a wide spectrum of subjects, including Natural Sciences and related domains. This reflects strong performance across leading disciplines alongside growing presence in emerging fields. In Social Sciences & Management, NUST has improved its global standing from 361 to 335, highlighting enhanced academic and research impact. Additionally, NUST has achieved a significant milestone with its first-ever inclusion in Data Science & Artificial Intelligence categories. Overall, NUST is now ranked in 21 subjects globally, the highest number by any Pakistani university, outlining its strong multidisciplinary growth with sustained academic excellence.—APP

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Briefs

ICT Police
put 39
lawbreakers
in handcuffs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police put 39 lawbreakers in handcuffs during separate operations across the federal capital and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. An official told APP on Sunday that police teams from Golra, Aabpara, Industrial Area, Noon, Shams Colony, Kirpa and Bani Gala police stations arrested 14 accused involved in various criminal activities. He said the police recovered 1,660 grams of hashish, 610 grams of heroin, 201 grams of ice, 15 bottles of liquor, seven pistols with ammunition and two daggers from their possession. Cases have been registered against them and further investigation is underway. He said that during a special campaign launched to arrest proclaimed offenders and absconders, police teams apprehended 25 more criminals from different areas of the city. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Qazi Ali Raza said that Islamabad Police remained committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and no elements would be allowed to disturb public peace.—APP

SSP Qazi
reviews
security at
Churches

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza on Sunday reviewed security arrangements at churches and other places of worship across the federal capital and issued necessary directions to police officers. An official told APP that ICT Police personnel were deployed at churches and other worship places to ensure safety of worshippers and maintain law and order. SSP Qazi inspected security measures and directed officers to remain vigilant and perform their duties with professionalism. Qazi emphasized that foolproof security arrangements must be ensured at all places of worship, particularly during religious gatherings. The official said special attention was given to sensitive locations, while effective coordination among police units was also maintained. He added that Islamabad Police remained fully alert and committed to protecting places of worship and ensuring a peaceful environment in the capital.—APP

MD NGC briefs
federal minister
Awais Leghari

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC) has completed its six-point reform program, introducing several transformative measures to make the company more efficient, transparent, and accountable, in line with the rapidly evolving demands of Pakistan's power sector. In this regard, Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division), Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, was given a detailed briefing in Islamabad on the reform program, highlighting the key progress and initiatives undertaken within the company. During the briefing, Managing Director (NGC) Engr. Altaf Hussain Malik informed the Federal Minister that the reform process, initiated in January 2026, is progressing according to schedule, and the company's new operating model will be implemented from July 1, 2026. During the briefing, the Federal Minister

for Energy (Power Division) appreciated the reform initiatives undertaken by NGC management and reaffirmed the government's full support for the process. He stated that these reforms represent an excellent example of the institutional transformation required in Pakistan's power sector. The focus of the company's leadership and team on performance, transparency, and accountability is commendable. The government will continue to fully support such initiatives aimed at strengthening the national energy infrastructure. On the occasion, MD NGC Engr. Altaf Hussain Malik, while giving the briefing, highlighted that under the restructuring plan six major strategic changes have been introduced, including: • Unified operational leadership to accelerate project completion Strengthening financial governance to promote transparency Establishment of regulatory and stakeholder coordination teams to enhance communication Independent safety oversight to make safety the top institutional priority Improvements in internal procedures to eliminate delays and unnecessary complexities Development of digital systems to utilize modern technology and real-time data He further stated that the reform process aims to build an institution that is future-ready, agile, and accountable. With the continuous support of the Ministry of Energy and the dedication of the organization's team, the foundation of a stronger and more efficient transmission system is being laid, which will ensure reliable electricity transmission across Pakistan.

IRS hosts expert webinar on OIC's
momentum against Illegal settlements

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad (IRS) convened an expert webinar featuring Dr. Feras Qawasmeh, Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the Joao Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies in Qatar, on the theme "A United Front Against Illegal Settlement Expansion: The Role of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation." The discussion focused on the changing patterns of Israel's expanding illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, and the value of the collective consensus among Pakistan and its OIC partners at the extraordinary open-ended ministerial session recently. Dr. Qawasmeh underlined the need for greater regional diplomacy to leverage grass-root campaigns – including those that involve Palestinian-led movements focused against settlement expansion. The discussion underlined how Pakistan has continued to back the two-state solu-

tion, the sanctity of Palestinian liberties, and a clear stance against any illegal aggression or violence that threatens Palestinian statehood. Recognizing the value of the OIC to meaningful progress, Dr. Qawasmeh built on the significance of Muslim-majority states presenting a consensus against settlement expansion. His talk put a premium on countries to navigate complex challenges that prevent sufficient international scrutiny towards the expanding settlement challenge, considering how rising arson attacks and impediments to life carry on. His talk delivered a critical value addition on the role of key movements, such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), in lending international scrutiny and awareness to the settlement issue. These considerations were part of policy recommendations, including a set pipeline of Palestinian rights advocates and organized groupings that can derive traction with Pakistan and key Gulf partners within the OIC, to collectively advance their own consensus against

any forced annexation with grass-roots advocacy. Hannan Hussain, head of the West Asia Program at the Institute, added that the talk provided an in-depth assessment of the conditions on-ground in occupied West Bank, where rising tensions between recipient populations and those spearheading violence, deserves ample attention. Core reference points included the lasting effects of the Oslo Accords which have led to a geographical shift in terms of the security controls and political liberties enjoyed by Palestinians at present, and how these elements of control continue to shift to their detriment amid settlement expansion. These dynamics – largely understudied in official discourse on the occupied West Bank – closely align with Pakistan's principled position on ending settler violence and growth in illegal settlements as international attention focuses on the tensions within the Middle East. Major proof points for Pakistan's position include its latest alarm at the UN Security Council.

Stronger policies needed
to tackle climate change

Sardar Tahir Mehmood noted that climate change has emerged as one of the most serious global challenges, posing significant threats to agriculture, water resources, infrastructure, and public health. He observed that countries like Pakistan are particularly vulnerable to climate-related impacts including floods, droughts, heatwaves, and extreme weather events that endanger livelihoods and economic stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Marking the significance of Earth Day, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood has called for urgent and coordinated action to address climate change and promote effective water management in order to ensure sustainable economic growth and environmental protection in Pakistan. In a statement issued here on Saturday, he said that Earth Day serves as a powerful reminder of the collective responsibility of governments, businesses, and citizens to safeguard the planet and its natural resources for future generations. He urged all segments of society to participate in the global spirit of "Give an Hour to Earth", encouraging individuals and organizations to dedicate time and effort towards environmental protection and responsible resource use.



Sardar Tahir Mehmood noted that climate change has emerged as one of the most serious global challenges, posing significant threats to agriculture, water resources, infrastructure, and public

health. He observed that countries like Pakistan are particularly vulnerable to climate-related impacts including floods, droughts, heatwaves, and extreme weather events that endanger livelihoods and economic stability. Highlighting the growing water crisis, he said that sustainable water management has become indispensable for long-term development. Pakistan is facing increasing water scarcity, and efficient use of water in agriculture, industry, and urban sectors is essential to conserve resources and ensure food and energy security. The ICCI President urged the government to formulate comprehensive and forward-looking policies that promote climate resilience, encourage investment in renewable energy, and support initiatives aimed at conserving water resources. He also emphasized the importance of stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors to implement climate-friendly projects and sustainable

development programs. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub stressed the need to raise public awareness about environmental protection, adding that responsible consumption of water and energy must become a national priority. Educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the media should play a proactive role in spreading awareness about climate change and inspiring communities to adopt environmentally responsible practices. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry reaffirmed that the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will continue to support initiatives that promote environmental sustainability and responsible resource management. He emphasized that the message of Earth Day should translate into practical actions, noting that timely and proactive measures today will help protect natural resources and ensure a prosperous, greener, and sustainable future for coming generations



ISLAMABAD: A view of garbage heap near the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) along with Col Sher Khan Shaheed road in the federal capital creating problems for commuters needs the attention of concerned authorities

ITP adds
15 electric
vehicles to fleet

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has inducted 15 electric BYD Atto 2 vehicles into its fleet as part of its move towards eco-friendly policing and clean energy adoption in the federal capital. An ITP official told APP on Sunday that the addition of electric vehicles reflects a positive step towards modern policing and environmental sustainability. He said the initiative aimed at reducing carbon emissions while enhancing operational efficiency of traffic police across the city. However, the official said that in view of the rapidly increasing population and growing traffic pressure in the capital, the current number of vehicles appeared insufficient. Experts believed that at least 45 vehicles and around 3,000 personnel were required for effective traffic management to ensure better and organized commuting facilities for citizens. The official said Islamabad Traffic Police remained committed to adopting modern technologies and environmentally friendly measures to improve service delivery. He added that further steps were being considered to strengthen the fleet and manpower in line with the city's growing needs.—DNA

