



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 03, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Pakistan will never compromise on its sovereignty: Zardari**

Detailed News On Page-08

**How France arms can protect EU**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Deputy PM Dar briefs diplomatic corps on ME**

Detailed News On Page-01

## Briefs

**EU states expected to discuss defence**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The EU is expected to discuss potentially activating a mutual assistance clause in view of an escalation of the Iran war touching one of its nations, Brussels said Monday. "This question [...] is certainly going to be discussed in the coming days, in the various meetings that are foreseen," commission spokeswoman Paula Pinho told a press conference. "For the moment no such discussion has taken place." Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen stressed earlier that, while Cyprus was "not the target" of the drone attack, the EU was solidly behind its member states. "We stand collectively, firmly and unequivocally with our Member States in the face of any threat," she wrote on X.

**Israeli PM Netanyahu's office attacked**

DNA

TEL AVIV: Iran's Revolutionary Guards has said their missile attacks have targeted the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the headquarters of the Israeli air force commander. "The office of the criminal prime minister of the Zionist regime and the headquarters of the regime's air force commander were targeted," the Guards said in a statement carried by Fars news agency. It said Kheibar missiles were used in the attack.

**Pakistan stock market crashes**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) opened the week deep in the red on Monday as escalating US-Iran tensions, which have also roiled global equity markets, triggered panic selling. The PSX's benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 151,972.99 points, down 16,089.17 points, or -9.57%, from the previous close of 168,062.16, marking its highest ever one-day fall. The index touched an intraday high of 159,328.59 (down 8,733.57 points, or -7.23%) and a low of 151,747.96 (down 16,314.2 points, or -9.71%), compared with the previous close of 168,062.16. It plunged over 15,000 points to start the session, prompting a trading halt for about an hour under the exchange's risk-management rule before trading resumed. "Due to panic selling, PSX fell 9%. Leveraged position coupled with Iran and Afghanistan positions added fuel to the fire," Topline Securities CEO Mohammed Sohail told Geo.tv. AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst, said: "This is panic mode. May last a few days. Keep an eye on Oil. Below 80 should settle the market by Friday." Trading was halted for 45 minutes till 10:27am before resuming. Military strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran showed no sign of lessening, while Iran responded with missile barrages across the region. Topline said the conflict has raised economic risks for Pakistan despite no direct involvement.

## Middle East; Afghan issues

# No law allows to target heads of states: Dar

He regretted that despite repeated assurances, the Afghan regime never fulfilled its commitment and instead the terrorist attacks with evidenced involvement of Afghanistan increased manifold across Pakistan

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has said Pakistan remains a strong proponent of regional peace and stability but it will make no compromise on its sovereignty and safety of its people. He was briefing members of diplomatic corps in Islamabad this afternoon about Pakistan's position on regional situation and its ongoing response against the unprovoked aggression of Afghan Taliban regime. Ishaq Dar said Pakistan did everything it could for peace and stability in Afghanistan, whether through humanitarian relief assistance, hosting refugees, or providing scholarships to Afghan students. He said Pakistan's only demand from Afghanistan was to take action against the TTP and other terrorist outfits operating from their soil. He regretted that despite repeated assurances, the Afghan regime never fulfilled its commitment and instead the terrorist attacks with evidenced involvement of Afghanistan increased manifold across Pakistan. He said these attacks even targeted civilians and places of worship. Ishaq Dar said it is in this backdrop and following Afghanistan's provocative actions on Thursday last, that Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil Haq. He, however, made it clear that all attacks by Pakistan's security forces

## Chinese envoy meets Ishaq Dar

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in the region and beyond. He was talking to Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong in Islamabad on Monday. They discussed the evolving regional situation and broader developments. Ishaq Dar emphasized the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, and continued consultations.

es under this Operation are very precise, proportionate and measured based on intelligence and it is being ensured that no civilian is targeted in these attacks. He said Pakistan is acting in self-defence and exercising maximum restraint in accordance with the international law and UN Charter.

Continued on Page 06

## Middle East tensions

# PM forms 18-member committee to oversee oil prices amid conflict

*Finance minister-led committee to monitor fuel supply, forex exposure and fiscal impact amid oil price volatility*

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has constituted an 18-member high-level committee to oversee the impact of rising international oil prices on the country's economy in the wake of the US-Israeli attack on Iran. According to a notification issued by the Prime Minister's Office on Monday, the committee has been formed after international oil prices showed an upward trend amid the evolving regional situation. The prime minister constituted the body to monitor price volatility and devise a mitigation strategy for Pakistan's economy, the notification said. Oil prices soared and stocks fell in Asia on Monday after US-Israeli strikes on Iran sent investors fleeing the prospect of an extended conflict in the crude-rich Middle East. Brent briefly spiked almost 14% and West Texas Intermediate nearly 12% at the start of business after the attack on

Continued on Page 06

## Oil prices sky rocket

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Oil prices surged by as much as 13 per cent on Monday after shipping in the crucial Strait of Hormuz was disrupted by retaliatory Iranian attacks following initial bombing by Israel and the United States that killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Brent crude futures rose to as much as \$82.37 a barrel, the highest since January 2025, before retreating to be up \$5.41, or 7.4pc, to \$78.28 by 06:05. US West Texas Intermediate crude climbed to an intraday high of \$75.33, up over 12pc and the highest since June, though it later pared gains and was up

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar briefs the diplomatic corps. - DNA

## PM Shehbaz lauds role of Oman Sultan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman. The two leaders discussed the prevailing regional situation that had aggravated following Israel's attack on Iran as well as subsequent hostilities that had endangered the peace and security of the entire region.

The Prime Minister said that the escalation had taken place at a time when diplomatic efforts were underway to reduce U.S.-Iran tensions, facilitated by Oman. The attacks had not only derailed the delicate diplomatic process, but had also undermined efforts to promote dialogue and de-escalation in the region. He stressed upon the urgent need to prevent further escalation and to create space for resumption of diplomatic initiatives. While conveying his deep appreciation for Oman's mediatory role, the Prime Minister commended

Continued on Page 06

## China calls for ceasefire

DNA

BEIJING: China called on Monday for a ceasefire and diplomatic talks to end the conflict in the Middle East as it stretched into a third day. "The most urgent task is a cessation of military operations and preventing a spillover of conflict," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a news conference, urging "a resolution through dialogue and negotiation." One Chinese citizen was killed in Tehran, she said, where Israel and the United States have been carrying out strikes in an operation that killed the Islamic republic's supreme leader. Meanwhile, British Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper on Monday said an unmanned drone that struck a UK military base on Cyprus hit the runway. "This is an unmanned drone strike specifically on the airport runway... we're not able to provide further

Continued on Page 06

## Israeli attacks kill 31 in Lebanon

# Kuwait confirms 'several' US military aircraft 'crashed'

The exact number of aircraft involved has not been specified beyond "several," and the precise cause remains under joint investigation by Kuwaiti and US authorities

MONITORING DESK

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Ministry of Defense has confirmed that several US military aircraft crashed in Kuwaiti territory on March 2, 2026, amid the escalating Middle East conflict. All crew members survived the incidents, with pilots and other personnel ejecting safely via parachute before the crashes occurred. The affected crews were quickly rescued by local authorities, evacuated, and transported to hospitals where they remain in stable condition with no reported fatalities or serious injuries. Videos circulating online and geolocated by outlets such as CNN show at least one fighter jet, identified as appearing to be an F-15E Strike Eagle, spiraling downward in a tailspin while on fire before impacting the ground near the US Ali Al Salem Air Base, roughly within 10 kilometers of the facility in areas like west of Al Jahra.

Separate footage captures a pilot descending safely under parachute, with some locals assisting upon landing in certain instances. The exact number of aircraft involved has not been specified beyond "several," and the precise cause remains under joint investigation by Kuwaiti and US authorities. Speculation includes potential Iranian missile or drone strikes as part of Tehran's retaliatory actions against US-allied Gulf states following recent

Continued on Page 06

## US, Israel hit Hezbollah in Iraq

NEWS DESK

BAGHDAD: New strikes have hit a military base in Iraq housing the Iran-backed Kataeb Hezbollah group, while in the Kurdish city of Irbil air defenses intercepted drone attacks.

"Three strikes hit Jurf Al-Nasr," a Kataeb Hezbollah source told AFP, referring to a military base that serves as one of the main bastions of the powerful armed group, which has been targeted several times since the start of the Israel-US campaign against Iran.

Iraq, which has recently regained a sense of stability but has long been a proxy battleground between the US and Iran, said it did not want to be dragged into the war. But it has not been spared. From the early hours of the campaign against Iran, strikes blamed on the US and Israel hit Iran-backed groups, which have vowed retaliation. On Sunday, nine Iran-backed fighters were killed in separate strikes, including five from

Continued on Page 06

# Crackdown against Afghan nationals intensifies in KP

Members of the Afghan community say fear of arrest has confined many families to their homes. Some allege that adults and teenagers are being detained, and in certain cases women have also been taken into custody. There are complaints that detainees face difficulties contacting relatives and arranging basic necessities

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have intensified action against Afghan nationals across the province, particularly in Peshawar, amid renewed tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to sources, raids on rented houses, shops and markets have become routine, with police and other law enforcement agencies detaining Afghan nationals and shifting them to police stations for further processing and deportation. The crackdown reportedly gathered pace following recent armed clashes between security forces of the two countries and the temporary closure of border crossings, including Torkham. Video messages circulating on social media purportedly show instructions to police officials to tighten enforcement measures. It is being claimed that police stations have been assigned daily targets for detentions, though officials have not publicly confirmed such directives.

Members of the Afghan community say fear of arrest has confined many families to their homes. Some allege that adults and teenagers are being detained, and in certain cases women have also been taken into custody. There are complaints that detainees face difficulties contacting relatives and arranging basic necessities.

Observers note that many Afghan nationals have lived in Pakistan for decades, running small businesses and maintaining close social ties with local communities. Critics of the ongoing operation argue that while repatriation may be a state policy decision, it should be carried out in a humane and orderly manner, allowing families reasonable time to settle the affairs. They also stress the need to ensure compliance with international norms relating to migration and asylum, and to avoid creating hardship during the holy month of Ramadan. Officials maintain that measures are being taken in accordance with government directives and security considerations. The situation remains fluid as authorities continue enforcement actions across the province.

**SERENA HOTELS**

*Destination Weddings*

Hunza Serena Hotel | Sost Serena Hotel

For more Information, please contact: 0355 4899913

## Over 35 schools closed in Khyber amid border tension

PESHAWAR: In light of the recent tension on Afghanistan border areas, the district administration has ordered the closure of 37 public and private schools located near border areas, Deputy Commissioner Khyber said on Monday.

According to the official statement, all public and private schools for boys and girls situated in the border areas of Landi Kotal have been closed until further orders. A formal directive has been issued to the district education department for immediate implementation. The decision has been taken in view of the prevailing border situation and alleged provocation from the Afghan side. The primary objective of closing the educational institutions is to ensure the safety and security of students and teaching staff. The district administration stated that the situation is being continuously monitored, and a decision regarding the re-opening of schools will be made once conditions improve.—APP

## PHC implements transparent recruitment reforms

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court, under the vision of the Chief Justice on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ESEA) for appointments in the High Court establishment as well as the District Judiciary across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The initiative was part of a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at ensuring merit, transparency and standardization in recruitment to strengthen institutional efficiency and credibility. Under the arrangement, ESEA will manage online applications, conduct biometric verification through NADRA E-Sahulat Centers, hold computer-based and skill-based examinations, and compile results along with provisional merit lists in accordance with prescribed weightages and standardized procedures.—APP

## Punjab directs for 24/7 emergency readiness

RAWALPINDI: In view of the prevailing situation, the Punjab government on Sunday directed all public sector hospitals across the province to remain on 24/7 emergency alert and maintain full operational readiness. According to official instructions, emergency wards, operation theaters and trauma centres have been ordered to remain fully functional at all times. Availability of specialist doctors and essential medicines has also been ensured to deal with any contingency. The directive emphasized that all administrative and medical staff must remain vigilant and prepared to respond promptly to any emergency. Officials said the government was committed to protecting every human life through a coordinated strategy and swift response mechanism, ensuring uninterrupted healthcare services across Punjab.—APP

# India defies WB guarantee with abeyance of IWT

PESHAWAR: The illegal abeyance of Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by Hinduvata Indian regime has shaken the World Bank-backed accord signed by President Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1960. "The illegal suspension of IWT by India has raised serious questions regarding powers and influence of the World Bank as PM Modi unilateral action was beyond of the top bank guarantee," said Professor Dr. A.H Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department at University of Peshawar while talking to APP on Monday. Strongly condemning India's unilateral decision to hold IWT in abeyance, he said that it was a test case for World Bank-brokered agreement to force India to immediately reverse its decision or in future no country will accept the bank's framework of guarantees," said Dr Hilali. He said the illegal step could undermine established dispute-resolution mechanisms and regional stability besides creating escalation in the already stressed security environment, especially in the Middle East. The landmark treaty has long been regarded as a model of water-sharing cooperation between the two neighboring countries, having remained intact despite decades of political tensions and

armed conflicts between the two countries. International law expert and senior advocate supreme court, Asif Yousafzai said India has lost all legal grounds after historic ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague. He said the International Court's ruling has reaffirmed the binding nature of the Treaty's design and operational provisions and declared India's move illegal. He said the international court has clearly ruled that IWT are still in force and no country can suspend or hold it in abeyance unilaterally. He argued that any withdrawal from or suspension of the Treaty framework could weaken confidence in international agreements and legal commitments besides further exposed negative designs of the fascist Modi regime against Pakistan. Yousafzai said the unilateral measures affecting the Treaty pose challenges to its core principles and broader norms of international law. IWT includes established mechanisms such as the Permanent Indus Commission, neutral experts, and arbitration procedures designed to keep technical disputes separated from political escalation and conflicts. Any disruption in the flow of the western rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Treaty could have negative implications

for water availability, agriculture, fisheries, bees population and food security in downstream areas of Punjab and Azad Kashmir, framing the matter as both a legal and humanitarian concern. Pakistan has pursued dispute resolution through legal and institutional channels, including arbitration and neutral expert processes provided under the Treaty. He maintained that decisions rendered by the PCA remain binding under international law, regardless of participation by either party. Dr Ejaz Khan, former Chairman International Relations UoP said that the Treaty does not provide for unilateral suspension, and warned that setting such a precedent could have broader implications for other transboundary river agreements worldwide. If today India stops Pakistan water being an upper riparian country that in future China could take the same step against India, he said. He also stressed that disputes over infrastructure design and water storage can be addressed within the Treaty's technical framework. The experts condemned recent remarks by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah regarding non restoration of the Treaty, suggesting that the issue should remain within legal and technical parameters rather than becoming politicized.—DNA

# CDA unveils cleanliness drive to upgrade sanitation system

Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, directed that a three-bin system be ensured in commercial Markazs so that waste can be separated and recycled. He said that local traders should also be included in the cleanliness campaign in commercial Markazs and trade centers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held on Monday at the headquarters of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to review and finalize a comprehensive strategy aimed at ensuring a high standard of cleanliness and sanitation across the Federal Capital.

