LAHORE - KARACHI - ISLAMABAD

A sister publication of CENTRELINE & DNA News Agency

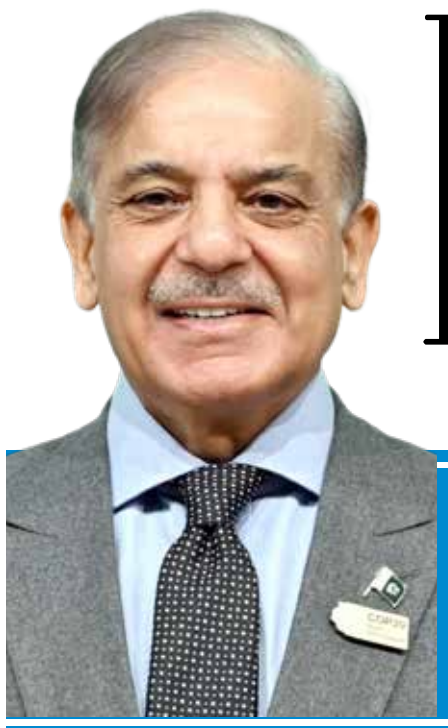
WWW.ISLAMABADPOST.COM.PK

Daily Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 02, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30



Prime Minister asks Ministry to take up levey issue with IMF

Detailed News On Page-08

Aurangzeb takes up investment issue with IFC

Detailed News On Page-08

Japanese envoy calls on Sindh governor Nehal

Detailed News On Page-02

Disappointed by allies

Trump signals possible NATO exit, predicts end of Iran conflict

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has reaffirmed that Britain will not join the war militarily. While maintaining support for NATO and broader Western security cooperation, Starmer made it clear that the UK would avoid direct involvement in combat operations

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has indicated that he is "seriously considering" withdrawing from NATO, expressing deep dissatisfaction with the alliance and its lack of support during the ongoing Iran conflict.

According to recent statements, Trump said NATO has "disappointed" him and "never impressed" him, adding that "without the United States, NATO is nothing." His remarks reflect growing frustration within Washington over what it perceives as limited backing from European allies during the war with Iran. Trump has repeatedly criticized NATO members for failing to contribute meaningfully, stating that the alliance "has done absolutely nothing" to support U.S. efforts.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has echoed these concerns, suggesting that Washington may "reexamine" its relationship with NATO after the conflict ends, calling the alliance a potential "one-way street" if allies do not reciprocate support. On the Iran front, President Trump struck an optimistic tone, predicting that Iran would soon be brought to an end militarily. He has suggested that U.S. operations could conclude

Continued on Page 06

Trump says Iran's 'new regime' president has asked for ceasefire

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump stated on Tuesday that the president of Iran's "new regime" has asked for a ceasefire in the ongoing conflict, but the United States will only entertain any truce once the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened to international shipping. Speaking to reporters, Trump described progress in indirect communications with what he called a "much more reasonable" and "less radicalized" Iranian leadership that emerged following heavy U.S.-Israeli military strikes and the death of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei earlier in the war. He characterized the situation as having achieved a form of regime change, even as Iran's formal structures—including President Masoud Pezeshkian—remain in place amid an interim leadership period.

"Iran has asked for a ceasefire," Trump said. "They are begging to make a deal. But we will only consider it seriously when the Strait of Hormuz is open — fully open — for everyone. No more games."The Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which roughly one-fifth of global oil passes, has been largely closed or severely restricted since the escalation of the 2026 Iran war, causing oil prices to surge and global energy markets to tighten. Iran has used its position there as leverage, with some Iranian officials stating the waterway will reopen "but not for you" or only under new conditions and "laws" set by Tehran.

Iran's Araghchi refutes Trump's ceasefire claim

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has firmly rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that Tehran requested a ceasefire, calling the assertion "false and baseless" and insisting that Iran will continue fighting until its conditions are met.

Speaking amid intensifying conflict, Araghchi said there are no negotiations underway with the United States, directly contradicting Trump's recent statement that Iran's leadership had sought a halt to hostilities. Trump had earlier claimed that Iran's president wanted a ceasefire and suggested the U.S. might consider it only if the Strait of Hormuz is reopened.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan, China naval exercise ends

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Exercise SEA GUARDIAN IV, conducted from 25 March to 1 April 2026 between the Pakistan Navy and PLA (N), aimed to enhance interoperability and maritime cooperation. The exercise included a five-day port phase in Karachi and a two-day sea phase in the North Arabian Sea. During the port visit, PLA Navy Ship DAQING was welcomed by PNS TAIMUR. Activities included exchange visits, orientations at naval installations, professional discussions on maritime challenges, and a maiden Young Officers Seminar. The sea phase featured key exercises such as air

Continued on Page 06

UK official visits Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ed Llewellyn CVO OBE, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Director General Political, visited Islamabad on 1 April for a series of senior-level engagements. He reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region. During his visit, the Director General welcomed Pakistani efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East and re-iterated the UK's call for a cessation in attacks against civilian infrastructure. He also recognised the impact of terrorism on Pakistan's people, and the sacrifices made by its law enforcement

Continued on Page 06

ISLAMABAD: CEO of Multinational telecommunication company Mr. Kaan called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Wednesday. – DNA

Security forces kill 13 India-backed terrorists in two KP IBOs: ISPR

Intelligence-based operations carried out in Khyber District's Bara area and Bannu, says military's media wing

News Desk

PESHAWAR: Security forces gunned down 13 India-backed terrorists during two separate intelligence-based operations conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, read a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Wednesday.

According to the military's media wing, two intelligence-based operations were carried out in the Khyber District's Bara area and Bannu on the reported presence of the terrorists. During the conduct of operation in general area Bara, the ISPR said, security forces "effectively engaged khwarijs' location and after an intense fire exchange, 10 khwarij were [killed]".

Another intelligence-based operation was conducted in Bannu District, wherein three terrorists were effectively neutralised.

"Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored kharji found in the area," the ISPR said, adding that the relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm-e-Istehkam" will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Continued on Page 06

President, PM pay tribute to security forces

APP

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid tribute to the security forces for successful operations against Fitna al Khawarij terrorists in the Khyber and Bannu districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in which 13 terrorists were killed. In separate statements, the president and the prime minister expressed their unwavering resolve to completely eradicate terrorism from the country. President Zardari stated that operations against terrorists, backed by external elements, must continue to ensure national security and the protection of citizens. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the security forces were standing like an iron wall against terrorism to safeguard the country.

Briefs

Pak, Oslo sign carbon accord

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan signed its first bilateral carbon market agreement under the Paris Agreement with Norway, marking a step towards attracting climate finance, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday. The memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed under the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, will enable Pakistan to develop carbon credit projects and transfer emission reductions to Norway. Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Musadik Malik described the agreement as a "historic milestone", saying it marked Pakistan's shift from carbon market preparedness to implementation. "This is Pakistan's first bilateral agreement under Article 6.2 and an important step towards implementation," he said.

Teenagers can now have bank accounts

News Desk

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Wednesday launched a new framework for teenagers' accounts, enabling them to independently own and operate bank accounts and digital wallets. According to a statement issued by the SBP, the move will build a financially savvy young generation. "By providing a convenient entry into the formal financial system at an early age, the SBP aims to foster meaningful participation of teenagers in the economy," the statement said. It added that the initiative addressed a critical gap in the country's financial landscape.

'Devoid of facts'

Ministry rubbishes claims of barbed wire being removed

"The Taliban regime works hand in glove with terrorists, smugglers and criminal mafia to infiltrate [it],"

Fiaz Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD: The information ministry on Wednesday dismissed claims regarding the removal of the barbed wire along the Pak-Afghan border as "fabricated and devoid of facts". In a post on X, the ministry's fact-checking account denounced these "fake claims by the Afghan Taliban regime and Indian RAW's (Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing) mouthpieces".

It said that the Pak-Afghan border, also called the Durand Line, was 2,640 kilometres long and guarded by Pakistan. "The Taliban regime works hand in glove with terrorists, smugglers and criminal mafia to infiltrate [it]," it said, adding that the complex dynamics of the border had already been explained multiple times by relevant security officials. The ministry's post also referred to a November 2025 press conference by the

Continued on Page 06

Significant decline in combat-related fatalities

Faisal Sheikh

ISLAMABAD: A significant reduction of 35 per cent in combat-related fatalities was recorded across Pakistan during the month of March, coinciding with Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, according to monthly statistics released by a think tank. Data released by Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) showed that a total of 331 people were killed in March compared to 506 in February, marking a 35pc decline in overall combat-related deaths.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan, Afghan peace talks resume in China

Since Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan on February 26, diplomatic contact between the two sides had largely ceased

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan and China met on Wednesday in the Chinese city of Urumqi under the trilateral mechanism. Since Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan on February 26, diplomatic contact between the two sides had largely ceased. A Pakistani official said that there was no breakthrough during the meeting. The official said that China would continue to engage with both countries.

Earlier, a senior official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), who asked not to be named due to the sensitive nature of negotiations, told Dawn that the meeting was not a "mediation effort per se". The meeting was focused on sharing perspectives on the latest escalation. No major outcomes were expected, though it was believed that China was pushing for confidence-building measures, such as reopening trade routes. Officials were engaged in detailed

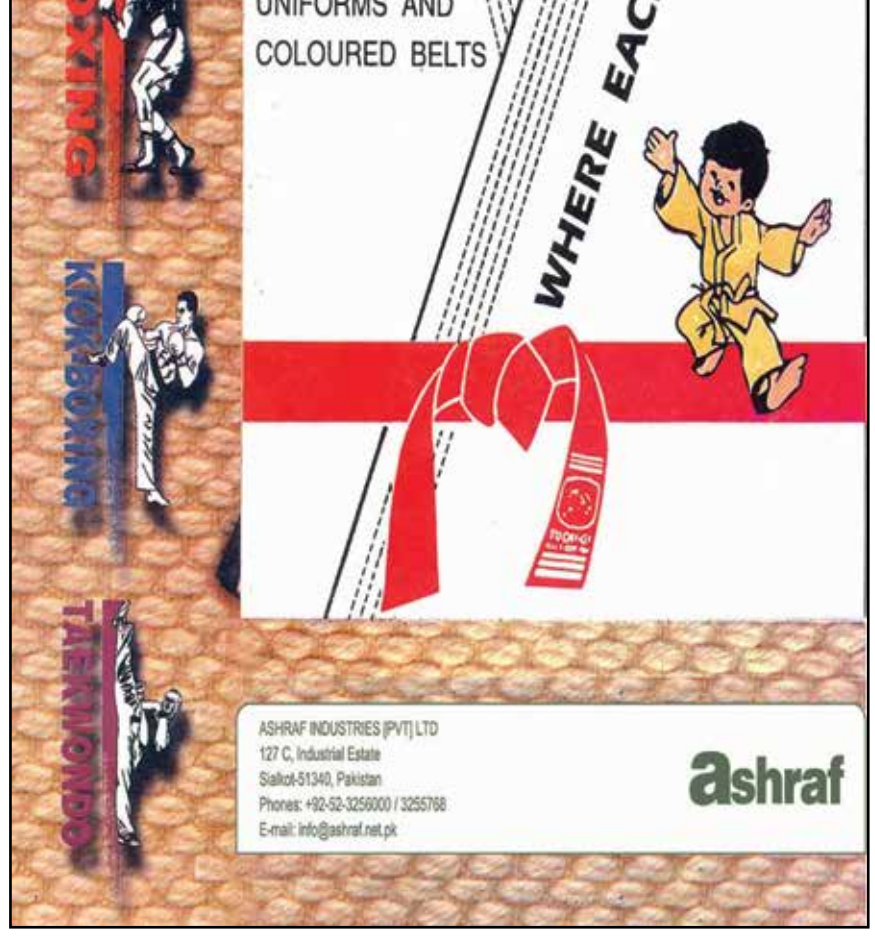
Continued on Page 06

Chinese FM conveys praise

APP

BEIJING: Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi has conveyed his country's appreciation and support to Pakistan's active diplomatic role and efforts to end the conflict and promote peace in West Asia. The bilateral ties and regional developments were discussed in a meeting between Wang Yi and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, who paid an official visit to Beijing on March 31-April 1, 2026, at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart. The meeting was marked by traditional warmth and cordiality. Both dignitaries

Continued on Page 06



Rape survivors in Pak struggle to access justice despite legal reforms

Strengthening implementation, evidence gathering and support services can help Pakistan turn legal reforms into effective justice for sexual violence survivors