PSAA Chairman hails govt

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Ship's Agents Association (PSAA) Mohammed A. Rajpar on Sunday lauded the government for considering their suggestions and amending international transshipment rules, saying sustained implementation could attract \$50-100 million in annual investment and transform Pakistan's seaports and airports into a regional hub like Dubai. While speaking to a local news channel, Chairman PSAA Mohammed A. Rajpar added that the Middle East war has presented Pakistan with a golden opportunity to establish itself as a permanent transshipment hub and said that global recognition of the country as a prime alternative location for transshipment marks a major achievement. He added the association had presented several suggestions to improve international transshipment rules. He expressed gratitude to the Minister of Maritime Affairs and other officials for considering their recommendations and implementing the amended policies. He further hailed the government for managing trade volumes wisely and with sound judgment, saying that continued implementation of these policies would attract more investment, strengthen trade, and set new records at Pakistan's seaports and airports. Rajpar noted that the trade momentum started strongly earlier in the year and compared to last year, the country is witnessing significant growth in shipping and transshipment activity.—DNA

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The battle of ideas at the heart of Iran war

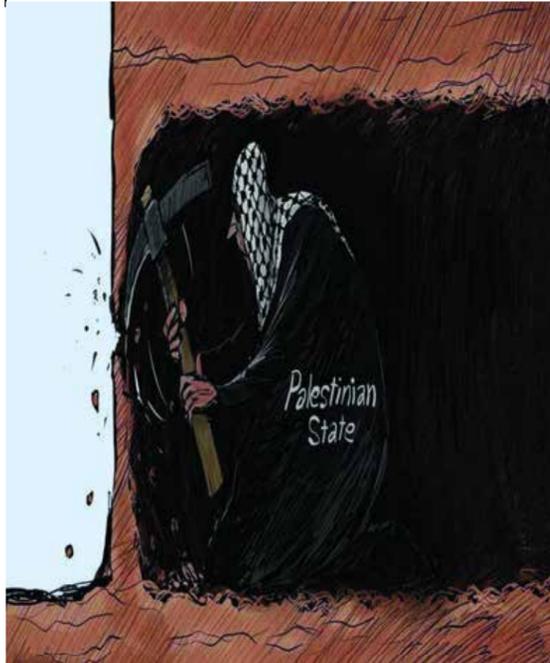
NADIM SHEHADI

It is not a coincidence that Iran is firing missiles at the Arab Gulf states. The fundamental difference between them is what this current war is really about. They represent two opposing worldviews, one based on a militant and radical version of Islam and the other on a liberal practice.

Their battle is one of ideas. Radicalism was inherited from the revolutionary decades of the 1970s and 1980s and the anti-imperialist movements opposed to the US. The other side is liberal, allied to the West and the US and in tune with its world order. For the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxy militias, the Gulf Cooperation Council states represent the real danger: a viable and prosperous alternative model for the region.

This is also not about theology. There are similar theological schools, like Salafis or Sufis, on both sides. It is also not strictly about religion either. There are radical and liberal secularists allied to both sides. It is a clash of radical versus liberal ideas that sometimes uses religion as a vehicle. In Catholicism, it is the difference between Latin American liberation theology and conservative movements like Opus Dei. When radical Islam started to expand in the late 1970s, many of its militants were former leftist revolutionaries and some were not even Muslim. It is not Islam that was radicalized, rather it was radicalism that was Islamized, according to French academic Olivier Roy.

For the IRGC and its proxies, the GCC states are a viable and prosperous alternative model that must be destroyed. Analysts are often wrong, especially when they make sense. An elegant theory based on a binary is always attractive and, after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the US, many misleading arguments emerged. One was that of a clash of civilizations, Islam against the West, due to their incompatible values. Another even more simplistic one was about the Shiite-Sunni divide, which in my view existed far more among the experts inside the Washington beltway than in the Middle East itself. The most misleading was that of Islam versus secularism or modernity. These were not just simple analytical tools — they were dangerous because policies were based on their assumptions. Such as when a leaked nongovernmental organization report, written by an expert influenced by the Syrian regime, described the conflict in Syria as being between radical Islam and secularism. This was instrumental in Europe's engagement with the Assad regime. Bashar Assad, who was described as a secular modernist, could be reformed whereas radical Islam could not. The European Commission, for example, had a lot of experience with its EU enlargement programs of transforming the former Stalinist countries of Eastern Europe into modern liberal states. The "acquis communautaire," or the tools of this transformation, was ready to be delivered by an army of experts who descended on Damascus with their PowerPoint pres-



entations. In the meantime, Assad was allowed to crush the revolt and destroy the country, enabled by an elegantly false dichotomy that was compatible with EU bureaucracy. Another fallacy was that of the Sunni-Shiite divide. People have been living together for centuries and continue to do so. This idea also became dangerous in the hands of experts. Simply put, Daesh and Al-Qaeda were considered as Sunni and the IRGC, which was Shiite, was considered an ally in the war on terror. In reality, radical Sunni groups like Al-Qaeda considered pro-Western Muslim states to be the principal enemy and the IRGC an ally.

The result was that most institutions that received counterterrorism funding were focused on combating the Sunni variety. None of these funds or organizations were dedicated to countering militias like Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilization Units of Iraq or the Houthis in Yemen. In fact, Project Cassandra, which was investigating the Hezbollah network, was shut down by the Obama administration to prevent it potentially disrupting the nuclear deal negotiations with Iran. This was a time when counterterrorism experts considered Iran an ally. In reality, both the IRGC and Daesh were radicals who were on the same side — they both considered liberal, pro-western Muslims as their real enemies. What the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks revealed was that the radical wings of Sunni Hamas were also allied to the IRGC's Shiite militias. Even the Muslim Brotherhood is divided between radical anti-Western and more liberal branches, as we have seen among the young generation of exiles with Brotherhood background in Syria. In the current war, a widespread fallacy among experts is that, for the IRGC or Hezbollah to win, all they have to do is survive.

In the current war, a widespread fallacy among experts is that, for the IRGC or Hezbollah to win, all they have to do is survive; whereas those fighting them have to achieve all their objectives, whether declared or undeclared. How many times have we heard or read that the US has no strategy, no plan or no endgame, whereas all the Iranian regime has to do is survive? Imagine asking a player during a game of chess — a game that simulates war — to reveal their strategy.

This is also based on the supposition that, if the Iranian regime can still threaten the Gulf countries with a few rockets, then it continues to hold the whole region hostage, including global trade routes. Similarly, Hezbollah wins if it survives long enough to be able to throw half a dozen rockets across the border into Israel. Because then it maintains the ability to destabilize both Lebanon and Israel and ignite a war. This is not really a victory — it is merely prolonging the conflict until the next round. The real battle is not solely a military one, it is between two narratives. The choice is between the vision of the region represented by Tehran and that of the Gulf states: a liberal Islam allied with the West versus a radical Islam in confrontation with the West. Radical groups will lose support when their constituencies realize that all that they bring is death and destruction. Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and even Iran itself bear witness to this fact. The conduct of war can be counterproductive — bombing people in Iran and destroying infrastructure has its limits. An Israeli invasion and occupation of parts of south Lebanon would give Hezbollah a boost because it would legitimize its status as a group resisting occupation. But Hezbollah would likely lose its grip over the Lebanese population it has indoctrinated for more than two generations with the realization that the totally unnecessary war it provoked by throwing rockets at Israel in support of Iran has brought nothing but misery.

Iran and the Fall of Old Military Might

Qamar Bashir



Equally transformative is the role of artificial intelligence in this new warfare ecosystem. Iran and other actors are increasingly using AI-generated simulations to depict battlefield scenarios, showcasing the destruction of enemy assets in ways that blur the line between reality and fabrication. These visuals, often indistinguishable from real footage, amplify psychological pressure and can even mislead decision-makers. There have been instances where such AI-generated content caused confusion at the highest levels, underscoring the disruptive power of synthetic media

THE modern battlefield is no longer defined by tanks rolling across deserts or fighter jets dominating the skies. Instead, it is shaped by invisible algorithms, autonomous drones, and emotionally charged digital narratives that travel faster than missiles and penetrate deeper than bombs. What we are witnessing in the ongoing Iran-United States-Israel confrontation is not just a war of weapons—it is a war of perception, precision, and psychological dominance. And in this evolving theater, Iran appears to have mastered a new doctrine that is rewriting the rules of conflict in the 21st century.

One of the most striking aspects of this transformation is Iran's sophisticated use of media and digital storytelling. Highly emotional videos, cinematic reels, and symbolic imagery have flooded social media platforms, creating a powerful narrative that resonates far beyond its borders. In one such clip, a young girl in Tehran prepares for school, her innocence captured in soft morning light, while in parallel, a fighter jet readies for a strike. The sequence ends in devastation, with only her schoolbag—marked by a small animal drawing—remaining amid the rubble. Another haunting visual depicts coffins draped in the American flag sinking into the sea, followed by an endless horizon of destruction. These are not mere videos; they are psychological instruments designed to evoke empathy, outrage, and moral questioning.

This is propaganda in its most refined and modern form—not crude messaging, but emotionally intelligent storytelling backed by high production quality and strategic timing. It challenges the legitimacy of war, portrays Iran as a victim of aggression, and mobilizes both domestic and global audiences. In contrast, the United States, traditionally dominant in narrative control through mainstream media, appears less agile in this decentralized digital environment. The monopoly of information once held by major networks has been shattered by smartphones, independent creators, and algorithm-driven platforms.