The meeting was chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, and attended by CDA Board Member Administration Talat Mehmood, Director General (DG) Building Control and Housing, DG Environment, Director Solid Waste Management, Chief Officer MCI, and other senior officials. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, said that a comprehensive cleanliness system should be devised for the immediate resolution of sanitation-related issues in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. He said that in this regard, a special cleanliness campaign will be launched across Islamabad. The meeting decided to immediately fulfill the requirement for new machinery and manpower to improve secondary and primary collection across the City. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, said that special attention will be given to modern equipment, machinery, manpower and planning to solve sanitation problems in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. During the briefing on various measures regarding sanitation in the Federal Capital, Islamabad, it was informed that the number of waste containers in urban and rural areas will be increased. It was briefed that the repair work of damaged waste containers installed in the city will also be carried out and the number of waste trolleys for sanitation will also be increased. Similarly, dustbins will be installed across the city for waste disposal. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, directed that a three-bin system be ensured in commercial Markazs so that waste can be separated and recycled. He said that local traders should also be included in the cleanliness campaign in commercial Markazs and trade centers. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that mohallah committees should be formed for local residents to improve the sanitation system. He directed that challans and fines be imposed against elements spreading littering in Markazs and commercial areas. He said that the Islamabad Food Authority



should also take action against the restaurants responsible for the waste. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that a 24/7 control room should be established to monitor the sanitation process in the city. He said that helpline numbers for resolving citizens' complaints should be displayed on digital screens across the City for public awareness. The meeting was briefed that the provision of wireless sets and new uniforms is being ensured for the field staff for quick response. The

meeting was informed that the process of licensing and registration will be initiated for scavengers (individuals lifting garbage) in different areas. Chairman CDA Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, said that these measures will bring significant improvement in the solid waste system of Islamabad and citizens will be able to have a clean environment. He further said that all resources will be utilized to make the Federal Capital, Islamabad, a clean City.

## LCCI strongly advocates 'One City, One Chamber' principle

LAHORE: Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) President Faheemur Rehman Saigol here Monday categorically clarified LCCI's position regarding the proposed Trade Organizations Rules 2013 Amendment Bill, stating that the amendment is purely clarificatory in nature and aimed solely at ensuring unified citywide representation in an official communication addressed to all Chambers of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) across Pakistan. President LCCI underscored that certain misconceptions and misrepresentations surrounding the proposed amendment required immediate correction in the larger interest of institutional clarity and national business unity. He emphasized that there is no attempt whatsoever to override, dilute, or negate the Trade Organizations Act, 2013. The proposed amendment to the Trade Organizations Rules, 2013 is intended only to rectify a structural anomaly that uniquely affects Karachi due to its administrative configuration. Under the Trade Organizations Act, 2013, a chamber may be established for each district. Across Pakistan, this provision has never generated complications because major metropolitan cities such as Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Faisalabad, and

Peshawar fall within their respective single administrative district. Consequently, each of these cities is represented by one unified chamber. Karachi, however, stands as a unique case. Unlike any other metropolitan city in Pakistan, Karachi has been administratively divided into multiple districts solely for governance and administrative convenience, Faheemur Rehman Saigol said, adding that this administrative division was never intended to fragment the city's commercial identity or economic representation. Nevertheless, the mechanical application of the district-based provision of the Act to Karachi creates the anomaly of multiple chambers within a single metropolitan city, a situation unprecedented anywhere else in Pakistan. The President LCCI stated that the Chamber firmly believes Karachi, like every other major city of Pakistan, must continue to be represented by one unified institution. The objective of the proposed Trade Organizations Rules 2013 Amendment Bill is simply to ensure parity and consistency so that Karachi is treated on the same footing as other metropolitan centers where a single chamber represents the entire city. He further clarified that the proposed amendment will not affect any chamber, trade body, or

association anywhere else in Pakistan. It does not alter the legal status, jurisdiction, or operational mandate of any existing organization in any other city. The amendment is confined exclusively to Karachi to ensure that the entire commercial and industrial community of the country's largest economic hub continues to be represented effectively by one institution, the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry, which has been serving the business community since 1959. He stated that the Lahore Chamber has always enjoyed close, cordial, and highly constructive relations with Chambers across Pakistan, and that all Chambers regularly work together, particularly in presenting joint budget proposals and raising a unified voice on national economic issues. While categorically rejecting any suggestion of vested interest or targeting, President LCCI emphasized that LCCI would never take a position that could undermine fellow Chambers with whom it shares longstanding and respectful working relationships. Faheemur Rehman Saigol emphasized that institutional consistency, clarity of representation, and unified advocacy are essential at a time when Pakistan's business community faces significant economic challenges.—DNA

## 5,000 Kg substandard ketchup, mayonnaise destroyed

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has sealed an illegal production unit in Mian Mubarak Town, Nish-tar Town, and destroyed 5,000 kilograms of substandard ketchup and mayonnaise worth approximately Rs2.5 million, thwarting an attempt to supply the products to fast food restaurants during Ramadan. The action was taken on the directions of the PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid. A case has been registered against the owners and a fine of Rs300,000 imposed, while investiga-

tions are under way to trace the supply chain. According to the DG, the raid was carried out after on-the-spot samples of ketchup and mayonnaise failed laboratory tests. The counterfeit products were being packed with labels of renowned brands to deceive consumers. Officials found that non-food grade ingredients were being used in the preparation of the products. Mandatory documentation and workers' medical certificates were missing, while insects were present inside the unit. Ketchup was stored in dirty, rusted containers and the required product

registration and packaging approvals were not obtained. The DG informed that the attractively packed substandard mayonnaise was intended for distribution across Lahore city. He reiterated that food businesses across the province must strictly comply with Punjab Food Authority laws. He further said that, on the directions of the Chief Secretary Punjab, indiscriminate action is being taken against elements endangering public health, warning that businesses involved in adulteration and food fraud will be shut down.—APP

## Farmers must be provided with guidance on wheat

LAHORE: Punjab Agriculture Secretary Itfikhur Ali Sahoo directed that, in view of the prevailing weather conditions, farmers should be provided with timely and effective technical guidance regarding wheat and other crops. He chaired the meeting which discussed the current situation of wheat and other major crops here on Sunday. The meeting informed that the condition of the wheat crop across the province is very good, and all possible resources and efforts are being utilized to achieve the production target. He emphasized that, in accordance with experts' recommendations, comprehensive guidance should be issued at this critical stage regarding the irrigation of wheat, while continuous coordination should be maintained with the Irrigation department to ensure the availability of canal water. He further directed that cooperation of divisional and district administrations be sought to remove any obstacles in wheat crop management. The meeting was also informed that a target has been set to cultivate early cotton on 700,000 acres during the current season.—APP

## KPFA continues province-wide action

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority continued its province-wide crackdown against adulteration and substandard food items on the weekend under the provincial government's Ramadan Plan, destroying large quantities of unsafe food and sealing a hotel in Peshawar. According to the authority's spokesperson on Sunday, food safety teams carried out inspections in several districts and confiscated hundreds of liters of adulterated milk, unsafe and rancid cooking oil, substandard beverages and dead chicken. The seized items were destroyed on the spot, while heavy fines were imposed and improvement notices issued to a number of food businesses. In Peshawar, inspections were conducted under the supervision of Director General Kashif Iqbal Jilani and Director Operations Muhammad Yousaf. Teams visited kebab shops and samosa and pakora outlets at Jameel Chowk (Ring Road), Taro Jabba and adjoining areas. Cooking oil was tested on the spot through a mobile food testing laboratory. One hotel was sealed over poor hygiene and use of substandard oil, while several vendors were fined and unsafe oil and ghee discarded. The Town-III team also inspected markets and the Industrial Estate in Hayatabad, where samples of cooking oil and spices were tested and expired items destroyed. During an inspection of a beverage manufacturing unit, officials found counterfeit drinks being prepared under the name of a well-known brand. Around 200 liters of substandard beverages were destroyed and heavy fines imposed. Improvement notices were issued for compliance with food safety standards. In Abbottabad, the food safety team set up a checkpoint at Muslimabad Check Post and inspected food items entering the district from late night till early morning using the mobile testing laboratory. Approximately 300 liters of adulterated milk were seized and disposed of. Oil used at various iftar stalls was also tested and found to be unsafe in some cases, leading to its disposal. In Charsadda, teams intercepted a vehicle carrying dead chickens during early morning inspections of food transport vehicles. The consignment was confiscated and a heavy fine was imposed. Inspections were also conducted in the Sherpao branch area, where improvement notices were issued over hygiene lapses. In Malakand, inspections at Thana Bazaar covered grocery stores, meat shops, milk sellers, kebab shops and bakeries. At a butcher shop, 30 kilograms of minced meat adulterated with a prohibited color were recovered and destroyed, and a fine imposed.—APP



The Smooth Moving Connection

# freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING







### Our Services

- Packing
- Shipping
- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage



**Head Office**  
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.  
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.  
Email: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

**Branch Offices**

<p><b>Karachi</b> Floor No. 14, 4/15, 3rd Floor, Khatkhata Mall, Main Tariq Road, 17/2, Block-2, P.E.C.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3453608, 34539479 Fax: (+92 21) 3453174 Email: karachi@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p><b>Lahore</b> P.O. Calling Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3575081, 3575108 Fax: (+92 42) 3575140 Email: lahore@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p><b>Peshawar</b> Office No. C-1, 3rd Floor, Zabeer Plaza, Lafiq Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2562778 Fax: (+92 91) 2562583 Email: peshawar@freelinemovers.com</p>
<p><b>Rawalpindi</b> House #4, Street #4, Chahat Anwar Road, Dhaire-Now, Kulab-Altamash. Tel: (+92 992) 775, 93 79356 658, 93 77948 203. Email: rawalpindi@freelinemovers.com</p>		

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

March 01/Bosnia National Day

March 03/Bulgaria National Day

March 06/ Ghana Independence Day

March 12/Mauritius National Day

March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20/Tunisia Independence Day

March 21/Namibia National Day

March 25/Greece National Day

March 26/Bangladesh National Day

March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



### Enquiry

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



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Fruit export earnings nearly double over last decade

The country's merchandise exports reached to \$20.462 billion during the first eight months (July–February) of the current fiscal year (2025–26), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Monday

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's fruit export earnings have nearly doubled over the past decade, rising from Rs44.6 billion in 2015-16 to Rs86.0 billion in 2024-25. According to official trade data for the last 10 fiscal years from the Ministry of Finance available with Wealth Pakistan, fruit export volumes stood at 677,000 tonnes in 2015-16, generating Rs44.6 billion in export receipts. In 2016-17, volumes declined to 646,000 tonnes, a drop of around 4.6%, while export earnings fell to Rs39.9 billion, reflecting both lower shipments and reduced export value. Pakistan recorded above-average rainfall from March to September 2016, triggering flash floods in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab that damaged orchards, standing crops, and rural infrastructure, affecting output during the period. Exports recovered in 2017-18, rising to 697,000 tonnes, while earnings improved to Rs43.8 billion. The upward momentum continued in 2018-19, when volumes increased to 756,000 tonnes and export value climbed to Rs56.3 billion, representing a year-on-year growth of nearly 28% in earnings. In 2019-20, fruit export volumes reached 798,000 tonnes, with export receipts increasing further to Rs67.8 billion. This marked a two-year expansion phase in both quantity and value. A major surge occurred in 2020-21, when shipments jumped to 975,000 tonnes – the highest level recorded in the decade – lifting export value to Rs76.8 billion. Compared to 2015-16, volumes during this peak year were higher by nearly 44%. However, 2021-22 witnessed a sharp reversal in shipment volumes. Exports fell to 622,000 tonnes, a decline of more than 36% compared to the previous year. Despite the contraction in quantity, export earnings rose to Rs84.4 billion, indicating a substantial increase in export value per tonne. In 2022-23, volumes remained relatively subdued at 629,000 tonnes, while export value declined to Rs68.8 billion. In 2022, the worst floods in decades swept across the country, inundating vast stretches of farmland and affecting millions of acres of crops.



