



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**China welcomes Pakistan's role as a mediator**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Cricketer Shah gets Rs 20 mn heavy penalty**

Detailed News On Page-01



**Kuwait to keep sending oil shipments**

Detailed News On Page-07



## Briefs

**Shehbaz vows not to abandon needy masses**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the government was making every effort to provide further relief to the poor and middle-income class, and vowed not to abandon them in this challenging time. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the impact of the Middle East situation on petroleum products, availability of current stocks, and public relief measures, said that by using digital systems, public relief would be delivered directly to the common man. He said that government expenditures and the development budget had been slashed, and 60 per cent of official vehicles had been grounded to initiate austerity from within. The prime minister said that the proposals to hike fuel prices had been repeatedly rejected, and the funds saved through austerity measures were being utilized for public relief. He said that owing to the timely decisions, the disruption in the supply of fuel had been averted despite the global crisis.

**Russian oil tanker arrives in Cuba**

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia said on Monday that an oil tanker carrying 100,000 metric tons of crude oil had arrived in Cuba and that Moscow would stand by its friends by working on further supplies despite a US blockade of the island. The US cut off Venezuela's oil exports to Cuba after toppling deposed Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro on January 3, and US President Donald Trump threatened to slap punishing tariffs on any other country that sent crude to Cuba. But Trump on Sunday signalled he was reversing course and expressed sympathy for the Cuban people's need for energy. The Anatoly Kolodkin was waiting to offload at the port of Matanzas, Russia's transport ministry said. The Kremlin said it had raised the issue of the tanker during talks with the US but that Russia felt it had a duty to support "friends" in Cuba.

**3 Lebanese journalists killed**

NEWS DESK

BEIRUT: Three Lebanese journalists were killed in a targeted Israeli strike in southern Lebanon on Saturday, their employers have said. Ali Shoeib, a reporter for Hezbollah-affiliated Al Manar TV, and reporter Fatima Ftouni and her brother, cameraman Mohamed Ftouni, both from Al Mayadeen channel, were killed in the town of Jezzine, according to the stations. The strike reportedly hit their car just before noon (10:00 GMT). The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed it killed Shoeib and Mohamed Ftouni, describing them as "terrorists" from Hezbollah's military wing. It said they both operated "under the guise" of journalists. It also said it was aware of reports a female journalist was killed. The IDF said Shoeib had worked to "expose the locations of IDF soldiers operating in southern Lebanon and along the border", including during the current fighting, and had used his position "to disseminate Hezbollah propaganda materials".

## Shehbaz says

# GSP+ very important for Pak economy

**Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif Holds Phone Talks with EU Council President António Costa**

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from H.E. António Costa, President of the European Council, this afternoon. In a warm and cordial conversation, the two leaders discussed the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, with a particular focus on the escalating crisis involving Iran and Gulf countries. Both expressed deep concern over the conflict's severe impact on regional stability and the global economy. They stressed the urgent need to resolve the crisis through sustained dialogue and diplomatic channels. Prime Minister Sharif briefed President Costa on the latest developments in Pakistan's mediation efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions in the Middle East. President Costa endorsed Pakistan's peace initiatives and reaffirmed the European Union's strong support for all diplomatic efforts directed at restoring peace and stability in the region. The leaders also exchanged views on strengthening Pakistan-EU relations. Highlighting the high importance Pakistan attaches to its partnership with the EU, Prime Minister Sharif recalled that his scheduled visit to Brussels had to be postponed last month. President Costa expressed his anticipation in

Continued on Page 06

**PM thanks FMs for confidence in Pakistan's peace efforts**

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday thanked the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Egypt for expressing confidence in Pakistan's sincere efforts for peace and stability in the region. The prime minister, who met with Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Dr. Badr Abdelatty of Egypt on Sunday, expressed pleasure to receive them for the quadrilateral meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East. On two different posts on his X timeline, the prime minister said that during the meeting with the foreign ministers of Türkiye and Egypt, he stressed the need for collective efforts to urgently bring an end to hostilities that were causing heavy loss of life, economy, and property not only in

Continued on Page 06

## US-Iran war

# China lauds Pakistan's mediation endeavours

**Mao made the remarks at a regular press briefing following Pakistan hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt on Sunday for a high-level meeting aimed at halting the conflict in the Middle East**

DNA

BEIJING: China supports all efforts conducive to easing tensions, deescalating the situation and restoring dialogue, and calls on all parties to start the peace talks process as soon as possible, foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Monday. Mao made the remarks at a regular press briefing following Pakistan hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt on Sunday for a high-level meeting aimed at halting the conflict in the Middle East. China appreciates Pakistan's efforts to ease the Middle East tensions, supports Pakistan in continuing to play its role as a mediator. We are willing to strengthen communication and coordination with Pakistan and other relevant parties to jointly promote peace, end hostilities, and safeguard regional peace and stability, Mao said.

**FM Ishaq Dar to visit China**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar will embark on an official visit to China on March 31 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) on Monday. The FO said that Pakistan and China enjoy an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, characterised by "close coordination and regular consultations" on regional development and international issues. "In this context, the upcoming visit will provide an opportunity for both sides to hold in-depth discussions on regional developments, as well as bilateral

Continued on Page 06

# UAE takes hard line against Iranian interests

**The move effectively allows the UAE to seize or freeze approximately \$530 billion in Iranian-held assets – encompassing real estate, investments, bank accounts, and businesses in the emirates**

DNA

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has reportedly revoked residency permits for Iranian citizens, including long-term "Golden Visas," as relations between the two countries collapse following Iranian missile and drone strikes on Gulf targets. Iranian media outlets, including Tasnim news agency and Tehran Times, claim the move effectively allows the UAE to seize or freeze approximately \$530 billion in Iranian-held assets – encompassing real estate, investments, bank accounts, and businesses in the emirates. Iranian expats and business owners have reported sudden cancellations of visas, even for those holding investor-linked Golden Visas that promised extended stays (sometimes marketed with long-term assurances). Some individuals abroad discovered their permits invalid upon attempting re-entry, leaving them stranded or forced to return via indirect routes such as through Afghanistan. Accounts from Iran International describe affected Iranians, including those with 10-year visas, unable to return to the UAE. The actions come amid a broader regional conflict in-

volving Iran, the US, and Israel, during which the UAE has faced a disproportionate number of Iranian attacks on its territory and infrastructure. Abu Dhabi has condemned the strikes as violations of its sovereignty, closed its embassy in Tehran, and called for reparations from Iran for damages to Gulf states. Earlier reports indicated the UAE was exploring freezing Iranian-linked assets and shadow companies as leverage. Iranian sources frame the visa revocations and asset measures as a betrayal of prior economic ties and residency promises, estimating the frozen value at \$530 billion. However, the massive seizure figure has not been independently verified by UAE officials or neutral sources, and some observers question whether Iranian assets in the UAE reach that scale under years of sanctions. The UAE has not issued an official statement confirming a blanket asset confiscation. This development marks a sharp reversal from recent years of cautious economic engagement between the UAE and Iran, highlighting how the ongoing war has shattered diplomatic and commercial bridges in the Gulf.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high-level meeting to review oil stocks, other issues. – DNA

**CM Punjab remarks Cricketer Shah gets Rs 20 mn penalty**

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced the outcomes of disciplinary committee proceedings pertaining to breaches of various clauses of Naseem Shah's central contract and the board's social media guidelines. The PCB had issued a show-cause notice dated 27th March 2026 outlining the violations and sought a response from Naseem. A personal hearing was then held by a three-member disciplinary committee on 30th March 2026 after Naseem's reply had been received and reviewed. Pursuant to the hearing and evaluation of Naseem's submissions, the Committee has determined as follows:

Continued on Page 06

**Rains across country from April 1**

At least 17 people, including children and women, lost their lives in rain-related incidents in KP

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: In a fresh weather advisory, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) warned of widespread rain, thunderstorms and strong winds expected to grip much of the country between April 1-4. The Met Office, in its advisory on Monday, said that a westerly wave is expected to move into south-western Balochistan on April 1, gradually

Continued on Page 06

## Middle East crisis

# Trump signals progress in talks as Iran War enters critical phase

**The remarks come as Spain has closed its airspace to US military jets involved in strikes on Iran. Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles confirmed the decision, which goes beyond an earlier ban on the use of joint US-Spanish bases at Rota and Morón**

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump announced that the United States is in "serious discussions" with representatives of a "new regime" in Iran to end ongoing military operations. Speaking from the Oval Office, Trump stated that an agreement "is very much on the cards," raising hopes for a potential ceasefire amid more than a month of intense conflict. The remarks come as Spain has closed its airspace to U.S. military jets involved in strikes on Iran. Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles confirmed the decision, which goes beyond an earlier ban on the use of joint U.S.-Spanish bases at Rota and Morón. The move forces American aircraft to reroute, highlighting growing European divisions over the war.

In Tehran, Iranian officials are reportedly weighing a withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Semi-official media, including Tasnim, said parliament and other bodies are urgently reviewing the option, arguing the treaty has yielded no benefits for Iran amid the current crisis. Trump again warned Iran to fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz, threatening to "obliterate" Kharg Island – Iran's critical oil export terminal – if no deal is reached. He reiterated that the U.S. has multiple options, including possible seizure of the strategic island, to ensure freedom of navigation and protect global oil flows. The developments reflect a mix of diplomatic momentum and continued military pressure as the U.S.-Israel campaign against Iran enters its second month. Markets remain volatile amid fears of prolonged disruption to energy supplies.

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## KPC CM expresses grief over rain-related casualties

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, on Monday expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and property in rain-related incidents reported from various districts of the province.

He extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased and strength for the affected families to bear the loss with patience. The CM also conveyed best wishes for the early recovery of those injured in the incidents and directed the administrations of concerned hospitals to ensure they receive timely and quality medical treatment.

He further instructed authorities to accelerate rescue and relief operations in the affected areas to provide immediate assistance to victims. "The provincial government shares the grief of the affected families and will not leave them alone in this difficult time," the CM said, assuring that all possible support would be extended to those impacted by the recent rains.—APP

## New wheat procurement policy formulated

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has said that the new wheat procurement policy of the Sindh government has been formulated in line with its broader vision. The policy aims to protect the interests of farmers. The decision to procure one million metric tons of wheat has been taken to ensure food security and keep flour prices under control. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that wheat procurement will begin at 109 centers across the province from April 1. The support price of wheat has been fixed at Rs 3,500 per maund. For the first time, wheat will be procured only from registered Hari Card holders in order to eliminate the role of middlemen. This initiative will ensure that the maximum benefit reaches genuine farmers, with approximately 330,000 farmers expected to benefit directly. He further stated that the government will not provide bardana (gunny bags) this year. Farmers will bring their own bags, and Rs 60 per bag will be paid directly into their bank accounts through Sindh Bank. The new procedure will not only make the procurement process easier but will also be more transparent.—APP

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naeem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum

suit for dissolution of marriage etc  
Case title: Ambreen Khaliq vs Waheed Iqbal son of Muhammad Iqbal currently residing in (Malaysia) through Mukhtar Khas Real brother Muhammad Zaheer son of Muhammad Iqbal Residence Mona Mirwal Post Office Dhadiyal Tehsil and District Chakwal. As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 06.04.2026 at 09:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.



ISLAMABAD: Motorists on their way during morning time rainfall in the Federal Capital.

## Hazardous industries to be shifted out of city areas

Faisalabad: The Divisional Administration Faisalabad and major industrial associations on Monday signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to relocate hazardous industries from urban areas to designated zones, aiming to curb environmental pollution, enhance public safety and promote sustainable industrial development.

The agreement brings together key stakeholders, including the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association (APTPTMA), Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PHMA), Faisalabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry (FCSTSI) and All Pakistan Textile Sizing Industries Association (APTSIA). Under the MoU, industrial units currently operating in densely populated areas will be gradually relocated to designated industrial zones outside city limits. The administration will develop at least two industrial zones equipped with essential infrastructure, including road networks, electricity, gas, water.—APP

# Kundi, US CG discuss matters of mutual interest

The governor expressed concern over reports regarding a proposal to close the US Consulate General office in Peshawar, saying that the facility serves as an important diplomatic and facilitative center for the people and government of the province

ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi Monday hosted a luncheon in honour of US Consul General Thomas Eckert and members of the consulate's diplomatic staff at his residence in Islamabad. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on Pakistan-US bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest, said a news release issued here by the party secretariat. The regional situation, particularly law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, promotion of sports activities, and progress on declaring Peshawar and New York City as sister cities, also came under review. The governor expressed concern over reports regarding a proposal to close the US

Consulate General office in Peshawar, saying that the facility serves as an important diplomatic and facilitative center for the people and government of the province. He emphasized that its services should continue and urged the US consul general to raise the matter with the US Embassy and Congress.