Yet, the media war is only one dimension of this new paradigm. The more profound shift lies in the realm of asymmetric warfare. Iran's strategy relies not on matching the United States or Israel tank for tank or jet for jet, but on deploying cost-effective, highly efficient systems that neutralize expensive conventional assets. Drones, short-range missiles, and underground launch systems have become the backbone of this approach. According to defense analyses, Iran possesses thousands of such systems, many hidden deep beneath mountainous terrain, making them nearly impossible to eliminate through conventional airstrikes.

The economic contrast is staggering. A single U.S. aircraft carrier, such as the USS Gerald R. Ford, costs

over \$13 billion to build and millions more per day to operate. In comparison, Iranian drones can be produced for tens of thousands of dollars, yet they have demonstrated the capability to threaten even the most advanced naval and aerial platforms. This imbalance represents a fundamental shift: warfare is no longer about who spends more, but who adapts faster and innovates smarter.

This reality has forced even the most powerful militaries to reconsider their strategies. Reports indicate that major U.S. naval assets, including carriers like the USS Abraham Lincoln, are operating at significant distances from potential conflict zones to avoid vulnerability. The fear is not hypothetical; recent conflicts have shown that swarms of inexpensive drones can overwhelm sophisticated defense systems, creating a scenario where billion-dollar assets are at risk from relatively low-cost attacks.

Equally transformative is the role of artificial intelligence in this new warfare ecosystem. Iran and other actors are increasingly using AI-generated simulations to depict battlefield scenarios, showcasing the destruction of enemy assets in ways that blur the line between reality and fabrication. These visuals, often indistinguishable from real footage, amplify psychological pressure and can even mislead decision-makers. There have been instances where such AI-generated content caused confusion at the highest levels, underscoring the disruptive power of synthetic media. This convergence of asymmetric warfare and digital propaganda has produced a dual-front strategy that is extraordinarily difficult to counter. On one hand, physical attacks are decentralized, mobile, and deeply concealed. On the other, the information space is saturated with narratives that shape public opinion and political discourse. Together, they create a feedback loop where military actions reinforce media narratives, and media narratives, in turn, influence strategic decisions.

Despite extensive military operations, the strategic objectives set by the United States and Israel remain largely unmet. These objectives reportedly included crippling Iran's missile capabilities, dismantling its nuclear infrastructure, and potentially triggering regime change. While there have been tactical successes—such as strikes on specific facilities—independent assessments suggest that a significant portion of Iran's military infrastructure remains intact and operational. Its missile systems continue to function, and its ability to project power across the region has not been decisively diminished.

Meanwhile, the broader geopolitical consequences are becoming increasingly evident. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which nearly 20% of the world's oil supply passes, remains under con-

stant threat. Disruptions in this region have already contributed to fluctuations in global energy markets, highlighting how localized conflicts can have worldwide economic repercussions. The longer the conflict persists, the greater the risk of systemic instability in global trade and energy supply chains.

Perhaps the most profound lesson emerging from this conflict is the erosion of traditional power structures. For decades, global dominance was defined by three pillars: military superiority, economic strength, and control over information. Today, each of these pillars is being challenged. Military superiority is undermined by asymmetric tactics, economic strength is vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and energy shocks, and information control has been democratized by digital platforms. In this new environment, smaller or less resource-rich nations can punch far above their weight. By leveraging technology, innovation, and narrative strategy, they can resist and even frustrate the ambitions of more powerful adversaries. This does not mean that conventional forces are obsolete, but it does mean that they are no longer sufficient on their own. The battlefield has expanded into cyberspace, social media, and the human psyche.

The implications for the future are profound. Defense budgets will need to be reallocated, with greater emphasis on cyber capabilities, drone technology, and AI-driven systems. Military doctrines will have to evolve to address decentralized and hybrid threats. And perhaps most importantly, governments will need to recognize that winning a war is no longer just about destroying the enemy's capabilities—it is about controlling the narrative, maintaining legitimacy, and securing the support of both domestic and international audiences. As the world watches this conflict unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that we are witnessing the end of one era and the beginning of another. The age of overwhelming force and unilateral dominance is giving way to a more complex, multipolar landscape where power is distributed, contested, and constantly shifting. In this new reality, adaptability, innovation, and perception will matter as much as, if not more than, sheer strength. The war of the 21st century is not just fought on the ground or in the air; it is fought in minds, on screens, and through networks. And those who understand this transformation—and act on it—will define the future of global power.

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

A Voice the World Chose to Ignore

Sadaf Noreen Awan

Larijani's life itself reads like a novel. Born in Najaf, Iraq, a city of knowledge and revolution, he pursued higher education in mathematics and philosophy. He led Iran's state broadcasting system, sat in the Supreme National Security Council confronting adversaries directly, and later became Speaker of Parliament. He fought on every front and stood firm on each one. The West tried to pressure him through sanctions, threats, and negotiations but he never bent. And those who refuse to bend are often eliminated

THE man who, after the passing of Ali Khamenei, had become the most powerful figure in Iran was assassinated by the United States and Israel inside his daughter's home... and the world chose to close its eyes. Ali Larijani was not an ordinary politician. He was the man who defended Iran's nuclear program face-to-face with Western powers, who organized Iran's internal strength as Speaker of Parliament, and who stood shoulder to shoulder with Khamenei for decades, shaping the state's strategic direction.

When Syed Ali Khamenei embraced shahadat on February 28, 2026, all eyes turned toward Ali Larijani. He was widely seen as the man most capable of taking control. The West understood that if he assumed full authority, Iran would neither bow, nor be bought, nor be broken. Larijani's life itself reads like a novel. Born in Najaf, Iraq, a city of knowledge and revolution, he pursued higher education in mathematics and philosophy. He led Iran's state broadcasting system, sat in the Supreme National Security Council confronting adversaries directly, and later became Speaker of Parliament. He fought on every front and stood firm on each one. The West tried to pressure him through sanctions, threats, and negotiations but he never bent. And those who refuse to bend are often eliminated. And then, what has happened before... happened again. The way I see it, Ali Larijani was a relatively non-controversial figure. He was someone who had ongoing dialogue with the West, especially regarding the nuclear program. He was considered a calm, intellectual, and highly educated person with a strong understanding of international relations. In my view, Israel targeted him precisely for this reason to prevent any meaningful progress in talks between the United States and Iran while he was still alive. His presence could have helped bring both sides closer to the negotiating table. Therefore, targeting him appears to be an Israeli strategic move to

close all possible avenues through which Iran and the United States could engage in dialogue.

When the West finds no answer at the negotiating table, it answers from the sky. On March 17, 2026, Ali Larijani was visiting his daughter's home in Pardis, Tehran. It was not a military base. Not a missile site. Just a father visiting his child. But that made no difference to American and Israeli warplanes. A strike was carried out. Along with Larijani, his son Morteza was also killed. His deputy was killed. His guards who rushed to protect him were also killed. In a single strike, an entire circle of leadership was wiped out. This was not the first time. Remember Qasem Soleimani, assassinated in a drone strike at Baghdad Airport. Remember Ismail Haniyeh, killed while a guest in Tehran. Remember Hassan Nasrallah, targeted in a calculated attack. Each time, the target was the same: a symbol of resistance, someone unwilling to submit. This is not coincidence. It is a deliberate strategy to eliminate any leadership that dares to stand on its own terms. Now pause for a moment and reflect. This is the same West that speaks endlessly about "rule of law," "human rights," and "diplomatic solutions." The same media that justifies every act under the label of "self-defence." Yet today, when a country's leading figure is killed inside his daughter's home, that same media falls silent. Because the victim did not align with their interests. And the perpetrators were those they protect. This is not just hypocrisy it is a system that decides which deaths are worthy of headlines... and which are erased. What is even more painful is the global silence. No emergency session at the United Nations. No strong resolution in the Security Council. No diplomatic outrage. No clear condemnation. Just silence. A deep, unsettling silence. The same silence that covered the deaths of children in Gaza. The same silence after bombings of civilian gatherings in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. When the powerful strike, the

world looks away. But Iran did not remain silent. Despite the loss, millions poured into the streets of Tehran. Voices rose. A message was sent to the world: You may kill, but you cannot break this nation.

This is something the West has never fully understood that a nation which sees martyrdom as honour, not fear, cannot be defeated by bombs. The blood of Ali Larijani just like the blood of Syed Ali Khamenei, has not weakened Iran while it has strengthened the resolve of its next generation. And now the question turns to the rest of the world: I am just thinking, where are the voices of Muslim nations? Where are the Muslim countries that speak of unity? Why the silence now? Is human life only valuable in USA or Israel? Specially when it serves their political interests which is unfolding the agenda of Greater Israel? When a national leader is killed inside his own family's home, and the world remains quiet, then talk of human rights by the Human Rights Organizations, becomes nothing more than empty slogans. History is unforgiving. It records everything. It forgets nothing. And future generations will ask: When a leader is killed inside his daughter's home was that war... or terrorism? And if the same had happened to a Western leader, would the world have remained silent? Absolutely Not, and everyone already knows the answer. The blood of Ali Larijani and Morteza Larijani, the blood of those innocent 170 schoolgirls at Minab, the blood of approximately 2000 military personnel and civilians at Iran, almost 1000 at Southern Lebanon, 675 at Gaza after the so-called peace agreement, now stands as a witness exposing a system of double standards of Israel and America, the two crime partners, has existed for decades. And that voice will continue to echo... it will keep on haunting the sleeping Muslim Ummah, until they find the courage to answer it honestly. They must wake up now, before it's too late.