Exports rebounded strongly in 2023-24. Shipment volumes rose to 928,000 tonnes, while export earnings surged to a record Rs97.1 billion – the highest export value recorded during the 10-year period under review. Compared to 2015-16, export earnings in 2023-24 more than doubled. In the latest fiscal year, 2024-25, volumes again declined sharply to 579,000 tonnes – the lowest level recorded in the decade. Despite the 37% drop in volume compared to the previous year, export receipts remained robust at Rs86.0 billion. Over the 10-year period, fruit export volumes fluctuated within a wide range of 579,000 to 975,000 tonnes. In contrast, export value showed a sustained uptrend, increasing by nearly 93% from Rs44.6 billion in 2015-16 to Rs86.0 billion in 2024-25. The data

indicate that while shipment quantities experienced significant swings during the decade, overall export earnings from fruit strengthened substantially. Meanwhile, The country's merchandise exports reached to \$20.462 billion during the first eight months (July–February) of the current fiscal year (2025–26), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Monday. According to the PBS data, the exports showed a decline of 7.30 percent when compared to exports of \$22.073 billion during July–February of last fiscal year (2024–25). On the other hand, imports into the country increased by 8.06 percent, rising from \$42.110 billion last year to \$45.504 billion during July–February (2025–26). Based on the figures,

the trade deficit during the first eight months was recorded at \$25.042 billion against the deficit of \$20.037 billion last year, showing an increase of 24.98 percent. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports in February 2026 decreased by 8.76 percent to \$2.272 billion compared to \$2.490 billion in February 2025. The imports also witnessed a decrease of 1.61 percent, declining from \$5.339 billion to \$5.253 billion during the same period. On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country decreased by 25.63 percent when compared to \$3.055 billion during January 2026. The imports also decreased by 9.51 percent compared to \$5.805 billion in January 2026, PBS reported.—DNA

## Ramazan M-Tag hours revised in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD :The Islamabad district administration has changed M-Tag service hours and introduced two new categories of 24 hours and 12 hours for motorcycles to facilitate the citizens during Ramazan. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, the decision expands access across 13 service points, with 4 centers now operating round the clock and 9 points providing 12-hour service. According to officials, the 24-hour service will be available at 26 Number Chungi, F-9 Park, Faizabad, and Phulgran. These locations will remain open day and night to ensure uninterrupted service for citizens who cannot visit during regular hours. In addition,

the Directorate of Excise approved an extension of staff duty hours. On the directions of the Director General of Excise, the existing 9-hour shift has been extended to 12 hours at selected points. As a result, 9 out of 13 M-Tag service locations will now offer 12-hour service each day. The 12-hour category includes centers at Rawat Check Post, G-14 Check Post, and 9th Avenue I-9. Officials confirmed that these points will remain open for extended hours throughout Ramazan to manage higher demand. Further locations providing 12-hour service include Wheat Godown Naka, Daman-e-Koh, and Murree Road near Tulip Naka. Authorities stated that these points

were selected based on traffic flow and public need. Centers established at Gulberg Greens, Millpur, and Margalla Avenue Check Post will also operate for 12 hours daily. The Excise Department said the extended schedule will continue during Ramadan to ensure smooth processing. Officials clarified that certain documents are mandatory for M-Tag installation. Citizens must bring ownership documents, a valid national identity card, and a registered mobile number. These requirements apply to all applicants without exception. The Excise Department also made it clear that vehicles must display official Excise number plates. Motorcycles or cars without department-issued number plates will not be eligible for M-Tag installation. Authorities urged citizens to visit the nearest service point during the revised hours and complete the process in time. They added that the changes are part of broader efforts to manage traffic and improve toll compliance while keeping public convenience in view during Ramazan.—DNA

## Over 32,700 illegal foreign nationals deported

RAWALPINDI: Over 32,700 illegally residing foreign nationals, including Afghans, have been deported from Lahore and other parts of Punjab as the province-wide action against illegal residents continues at a fast pace. The Punjab Police spokesperson said on Monday that the ongoing deportation drive was being carried out across the province in an organised and effective manner, adding that 346 illegal residents were currently present at various holding points. Providing further details, the spokesperson said that those deported included 12,357 men, 6,673 women and 13,700 children. Among them, 10,441 were holders of proof of residence, 11,098 were Afghan Citizen Card holders, while 11,190 were other illegally residing foreign nationals. Inspector General of Police Punjab Abdul Kareem said that the entire province remained on high security alert and the expulsion of all illegally residing individuals was being ensured under all circumstances. He added that Punjab Police were implementing the government's policy regarding deportation of illegal residents in accordance with international laws and that the entire process was being carried out with full observance of human rights.—APP

## Need stressed to transform waste sector into a strategic pillar of Pakistan's climate agenda under NDCs

ISLAMABAD: Climate experts, policy-makers and development practitioners have stressed the need to transform Pakistan's waste sector into a strategic pillar of its climate mitigation agenda under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by setting up robust data systems, life-cycle based emissions accounting, and formal integration of informal waste workers. The call was made during a webinar titled "Waste Sector Emissions & Bottom-Up Policy Inputs for NDCs in Pakistan," organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Monday. Executive Director of the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC), Arif Goheer, said the waste sector sits at the intersection of climate science, urban governance and sustainable development, yet remains "one of the most under-recognized but high-impact mitigation opportunities" for Pakistan. He said that according to the 2024 greenhouse

gas (GHG) inventory prepared under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reporting framework, the waste sector contributes around eight per cent of Pakistan's total GHG emissions, mainly in the form of methane, which has nearly 20 times higher global warming potential than carbon dioxide over the short-term. "Pakistan generates approximately 45 million tons of municipal solid waste annually, increasing at 7 to 8 per cent per year due to rapid urbanization and changing consumption patterns," he said, adding that though the national per capita waste generation figure used in inventories is 0.65 kilograms per day, it has risen to between one and 1.25 kilograms per day in metropolitan cities such as Karachi and Lahore. He noted that 70 to 80 per cent of collected waste is openly dumped, while wastewater treatment coverage remains only about 10 per cent nationwide, leading to unmanaged anaerobic decomposition and significant methane

and nitrous oxide emissions. He suggested shifting from a bulk approach emissions inventory to a life-cycle approach, supported by time-series data at district and municipal levels. Establishment of a centralized dashboard and structured data management system, he said, would enable robust baseline setting, credible emission accounting and improved access to climate finance. Head of SDPI's Ecological Sustainability and Circular Economy Unit, Associate Research Fellow, Zainab Naeem, said that the developing countries, particularly in South Asia, face serious challenges due to the dominance of informal actors in the waste sector, lack of source segregation, open dumping and inadequate landfill infrastructure. She also pointed to global developments around circular economy solutions and negotiations on plastic pollution, emphasizing the need to recognize locally practiced, climate-friendly solutions instead of relying solely on imported models.—DNA

## Adulterated milk destroyed, 2 suspects held

RAWALPINDI :The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Monday continued its crackdown on adulterated milk in Rawalpindi, destroying 500 litres of hazardous milk and handing over two suspects to the police following a successful operation near Amarpura Glass Factory. Acting on a tip-off, a PFA team set up a checkpoint in the area and intercepted two motorcyclists who were allegedly supplying adulterated milk from a clandestine warehouse. During inspection, officials recovered a large quantity of milk prepared with water and dried milk powder, which was disposed of on the spot. A PFA spokesperson said the seized milk was highly injurious to human health and was to be supplied to consumers, thereby endangering public health. The suspects, identified as Kashif and Sohab, were taken into custody along with their motorcycles and handed over to the local police for legal proceedings. The spokesperson said special monitoring teams remained active round the clock during the Holy Month of Ramazan to ensure the quality of food items and the provision of safe, pure consumables to the public. He added that indiscriminate action against adulteration would continue and no one would be allowed to endanger human lives. He urged citizens to report any suspected adulteration or suspicious activity to its helpline 1223 to enable timely action, adding that public cooperation was essential to eliminating the menace of food adulteration.—APP

## APHC terms strikes on Iran blatant aggression

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has condemned the martyrdom of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, and the killing of about 180 schoolboys in joint US-Israel missile airstrikes in Iran. APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a statement issued in Srinagar, expressed solidarity with the people of Iran and described the killing of the Supreme Leader as "immoral, unlawful, utterly reprehensible, and a grave assault on international law and global stability." The statement said the strikes on Iran were against the principles of the United Nations Charter and the fundamental norms governing international relations. Expressing profound anguish over the assassination, he termed it a grave and destabilizing act with serious implications for regional and global peace. Condemning the curfew-like restrictions imposed by the BJP regime in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the APHC said the huge presence of Indian forces has placed the lives of Kashmiris under a constant state of siege for more than seven decades. The spokesman said the BJP regime and the Indian military establishment were subjecting Kashmiris to the worst kind of human rights violations for demanding their right to self-determination. However, he reiterated the Kashmiri people's resolve to continue their struggle against Indian illegal occupation despite all odds. The spokesman said India had snatched natural resources and basic freedoms from the Kashmiri people, who have long been demanding their political rights, including their birthright to self-determination. He added that Indian forces personnel, enjoying unbridled powers under draconian laws, were committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied territory with impunity. He further said India was constantly trying to mislead the world about the ground situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The international community, he maintained, is legally and morally bound to stop the unprecedented Indian repression in IIOJK and compel New Delhi to respect the sentiments of the Kashmiri people and grant them their right to self-determination. The spokesman pointed out that unless the Kashmir dispute is resolved in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, peace and stability cannot be established in the region, nor can Pakistan-India relations improve on a sustainable basis. Meanwhile, Hurriyat leaders Fayaz Hussain Jafri and Syed Sibt Shabbir Qummi in their statements have also condemned the US-Israel strikes on Iran, terming them "naked aggression". They paid tribute to Iran's martyred Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The leaders said the attack, carried out during Ramazan, exposed US-Israel hostility towards Islam and Muslims, and that Iran's stance on Palestine and Kashmir had made it a target. The leaders asserted that the attack would strengthen resistance and ultimately lead to the defeat of the aggressors. In Islamabad, former APHC-AJK convener Muhammad Farooq Rehmanisaid the strikes on Iran would destabilize the Middle East and harm regional peace and progress. He warned that war is no solution and will cause human suffering, inflation, and price hikes. Rehmani criticized India's PM Modi's Israel visit and Afghan Taliban's attacks on Pakistan, suggesting a conspiracy behind these events. He urged Muslim heads of state to dialogue and resolve differences peacefully.—DNA

## IGP boosts morale of deployed personnel

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police continued round-the-clock efforts to ensure public safety as Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi personally visited the Red Zone to review security arrangements and encourage officers deployed on duty. An official told APP on Monday that IGP Rizvi inspected various sensitive points in the Red Zone in view of the prevailing security situation and assessed the overall preparedness of the force. He said the IGP met officers and personnel deployed at different checkpoints and security posts, reviewed checking procedures, and directed them to ensure comprehensive implementation of security measures. During his interaction with the deployed strength, IGP Rizvi appreciated their professionalism and dedication, expressing confidence in their ability to safeguard the federal capital. He emphasized that maintaining peace and protecting Islamabad is the foremost responsibility of the force. IGP also instructed officers to remain vigilant, maintain high alert, and respond effectively to any untoward situation. IGP Rizvi reiterated that Islamabad Police remain fully committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and ensuring a secure environment across the capital.—APP

## ANF holds 6 suspects, seizes 43 kg of narcotics

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has arrested six suspects and seized 43.19 kilograms of narcotics worth more than Rs 4.3 million in six separate operations across the country, an ANF spokesperson said on Monday. At Bacha Khan International Airport, 860 grams of ice (crystal methamphetamine) were recovered from the bag of a passenger bound for Qatar. The suspect was taken into custody. In Lahore, 2.4 kilograms of ice were seized from electrical appliances concealed in a parcel destined for New Zealand at a courier office. In Hyderabad, ANF officials recovered 20 kilograms of hashish from a vehicle and arrested the accused. Similarly, 16.8 kilograms of hashish were seized from a vehicle near the Sheikhpura Toll Plaza, where one suspect was apprehended. In another operation near Babu Sabu Toll Plaza in Lahore, 2.8 kilograms of ice were recovered from two suspects, both of whom were arrested.—APP

## Briefs

## Pakistan Hindu Council endorses President's appeal

ISLAMABAD: Patron-in-Chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, on Monday fully endorsed the appeal of President Asif Ali Zardari urging the Hindu community to celebrate Holi with simplicity this year. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, also a Member of the National Assembly representing minorities, termed the President's message timely and responsible. "The appeal calls for limiting large public gatherings in view of the prevailing regional tensions and security concerns", said a press release. Dr. Vankwani emphasized that under the current critical circumstances, prioritizing national security and the safety of citizens is a shared responsibility of everyone. He said Pakistani patriotic Hindu community has always played a positive role in promoting national unity, harmony, and interfaith cohesion. Following the President's appeal, Dr. Vankwani has issued directives to the Pakistan Hindu Council to review preparations for annual Holi celebrations across the country. He also urged community representatives to exercise caution, avoid large-scale public events, and extend full cooperation to local authorities. Expressing his heartfelt wishes to the Hindu community, Dr. Vankwani expressed hope that this year Holi will be observed in a spirit of peace, brotherhood, tolerance, and interfaith harmony. He noted that the present situation demands restraint, patience, and collective responsibility, reiterating that the national security of the country and safety of innocent people must be prioritized. —APP

## DIG Tariq inspects key security points

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq visited various security points across the federal capital to review arrangements aimed at maintaining law and order and ensuring the safety of citizens in view of the prevailing situation. An official told APP on Monday that the DIG Tariq inspected deployment at key locations and assessed the overall preparedness of the police force. DIG Tariq met officers and personnel performing duties at different points and directed them to remain alert, conduct effective checking, and ensure proper guidance to citizens. DIG emphasized the importance of professional conduct, vigilance, and timely response to any untoward situation. Official said the visit was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen security measures and maintain public confidence in the capital. DIG Tariq reiterated that ensuring peace and protecting the lives and property of citizens remain the top priorities of Islamabad Police. —APP

## Over 300 students get specialized training under NAVTTC

ISLAMABAD, Mar 02 (APP): More than 300 students completed specialized training under the Prime Minister's Overseas Employment Programme of the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), with a visa issuance ceremony held in Islamabad on Monday. Addressing the ceremony as chief guest, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, called on overseas employment promoters to actively support the programme and work closely with the government to expand overseas job opportunities for Pakistani youth. Calling the trainees as ambassadors of the country, he said their performance abroad would boost confidence among Pakistani manpower and play a key role to promote Pakistan's positive image globally. "With discipline, skill and professionalism, you will not only secure your own future but also brighten Pakistan's name," he said. —APP

## Axle load compliance vital for transporters: Aleem

The federal minister said that strict adherence to axle load compliance is not merely a regulatory requirement but a strategic benefit for the Goods Transporters themselves

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday said that axle load compliance was in the best interest of goods transporters as well as the country's road infrastructure, reiterating the government's full support to the transport industry. He expressed these views while talking to a high-level delegation of the All Pakistan Goods Transport Association (APGTA) led by its Chairperson Ch. Qamar Zaman Gill, which called on him here at the Ministry of Communications, said a press release. The federal minister said that strict adherence to axle

load compliance is not merely a regulatory requirement but a strategic benefit for the Goods Transporters themselves. He highlighted that compliance significantly reduces vehicle wear and tear, minimizes maintenance costs, and is essential for the preservation of the country's road infrastructure. Maintaining prescribed load limits is beneficial for the overall business ecosystem," he stated. He urged the association to play a proactive role in convincing all stakeholders across the country to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding national compliance. The delegation headed by Ch. Qamar Zaman Gill and President Muhammad Awais Chaudhry, expressed

their alignment with the Government's vision, informing the Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan that the Association firmly believes in upholding court decisions and adhering to established rules. The representatives noted that violations of axle load limits impact them negatively, leading to increased fuel consumption, higher accident rates, and unfavorable market rates due to non-compliance by certain factions. Addressing the recent challenges, Abdul Aleem Khan noted that while the Government had to provide certain reliefs following strikes by a faction of the transporters, it is imperative for the association to realize that long-term sustaina-

bility lies in self-regulation. The discussion specifically focused on the implementation of these standards across Motorway M1 and the GT Road. Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan concluded by reiterating the Government's commitment to supporting the transport industry while ensuring the safety and longevity of Pakistan's vital communication. Secretary Communications was also present during the meeting. Muhammad Awais Choudhary Chairmen APGTA, Imdad Husain Naqvi Senior Vice Chairman APGTA, Rana Asim Shakoor, Haji Liaqat Ali, Malik Nisar Awan, Choudhary Khalid Arain and Malik Rafeeq Awan were also part of the visiting delegation.