Welcoming the initiative to grant sister-city status to Peshawar and New York, Kundi stressed the need for its early implementation so that people of both regions could benefit from shared experiences and opportunities. He also highlighted the importance of developing sports infrastructure, saying that promoting sports is essential for sustainable peace and development in any re-

gion. The governor said that police and security forces were actively working to restore and maintain peace in the province. Speaking on the occasion, Thomas Eckert appreciated the governor's vision for strengthening ties between Peshawar and New York, adding that work on the initiative was underway with cooperation between authorities in both regions.

He reaffirmed that the US government and its people remain committed to advancing partnership-based initiatives aimed at the development and prosperity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The US consul general also thanked the governor for the warm hospitality extended during the luncheon.—DNA

# APNS, AGM, elections today

## DNA

KARACHI: The Annual General Council of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society will meet on Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. at APNS House, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Karachi", stated a press release of the APNS.

The Annual General Council will discuss the conditions prevailing in the

newspaper industry and take decisions to address the problems faced by the member publications and will finalize its recommendations on the issues pertaining to the Govt. Press relations, freedom of press and the future of the industry. The members will consider and adopt the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2025-2026, approve audit report of Annual Ac-

counts for the year 2025 and elect members to the Executive Committee for the year 2026-2027. The new Executive Committee will elect its office bearers for the new term. The meetings of the General Councils will be attended by full members only. The Secretary General, APNS has requested publishers of full member publications to attend the above Council meeting positively."

# Opp questions status of finance adviser in KP Assembly

PESHAWAR: The session of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was held on Monday with Speaker Babar Saleem Swati in the chair, where the opposition strongly criticized a notification issued by the Chief Secretary granting provincial minister status to Adviser on Finance Muzammil Aslam. The opposition termed the notification unconstitutional and argued that assuming the office of a provincial minister requires taking an oath, and any actions taken without fulfilling this requirement hold no constitutional validity. Raising the issue on a point of order, PPP parliamentary leader Ahmad Karim Kundi questioned the legality of the March 7 notification, stating that under constitutional provisions, the appointment of a provincial minister is made on the advice of the Chief Minister and requires oath-taking administered by the Governor. Responding to the concerns, Law Minister Aftab Alam clarified that Muzammil Aslam continues to serve as an adviser, adding that under recent constitutional provisions, advisers could be appointed and certain powers might be exercised accordingly. He said the notification issued by the Chief Secretary would be verified to determine its legal standing. Speaker Babar Saleem Swati directed the Law Minister to seek clarification from the Chief Secretary and present it before the House by the next session, adding that the matter could also involve a clerical error. Opposition Leader Dr Ibadullah criticized the government's handling of the issue, questioning how governance could proceed amid such ambiguity. The Speaker, however, maintained that whether as an adviser or a minister, Muzammil Aslam could represent the government in the House, while reiterating the need for clarity on the constitutional position.—DNA

# CCP holds awareness session on competition law at LCCI

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) held an awareness session at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) on the evolution and the substantive provisions of competition law. The session aimed to enhance understanding of core areas, including abuse of dominant position, prohibited agreements (cartelization), deceptive marketing practices, and mergers and acquisitions while promoting a culture of compliance within the business community. Chairman CCP, Farid Ahmad Tarar, led the CCP delegation, while the session was attended by LCCI President Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, members of the senior management, the Executive Committee, and a large number of general body members. Addressing the participants, the Chairman emphasized that distortion of competition harms both businesses and consumers, and underscored the importance of fostering a culture of compliance. He highlighted CCP's ongoing efforts to modernize its enforcement framework, including the automation of complaint handling mechanisms and the development of guidelines, particularly in emerging areas such as e-commerce. He also stressed the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and strengthening advocacy initiatives to promote voluntary compliance. In this regard, he encouraged LCCI to establish a voluntary compliance regime within the Chamber and develop practical guidelines for its members. He further noted that CCP is actively working on sector-specific guidelines and will continue to engage through targeted outreach and social media campaigns to raise awareness across industries. Speaking on the occasion, LCCI President Faheem ur Rehman Saigol appreciated CCP's outreach efforts and emphasized the need to strengthen linkages with the business community. He underscored the importance of regular engagement sessions and proposed formalizing cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). He noted that healthy competition is essential for a vibrant and sustainable economy. Senior Vice President Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh and Vice President Khurram Lodhi also spoke on the occasion highlighting the importance of sustained engagement between CCP and the business community. They suggested holding regular advocacy sessions, including monthly interactions, and proposed the designation of focal persons to enhance coordination and collaboration between CCP and the Chamber. They also emphasized the need for continued cooperation to promote a competitive business environment. Senior CCP officials, including Director General Dr. Ikram ul Haq, Director and Secretary to the Commission Maryum Pervaiz, and Director Malika Qudus, delivered detailed presentations on key provisions of the Competition Act, including abuse of dominant position, prohibited agreements, deceptive marketing practices, and mergers and acquisitions. The presentations provided practical insights into compliance requirements and highlighted the role of competition law in ensuring fair market practices.—DNA

# Ahsan urges govt to consult stakeholders for key eco decisions

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member Central Core Committee of UBG and former President of ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, has urged the government to consult the business community and other stakeholders before making key economic decisions so that policies beneficial for business, industry, and the overall economy can be formulated. In his statement, he said that Pakistan urgently needs clear, effective, and long-term economic and industrial policies to restore investor confidence and pave the way for the establishment of new industries. Bakhtawari stated that despite the increase in global oil prices, Pakistan continues to receive a steady supply of oil; therefore, pricing decisions should take into account the interests of both the business community and the general public. He emphasized that economic stability requires policies that promote industry, trade, and domestic commerce

so that business activities can continue without disruption. He further said that decisions regarding market timings, lockdowns, or other economic restrictions must involve the business community, as traders contribute significantly to the national tax revenue and play a key role in sustaining economic activity. He added that providing a conducive environment to traders would create new employment opportunities, increase industrial production, and boost exports. Bakhtawari noted that Pakistan is emerging as a safe country on the global stage, and despite challenging regional conditions, the international community is willing to enhance economic cooperation with Pakistan. He said that Pakistan's strategy during global challenges and conflict situations has highlighted the country's positive image and strengthened international confidence. He pointed out that the safe movement of Pakistani-flagged vessels through key global trade routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, re-

flects Pakistan's growing importance and effective diplomacy, demonstrating its role in global trade. He stressed the need for the government to formulate a comprehensive long-term industrial and commerce policy to provide clear direction to investors and encourage the establishment of new industries. He also called for a review of unnecessary restrictions, particularly those related to market timings, to further promote economic activity. Bakhtawari said that criticism of the business community is unjustified, as it serves as a backbone of the national economy and contributes significantly to tax revenue. He assured that the business community will continue to fully cooperate with the government for the country's development, as their future is tied to Pakistan. He concluded by expressing the commitment that the government and private sector should work together to develop policies that enhance investment, industry, trade, and employment opportunities, ultimately making Pakistan economically strong and stable.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



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- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Enquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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- MH.....561116
- 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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- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Rathore for exploring business potential in AJK

The Prime Minister said that Azad Kashmir is an ideal area for investment in natural resources, tourism, energy, agriculture, and housing, and that a business-friendly environment exists here

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Rathore, has said that there are vast opportunities for investment and business in Azad Kashmir, and that Pakistan's business community, especially traders from Islamabad, should take advantage of these investment opportunities. The Azad Kashmir government is providing investors with every possible facility and incentive to promote industrial and commercial activities and accelerate the region's economic development. He expressed these views during a meeting yesterday with Secretary General of the United Business Group (UBG), Zafar Bakhtawari, and Abid Bakhtawari. The Prime Minister said that Azad Kashmir is an ideal area for investment in natural resources, tourism, energy, agriculture, and housing, and that a business-friendly environment exists here. He added that the government is taking policy measures to provide facilities to the business community and simplify the investment process. On this occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari stated that the business community is deeply interested in investment opportunities in Azad Kashmir, and that the private sector can play an important role in the region's economic development. He said that by providing facilities to investors,



not only can employment opportunities be created, but regional trade can also be promoted. He expressed the commitment that the United Business Group will play its role in promoting investment and will inform

the business community about the opportunities available in Azad Kashmir. During the meeting, discussions were also held on mutual cooperation, promoting investment, and further strengthening business

links. Emphasis was placed on the need for the government and private sector to work together on initiatives that will boost economic activity in Azad Kashmir and further strengthen investor confidence.

## China Pavilion shines at 11th Pakistan Footwear show

ISLAMABAD: Around 100 Chinese enterprises from Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian, Henan and other major manufacturing hubs have taken center stage at the 11th Pakistan Footwear, Material and Machinery Show 2026, turning Hall No. 1 of the Expo Centre Lahore into a vibrant focal point of business activity and international cooperation, Gwadar Pro reported. The three-day exhibition, held from March 27 to 29, brought together more than 350 exhibitors from over 20 countries and occupied 3 halls. This year's event is organized around 5 specialized thematic zones: Innovative Fashion Design, Accessories and Semi-finished Products, Footwear Supply Chain, International Footwear Products, and Intelligent Shoe Machinery Equipment, covering the entire industrial spectrum from raw materials and design concepts to finished footwear and advanced manufacturing technologies. The strong

and growing Chinese presence at the exhibition reflects deepening bilateral trade ties and rising confidence in Pakistan's market potential. Addressing the event, Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani singled out Chinese footwear companies for bringing high-quality shoes, superior shoe-making materials, advanced production technologies and sophisticated design concepts to Pakistan. He also noted that these contributions provide a solid material foundation for the growth and modernization of Pakistan's domestic footwear industry. Kent Kuang, president of the Guangzhou Yueshu District Footwear Association, highlighted the remarkable growth in Chinese participation at the event. "This is my third consecutive year organizing Chinese exhibitors to this show. Chinese exhibitors have reached around 100, up from just over ten in 2023," Kuang said. "Behind this growth is the confidence

and commitment of China's footwear industry toward the Pakistani market, and it is also a testament to the deepening integration of the Chinese and Pakistani footwear industry chains." Kuang pointed out that the global footwear and leather industry is accelerating its transformation toward green, intelligent, and international development, adding that Pakistan, as one of South Asia's most promising emerging markets, is becoming a key growth engine for the global footwear industry. As the expo wrapped up, Chinese exhibitors reported strong business inquiries and on-site orders, with many calling their participation highly rewarding. Industry observers believe that continued collaboration with China, together with the increasing internationalization of the event, leaves Pakistan's footwear industry well positioned to broaden its export base, upgrade product quality and ascend the global value chain.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Metro Bus service staff cleaning the path during the heavy rainfall in the Federal Capital.

## ISSI-PAIDAR commemorate Tunisia's IDay

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Tunisia's Independence Day. The proceedings which began with the national anthems of Pakistan and Tunisia, were moderated by Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI; the Chief Guest on the occasion was Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR. Ms. Dorsaf Maaroufi, Charge d' Affaires of Tunisia to Pakistan; Javed Ahmed Umrani, Ambassador of Pakistan to Tunisia, Mr. Ammad Rasheed, Honorary Consul General for Tunisia, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Mr. Mohammad Hameed, Honorary Consul General, Punjab also spoke on the occasion. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his opening remarks highlighted that the 70th anniversary of Tunisia's independence reflects the resilience and determination of the Tunisian people. He noted that Pakistan and Tunisia share a historic bond rooted in Pakistan's

support for Tunisia's self-determination, which has evolved into growing economic and commercial cooperation since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1957. He emphasized that while bilateral trade remains modest, there is strong potential to expand it in sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and manufacturing, supported by institutional mechanisms like the Joint Ministerial Commission and Bilateral Political Consultations and by leveraging opportunities under African Continental Free Trade Area. Dr. Amina Khan said that the 70th Independence Day of Tunisia is a moment that celebrates the resilience, determination, and forward-looking spirit of the Tunisian people in shaping their sovereign future. Tunisia's journey is not only one of political independence, but also of continuous economic transformation and development. She also highlighted that since last year, CAMEA, under Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy, has taken the initiative to regularly celebrate the national days of African countries. She further said that this is independent of ISSI's flagship Africa Day event. She concluded by saying that these collective efforts reflect the importance Africa holds for Pakistan as evident by today's event, which is organized in partnership

with the Embassy of Tunisia. This reflects the shared commitment of both countries to further strengthening bilateral ties. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, while speaking on the occasion stated that Tunisia plays a leading role in African politics and Pakistan was one of the first countries to support Tunisia's independence. The PLO was given sanctuary in Tunisia in the 1990s and like Pakistan, Tunisia is also a strong supporter of Palestine. Both countries enjoy warm relations and there are immense opportunities to enhance trade and cooperation in various fields. The time has come to take this relationship forward as both countries are a part of the Global South. Praising Tunisia's resilience and leadership, he called for stronger trade, education, and cultural exchanges, advocating deeper people-to-people and business linkages. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to Africa, emphasizing that the future belongs to the Global South. Tunisia Charge d' Affaires Ms. Dorsaf Maaroufi, while speaking on the occasion highlighted that there are strong historical ties between Tunisia and Pakistan, especially Pakistan's support for Tunisia at the United Nations. She noted that this celebration reflects continued commitment to stronger relations.