DNA

KARACHI: Reforms to expand Pakistan's sexual violence laws, increase penalties, and improve procedures have not translated into better justice or protection fo survivors, finds a new report by Equality Now. Legal Response to Sexual Violence in Pakistan: Challenges in Enforcement and Access to Justice reveals how poor implementation, long delays in investigations and trials, and illegal out-of-court "compromises" are just some of the factors contributing to a dismally low 0.5% rape conviction rate. Cases are undermined by flawed evidence collection and a shortage of public prosecutors. Victim-blaming is common, with police, prosecutors and courts frequently applying outdated and narrow interpretations of rape and consent. Survivors also struggle to access legal aid, psychosocial care, safe shelters and effective victim and witness protection. Women and girls from marginalised communities, including Christian and Hindu groups, face higher risks of sexual harassment, abduction and forced religious conversion, including through child marriage. Women with disabilities are reported to be up to three times more likely to experience sexual violence, with discrimination, exclusion and practical barriers making it even harder to navigate Pakistan's justice system. Equality Now's Jacqui Hunt explains, "Pakistan has strengthened its sexual violence laws and, while these are welcome changes, it needs now to build on those with effective enforcement. The priority now is consistent legal implementation enabled by better resourcing, training and accountability. Gaps in laws that leave women and girls unprotected must be closed and stat support services improved so that all survivors can receive the justice they are entitled to." Rape in Pakistani law is based on the absence of consent, meaning sexual activity requires free and voluntary agreement. Physical evidence of violence is not needed to prove rape, and survivor testimony alone can be sufficient to secure a conviction. Despite this, authorities commonly rely on evidence of injury or resistance, and there remains considerable scepticism among law enforcement about whether rape has occurred without proof of physical violence. Some courts wrongly demand this type of corroborative evidence, and although a victim's sexual history or evidence of "immoral" character is inadmissible, defence lawyers continue to raise questions in cross-examinations to discredit victims.

Equality Now found widespread consensus that sexual violence investigations are weak. Insufficient resources undermine the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence. Police rely heavily on medical verification, such as DNA, and overlook other important forensic and non-forensic evidence.

Strengthening Pakistan's justice system requires improved evidence collection, investment and coordination between departments. To ensure laws are correctly applied, mandatory training and clear guidance are needed for everyone in the justice system. Better oversight of courtrooms is also essential to address improper evidence demands, rape myths, and prohibited questioning. Rape survivors face long delays and difficulties accessing services The introduction of fast-track mechanisms offers a promising pathway to timely justice, with research finding higher satisfaction among survivors using Gender-Based Violence Courts compared to regular criminal courts. However, rape cases still routinely experience long delays, procedural problems, and poor coordination between police, prosecutors and Women Medico-Legal Officers (WMLO). Timely medical examination is critical for gathering evidence. Pakistan's law states that in rape cases, DNA samples must be collected from a victim and the accused during a medico-legal examination. For females, these must be conducted by a WMLO, but a shortage means survivors must often travel far for examinations and are ill-informed about how to preserve evidence. WMLOs also lack resources to work effectively and need training on legal developments. Many still record whether the victim is a virgin, which is not relevant and reflects harmful social biases that presume a non-virgin is more likely to consent to sexual activity. Support services remain uneven, especially outside major cities. The Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021, promises legal aid, counselling, and provisions such as Anti-Rape Crisis Cells, intended as one-stop centres for reporting cases and conducting medico-legal examinations. While a promising initiative, they are frequently unavailable. The Act also requires perpetrators to pay survivors compensation, but courts reportedly don't enforce this. A shortage of safe shelters leaves survivors at risk of harm and intimidation. Legal reform needed to strengthen laws on marital rape, incest and child marriage Pakistan's law, in principle, treats marital rape the same as rape outside of marriage. However, courts have failed to recognise non-consensual sex within marriage as rape, or have applied legal provisions with significantly lower penalties. Each province has its own child marriage law, and inconsistencies in the age of marriage create confusion and loopholes that hinder prosecutions. The Child Marriage Restraint Acts set 18 as the minimum age of marriage for women in Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh and the Islamabad Capital Territory, whereas in KP it remains 16 years. The Christian Marriage Act, 1872, also permits child marriage under 18 if certain procedural requirements are met, such as when a father grants permission. While some courts rightly recognise child marriage as contravening girls' human rights, others have ruled that under Islamic law, sex within Muslim marriages can be lawful once a girl reaches puberty and is considered capable of consenting, even if she is below Pakistan's legal age of marriage. Harmonising laws to establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage, without exception, would close protection gaps and remove confusion. Lawyer and report lead author, Sahar Bandial, concludes, "For survivors of sexual violence, accessing justice and support in Pakistan remains slow, difficult, often retraumatising and impossible for many. While legal reforms are a vital step, they must now translate into tangible, meaningful change in police stations, courtrooms and communities throughout the country.

Shah for timely aid to patients

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmed Shah Wednesday underscored that ensuring transparent and timely financial assistance to deserving patients is a top government priority. The minister stated this during his visit to the Mayo Hospital in Lahore to review support being provided through Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM). During the visit, the minister conducted a detailed assessment of PBM's individual financial assistance mechanism, with particular focus on transparency and prompt disbursement to patients in need, said a news release. He was briefed that from 2021 to 2026, PBM has disbursed Rs. 685.8 million for the treatment of 3,035 patients at Mayo Hospital.

In the financial year 2024–25 alone, Rs. 321.4 million were provided to 1,180 patients, while in the current financial year, Rs. 106.6 million have so far been released for 535 patients. Additionally, Rs. 190 million were allocated last year specifically for cancer patients at the hospital.–**APP**

Tourist facilities, uplift projects in Galiyat reviewed

DNA

NATHIAGALI: Director General, Galliyat Development Authority (GDA), Muhammad Fawad on Wednesday conducted a detailed visit to Galiyat to review ongoing development initiatives and service delivery across the region. During the visit, the Director General was accompanied by GDA officers who briefed him on various development projects currently underway throughout Galiyat.

He visited Church Park Nathiagali to assess existing facilities and explore opportunities for further enhancement and the introduction of recreational activities for tourists.

Along with the Director Tourism, the Director General also visited Plaza Park and Changlagali Park to evaluate their current condition and identify areas for improvement aimed at enhancing the overall tourist experience.

Fawad also reviewed potential sites for the development of parking facilities to reduce vehicle congestion in Nathiagali and other areas of Galiyat. Additionally, he visited the GDA Facilitation Center and other tourist service facilities to assess their performance and ensure quality service delivery.

The Director General further inspected the GDA Control Room and DG House to review operational functionality and service efficiency.

He also visited various towns to assess the condition of roads, cleanliness, and availability of public facilities, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high standards for both tourists and local residents.

The visit reflects GDA's commitment to improving infrastructure, enhancing tourist amenities, and ensuring efficient service delivery across the region.

KARACHI: Ambassador AKAMATSU Shuichi paid a courtesy call on Syed Nehal Hashmi, Governor of Sindh. DNA

CM KP enhances compensation for minority communities

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Khan Afridi, Wednesday chaired a video-link meeting of the Assessment Committee for the Endowment Fund established for minority communities affected by terrorism, making key decisions to ensure their protection and rights. The Chief Minister directed that financial assistance cheques be distributed this week to the victims of the 2013 All Saints Church attack in Kohati Gate, Peshawar. He approved an increase in the endowment fund's seed money from Rs. 200 million to Rs. 400 million. In a significant enhancement of financial support, the Chief Minister ordered that compensation for widows under the fund be increased from Rs. 1 million to Rs. 2 million, while financial assistance for orphans was raised from Rs. 500,000 to Rs. 1.5 million. He also directed an increase in compensation for persons with disabilities from Rs. 500,000 to Rs. 1 million and increased financial assistance for the injured from Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 600,000. Further directives included initiating necessary groundwork for establishing a separate directorate for minority communities within the Auqaf Department. The Chief Minister also instructed that a development scheme for the rehabilitation of residential colonies of minority communities be proposed in the next Annual Development Program. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister stated that the protection and welfare of minority communities is a constitutional and moral responsibility. He acknowledged their commendable contribution to the country's development and affirmed that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands firmly with them. "ensuring equal rights and opportunities for minority citizens is the government's top priority," he added.–DNA

PDMA Sindh on high alert ahead of rain

KARACHI: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Sindh has activated its emergency response system and appointed focal persons at the district level to ensure timely and effective action, in anticipation of possible rainfall. Adviser for Rehabilitation, Gianchand Esrani, has instructed PDMA to remain fully prepared to tackle any adverse weather conditions. He stated that from today until April 4, Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, and other districts are expected to experience intermittent rainfall. DG PDMA, Salman Shah, said that dewatering pumps would be deployed at key locations in Karachi for the prompt drainage of rainwater, and rescue teams would be stationed on main roads to assist citizens if needed Director General PDMA Sindh Salman Shah said the authority is fully prepared to tackle the expected weather conditions. He added that 10 dewatering pumps would be deployed at key locations to ensure timely drainage of rainwater, while five rescue teams would be stationed along major roads to assist motorists in case of waterlogging or breakdowns. The PDMA has also designated focal persons across various districts, including Karachi East, Central, West, South, Korangi, Keamari, Malir, Hyderabad and Sukkur, to ensure a coordinated and timely response. The officials have been directed to remain on high alert, maintain field presence and coordinate with local administration for drainage, emergency response and relief operations.–**DNA**

KP Climate Change enforces transparent merit-based recruitment

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Climate Change, Forests, Environment, and Wildlife has issued comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure that the recruitment process across the province is transparent, fair, and strictly merit-based. This significant initiative has been undertaken in light of the directives of the Secretary, Department of Climate Change, and incorporates public feedback and suggestions gathered during the E-Khuli Kuchehri held at Peshawar. According to the official statement, a structured and clearly defined mechanism has been developed for filling vacant positions in the Forest Department, Wildlife Department, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI).

The primary objective of this framework is to ensure the selection of competent and deserving candidates through a credible and transparent process. Under the newly introduced procedures, obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Finance Department has been made mandatory prior to filling any vacant position. The schedule for written examinations will be finalized in consultation with the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA). Furthermore, in accordance with government rules and regulations, vacancies will be advertised in national newspapers to ensure maximum outreach and equal opportunity for all eligible candidates. The statement further clarifies that written examinations will be conducted by ETEA, while physical tests for Forest Guard positions will be carried out in collaboration with the respective district police, in line with prevailing laws. Interviews will be conducted by a duly constituted and empowered selection committee, headed by the relevant appointing authority. To uphold transparency at every stage of the recruitment process, particularly the final selection list, all relevant information will be prominently displayed on notice boards and the official websites of the concerned institutions. In addition, an effective grievance redressal mechanism will be established within each institution to ensure prompt resolution of complaints. The department has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that all recruitments are conducted strictly in accordance with the ESTACODE and other applicable rules, with concerned officials bound to adhere to these guidelines in letter and spirit. This initiative marks a significant step toward strengthening transparency and meritocracy within public institutions, while also serving as a milestone in restoring public trust and advancing the broader agenda of institutional reform.–DNA

PRBC engages SECP to facilitate Pak-Romania bilateral trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Atif Farooqi, Advisor and Chief Operating Officer of the Pakistan-Romania Business Council (PRBC), met Muzzafar Ahmed Mirza, Commissioner Licensing at the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), to discuss facilitation for Romanian companies entering Pakistan's market.

Atif Farooqi, Advisor PRBC highlighted PRBC's efforts to promote trade and investment, noting the rising interest of Romanian firms in Pakistan and the need for SECP's institutional support in licensing and compliance. He proposed closer cooperation to ease procedures and boost investor confidence.

Referring to the recent Karachi Port Trust–Constan a Port Authority MoU, Farooqi called it a milestone for maritime and trade cooperation, lauding Romanian Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoenescu's role in its success.

Both sides agreed to strengthen collaboration on trade facilitation, investment promotion, and regulatory support to advance Pakistan-Romania economic ties.