ISLAMABAD: A man riding cycle carrying chair on his head at a road in the Federal Capital.

## SC acquits accused in narcotics case

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has acquitted an accused in a narcotics recovery case, setting aside his life imprisonment on the grounds that the prosecution failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. In a written judgment authored by Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, the Court ruled that the accused, Sardar Muhammad, was entitled to the benefit of doubt. It ordered that he be released forthwith if not required in any other case. The Court observed that the prosecution had failed to establish its case beyond a reasonable doubt, noting material and fundamental contradictions in the statements of prosecution witnesses. According to the judgment, discrepancies were found regarding the time and place of arrival of police witnesses at the scene, which undermined the credibility of the prosecution's case. The apex court further pointed out that the site plan of the place of occurrence and the relevant daily diary entries were not produced before the trial court. It emphasized that in narcotics cases, it is essential for the prosecution to prove the safe custody and uninterrupted chain of custody of the recovered contraband from the time of recovery until its dispatch to the laboratory. In the present case, the Court held that the prosecution failed to establish this chain of custody. Delay in the transfer of the seized material and gaps in the record proved fatal to the prosecution's case. The judgment also underscored that in cases carrying severe and deterrent punishments, the standard of proof must be stringent and free from any doubt. The case originated from a First Information Report registered at Lorlai Police Station, alleging recovery of 15 kilograms of charas from the accused. The trial court had sentenced him to life imprisonment, a decision later upheld by the Balochistan High Court. However, the Supreme Court set aside the judgments of both courts and ordered the acquittal of the accused. —DNA

## \$1b AI fund to empower youth

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr Nadeem Javaid has expressed optimism that the federal government's recently announced \$1 billion fund for Artificial Intelligence (AI) would help build a future-ready digital economy and create meaningful opportunities for Pakistan's youth. The initiative envisages establishing a robust AI ecosystem across the country by introducing AI curriculum in all federally run schools, awarding 1,000 fully funded PhD scholarships to students by 2030, and launching a nationwide programme to train one million non-IT professionals in AI skills to enhance productivity and livelihoods. "Youth is a big reality of Pakistan, as 63 per cent of the population falls under the youth bracket. If we fail to utilize this effectively, it would become a serious challenge," he said while talking to APP on the sidelines of the recently concluded Pakistan Governance Forum 2026, held under the theme "Reimagining Governance for URAAN Pakistan." Dr. Javaid stressed that sustained economic growth was essential to absorb the growing youth population into productive employment. "If there is economic growth, there will be job creation and people will be absorbed. Along with jobs, entrepreneurial ventures are equally important," he added. He said the AI fund could create opportunities for youth-led startups, SMEs and micro-enterprises, including service-oriented ventures and small-scale manufacturing, adding "Hopefully, many new opportunities will emerge from this initiative where small companies and micro enterprises can take shape and contribute to economic activ-

ity," he added.

Highlighting the broader governance perspective, Dr. Javaid said development initiatives must be seen within a comprehensive framework rather than in isolation.

"Governance is an overarching framework that determines outcomes such as improved livelihoods, job creation and investment inflows," he remarked. Referring to the evolving second phase of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC 2.0), he said new initiatives were being shaped through mutual interests of Pakistan and China, creating synergy with national reform priorities under Uraan Pakistan.

He said that the government's reform agenda focused on key drivers, including exports, energy affordability, efficiency and environmental sustainability, which are vital for improving the investment climate.

Dr. Javaid said Pakistan already possessed key growth fundamentals such as a large workforce, a sizeable domestic market and an evolving industrial base, which could significantly contribute to GDP expansion if effectively leveraged. However, he underscored that beyond policy reforms, mindset remained the biggest challenge. "You can make strict rules and SOPs, but without alignment of mindset, honesty and work ethics, desired results cannot be achieved," he observed.

He said improved governance, effective utilization of youth potential and a positive national outlook were essential to translating reform initiatives into sustainable and inclusive economic growth. —DNA

## Headline inflation recorded at 7% in Feb

ISLAMABAD: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation stood at 7 percent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in February 2026, up from 5.8 percent recorded in January 2026, and 1.5 percent registered in February 2025, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. According to latest PBS data, the CPI inflation Urban, increased by 6.8% on year-on-year basis in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 5.8% in the previous month and an increase of 1.8% in February 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.3% in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.2% in the previous month

and a decrease of 0.7% in February 2025. CPI inflation Rural, increased by 7.3% on year-on-year basis in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 5.8% in the previous month and 1.1% in February 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.3% in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.6% in the previous month and a decrease of 1.1% in February 2025. Meanwhile, the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on YoY basis increased by 4.8% in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 3.3% in the previous month and -0.2% in February 2025. On MoM basis, it decreased by 0.1% in

February 2026 as compared to a decrease of 0.8% in January 2026 and a decrease of 1.6% in February 2025. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased by 1.0% in February 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.2% in the previous month and a decrease of 0.7% in February 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.7% in February 2026 as compared to a decrease of 0.2% in the previous month and a decrease of 0.2% in February 2025. The Core inflation measured by non-food non-energy (NFNE) urban increased by 7.1% on (YoY) basis in February 2026 as compared to 7.2% of the

previous month and 7.8% in February 2025. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 0.2% in February 2026 as compared to 1.0% in previous month and an increase of 0.3% in the corresponding month of last year i.e. February 2025. Core inflation measured by non-food non-energy (NFNE) rural remained stable at 8.3% on (YoY) basis in February 2026 as compared to the previous month and an increase of 10.4% in February 2025. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 0.4% in February 2026 as compared to 1.1% in the previous month and an increase of 0.4% in the corresponding month of last year i.e. February 2025. —DNA

## ITP issues advisory: Limited access to Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Monday announced that entry into the Red Zone will remain open only through Margalla Road and the route via Marriott Hotel, while all other access points have been closed due to security arrangements. An ITP official told APP that commuters heading towards the Red Zone must use the designated Margalla Road and Marriott routes, as the remaining entry points will stay sealed until further notice. He said citizens coming from Club Road are advised to proceed via Kashmir Chowk, Srinagar Highway, and Seventh Avenue before taking Margalla Road towards the Red Zone. Similarly, commuters travelling from Bhara Kahu should use Kashmir Chowk, Srinagar Highway, Seventh Avenue, and Margalla Road as the approved alternative route. The official urged motorists to cooperate with traffic police and strictly follow the advisory to avoid inconvenience. For further information, citizens may contact the Police Emergency Helpline "Pucar-15," Traffic Helpline 1915, or listen to ITP FM 92.4 for real-time updates. —APP

## SSP Sarfraz Virk visits Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Security Muhammad Sarfraz Virk visited various security points in the Red Zone to review deployment and operational preparedness. An official told APP on Monday that SSP Virk inspected security arrangements at different locations and met officers and personnel performing duties. SSP Virk briefed the deployed officers and officials about the nature of their duties and directed them to perform their responsibilities with alertness and professionalism. In view of the prevailing situation, SSP Virk instructed officers to remain on high alert and stay fully prepared to effectively deal with any untoward incident. He emphasized the importance of effective checking, coordinated response, and disciplined conduct while dealing with the public. He added that Islamabad Police remain fully committed to maintaining strict security in the Red Zone to ensure peace and public safety in the federal capital. —APP

## RWMC steps up anti-litter campaign

Officials said such initiatives not only helped improve public health and urban living standards but also highlighted the importance of cleanliness and order during sports and recreational activities

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has intensified anti-litter and cleanliness operations across all 22 tehsils of six districts of Rawalpindi Division, coupled with an awareness campaign.

"The campaign, initiated under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Suthra Punjab Programme, includes announcements in mosques, bus terminals and public transport to educate citizens about fines for littering, while awareness walks are being organised in collaboration with district and tehsil administrations," an RWMC spokesman said on Monday. School-based lectures, waste-picking activities and walks, he said, were also being held to encourage students to act as ambassadors of cleanliness and spread the message in their neighbourhoods. The spokesman said that in the Gujar Khan tehsil, the anti-litter drive was being carried out vigorously, with daily manual sweeping, waste lifting, door-to-door collection, and cleaning of containers, drains, main roads, and inner streets to ensure a clean and healthy environment for residents. He added that RWMC workers remained engaged round the clock on main roads and streets of Gujar Khan, urging citizens not to dump or burn waste in open areas and to support the company in making their city a zero-waste zone. RWMC Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar said the cleanliness campaign could not succeed without public cooperation. He urged citizens to fulfil their civic responsibility and work alongside sanitation staff to keep the city clean. He said anti-litter awareness announcements were being made at bus stands, streets and public places across all 22 tehsils of Rawalpindi Division to promote civic sense and preserve the city's beauty. Meanwhile, the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company was awarded an honorary shield in recognition of excellent cleanliness arrangements during a cricket league organised by a private school in Rawalpindi. Event organisers said the dedicated efforts of RWMC workers ensured a clean ground and a healthy environment for players and spectators alike. Officials said such initiatives not only helped improve public health and urban living standards but also highlighted the importance of cleanliness and order during sports and recreational activities. —DNA

**MOST EXPERIENCED**  
MANUFACTURERS &  
EXPORTERS OF  
MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS  
IN  
PAKISTAN

**WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED**

JUDO  
KARATE  
KUNG-FU  
JU-JUTSU  
TAEKWONDO  
UNIFORMS AND  
COLOURED BELTS

**Ashraf**

ASHRAF INDUSTRIES (PVT) LTD  
127 C, Industrial Estate  
Sialkot-51340, Pakistan  
Phone: +92-52-3256000 / 3256788  
E-mail: info@ashraf.net.pk

## After Khamenei: Iran, America and the World



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

**T**HE spectre of a direct war between Iran and the United States has long haunted the Middle East. For decades, hostility has simmered through proxy conflicts, economic sanctions, covert operations and diplomatic brinkmanship. Yet the possibility of open confrontation once dismissed as too costly for both sides has resurfaced in moments of acute crisis. If such a war were to coincide with the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, the consequences would reverberate far beyond the region.

Ayatollah Khamenei has been at the helm of the Islamic Republic since 1989, shaping its ideological posture and foreign policy orientation. Under his stewardship, Iran positioned itself as the standard-bearer of "resistance" against American influence in the region. From Lebanon to Iraq, Syria to Yemen, Tehran cultivated alliances and armed networks that extended its reach while maintaining plausible deniability. The United States, for its part, relied on sanctions, diplomatic isolation and regional partnerships to contain Iranian influence.

An outright war would mark a rupture in this long-standing pattern of calibrated hostility. The Middle East, already fragile after years of upheaval, would be plunged into deeper instability. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes, could become a flashpoint. Even limited disruption would rattle global energy markets, sending oil prices soaring and straining economies still grappling with inflation and debt.

For South Asia, including Pakistan, the fallout would be immediate. Higher oil prices would widen trade deficits and fuel domestic inflation. Remittances from expatriate workers in Gulf states could decline if regional economies falter. Moreover, sectarian tensions – often inflamed by regional rivalries – could find new expression, complicating internal security dynamics.

Yet the military dimension tells only part of the story. The death of Ayatollah Khamenei during such a conflict would introduce a profound layer of uncertainty. In Iran's political system, the Supreme Leader wields ultimate authority over the armed forces, judiciary and key institutions. His passing would trigger a succession process overseen by the Assembly of Experts, but the outcome would not be merely procedural. It would shape the ideological and strategic trajectory of the Islamic Republic. A leadership vacuum in wartime carries inherent risks. Competing factions within Iran's political and security establishment could manoeuvre to assert influence. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, long a powerful actor in its own right, might consolidate its role. Alternatively, pragmatic elements could argue for de-escalation to preserve the state. The direction chosen would deter-

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 130

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394

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



mine whether conflict intensifies or diplomacy regains ground.

For the United States, the optics and strategy would be complex. Washington has historically oscillated between pressure and engagement with Tehran. A war culminating in the death of Iran's Supreme Leader could be interpreted by some as the collapse of a long-standing adversarial structure. Others, however, would warn that destabilising a nation of nearly 90 million people carries grave risks, including state fragmentation, refugee flows and the rise of extremist elements. Regional actors would also recalibrate. Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates each with distinct stakes would assess whether the weakening of Iran enhances their security or invites new uncertainties. Russia and China, both of which have deepened ties with Tehran in recent years, would weigh how to protect their interests while avoiding entanglement in a broader conflagration. Beyond geopolitics lies the human cost. Iran's population is young, urban and increasingly connected to the wider world. Years of sanctions have strained livelihoods, yet national pride remains strong. A war could unleash suffering on a scale unseen since the Iran-Iraq conflict of the 1980s. Civilian infrastructure, already under pressure, would be vulnerable. The international community, divided though it may be, would confront the challenge of delivering humanitarian relief amid hostilities. The global economy would not remain insulated. Energy shocks would ripple across continents. Shipping lanes could become insecure. Financial markets, sensitive to geopolitical tremors, would react sharply. Developing economies especially those dependent on energy imports – would bear disproportionate pain. Multilateral institutions might urge restraint, but their leverage would depend on the willingness of major powers to prioritise stability over confrontation.