## Seasonal flowers bloom at Rehmanabad

RAAWALPINDI: Murree Road, the main artery of the garrison city, is presenting a refreshing scenic look as the green belts of Rehmanabad's old median are adorned with colourful seasonal flowers, creating vibrant scenes and enhancing the landscape. "The credit goes to the Horticulture Agency (HA) Rawalpindi, whose staff have been putting in all their efforts to create vibrant scenes for residents and enhance the city's landscape," a Horticulture Agency spokesman said on Monday. The initiative, carried out on the directives of Managing Director Horticulture Agency Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, involved plantation of seasonal flowers under a special campaign aimed at beautifying the main road. "Blooming flower beds and newly maintained green belts along the Rehmanabad stretch are presenting a pleasant visual outlook," the spokesman said. He added the effort had not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of Murree Road but also contributed to providing a cleaner and more refreshing environment for residents. The initiative was part of ongoing measures to promote a better recreational atmosphere and improve the city's environmental outlook, he said.—APP

## 'Walk Pakistan' drive to unite youth: Mashood

ISLAMABAD, Mar 30 (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan on Monday chaired a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office to launch the nationwide "Walk Pakistan" initiative, aimed at engaging young people across the country through a 14 to 18 day cross country walk from Lahore to Islamabad to promote national unity, cultural integration and healthy lifestyles. The meeting brought together key stakeholders from government, semi-government and service sectors, with both in-person and virtual participation to ensure wide engagement. Naveed Sherwani, Sabahat Rafique and Kamran Lashari were appointed to a working group responsible for coordinating and executing the programme. Officials said the initiative would feature participants from all provinces, including women, students, sports personalities and media representatives, ensuring broad based national participation. The walk will commence from Minar-i-Pakistan in Lahore and conclude in Islamabad.—APP

## Twin MoUs signed to train over 350 paramedics

ISLAMABAD: The Health Services Academy (HSA) and the Project Management Unit (PMU-HSRMU), Government of Balochistan, have signed two strategic agreements aimed at strengthening the provincial healthcare workforce and improving service delivery in underserved areas. The Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed in Quetta by HSA Project Coordinator Nadeem Sajjad Kayani and PMU Project Director Saqib Kakar. Under the first agreement, titled "Capacity Building Program for Paramedics & Allied Healthcare Providers," as many as 352 in-service paramedics from across Balochistan will receive specialized training. The program focuses on critical care disciplines, including ICU, NICU, emergency care, anesthesia, and cardiac care, utilizing a model that combines classroom instruction, simulation based learning, and supervised clinical practice. The second agreement, the "Nursing Internship Program," is designed to provide fresh nursing graduates from the province with structured opportunities to enhance their clinical skills and professional readiness. Following the specialized training at the Health Services Academy in Islamabad, the participants will return to their respective districts to provide quality healthcare at the grassroots level. Speaking on the occasion, representatives from both organizations termed the initiatives a major step toward building a skilled healthcare workforce for Balochistan. They noted that the programs would significantly address the shortage of trained human resources and improve the functionality of healthcare facilities in remote areas. HSA Director Nadeem Sajjad Kayani reiterated that under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, the Academy remains committed to strengthening the national health system through training, research, and policy support.—DNA

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## Briefs

IRSA  
releases  
81,100  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 81,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 73,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1448.29 feet which was 48.29 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 25,300 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1136.15 feet, which was 86.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 18,700 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 35,200, 31,400, 33,600, and 7,500 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 5,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

GPA  
announces  
berthing of  
HMO Leader

GWADAR: The Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) has announced the successful berthing of vessel HMO Leader, carrying general transshipment cargo, at Gwadar Port. According to Gwadar Port Authority (GPA), the ship, identified by IMO number 9169811, arrived carrying 368 metric tons of general transshipment cargo, signaling what authorities describe as growing commercial momentum at the port. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the vessel, a multipurpose heavy-lift cargo ship equipped with onboard cranes, is capable of handling oversized and specialized cargo such as industrial pipes, machinery and project equipment. The smooth handling of such cargo demonstrates the port's operational capacity to manage complex logistics and diverse shipping requirements. GPA said the arrival of HMO Leader marks "another milestone in enhancing maritime trade, strengthening regional connectivity" and boosting confidence among international shipping lines. The development underscores Gwadar Port's growing role in facilitating efficient port services and expanding regional and international trade.—APP

## Chinese energy projects power Pakistan through global crisis

Projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are increasingly positioning the country to withstand external shocks by reducing reliance on imported fuels and expanding indigenous and renewable energy sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As global energy markets reel from disruptions linked to escalating tensions in the Middle East and the closure of key supply routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, Pakistan is finding resilience through its long-term collaboration with China in the energy sector. Projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are increasingly positioning the country to withstand external shocks by reducing reliance on imported fuels and expanding indigenous and renewable energy sources, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. In an exclusive interview with Gwadar Pro, Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB), who has led the organization for the past decade and overseen the execution of almost all CPEC power projects, discussed Pakistan's evolving energy landscape, the growing role of renewable resources, and the expanding footprint of Chinese investment in ensuring energy security. Fast-Tracked Energy Development Under CPEC: "Basically, under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) maximum investment has come to the power projects. That

time when CPEC was started in 2013-14, Pakistan was facing about 12 hours of loadshedding like the city of Islamabad was facing 12 hours loadshedding, so one hour electricity was available and one hour was off, so this was the situation when CPEC was started. Renewable Energy Expands Rapidly: "At the same time, the renewable energy projects are solar, wind and hydro. So, solar and wind are around 1400MW that has been done under CPEC. And similarly, there are two largest hydro power projects in private sector in Pakistan done under CPEC. One is the 884MW Suki Kinari Hydropower project and the other one is 720MW Karot Hydropower Project. These are the two largest hydro power projects or hydro IPPs done in private sector under CPEC. In this difficult time when the import of oil and LNG is becoming more and more difficult, and very very expensive, in these times, these local resources whether it is wind, solar or hydro, help actually generate electricity without any import of fuel and not only save a lot of foreign exchange on fuel import but also provide a local resource, which is not dependent on the import and which is not dependent on the international situation or international crises. Solar Boom Driven by Consumers: "Solar energy in Pakistan, everyone

knows that has increased very rapidly, so the influx of solar has been very past in Pakistan. Now, we see that the net metering scheme which is the rooftop solar where the consumers connect to the grid; the surplus at day time go to the grid and in the evening, they come back to the grid and get the electricity from the grid. It has become more and more visible that going forward, the future is renewable because fortunately, when this renewable expanded in Pakistan, the price of solar equipment has gone down and it is almost the cheapest source of energy in Pakistan because Pakistan is blessed with very long sunshine throughout the year." Chinese Role in Investment and Technology: "Investment by China whether it is in the form of funds, it is in the form of loan, it is in the form of equity investment, that is the one part but again almost all the solar system being installed in Pakistan, they are Chinese manufactured. So, China is helping in two ways; one is, it is supplying efficient, cheap and reliable solar equipment to Pakistani consumers; secondly, making investment into IPPs. When we talk about this thing, I think there is some quantum of wind also, in the next year plan, and there is a quantum of solar also, so maximum investment and maximum installation

will be done by the Chinese companies. So, this is, I think, where Chinese has a lot of experience at home." Grid Modernization and Transmission Investment: "Other than that, there is a lot of investment at the grid which is required actually. As we increase the electricity of solar and wind in the grid, which are renewable resources, but they are intermittent resources; very rapidly their generation changes, we need to have very robust and strong and efficient grid. So, that is I think, the digitisation of grid, is a major requirement for increasing the renewable energy to the target which the government has set up that by 2035, at least 60% percent energy will be generated from the renewable resources. On top of that, the government target is actually, till 2035, the 90% electricity will be generated through renewable resources; which include nuclear as well, nuclear is also clean energy resource. So, with this, Chinese investment is very much needed, in terms of transmission expansion and the transmission upgradation and the digitisation of the grid, that is very critical. Fortunately, a lot of research and a lot of development is going into this area and day by day the cost of the battery is coming down... this will be one of the major venues for the investment, and supply of equipment by the Chinese companies."

## 181 Global icons hallmarked in merit-bound poll

It emphasizes the principle of recognizing genuine merit, encapsulated in its core philosophy of valuing real impact over visibility

ISLAMABAD: A groundbreaking global initiative aimed at documenting the most influential individuals and initiatives of the 21st century's first quarter has shortlisted 181 icons, including 20 from South Asia, under a strictly merit-based evaluation system, with final results to be announced after May 4, 2026. According to a press release issued on Monday, the "Quartecentennial Merited Impacts Gazette" has been developed through an advanced analytical framework termed "Axiological Architecture," focusing on documented achievements rather than popularity or fame. The initiative seeks to present a comprehensive account of impactful contributions made between 2000 and 2025. A selection slate comprising 182 icons shortlisted out of 1.9 million notables from 195 countries has been presented to the global audience in order to let the masses have their

own say on "who did what? How did it impact their lives? And what's the merit that their contributions hold for the 21st-century's iconicity? Instead of focusing on public visibility, social media attention, or celebrity status, the project is built on the principle of the "Sovereignty of the Unadorned Merit", with the resolute emblem-ethos: "Meriting the Merited Impacts" and "Valuing the Impact Value." In simple terms, this means that individuals and initiatives are evaluated solely on the basis of their real and undeniable contributions to humanity, knowledge, resilience, and long-term global influence. The evaluation process centres on the Merited Impact Value (MIV), a rigorous scoring system translating qualitative achievements into numerical assessment through a 1,000-point matrix. It measures four dimensions — Humanitarian, Scientific, Resilience, and Cumulative

Impact Merit. Combined scores are multiplied by a cumulative coefficient, ensuring contributions are judged by both direct achievements and broader societal influence. A panel of 150 neutral assessors evaluates candidates through the centrality focus system, examining impacts from human-centric, knowledge-centric, nature-centric, and holistic perspectives. Contributions are grouped into thematic quadrants such as humanitarian leadership, scientific innovation, environmental stewardship, athletic excellence, youth innovation, dignified asceticism, and legacy memorials. The Gazette aims to serve as a "categorical mirror" of the modern era, highlighting transformative achievements that have shaped global progress over the past 25 years. It emphasizes the principle of recognizing genuine merit, encapsulated in its core philosophy of valuing real impact over visibility. The final list of globally recognized icons will be officially announced after 04-05-2026.—DNA

## IESCO recovers billions from defaulters

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has recovered billions of rupees from electricity defaulters during an ongoing recovery campaign, while intensifying enforcement measures to ensure financial discipline and uninterrupted power supply. Chief Engineer (Commercial) Muhammad Sarwar urged consumers to pay their electricity bills on time, terming it both a national and moral responsibility, said a press release issued here on Sunday. He said timely payments are essential for maintaining a stable power distribution system and enabling the utility to deliver improved and uninterrupted services. He said that IESCO management had provided multiple modern and convenient platforms for the ease of consumers to pay their electricity bills. These include commercial bank branches, mobile banking applications, ATM machines, Easypaisa, JazzCash and other digital payment channels. In addition, consumers can also pay their electricity bills through QR codes from the comfort of their homes at any time without any difficulty. Muhammad Sarwar further stated that in line with the directives of the Government of Pakistan, a vigorous and continuous crackdown against defaulters was underway in all operational circles of IESCO. During this campaign, billions of rupees have been recovered from defaulters, while electricity meters and transformers of several non-paying consumers have also been disconnected, he said.—DNA

## ITP issues safety advisory

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Monday issued a comprehensive traffic advisory urging citizens to adopt precautionary measures during rainfall to avoid accidents and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the federal capital. An ITP official told APP that rain may cause slippery roads and slow-moving traffic, increasing the risk of accidents if proper care is not taken. He said motorists should use fog lights during heavy rain and keep their speed under control to maintain safe driving conditions. He said drivers and motorcyclists should strictly follow their lanes and ensure the use of side mirrors and indicators while travelling to avoid collisions. He said motorcyclists should remain in the extreme left lane and drive at a slow speed to ensure their safety as well as that of others on the road. He said ITP officers are present on various roads to facilitate and guide citizens during rain.—APP