Islamabad POST
METROLITE
Thursday April 02, 2026

National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

April 04/Senegal National Day

April 07/W. H. O. World Health Day

April 12/Somalia Armed Forces Day

April 15/DPR Korea The Day of the Sun

April 16/Denmark National Day

April 17/Iran Army Day

April 17/Syria Independence Day

April 18/Zimbabwe Independence Day

April 24/Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate

April 25/DPR Korea Armed Forces Day

April 26/Tanzania National Day

April 27/Sierra Leone Independence Day

April 27/South Africa Freedom Day
April 30/Sweden Birthday of His Majesty

April 30/Netherlands Birthday of Queen

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

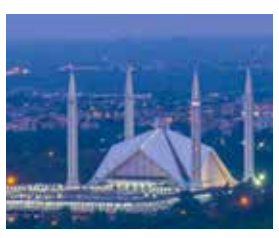
Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

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

Minister reviews NHA maintenance expenditures

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday approved large-scale new policies to ensure transparency and accountability in the National Highway Authority (NHA). Taking strict notice of heavy expenditures under the guise of maintenance, the minister made it clear that any form of corruption under the cover of repair work will not be tolerated, said a press release. Aleem Khan directed the Chairman NHA to immediately formulate a comprehensive and integrated plan for institutional reforms. He stated that while efforts are being made to save every penny, it is unacceptable that funds are being misused at lower levels. Therefore, any financial irregularity or corruption at any level will not be accepted. He further instructed NHA to hire competent, capable and honest executives from the private sector to improve the Institution's performance. 0 Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized the need to complete pending inquiries promptly, ensure full accountability of utilized funds and implement a strict monitoring system. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan also directed on-site inspections of maintenance work, the establishment of an effective check-and-balance system and the introduction of third-party evaluations to ensure transparency. He ordered the immediate resolution of construction-related complaints on the Abdul Hakeem Motorway (M-3), stating that responsibility must be clearly fixed in case of any deficiencies

in developmental projects. During the NHA meeting, concerns related to the Lyari Expressway were also reviewed and clear instructions were issued to the relevant authorities. Abdul Aleem Khan reaffirmed his commitment that hard-earned NHA resources will not be wasted and that an effective, transparent and accountable system will be introduced in the department. He further directed the Chairman NHA to introduce a new mechanism aligned with modern requirements to ensure the timely completion and quality of development work. The high-level meeting of the National Highway Authority was chaired by Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan where ongoing projects, financial matters, and institutional reforms were discussed in detail. Federal Secretary Communications and Chairman NHA briefed the Federal Minister on various important matters.

SLC attestation to advance digital edc transformation

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards enhancing transparency, efficiency, and ease of doing business for Private Educational Institutions (PEIs) in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), the Islamabad Capital Territory Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (ICT-PEIRA) has launched its School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Attestation Portal The formal launch ceremony, held on Wednesday, marking another milestone under PEIRA's ongoing Digital Reforms Initiative, aimed at modernizing regulatory processes and delivering citizen-centric services through technology-driven solutions. Prior to this initiative, the attestation of School Leaving Certificates (SLCs) was conducted manually, often resulting in delays, multiple physical visits, and inconvenience for students, parents, and institutions. The newly introduced portal transforms this process into a seamless, paperless, and user-friendly system, enabling applicants to submit requests online, track application status in real time, and receive attested certificates without visiting PEIRA offices. This landmark development reflects PEIRA's strong commitment to innovation, accountability, and improved governance in the education sector. It also underscores the visionary leadership of Chairman ICT-PEIRA, Dr Ghulam Ali Mallah, in driving digital transformation and institutional reform. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Mallah emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a turning point, accelerating the shift towards digitalization and preparing institutions and citizens to embrace technology. He noted that PEIRA has already transitioned key services online, including school registration and issuance of e-licenses, and is now moving towards a "visitor-free" service model, where physical visits are minimized and efficiency is maximized. "Our focus is now shifting more towards ensuring compliance with regulatory standards while facilitating stakeholders through digital platforms," Dr Mallah stated. He also acknowledged the pivotal support and strategic direction provided by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, whose guidance has been instrumental in making these reforms possible. He further highlighted that these initiatives align with the broader national vision of Digital Pakistan and Uraan Pakistan, aiming to enhance public service delivery through innovation and technology. With the launch of the SLC Attestation Portal, ICT-PEIRA has further strengthened its digital ecosystem, ensuring faster, transparent, and more efficient service delivery. –**APP**

Digital economy could contribute to 7pc to GDP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's digital economy has the potential to contribute 5–7 per cent to GDP by 2030 if key structural bottlenecks are addressed and reforms accelerated, according to the OICCI Digital Report 2025, which underscores the sector's growing role as a driver of productivity, exports and financial inclusion. The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) on Wednesday launched its flagship report, 'Recommendations for Pakistan's Digital Future', presenting a comprehensive assessment of the country's digital ecosystem, policy gaps and growth opportunities. The OICCI Digital Report highlights strong momentum in Pakistan's digital adoption. IT and IT-enabled services (IteS) exports reached $3.8 billion, while the country's thriving freelance economy generated $779 million in earnings. Pakistan now has more than 150 million broadband subscriptions and over 200 million telecom connections, with the mobile ecosystem contributing an estimated $17 billion to the national economy. Despite this progress, the report points to significant infrastructure gaps that could slow growth. Only about 18pc of cellular towers are connected through fibre, far below the global benchmark of around 40pc, limiting network capacity and readiness for next-generation technologies. OICCI President Yousaf Hussain said the OICCI Digital Report reflects encouraging gains in digital finance and inclusion. Pakistan has made notable strides in digital payments and financial inclusion. The Raast instant payment system processed PKR 18 trillion in peer-to-peer transactions in FY26, demonstrating the rapid adoption of digital financial services," he said, adding that infrastructure bottlenecks and regulatory delays continue to constrain the sector's full potential.

OICCI Secretary General M. Abdul Aleem noted that while policy dialogue has progressed, implementation remains slow "Only about one-quarter of OICCI's digital policy recommendations issued in OICCI's Digital Report 2022 have been implemented so far. Faster execution, improved fibre penetration and a more investment-friendly regulatory environment will be essential to unlock Pakistan's digital potential," he said. The OICCI report recommends lower taxes on broadband services and digital devices, accelerated fibre deployment, regulatory clarity in data protection and cybersecurity, and stronger public-private collaboration to position Pakistan as a competitive regional digital economy.–**DNA**

MUFAP membership to strengthen investor protection

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has made it mandatory for all investment advisors and distributors of mutual and pension funds to obtain membership of the Mutual Funds Association of Pakistan (MUFAP). The objective is to protect investors by ensuring that all market intermediaries follow a single Code of Conduct and operate under a standardized regulatory framework, said a release issued here on Wednesday. This step aims to reduce mis-selling, improve transparency, and give investors greater confidence that their financial interests are safeguarded. It will also provide a formal system for handling complaints and resolving disputes. The requirement applies to Licensed Investment Advisors, Licensed Securities Advisors, and distributors working with Asset Management Companies and Pension Fund Managers. As a Self-Regulatory Organization, MUFAP will facilitate membership and ensure compliance across the industry. By bringing all advisors and distributors under one platform, the initiative will improve oversight, promote professional standards, and streamline market practices. The move also supports capacity building and continuous professional development of financial intermediaries, helping them follow best practices and stay aligned with market developments. The directive is expected to strengthen investor protection, improve market discipline, and support the development of a more transparent and reliable mutual fund sector in Pakistan.–**APP**

Dr. Jamal for national unity, interfaith harmony

RAWALPINDI: Former Punjab Health and Population Welfare Minister, Dr. Jamal Nasir said that national unity is Pakistan's most pressing need and urged citizens to rise above sectarian and religious divides to strengthen the nation He made the remarks while inaugurating a calligraphy exhibition at Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi, featuring the works of Ashknaz Asif Khan, Principal of Sarpt Bible Seminary. The event drew artists and art enthusiasts from across the city Dr. Nasir emphasized that internal stability and solidarity are essential as external forces seek to weaken the country. He stressed that fostering brotherhood, hard work and unity is crucial and that striving to be a good human forms the foundation of societal progress. Director Arts Council Shakoor Ahmed and other speakers, including Ashknaz Asif Khan and social-political leader Wazil Gul, highlighted the importance of promoting fine arts.–**APP**

Govt allocates 2585 acres for Gwadar Central Business District

GWADAR: The Balochistan government has allocated 2,585 acres of land for Gwadar's Central Business District (CBD). To support the project's launch, with an initial estimated cost of Rs 90 billion, government has also granted Gwadar district tax-free zone status, exempting the area from all provincial taxes. In addition, a road network spanning over 280km has been constructed. This 10-year development project is projected to generate Rs 400 billion in profit, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. The development was discussed during a key meeting on Gwadar's flagship CBD project, held on March 31 under the chairmanship of Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Moin-ur-Rehman Khan. The meeting reviewed the project's progress, expected launch timeline, and its strategic importance in detail. Chief Engineer GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Director Town Planning Shahid Ali, and other senior officials attended the meeting. During the session, the Director of Town Planning delivered a comprehensive briefing on the technical, commercial, and urban planning aspects of the project. The CBD will be complemented by several completed and ongoing projects including the New Gwadar International Airport, Eastbay Expressway, Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute, rehabilitation of the old town, road remodeling, establishment of parks, promotion of green growth, development of ecological corridors, mapping of tourism sites, digitalization initiatives, advancement of a skills-based economy, and the provision of social and civic amenities. The project also aims to create new business opportunities while offering state-of-the-art healthcare and educational facilities. "In the context of global and regional changes, Gwadar is set to emerge as a new hub for national and international tourism, trade, and investment," Moin-ur-Rehman Khan told Gwadar Pro. He added that the Gwadar Central Business District is a key component of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan and will play a fundamental role in transforming the city into a world-class business and financial hub. The CBD is expected to become Gwadar's modern "downtown." The meeting was also informed that the CBD will feature modern business offices, hotels, residential apartments, shopping centers, conference halls, cultural centers, and advanced public spaces. Supporting infrastructure will include traffic management systems, parking facilities, walking tracks, cycling routes, and modern public transport. Key features of the project include amusement parks, an art and culture museum, a grand theater, a library, an international expo center, Gwadar Tower, a marina park, and seaside resorts. These developments are expected to enhance the city's appeal and play a vital role in promoting tourism.–**APP**

LCWU Completes Cohort-III

ISLAMABAD/ LAHORE: Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), Lahore has successfully completed the third cohort of Women Empowerment & Mentoring Programme (WEMP), a flagship initiative of the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan. The programme is aimed at empowering women faculty through structured mentoring, leadership development and professional capacity building. Attending the WEMP online closing ceremony, Managing Director NAHE Dr. Noor Amna Malik called for scaling a mentoring culture through the nationwide Mentoring Programme for Universities (MPU). She commended LCWU for successfully institutionalising mentoring practices and recognised WEMP as a model initiative contributing to women's empowerment in Pakistan's higher education sector. She particularly appreciated the leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Uzma Quraishi in effectively implementing the WEMP, noting that the successful completion and continued growth of the third cohort is a testament to LCWU's strong commitment and the program's impactful cascading effect. Dr. Malik also shared her expectations for LCWU to implement the MPU with the same dedication and enthusiasm, highlighting that the MPU represents the expansion of the WEMP from 18 universities to all public and private sector higher education institutions across Pakistan. She emphasised the importance of implementing the MPU as a gender-inclusive initiative, further strengthening the mentoring culture at a national scale.

She reiterated the importance of fostering mentoring cultures, continuous professional development, and capacity-building initiatives aligned with national higher education reforms, while reaffirming NAHE's commitment to supporting universities in developing sustainable mentoring frameworks and strengthening faculty development programs across Pakistan. In her welcome address, Vice Chancellor LCWU Prof. Dr. Uzma Quraishi highlighted the university's commitment to fostering women's leadership and professional excellence in higher education. She appreciated the contributions of mentors, mentees, and program organizers in cultivating a strong mentoring culture within the institution. A comprehensive report of the third cohort was also presented by Dr. Tahira Kalsoom, Secretary WEMP, outlining the key achievements of the programme. The report emphasised structured mentoring engagements, professional development workshops, leadership training, and reflective learning practices that significantly enhanced participants' academic confidence, communication skills, and leadership competency. It also underscores the program's role in strengthening mentor–mentee relationships and promoting collaborative learning among faculty. The Women Empowerment and Mentoring Program (WEMP) has emerged as a significant platform for developing female academic leaders, strengthening the faculty mentoring culture, and enhancing professional confidence and leadership skills. The successful completion of its third cohort reflects LCWU's vision of empowering women educators and preparing future academic leaders to contribute meaningfully to both national and global higher education landscapes. The closing ceremony reaffirmed the shared commitment of the HEC and LCWU to fostering inclusive leadership, professional growth, and sustainable mentoring practices across the sector. –**DNA**

National economy shows resilience amid regional challenges

ISLAMABAD: The government on Tuesday highlighted significant economic gains achieved during the ongoing fiscal year, citing improved macroeconomic stability, fiscal consolidation, and strengthening external sector indicators. According to the Monthly Economic Update & Outlook for March 2026, released by the Finance Division, the national economy demonstrated encouraging progress across key sectors during the first eight months of FY2025-26. One of the major achievements was the strengthening of the external account, where the current account posted a surplus of $427 million in February 2026, the highest during the fiscal year, supported by robust remittance inflows and controlled imports. Overall, the current account deficit remained contained at $700 million during July–February FY2026, indicating effective external sector management. Remittances emerged as a key pillar of stability, rising by 10.5 percent to $26.5 billion, driven by higher inflows from key partner countries.