At a deeper level, the death of Ayatollah Khamenei would symbolise the end of an era. He embodied the continuity of Iran's post-revolutionary order, bridging the fervour of 1979 with the complexities of the 21st century. His departure could open space for generational change. Whether that change tilts toward reform or retrenchment would hinge on internal dynamics as much as external pressures. History suggests that wars rarely unfold as planned. What begins as a limited strike can spiral into protracted conflict. In the interconnected world of today, regional wars seldom remain confined. Cyberattacks, drone warfare and proxy engagements blur traditional battle lines. The Iran-US rivalry has already manifested in these domains; a full-scale war would expand them.

For Pakistan and other middle-income countries, the prudent course would be diplomatic engagement and neutrality. Islamabad has historically sought balanced relations with both Tehran and Washington. In a scenario of war and leadership transition in Iran, quiet diplomacy could serve regional stability. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations might also attempt mediation, though success would depend on political will. Ultimately, the prospect of an Iran-US war, compounded by the death of Ayatollah Khamenei, underscores the fragility of global order. It reminds policymakers that entrenched hostilities, left unresolved, carry latent dangers. The international community has witnessed the costs of miscalculation before in Iraq, Syria and beyond. Preventing another conflagration demands foresight, restraint and a willingness to pursue dialogue even amid distrust. The stakes extend beyond two nations. They encompass energy security, regional equilibrium, economic stability and the aspirations of millions who yearn for peace. In a world already beset by crises, the last thing it needs is a war that could redraw the political map of the Middle East and unsettle the global system for years to come.

## Probability of Victory in an Iran-US-Israel War

Qamar Bashir



**Yet degrading capability is not synonymous with eliminating threat. Missile forces are mobile. Drones are inexpensive and produced in significant quantities. Even if command structures suffer damage, decentralized networks can continue operations. Thus, while U.S.-Israel forces could inflict substantial destruction, the probability of completely stopping Iranian retaliation remains uncertain. The difference between "damaging" and "neutralizing" is strategically profound. Another potential definition of victory is economic and psychological leverage**

**A**S tensions escalate between Iran and the joint forces of the United States and Israel, the most pressing question dominating strategic circles is deceptively simple: Who would win? Yet modern warfare—especially among technologically advanced and regionally entrenched powers—is no longer a matter of tanks crossing borders or flags planted on captured capitals. Victory today is layered, conditional, and defined by political objectives rather than territorial conquest alone. To assess the probability of winning, one must first define what "winning" actually means.

If victory is defined as regime survival and preservation of fighting capability, Iran's probability of success appears stronger than many assume. Historically, external air campaigns have struggled to topple deeply entrenched governments without significant ground intervention. Iran's geography alone presents a formidable challenge. Its mountainous terrain, expansive landmass, and dispersed military infrastructure complicate any attempt at rapid decisive victory. Much of its missile arsenal is believed to be stored in underground facilities designed precisely to withstand aerial bombardment. Even sustained precision strikes may degrade capabilities, but eliminating them entirely is another matter.

Moreover, Iran's doctrine is built around resilience and asymmetric endurance. Rather than matching Western air superiority aircraft for aircraft, Tehran relies on ballistic missiles, drones, cyber operations, and proxy networks across the region. This model does not aim to dominate the skies; it aims to outlast and impose cost. If the objective of Washington and Tel Aviv were to collapse the Iranian state or compel unconditional surrender, the probability of achieving that quickly would remain relatively low without a major ground campaign—an option that carries enormous political and military risk. In that scenario, Iran's likelihood of "winning" through survival could reasonably be considered moderate to high.

However, if victory is defined differently—say, as the ability to significantly degrade Iran's military capacity and limit its ability to launch sustained retaliation—the balance shifts. The United States maintains overwhelming air superiority, advanced stealth platforms, satellite surveillance, cyber dominance, and long-range precision strike capabilities. Israel brings decades of experience in targeted operations, missile defense innovation, and real-time battlefield intelligence integration. Together, they possess unmatched technological coordination. In the early phases of a high-intensity conflict, joint U.S.-Israeli forces would likely dominate the airspace, suppress air defenses, and strike high-value targets including command

centers, missile storage sites, naval facilities, and communications infrastructure. Iran's conventional air force is comparatively limited, and its air defense systems, while upgraded over the years, would struggle against advanced stealth bombers and electronic warfare. Under this definition of victory—crippling Iran's infrastructure and reducing its capacity for sustained attacks—the coalition's probability of success would be moderate to high.

Yet degrading capability is not synonymous with eliminating threat. Missile forces are mobile. Drones are inexpensive and produced in significant quantities. Even if command structures suffer damage, decentralized networks can continue operations. Thus, while U.S.-Israel forces could inflict substantial destruction, the probability of completely stopping Iranian retaliation remains uncertain. The difference between "damaging" and "neutralizing" is strategically profound. Another potential definition of victory is economic and psychological leverage. Iran's geographic position near the Strait of Hormuz gives it influence over one of the world's most crucial energy corridors. Even partial disruption of maritime traffic would elevate global oil prices, strain supply chains, and create political pressure in energy-importing nations. While Iran itself would suffer economically from prolonged instability, it could still leverage regional disruption as a strategic equalizer. If the objective becomes forcing negotiations by generating economic shock, Iran's probability of achieving leverage increases.

On the other hand, prolonged conflict risks devastating Iran's own infrastructure. Energy facilities, ports, and industrial assets could become targets, further weakening its economy. The United States, with a diversified economy and global alliances, is better positioned to absorb long-term financial strain. Israel, though geographically smaller, maintains advanced civil defense systems and missile interception layers that mitigate, though do not eliminate, the impact of incoming threats. Thus, in a war of economic attrition, neither side emerges unscathed, but the coalition likely retains greater structural resilience. Regime change remains the most ambitious—and least probable—outcome. History offers cautionary examples of external interventions that underestimated the complexity of internal political dynamics. Airpower alone rarely achieves political transformation. Ground occupation in a country the size of Iran would require vast troop deployments and sustained logistical commitment, with unpredictable consequences. Under this scenario, the probability of rapid decisive

regime collapse appears low. Iran's political system, though internally contested, has demonstrated endurance under decades of sanctions and pressure.

Therefore, when evaluating probability, the answer depends on which strategic objective is prioritized. If the goal is to survive and maintain core sovereignty, Iran's odds are comparatively stronger. If the goal is to inflict extensive military degradation and assert technological superiority, the U.S.-Israel coalition holds the advantage. If the goal is total capitulation or permanent elimination of threat, probabilities on both sides decline sharply, as modern warfare between capable states rarely produces absolute outcomes.

There is also the factor of escalation management. A broader regional spread involving additional actors could alter calculations dramatically. The longer a conflict persists, the more unpredictable it becomes. Domestic political pressures in all three countries would shape decision-making. Public tolerance for casualties, economic hardship, and prolonged instability could either harden resolve or accelerate diplomatic engagement. Ultimately, the most realistic outcome in such a confrontation may not be traditional victory at all, but a negotiated pause after significant destruction. In modern high-intensity conflicts, wars often end not because one side is annihilated, but because costs outweigh objectives. The probability that both sides declare partial success—while privately recognizing the limits of military solutions—may be higher than outright triumph for either camp.

In strategic terms, Iran is more likely to "win" by surviving, absorbing damage, and continuing to function as a sovereign actor. The United States and Israel are more likely to "win" by demonstrating overwhelming tactical superiority and degrading Iran's operational capabilities. Neither outcome represents total dominance. Both involve trade-offs.

War among technologically advanced powers with asymmetric tools is less about decisive victory and more about shaping post-conflict narratives. Survival can be framed as victory. Deterrence can be framed as success. Destruction of infrastructure can be presented as strategic achievement. Yet beneath these narratives lies a sobering truth: in such conflicts, the probability of absolute victory for any side remains limited. The real question, then, may not be who would win—but at what cost, and for how long.

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

## The World as a Wrestling Ring

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



**In pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize, claims were made of having halted wars and brokered historic reconciliations. When such aspirations faltered or recognition did not materialise, the posture seemed to harden. Economic sanctions became instruments of coercion; tariffs were deployed as political signals; alliances were weighed against...**

**I**N the chronicles of antiquity, wrestling was not merely a contest of strength but a disciplined art, governed by rules that were honoured as sacred law. Its tournaments were conducted with splendour and ceremony; the arena was a place where courage met character. The defeated wrestler would concede with dignity, acknowledging the superior skill of his opponent, while the victor celebrated not with arrogance but in accordance with time-honoured tradition. It was a spectacle of rivalry, yet also of restraint. Honour defined its spirit, and the contest ended when one party admitted defeat with grace. With the passage of time, however, this noble sport declined into a spectacle of unrestrained theatrics. What was once governed by principle descended into what is now called freestyle wrestling. As defeat loomed, stratagems alien to the sport's ethos were shamelessly employed. A manager, coach, or confederate would intrude into the arena, striking the one who stood on the brink of triumph, sometimes with a chair or an iron object, transforming certain victory into orchestrated defeat. The audience was left to cheer a manufactured outcome while the essence of fair competition lay bruised upon the canvas. The rules became pliable; spectacle replaced sport; power supplanted principle.

In 2007, television screens displayed such scenes involving the billionaire and wrestling enthusiast Donald Trump, who appeared as a manager in the ring, relishing the drama of interference and reversal. At the time, it seemed little more than theatrical entertainment. Yet history often blurs the line between spectacle and statecraft. Time turned, and the same figure ascended to the presidency of the United States. Analysts have since observed that he appeared to regard politics and power as another arena—one in which surprise manoeuvres, public theatrics, and the art of domination overshadowed quiet diplomacy.

In pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize, claims were made of having halted wars and brokered historic reconciliations. When such aspirations faltered or recognition did not materialise, the posture seemed to harden. Economic sanctions became instruments of coercion; tariffs were deployed as political signals; alliances were weighed against transactional gain. Sovereignty, in this climate, appeared negotiable. When a government resisted alignment, pressure

intensified. In some cases, leaders were removed under dramatic circumstances, extracted from their seats of authority. Some were even taken from their homes without any hesitation. Where persuasion failed, the language of regime change emerged; where compliance was not forthcoming, the rumble of military intervention followed. Strategic regions rich in energy resources became arenas in which dominance was asserted and redrawn.

The recent attack on Iran has been cited by many observers as a striking illustration of this doctrine. Simultaneously, the re-emergence of Reza Pahlavi, son of the late Shah, in political discourse has revived speculation about designs for regime transformation. Such developments evoke uneasy memories of interventions past, where the stated objectives of stability and security masked deeper strategic calculations. Oil routes, maritime chokepoints, and geopolitical alignments form the invisible architecture of these confrontations. It is widely assumed that before hostilities commenced, precautionary measures were taken to evacuate essential personnel and assets. Yet the flames of retaliation burn not in distant corridors of power but in the lands where ordinary people dwell.

Beyond Iran, the strategic chessboard extends across South Asia. In Pakistan, concerns have arisen that shifting alignments among Israel and India—highlighted during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Israel. Through the unsettled corridors of Afghanistan, new pressures and proxy rivalries threaten to complicate an already fragile landscape. Some analysts argue that understandings reached in diplomatic meetings have signalled broader strategic cooperation, with implications not only for Iran but also for Pakistan's security environment. Under this grand strategic contest—this modern "Great Game"—the air of the region has grown heavy with suspicion, and the scent of gunpowder lingers ominously.

The Gulf has become a theatre of escalating retaliation. American military installations across its littoral states now stand as potential flashpoints. As Iran responds by targeting these bases, the danger of a wider conflagration intensifies. A direct clash between Iran and those Gulf states hosting foreign bases could transform a calculated strike into a regional inferno. In such a scenario, Muslim nations risk finding themselves drawn into fratricidal conflict, their

cities reduced to battlegrounds, their youth sacrificed to a contest shaped by ambitions beyond their own making. Muslims would be pitted against Muslims, while the architects of confrontation watch from afar.

History offers sobering precedents. Iraq was once accused of harbouring weapons of mass destruction. A devastating war ensued, dismantling state institutions and fracturing society. In the aftermath, the world was informed that the alleged arsenal did not exist. The scars of that intervention remain visible to this day. Iran now confronts accusations and hostilities that echo that earlier narrative, raising the haunting question of whether lessons have truly been learned—or whether the script is merely being revised for a new stage. The tragedy of our era lies in the transformation of international relations into a degraded wrestling ring—where interference replaces fair contest, economic pressure substitutes for dialogue, and theatrical gestures overshadow genuine statesmanship. Powerful nations often behave as though the globe were an arena in which dominance must be publicly displayed. If this trajectory persists, every state, regardless of size, may one day find itself dragged into the vortex, unable to escape the consequences of a contest it never sought.

Muslim countries, bound by shared history and faith, face a moment of profound introspection. Division renders them vulnerable to manipulation; unity could provide resilience. Awakening does not necessitate hostility toward others but demands clarity of vision, strategic prudence, and solidarity in safeguarding sovereignty. They must resist becoming instruments in contests that do not serve their peoples' welfare. The world stands at a crossroads. It may continue along the path where might is mistaken for right and politics becomes performance, or it may rediscover the older ethic of honourable contest—where restraint tempers ambition and justice anchors power. Let the earth not be reduced to a wrestling arena in which surprise blows determine destiny and regime change becomes a recurring spectacle. Let it instead become a cradle of peace, where nations compete in progress rather than destruction, and where victory is measured not by conquest but by concord. For in the final reckoning, dominance achieved through coercion fades, but the yearning for peace endures in every human heart.

## Briefs

## No law allows to target heads of states: Dar

FROM PAGE 01  
Ishaq Dar said Pakistan expects the international community to condemn the terrorist threat which is emanating from Afghanistan and is destabilizing the whole region. He expressed the hope that the international community will urge the Taliban regime to uphold its commitment to not allow its soil to be used for terrorism against the neighboring countries. On the regional situation, Ishaq Dar said Pakistan is in contact with all brotherly countries in the region and all its efforts are focused on de-escalation and resumption of dialogue and diplomacy. He further said that UN charter and diplomatic norms does not allow anybody to target head of states. He regretted the supreme leader of Iran was targeted and assassinated.