## PM praised for shielding public from oil price shock

ISLAMABAD: Prominent business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Shahid Rasheed Butt on Monday praised Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for deciding not to pass the recent surge in global oil prices on to the public, calling the move a timely step to protect households and support economic stability. He said the decision to absorb the international oil shock demonstrated the government's commitment to shielding citizens and businesses from the ripple effects of global inflation at a time when energy prices are rising due to tensions in the Middle East. By maintaining fuel price stability, he noted, the government has provided relief to transporters, farmers and manufacturers who depend heavily on petroleum products. Shahid Rasheed Butt said the policy reflected a "relief over revenue" approach, helping to stabilize transport fares and production costs and preventing an additional inflationary burden on the public. According to Butt, such measures are particularly important for middle- and lower-income households already coping with high living costs. The business leader also welcomed Pakistan's staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund following the third review of the Extended Fund Facility and the second review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility.—APP

## FPCCI, UBG welcomes extension of membership deadline

DGTO's decision will facilitate registration for the business community across the country, says Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, SM Tanvir Patron in Chief United Business Group



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh & SM Tanvir Patron In Chief UBG has welcomed the decision to extend the membership renewal deadline for trade bodies across Pakistan by three weeks and thanked the Director General Trade Organizations (DGTO) for this important step. Earlier, the origi-

nal membership renewal deadline for all trade bodies was March 31, 2026. In light of the challenges faced by chambers and associations, especially due to reduced working hours during the holy month of Ramadan and the subsequent Eid holidays, FPCCI has formally requested for an extension. On behalf of the President of FPCCI, Mr. Tariq Jadoon Khan (Vice President FPCCI), Mr. Karim Aziz Malik (Chairman Capital House) and Mr. Malik Sohail Hus-

sain (Chairman Coordination FPCCI and President Hafizabad Chamber) actively followed up on this request and made the issuance of the notification possible. After carefully reviewing the situation, the DG Trade Organizations (DGTO) approved the extension, giving trade bodies another three weeks to complete the renewal of their membership. The new deadline has now been set to 20th April 2026. Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh and SM Tanvir

thanked the DGTO for this timely decision and said that this extension will provide significant relief to chambers and associations across the country, which will enable them to complete the renewal process effectively. He appreciated the DGTO for giving personal attention to this most important issue. The President of the Federation further said in his statement that he and his team are dedicated to protecting the interests of the business community of Pakistan.

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## The Peacemaker Who Played with Power



MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

ON a hushed night in the year 2060, when the city outside appeared calm but history still murmured beneath the silence, a grandmother sat beside her granddaughter's bed. The child had grown fond of stories that were neither fairy tales nor myths, but reflections of a troubled past—stories meant to sharpen conscience rather than merely entertain. The lights were dimmed, shadows rested on the walls, and the grandmother began.

"Once upon a time," she said softly, "there ruled a man who stood at the helm of a powerful country. He was eloquent, theatrical, and acutely aware of the power of perception. He rarely relied on a single identity. Instead, he adopted different names, titles, and pseudonyms—each suited to the audience before him. In one place he was hailed as a peacemaker, in another as a global guardian. His real name has faded, but his conduct remains unforgettable." In the early years, she explained, his reputation was carefully cultivated. Wherever conflict brewed, he appeared—at conferences, summits, emergency visits—claiming credit for preventing wars that, according to him, would have otherwise turned into great disasters. He would stand before applauding crowds and say that his intervention alone had saved regions from catastrophe. Hosts welcomed him warmly, media celebrated him generously, and admirers praised his courage in "stopping wars before they began." For a time, the world believed him. "He spoke often of reconciliation," the mother said, "and quoted laws and treaties as if they were sacred vows. He warned others against recklessness and preached restraint. People trusted him because they wanted peace, and because confidence, once projected convincingly, can feel like truth." But his character, she continued, was never rooted in principle. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, his stance began to shift. The same man who once condemned interference now found reasons to intrude. His thinking, once wrapped in the language of diplomacy, turned sharply—almost overnight—by a full one hundred and eighty degrees. What had once been restraint became impatience; what had once been mediation became domination. "He developed a habit," the mother said, "of interfering where he was neither invited nor needed." Each day brought a new position. One morning he would praise dialogue, by evening he would dismiss it as weakness. One day treaties were binding; the next day they were obsolete. His words no longer anchored his actions. Allies struggled to understand him, adversaries learned to fear him, and smaller nations grew anxious, never knowing which version of him would appear tomorrow. To many observers, his behavior began to resemble

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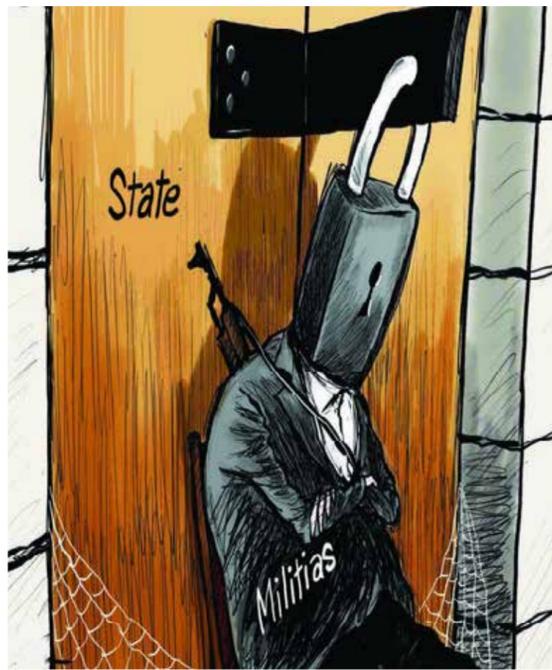
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a familiar figure from everyday life—like the stereotypical 'Massi' of the neighborhood, the woman who inserted herself into every household dispute, every street quarrel, every private matter, convinced that no affair could proceed without her involvement. What once seemed concern slowly revealed itself as control. What once appeared helpful turned into habitual intrusion. "He interfered everywhere," the mother said quietly, "not to solve problems, but to assert presence." As the global mood darkened, so did his conduct. The belief that "might is right" gained currency in many corridors of power, and he embraced it eagerly. Law, he argued, was useful only when it served strength. Treaties were tools, not obligations. Morality became flexible, adjusted daily to suit advantage. Then came the night that stripped away all remaining illusions. Under the cover of darkness, he ordered an operation beyond his borders. Armed men entered another land and seized its rulers from their own home—without trial, without legal process, without international consent. When the world reacted in shock, he appeared unmoved. Adopting yet another title, he justified the act as necessary for global stability. "He spoke," the mother said, "as though power itself had replaced law." The room felt heavier. "He did not stop there," the mother said. "Once he crossed that line, others vanished. He threatened more nations, and treated war like a strategy game. He no longer cared about rules—only outcomes. Treaties became scraps of paper. Law became something for others to obey." "Did people stop him?" the granddaughter asked. "Some tried," the mother replied, brushing her daughter's hair. "But many applauded him. They called him strong. They confused force with courage and speed with wisdom. And so, fear spread, conflicts multiplied, and the world paid a price that took decades to heal." From that moment onward, his transformations accelerated. His positions shifted daily, sometimes hourly. He spoke of peace while preparing war, invoked morality while violating every norm he once defended. Soon, his rhetoric turned toward an ancient country—first cautiously, then aggressively, and finally with open menace. No treaty restrained him now. No institution commanded his respect. Critics were mocked, allies confused, and supporters applauded what they mistook for decisiveness. In reality, it was unpredictability elevated to doctrine. "He ruled," the mother said, "without trust—and a leader without trust is more dangerous than an open enemy." The daughter turned her face toward her mother. "Did he succeed?" she asked. The mother shook her head slowly. "Power gained without principle never succeeds. His rule left the world more unstable, alliances weaker, and conflicts deeper. Even after he faded from the stage, the damage he caused took years—sometimes decades—to heal." She leaned closer and whispered, "That is why I tell you this story. Remember; a leader who changes principles day by day cannot be trusted. When interference becomes habit, peace becomes performance. And when 'might is right' replaces justice, the world loses its moral compass." She kissed her granddaughter's forehead and turned off the light. As the child drifted into sleep, the lesson lingered in the quiet room—a reminder passed from one generation to the next; that peace is proven by restraint, not slogans; that power without law breeds chaos; and that history never forgets those who wore the mask of peace while practicing the language of force.

## Iran vs US: When Demands Collide, Can Peace Survive?

Qamar Bashir



This makes the second demand the cornerstone of Iran's entire proposal. It is not just about security—it is about redefining the regional balance of power. Accepting it would require the United States to rethink decades of military strategy in the Middle East, potentially withdrawing or significantly reducing its forward presence. For Washington, this is a strategic red line. Its military bases are not only about Iran but about securing energy routes, maintaining alliances, and projecting global influence. Removing them would reshape the geopolitical order of the region

THE Middle East today is not witnessing a single war, but a convergence of multiple battlefields—each feeding into the other and pushing the region toward a dangerous tipping point. What began as a confrontation between Iran, Israel, and the United States has now expanded into a multi-front conflict involving Lebanon, Yemen, the Gulf states, and beyond. The war is no longer linear; it is layered, interconnected, and increasingly uncontrollable. One of the most intense theaters of this conflict is southern Lebanon, where Israeli operations have escalated dramatically. Infrastructure—bridges, homes, businesses—has been systematically targeted under the justification of creating a "buffer zone" to prevent missile threats. The humanitarian cost has been devastating: over a thousand civilians killed and more than a million displaced, forced into survival conditions that resemble a humanitarian catastrophe. This front is deeply linked with the broader Iran-Israel confrontation. Analysts like Scott Ritter argue—controversially—that Lebanon's political leadership has failed to defend its sovereignty, enabling external aggression. While such claims remain debated, they reflect a growing perception of state fragility in the region. Ritter also warns that if Israel commits to a ground invasion, it risks repeating its past miscalculation, when Hezbollah forced Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. In that sense, Lebanon could become a strategic trap—just as Iraq and Afghanistan became prolonged quagmires for the United States. Against this volatile backdrop, Iran has articulated a five-point framework for negotiation. This proposal comes in direct response to what Tehran considers a "one-sided" and "maximalist" U.S. plan that demands strategic capitulation. The first Iranian demand is simple and fundamental: an immediate cessation of attacks by the United States and Israel. From Tehran's perspective, no negotiation can take place under active bombardment. The second demand, however, is the most critical—and the most transformative. It calls for binding guarantees that Iran will not be attacked again. On the surface, this appears reasonable. But its implicit meaning is far deeper and far more consequential. Iran is not asking for verbal assurances—it is demanding structural change. In essence, this demand implies that the United States must dismantle the very infrastructure that makes repeated attacks possible. This includes the network of U.S. military bases spread across the Middle East—particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and other regional states—that have historically been used to project

power toward Iran. From Tehran's perspective, as long as these bases exist, any promise of peace is hollow. A missile launched from a distant continent is one thing; a missile launched from a nearby base is an immediate existential threat. Therefore, Iran's logic is uncompromising: peace cannot coexist with a permanent war infrastructure positioned at its doorstep. This makes the second demand the cornerstone of Iran's entire proposal. It is not just about security—it is about redefining the regional balance of power. Accepting it would require the United States to rethink decades of military strategy in the Middle East, potentially withdrawing or significantly reducing its forward presence. For Washington, this is a strategic red line. Its military bases are not only about Iran but about securing energy routes, maintaining alliances, and projecting global influence. Removing them would reshape the geopolitical order of the region. This is why this clause is likely to become the breaking point in negotiations. It is binary—either the infrastructure of threat is removed, or it remains. There is little room for compromise. And if it remains, Iran believes that history will repeat itself: negotiations will occur, promises will be made, and attacks will follow. The third demand introduces an economic dimension. Iran seeks recognition of its rights over the Strait of Hormuz—one of the most critical energy corridors in the world. Tehran proposes imposing transit or security fees on ships passing through, arguing that such a mechanism would help it recover war-related losses and assert sovereign control. The fourth demand focuses on reparations. Iran calls for compensation for civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction, proposing an international mechanism to assess damages and enforce payments. This reframes Iran not as an aggressor, but as a state seeking justice under international law. The fifth demand expands the scope of peace. Iran insists that Israel must cease attacks not only on Iran but also on regional actors aligned with it—in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. This reflects Iran's broader strategic vision: that regional peace cannot be achieved through isolated agreements but requires a comprehensive de-escalation. When compared with the United States' 15-point plan—which includes dismantling Iran's nuclear program, restricting its missile capabilities, and ending its regional alliances—the gap becomes stark. The U.S. framework seeks to limit Iran's power; Iran's framework seeks to remove threats against it. Both sides are effectively boxed into opposing paradigms. For the United States, compromise risks weakening its strategic dominance. For Iran, compro-