Meanwhile, foreign exchange reserves surged to $21.7 billion by mid-March 2026, marking a four-year high and significantly enhancing the country's external liquidity position and resilience against global shocks.

The government's focus on digital transformation also yielded positive results, with IT exports maintaining strong growth momentum and contributing to foreign exchange earnings Net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows stood at $1.2 billion, with major contributions directed towards the power and financial sectors, reflecting improved investor confidence. On the domestic front, large-scale manufacturing (LSM) recorded a growth of 5.8 percent during July–January FY2026, compared to a contraction in the same period last year. The expansion was driven by key industries, including automobiles, textiles, food, and petroleum products. Notably, automobile production witnessed remarkable increases, with trucks and buses up by 78.4 percent and cars by 52.3 percent, indicating a revival in industrial demand and consumer confidence. The agriculture sector also benefited from proactive government support, particularly during the Rabi season. Agricultural credit disbursement rose by 11.1 percent to Rs1,649 billion, while imports of agricultural machinery increased by 17.1 percent, facilitating modernization and productivity enhancement. Fertilizer offtake, including urea, also recorded growth, supporting improved crop prospects. Fiscal consolidation remained one of the government's most notable achievements. The fiscal deficit during July–January FY2026 was significantly reduced to Rs64.7 billion from Rs2,070.9 billion in the corresponding period last year.–**DNA**

Briefs

Pakistan's role for peace to be remembered in history

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that when history is written, Pakistan's name will be inscribed in golden words for its principled stand for peace, stability, and responsible leadership in a turbulent region. In a post on X, he said that at a time of rising tensions, Pakistan emerged not as a spectator but as a force for balance and diplomacy. He said the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the tireless diplomatic efforts of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and the unwavering commitment to national security by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir had collectively played a defining role. Their coordinated efforts, he added, not only safeguarded Pakistan's interests but also contributed meaningfully to de-escalation, dialogue, and regional harmony. "This is the Pakistan the world witnesses today – a nation that stands firm, acts wisely, and leads with responsibility," he said.

Ayaz felicitates newly elected APNS office-bearers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected office-bearers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS). In his felicitation message, the Speaker congratulated Senator Sarmad Ali on being elected President, Ms. Naz Afreen Sehgal Lakhani as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Muhammad Athar Qazi as Secretary General, Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary, and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary, along with other members of the newly elected governing body. The Speaker said that the success of the newly elected leadership reflects the confidence reposed in them by members of the organization in recognition of their abilities and leadership qualities. He expressed hope that the new leadership would play a pivotal role in effectively addressing the challenges faced by the newspaper industry. Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that a free, independent and responsible press is a cornerstone of any democratic society. "The media plays a vital role in promoting public awareness, national development and democratic stability," he added. He further reaffirmed that Parliament remains committed to addressing the issues faced by the media, particularly the newspaper industry and will continue to extend full cooperation in this regard.
The Speaker also conveyed his best wishes to the newly elected APNS leadership for a successful tenure.

CASS organises roundtable on Pakistan energy security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As an independent think tank, CASS organises academic events for scholars and practitioners interested in national security in its wider context. The event was attended by academics, intellectuals, and domain experts. Maheera Munir, a Research Assistant at CASS Lahore, delivered the opening address.
The speaker, Dr Naveed Arshad, Director Energy Institute LUMS, highlighted that Pakistan is undergoing a silent energy disruption, which has placed Pakistan in a rare club comprising countries producing 25 per cent of their total electricity from solar sources. While all of the countries in this club are small or rich with either the private sector or the government taking the initiative for the installation of solar farms, Pakistan's solar boom occurred downside of the meter, at the individual level. Dr Arshad stated that Pakistan's solar revolution is driven by multiple factors including the public's familiarity with alternate sources of electricity, flat rooftops, Pakistan's high solar irradiance, and an attractive net metering policy. He emphasised that Pakistan can achieve energy security by adopting electrification of energy; however, it requires "out of the box" solutions. In that regard, he underscored the need for every house to become a powerhouse with electrification of all household loads. Additionally, it is important for Pakistan to consider battery value chain, new battery chemistries, battery deployment, and explore the possibility of mobile mines. Dr Arshad expressed optimism that implemented together, these options can allow Pakistan to become a truly first electrostate of the Global South. In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS, Lahore, observed that solar energy is gaining traction in Pakistan due to falling costs and rising interest from households and businesses. He emphasised that solar energy's integration into the wider energy system requires investment in storage, smart grids, and forecasting tools. He further remarked that governance and financing mechanisms will be decisive in sustaining expansion. Today's choices, he argued, will shape Pakistan's energy security and resilience for decades to come. The event concluded with a lively interactive session. It highlighted the energy-AI nexus, disposal of solar panels, and economics of energy. The participants appreciated CASS Lahore's initiative in hosting an engaging and thought-provoking discussion.

Medical consultation camp held

ISLAMABAD: With the support of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, a free medical consultation event commemorating the 75th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic ties is being held from March 30 to April 3 at Qihuang Traditional Chinese Medicine Center in Islamabad, Pakistan. The event is organized by the Overseas Chinese Association of Pakistan, according to China Economic Net (CEN). The free medical consultation event primarily serves Chinese citizens in Pakistan and local Pakistani residents, offering free routine health check-ups. At the request of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Qihuang Traditional Chinese Medicine Center distributed first aid kits provided by the embassy to each participating Chinese citizen. A total of 100 such kits were distributed. According to La Jielian, President of the Overseas Chinese Association of Pakistan and director of Qihuang Traditional Chinese Medicine Center in Pakistan, the center receives about 40 patients per day during the consultation period, "coming from all over Pakistan." Qihuang Traditional Chinese Medicine Center is one of the most prominent traditional Chinese medicine institutions in Pakistan.–**APP**

Chinese Language Hub opens in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: As China and Pakistan celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations, a step forward in educational cooperation was taken with the launch of the Islamabad-based Zhiyuan Academy, an institution dedicated to advancing Chinese language education and HSK proficiency training across the country. The event, titled "Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, in a new era of HSK Chinese language learning" was jointly organized by the Pakistan Chinese Education Association, Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, and the local Smart School, China Economic Net reported on Wednesday. The ceremony, held in a hybrid format, brought together education leaders, heads of institutions and frontline educators from both countries and marked a milestone in institutionalizing Chinese language learning in Pakistan. At the core of the newly established Zhiyuan Academy is a commitment to systematic HSK Chinese proficiency test preparation. The institution aims to provide professional, comprehensive and efficient pathways for Pakistani students to master the language, ensuring that learners are well equipped to meet international standards. By focusing on structured training modules aligned with HSK requirements, the academy also seeks to address the growing demand for certified Chinese language skills in trade, industry and academic exchanges. Beyond test preparation, the initiative is designed to build a localized Chinese education system tailored to the specific learning characteristics of Pakistani students. Through collaboration with Chinese universities, organizers plan to develop teaching resources and courses that reflect local cultural contexts while maintaining academic rigor. A key feature of the academy is its commitment to regular cultural immersion programs. Organizers announced plans to facilitate study tours to China, enabling Pakistani students to experience Chinese culture firsthand. These exchanges are intended to foster deeper mutual understanding and strengthen bonds between the youth of both countries through direct interaction and shared experiences.–DNA

Abbasi pays tribute for successful operation

Highlighting national unity, Abbasi said that all state institutions are on the same page in the ongoing fight against terrorism and together, they will ensure lasting peace in the country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Wednesday paid rich tribute to the security forces for their successful operations against terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement, the minister lauded the elimination of 13 militants during operations conducted in Bannu and Bara, calling it a clear reflection of the professionalism and operational capability of the security forces. He said that the unwavering resolve of the armed forces in the fight against terrorism is a matter of pride for the entire nation. "The whole nation stands behind its security forces and takes pride in their courage and sacrifices," he added. Hanif Abbasi reaffirmed that anti-state elements would be confronted with full force on every front, emphasizing that Pakistan remains determined to root out terrorism in all its forms. He said that the bravery and sacrifices rendered by the security personnel are unforgettable and will always be remembered with honor.The minister underscored that the nation remains united and resolute in its commitment to eliminate terrorism completely. He also assured that the sacrifices made for the peace and stability of the country would not go in vain. Highlighting national unity, Abbasi said that all state institutions are on the same page in the ongoing fight against terrorism and together, they will ensure lasting peace in the country.–**DNA**

MoU for therapy services in all FDE institutions

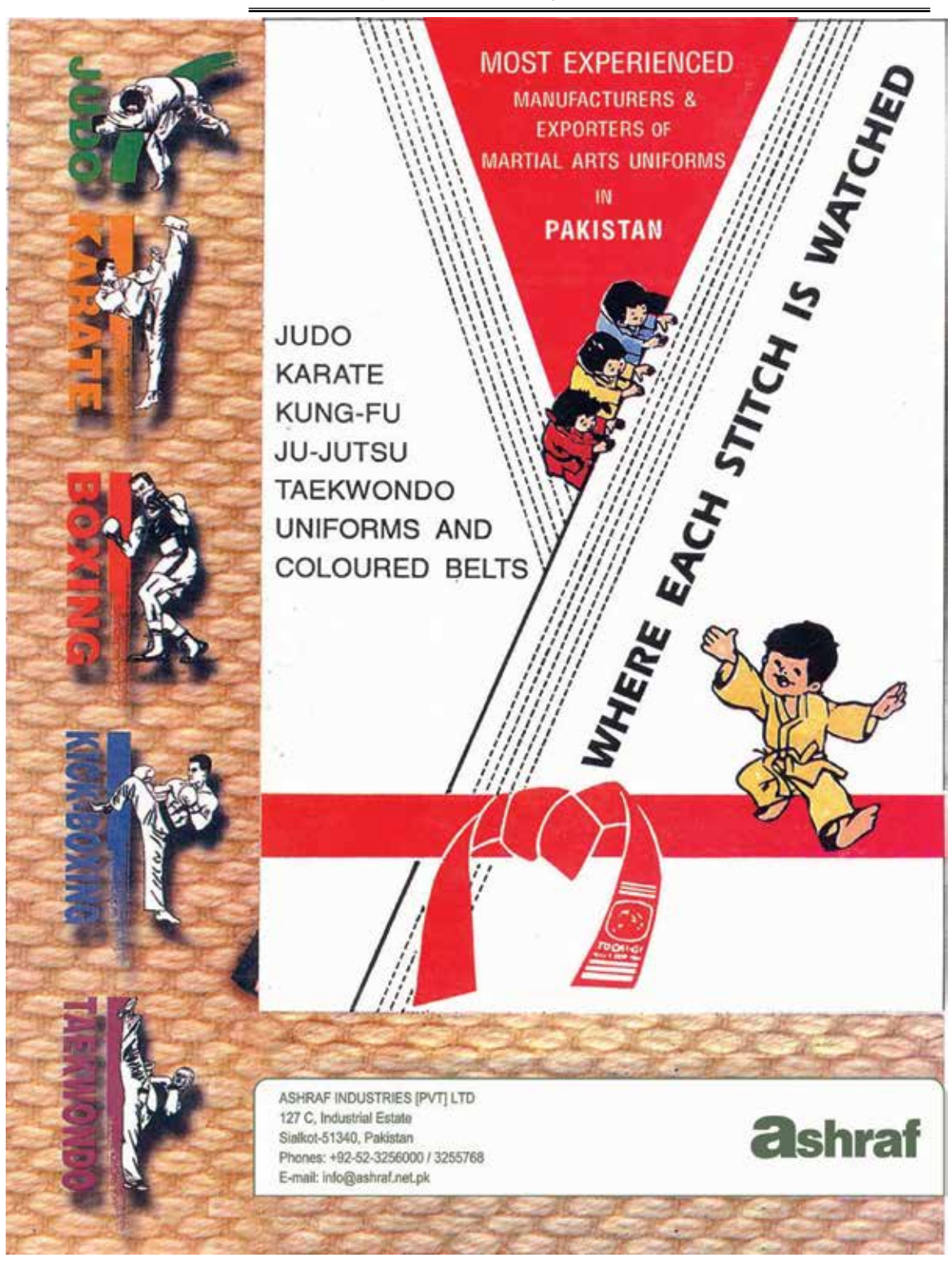
ISLAMABAD: In a landmark step toward inclusive education, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT) hosted a contract signing ceremony to launch the "Provision of Remedial Therapy Services" in all educational institutions under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). The partnership with the National Institute of Psychology (NIP)Center of Excellence under Quaid e Azam University is formalized by Prof. Dr Rubina Hanif, Director NIP, in the presence of Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui Federal Minister for Education, Nadeem Mahbub Secretary MoFEPT and FDE Officials This initiative is a direct response to the Dyslexia Bill 2022, focusing on critical interventions for students with learning disabilities. A specialized team of 60 Remedial Therapists and 3 expert coordinators will provide diagnostic testing and evidence-based therapeutic support by integrating professional psychological care and teacher capacity-building, the project will create a sustainable framework to ensure students with diverse learning needs achieve their full potential within the formal school system.–**APP**