## US, Israel hit Hezbollah in Iraq

FROM PAGE 01  
Kataeb Hezbollah. The group announced it will bury its fighters Monday. The Kataeb Hezbollah source told AFP that four fighters were killed in an attack near the Syria-Iraq border and another in a strike on the Samawa region in Iraq's south. Several Iran-backed Iraqi armed groups known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, including Kataeb Hezbollah, have said they will not stay "neutral" and would defend the Islamic republic. A shadowy group called Saraya Awliyyaa Al-Dam (Guardians of Blood), which claims to be part of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, said on Telegram it was behind early Monday morning drone attacks on Baghdad airport. Since the start of the US-Israeli campaign on Iran, drones have repeatedly been intercepted over Irbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region, which hosts US-led coalition troops and a major US consulate complex.

## PM forms 18-member committee to oversee...

FROM PAGE 01  
the Islamic Republic, which martyred supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior officials. The bombings have also seen the vital Strait of Hormuz — through which around 20% of global seaborne oil passes — effectively shut and several ships attacked, fanning supply fears. Meanwhile, the notification stated that Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has been appointed as the convener of the committee. Its members include the minister for petroleum, minister for power, minister of state for finance, the governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, secretaries of petroleum, power and finance, the chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue, the special secretary to the prime minister, the chairman of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority, the managing director of Pakistan Refinery Limited, the head of supply chain of Pakistan State Oil, the head of Pakistan LNG Limited, the managing directors of SNGPL and SSGCLPG, and representatives of the Inter-Services Intelligence and the Intelligence Bureau. According to the notification, the committee will closely monitor forward and futures prices of petroleum products and assess the predictability of the supply chain in view of the current conflict in the region. It will also determine the foreign-exchange implications of oil price volatility for the short and medium term and suggest measures to ensure that petroleum supply remains uninterrupted and markets stay adequately supplied. The committee has further been tasked with carrying out a detailed analysis of the fiscal impact in the event of a prolonged conflict and reviewing the broader effects of the war on Pakistan's economy. The notification said the committee will meet daily and submit its report to the prime minister, and may co-opt any additional members if required to fulfil its mandate.

## Usman Wazeer knocks out Indian boxer Baljit Singh

The victory marks his third consecutive win against an Indian opponent, further cementing his reputation as a clinical finisher on the international stage

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's unbeaten boxing star Usman Wazeer delivered a stunning first-round knockout against India's Baljit Singh, extending his flawless professional record to 18-0. Wazeer dominated from the opening bell with sharp footwork and aggressive combinations. A powerful early punch sent Baljit Singh to the canvas, forcing the referee to stop the contest. The victory marks his third consecutive win against an Indian opponent, further cementing his reputation as a clinical finisher on the international stage. After the bout, Wazeer dedicated his triumph to the martyrs of Pakistan's Armed Forces and thanked his sponsor ACTIVIT and its CEO, Rd. Rizwan Aftab



Ahmed, for their continued support. He emphasized that structured and sustained sponsorship plays a decisive role in an athlete's development, particularly in professional boxing where financial stability is crucial for competing internationally. For the continued trust and backing, Wazeer expressed deep gratitude to Rd. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed for supporting his journey and career. Beyond his own ambitions, Wazeer is also focused on grassroots development. Through his UW Box Academy, he is currently training six to seven young boxers from across Pakistan. "Professional boxing is growing rapidly around the world, and it is progressing in Pakistan as well. The better our youth are trained and groomed, the stronger results they will deliver for Pakistan," he said.

## Sadaf Shamas, Fatima star as Pakistan thrash South Africa for consolation victory

Sadaf Shamas's 97 and Fatima Sana's All-Round Brilliance Power Pakistan women's national cricket team to 119-Run ODI Rout of South Africa women's national cricket team in Durban



DURBAN: Sadaf Shamas starred with the bat while skipper Fatima Sana delivered an all-round show to help Pakistan women thrash South Africa in the third and final One-day International for a 119-run consolation victory at the Kingsmead Cricket Ground on Sunday. Sadaf scored a 71-ball 97 (16 fours and a six) while Fatima added a late 60 off 41 (three fours and five sixes) to boost

the visitors to 306 before Sadia Iqbal's 3-41 and Fatima's 2-29 saw South Africa bundled out for 187. Put in to bat first, Pakistan lost opening batter Gul Feroza early before Sadaf and Sidra Amin (41) stitched a 130-run partnership. Pakistan stood at 164-3 following the duo's departure but lost two quick wickets, which required a rescue effort of sorts and Fatima, along with

Najiha Alvi were up to the task. The pair put up 65 for the sixth wicket before Najiha was dismissed in the 48th over. Fatima brought up her fifth ODI half-century and remained unbeaten. For the Proteas, Sune Luus bagged 3-42 while Nonkululeko Mlaba returned figures of 2-56. In reply, Tasmia Rubab (1-19) provided Pakistan with the first breakthrough as she dismissed Tazmin Brits in her first over. Fatima continued the momentum with her pace as she bagged the scalps of her counterpart Laura Wolvaardt and Luus for a duck in space of three deliveries to reduce the hosts to 7-3 after two overs. First drop Faye Tunnicliffe (47) and top-scorer Annerie Dercksen (54) then stitched an 85-run alliance for the fourth wicket, before the former was out caught and bowled by Nashra Sundhu (2-25). Sinalo Jafra (33) joined Dercksen at the crease and put together 50 runs before being removed by Sadia. Umme-Hani (2-35) sent Dercksen back in the hut six deliveries later to leave the hosts 147-6 after 27 overs. Sadia struck again in the 30th over to dismiss Nadine de Klerk before Umme-Hani bagged her second wicket to remove Chloe Tryon as Pakistan sealed the match. — APP

## Timber header earns Arsenal crucial win over Chelsea

LONDON: Arsenal maintained control of the Premier League title race as they chiselled out a nervy 2-1 win over London rivals Chelsea to open up a five-point lead at the top of the table on Sunday. Jurrien Timber's 66th-minute header from a Declan Rice corner ensured Arsenal took three precious points but it was an afternoon of nerves in north London. It was far from pretty but Mikel Arteta's side, and the fans who squirmed through the closing minutes, will not care about that as a first title since 2004 edged a little closer. Arsenal moved to 64 points from 29 games with sole chasers Manchester City, who have played a game fewer, on 59. Defender William Saliba had given Arsenal the lead in the 21st minute from a trademark corner routine. But it had looked as though an own goal by Piero Hincapie just before halftime would prove costly for the hosts until Timber came to their rescue. Chelsea, whose six-match unbeaten league sequence under new manager Liam Rosenior was halted, ended the match with 10 men after Pedro Neto was sent off for a second yellow card. Arsenal fans will hope that the remaining nine games of the Premier League run-in are less fraught than this one. It was not a fluent showing as they extended their unbeaten league run against Chelsea to nine games and they had to resort to the tactic that has served them so well this season. With both their goals coming from corners, Arsenal have now scored 16 times from that route this season in the Premier League, the joint-most by any side in a single campaign. They were given a taste of their own medicine though with Hincapie's own goal also coming from a corner. There were puffed cheeks aplenty too as the referee blew the final whistle after a period of stoppage time that Arsenal spent hanging on against Chelsea's 10 men. Last weekend's drubbing of north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur had eased the mounting pressure after Arsenal's form had begun to waver in recent weeks. Sixth-placed Chelsea proved a far sterner test though as they sought to boost their hopes of a top-five finish. Arsenal got ahead when captain Bukayo Saka's deep corner was headed back across goal by Gabriel and fellow defender Saliba nodded goalwards with the ball going in off Chelsea's Mamadou Sarr, although Saliba was credited with the goal. — APP

## Western Japan cities hike tourism-linked fees

KYOTO: The city government of Kyoto raised its lodging tax for people staying at hotels and other accommodations collecting up to 10,000 yen (\$64.1) per person per night. Similarly, the western Japan city that hosts Himeji Castle raised the entry fee for the World Heritage site from 1,000 yen to 2,500 for nonresidents aged 18 or older. The Kyoto City has introduced a new five-tiered accommodation tax system, ranging from 200 yen to 10,000 yen, raising the maximum per-night levy from 1,000 yen. The top rate will be the highest for fixed amounts imposed by municipalities, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Under the new system, a tax rate of 200 yen per person per night is collected for a stay of less than 6,000 yen, rising to 400 yen for a stay of 6,000 yen to below 20,000 yen, 1,000 yen for a stay of 20,000 yen to below 50,000 yen, and 4,000 yen for a stay of 50,000 yen to below 100,000 yen. The highest tax rate of 10,000 yen applies to a stay costing 100,000 yen or more per night. The higher rates are estimated to more than double the city's lodging tax revenue in fiscal 2026 to about 13.2 billion yen. The city will allocate the increased income to support the tourism industry and fund cultural property restoration. — APP

## Green wins her 2nd HSBC Women's World Championship

Hannah Green Defends HSBC Women's World Championship Title at Sentosa Golf Club, Edges Austin Kim by One Shot for Seventh LPGA Victory

SINGAPORE: Australia's Hannah Green held off Austin Kim on Sunday to win the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore for the second time. Green, the 2024 champion, balanced three birdies and three bogeys on an eventful back nine to finish with a 3-under 69 and a final score of 14-under at Sentosa Golf Club. The 2019 Women's PGA Championship winner tapped in for bogey at the 18th for her seventh LPGA Tour title. "When I did win Singapore two years ago, I went on to win two other tournaments that season and pretty much had my best season on tour," said Green, 29. "So having a win so early in the season gives me a bit more flexibility with the tournaments that I can play. So I'm hoping that this puts me in good stead for the rest of the year." Green was at 16-under after birdies at the first, 11th and 13th holes and an eagle at the par-5 eighth hole. Her birdie at the par-3 15th helped her survive a bogey-bogey finish. "I knew that I had enough of a lead to be able to get away with making mistakes coming down the stretch. But I think 15 was the real turning point," she said. First- and second-round leader Kim nearly chased down her first title, matching the low round of the day with a 67 to finish one shot behind Green in the 72-hole, no-cut tournament. Kim carded six birdies and an eagle at No.

8, but a bogey at the par-3 15th proved costly for the 25-year-old American. "Overall, I think it was a really solid week," Kim said. "A great way to start the year. I hit a lot of bad shots but I also hit a lot of good ones, and it was really confidence boosting." — Agencies



## Hockey World Cup qualifying round; Pakistan beat Malaysia 5-3

Pakistan Hockey Federation President Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani, Ad-hoc Governance and Management Chairmen Olympian Ishaquddin Siddiqui and Olympian Hassan Sardar, and Chief Selector Samiullah Khan have congratulated the national team on their victory in the qualifier round

## SPORTS DESK

CARIO: In the second match of the FIH Men's World Cup Qualifier round, held from March 1st to 7th, Pakistan defeated Malaysia with a score of five goals to three, successfully qualifying for the semi-finals. For Pakistan, Rana Waheed Ashraf, Zakariya Hayat, Ahmed Nadeem, Muhammad Sufyan Khan, and Muhammad Ammar scored one goal each. On the Malaysian

side, Abdul Rauf, Ahkamullah, and Fitri Saari each scored one goal. Pakistan Hockey Federation President Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani, Ad-hoc Governance and Management Chairmen Olympian Ishaquddin Siddiqui and Olympian Hassan Sardar, and Chief Selector Samiullah Khan have congratulated the national team on their victory in the qualifier round. The national team will play its third match of the World Cup Qualifier round against Austria on March 4th.

## PM lauds role of...

FROM PAGE 01

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for Muscat's constructive efforts in facilitating dialogue and building trust among regional and international stakeholders. He acknowledged that Oman's balanced and forward-looking diplomacy was a stabilizing force in the region. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact and to continue supporting diplomatic initiatives aimed at restoring calm and ensuring lasting regional stability.

## Oil prices sky rocket

FROM PAGE 01

\$4.74, or 7.1pc, at \$71.76. Both benchmarks jumped as a sustained exchange of counterattacks damaged tankers and sharply disrupted shipments in the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Gulf to the Arabian Sea. On a typical day, ships carrying oil equal to about one-fifth of global demand from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait sail through the Strait along with tankers hauling diesel, jet fuel, and gasoline and other products from their refineries to major Asian markets, including China and India. "Markets are acknowledging the seriousness of the conflict, but are also signalling that, for now, this is a geopolitical shock, not a systemic crisis," said Priyanka Sachdeva, senior analyst at Phillip Nova. Prolonged effective closure of the Strait would push oil prices higher and cause shortages in supply to top importers, China and India. More than 200 vessels, including oil and liquefied gas tankers, have dropped anchor outside the Strait, shipping data showed on Sunday. Three tankers were damaged, and one seafarer was killed in attacks on Sunday in Gulf waters.

## Kuwait confirms...

FROM PAGE 01

US and Israeli operations targeting Iranian assets, possible friendly fire in heavily contested airspace, or technical failures, though no official determination has been released yet. The US Central Command has not issued a formal statement on the matter as of the latest reports. This development underscores the heightened risks to American air operations in the region as the broader conflict continues to intensify with spillover effects across the Gulf. Meanwhile, Israeli attacks kill 31 in Lebanon, Iran strikes across region, and US warplanes crash in Kuwait

## China calls for ceasefire

FROM PAGE 01

information and detail at this point, but obviously all of the precautionary measures are being taken around the base," Cooper told.