mise risks surrendering sovereignty and deterrence. In this rigid standoff, any concession by either side would be perceived not as compromise but as capitulation. This is precisely why diplomacy has stalled and why the risk of escalation continues to intensify. This evolving reality also reflects a broader and more troubling pattern in U.S. strategic behavior. From the prolonged engagement in the Vietnam War, to nearly a decade of conflict following the Iraq War, and two decades of entanglement in the War in Afghanistan, the United States has repeatedly found itself embedded in extended conflicts. Now, with Afghanistan no longer serving as a theater of engagement, a new front appears to be taking shape—one that risks drawing Washington into another prolonged and complex confrontation. This raises a critical question: whether sustained geopolitical engagement through conflict has become an embedded feature of U.S. strategic doctrine, where controlled instability in key regions is perceived as serving long-term national interests, even if those interests are not always clearly articulated. At this critical juncture, what is required is not conventional diplomacy, but a deliberate, sincere, and strategically articulated effort to bring both parties out of their entrenched positions. A meaningful resolution will not emerge from forcing one side to surrender, but from crafting a mutually acceptable, win-win framework—one that preserves sovereignty while addressing security concerns. Without this shift, the trajectory is clear. The war will expand, new fronts will open, and the region will descend deeper into instability. The pattern is not new. From Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan, history has shown that wars born out of strategic rigidity often evolve into prolonged quagmires. The danger now is that the Middle East is on the verge of becoming the next chapter in that pattern. And while states negotiate, calculate, and posture, it is the civilians—from Lebanon to Iran and beyond—who continue to pay the price. In the end, this is not just a war of missiles and military might. It is a war of narratives, perceptions, and strategic visions. And unless those visions can be reconciled through genuine diplomacy, the region risks remaining trapped in a cycle of conflict with no clear end.

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

## Ten messages and achievements of Iran in the Ramadan War

Mr. Majid Meshki



This benevolent effort, however, failed with the attack on a girls' school and the martyrdom of 169 innocent children, simultaneously with the attack on the home and office of the highest political and religious official of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the martyr Ayatollah Khamenei and marked the beginning of a series of developments...

MORE than three weeks have passed since the beginning of the aggression of the Zionist regime and the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran. An aggression that, like the previous one, occurred nine months ago when the Islamic Republic of Iran was trying to reach a balanced agreement for a lasting peace in the West Asian region, in order to secure its legal rights and save the region and the world from being involved in a costly war. This benevolent effort, however, failed with the attack on a girls' school and the martyrdom of 169 innocent children, simultaneously with the attack on the home and office of the highest political and religious official of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the martyr Ayatollah Khamenei and marked the beginning of a series of developments and events whose end is not very clear. But what has happened so far can be examined and re-examined from several angles:

**First:** With this action, America and the Zionist regime have violated all international rules and laws and sent the message to the world that they do not adhere to any international treaties. This message will be a very dangerous message for world peace and stability.

**Second:** Despite the misconceptions and mistakes of those who initiated the war, Islamic Republic of Iran not only stood firm against the aggressors, but has also taught the aggressors unforgettable lessons.

**Third:** With the start of this war, the global economy has been affected and energy prices are in-

creasing uncontrollably. There is no doubt that the increase in oil prices in the world will soon show its effects on the global economy and will cause irreparable damage. This is while Iran has not yet taken any military action to close the Strait of Hormuz, and the price of oil has nearly doubled due to the decrease in traffic through this waterway.

**Fourth:** According to the assessment of American experts, tens of billions of dollars of American financial resources have been spent in the past two weeks to start and continue this war, while the United States and the Zionist regime have not achieved any of their goals.

**Fifth:** The growing trend of opposition to the war in America has even reached those close to the US President, and yesterday we witnessed the resignation of the head of the US Counter-Terrorism Commission, who is considered a close confidant of Trump. This opposition is growing increasingly among the American people.

**Sixth:** The return of the Resistance Front to the operational arenas is considered one of the other achievements of this war. The return of Hezbollah in Lebanon to the battle against the Zionist regime and the return of Iraqi resistance groups to military operations against America are considered a part of the revival of the Resistance Front.

**Seventh:** Another unexpected achievement of this war is the demonstration of Iran's power throughout the West Asian region and the Persian Gulf, which if its initiators had a correct picture of, it is unlikely that they would have taken such an unwise action.

**Eighth:** The fact that America is alone in build-

ing a coalition and involving other countries in this war is another clear message. The US President, by inviting heads of state to join the US in opening the Strait of Hormuz, tried to bring a coalition of countries with him, but they met with a negative response, and this incident is considered the beginning of the end of American authoritarianism in the world.

**Ninth:** Political, social, and economic stability, along with the exemplary resistance, bravery, and steadfastness of the Iranian Muslim people, along with the donation of pure blood to water the seedlings of Islam, were other unique events of the imposed Ramadan War, which undoubtedly added another golden chapter to the long history of Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Tenth:** Iran, while sending a message of friendship to neighboring countries before and during the war, repeatedly asked them not to allow foreigners to use their land against the territory and territorial integrity of Iran. This warning was unfortunately not taken seriously by some of Iran's southern neighboring governments, forcing Iran's defense forces to target the aggressors' bases inside the territory of neighboring countries in order to protect the peace and security of the region and Iran. This was never and is not the desire and desire of Islamic Republic of Iran. It is hoped that neighboring countries will observe good neighborliness more than ever and not play on the playground of the common enemy of the Islamic world, namely the Zionist regime.

— The writer is the Cultural Consul of the Islamic Republic of Iran-Islamabad

## Briefs

PM thanks  
FMs for  
confidence  
in Pakistan's  
peace efforts

FROM PAGE 01  
Iran, but across several brotherly Muslim countries. While appreciating the valuable contributions of Turkey and Egypt, Prime Minister Shehbaz reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment and resolve to play a positive role in bringing both Iran and the US to the negotiating table. "Grateful for their confidence in Pakistan's sincere efforts for regional peace and stability," he remarked. During the meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, the prime minister conveyed his respectful regards to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and warm greetings to Saudi Prime Minister and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the Kingdom and appreciated Saudi Arabia's remarkable restraint in these challenging times. Recognizing the Kingdom's leadership role in the Muslim Ummah, Prime Minister Shehbaz underscored the importance of unity among Islamic countries. Both sides also agreed to remain in close coordination in our shared pursuit of peace and stability in the region.

FM Ishaq  
Dar to  
visit China

FROM PAGE 01  
and global issues of mutual interest," said the FO statement. It added that "FM Dar's decision to undertake the visit, despite medical advice to rest following a hairline shoulder fracture sustained yesterday, reflects the importance Pakistan attaches to its relationship with China". Earlier on Friday, Dar held a telephone call with Wang Yi, during which they exchanged views on the evolving regional situation and broader global developments. Initiating peace talks in the war involving Iran "is no easy task," Wang said, but noted that such efforts would be "conducive to restoring normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz". The two sides agreed to jointly promote a ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and the resumption of peace talks, while ensuring the safety of non-military targets and key waterways, according to a summary released by the Chinese ministry.

Rains across  
country  
from April 1

FROM PAGE 01  
extending its influence across nearly all provinces over the following days. "Balochistan will be the first to bear the brunt of the system, with rain, thunderstorms, and isolated hailstorms anticipated from the evening of April 1 across a sweeping stretch of districts from coastal areas including Gwadar, Pasni, and Ormara inland through Quetta, Ziraat, Loralai, Zhob, Khuzdar, and dozens of other regions, continuing through April 4 with occasional breaks," it said. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will see conditions deteriorate from the night of April 1, with rain and thunderstorms affecting the entire province from Chitral, Dir, and Swat in the north to Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Waziristan in the south, the advisory noted. The PMD said that snow is expected over higher elevations, while isolated areas face the added threat of hailstorms and heavy downpours. The Met Office further said that Punjab and Islamabad will also be drawn into the system from the night of April 1, with thunderstorms and hailstorms forecast across the region from Murree and Rawalpindi down through Lahore, Multan, Bahawalpur, and Rahim Yar Khan. Dera Ghazi Khan and the surrounding areas face a heightened risk of particularly heavy rainfall. Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK are expected to experience rain, snow over the mountains, and hailstorms from the night of April 1, covering districts including Hunza, Gilgit, Skardu, Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, and Mirpur, among others.

UHS-PMMA Drive Empowers  
School girls in Self-Defence

*The Adolescent Self-Defence Workshops Program, currently underway in Lahore, Sheikhpura, and Kasur, has already trained more than 2500 students from 30 schools*



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step toward youth empowerment and grassroots sports development, the University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore, in collaboration with the Pakistan Martial Arts Association (PMAA), has launched a large-scale self-defence training initiative for adolescent schoolgirls. The

Adolescent Self-Defence Workshops Program, currently underway in Lahore, Sheikhpura, and Kasur, has already trained more than 2500 students from 30 schools. The initiative leverages martial arts as a structured sporting discipline to enhance physical fitness, agility, and mental resilience, while equipping participants with essential self-defence skills. Designed as a comprehensive, sports-based training program, the workshops focus on practical combat tech-

niques, situational awareness, and confidence-building exercises. Sessions are being conducted under the supervision of certified PMAA instructors, ensuring both technical precision and strict safety standards.

The training is led by Chief Trainer Anwar Mohiuddin, who also serves as President of PMAA, along with a team of experienced coaches including Abdullah Munir, Muhammad Shakil, Alizae Ijaz, Nimra Nadeem, Hanza Mohiuddin, Sumaiyya Mohiuddin, Meerab Butt, Ahmed Ali, Mubashir Butt, Javeria, Ayesha Khalid, and Mian Abad. The curriculum integrates discipline, reflex development, controlled sparring, and key elements of modern martial arts, making it both physically engaging and strategically enriching for young athletes.

UHS Vice Chancellor Ahsan Waheed Rathore highlighted the importance of sports in shaping confident and capable youth, noting that the initiative reflects a growing recognition of martial arts as a vital component of girls' development. "This initiative aligns with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to ensure that every girl is trained in self-defence, contributing to a safer, stronger, and more empowered society," he said.

Prof Dr Sidrah Saleem, Director of the UHS Research and Development Center, emphasised the developmental impact of such programs. "Self-defence education is an essential part of adolescent growth. Through these workshops, UHS is investing in the strength, confidence, and independence of young girls, while promoting resilience, courage, and leadership," she said. Chief Trainer Anwar Mohiuddin underscored the broader purpose of the initiative, stating, "Martial arts is not merely a sport; it is a life skill. Our mission is to make every girl strong, prepared, and confident." He added that the response from students, parents, and schools has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants demonstrating increased confidence and awareness.