Former Algerian president passes away: Embassy opens condolence book

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Algeria is deeply saddened to announce the news of demise of Mr. LIAMINE ZEROUAL, former President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (during the period 1994-1999) passed away on Sunday 29th March 2026. In this regard, a book of condolence will be opened at the Embassy premises House No. 107, Street No. 9, Sector E-7, Islamabad, from Wednesday 1st April from 10:00am.-12:00 and 2:00pm.-4:00pm till Thursday 2nd April 2026 from 10:00am.-12:00p.m. and 2:00pm. - 4:00pm Liamine Zeroual (1941-2026) was a prominent Algerian military and political figure who served as President of the Republic (1994-1999). He joined the National Liberation Army (ALN) in 1957 and held high-ranking leadership positions in the People's National Army (ANP) after independence. He led Algeria during the "Black Decade" in the fight against terrorism, established the National Concord Law, and was known as a "statesman" who laid the foundations for the peaceful transfer of power.–**DNA**

AIOU to sets up hybrid mode int'l moot

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will host the Fifth International Conference on Early Childhood Development here on April 7–8. The central theme of the conference is "Investing in Early Childhood Development: Building Human Capital." The conference will be held in a hybrid format, allowing participants to attend both online and in person. This approach will enable broad participation from national and international experts, researchers, educators and policymakers. According to Conference Secretary Dr Tooba Saleem, the event aims to highlight the importance of early childhood education and development, promote the exchange of modern research and experiences and explore effective strategies for the holistic development of children. She added that adopting hybrid and blended modes will not only increase accessibility for participants but also align with government energy conservation policies. To increase virtual participation, the university will provide live streaming of sessions, interactive panel discussions and online networking opportunities. Key government officials are expected to attend the opening and closing ceremonies, while various sessions will cover important topics such as early childhood education, health, nutrition and psychological development.–DNA



Chairman Senate felicitates newly elected APNS office-bearers

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday extended his felicitations to the newly elected office-bearers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS).
He conveyed his best wishes to Senator Sarmad Ali on his election as President, Naz Afreen Sehgal Lakhani as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Muhammad Athar Qazi as Secretary General,

Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary, and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary.
He said that the confidence reposed by members in the new APNS leadership reflects their ability to align the newspaper industry with contemporary requirements.
The Chairman expressed hope that the newly elected team would adopt a comprehensive strategy to effectively address the economic and professional challenges faced by the newspaper industry.
He said that a responsible and well-informed media not only promotes democratic values but also plays a vital role in strengthening national discourse.
He further said that the Senate, as the Upper House of Parliament, would continue to support the protection of press freedom and the institutional strengthening of the media.
He conveyed his best wishes for the success of the newly elected leadership and for the promotion of quality journalism in the country.

Daily Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 02, 2026

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 149
Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
Phone: 051-8488394
Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Why the Middle East crisis demands a global health response

Dr. Hanan Balkhy

ACROSS the Eastern Mediterranean region, escalating armed conflict is dismantling the infrastructure of health. Hospitals are managing surges of trauma patients while facing shortages of medicines, fuel and staff. Disease surveillance systems – the backbone of outbreak detection – are weakening. At the same time, mortality from otherwise preventable and treatable conditions is rising, often unrecorded.

This is more than a humanitarian crisis. It is a rapidly evolving public health emergency with implications that extend far beyond the region.

The scale of humanitarian need in this region was already without parallel. Nearly half of the world's population requiring humanitarian assistance lives here, alongside about 40 percent of all internally displaced persons globally. Entering 2026, an estimated 115 million people – one in seven across the region – depended on humanitarian support. The current escalation has sharpened these pressures acutely. National authorities report more than 1,800 deaths and 23,000 injuries in Iran and more than 1,000 killed and 3,000 injured in Lebanon. In Lebanon, more than 1 million people have been displaced, many sheltering in overcrowded collective sites. In Iran, 3.2 million people are temporarily relocated, alongside increasing cross-border movement.

Under international law, health facilities and personnel are protected. Yet these protections are being repeatedly violated

Access to healthcare is becoming increasingly constrained. Facilities have closed or reduced services due to insecurity, while movement restrictions delay ambulances, patient referrals and the delivery of medicines. For patients with urgent or chronic conditions, these delays can be fatal.

Crucially, the full impact is not captured by injury and death tolls alone. In most conflict settings, indirect mortality – caused by disruption to routine services such as maternal care, dialysis and immunization – often exceeds deaths caused directly by violence. This second wave of mortality is already unfolding.

The World Health Organization has verified multiple attacks on healthcare across the region, resulting in deaths and injuries among health workers and patients. In Lebanon, for example, deaths resulting from these attacks nearly doubled in less than a week – from 16 as of March 11 to 31 as of March 18.

Under international humanitarian law, health facilities and personnel are protected. Yet these protections are being repeatedly violated. The consequence is not only immediate harm but also reduced access to care for entire populations. For health professionals, the effects are stark: surgeries without adequate supplies, interruptions to intensive care and breakdowns in referral systems. Without systematic documentation and accountability, such patterns risk becoming normalized.

The crisis is also generating significant environmental health risks – an area that remains underreported.

Strikes on petroleum infrastructure, refineries, storage terminals and coastal oil facilities are releasing plumes of particulate matter, sulfur dioxide and volatile organic compounds across populated areas. Satellite data indicates these plumes travel hundreds of kilometers, exposing communities far beyond strike zones to acute respiratory and cardiovascular risk.

Threats to water systems are equally concerning. Many countries in the Gulf rely on desalination for the vast majority of their drinking water. Contamination of coastal waters from oil spills or industrial damage could disrupt these systems, placing tens of millions at risk.

The WHO is working with national authorities to assess these environmental exposures and provide public health guidance on air quality and water safety.

These dynamics highlight a critical point: environmental damage in conflict translates directly and rapidly into public health risk.

The consequences of health system disruption in the Middle East are not contained within the region.

The WHO's logistics hub in Dubai plays a central role in supplying emergency medicines, vaccines and laboratory materials worldwide. Disruptions to these operations have already delayed shipments to multiple countries.

Instability in key transport routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, has wider implications for energy markets. Rising fuel and food prices can increase food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

The consequences of health system disruption in the Middle East are not contained within the region

There are also potential risks associated with damage to industrial or nuclear infrastructure. Although no radiological impact has been reported to date, the proximity of active conflict to such facilities underscores the importance of preparedness and risk mitigation.

Further escalation could drive additional displacement, placing pressure on neighboring health systems and beyond. What begins as a regional crisis can quickly translate into a broader global health and economic shock.

Despite rising needs, funding for health emergencies in the region remains critically low. The WHO estimates that $689 million is required for 2026, but this is only 37 percent funded.

These shortfalls have immediate consequences: fewer functioning facilities, reduced trauma care capacity and gaps in disease surveillance. Delayed investment not only costs lives but also increases long-term humanitarian and economic burdens.

The full health consequences of this crisis are still unfolding but the risks are already clear: governments and donors must act now to uphold international humanitarian law, sustain essential health services and close critical funding gaps.

The current crisis shows how quickly health systems can be pushed beyond their limits – and how far the consequences can spread. Protecting healthcare in conflict is not only a humanitarian imperative, it is essential to global health security, economic stability and development.

Are the USA and Israel Terrorists — or Is Iran?

Qamar Bashir

Historically, legitimacy has often been shaped not by actions alone, but by control over narrative. The ability to define terms, to repeat them through global media, and to embed them into public consciousness has allowed powerful nations to position themselves as arbiters of justice—even when their actions are contested. The war has also exposed the strategic use of information. From the outset, claims that Iran's capabilities had been "90 percent degraded" were widely circulated. Yet, continued retaliatory strikes and sustained operational capacity challenge these assertions

THE ongoing war involving Iran has exposed a profound paradox, a striking contradiction, a concealed truth, and a manufactured lie. At its core lies a deeply unsettling question: who defines terrorism, and by what moral authority? The very states that stand accused globally of war, civilian casualties, and widespread destruction are the ones labeling another nation—Iran—as a "terrorist state." This contradiction is not merely political; it is philosophical, moral, and deeply human. If one were to objectively assess Iran's historical conduct, the narrative becomes far more complex than the labels suggest. Iran, for centuries, has not engaged in expansionist wars in the way major global powers have. Unlike repeated military interventions seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, Iran's posture has largely been framed as defensive or reactive within its sphere of influence. Yet, despite this, it continues to be branded as the "world's leading sponsor of terrorism."

This labeling becomes even more paradoxical when juxtaposed against the actions of powerful nations. The United States has been involved in prolonged wars—from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan—resulting in immense civilian suffering. Similarly, Israel's military operations have drawn sustained criticism for disproportionate force. Yet these actions are rarely framed within the same terrorism narrative. Power, it seems, does not merely influence outcomes—it defines vocabulary.

The contradiction deepens further when examining the language used by political leadership. In recent months, figures such as Donald J. Trump, Marco Rubio, and Pete Hegseth have employed rhetoric that is not only confrontational but deeply dehumanizing. Iranian leaders have been described as "lunatics," "religious fanatic zealots," and "radical clerics," while their military has been portrayed as "decimated," "rats running," or facing "certain death." Statements such as "annihilate," "wipe out," and "no mercy" reflect not diplomacy, but domination.

In the current 2026 conflict—widely referred to as Operation Epic Fury—this language has reached a new and alarming intensity. The successive elimination of Iran's top leadership through three coordinated waves of U.S.-Israeli strikes has been framed not as a tragic necessity of war, but as a moment of triumph. President Trump described the killing of Ali Khamenei as "justice for the world," calling him "one of the most evil people in history," while declaring the Iranian regime "decimated, destroyed—they're all dead." He dismissed subsequent leadership tiers as "mostly dead," suggesting that Iran's governing structure had been "wiped out" and replaced by something more "reasonable."

Meanwhile, Secretary Hegseth adopted a tone that stripped away even the last remnants of diplomatic civility, remarking that the remaining Iranian leaders were "toast," boasting that "Trump got the last laugh," and repeatedly describing the campaign as one in which targets were "hunted down and killed." He went so far as to characterize this approach as "negotiating with bombs." Secretary Rubio reinforced this posture, referring to Iranian leaders as "religious fanatic lunatics" and stating that those who once engaged diplomatically with the United States were now "no longer on planet Earth."

When these remarks are placed in the broader equation of diplomacy, commerce, and international order, they reveal something far deeper than policy—they expose a mindset. A mindset in which the elimination of leadership is celebrated, where human beings are reduced to targets, and their deaths to rhetorical victories. The language—"wiped out," "toast," "hunted," "no longer on planet Earth"—is not merely undiplomatic; it is profoundly cruel, shockingly heartless, and reflective of an extraordinary level of hubris. It suggests a worldview in which power grants the right not only to kill, but to celebrate killing.