Briefs

Islamabad moot on ME reviews...

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aligning positions ahead of any possible US-Iran talks, and facilitating dialogue. Though neither Washington nor Tehran attended the meet, it is still being viewed as a preparatory step toward a broader diplomatic opening. Egyptian FM Abdelatty and Turkiye's FM Hakan Fidan landed in Pakistan on Saturday night, while Saudi Arabia's Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud arrived on Sunday afternoon. Several roads leading to Islamabad's Red Zone — where key government buildings and diplomatic missions are based — were sealed off, AFP reporters said. Security was tight and the driveway of the foreign ministry was decorated with the flags of all four countries. Before the quadrilateral moot, Dar also held separate meetings with his counterparts from Turkiye, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

US root cause of West Asia...

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government and people on the martyrdom of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, along with several senior officials and Iranian citizens. Mirzoyan also expressed deep sorrow over the attacks on civilians, particularly the students of Shajareh Tayyebi Elementary in Iran's southern city of Minab, and conveyed solidarity and sympathy with the families of the martyrs and the Iranian government and people. For his part, Araqchi praised the positions and messages of sympathy from the Armenian government and people, updating his Armenian counterpart on the war crimes committed by the aggressors, egregious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, especially the attacks on schools and educational and research centers, historical and cultural sites, hospitals, critical and productive infrastructure, as well as residential areas.

PTI drops 'Imran release force' plan

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idea "unconstitutional" and "illegal", warned that the formation of any such force could fall into the category of militancy. Following internal deliberations, the party leadership decided to scrap the force concept altogether. Instead, the initiative has now been reframed as a broader, inclusive political movement open to all supporters, without any oath-taking or formal structure resembling a force. Sources said the revised strategy emphasises a gradual, peaceful and democratic street movement. Participation will not be restricted, and the party has explicitly ruled out any form of violence or militancy.

US-Israeli strikes hit...

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hitting port infrastructure. The strikes occurred amid the ongoing escalation in the US-Israeli-Iran conflict, which has seen repeated exchanges targeting military, energy, and naval assets in the region. The Strait of Hormuz is a critical chokepoint for global oil supplies, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil passes. Any disruption in the area raises serious concerns over energy security and international shipping. Iranian media described the attack as part of broader US-Israeli operations against Iranian targets. No immediate confirmation or detailed statement was available from US or Israeli officials regarding this specific strike on Bandar Khamir. This incident comes as tensions remain high, with previous strikes reported on nearby strategic locations including areas around Bandar Abbas, Iran's main southern port and naval hub close to the strait. The wider conflict has already impacted oil prices and raised fears of further regional instability.

K2 Squash Club to Make PSA History in USA

The men's Challenger 15K event, scheduled from April 8 to 12, is expected to deliver high-quality action with a strong international field, including Salman Khalil, Tom Walsh, Mohammad Sharaf, and Yassin Elssin Elshafei

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: K2 Squash Club is set to host its first-ever PSA Challenger tournaments this April in the United States, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards international recognition. The initiative, spearheaded by Tournament Director Muhammad Naveed Alam, underlines the club's growing stature and ambition to emerge as a prominent venue on the global squash circuit. Sanctioned by the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and presented by One World Squash, the two-phase tournaments will feature top players from around the world, blending seasoned professionals with emerging talent. The men's Challenger 15K event, scheduled from April 8 to 12, is expected to deliver high-quality action with a strong international field, including Salman Khalil, Tom Walsh, Mohammad Sharaf, and Yassin Elssin Elshafei. With a total prize purse of \$15,000, the event promises intense competition and valuable ranking opportunities.



Wildcard entries, including Ahsan Ayaz, will add further excitement, providing rising players with a platform to compete at a higher level. The final, set for April 12, is likely to attract significant attention from squash enthusiasts.

The women's Challenger event will follow from April 22 to 26, featuring a competitive lineup of international players such as Zeina Zein, Laura Silva, Lucie Stefanoni, and Malak Taha. With a prize fund of \$6,000, the tournament will offer crucial exposure and ranking points for players aiming to climb the PSA ladder. These tournaments represent the culmination of K2 Squash Club's sustained efforts to expand its footprint in professional squash. Having previously hosted PSA Satellite events, the club has steadily developed the infrastructure and organisational expertise required to stage higher-tier competitions.

A key driving force behind this progress is Muhammad Naveed Alam, whose extensive experience — including over 15 years working alongside squash legend Jahangir Khan — has played a pivotal role in shaping the club's development strategy. Support from the club's management, led by owner Karamatullah Khan, has further strengthened this vision. Their commitment to promoting squash and creating opportunities for players has been instrumental in bringing PSA Challenger events to the venue.

PSL 11: Josh Philippe steers Multan Sultans to victory over Islamabad United

Sultans chase down 172-run target inside 19 overs for the loss of five wickets

DNA

LAHORE: Josh Philippe hit a half-century as Multan Sultans defeated Islamabad United by five wickets in the fourth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Saturday. Set to chase 172, the Sultans comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and eight balls to spare. The 2021 champions, however, had a contrasting start to their innings as they lost in-form opener Sahibzada Farhan in the third over with just 16 runs on the board. Following the early stutter, Philippe joined Steve Smith in the middle, and the duo brought the Sultans back into the hunt by knitting a brisk 45-run partnership for the second wicket.

Salman Irshad broke the budding stand by dismissing Smith, who made a valiant 31 off 23 deliveries on his PSL debut. Sultans then suffered another setback to their pursuit as United's captain Shadab Khan removed Shan Masood (six) in the next over and thus slipped to 70/3 in 8.5 overs. Philippe then raised a match-defining 61-run partnership for the fourth wicket with captain Ashton Turner until eventually falling victim to Shadab in the 15th over. The wicketkeeper batter remained the top-scorer for the Sultans with a blazing 55 off 35 deliveries, studded with five fours and two sixes. Emerging all-rounder Arafat Minhas retained Sultans' momentum by playing a swashbuckling 25-run cameo from just 11 deliveries, hitting four fours and a six, and walked back in the 18th over when United needed just 10 more from 16 deliveries. Skipper Turner oversaw the Sultans' run chase until the end and returned after scoring an unbeaten 43 off 28 deliveries, featuring four fours and a six, while all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz contributed with seven not out from five balls. For the United, Irshad and skipper Shadab bagged two wickets each, while Imad made one scalp. Earlier, Sultans captain Ashton Turner's decision to field first proved beneficial as the three-time champions United could accumulate 171/8 in their 20 overs. The United got off to a decent start to their innings as their opening pair of Devon Conway and Sameer Minhas put together 48

runs at a brisk pace until the former fell victim to Peter Siddle in the sixth over and walked back after scoring 26 off 23 deliveries. Sameer (28) was then involved in a brief 21-run partnership for the second wicket with Andries Gous (11) before both perished in successive overs, resulting in United slipping to 75/3 in 9.3 overs. Following the back-to-back dismissals, Mark Chapman took the reins of United's batting charge and knitted brief partnerships with captain Shadab Khan (four) and Haider Ali before falling victim to Momin Qamar in the 15th over. The New Zealand international remained the top-scorer for the three-time champions with a blistering 40 off 23 deliveries, laced with three fours and two sixes. Qamar struck again on the final delivery of the 15th over, dismissing Haider, who mustered 13 off 12 deliveries.

Pakistan joins sovereign AI white paper launch at ZGC Forum

BEIJING: Pakistani Embassy in China joined the launch of a sovereign AI white paper at the Zhongguancun Forum here, alongside partners from China, Brazil, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and Kazakhstan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. The document defines sovereign AI as national control over AI systems, data and infrastructure, while calling for cooperation on technology, deployment and governance. At the launch, Zhipu AI CEO Zhang Peng said sovereign AI had become a key national capability linked to security, economic upgrading and influence over global AI governance. Khan Muhammad Wazir, tech affairs counselor at the Pakistani Embassy, represented the Pakistan at the launch ceremony. Speaking to CEN in an exclusive interview after the event, Khan said Pakistan views sovereign AI as an important issue for every country and saw the new platform as an opportunity to expand cooperation. "We believe in cooperation, and we believe in becoming part of such alliances and associations," Wazir said. "Pakistan is part of it." He said Pakistan hoped to benefit from cooperation with Chinese companies and partners through the sharing of experience and resources. Wazir also said broader Pakistan-China cooperation in science and technology was expanding, with a growing role for the private sector alongside government-level engagement. He said cooperation in science and technology, agriculture and education was moving forward well. Sovereign AI is gaining attention as governments become more concerned about dependence on foreign technology, especially in areas involving public services, sensitive data and critical infrastructure. For countries like Pakistan, the issue is not only about security. It also concerns whether AI tools can be adapted to local languages, regulatory needs and development priorities, rather than relying entirely on systems built elsewhere. — Agencies

PSL 11: Peshawar Zalmi down Rawal Pindiz in campaign opener

Peshawar Zalmi chase down 215-run target with five wickets to spare

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: A combined batting effort helped Peshawar Zalmi defeat Rawal Pindiz by five wickets in the third match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at the Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday. Zalmi successfully chased down Pindiz's 215-run target, losing five wickets, courtesy of stellar performances by openers Babar Azam, Mohammad Harris, Michael Bracewell, Abdul Samad and Kusal Mendis. The team got off to a commanding start as Harris and skipper Babar set the tone with brisk scoring. The duo stitched a 50-run partnership inside five overs, showcasing their brilliance with regular boundaries. However, their 78-run stand was broken when Asif Afridi struck, dismissing Babar, who had played an impressive knock of 39 off 28 balls, including four fours and a six. Harris continued to keep the scoreboard ticking but was eventually dismissed by Amad Butt after scoring 47 off 28 deliveries, laced with four fours and two sixes, leaving the side at 96-2 in 10 overs. Kusal Mendis then came to the crease and immediately accelerated the scoring, putting pressure on the Pindiz bowling attack and taking the total past the 100-run mark alongside Aaron Hardie, who struggled at the other end.