Four Kazakh boxers secure medals  
ahead of Asian Championship bouts

ASTANA: The Asian Boxing Championships kicked off in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on March 30, Qazinform News Agency reports. Ahead of the start of the continental tournament, it was already known that four Kazakhstani boxers had secured medals at the 2026 Asian Championships, as they will enter the competition at the semi-final stage, where even a loss guarantees at least bronze, with no match held for third place. Thus, Nurbek Oralbay (85 kg), Bakyt Seidish (70 kg), Nadezhda Ryabets (80 kg), and Dina Islambekova (+80 kg), who will begin from the semifinals, have already secured at least bronze medals. Kazakh-

stan has also suffered its first loss at the championships, as Zhazira Orakbayeva (51 kg) sustained a shoulder injury in the third round of her bout against Kum Byol An of North Korea and was unable to continue, with the victory awarded to her opponent. Elna Bazarova (54 kg) will also enter the ring in Ulaanbaatar to face Preeti Pawar of India, according to the draw, later today, March 30. The schedule of opening bouts for other Kazakhstani boxers at the 2026 Asian Championships is as follows:

March 31 - Round of 16  
60 kg: Rima Volosenko vs Priya (India)  
April 1 - Round of 16

60 kg: Orazbek Assylkulov vs Paul Juyfer Bascon (Philippines)  
April 2 - Round of 16  
65 kg: Ertugan Zeynullinov vs Yu-ting Lin (Chinese Taipei)  
April 3 - Quarterfinals  
55 kg: Makhmud Sabyrkhan 70 kg: Torekhan Sabyrkhan (opponent to be determined)  
April 4 - Quarterfinals  
65 kg: Laura Yessenkeldi vs Ankushita Boro (India)  
75 kg: Valentina Khalzova vs a boxer from Korea  
50 kg: Sanzhar Tashkenbay +90 kg: Aibek Oralbay (opponents for Sanzhar and Aibek to be determined)  
April 5 - Quarterfinals  
48 kg: Aigerim Sattibayeva vs Sabina Bobokulova (Uzbekistan)  
57 kg: Ulzhan Sarsenbek

(opponent to be determined)  
75 kg: Sabirzhan Akkalykov vs Taiga Yagi (Japan)  
80 kg: Yerassyl Zhakpekov (opponent to be determined)  
90 kg: Sagyndyk Togambay vs Xuezheng Han (China)  
April 6 - Semifinals  
70 kg: Bakyt Seidish (opponent to be determined)  
80 kg: Nadezhda Ryabets vs Pooja Rani (India)  
+80 kg: Dina Islambekova vs Oltinoy Sotimboeva (Uzbekistan)  
April 7 - Semifinals  
85 kg: Nurbek Oralbay (opponent to be determined)  
Earlier, Qazinform News Agency reported that Kazakh athletes have secured three medals at the Asian Track Cycling Championships. - APP

India's JioStar terminates  
Bangladesh IPL cricket  
broadcast deal, shows letter

INDIAN billionaire Mukesh Ambani's entertainment venture JioStar has terminated its broadcast deals in Bangladesh for the Indian Premier League cricket tournament, saying its local partner defaulted on payments, according to a document seen by Reuters. Bangladesh in January banned IPL broadcasts after one of its teams, Kolkata Knight Riders, dropped Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman on the Indian cricket board's instruction, just as tensions rose between the two countries following the killing of a Hindu man in Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh is reviewing the ban and had on Saturday said any further steps will depend on the opinion of its sports ministry, the termination by JioStar means there will be no local broadcaster for the IPL season, even if the country were to change its stance. "The agreement stands terminated with immediate effect," JioStar said in a letter dated February 17 to Bangladesh broadcaster TSports, which had sublicensed the rights from JioStar for IPL seasons from 2023 to 2027. The company cited its partner's "continued failure and default in adhering to the payment timelines stipulated under the agreement". JioStar, a joint venture of Ambani's Reliance and Walt Disney, did not respond to Reuters queries. TSports and Bangladesh's sports and information ministries also did not respond to requests for comment. - Agencies

Fakhar charged with  
Level 3 offence after ball-  
tampering controversy

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars batter Fakhar Zaman has been charged with a Level 3 offence under Article 2.14 of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel for allegedly breaching Article 41.3 of the playing conditions, which prohibits any action that alters the condition of the ball. "Fakhar denied the charge levelled against him during a disciplinary hearing led by the match referee Roshan Mahanama," the PCB said. "Another hearing is set to take place within the next 48 hours after which the match referee will share his verdict." The controversy unfolded shortly before the final over of Karachi Kings' chase, when the on-field umpires examined the ball and ruled that its condition had been changed. As a result, a five-run penalty was imposed on the fielding side, reducing Karachi's target to nine runs instead of 14. The incident came after Fakhar, Lahore captain Shaheen Shah Afridi and fast bowler Haris Rauf were involved in a brief discussion, during which Fakhar and Rauf passed the ball between them. The umpire then approached Rauf and asked to see the ball before, following consultation with the square-leg umpire, awarding the penalty and ordering the ball to be changed. The penalty proved decisive as Abbas Afridi struck a four and a six to seal a four-wicket Karachi win with three balls to spare. Shaheen said Lahore would review the footage of the incident. - APP

The Tibetan family behind China's  
ski mountaineer Cidan Yuzhen

BEIJING: More than 70 years ago, Tashi Wangdrak was a young Tibetan serf, born into a world where freedom was unimaginable. He never thought he would live beyond middle age, and certainly never imagined that one day a descendant of his would compete at the Winter Olympics. This February, his granddaughter Cidan Yuzhen raced on the snow of the Italian Alps at the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in ski mountaineering - a sport returning to the Olympic program after more than a century. The 19-year-old's participation marked the pinnacle of a family journey that spans three generations, from the rigid confines of feudal serfdom to the global stage of competitive sport. Tashi Wangdrak grew up in Chanang County. In old Xizang, nearly all Tibetans were serfs under a feudal system controlled by aristocrats, governmental officials and senior lamas. Serfs were considered property of manor owners rather than individuals, obliged to work long hours and pay burdensome taxes. "I spent my childhood sewing clothes with my mother in a shed meant for livestock," Tashi Wangdrak recalled decades later. "Even the food we eat had to be rationed carefully. There was no freedom, no future we could plan for ourselves." The obligations were crushing. Many serfs tried to escape, risking brutal punishment or death if

caught. Tashi Wangdrak and his mother decided to flee. They wandered through snow and hunger, finally reaching Rirong Township in Luntse County, where they found temporary refuge. There, he met Chodron, a young woman who had also escaped servitude. They married and began to rebuild their lives, though poverty remained a constant companion. Everything changed in March 1959, when the democratic reform swept Xizang, abolishing feudal serfdom and ushering in a new era of freedom. These reforms allowed Tashi Wangdrak and his wife to raise children free from the bonds of servitude - the first generation of their family born with personal freedom. "We were allocated land of our own," he said. "For the first time, I had a home of my own." Life in Rirong Township, perched over 4,000 meters above sea level, remained physically demanding and economically limited. Tashi Wangdrak and his children depended largely on livestock herding, one of the few ways to survive on the harsh Tibetan Plateau. Cidan Yuzhen was born in 2006. Unlike her grandparents, she had access to formal education, yet the rhythm of her family's life was still dictated by the mountains. She herded sheep and worked the fields, but her aspirations stretched far beyond the plateau. "I wanted to be a physical education teacher," she recalled. - APP

Chinese sci-fi writers expand once-niche  
scene, draw global attention

*"Liu's success opened up a world of possibilities for Chinese sci-fi writers," said Gu Shi, a rising author in the field. "It was a turning point*

BEIJING: Flickering like fireflies in the dark, renowned Chinese sci-fi writer Liu Cixin wrote in the early 2000s, describing a small, largely unnoticed community of Chinese sci-fi writers and fans. "But like spring grass, we are spreading." A little over a decade later, Liu's "The Three-Body Problem" captured global acclaim with the 2015 Hugo Award, turning a once-niche genre in China into a booming industry, with annual revenues exceeding 100 billion yuan (about 14.5 billion U.S. dollars) for three consecutive years since 2023. Across the country, people from various walks of life - journalists, engineers, even pop singers - have been inspired to take up the pen. Their stories, ranging from interstellar epics to near-future visions, have been translated into multiple languages, reaching audiences far beyond China's borders. On Thursday, in downtown Beijing, a seminar brought together some of the country's rising sci-fi voices to explore the global outlook of Chinese sci-fi, drawing more than 120 writers, translators, publishers, and fans from over 20 countries.

"Liu is our current No.1 bestseller," said Nicolas Cheetham, managing director of the British publisher Head of Zeus, which released the English edition of "The Three-Body Problem." "Liu's success opened up a world of possibilities for Chinese sci-fi writers," said Gu Shi, a rising author in the field. "It was a turning point. One day, we realized our work could reach readers around the globe." Since 2016, several of Gu's short stories have appeared in English in Clarksworld, a U.S. science fiction magazine. Her story, "Strength Test," was adapted into an animated short film in 2021 and screened at international film festivals in multiple countries, including the United States, Britain, Austria and India. "Knowing your work could one day be read and watched worldwide brings both a weighty responsibility and a powerful motivation," Gu said. "When I'm crafting a new story, I think carefully about how to weave Chinese cultural heritage into visions of the future." Translation, Gu emphasized, plays a critical

role in a story's success abroad - a point widely echoed in the room. Despite differences in language and culture, writers and translators agreed that science fiction is uniquely suited for global audiences. "Readers expect the new and the different, and science can serve as a kind of lingua franca to bridge cultural gaps," Cheetham explained. "I grew up and live in China, so it's natural that the ideas and philosophies I encounter here find their way into my work," said Liang Ling, a 1992-born sci-fi writer whose work often delves into the pressures of daily life in rapidly urbanizing cities. "But science fiction deals with universal human concerns - time, life, memory. It's a language the world can understand," she added. International scholars at the seminar noted that Chinese sci-fi authors are actively transforming traditional cultural elements into core narrative tools, thereby giving fresh life to history, ecology and gender. This approach, steeped in rich Chinese culture, not only stretches the boundaries of the genre but also offers global readers a

lens into contemporary China. "Science fiction writers are the ones who tiptoe into the future - and sometimes see the future take shape," said Wang Jinkang, whose 1993 debut envisioned brain-computer interfaces, decades before the concept appeared in the country's latest five-year plan for future development priorities. Seminar participants widely agreed that rapid technological advances provide fertile ground for sci-fi, while sci-fi itself serves as both a "laboratory for ideas" and an early-warning system for potential risks and challenges ahead. To chart the unique contributions of Chinese science fiction to the global stage over the next decade, award-winning author Chen Quifan said Chinese writers must approach their work with bold imagination - exploring not just literature but also thought, values and aesthetics. "I'm crafting a sci-fi story inspired by my own research and everyday life," said Zhao Xiaorui, an engineer and avid sci-fi fan, after the seminar. "With the society fast changing, life itself feels like science fiction, doesn't it?" - APP

GSP+ very  
important for  
Pak economy

FROM PAGE 01  
welcoming the Prime Minister to Brussels at mutually convenient dates. Prime Minister Sharif underscored the significance of the GSP Plus scheme and conveyed his keen interest in inaugurating the first-ever Pakistan-EU Business Forum, scheduled for April 28-29, 2026, in Islamabad. He also extended his good wishes to H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

Cricketer  
Shah gets  
Rs 20 mn...

FROM PAGE 01  
Whilst noting the unconditional apology tendered, Naseem is found to have breached various clauses of his central contract and a fine of Rs20 million has been imposed. It was noted that Naseem's social media adviser has already been terminated by him and shall be blacklisted by the PCB from associating with any player falling under the PCB's jurisdiction. The PCB remains committed to upholding professional standards, contractual obligations and the integrity of the game.

UAE takes  
hard line  
against...

FROM PAGE 01  
Many Iranian residents and investors now face uncertainty, with reports of repatriations and disrupted lives in one of the region's premier expat hubs.

ICCI hopes  
diplomacy will  
lead to peaceful  
resolution  
of conflict

DNA  
ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood has strongly commended Pakistan's proactive diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating the ongoing Middle East conflict, terming them vital for stabilizing global markets, protecting regional trade, and preventing further economic disruption. In a statement issued here on Monday, he praised the country's civil-military leadership for what he described as "proactive and strategic diplomacy" in initiating dialogue and peace efforts among the concerned parties. Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the ongoing conflict has been severely impacting global economies by pushing up energy prices, disrupting international trade routes, and contributing to rising inflation worldwide. He emphasized that timely diplomatic intervention is essential not only for regional peace but also for safeguarding economic stability.

High level  
meeting at  
CDA HQd

DNA  
ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held on Monday via Zoom at the CDA Headquarters between the Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, and Qatari investors regarding the promotion of the hospitality industry in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. The meeting was attended by CDA Board Members including Member Admin and Estate Talat Mehmood, Member Finance Tahir Naem, Member Planning and Design Dr. Khalid Hafiz, Member Engineering Syed Nafasat Raza, Member Environment Esfandyar Baloch along with other senior officers. The meeting discussed potential cooperation and investment opportunities in the hospitality sector within the Federal Capital, Islamabad. The participants were apprised of the investment opportunities in the hospitality industry and various hotel projects in Islamabad. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, said that there are excellent opportunities for investors in the hospitality industry.