Yet, strikingly, Iran's official responses have largely avoided descending into similar linguistic hostility. While firm and assertive, Iranian leadership has generally refrained from using overtly dehumanizing language against American or Israeli leaders. This asymmetry in discourse reveals another dimension of the paradox: the side with overwhelming military superiority often adopts the most aggressive rhetoric, while the targeted state attempts to retain diplomatic restraint.

Another dimension of this conflict lies in the proportionality of violence, and here the numbers tell a far more revealing story than rhetoric. In Iran alone, approximately 3,486 people have been killed, including 1,568 civilians and at least 236 children and more than 20,000 wounded, Lebanon has reported over 1,200 deaths, including at least 124 children, as Israeli strikes intensified across its territory. In stark contrast, Israel reports 19 civilian deaths, alongside a small number of military casualties, while the United States has recorded 13 military deaths and no significant civilian losses on its own soil. Elsewhere, countries such as Iraq have reported around 100 deaths, with additional casualties scattered across Gulf states, Syria, and other affected regions. If terrorism is defined as violence against civilians to achieve political objectives, then the clarity of labeling becomes increasingly blurred. Can a state responsible for large-scale civilian destruction still claim exclusive moral authority? Or does power itself redefine morality?

Historically, legitimacy has often been shaped not by actions alone, but by control over narrative. The ability to define terms, to repeat them through global media, and to embed them into public consciousness has allowed powerful nations to position themselves as arbiters of justice—even when their actions are contested. The war has also exposed the strategic use of information. From the outset, claims that Iran's capabilities had been "90 percent degraded" were widely circulated. Yet, continued retaliatory strikes and sustained operational capacity challenge these assertions. The gap between declared success and observable reality highlights how information itself has become a weapon of war.

Iran, by contrast, has maintained a relatively consistent message: that any attack on its territory would be met with reciprocal force. Whether through threats to energy routes, regional strikes, or broader escalation signals, its actions have largely aligned with its stated doctrine. This consistency stands in contrast to the shifting narratives and evolving justifications presented by its adversaries.

The Iran conflict is therefore not merely a military confrontation—it is a battle over definitions: of terrorism, legitimacy, and morality. It forces the world to confront uncomfortable truths about power and perception, and to question whether moral authority truly lies with those who possess the greatest force.

In the end, the paradox remains unresolved. A nation labeled as a terrorist state asserts its right to defend itself, while those waging war in the name of security claim moral superiority. Between these competing narratives lies a complex and often uncomfortable reality—one that cannot be reduced to slogans or labels. The true measure of humanity is not in the ability to dominate, but in the capacity to uphold dignity even in conflict. If the language of war continues to strip away that dignity, then the line between justice and aggression will fade into obscurity. And perhaps that is the most dangerous truth of all.

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

Pakistan's Struggle for Civilian Space

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

The military's involvement deepened this dynamic. During periods of direct rule, generals often invoked religious narratives to justify their authority. The most pronounced example came during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, whose Islamisation policies left an enduring imprint on Pakistani society. Laws were reconfigured, educational curricula reshaped...

FEW countries have experienced the persistent entanglement of religion and power quite like Pakistan. Since its inception, the state has oscillated between competing centres of authority the barracks and the pulpit each shaping the country's political trajectory in ways that continue to reverberate. The uneasy alignment between military dominance and religious influence has defined not only governance but also the national imagination.At independence, Pakistan's founding vision was neither theocratic nor militaristic. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's early speeches suggested a constitutional state where religion would remain a personal matter. Yet, the fragility of political institutions, combined with early security anxieties, created fertile ground for the military's rise. Over time, the armed forces came to see themselves not merely as defenders of borders but as custodians of the state's ideological frontiers.

Parallel to this ascent was the growing influence of religious actors. The mosque, as a social and political space, gradually evolved into a powerful platform capable of mobilising public sentiment. While religious scholars had initially played a limited role in the nationalist movement, their significance increased as successive governments sought legitimacy through Islamic symbolism. This convergence was neither accidental nor entirely organic. It was, in many ways, a product of deliberate policy choices. The state, in moments of political weakness, turned to religion as a unifying force. The Objectives Resolution of 1949 marked an early step in embedding religious principles into governance. While framed as a compromise between modern statehood and Islamic ideals, it opened the door to future contestations over the role of religion in law and policy.

The military's involvement deepened this dynamic. During periods of direct rule, generals often invoked religious narratives to justify their authority. The most pronounced example came during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, whose Islamisation policies left an enduring imprint on Pakistani society. Laws were reconfigured, educational curricula reshaped, and public discourse reframed in explicitly religious terms. The mosque, in this period, was not merely a place of worship but an extension of state power.Yet, the relationship between military and mosque has never been entirely harmonious. It is marked as much by cooperation as by tension. Religious groups have often been both allies and adversaries. At times, they have been instrumentalised for strategic purposes, particularly in regional conflicts. At other moments, they have challenged the state's authority, questioning its commitment to Islamic principles.

This duality has had profound consequences. On the one hand, it has enabled the state to harness religious sentiment in pursuit of political or strategic goals. On the other, it has empowered actors whose agendas do not always align with state priorities.

The result is a complex landscape where lines of authority are blurred and accountability is often elusive.The impact on democratic development has been particularly stark. Civilian governments, already constrained by institutional weaknesses, have found themselves navigating a delicate balance. Efforts to assert parliamentary sovereignty are frequently overshadowed by the enduring influence of the military establishment. Simultaneously, political leaders often invoke religious rhetoric to bolster their legitimacy, further entrenching the mosque's role in governance.

This interplay has also shaped public discourse. Questions of identity, citizenship, and rights are frequently framed in religious terms, limiting the space for pluralism. Minority communities, in particular, have borne the brunt of this dynamic, as debates over faith and belonging intersect with political power. The promise of equal citizenship, envisioned at independence, remains unevenly realised.Education and media have not been immune. Narratives constructed over decades have reinforced a particular understanding of Pakistan's ideological foundations, often privileging religious identity over civic values. This has contributed to a societal environment where dissenting voices can be marginalised, and critical inquiry discouraged.

Yet, it would be reductive to view Pakistan solely through the prism of military and mosque. The country is also home to vibrant civil society movements, an assertive judiciary, and a resilient, if contested, democratic tradition. Periodic transitions to civilian rule, though imperfect, reflect an ongoing struggle to recalibrate the balance of power.In recent years, there have been signs of both continuity and change. The military remains a central actor in national affairs, though its role is increasingly scrutinised in public debate. Religious groups continue to wield influence, particularly at the grassroots level, but their political appeal is not uniform. Urbanisation, technological change, and a growing youth population are reshaping the contours of political engagement.

The challenge for Pakistan lies in redefining this relationship in a manner that strengthens democratic institutions while respecting the country's religious sensibilities. This requires a careful disentangling of state authority from both military overreach and the instrumental use of religion. It calls for a renewed commitment to constitutionalism, where power is exercised within clearly defined limits and accountability is upheld.Equally important is the need to reclaim the mosque as a space of spiritual reflection rather than political mobilisation. Religion, in its essence, offers ethical guidance and social cohesion. When subsumed into the machinery of power, it risks losing its moral authority and becoming a tool of division.

The path forward is neither simple nor linear. It demands political will, institutional reform, and societal introspection. Pakistan's history offers ample lessons on the costs of imbalance whether in the form of authoritarian rule or ideological rigidity. The task now is to forge a more inclusive and stable order, where neither the barracks nor the pulpit overshadow the will of the people. Ultimately, the story of Pakistan between military and mosque is one of negotiation between power and principle, authority and faith. How this negotiation unfolds will determine not only the nature of the state but also the aspirations of its citizens. In that sense, the question is not merely about institutions, but about the kind of society Pakistan seeks to become.

Islamabad POST
Thursday, April 02, 2026

Bangladesh 55th Independence Day anniversary celebrated

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain attended the event as chief guest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad hosted a diplomatic reception to mark the 55th Independence and National Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, with a large number of dignitaries, diplomats, and members of civil society in attendance. The reception and dinner were held at a Islamabad Serena Hotel, where Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan, along with officials of the mission, warmly received the guests.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain attended the event as chief guest. The ceremony was also attended by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Kundi, federal ministers, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, parliamentarians, ambassadors and high commissioners, representatives of international organisations, senior civil and military officials, business leaders, journalists, and members of the Bangladeshi community.

The event commenced with the national anthems of Bangladesh and Pakistan, reflecting the spirit of mutual respect and friendship.

In his remarks, Rana Tanveer Hussain felicitated the government and people of Bangladesh on their Independence and National Day.

He lauded Bangladesh's impressive socio-economic progress and emphasized the importance of further strengthening bilateral relations for the mutual benefit of both nations. In his welcome address, High Commissioner Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan underscored the shared aspirations of the peoples of Bangladesh and Pakistan to enhance bilateral ties and promote regional cooperation.

He highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to expanding collaboration in key areas including trade, direct air and maritime connectivity, education, tourism, culture, healthcare, agriculture, industry, and energy. The High Commissioner also reaffirmed his country's broader foreign policy objectives, stating that Bangladesh remains focused on advancing development and safeguarding national interests through strengthened partnerships with friendly countries. He further sought support for Bangladesh's candidature for the presidency of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The ceremony featured cultural elements showcasing Bangladesh's rich heritage, adding vibrancy to the occasion and promoting people-to-people connections.

The event concluded with renewed commitments from both sides to deepen cooperation, promote regional peace and stability, and work towards shared prosperity. The 55th anniversary celebrations were marked with due respect and enthusiasm, highlighting the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Briefs

Trump signals possible NATO exit...

FROM PAGE 01

within "two to three weeks," signaling a possible rapid end to the conflict. Secretary of State Rubio also indicated that the United States can see the "finish line" in the war, hinting that the conflict may wind down in the coming weeks, although not immediately. Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has reaffirmed that Britain will not join the war militarily. While maintaining support for NATO and broader Western security cooperation, Starmer made it clear that the UK would avoid direct involvement in combat operations.

Chinese FM conveys praise

FROM PAGE 01

exchanged notes on the regional developments in West Asia and bilateral relations, according to a Foreign Office press release. Deputy Prime Minister Dar briefed Foreign Minister Wang Yi in detail on the efforts Pakistan continued to make towards the cessation of conflict and the resumption of dialogue, including the recent meeting in Islamabad among foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Egypt. Both sides reviewed the regional security environment and expressed deep concern over its serious socio-economic repercussions on developing countries. In this context, both sides launched a five-point initiative for restoring peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East.

Security forces kill 13 India...

FROM PAGE 01

Since the Afghan Taliban grabbed power in Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan has seen a sharp increase in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in KP and Balochistan, which share a border with Afghanistan. Amid the rising terror incidents, Pakistan launched "Operation Ghazab lil-Haq", during which around 684 Afghan Taliban operatives and affiliated militants were killed. More than 900 Afghan Taliban operatives have also been injured, while Pakistan has destroyed 252 checkposts, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar confirmed today.

Ministry rubbishes...

FROM PAGE 01

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General (DG) Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, during which he spoke about terrorist infiltration through the Pak-Afghan border and challenges being faced in this regard. He had also said that Afghan forces open fire at Pakistani checkposts across the border to facilitate the infiltration of terrorists into the country. In its post, the ministry also shared a screenshot of another post by an X account named Afghanistan Defence, in which Afghan forces were quoted as stating that "operations to completely remove the barbed wire along the Durand Line are ongoing and progressing rapidly".

Significant decline in...

FROM PAGE 01

PICSS also observed a decline in high-profile militant attacks, even as the overall number of attacks increased during the month. It noted that the reduction in human losses coincided with Pakistan's cross-border military strikes under Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, which began in the last week of February and targeted terrorist positions in Afghanistan. "The timing suggests these operations may have contributed to disrupting militant capacity and reducing the lethality of attacks," the report noted.