Tiger Woods arrested, charged with DUI after Florida crash: police

Golf icon released later, with Florida law requiring him to remain in jail for at least eight hours

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK: Tiger Woods' turbulent career veered into fresh turmoil on Friday when the golf icon was arrested and charged with driving under the influence after a rollover crash near his Florida home, authorities said. Woods, 50, escaped injury but was detained after his vehicle clipped a truck while attempting to overtake on a residential road on Jupiter Island, flipping onto its side before sliding to a stop. Martin County Sheriff John Budensiek said Woods — who was arrested for driving under the influence in 2017 — showed signs of "impairment", although he passed a breathalyser test. "When it came time for us to ask for a urinalysis test, he refused, and so he's been charged with DUI, with property damage and refusal to submit to a lawful test in the crash," Budensiek said. The 15-time major champion was released later on Friday, with Florida law requiring him to remain in jail for at least eight hours before he could post bail. Budensiek said drug recognition experts who examined Woods at the scene found the golfer "lethargic" and believed he was



impaired with "some kind of medication or drug." No drugs or medication were found in his vehicle and since Woods refused the urine test, his right under Florida law, authorities "will never get definitive results as to what he was impaired on at the time of the crash," Budensiek said. While neither Woods nor the driver of the other vehicle was injured, Budensiek said the incident on the two-lane road "could have been a lot worse."

Pakistan: Bridging Conflict to Peace



TANVEER HUSSAIN

THE recent tensions between Iran, the United States, and Israel cannot be fully captured by simply calling it a war. In reality, it was a coordinated action by two major powers against a smaller country. Although Iran suffered significant human and material losses — its top military, political, and religious leadership was targeted, and its defense installations, weapons depots, and oil resources

were severely damaged — the unexpected response from Iran surprised not only the United States but the entire world. The courage and strategic response demonstrated by Iran not only helped maintain a balance in the conflict but also sparked a new global debate. The United States, which has historically engaged in conflicts from thousands of miles away by leveraging others, once again appeared to be using Arab countries as fuel for this conflict, despite their lack of direct involvement. As a result, the Arab world emerged as one of the most affected regions, bearing the economic and strategic costs of the escalation. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz shook the global economy. A dramatic surge in oil prices, uncertainty in markets, and an energy crisis once again reminded the world that instability in the Middle East does not remain confined to regional borders. This is why calls for ceasefire and peace are now rising from across the globe.

However, the real question remains: what will the post-war world look like? This conflict has challenged long-standing assumptions. Iran's resistance has weakened the perception that Israel is invincible. For countries like Qatar and others in the Arab world, this serves as a clear message that remaining silent is not always the only option — measured and effective responses can also be considered. Furthermore, this conflict has taught the Arab world an important lesson. For decades, countries that relied heavily on the United States for their defense are now seriously questioning whether such dependence truly serves their long-term interests. In difficult times, the U.S. appeared to prioritize Israel, leaving many Arab allies feeling isolated. It is now certain that Arab nations will rethink their defense strategies. Following Pakistan's victory in its war with India and the Pakistan-Saudi defense agreement, Pakistan's prestige has significantly increased in the

Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East. Several Muslim countries are now interested in defense partnerships with Pakistan. Agreements are being made for the purchase of Pakistani weapons and JF-17 Thunder fighter jets. Disillusioned by the United States after the conflict, Arab countries are likely to look toward alternative partners for their defense needs, with Pakistan at the forefront. This is a matter of pride for the people of Pakistan. Pakistan's firm and courageous support for Iran's position at the United Nations was received positively in Iran, further enhancing Pakistan's stature and respect. The slogans of "Tashakur Pakistan" (Thank you Pakistan) echoed in the Iranian parliament stand as clear evidence of this appreciation. Pakistan is among the few countries that maintain balanced and active diplomatic relations simultaneously with the United States, China, Russia, Iran, and the Arab

world. This unique position makes it a credible and reliable mediator. Through backchannel diplomacy, Pakistan has also made serious efforts to reduce tensions. Islamabad has played a key role in maintaining communication between the parties, reducing misunderstandings, and facilitating a path toward negotiations. Pakistan's offer of mediation is being viewed positively on the global stage, which is why Islamabad is emerging as a potential hub for peace talks. If Pakistan succeeds in conducting effective and result-oriented diplomacy at this critical moment, it will not only help achieve a ceasefire in the region but also strengthen its global standing as a responsible and peace-loving nation. In conclusion, this conflict is not merely a military confrontation but part of a broader global transformation that will shape new alliances, priorities, and balances of power in the coming years. In this changing world, Pakistan has the potential to emerge not just as a spectator, but as a builder of peace.

Most of target achieved...

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until it neutralizes the Islamic Republic. "The president's going to keep at it for a little while longer to ensure that once we leave, we don't have to do this again for a very long time," Vance said in a podcast. Vance said that "This country is threatening us in all these ways. They're still trying to build a nuclear weapon. We need to neuter them for a very, very long time, and that's the purpose. He said the goal of the mission is to ensure that the US doesn't have to go back into Iran in a "year down the road."

Report says Bushra Bibi has vision...

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she has been diagnosed with posterior vitreous detachment in her right eye. The report notes symptoms including blurred vision and the appearance of black spots, along with complaints of flashes in the eye and headaches. It further states that she has also been identified with myopia and astigmatism, which are affecting her near vision. Doctors have advised the regular use of glasses, prescribed eye drops and other medications, and recommended a follow-up examination after four weeks.

First PIA flight to London...

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PK-785's voyage was inaugurated by Defence Secretary Lt Gen (r) Muhammad Ali, British High Commissioner Jane Mariott, and Chairman PIA Consortium Arif Habib, who jointly cut the ribbon, state-run Pakistan TV reported. The flight was scheduled to take off at 12:50pm, but faced a slight delay, eventually departing at 1:19pm. On March 26, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif had said that the PIA would commence its first direct flights from Islamabad and Lahore to London's Heathrow Airport on March 29 and 30, respectively.

Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon

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launching rocket attacks against Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader. Israel intensified its war on Lebanon again on March 2, after Hezbollah responded to Israeli attacks for the first time in more than a year. Hezbollah claimed the attack was retaliation for Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's assassination two days earlier. A ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah had ostensibly been in effect since November 27, 2024, despite the United Nations counting more than 10,000 Israeli ceasefire violations in that period, and hundreds of Lebanese deaths. After Hezbollah's reply, Israel intensified its attacks on the south and declared its intention to occupy southern Lebanon.

Shehbaz lauds KSA's remarkable restraint...

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attempts to bring both the United States and Iran to the negotiating table, the PMO said. The Saudi FM also shared the latest Saudi perspective on the regional situation with the prime minister, who assured the visiting dignitary of Pakistan's full and unwavering solidarity and support. The premier also emphasised Saudi Arabia's leadership role within the Muslim Ummah and stressed the need to forge unity within Islamic countries at this critical time, the statement said. During the meeting, PM Shehbaz recalled his recent conversations with the Saudi crown prince, including their meeting in Jeddah on March 12. "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia agreed to continue to coordinate their positions closely in order to secure peace and stability in the region," the PMO said..

Briefs

China hints at expanding vehicle rotation system

SEOUL: Finance Minister Koo Yun-cheol said Sunday the government could expand a mandatory five-day vehicle rotation system to the private sector if global oil prices rise to US\$120-130 per barrel as part of nationwide energy-saving efforts amid an escalating conflict in the Middle East.