## Briefs

## Germany, Syria 'working jointly' on refugee returns: Merz

BERLIN: Berlin and Damascus are working together to enable the return of more Syrian nationals from Germany to their home country, Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Monday. Germany is home to the largest Syrian diaspora in the European Union at more than a million, many of whom arrived during the peak of the migrant influx in 2015-2016. Speaking at a press conference alongside Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, Merz said: "We are working jointly toward more Syrians being able to return to their homeland." Sharaa said that "we are working with our friends in the German government to establish a 'circular' migration model." He said that such a model would "enable Syrians to contribute to the reconstruction of their homeland without giving up the stability and lives they have built here, for those who wish to stay." Merz also said Germany wanted to "support" reconstruction in Syria as it struggles to rebuild after a long and bloody civil war, adding that a German government delegation would travel to the Middle Eastern country to this end in the next few days.—APP

## Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.16 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.17. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.50 and Rs 280.2, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.66 to close at Rs 320.86 from the previous day's close of Rs 321.52, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 2 and closed at Rs 369.63 compared to the previous day's Rs 371.63. The exchange rate of the Emirati remained stagnant at Rs 76.01 while the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 paisa to close at Rs 74.38.—APP

## PSX plunges over 4,800 points

ISLAMABAD, Mar 30 (AP): The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a strong bearish trend on Monday, losing 4,864.54 points, a negative change of 3.21 percent, closing at 146,842.97 points against 151,707.52 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 529.130 million shares with a traded value of Rs 29.603 billion, compared to 435.513 million shares valuing Rs 23.989 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization declined to Rs 16.327 trillion from Rs 16.885 trillion a day earlier. Out of 481 active companies in the ready market, 51 advanced, 379 declined, and 51 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 56.526 million shares, followed by Bank of Punjab with 35.921 million shares and Dost Steels Limited with 31.661 million shares. The top gainers included Blessed Textiles Limited, which increased by Rs 79.91 to close at Rs 879.01, and Shahmurad Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 22.76 to settle at Rs 392.76. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 704.78 to close at Rs 15,500.00, while Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited fell by Rs 628.50 to close at Rs 23,952.50. In the futures market, turnover stood at 109.897 million shares with a traded value of Rs 7.123 billion, compared to 524.520 million shares worth Rs 19.587 billion in the previous session. Out of 311 futures-market companies, 8 recorded gains while 303 declined.—APP

## FM discusses digital transformation with VEON delegation

During the meeting, the Finance Minister highlighted that the spectrum auction was conducted through a transparent and consultative process, balancing pricing considerations with the need to foster a sustainable telecom ecosystem

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting at the Finance Division with a high-level delegation from VEON led by Mr. Kaan Terzio lu, Group CEO of VEON. The delegation also included Mr. Aamir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz, and Mr. Syed Zaheer Mehdi, Chief Corporate & Regulatory Officer, Jazz. At the outset, the Finance Minister warmly welcomed Mr. Terzio lu and appreciated his visit to Pakistan. Mr. Terzio lu congratulated the Finance Minister and the Government of Pakistan on the successful completion of the recent multiband spectrum auction and acknowledged the country's improving macroeconomic stability. During the meeting, the Finance Minister highlighted that the spectrum auction was conducted through a transparent and consultative process, balancing pricing considerations with the need to foster a sustainable telecom ecosystem. He emphasized that the outcome represents a "win-win" for all stakeholders, particularly benefiting the citizens of Pakistan through improved connectivity and digital services. The Minister noted that the successful auction has drawn international recognition, with Pakistan gaining prominence in global telecom discussions. He reiterated the government's commitment to transparency, policy consistency, and investor facilitation, under the leadership of the Prime Minister.



Discussions also covered Pakistan's broader economic outlook, ongoing reforms, and efforts to enhance international partnerships. The Finance Minister apprised the delegation of ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening macroeconomic stability, attracting foreign investment, and leveraging emerging technologies such

as artificial intelligence and digital finance. Mr. Terzio lu appreciated the government's efforts to create a conducive investment environment and reaffirmed VEON's commitment to expanding its footprint in Pakistan. He highlighted VEON's ambition to move beyond traditional telecom services and contribute to Pakistan's digital transformation.

Mr. Aamir Ibrahim, CEO Jazz, underscored the company's role in supporting the government's digitization agenda, particularly in the areas of digital payments and financial inclusion. He highlighted JazzCash's contributions to enabling targeted subsidy delivery and QR code-based payment solutions, developed in collaboration with government institutions. The Finance Minister acknowledged Jazz and VEON's contributions to Pakistan's digital ecosystem, especially in advancing the government's vision of a cashless economy. He appreciated their continued support in promoting innovation, financial inclusion, and technology-driven growth.—DNA

## El-Sisi warns oil could top \$200

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has choked off a crucial route that previously handled about a fifth of global oil supplies

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi urged US President Donald Trump on Monday to stop the Iran war, saying only he could do so, and warned that fears of the oil price going above \$200 a barrel were not exaggerated. "I tell President Trump: nobody can stop the war in our region in the Gulf but you," El-Sisi said at the Egypt Energy Show 2026 conference in Cairo. "Please, Mr. President, please. Please help us stop the war. You are capable of doing so," he added. Egypt, long a recipient of US military aid and support from wealthy Gulf countries, has also condemned Iranian attacks on Gulf Arab states and pushed diplomatic efforts to avoid a wider regional war. The war will trigger twin shocks of supply shortages and price rises, the full extent of which have yet to be felt, El-Sisi told the conference. "I fear that targeting energy facilities, whether production or refineries, will have very serious repercussions for the global economy and fuel prices," he said. Market watchers had warned "the price of a barrel of oil could reach more than \$200, and this is not an exaggeration," he added. El-Sisi also warned of a looming crisis for global food supplies, noting that disruptions to fertilizer exports will have a massive impact on prices. "Wealthy countries might be able to absorb this, but for middle-income and fragile economies, it could have a very, very severe impact on their stability," he said. Egypt and Israel have had diplomatic relations since a 1979 peace treaty that returned the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had captured in the 1967 war. However, the relationship is often termed a cold peace, and Cairo has long been wary that Palestinians could be forced from Gaza across its border. El-Sisi credited Trump with ending the war in Gaza, noting that he had also said only the US president could stop that conflict before a ceasefire agreement was signed in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh in November. Earlier, the Gulf Cooperation Council bloc's Secretary-General Jasssem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi urged the international community to protect vital maritime corridors, condemning Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its attacks on regional energy infrastructure. Addressing the conference virtually, he said Iranian aggression was a threat to the world. "The brutal Iranian threats against energy facilities and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz constitute not only a blatant violation of international law but also a direct threat to global energy," he said. GCC member states — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain — have faced drone and missile attacks. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has choked off a crucial route that previously handled about a fifth of global oil supplies.—APP

## Chinese hand-pulled noodles connect cultures

LANZHOU: With swift and practiced hands, 42-year-old Peng Jingjing twisted, stretched and folded dough into slender strands before a dozen students at the I.E.S. Hotel Escuela in Madrid, bringing the art of hand-pulled noodles to life. An associate professor at Lanzhou Resource and Environment Vocational and Technical University in northwest China's Gansu Province, Peng has been teaching the art of Lamian noodle making for nearly two years, and earlier this year she taught in Spain for the first time. In China, the wide variety of noodles is among the finest expressions of its culinary heritage, with traditional Lamian noodles, or hand-pulled noodles, serving as a signature specialty of Lanzhou. The growth of the Lamian noodle industry has provided local people with a pathway to poverty alleviation and economic prosperity. The Lamian noodle-making technique is recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage. For many years, however, the skill was passed down mainly through traditional master-apprentice relationships, without formal professional standards. In recent years, as Chinese culture has gained increasing global appeal, noodles have attracted a growing international following. In response, Lanzhou has strengthened support for vocational training institutions, offering structured courses that cultivate skilled Lamian noodle makers. Today, opportunities to learn the art of hand-pulled noodles in Lanzhou are becoming increasingly professional and systematic. Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, more Lamian noodle makers have sought new business opportunities outside China. By 2025, the total number of Lamian noodle restaurants — both domestically and abroad — had reached 71,000, according to the Gansu Provincial Department of Commerce. To better support the overseas expansion of the Lamian noodle industry, Lanzhou Resource and Environment Vocational and Technical University established a talent training base in Barcelona last year. The university also launched an international Lamian beef noodle chef training program for local vocational students, benchmarked against the standards of UK NARIC, the National Recognition Information Center for Britain. As the university's first instructor dispatched to Spain, Peng began coordinating with the faculty of I.E.S. Hotel Escuela months in advance. She also prepared Spanish-language teaching materials to ensure local students could fully engage with the program. The three-day course in January combined both theoretical lessons and hands-on practice. At the end of the program, every student took a qualification test, with successful participants earning credit points officially recognized by their institution. During the course, students were amazed by the skill of transforming dough into hair-thin noodles and intrigued by the use of traditional Chinese medicinal ingredients in the broth. "Although we cannot speak each other's language, we communicated smoothly using translation tools," Peng said, adding that they told her how much they enjoyed the course and hoped she would teach them every day. The training also attracted representatives from a local Lamian noodle restaurant to engage with the program.—DNA

## China-backed Mekong kids' heart care project launched

PHNOM PENH: A China-backed Mekong children's heart care project was officially launched in Cambodia on Monday, aiming at delivering life-saving treatment to children with congenital heart disease (CHD). Funded by China through the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, the landmark project is implemented by the Mekong Institute, in close partnership with the Ministries of Health of Cambodia and Laos, with technical support from the Fwui Hospital of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences. "The project will screen at least 40,000 children in Cambodia, including 10,000 ultrasound screenings, provide full-cycle treatment for at least 40 children with CHD, and train more than 100 healthcare professionals," a press release said. It added that the project will also provide essential medical equipment and support advanced training for Cambodian doctors. Hok Kimcheng, director general for Health at Cambodia's Ministry of Health, said CHD remained a public health concern, affecting the lives of many children and families, early detection, timely diagnosis, and appropriate treatment are essential to improve the survival and quality of life. "This project reflects our shared commitment to strengthen the health system through the technology transfer, capacity building, and regional cooperation," he said. Kimcheng added that the project has adopted a comprehensive approach, combining school-based screening, advanced diagnostics, referral systems, treatment, and follow-up care. "We are confident that this collaboration will not only benefit Cambodian children, but also contribute to the broader regional effort in addressing CHD," he said. Suriyan Vichitkarn, executive director of Mekong Institute, said the project reflected China's firm commitment to advancing the Global Development Initiative and accelerating progress toward the UN 2030 Agenda, as well as shared determination to improve access to care for children with CHD.—DNA

## Pakistan, Kuwait for enhancing regional uplifts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting on Monday with Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan, to discuss bilateral relations, energy cooperation, and regional developments. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed gratitude to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) for assuring full facilitation to Pakistani-flagged vessels for any likely lifting of diesel and jet fuel from Kuwait. The Minister acknowledged Kuwait's continued support for Pakistan despite global and regional challenges and expressed deep appreciation for Kuwait's contribution toward Pakistan's energy security. He requested the Ambassador to convey his fondest regards to Kuwait's Minister of Oil, Tariq Suleiman Ahmed Al-Roumi, and the CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Sheikh Nawaf Al Sabah. During the meeting, the Federal Minister highlighted the historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Kuwait, stating that the relationship between the two countries is not only longstanding but also "connected by hearts." He noted that for the past five decades, Pakistan has been purchasing petroleum products, particularly diesel, from Kuwait, reflecting the enduring trust and part-



## Bangladesh turns off lights as Mideast war deepens energy crunch

DHAKA: Bangladesh has ordered civil servants to switch off the lights and turn down air conditioning to save power as the Mideast war worsens an energy crunch, officials said Monday. The South Asian nation of 170 million people imports 95 percent of its oil and gas needs. The Ministry of Public Administration issued a string of orders regarding office attendance and saving electricity and fuel, ministry official Sakawat Hossain told AFP on Monday. "Only the necessary number of lights, fans, air conditioners, and other electrical equipment should be used," the order issued late Sunday read. It also reminded workers to turn off the lights when they leave, and ordered that air conditioning temperatures must be set at 25 degrees Celsius, or warmer. Bangladesh has said it is seeking loans of around \$2 billion from multilateral donors to tackle energy worries. The government has already taken several measures to curb fuel consumption, including setting limits on fuel purchases, halting production at most fertilizer factories, and deploying police to patrol filling stations.—APP

## Russia expels UK diplomat on spying allegations

MOSCOW: Russia on Monday ordered a diplomat at the British embassy in Moscow to leave the country over allegations he was working as a spy, Russia's FSB security service reported. Moscow and London have expelled multiple embassy staff over the last decade, both trading accusations of espionage. Expulsions from one side have typically been followed by a tit-for-tat response from the other. The diplomat, whom the FSB named as 29-year-old embassy secretary Albertus Gerhardus Janse Van Rensburg, was expelled for engaging in "subversive intelligence activities that threaten Russia's security," the FSB said. "A decision was made to strip Janse Van Rensburg of his accreditation, and he was ordered to leave Russia within two weeks," it added. The Russian foreign ministry said it had summoned Britain's charge d'affaires over the incident and warned the United Kingdom not to retaliate. The British embassy made no immediate public comment. Relations between London and Moscow, currently at a low point over the Ukraine war, have been strained by spying allegations for decades.—APP

## Heavy rain, floods kill 22 people in Afghanistan

KABUL: Heavy rain that triggered severe flooding and caused buildings to collapse has killed 22 people and injured 32 in Afghanistan over the last two days, the country's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said on Monday, as it warned of continued risk due to bad weather. Most of the deaths were reported from the central and eastern provinces of the war-shattered South Asian nation, including Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Daykundi and Logar, where torrential rain triggered flash floods and caused houses to collapse in rural and mountainous regions, the authority said. Conditions remained "unstable" in parts of the country on Monday, with continued risk of further rain and flooding in some areas, it said. Twenty-two people were killed, 32 injured and 241 houses damaged in flooding and other weather-related incidents across 13 provinces over the past two days, an NDMA official, who did not want to be named because he was not authorized to speak to the media, told Reuters. Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters and the United Nations lists it among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. With international aid, which formed the backbone of the government's finances, slashed since the Taliban seized power in 2021, the country has been struggling to cope.—APP

## Briefs

### Afghan Taliban open fire in Bajaur sectors

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire in the Bajaur sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday, said security sources. They added that Pakistan's security forces "retaliated vigorously" after Afghan Taliban fighters opened fire with "small and large weapons" along different areas of the border district. Security sources further said retaliatory fire by Pakistani forces silenced the enemy's guns and "Afghan posts from which Pakistan was being fired at were also destroyed".