Italy again miss out on Fifa World Cup as Bosnia, Turkiye qualify

Turkiye make it to mega event for first time since 2002 when they reached semi-finals

ITALY failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup as a play-off defeat on penalties to Bosnia and Hercegovina on Tuesday meant the Azzurri will not go to this year's tournament in North America, while Turkiye, the Czech Republic and Sweden all secured their places at the finals. Italy have won the World Cup four times, but they failed to qualify for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments and will once again have to watch from afar as the field is expanded to 48 teams in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Bosnia won 4-1 in the shoot-out in Zenica after their play-off final finished 1-1 at the end of extra time, with Sandro Tonali the only Italy player to score from the spot as Francesco Pio Esposito blazed their first penalty over and Bryan Cristante smashed his kick against the crossbar. Moise Kean had given Gennaro Gattuso's Italy the lead on 15 minutes, but they were reduced to 10 men when Alessandro Bastoni was shown a straight red card late in the first half. Bosnia equalised on 79 minutes through Haris Tabakovic, and with no further goals in extra time, the tie was decided on penalties. "I don't think the boys deserved to suffer such a blow," said Gattuso. "It's difficult to digest." Ranked 66th in the world, Bosnia finished second in qualifying Group H behind Austria before beating Wales on penalties in their play-off semi-final. Their only previous World Cup appearance came in 2014. Now they go into Group B at this year's tournament along with Canada, Qatar, and Switzerland. The 2014 edition is the last time Italy qualified. They went out in the group stage, like in 2010. They have not won a World Cup knockout game since they last lifted the trophy in 2006. In 2018, they failed to qualify after losing a two-legged play-off final to Sweden, and they also missed out in 2022 after losing a play-off to North Macedonia. Turkiye qualified as Kerem Akturkoglu's 53rd-minute goal secured a 1-0 win in Kosovo, shattering their hosts' dream of appearing at the tournament for the first time.

M5.0 quake jolts eastern Japan, no tsunami warning issued

TOKYO: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.0 rattled eastern Japan on Wednesday, with no tsunami warning issued, according to the weather agency. The 10:06 a.m. quake struck southern Ibaraki Prefecture, with the temblor measuring lower 5 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of 7 in nearby Tochigi Prefecture. It measured 3 in central Tokyo. No casualties or significant property damage have been reported so far in Tochigi Prefecture, authorities said, while they continue to gather relevant information. The Tokai No. 2 nuclear power station in Ibaraki Prefecture has confirmed no abnormalities, its operator Japan Atomic Power Co. said. The shinkansen bullet train service between Tokyo and Aomori Prefecture in northeastern Japan was suspended in the wake of the quake, but operations resumed about 10 minutes later as no abnormalities were found, according to railway operator JR East. The quake occurred at a depth of 50 kilometers, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. A lower 5 quake is defined by the agency as shaking that causes many people to be frightened and to hold onto something stable, while objects may fall from shelves. – **APP**

UNGA adopts resolution aimed at strengthening the work of the UN system

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations General Assembly Tuesday adopted a resolution to strengthen how UN mandates – the decisions taken by member states that guide the organization's work – are created, implemented and reviewed across the system as part of the world body's reform efforts to make it more efficient and effective. The 193-member Assembly passed the resolution by a recorded vote of 168 in favour, 4 against, with no abstentions. (Belarus, North Korea, Nicaragua and Russia voted against the resolution.) Pakistan supported the resolution, but expressed reservations, noting some missing elements, including Islamabad's position for focusing on mandate implementation as per the original intent of the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative. In this regard, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, also highlighted Islamabad's stand on upholding member states' sovereign prerogatives across the mandate life-cycle.– **APP**

Iran will play World Cup matches in US as planned: Fifa president

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said that Iran will play their World Cup matches in the United States in June as scheduled despite the country's ongoing armed conflict with the tournament co-hosts. The Iranian FA (FFIRI) has been pushing to relocate the team's three World Cup group matches from the US to Mexico, citing the American military involvement alongside Israel in strikes that sparked the current regional war. The FFIRI said earlier this month they were in discussions with Fifa about a venue switch, while Iran's sports ministry has banned national and club sports teams from travelling to countries it considers hostile until further notice. Infantino, however, was dismissive when asked about the possibility of a venue switch during a surprise visit to Turkiye to watch Iran's 5-0 friendly win over Costa Rica.

"No, no, the matches will be where they should be according to the draw," he told reporters in the Turkish city of Antalya, where the Iran squad has been holding a training camp. "It looks like we'll be in the right grounds. We're delighted because they're a very, very strong team, as we saw today. I'm very happy. I saw the team, I spoke to the players and the coaches." Iran, who booked their place at the tournament in March last year, are scheduled to play all of their Group G matches on American soil — two in Los Angeles and one in Seattle — against Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand.

US President Donald Trump said earlier this month that while Iran's national team were welcome to play in the US, it might not be appropriate for their "life and safety". Trump later made clear that any threat to the players would not come from the United States. United Arab Emirates-based striker Sardar Azmoun was omitted from the squad for the training camp amidst Iranian media reports that he had been expelled for a perceived act of disloyalty to the government. Azmoun, who has scored 57 goals in 91 internationals, had posted a picture on his Instagram feed of a meeting with Dubai ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, whose Emirate has been the target of Iranian rocket and drone attacks during the conflict. – **APP**

ISLAMABAD: President Press Club Razzaq Sial, Secretary General Furqan Rao and other office bearers presenting bouquets to State Minister Huzaifa Rehman on the occasion of a friendly cricket match organized by the National Press Club. – DNA

Iran's Araghchi refutes...

FROM PAGE 01

He also warned that military operations would continue otherwise. Iranian officials, however, have pushed back strongly. Araghchi emphasized that Tehran will not respond to "threats and deadlines", signaling that the conflict will persist. He indicated that any end to the war would depend on Iran's own terms—particularly holding the "aggressor" accountable.

Pakistan, Afghan peace...

FROM PAGE 01

discussions on the evolving regional situation, balancing security concerns with economic priorities. Diplomatic sources, while sharing an update on talks, said Pakistan reiterated its concerns over the presence of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) sanctuaries inside Afghanistan. Afghan Taliban representatives, while signalling a willingness to address these concerns, continued to maintain that TTP actions inside Pakistan do not fall under their direct responsibility.

Pakistan, China naval exercise...

FROM PAGE 01

defence drills against multi-domain swarm threats, operations with a Pakistan Navy submarine, conventional war-at-sea exercises, and live gunnery firing strengthening operational and tactical coordination. The exercise concluded with a coordinated patrol in the Arabian Sea, reaffirming both navies' commitment to regional maritime security and stability.

UK official visits Pak

FROM PAGE 01

and security forces in seeking to combat it. He re-affirmed that the UK stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan in the fight against terrorism and emphasised our commitment to deepening our cooperation to this end. He also underlined the UK's support for Pakistan's long term economic growth and highlighted the importance of continued partnership on climate resilience, development and people-to-people links. British Director General Political, Ed Llewellyn CVO OBE.

Briefs

AI's role in transforming social responsibility discussed

RIYADH:): Experts in social development and artificial intelligence explored the rapid evolution of social responsibility amid the growing influence of data and AI.
They emphasized the need to adopt innovative, data-driven models and AI-powered decision-making to enhance the efficiency of initiatives and strengthen their long-term social impact.
These discussions took place during the Saudi Social Responsibility Day Forum, held yesterday, with the participation of more than 200 stakeholders from universities and government entities..–**APP**

Rupee gains 03 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 03 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs279.12 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.15. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs279 and Rs280.15, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs3.34 to close at Rs323.47 from the previous day's close of Rs 320.13, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).
The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs1.87 and closed at Rs370.61 compared to the previous day's Rs368.74. The exchange rate of the Emirate and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 and 03 paisa and closed at Rs75.99 and Rs74.36, respectively.

Gold price surges sharply by Rs15,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD, Apr 1 (APP):Gold prices in Pakistan witnessed a significant surge on Wednesday, as rate of 24-karat gold per tola jumped to Rs. 494,062, marking a sharp increase of Rs. 15,300 in a single day from previous day's Rs.478,762, according to the latest rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold rose by Rs. 13,117 to Rs. 423,578 from 419,461 while 22-karat gold increased by Rs.12, 024 to Rs. 388,293 from Rs.376,269. In the international market, gold prices also climbed, reaching $4,713 per ounce, with a gain of $153 from previous day's $4,560. Silver prices followed the upward trend in the domestic market. . The price of silver per tola increased to Rs. 7,984, up by Rs. 200, while 10 grams of silver were recorded at Rs. 6,844, showing a rise of Rs. 171. International silver prices also edged higher to $75, gaining $2.–**APP**

Competition Commission of Pakistan recovers Rs 35m

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) on Wednesday successfully enforced its order against two manufacturers of frozen desserts for misleading consumers by advertising their products as "ice cream," and has recovered Rs35 million in penalties from them.
The case was initiated on a complaint filed by M/s Pakistan Fruit Juice Company (Private) Limited, manufacturers of "Hico" ice cream, alleging that M/s Unilever Pakistan and M/s FrieslandCampina Engro were engaged in deceptive marketing by portraying their frozen dessert products as ice cream through television and social media advertisements, a news release said on Wednesday.–**APP**

Pakistan, IFC discuss investment, infrastructure uplift

Key areas of engagement include financial sector support through risk-sharing and guarantee facilities to promote trade and SME financing, expansion of local currency financing to mitigate foreign exchange risks, and upcoming initiatives such as a diversified payment rights facility and a green bond issuance with a leading local bank

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) here on Wednesday discussed expansion of investment opportunities, strengthening infrastructure development, and boosting job creation, as part of efforts to accelerate economic growth. According to press release issued by finance ministry, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with, IFC Divisional Director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Simon Andrews, who called on him along with Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, and Ms. Naz Khan, Country Manager IFC. On the occasion, the Minister appreciated the IFC's enhanced engagement in Pakistan over the past few years, particularly in investment, trade finance, and advisory support. He acknowledged the positive impact of IFC's on-ground leadership and responsiveness, noting that increased senior-level presence has significantly strengthened collaboration and delivery. The IFC delegation briefed the Minister on its growing portfolio in Pakistan, which now exceeds $2 billion annually, with approximately $2.7 billion committed this year. Key areas of engagement include financial sector support through risk-sharing and guarantee facilities to promote trade and SME financing, expansion of local currency financing to mitigate foreign exchange risks, and upcoming initiatives such as a diversified payment rights facility and a green bond issuance with a leading local bank Discussions focused on further scaling private sector investment, particularly in infrastructure and public-private partnerships. While progress has been made in areas such as urban water management and distribution efficiency projects, both sides acknowledged the need to develop a stronger pipeline of bankable projects and enhance coordination to unlock larger-scale private investment in sectors including energy, transport, and logistics. The minister emphasized the importance of adopting a client-centric approach to financing solutions, particularly in facilitating local currency lending to support private sector growth and reduce exchange rate vulnerabilities. He underscored that such initiatives complement, rather than substitute, foreign currency inflows and are essential for sustainable economic expansion. The meeting also covered collaboration on job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation, including proposals for developing a venture capital ecosystem and strengthening private sector engagement in policy formulation. Both sides discussed mechanisms to further institutionalize dialogue between government and business stakeholders to support effective and responsive policy-making.
Broader discussions addressed regional economic connectivity, particularly with Central Asian countries, and the importance of leveraging emerging opportunities in agribusiness, infrastructure, and trade linkages. The Minister also briefed the delegation on the government's ongoing efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability amid global uncertainties, including proactive management of energy supply chains, fiscal discipline, and targeted subsidy frameworks. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration, accelerating implementation of priority initiatives, and leveraging the full suite of World Bank Group instruments to support Pakistan's reform agenda, private sector development, and sustainable, inclusive economic growth.–**DNA**

Headline inflation recorded at 7.3% in March

ISLAMABAD: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation was recorded at 7.3 percent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in March 2026, up from 7 percent recorded in February 2026, and 0.7 percent registered in March 2025, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. According to details, CPI inflation urban, increased by 7.4% on year-on-year basis in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 6.8% in the previous month and an increase of 1.2% in March 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 1.3% in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.3% in the previous month and an increase of 0.8% in March 2025. CPI inflation rural, increased by 7.2% on year-on-year basis in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.3% in the previous month and no change observed in March 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 1.0% in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.3% in the previous month and an increase of 1.1% in March 2025. The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on YoY basis increased by 5.6% in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 4.8% in the previous month and a decrease of 2.3% in March 2025. On MoM basis, it increased by 0.7% in March 2026 as compared to a decrease of 0.1% in the previous month and March 2025. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased by 6.7% in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 1.0% in the previous month and a decrease of 1.6% in March 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 5.9% in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.7% in the previous month and an increase of 0.3% in March 2025 Meanwhile, the core inflation, measured by non-food non-energy for urban increased by 7.4% on (YoY) basis in March 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.1% of the previous month and 8.2% in March 2025. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 0.7% in March 2026 as compared to 0.2% in previous month and an increase of 0.5% in the corresponding month of last year i.e. March 2025. 8. The core inflation, measured by non-food non-energy for rural increased by 8.4% on (YoY) basis in March 2026 as compared to 8.3% of the previous month and an increase of 10.2% in March 2025. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 0.8% in March 2026 as compared to 0.4% in the previous month and an increase of 0.7% in the corresponding month of last year i.e. March 2025.–**DNA**

Securing Iran's enriched uranium by force would be risky

VIENNA: Should the US decide to send in military forces to secure Iran's uranium stockpile, it would be a complex, risky and lengthy operation, fraught with radiation and chemical dangers, according to experts and former government officials. US President Donald Trump has offered shifting reasons for the war in Iran but has consistently said a primary objective is ensuring the country will "never have a nuclear weapon." Less clear is how far he is willing to go to seize Iran's nuclear material. Given the risks of inserting as many as 1,000 specially trained forces into a war zone to remove the stockpile, another option would be a negotiated settlement with Iran that would allow the material to be surrendered and secured without using force. Iran has 440.9 kilograms (972 pounds) of uranium that is enriched up to 60 percent purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90 percent, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog agency. That stockpile could allow Iran to build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponize its program, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi told The Associated Press last year.–**Agencies**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Aisha Humera Moriani and Norway's Ambassador to Pakistan Per Albert Ilsaas sign the country's first landmark bilateral agreement under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement during a ceremony at the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination.