"If the situation worsens, we may have to raise the national resource crisis alert to Level 3," Koo told a KBS television interview. "In that case, we would extend the vehicle rotation system to the private sector and seek public cooperation. The finance minister said the government will closely monitor developments in every aspect, noting that a rise to \$120-\$130 could trigger a Level 3 alert from the current \$100-\$110 level. His remarks came after the government last week raised the alert by one notch to Level 2 under its four-tier national resource security crisis warning system, citing potential disruptions to crude oil supplies. At the same time, it enforced a mandatory five-day vehicle rotation system for the public sector while asking the private sector to voluntarily participate in the program. The system restricts vehicles from operating one day out of every five business days based on the last digit of their license plate numbers. The government is also working on a supplementary budget worth 25 trillion won (US\$16.6 billion) to help ease the burden of rising oil prices and support small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as vulnerable households affected by the prolonged conflict. —APP

UAE, Ukrainian Presidents discuss coop, regional uplifts

ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, discussed security developments in the region amid ongoing military escalation and their implications for regional and international peace and security, as well as their impact on international navigation and the global economy. The meeting also addressed the continued Iranian terrorist aggression targeting the UAE and other countries in the region, including attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Zelenskyy reiterated his condemnation of this aggression, noting that it constitutes a violation of sovereignty, international law, and the UN Charter and undermines regional and international peace and security. The two sides also discussed opportunities to advance bilateral cooperation under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the UAE and Ukraine, reaffirming their shared commitment to achieving its objectives. Moreover, His Highness reiterated the UAE's support for all efforts and initiatives aimed at achieving a lasting peace in Ukraine. The meeting was attended by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the Presidential Court; Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs; Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Adviser to the UAE President; along with a number of ministers and officials. —APP

Philippines, China restart talks on energy coop in disputed sea

MANILA: The Philippines and China have resumed talks on the disputed South China Sea, exploring potential oil and gas cooperation amid an energy supply crisis in the Middle East. China and the Philippines have been at odds for decades over parts of the strategic waterway, which is believed to hold significant reserves of oil and gas. China claims nearly the entire sea — a position that was rejected in 2016 by an international arbitration tribunal in The Hague, which ruled in favor of the Philippines. While Beijing did not accept the ruling, it established with Manila the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea in 2017. As tensions have been flaring repeatedly in recent months, including confrontations between coast guard vessels and disputes over access to fishing grounds. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy PM/Minister of Finance Ishaq Dar met Türkiye FM Hakan Fidan. Both leaders reaffirmed strong Pakistan-Türkiye ties, discussed regional developments incl. Iran, and stressed dialogue, de-escalation, diplomacy & coordination for peace and stability.

EU-India trade deal, global tensions threaten export prospects: BMP

Mian Anjum Nisar pushes for new strategy amid falling exports to Europe

Pakistan's export sector is facing mounting pressure as shipments to key European markets show signs of stagnation despite continued access under the GSP+ scheme. The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Businessmen Panel (BMP) has expressed serious concern over the declining momentum, warning that without immediate corrective measures, the country risks losing its competitive edge in global markets. BMP Chairman and former FPCCI president Mian Anjum Nisar highlighted that Pakistan's exports to the European Union are not growing at the pace required to sustain economic stability. While official figures from the State Bank of Pakistan show a marginal increase of 0.95% to \$6.122 billion during July-February FY2025-26, the growth is largely stagnant when adjusted for inflation and rising costs. He noted that the slowdown is particularly evident in Western and Northern Europe—regions that traditionally account for the bulk of Pakistan's exports. Countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Belgium have recorded consistent declines, signaling weakening

demand and growing competition. The situation is further complicated by global geopolitical developments. The recent free trade agreement between the European Union and India, along with ongoing Middle East tensions, is expected to intensify competition and suppress consumer demand in Europe due to rising energy prices and economic uncertainty. The BMP leadership has strongly criticized the government's economic and trade policies, terming them "short-sighted and disconnected from ground realities." According to Mian Anjum Nisar, the persistent decline in export growth is not merely due to external factors but also reflects internal policy failures. He pointed out that exporters are grappling with high energy tariffs, expensive financing, and a volatile currency environment. "Our industries are paying significantly higher electricity and gas prices compared to regional competitors like India and Bangladesh. This alone is eroding our price competitiveness in international markets," he said. The BMP also expressed concern over inconsistent policy frameworks. Frequent changes in tax regimes, delays in refund payments, and lack of clarity in export

incentives have created uncertainty for businesses. Exporters, particularly in the textile sector, are struggling to plan long-term strategies due to unpredictable government decisions. Mian Anjum Nisar further criticized the government for failing to effectively utilize the GSP+ status. While the scheme provides duty-free access to European markets, Pakistan has not been able to diversify its export base or move up the value chain. Instead, exports remain heavily concentrated in low-value textile products. Another major issue raised by BMP is the lack of proactive trade diplomacy. The EU-India FTA is a clear indication that Pakistan is lagging behind in securing strategic trade agreements. "We are losing ground not because we lack potential, but because we lack vision and timely action," he remarked. The panel also highlighted structural inefficiencies within the export sector, including outdated industrial practices, lack of technological adoption, and insufficient support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). These issues, combined with rising input costs, are making it increasingly difficult for Pakistani exporters to compete globally. In light of these challenges, the BMP

has put forward a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at revitalizing Pakistan's export sector and safeguarding its presence in European markets. Firstly, Mian Anjum Nisar emphasized the urgent need to reduce the cost of doing business. This includes lowering energy tariffs for export-oriented industries, ensuring uninterrupted power supply, and providing subsidized financing options. He stressed that without competitive production costs, Pakistan cannot sustain its exports in price-sensitive markets like Europe. Secondly, the BMP called for diversification of exports. Instead of relying heavily on traditional textile products, Pakistan must expand into value-added goods such as technical textiles, engineering products, pharmaceuticals, and IT services. This shift will not only enhance export revenues but also reduce vulnerability to market fluctuations. Another key recommendation is the strengthening of trade diplomacy. The government should actively pursue bilateral and multilateral trade agreements to counterbalance the impact of the EU-India FTA. Engaging with emerging markets and exploring new trade corridors can also help reduce

dependence on traditional destinations. The BMP also stressed the importance of innovation and technology adoption. Modernizing industrial processes, investing in research and development, and promoting digital transformation can significantly improve productivity and product quality. This, in turn, will enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in global markets. Furthermore, Mian Anjum Nisar highlighted the need for skill development and workforce training. A skilled labor force is essential for producing high-quality goods that meet international standards. The government should collaborate with industry stakeholders to establish training programs and technical institutes. The panel also recommended improving logistics and infrastructure. Efficient ports, streamlined customs procedures, and reliable transportation networks are critical for timely delivery of goods. Delays and inefficiencies in these areas can lead to loss of orders and damage to Pakistan's reputation as a reliable supplier. Mian Anjum Nisar warned that without immediate and decisive action.—DNA

Syria president to head to Germany, UK

DAMASCUS: Syria's presidency announced on that President Ahmed Al-Sharaa will head to Germany and Britain next week, his first visit to the two countries since assuming power. The official SANA news agency said Sharaa would "pay an official visit to both the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom on Monday and Tuesday" and he will meet "senior officials in both countries to discuss ways to develop bilateral relations." A German government spokesman said on Friday that Sharaa will visit the country for talks with Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Berlin said the talks would address economic stability in Syria, reconstruction, energy, strengthening bilateral economic relations, as well as Syria's reintegration into the international financial system and the issue of the return of Syrians residing in Germany. The visit comes in the context of a gradual opening between Damascus and European capitals since the ouster of longtime Syrian ruler Bashar Assad in December 2024. Germany reopened its embassy in Damascus in March 2025, while Syria opened a consulate in Bonn last month. Germany is home to around a million Syrians — many of whom arrived during the huge influx of refugees that peaked in 2015 under former chancellor Angela Merkel. But with the overthrow of Assad and the end of the country's civil war, some voices in Germany have started urging them to go back home. As for the United Kingdom, Sharaa's visit comes after London announced in July 2025 the resumption of diplomatic relations with Syria following a visit by Foreign Secretary David Lammy to Damascus, the first visit by a British minister in 14 years. The British government said at the time that its engagement with Damascus was aimed at supporting the political transition, assisting economic recovery, countering the Daesh group, reducing illegal migration, and addressing the issue of chemical weapons.—APP

Iran claims aluminum plant attacks in Bahrain, UAE

RIYADH/TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Sunday they launched missile and drone strikes on aluminum plants in Bahrain and the UAE over the weekend, targeting what they described as industries linked to the US military. The Guards also threatened to target US universities in the Middle East, while saying US-Israeli strikes had destroyed two Iranian universities. They demanded a US condemnation of the bombing of universities by noon (0830 GMT) Monday. Since the Middle East war erupted at the end of February, Bahrain and other Gulf countries have regularly been targeted by Iranian missile and drone strikes in retaliation for the US-Israeli campaign, now in its second month. In a statement carried by Iranian state broadcaster IRIB, the Guards said they hit an aluminum facility in the UAE and Aluminium Bahrain's main plant, calling both sites "industries affiliated with and connected to the US military and aerospace sectors in the region. The IRGC said the strikes were retaliation for a US-Israeli attack on Iranian industrial infrastructure launched from bases in Gulf states. Aluminium Bahrain, one of the world's largest aluminum producers, said two employees were wounded in an Iranian strike targeting its facility on Saturday. The company, also known as Alba, said the workers suffered minor injuries. Alba added that it was assessing the impact on operations and would provide updates when available. It gave no details on damage to the site. Emirates Global Aluminium confirmed on Saturday that the company's Al-Taweelah site sustained significant damage during the Iranian missile and drone attacks at Khalifa Economic Zone Abu Dhabi. A number of EGA employees were injured. None of the injuries were life threatening. Abdullnasser Bin Kalban, chief executive of EGA, said: "The safety and security of our people is our top priority at EGA at all times. We are deeply saddened and are assessing the damage to our facilities." EGA's Al-Taweelah smelter produced 1.6 million tonnes of cast metal in 2025. EGA had substantial metal stock on the water when the conflict began, and Defense forces in the UAE and Kuwait said early Sunday they were actively responding to new waves of hostile missile and drone attacks launched from Iran, as the conflict triggered by a joint US-Israeli assault on Tehran entered its second month with no sign of abating. The defense ministries of both states posted on X to reassure citizens that the explosions they were hearing were the result of air defense systems intercepting incoming fire. "Everyone is requested to adhere to the security and safety instructions issued by the competent authorities," Kuwait's Army General Staff said in a separate statement, as four Iranian drones were intercepted and destroyed. Air defenses engaged 16 ballistic missiles and 42 drones on Sunday, the UAE defense ministry said. In Saudi Arabia, the defense ministry reported Sunday morning the interception and destruction of 10 drones during the past hours. Bahrain's Defense Force reported it has engaged a total of 385 drones and 174 missiles since February 28.—DNA