According to local security officials, Pakistan "did not target any civilian population, but only targeted those posts from which continuous firing was being done". The Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday said that the temporary pause in Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against the Afghan Taliban over Eidul Fitr had concluded, and the operation will continue "until its objectives are achieved".

FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi made these remarks while responding to questions during his weekly press briefing regarding whether the pause had been extended. The operation was launched on the night of Feb 26, following unprovoked cross-border attacks by the Afghan Taliban. Earlier this month, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir said that peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan could only prevail if the Taliban regime "renounced their support for terrorism and terrorist organisations". Relations between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban are at their lowest point in the four years since the group came to power.

### High alert in Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police officers remained actively deployed across the Red Zone and other parts of the district to ensure the safety and security of citizens, with Superintendent of Police (SP) Judicial Protection Unit Muhammad Iqbal Khan briefing personnel on their duties. An official told APP on Monday that SP Judicial Protection Unit Muhammad Iqbal Khan visited various security points and reviewed duty arrangements of police personnel deployed in sensitive areas. SP Iqbal briefed officers about the nature of their responsibilities and directed them to remain alert while performing their duties with professionalism and dedication. He emphasized that ensuring the protection of citizens and maintaining law and order remained the foremost priority of Islamabad Police, adding that no negligence in security duties would be tolerated. The SP Iqbal further instructed personnel to maintain strict vigilance, keep a close watch on suspicious activities, and immediately report any unusual situation to the relevant authorities. - APP

# President, PM discuss internal, external issues

The meeting comes a day after the quadrilateral ministerial moot in Islamabad, involving the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt, discussing possible ways to bring an "early and permanent end" to the war in region

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday called on President Asif Ali Zardari to discuss the overall national security situation and key challenges facing the country, according to the President's Secretariat. The meeting comes a day after the quadrilateral ministerial moot in Islamabad, involving the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt,



discussing possible ways to bring an "early and permanent end" to the war in the region. The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkiye had also called on PM Shehbaz after the meeting concluded. According to President's Secretariat, the meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. National Security Adviser and Inter-Services Intelligence Director General Asim Malik also participated in the meeting. During the meeting, participants held a detailed discussion on the overall national security situation, reviewed the evolving regional scenario and its implications for Pakistan, the secretariat said. They further deliberated on economic, energy and security challenges, it added. It stated that the leadership also "emphasised the need for a coordinated national strategy and institutional harmony". Last week, President Zardari had also chaired a high-level meeting with PM Shehbaz, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir and other ministers. The meeting had reviewed the economic, energy and regional situation amid oil and gas supply concerns, focusing on coordination, austerity, fuel conservation and public relief.

## PMDC takes note of filming of surgery

"The council has directed all concerned individuals to submit a detailed explanation, clarifying their roles and the circumstances surrounding the incident," it said

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) on Monday took notice of what it called a "disturbing incident" regarding the filming of patients mid surgery at Lahore's Lady Willingdon Hospital. The video in question, which was widely shared on social media, showed doctors performing what appeared to be C-sections on two patients in the same operating theatre, with a medical curtain in the middle. The person filming the video can be heard saying that a "competition was underway". On Saturday, the Punjab government had suspended the medical superintendent (MS), head of the gynae department, a woman medical officer, five postgraduate resident doctors, two nurses, and a hospital staff member due to the incident.

In a statement released on Monday, the PMDC said, "According to initial reports, a video recorded inside an operating theatre, purportedly showing medical staff engaging in unprofessional conduct and inappropriately treating surgical procedures, has circulated widely." It said the incident had

"raised grave concerns regarding patient dignity, confidentiality and adherence to established medical ethics".

The council said it had formally issued notices to the hospital administration as well as the doctors allegedly involved in recording and disseminating the video.

"The council has directed all concerned individuals to submit a detailed explanation, clarifying their roles and the circumstances surrounding the incident," it said.

It said that the recording of patients without consent, particularly in sensitive clinical environments such as operating theatres, constituted a "serious breach of professional ethics and may violate patient rights and confidentiality standards".

It further said that PMDC President Prof Dr Rizwan Taj had taken notice of the incident and said that such actions were "unacceptable and will be dealt with strictly under the relevant regulatory framework". The council said it had sought comprehensive details of the identification of doctors involved in filming and sharing the footage, consent procedures, if any, followed, before recording and disciplinary measures taken by the hospital administration.

## Court acquits triple murder case accused

NEWS DESK

HYDERABAD: The Model Criminal Court of Dadu on Monday acquitted all eight accused in the triple murder case of an ex-PPP UC chairman and his two sons in the district's Mehar town. The ex-UC chairman, Raees Karamullah Chandio and two sons, Mukhtiar and Qabil, were gunned down in an armed attack on their residence in Ahmed Colony on Jan 17, 2018. The attack was blamed on their PPP colleagues, MPA and Chandio tribe chieftain Sardar Chandio and his brother Burhan Chandio. Both the accused were members of the Sindh Assembly at the time of the offence. Mukhtiar's daughter Umm-i-Rabab Chandio, who is a lawyer, has been pursuing the case along with other counsel. During today's hearing, an additional session judge, Hassan Ali Kalwar, ruled that the prosecution failed to prove the case and

acquitted the accused, extending them the benefit of the doubt.

Other than the two MPAs, the accused included Sikandar Ali Chandio, Ali Gohar Chandio, Abdul Sattar Chandio, Zulfiqar alias Qadoo Chandio, Ghulam Murtaza Chandio, and Abdul Kareem Chandio.

The court directed that those accused in custody were to be "set free forthwith if they were not required in any custody case/crime, with an acquittal intimation, and be remanded back to jail custody".

Bail bonds and sureties of the accused, shown to be on bail, stand discharged, the court ruled. The complainant's counsel, Salahuddin Panhwar, in a statement, said, "We are going to challenge the verdict in the Sindh High Court". He maintained that the case was "fit for conviction, but all the accused were acquitted". "We presented evidence that was sufficient enough to even convict Sardar Khan Chandio for the offence of Section 109 Pakistan Penal Code," he added.

## FPCCI hails export relief for Iran, Central Asia

The FPCCI leader emphasized the need for expanding bilateral trade ties with Iran to unlock new avenues for industrial growth and regional integration

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Chairman BMP-Progressive and Senior Vice President Federation Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), has welcomed the federal government's decision to grant a temporary exemption from bank guarantees and letters of credit (LCs) for exports to Iran and Central Asian states, calling it a timely move to facilitate trade and support exporters. In a statement, Saquib Fayyaz Magoon described the relaxation as a "positive and pragmatic step" that would ease financial constraints and help revive cross-border trade through land routes. Under the new arrangement, exporters will be allowed to ship goods via Iran to destinations including Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries without the previously mandatory financial documentation, a move expected to streamline export procedures and reduce transaction delays. Mr. Magoon expressed appreciation for Commerce Minister Jam Kamal, noting that the decision would not only simplify export mechanisms but also strengthen regional trade connectivity and generate

broader economic benefits. However, he urged the government to go a step further by allowing the import of industrial raw materials—particularly petrochemicals—from Iran. He argued that access to competitively priced Iranian inputs could significantly reduce production costs for Pakistani industries.

"Global and domestic prices of petrochemicals remain elevated, placing immense pressure on manufacturers," he said, adding that cheaper imports from Iran would provide much-needed relief and improve the price competitiveness of Pakistani goods in international markets.

He maintained that lower input costs would ultimately translate into higher exports, contributing to an increase in foreign exchange earnings and helping stabilize the country's external account.

The FPCCI leader emphasized the need for expanding bilateral trade ties with Iran to unlock new avenues for industrial growth and regional integration. He expressed optimism that the government would take the business community's recommendations seriously and introduce further measures to strengthen exports and industrial productivity.

## Punjab schools open tomorrow

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for School Education Rana Sikandar Hayat said on Monday that educational activities in the province would resume from April 1 (Wednesday), with classes taking place five days a week. He made the statement in a post on the social media platform X.

Separately, in an official statement, the minister reiterated that schools in Punjab would reopen on April 1 and that classes would take place five days a week.

He also said that the "hybrid system" would not work, adding that the classes would be in-person.

"Students should come to school and study," he said.

On March 9, the provincial government had announced that educational institutions, including schools, colleges and universities, would remain closed from March 10 to March 31 amid the global fuel crisis triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran. Meanwhile, the Punjab government on Monday also stated that a notification circulating on social media regarding classes four days a week was fake.

## Ukraine apologizes to Finland

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine said Monday it had apologized to Helsinki after two Ukrainian drones crashed in southern Finland over the weekend, adding that they were likely knocked off course by Russian interference.

Moscow fires hundreds of drones at Ukraine in nightly barrages, with Kyiv increasingly retaliating with its own strikes targeting energy and military sites.

"Under no circumstances were any Ukrainian drones directed toward Finland. The most likely cause is interference from Russian electronic warfare systems. We have already apologized to the Finnish side for this incident," Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Georgiy Tykhy told reporters.

Ukraine struck port facilities on the Russian coast in the Gulf of Finland, close to Russia's border with the NATO and EU member, several times last week.

## PSX falls as oil surge, bond yields rattle investors

KSE-100 Index crashes to intraday low of 144,656.97, falling 7,050.54 points, or 4.65%

THE bourse fell on Monday as surging oil prices and rising bond yields intensified fears of imported inflation and external-account stress, with investors also tracking the widening Middle East conflict and its spillover risks for trade and industrial activity. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index traded between a high of 151,813.61 (up 106.10 points, or 0.07%) and a low of 144,656.97 (down 7,050.54 points, or 4.65%) compared to the previous close of 151,707.51. "Stocks witnessed selling amid concerns for Middle East conflict impacting industrials output and surging interest rates," said Ahsan Mehanati, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Arif Habib Commodities. "Surging Govt bond yields, higher crude oil prices impacting external account played catalyst role in bearish activity at PSX," he added. Oil rallied as the conflict entered its fifth week, with Yemen's Houthi rebels saying they fired cruise missiles and drones at strategic sites in Israel, adding to concerns about a widening theatre and disruption

risks around the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.

Saudi Arabia rerouted much of its oil exports via the Red Sea to avoid Hormuz, which the report said has been effectively closed, pushing crude to its highest level since earlier in the month; Brent climbed close to \$117 a barrel at one point. Risk aversion also hit global equities, with heavy falls reported across Asian markets after Wall Street's sell-off. Adding to the cautious mood were US President Donald Trump's remarks about wanting to "take the oil in Iran" and that the United States could take Kharg Island "very easily", while Iran's parliament speaker warned Washington was "secretly planning a ground attack".

Foreign flows remained under pressure. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data showed overseas investors withdrew a net \$177.9 million from Pakistan's Treasury Bills (T-bills) as of March 19, compared with \$31.2 million in February, while also selling \$21 million in Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) and \$148.7 million from their Pakistan Stock Exchange portfolios by March 19. Overall, the report said foreign investors sold T-bills, PIBs and equities worth \$348 million as heightened global risk sentiment and higher oil prices drove a flight from emerging-market exposure. On the inflation front, weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) rose 0.97% in the week ended March 26 to 345.45 points, and was up 8.24% year-on-year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. - Agencies



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