## Syria, Cyprus discuss activating search

DAMASCUS: Syrian Transport Minister Yarub Badr discussed with Cyprus' Chargé d'Affaires in Damascus, Michalis Hadjikyrou, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in the transport sector. Talks held at the ministry's headquarters focused on activating the 2007 Syria-Cyprus search and rescue agreement, which covers multiple transport-related sectors under the ministry's framework. The meeting also addressed interest from Cypriot companies in participating in road infrastructure projects in Syria. Minister Badr welcomed the prospect, noting that related projects will be announced soon. During the discussions, Badr received an official invitation to attend a search and rescue event scheduled to take place in Cyprus on March 13. The talks follow earlier discussions last month between Syria's Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management and the Cypriot diplomatic mission on strengthening regional disaster response and emergency preparedness cooperation. — Agencies

## Briefs

## 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 279.46 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.47.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.00 and Rs 280.50, respectively. The price of the Euro against the Rupee decreased by Rs 2.47 to close at Rs 327.47 from the previous day's close of Rs 329.94, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paisa and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 3.07 and closed at Rs 373.56 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.63. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham stood stagnant to close at Rs 76.09, while the Saudi Riyal came down by 07 and closed at Rs 74.44.—APP

## Gold prices surges by Rs 13,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 13,300 on Monday and was sold at Rs 563,862 against its sale at Rs 550,562 in the local market, the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also witnessed an increase of Rs11,402 to Rs483,420 from Rs 472,018, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold rose by Rs 10,453 to Rs443,151 from Rs432,698. The rates of per tola silver increased by Rs 188 to Rs 10,050 from Rs 9,862, while that of 10 grams silver went up by Rs 161 to Rs 8,616 from Rs 8,455. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$133 to \$5,411 from \$5,278, whereas that of silver rose by \$1.88 to \$95.66, the Association added.—APP

## Chamber continue work to strengthen philanthropic efforts

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has said that the spirit of Ramadan teaches compassion, generosity and service to humanity, and institutions working for the welfare of orphaned children reflect these noble values in their true essence. Addressing an Iftar dinner hosted for the children of Pakistan Sweet Home, he urged the business community to generously participate in supporting and patronizing orphaned children by contributing to their education, health and character building. He said that these children are the future of Pakistan and, with proper guidance and opportunities, they can grow into doctors, engineers, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs who will play an important role in the country's development. Sardar Tahir Mehmood paid rich tribute to Zamurad Khan, recipient of Hilal-e-Imtiaz, for his visionary leadership and tireless efforts in effectively running Pakistan Sweet Home and transforming it into one of the largest orphan care networks in Asia. He highlighted that Pakistan Sweet Home is providing shelter, quality education and a nurturing environment to thousands of children. Hundreds of students of the institution have secured admission in leading universities including National University of Sciences and Technology, Quaid-i-Azam University and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology as well as various medical colleges, which he described as a remarkable achievement. Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed that the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will continue to support such welfare initiatives under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and will work with the business community to strengthen philanthropic efforts for the better future of deserving children.—APP



TEHRAN: Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Muhammad Mudassir Tipu briefed Pakistani students about evacuation of expatriates by land routes.

## Macron to set out how France's nuclear arms could protect Europe

"What we are experiencing demonstrates that in the world to come, power and independence will be two indispensable forces for dealing with the proliferation of threats," said a member of Macron's team

PARIS: France will unveil on Monday how it could use the European Union's only atomic arsenal to protect the continent in an unstable world, with Russia becoming increasingly aggressive and the United States turning away. The speech by French President Emmanuel Macron, at France's Ile Longue nuclear submarine base, comes after the launch of US and Israeli attacks against Iran in a campaign that risks destabilising the Middle East. "What we are experiencing demonstrates that in the world to come, power and independence will be two indispensable forces for dealing with the proliferation of threats," said a member of Macron's team. Macron is set to update France's nuclear doctrine as Russia's war against Ukraine grinds into a fifth year and NATO allies worry about Washington's wavering commitment to Europe. "There will undoubtedly be some significant shifts and developments," a source said of the speech set to be delivered from 1415 GMT Monday.

European nations, which have relied on the US nuclear deterrent throughout the Cold War and in the decades since it ended, are increasingly debating whether to bolster their own atomic arsenals. Paris has been in talks with countries including Germany and Poland over how France could use its atomic arsenal to help protect the continent. Last year, Macron said he was ready to discuss possible deployment of French aircraft armed with nuclear weapons in other European countries. Macron said in February he was considering a doctrine that could include "special cooperation, joint exercises, and shared security interests with certain key countries. France maintains the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal, estimated at around 290 warheads. Britain, which is no longer a member of the EU, is the only other European nuclear power. By contrast, the United States and Russia, the world's two main atomic powers, have thousands of nuclear warheads each.

Reassurances from US officials that Washington's deterrent would continue to cover Europe under the NATO alliance have done little to quell European fears of fickleness under US President Donald Trump. "It is clear that we will need to reflect together on how French and British deterrence can fit into a more assertive European defense," Bernard Rogel, who served as top military adviser to Macron, told AFP. But how exactly nuclear cooperation would work between the EU's 27 states is another story. Rogel insisted that control over the launch decision will remain in French hands. "I can't see us having 27 buttons. From a credibility standpoint, that just doesn't work," he said. afel Loss, a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said leaders should find confidence in European support for strengthening nuclear deterrence. He said people in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland now tend to support rather than oppose the idea of developing an alterna-

tive European nuclear deterrent. "If there's going to be some kind of bigger European investments in France or UK's nuclear deterrence, that's only a good thing," Finland's defense minister Antti Hakkanen told AFP in February. Florian Galleri, a historian specializing in nuclear doctrines, warned that Macron would have to tread carefully, pointing to his low approval ratings one year before the end of his presidency. Macron's address could also spark a backlash ahead of the 2027 presidential election, in which Marine Le Pen's euroskeptic far-right is seen as having its best chance yet at winning the top job. "There is a consensus on possessing nuclear weapons in France, but not on nuclear policy," Galleri said. The far-right has already issued a warning. "If Mr. Macron thinks he can give France's nuclear weapon to the EU, he will face impeachment proceedings for treason," Philippe Olivier, an adviser to Le Pen, said on X.—DNA

## Azerbaijan State News Agency marks 106th anniversary

BAKU : AzerTaj, a branch of the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA), AzKavRosta, AzerTA, ZagTA, the State Telegraph Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency, and finally the Azerbaijan State News Agency...Operating under various names throughout its history, AZERTAC celebrates its 106th anniversary. Founded on March 1, 1920 by the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, AZERTAC has undergone a complex, difficult and honorable path as the first national news agency. On March 2 of the same year, the first news reports signed by AzerTaj were published in the newspaper Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, as a legacy of the republican era, AZERTAC operated as an independent news source for only 58 days After the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the agency functioned as a branch of the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) and over 70 years changed its name seven times, facing strict limitations in news coverage. Nevertheless, despite these constraints, the agency fulfilled its historical mission to the end. Following the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence, the agency regained its historical name - from March 3, 1995 it was called the State Telegraph Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers, and from January 17, 2000, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency. By an order of President Ilham Aliyev dated February 26, 2015, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency was renamed the Azerbaijan State Information Agency (AZERTAC). Throughout its activity, the agency has chronicled the history of the country and covered the path traversed by the republic. Successfully overcoming numerous challenges, AZERTAC soon after the restoration of state independence began to serve as Azerbaijan's informational window to the world. Today, as the country's main news resource, it is experiencing a new stage of development, continuously improving its operations through modern information technologies and tools, and is recognized as an accurate and reliable source of news.—APP

## Saudi Exchange shows resilience on Aramco shares, defying regional trend

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index showed signs of resilience on March 2, buoyed by gains in Saudi Aramco, even as the Middle East region continues to grapple with escalating tensions As of 11:50 a.m., Saudi time, the Kingdom's benchmark index maintained stability, seeing only a marginal decline of 0.74 percent to 10,398.64. Aramco's share price increased by 1.16 percent to SR26.10 (\$6.95), compared to the previous close of SR25.80. The gains posted by Saudi Aramco and the stable movement of the Kingdom's benchmark index came even as most Gulf markets declined after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, triggering retaliatory attacks and raising fears of a broader regional conflict. On March 1, the UAE's Capital Market Authority announced a two-day closure of the Dubai Financial Market and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, effective March 2 and March 3, citing escalating regional tensions and its regulatory mandate to maintain market stability. Boursa Kuwait declined by 2.25 percent, while Bahrain's benchmark and Qatar Stock Exchange edged down by 1.53 percent and 3.26 percent, as of 11:00 a.m. Saudi time. Investors are keeping a close eye on oil markets, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, as tensions escalate in the region. Tony = Hallside, CEO of STP Partners, told Arab News that Gulf equities have opened with volatility rather than panic, with sharp early drawdowns followed by partial rebounds as investors separate direct conflict risk from oil upside and government balance sheet strength. "Local and regional investors are broadly de-risking around the edges, raising cash, shortening time horizons, and rotating toward defensives and energy-linked exposure, while foreign flows tend to get more selective until the Hormuz and escalation trajectory is clearer," said Hallside. He added: "The key tell is dispersion: energy strength alongside broader market weakness, and a premium placed on liquidity and balance sheet quality." Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy, CEO of Vault Saudi, told Arab News that regional markets reacted sharply to heightened uncertainty on March 2, with a clear flight to safety as investors shifted into a risk-off mode. "Selling pressure was evident across most sectors, while energy names held up better as markets priced in rising supply risks," said Sudairy. He added: "Looking ahead, volatility is likely to remain elevated. Oil prices are poised to open significantly higher, and until there is greater clarity on the geopolitical front, we expect equities to stay under pressure while commodities continue to take center stage." Sudairy also discussed the vitality of prioritizing global diversification over concentration. "We are reminding clients that volatility is not the same as permanent loss; history shows that reacting emotionally to headlines often does more damage to long-term wealth than the events themselves. Our stance is to remain disciplined, look past the short-term noise, and focus on fundamental resilience," he added. Hallside said the most obvious divide after the conflict is between energy and non-energy cyclical stocks. Oil and upstream-linked companies tend to benefit from higher crude prices, while sectors such as tourism, aviation, and retail, as well as real estate and banking, may face near-term pressure if risk premiums rise and borrowing costs increase. "Regionally, anything exposed to cross-border trade flows, shipping lanes, or discretionary demand is the most headline sensitive," added the STP Partners official.—DNA

## Gaza's ceasefire had some momentum. Now, some fear new war will distract world

As the Middle East turns to another war, some Palestinians see a benefit: Israel's military is distracted. "The good thing is that the sound of booms and demolitions is rare now near the yellow line," said Ahmed Abu Jahl, of Gaza City, speaking about the line dividing Gaza and marking out roughly half the territory controlled by Israeli forces

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip: Some Palestinians say they fear the widening war sparked by US and Israeli attacks against Iran could overshadow the fragile situation in Gaza, just over a week after US President Donald Trump rallied billions of dollars in pledges for the territory's reconstruction and tried to nudge a ceasefire forward. Residents say they are scared of neglect and deprivation, with Israel in the wake of the weekend strikes closing all crossings into their shattered territory of over 2 million people. Palestinians told The Associated Press they were rushing to markets, haunted by memories of painful food scarcity last year under months of Israel's blockade. Part of Gaza, around Gaza City, was found to be in famine. "When the crossings shut down, everything was suspended from the market," said Osama Hanoda from Khan Younis. "The prices go up, and people live in misery." The shaky Israel-Hamas ceasefire had led to more humanitarian aid and other supplies entering Gaza, even as the United Nations and aid partners say more of everything from basic medical supplies

to fuel is needed. Now, Palestinians are hoarding again, with reports of prices rising sharply for basic goods such as bags of flour. "We are afraid of not finding milk" and diapers for the kids, or food and water, said Hassan Zanoun, who was displaced from Rafah. COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing civilian affairs in Gaza, did not respond to a request for comment Sunday. In its announcement of the closings, it asserted that the food supply inside the territory "is expected to suffice for an extended period." It added that the rotation of humanitarian workers in and out of Gaza is postponed. It was not clear when any crossing might reopen. Israeli authorities focused on Iran, and citizens dashed repeatedly for shelter as sirens wailed. War in Gaza began with the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and it's been marked from the start by restrictions on people and supplies being allowed into the territory - and terrified people, including medical evacuees in need of treatment, getting out. A month ago, Gaza's main Rafah border crossing with the outside world - its

only crossing not with Israel - reopened, allowing a small and tightly controlled flow of Palestinian traffic in both directions. No cargo was allowed through. Now all crossings are closed again in the middle of the ho Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, a time of chosen deprivation, evening feasts and prayer. Images have shown Palestinians lined up at long tables in the middle of bombed-out debris. The strikes on Iran shook that routine. "All the people rushed to markets, and they all wanted to shop and hide," said Abeer Awwad, who was displaced from Gaza City, as word of the explosions in Tehran began to spread. Under the Oct. 10 US-brokered ceasefire, the heaviest fighting has subsided, though regular Israeli fire continues in Gaza. The UN World Food Program has noted progress in the enclave but said in its latest food security analysis last week that hunger remains. "Households reported an average of two meals per day in February 2026, compared to one meal in July," it said. "Still, one in five households consumed only one meal daily.—Agencies

## Four migrants dead, 10 missing off Libyan coast: UN

TRIPOLI: Four migrants have died at sea and 10 are missing after an incident involving a boat off the coast of Tobruk, in eastern Libya, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) announced Sunday. "31 were on board. 17 survived. Others are still missing," UNHCR said on Facebook, without giving further details about their nationalities. "People risk the sea when war leaves them no safe way out... Expand safe and legal pathways," it added.—APP

## China's box office surpasses 10b yuan

BEIJING: China's box office revenue has topped 10 billion yuan (about 1.44 billion U.S. dollars) so far this year, according to data from Maoyan, one of the country's major online movie ticket platforms.

The box office revenue broke the 10 billion yuan mark at nearly 7:00 p.m. Sunday, according to Maoyan.

Meanwhile, some 225 million film tickets were sold, with the total number of screenings topping 26.1 million, the data showed.

The number was largely driven by the Chinese New Year holiday, which ran from Feb. 15 to 23 and saw box office sales of over 5.75 billion yuan, according to previously released data from the China Film Administration. Maoyan has also reported a notable shift in the movie-goer demographic this year, with those aged under 25 accounting for 27.61 percent of the total number of viewers, compared with the 23.53 percent for last year's same period. Industry data suggest the market's strong performance so far has been supported by lower ticket prices. According to Taopiaopiao, another major ticketing platform, the average ticket payment stood at 42 yuan in the first two months of 2026, compared with 50 yuan in the same period of 2025. The average ticket price during the nine-day Chinese New Year holiday fell by 6 percent from the same period last year.—APP

## EDB invested USD 5.2b in Kazakhstan's economy

ASTANA : Kazakh Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov and Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) chairman Nikolay Podguzov held talks to discuss priority projects and future investment cooperation, Qazinform News Agency learnt from the Government's press service. During the talks, the latter reported on the development of projects in Kazakhstan.