Pakistan shows eco resilience amid global challenges

Khurram further stated that Pakistan had expanded shipping access through the Strait of Hormuz, supporting regional stability, while fuel security buffers have improved from 3.5 weeks toward four weeks despite global disruptions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Shehzad, said on Sunday that Pakistan was demonstrating strong economic resilience, improving macroeconomic fundamentals, and emerging as a credible player in diplomacy, trade, and investment despite ongoing regional instability and war-related uncertainties. In a post on social media platform X, he highlighted that Pakistan has emerged as a key diplomatic bridge in global conflicts by engaging the United States, Iran and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to help de-escalate tensions. He noted that the Pakistan-International Monetary Fund review has been successful, with the programme remaining on track and reforms delivering positive

results. Foreign exchange reserves have risen for 33 consecutive weeks, reaching around \$21.7 billion, a four-year high, reflecting strengthening external buffers. Khurram further stated that Pakistan had expanded shipping access through the Strait of Hormuz, supporting regional stability, while fuel security buffers have improved from 3.5 weeks toward four weeks despite global disruptions. He said, Pakistan is reasserting itself as a gateway to Asian trade corridors, with ports and connectivity capturing shifting global trade flows, adding that the country has recorded a strong current account surplus, the highest in a year. Highlighting industrial growth, he said the large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector grew by 12.1 percent month-on-month and 10.5 percent year-on-year, with 7 month growth during 2025-26 at 5.8 percent, led by automobiles, cement, garments, and petroleum sectors. He also mentioned that a landmark 5G auction has taken place, attracting

over \$500 million in investment, reflecting strong investor confidence and progress in digital transformation. The advisor said major global and existing investors have committed multi-billion dollar investments, including VEON, Raqami/KIA, Nestlé, SOCAR, and others, along with new entrants such as Google, BYD, Aramco, AD Ports, and Mashreq Bank. He added that remittances and IT-tech exports continue to perform strongly, with remittances rising 11 percent year-on-year to \$26.5 billion in 8 months, expected to exceed \$41 billion in FY26, while IT exports grew 20 percent to \$3 billion and are projected to cross \$4 billion. Citing an Ipsos survey, he said public confidence in the country's direction has improved significantly, with the "right direction" perception increasing from 12 percent to 40 percent. He said, Pakistan's economic indicators, diplomatic engagement, and investor confidence reflect a positive trajectory despite external challenges.

Israeli air strikes hit two Gaza police checkpoints, killing six

CAIRO: Two Israeli air strikes on two checkpoints of the Hamas-led police force killed at least six Palestinians including a child, local health officials said, in the latest round of violence despite a US-brokered ceasefire that is now more than five months old. Medics said Israeli planes attacked two police checkpoints in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, killing three policemen and three civilians, including a girl, and wounding four others. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the recent strikes. The military has killed over 680 Palestinians in Gaza since a ceasefire with Hamas came into effect in November, local health officials say. More than 72,000 have been killed since the war started in October 2023. Israel is now also waging a war, alongside the US, against Iran, and is carrying out a new campaign against Hezbollah in which Israel forces have invaded southern Lebanon. Violence in Gaza has persisted despite the ceasefire and amid Israel's war with Iran. Health officials in the territory say at least 50 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since the Iran conflict began a month ago. US-Israeli strikes on Sunday hit a quay at an Iranian port city near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, killing five people, Iranian state media reported.—APP

Hundreds of Israelis protest against war, clash with police

TEL AVIV: Hundreds gathered in Tel Aviv and some other Israeli cities on Saturday to protest the war in the Middle East, in unauthorized demonstrations that security forces sought to disperse. Weekly protests against the war launched by Israel and the United States against Iran on February 28 have been taking place in Tel Aviv and elsewhere, initially drawing only a few dozen participants. Numbers now appear to be rising, though they are far from the tens of thousands who filled the streets last year to protest the war in Gaza. A number of former parliamentarians and prominent left-wing organizations joined Saturday's rallies, including Standing Together, Peace Now and Women Wage Peace. AFP footage showed law enforcement officers removing demonstrators in Tel Aviv. Similar scenes were filmed by activists in the northern city of Haifa. Under wartime security guidelines, gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited in Israel, as the country faces daily barrages of missiles and rockets from Iran and Lebanon. A spokesperson for one of the organizing groups said that the protests had not been authorized.—APP

Syria says it closed smuggling tunnel on Lebanon border

DAMASCUS: Syrian authorities said Saturday that they found and closed a tunnel between their country and Lebanon they believed was used for smuggling by "Lebanese militias." In a statement to the official SANA news agency, a defense ministry official said the army "discovered a tunnel connecting Syrian and Lebanese territory near the village of Hosh Al-Sayyid Ali, west of Homs." "The tunnel was being used for smuggling by Lebanese militias and the relevant military authorities have closed it." Lebanon's east, along the border with Syria, is a stronghold of the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, which is currently fighting a war against Israel. Hezbollah provided military support to former Syrian president Bashar Assad, who was overthrown in December 2024 by an Islamist coalition hostile to the Shia movement. Since then, its supply routes from Syria have been cut off, and Lebanese and Syrian authorities are trying to combat smuggling across the porous border between the two countries.—APP

Briefs

Car hits pedestrian in UK

NEWS DESK

LONDON: British police said on Sunday seven people had suffered "serious but not life-threatening injuries" after a car was driven into pedestrians in a central England city, with one man arrested. Officers arrested the man in his 30s shortly after the incident in Derby, located about kilometers north of Birmingham, Derbyshire Police said in an update. "He was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, causing serious injury through dangerous driving, inflicting grievous bodily harm with intent, and dangerous driving," the force added. "The investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident are ongoing and we are keeping an open mind as to the motives." The car, a black Suzuki Swift, struck the pedestrians at about 9:30 p.m. (2130 GMT) on Saturday, according to police. The seven people hurt were treated at the scene by ambulance crews and taken to Royal Derby Hospital and Queen's Medical Center in the nearby city of Nottingham, the force's update said. "The seven suffered a range of serious but not life-threatening injuries and we can confirm that, contrary to online speculation, no one died in the incident," Derbyshire police noted. The force had earlier said it did not believe there was an ongoing risk to the public. Derby North MP Catherine Atkinson said she was "deeply shocked." "My thoughts are with those injured and I'm grateful to our emergency services," she said on social media. "Please follow police advice and avoid the area. Anyone who has information should contact them as soon as possible."

'No one has claimed attacks onus'

DNA

ABU DHABI: Oman's foreign ministry said on Sunday that it condemns attacks on its territory, adding that no party has claimed responsibility. It said authorities were investigating the attacks' "sources and motives" without providing further details or specifying any specific attack. Oman said on Saturday that a worker was injured in a drone attack on the Gulf country's Salalah port and Danish container shipping group Maersk said later that it temporarily halted its operations at the port after Saturday's attack. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday that they targeted a US support vessel at a "considerable" distance from Salalah port, Iranian media reported. "As we have previously stated, the national sovereignty of our brotherly and friendly country Oman is respected by the Islamic Republic of Iran," it added. On March 11, drones struck oil storage facilities at Salalah port. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told Oman's sultan in a phone call that the incident would be investigated.

KP terror incidents drop

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: Terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have declined by 65% following the launch of Operation Ghazab li-Haq against terrorists and their support infrastructure in neighbouring Afghanistan, police said. According to a report compiled by KP police, 240 incidents of terrorism were reported this year in the province before the operation began, while 80 incidents have been recorded since its launch. In total, 323 terror incidents have been reported so far this year, as per the report. The security forces launched Operation Ghazab li-Haq last month after the Afghan Taliban regime's unprovoked aggression along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

PM satisfied with fuel conservation polices

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed relevant authorities to intensify coordination with Chief Secretaries of all four provinces, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan for better implementation of these measures



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review implementation of fuel conservation and austerity measures. Lahore, 29 March 2026. - DNA

DNA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presided over a meeting to review the implementation of fuel-saving and austerity measures in light of the evolving situation in the region. The Prime Minister stated that, thanks to timely government decisions, sufficient stocks of petroleum products are available to meet the country's needs. He emphasized that providing relief to the public remains the top priority during the current circumstances.

"Over the past three weeks, we have provided as much relief to the people as possible," the PM said. He highlighted that the federal government has absorbed a massive Rs125 billion burden by cutting from savings and development budgets to prevent petroleum price increases. This step was taken to shield citizens from the direct impact of global tensions and rising international oil prices. The meeting was informed that April's petrol imports have already been arranged, and a digital dashboard has been developed for regular monitoring of petroleum demand, supply, and the entire supply chain. Officials briefed that, unlike in some other countries, Pakistan is not facing long queues or mismanagement at fuel stations — a clear sign of effective government management. The Prime Minister directed relevant authorities to intensify coordination with Chief Secretaries of all four provinces, Azad

Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan for better implementation of these measures. He urged the public to support the government's fuel conservation campaign by avoiding unnecessary travel, prioritizing teleconferencing for official meetings, and reducing fuel consumption wherever possible. Key Directives: Provincial governments should facilitate the registration of motorcycles and rickshaws in the owners' names to digitize data nationwide. This will enable these owners to benefit from any future government relief programs. A briefing was also given on a proposed fuel support program and the mobile app being developed for motorcycle riders and rickshaw drivers. Participants were told that the government has successfully managed the fuel situation

through proactive and timely actions, ensuring smooth supply without disruptions. The meeting was attended via video link by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers including Ahad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Attaullah Tarar, Dr. Musadik Malik, Ahsan Iqbal, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Aweis Khan Leghari, Special Assistant Tariq Bajwa, State Bank Governor Jamil Ahmad, and other senior officials. This review comes as global oil markets face pressure from ongoing tensions in the Gulf region. The government continues to monitor the situation closely while appealing for public cooperation in energy conservation to ensure stability for all citizens.

Pakistan launches first national drought plan

The plan shifts Pakistan from post-impact relief to preparedness and early warning

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Aisha Humera Moriani has stressed the urgent need for Pakistan to move from a reactive to a proactive, risk-based approach to drought management, warning that climate change is making droughts more frequent and more severe. Addressing a national consultative workshop on the National Drought Action Plan in Islamabad, she said drought was no longer a distant or occasional threat but an increasingly persistent challenge driven by rising temperatures, water stress and climate variability. "Pakistan is already among the countries facing high water risk and drought directly affects agriculture, water resources, food security, ecosystems and livelihoods," she said, adding that past responses had largely focused on post-impact relief rather than preparedness. Moriani highlighted the need for a coordinated institutional and policy framework to translate data into action. She acknowledged the role of the International Water Management Institute, the Pakistan Meteorological Department and partners in developing the Pakistan Drought Manage-

ment System, which provides real-time monitoring and early warning capabilities. "This is a significant step forward. However, data alone is not enough. We need systems that ensure timely data-informed and evidence-based decisions and on-ground implementation," she said. The secretary informed participants that the ministry, with support from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and following extensive consultations, had developed a National Drought Action Plan. The plan is structured around key pillars, including planning and resource mobilisation, governance and policy, early warning systems, local mitigation actions and capacity building. The workshop, attended by representatives from federal and provincial governments, development partners and organisations including IWMI, PMD, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, aimed to finalise an operational framework for implementing the plan. Participants discussed identifying priority sectors, defining institutional roles and responsibilities, and developing a roadmap for short, medium and long-term actions. Moriani emphasised that effective drought management required strong coordination among federal and provincial governments, technical agencies and development partners.

No increase in medicines prices: DRAP

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) on Sunday dismissed reports of price hikes in essential medicines across the country, stating that the rates have not "undergone any upward revision". The statement comes as stakeholders in recent news reports alleged that an unprecedented increase in medicine prices had been observed since February 2024. Pakistan Drug Lawyers Forum President Noor Muhammad Mehr, a day earlier, told Dawn that the price of the insulin delivery device HumaPen Ergo II had increased by 114 per cent. The Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA), however, claimed that the prices of essential

medicines had remained unchanged despite a more than 20 per cent rise in fuel prices. In its statement, Drap said that it "strongly refutes the factually incorrect news reports circulating on various media channels regarding the recent increase in prices of medicines". The regulatory body stated that medicine supply in Pakistan remained "unaffected" by the conflict in the Middle East and subsequent sea route disruptions, as 85pc of medicines consumed in the country were "manufactured locally". It added that Drap had also advised manufacturers to engage in contingency planning, directing firms to adopt multiple sourcing strategies through geographically diverse channels to strengthen supply chain resilience amid uncertainty caused by the US-Iran war. The purpose of these measures, it said, was to ensure that "temporary cargo disruptions (if any) do not evolve into future shortages". The authority said it had conducted a comprehensive review of the supply chain of medicines and medical devices and "found it satisfactory for [the] coming months". According to Drap, the "price mentioned in recent news reports [refers] to the Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) already printed on medicine packs and insulin administering device [...] manufactured in 2024 or 2025 and wrongly portrayed as a recent price hike". Drap reiterated that "no new price increase has been approved for essential medicines in recent months".

Anti-Trump and anti-war protests rage up in US

NEWS DESK

ST. PAUL, Minnesota/DALLAS/LOS ANGELES/WASHINGTON/NEW YORK: Demonstrators decrying US President Donald Trump's aggressive deportation efforts, war in Iran and other policies took to city streets across the country on Saturday in the third round of the "No Kings" rallies. More than 3,200 events had been planned in all 50 states, after the two previous nationwide events attracted millions of participants. Large rallies took place in New York, Dallas, Philadelphia and Washington, but two-thirds of No Kings events were happening outside major cities, a nearly 40 percent jump for smaller communities from the movement's first mobilization last June, organizers said. Trump poses 'existential threat,' actor De Niro says in Minnesota, a flashpoint in Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, a massive rally was held outside the state capitol in Saint Paul. Many held aloft posters bearing photos of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, US citizens fatally shot by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis this year. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2024, told the crowd that their resistance to Trump and his policies makes them "the heart and

soul" of everything good about the US. "They call us radicals," Walz said. "You're damn right we've been radicalized — radicalized by compassion, radicalized by decency, radicalized by due process, radicalized by democracy, and radicalized to do all we can to oppose authoritarianism." US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a Trump critic who sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016 and 2020, also addressed the event in Minnesota. Musician Bruce Springsteen performed his song "Streets of Minneapolis" — a ballad criticizing Trump's immigration crackdown and lamenting the deaths of Good and Pretti. "We will not allow this country to descend into authoritarianism or oligarchy in America," said Sanders, an independent. "We, the people, will rule." The National Republican Congressional Committee criticized Democratic politicians and candidates for supporting the rallies. "These Hate America Rallies are where the far-left's most violent, deranged fantasies get a microphone and House Democrats get their marching orders," committee spokesperson Mike Marinella said in a statement. In New York, a crowd that police estimated at tens of thousands stretched more than 10 blocks in midtown Manhattan. Actor Robert De Niro, one of the organizers, said that no president before Trump has posed "such an existential threat to our freedoms and security."

Austria to ban under age social media use

NEWS DESK

VIENNA: Austria has announced plans to ban social media for children aged under 14, becoming the latest country to consider introducing restrictions for children online. It follows lengthy negotiations within the conservative-led three-party coalition government, but it is not yet clear how or when the ban will be implemented. Announcing the plans, Vice-Chancellor Andreas Babler of the Social Democrats said the government could not stand by and watch as social media made children "addicted and also often ill". He said it was the responsibility of politicians to protect children and argued that the issue should be treated no different to alcohol or tobacco: "There must be clear rules in the digital world too." In future, said Babler, children under 14 would be protected from algorithms that were addictive. "Other information providers have clear rules to protect young people from harmful content." These, he said, should now be implemented in the digital space. Austria is the latest among a growing number of countries to consider restricting social media access for children, citing concerns about potentially harmful content made available to them on the platforms.

Kim Jong Un oversees test of high-thrust engine: state media

NEWS DESK

SEOUL: Photos released by KCNA showed leader Kim Jong Un inspecting what appeared to be part of the engine, flanked by officials. This undated picture released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on March 29, 2026 shows a combustion test of a solid-fuel rocket engine at an undisclosed location in North Korea. — KCNA via AFP Another image showed flames erupting from a ground-mounted engine, illuminating the surrounding test site in orange light. Kim said that North Korea's defence capabilities had entered "a significant phase of change" in building up its strategic forces. Multi-warhead ICBMs? The North has already demonstrated it has mastered the engine technology needed to launch a missile capable of reaching the US mainland with a lower-thrust engine, said Lee Ho-ryung of the Korea Institute for Defence Analyses. "They have already passed that mark," she said. The question is no longer whether a missile could reach the United States, but whether it could carry multiple warheads, she said. A multi-warhead missile can strike multiple targets with a single launch while overwhelming defence systems through simultaneous, dispersed reentry vehicles. "A multi-warhead missile needs higher thrust power because of its heavier weight," she said.

3 children die in Bannu roof collapse

ISLAMABAD: At least three children lost their lives and two others were injured after the roof of their home collapsed in Bannu amid heavy rainfall that swept across parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on Sunday. According to details, rescue officials informed that the tragic incident occurred in the Warashmi Kalan Mandan area of Bannu, private news channel reported. Officials added that five children including a man name Sher Muhammad were buried under the rubble of the roof. As a result, his two daughters and one son died on the spot, while his two sons were rescued in an injured condition during the operation. Upon receiving the report, Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the scene and shifted the deceased and injured children to District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Bannu. — APP