He said the EDB's portfolio includes 326 projects worth 19.6 billion US dollars. In 2022-2026, the EDB invested nearly 9 billion US dollars across member states, with 5.2 billion US dollars directed to Kazakhstan, which is equal to the Bank's investments in the country over the previous 15 years. Over the past four years, annual investments in Kazakhstan have exceeded 1 billion US dollars to reach 1.5 billion US dollars in 2025. Kazakhstan's share of the EDB's current portfolio stands at 64.9%. The Bank channeled 2.1 billion US dollars in industry, 1 billion US dollars in energy, 1 billion US dollars in transport infrastructure, 1 billion US dollars in financial sector. Among the key projects supported are the construction of the Silleno gas processing plant, the KPI gas-chemical complex in Atyrau region, the modernization of mining and metallurgical enterprises, the reconstruction of thermal power plants in Karaganda, Almaty, Aktobe, and others. The Bank actively supports both conventional and renewable energy development. In particular, EDB contributed to the generation of 1 in every 8 kW of electricity in Kazakhstan. These projects were developed in Karaganda, Turkistan, Akmola and other regions. The Bank also supported the projects on supplies of locomotives, freight wagons for Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, and road reconstruction.—APP

**Briefs**

**US Embassy, consulates shut appointments**

DNA

KARACHI: The US Mission to Pakistan cancelled all US visa and American Citizen Services appointments at the US Embassy in Islamabad and the US Consulates General in Karachi and Lahore, citing protest activity and security concerns.

In a security alert for Pakistan dated March 1, the mission said it was monitoring reports of ongoing demonstrations at the US Consulate General in Lahore and violent protests at the US Consulate General in Karachi. It noted calls for additional demonstrations at the US Embassy in Islamabad and the US Consulate General in Peshawar and added that US government personnel had been directed to restrict their movements until further notice.

The mission advised US citizens to monitor local news and follow personal security precautions, including staying away from surroundings, avoiding large crowds and keeping their STEP registration up to date.

It also urged people to review personal security plans, keep a low profile, carry identification, cooperate with police, and monitor email and local media for further appointment updates. In a separate update posted by the US Embassy in Islamabad on X, the embassy said all appointments for US visas and American Citizen Services were cancelled for March 2 at the Islamabad embassy and the consulates in Karachi and Lahore.

**Pak Embassy UAE shuts services**

ABU DHABI: The Embassy of Pakistan in Abu Dhabi has launched an initiative aimed at "facilitation and outreach" efforts for Pakistani nationals residing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) amid heightened tensions in the Middle East. In a post on X, the embassy said, "The Embassy of Pakistan in Abu Dhabi has launched an online registration form for the Pakistani community residing in the UAE for the sake of facilitation and outreach".

The nationals were directed by the embassy to register here. The embassy has set up facilitation desks in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which will "operate round the clock". The embassy also issued directives for Pakistani nationals stranded in transit in the UAE due to flight disruptions and airport closures to register here.

In a post on X, the embassy said, "All Pakistani citizens who are presently in transit are requested to fill out this form carefully and completely". "The information provided will help the Embassy coordinate with relevant authorities and airlines to extend necessary assistance," it added. - APP

**India and Canada strike agreement**

DNA

NEW DELHI: India and Canada on Monday reached a string of agreements, including on critical mineral cooperation and a "landmark" uranium supply deal for nuclear power, the countries' leaders said in New Delhi. The pacts, which also covered technology and promoting the use of renewable energy, were announced after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney hailed a fresh start in the relationship between their nations. "Our ties have seen a new energy, mutual trust, and positivity," Modi said. Ties effectively collapsed in 2023 after Ottawa accused New Delhi of orchestrating a deadly campaign against Sikh activists in Canada, accusations India rejected. Carney's visit - his first to India since taking office last year - is not only aimed to reset strained ties, but also to push efforts to diversify trade beyond the United States.

**President Zardari says**

**Pakistan won't allow anybody to harm peace**

In joint sitting, president reaffirms Pakistan's support for Iran's sovereignty, slams attacks on Gulf countries



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday calling the war a last resort, urged India to shift from war theatres to meaningful negotiations - or face another humiliating defeat - and warned that Pakistan had already shown both India and Afghanistan only a fraction of its capabilities. "Make no mistake. We are ready for you," the president said in his annual address to the joint sitting of parliament.

"My message to them is to move away from war theatres to meaningful negotiating tables because that is the only path for regional security... India must listen to us attentively: Pakistan will continue to give its fullest diplomatic and moral support to the just cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Co-chaired by Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the session was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the National Assembly and

Senate, while in the galleries were First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, provincial governors and chief ministers, and diplomats. Opposition lawmakers staged a protest during the president's address, chanting, "Go, Zardari, go" slogans.

The president, who addressed the parliament for the ninth time at the beginning of the new parliamentary year, deliberated on all national, regional, and international matters, including the Kashmir and Palestine issues, ongoing tension in the Gulf region, Marka-e-Haq and Ghazab lil-Haq operations,

Indian violation of the Indus Waters Treaty, economy, provincial autonomy, and poverty. The president said that nobody in South Asia would be free and safe until Kashmiris win their freedom from Indian occupation. The president condemned the war waged on Iran and reaffirmed Pakistan's support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, besides condoling the martyrdom of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

Regarding Marka-e-Haq, he said that Pakistan initially showed restraint amid Indian violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, but later its armed forces acted with outstanding professionalism and discipline, turning India's attack into a landmark strategic victory. Similarly, responding to the attacks by the Afghan Taliban regime on the night of February 26, the armed forces acted decisively. Responding to the statements by Indian leaders of preparing for another war, he said that, being a lifelong advocate for regional peace, he would not recommend that. "At the same time, I would also say that any aggressor should prepare for another humiliating defeat...Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state...At the same time, we are a state that defends itself decisively when required." Deliberating on the Ghazab lil-Haq operation, President Zardari said that Pakistan had tried every possible form of diplomacy to prevent an outbreak of military responses to terrorist incursions from Afghanistan. "For us, war is always the last option. No state accepts serial attacks on its soil... We have let both India and Afghanistan see a fraction of our capabilities," he commented.

**Bench hearing Imaan pleas dissolved**

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday dissolved the bench hearing the appeals of human rights lawyer Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha against their conviction in a controversial tweets case, and ordered the file to be placed before Chief Justice Sardar Faraz Dogar for the constitution of a new bench.

A sessions court had sentenced the two lawyers to a total of 17 years in prison on multiple charges in January, a day after they were arrested in Islamabad in connection with a separate case. Justice Muhammad Asif issued the order on an application filed by the appellants seeking the early hearing of their appeals and suspension of their sentences.

During the proceedings, the counsel for the appellants, Riasat Ali Azad, argued that despite the matter being taken up on February 19, no effective date had been assigned for the hearing, prolonging the incarceration of his clients.

**Finance Minister meets IMF team**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, met the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission, led by Ms. Iva Petrova, at the kick-off meeting for the third review of Pakistan's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement and the second review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). In his remarks, the Finance Minister underscored that since the successful completion of the previous review, Pakistan has continued to consolidate the hard-earned gains in macroeconomic stability achieved under the EFF supported program and RSF programmes. He emphasized the Government's firm resolve to maintain fiscal discipline and safeguard macroeconomic stability, terming these achievements as the result of sustained and difficult reforms. The Minister highlighted that structural reforms, particularly in taxation and the energy sector, remain central to the Government's reform agenda.

**UNESCO slams US-Israeli strike on Iran girls' school**

UNESCO said it joined a host of bodies from across the United Nations system and senior officials, including Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to condemn the military attacks, as well as the retaliatory strikes by Iran that hit several Middle Eastern countries

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO), has called the bombing on a primary school during the United States and Israeli military attacks on Iran on Saturday "a grave violation of humanitarian law." The missiles reportedly destroyed a girl's primary school in Minab, southern Iran, killing around 150 and wounding almost 100 person, believed to be included a large number of students among the dead.

In a statement released on social media, UNESCO expressed deep alarm at the impact of the military attacks, noting that pupils in a place dedicated to learning are protected under international humanitarian law, and that "attacks against educational institutions endanger students and teachers and undermine the right to education."

UNESCO said it joined a host of bodies from across the United Nations system and senior officials, including Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to condemn the military

attacks, as well as the retaliatory strikes by Iran that hit several Middle Eastern countries.

Meanwhile, United Nations Messenger of Peace and Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai said that she was heartbroken and appalled by the bombing of the school.

"The killing of civilians, especially children, is unconscionable, and I condemn it unequivocally," Malala, a Pakistani education activist, said in a social media post, and called for the escalation of violence across the region to end, and for justice and accountability to follow.

"All states and parties must uphold their obligations under international law to protect civilians and safeguard schools," she wrote. "Every child deserves to live and learn in peace." Malala became an international symbol of the fight for girls' education after she was shot in 2012 for opposing Taliban restrictions on female education in her home country of Pakistan. - Agencies

**Major Saudi refinery, Kurdish and Israeli oil, gas fields shut**

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia shut its biggest domestic oil refinery on Monday after a drone strike, a source said, as Israeli and US strikes and Iranian retaliation forced shutdowns of oil and gas facilities across the Middle East. A wave of attacks on the region stretched into a third day, resulting in the precautionary suspension of most oil production in Iraqi Kurdistan and at several major Israeli gas fields, throttling exports to Egypt. State oil giant Saudi Aramco's 550,000 barrels per day (bpd) Ras Tanura refinery, which was shut as a precautionary measure, is part of an energy complex on the kingdom's Gulf coast which also serves as a critical export terminal for Saudi crude oil. In Iraqi Kurdistan, which exported 200,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) via pipeline to Turkey's Ceyhan port in

February, companies including DNO, Gulf Keystone Petroleum, Dana Gas and HKN Energy have stopped output at their fields as a precaution, with no damage reported. Offshore Israel, the giant Chevron-operated Leviathan gas field was shut on Saturday, according to sources, while Energean shut down its production vessel serving smaller gas fields. The situation at Aramco's Ras Tanura refinery is under control, the source said. Two drones were intercepted at the facility, with debris causing a limited fire, the Saudi defence ministry's spokesperson said on Al Arabiya TV, adding there were no injuries. Aramco did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Some of the refinery's units were shut as a precautionary measure but the supply of petroleum and its derivatives to local markets was not affected, Saudi state news agency SPA said, citing an unnamed official at energy ministry. Still, its shuttering will likely add to supply anxieties as shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, through which around a fifth of global oil consumption flows, grinds to a near-halt after vessels were attacked around it on Sunday. Brent crude futures LCO1C1 surged roughly 10% on Monday to over \$82 a barrel. "The attack on Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura refinery marks a significant escalation, with Gulf energy infrastructure now squarely in Iran's sights," said Torbjorn Soltvedt, principal Middle East analyst at risk intelligence firm Verisk Maplecroft. - DNA

**Pentagon tells Congress**

**'No intelligence suggests' Iran planned to attack US first**

Trump has argued, without evidence, that Iran was on track to soon secure ability to strike US with ballistic missile

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Trump administration officials acknowledged in closed-door briefings with congressional staff on Sunday that there was no intelligence suggesting Iran planned to attack US forces first, two people familiar with the matter said. The United States and Israel launched their most ambitious attacks on Iran in decades on Saturday, martyring Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sinking Iranian warships and hitting more than 1,000 targets so far, officials say. But Sunday's remarks to Congress appeared to undercut one of the key arguments for the war made by senior administration officials.

A smoke plume rises following a missile strike on a building in Tehran on March 1, 2026. They told reporters the day before that President Donald Trump decided to launch the attacks in part because of indicators that Iranians might strike US forces in the Middle East "perhaps preemptively." Trump, one of the officials said, was not going to "sit back and allow American forces in the region to absorb attacks." Pentagon officials briefed Democratic and Republican staff of several national security committees in both the Senate and the House of Representatives for more than 90 minutes on the unfolding US attack in Iran, White House spokesperson Dylan Johnson said earlier.

In the briefings, administration officials emphasised that Iran's ballistic missiles and proxy forces in the region posed an imminent threat to US interests, but there was no intelligence about Tehran attacking US forces first, the two sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters. The Pentagon is seen from the air in Washington, U.S., March 3, 2022, more than a week after Russia invaded Ukraine. Trump said the attack, which is expected to run for weeks, aimed to ensure Iran could not have a nuclear weapon, contain its missile program and eliminate threats to the United States and its allies. He has urged Iranians to rise up and topple the government.

Still, Democrats have accused Trump of waging a war of choice and have taken aim at his arguments for abandoning peace talks that mediator Oman said still held promise. Trump has argued, without presenting evidence, that Iran was on track to soon secure the ability to strike the United States with a ballistic missile. His missile claim was not backed by US intelligence reports, and appeared to be exaggerated, sources familiar with the reports have told Reuters. Questions about the justification for the war come as the US military revealed on Sunday the first American casualties of the conflict. Following the martyrdom of Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei, many senior US officials remain sceptical that the US and Israeli military operation against the Islamic Republic will lead to regime change in the near term.

**23 killed in protests across Pakistan**

10 killed in Karachi after protesters breached outer security cordon of US consulate

DNA

KARACHI: At least 23 people were killed and dozens injured in clashes during protest demonstrations across Pakistan, which turned violent despite appeals for calm from religious figures and the security czar, against the US-Israeli bombing campaign that martyred Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and top officials. According to details, 10 protesters lost their lives in Karachi during a demonstration outside the US consulate, 11 in Gilgit Baltistan's Skardu and two in Islamabad. In Karachi, authorities blocked all roads leading to the consulate, while a traffic police post under the Sultana bridge was set on fire. Police resorted to shelling near the Central Police Office on II Chundrigar Road to disperse a rally, while another protest was held at Native Jetty Bridge near the Customs House. At least 34 people were injured, police said. Karachi's Civil Hospital said all those killed and injured were hit with gunshots.

**NOW IN PAKISTAN**  
Invisible Braces  
Dental Implants

**Dr. Abrar & Associates**  
DENTAL SURGEONS

House # 6-A, Ismail Zabeeh Road, (Service Road Parallel to Faisal Avenue) F-8/3, Islamabad.  
e-mail: abrar\_associates@yahoo.com | www.drabrarassociates.com  
Ph: +92 51 228 7691 | +92 51 228 7692 | Fax: +92 51 228 7693