ICCI President invites diaspora to invest in Pakistan

Kashmir Journalist Forum's delegation included Secretary General Maqsood Muntazir, Secretary Finance Sardar Imran Azam, Senior Vice President Iqbal Awan, Khalid Gardezi, Haseeb Shabbir, Qazi Sagheer, Zahoor Alam, Sardar Nadeem, Sardar Nisar Tabbasum, Liaqat Mughal, Talha Sadozai and Raja Ahsan Hameed. The event was conducted by ICCI Executive Member Zulqurnain Abbasi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood has emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between the business community and the media to ensure effective dissemination of information and to promote trade, investment, and economic activities in the country. He expressed these views while addressing a delegation of the Kashmir Journalists Forum, led by its President, Sardar Irfan Sadozai, which visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, according to a release issued here on Wednesday. Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the media plays a pivotal role in highlighting economic opportunities and business initiatives, adding that close liaison between ICCI and journalists is essential for keeping the business community informed about emerging investment prospects and policy developments. Highlighting the investment potential of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), he said that the region offers vast opportunities particularly in tourism, mines and minerals, and the information technology sector. He noted that ICCI is actively working to connect investors from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to facilitate mutually beneficial economic partnerships and unlock the region's untapped potential. The ICCI President further said that the recent Middle East conflict has opened new avenues for Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to attract foreign investment, especially from overseas Pakistanis and the Kashmiri diaspora He stressed that by providing a conducive investment environment and proper facilitation, the country can capitalize on these opportunities Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that as the premier chamber of the federal capital, ICCI is committed not only to promoting business activities in Islamabad but also to contributing to the overall economic development of Pakistan. He acknowledged the vital role of overseas Pakistanis and Kashmiris in strengthening the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances. He added that ICCI is determined to provide overseas investors with a single-window facilitation mechanism to address their concerns and guide them in making productive investments. "The Chamber will continue to act as a bridge between investors, the Government of Pakistan, and the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to enhance economic cooperation and investment," he remarked. In his welcome address, ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry highlighted the achievements of the Chamber under the leadership of President Sardar Tahir Mehmood and said that constructive dialogue between the media and business community is essential for promoting economic awareness and growth Earlier, President Kashmir Journalists Forum Sardar Irfan Sadozai briefed the participants about the objectives of the forum and stressed the importance of strengthening connectivity between the Chamber and the journalists' community.He also appreciated the efforts of ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood for actively promoting and highlighting the investment potential of Azad Jammu and Kashmir alongside Pakistan. Among others present on the occasion were ICCI Executive Member Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, Senior Member Hazoor-ul-Islam Abbasi, Akhtar Abbasi, and members of the Kashmir Journalists Forum. Kashmir Journalist Forum's delegation included Secretary General Maqsood Muntazir, Secretary Finance Sardar Imran Azam, Senior Vice President Iqbal Awan, Khalid Gardezi, Haseeb Shabbir, Qazi Sagheer, Zahoor Alam, Sardar Nadeem, Sardar Nisar Tabbasum, Liaqat Mughal, Talha Sadozai and Raja Ahsan Hameed. The event was conducted by ICCI Executive Member Zulqurnain Abbasi.

Drone attack targets Kuwait airport

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait: Kuwait's civil aviation authority said the Gulf state's international airport was under an Iranian drone attack on Wednesday that led to "a large fire" at fuel tanks. "Kuwait International Airport has been subjected to blatant attacks by drones launched by Iran and the armed factions it supports," the official Kuwait News Agency quoted the spokesman of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation as saying. The spokesman, Abdullah Al?Rajhi, said "fuel storage tanks... were targeted, resulting in a large fire at the site," reporting no casualties.–**APP**

UK to send additional air defense kit, troops to ME

LONDON: Britain plans to send additional air defense equipment and troops to help its allies in the Middle East as Iranian attacks continue, defense minister John Healey said on Tuesday as he visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain. Healey held talks with allies where they discussed the Strait of Hormuz and further UK-Gulf co-operation on regional security, Britain's Ministry of Defense said. UK will deploy Sky Sabre, a ground-based air defense system used by the British Army, in Saudi Arabia, statement said. The deployment of British Typhoon fighter jets in Qatar, where the UK operates a joint squadron with Qatar, will be extended, Healey announced. Britain's Lightweight Multirole Launcher is now in Bahrain, where it is being integrated into that country's defense systems, the MoD added. Healey told reporters that British troops will help install, train, and operate the new air defense systems, with nearly 1,000 soldiers expected to be deployed across the Middle East to help "defend the skies and reinforce air defenses." "I pay tribute to the heroic efforts of our partners across the Gulf in protecting their nations. We will stand by our long-term partners in the Middle East and continue to push for a swift resolution to this conflict," Healey said in the MoD's written statement.–**APP**

More devices used in China's household sector

HEFEI: When a newborn stirred in the night, a sensor clipped to the edge of the diaper quietly went to work, sniffing, sensing and logging data Within minutes, the caregiver's wristband buzzed and received the latest information about the baby, including the need to change the diaper and the infant's upset stomach. This gadget, jointly developed by a domestic service company in east China's Anhui Province and an artificial intelligence firm, combines humidity detection with highly sensitive odor sensors. "It tracks infants' digestive patterns and uploads the data to a digital platform, where it is paired with feeding records kept by caregivers," said Ding Youmei, president of the Anhui-based Wansao, the domestic service company. "The result is a personalized health profile that helps nannies and parents monitor babies more precisely." The company hopes the technology may eventually serve another demographic, frail elderly people who require constant care. Such experiments illustrate the growing use of artificial intelligence in the vast but traditionally labor-intensive domestic service industry.
In China, where the domestic service sector already employed more than 30 million people and generated a market value of over 1.2 trillion yuan (about 173.43 billion U.S. dollars) in 2024, the arrival of algorithms is expected to reshape how households find help and how such help is delivered.
"Drawing on years of industry data, we have begun building digital platforms powered by large language models and private knowledge bases," Ding told Xinhua. "Besides answering questions for families and caregivers alike, they can also generate detailed digital profiles of domestic workers, allowing platforms to match clients with suitable candidates from databases containing tens of thousands of service providers.–**APP**

CENTRELINE
Largest Diplomatic Magazine

Daily
Islamabad POST

DNA
DIPLOMATIC NEWS AGENCY

THURSDAY, APRIL 02, 2026 | WWW.ISLAMABADPOST.COM.PK

Briefs

Crude oil surges, equity markets rise

DNA

LONDON: Global shares rose on Tuesday, and Brent crude oil prices were poised for a record monthly increase, as traders came to the end of a tumultuous March dominated by the Iran war. Iran attacked a fully-loaded oil tanker off Dubai early on Tuesday after President Donald Trump warned the US would obliterate Iran's energy plants and oil wells if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz.

Still, markets got a lift from a Wall Street Journal report that Trump had told aides he is willing to end the military campaign even if the strait remains largely closed. The war, which began with the US and Israel launching coordinated strikes against Iran on February 28, has sent shockwaves across global markets and raised the risk of a worldwide recession.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe rose 10.42 points, or 1.08%, to 971.29.

"We're in an oversold condition, and then that, coupled with this element of potentially encouraging news, has helped to shape the bounce that we're seeing today," said Fiona Cincotta, senior market analyst at City Index. She cautioned, however, that the move should be treated carefully.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.21% to 45,764.14, the S&P 500 added 1.52% to 6,440.34, and the Nasdaq Composite climbed 2.02% to 21,214.90. The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.91%, and Europe's broad FTSEurofirst 300 index gained 0.85%.

Russian military transport plane crashes

DNA

MOSCOW: A Russian An-26 military transport plane crashed into a cliff in Crimea, killing 29 people on board, due to a possible technical malfunction, Russia's defence ministry said early on Wednesday, according to news agencies.

TASS news agency, quoting the ministry, said communication with the aircraft was lost at about 6pm local time (1500 GMT) on Tuesday on a planned flight over Crimea. The peninsula, covered in sweeping mountains leading down to the coast of the Black Sea, was annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014. "The defence ministry reported that a search team found the site of the catastrophe," TASS reported. "According to a report from the site, six crew members and 23 passengers on board were killed."

The ministry report did not say how many people were on board, but it made no mention of any survivors on the An-26, a light tactical military transport that has for decades been a mainstay that can carry cargo and up to 40 passengers over short and medium distances.

PM directs finance ministry to take up fuel levy issue with IMF

At present, government imposes a levy of Rs100 per litre on petrol and Rs55 per litre on diesel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed the Finance Division to talk to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the levy structure on petrol and diesel, aiming to prevent any additional burden on the public amid surging global petroleum prices triggered by the ongoing Iran war. According to sources, the prime minister on Tuesday asked the finance ministry to take up the matter with the IMF so that any required adjustment in petroleum prices could be offset against the existing levies.

At present, the government imposes a levy of Rs100 per litre on petrol and Rs55 per litre on diesel. These levies on petroleum products are part of IMF conditionalities.

The move comes as the government has already spent a massive subsidy of Rs129 billion to keep the fuel prices stable for consumers. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the government was providing all possible facilities to investors in the digital and telecom sectors to promote the country's digital economy.

"The recent successful auction of 5G spectrum in Pakistan reflects that the government is moving in the right direction," the prime minister said while speaking to VEON Group CEO Kaan Terzioglu, who along with a delegation called on him at the PM House. He stated that Pakistan was pursuing a comprehensive and effective strategy to increase foreign investment and promote innovation in the information technology sector.

"Effective use of information technology to achieve a cashless economy is among the government's top priorities," he said, adding that digitalization of the economic sector would help ensure transparency.

Following the 5G spectrum auction, the prime minister noted that all relevant institutions were working in close coordination to provide high-quality internet services to the public through telecom operators.

He further emphasized that Pakistan's youth could play a vital role in strengthening the economy and improving service delivery through active participation in information technology and digital platforms.

He added that the growing interest of young people in telecom and IT is attracting international investors to Pakistan.

On the occasion, Kaan Terzioglu, particularly appreciated the government's initiatives, under the Prime Minister's leadership, to promote a cashless economy and complete digitalization of the economy.

He also expressed his company's intention to further increase investment in Pakistan.

Bilawal pays tribute to security forces

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday paid tribute to the security forces for their successful operations against the terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, he termed the two separate operations carried out in Bara and Bannu as a clear reflection of the effective strategy and professionalism of the security forces.

He commended the forces for eliminating 13 terrorists, praising their courage and operational capabilities.

Bilawal Bhutto said that the nation stands proud of its security institutions, which continue to safeguard the country against the menace of terrorism.

He reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism will continue until the last terrorist is eliminated.

The PPP chairman also reiterated his party's unwavering support for the armed forces, vowing to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in ensuring lasting peace and stability in the country. – **APP**

Centre, provinces 'struggle to reach consensus' on targeted fuel subsidy

No agreement on subsidy model for motorcyclists, farmers and transport sectors, say sources

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government and provinces have failed to finalise a unified mechanism for targeted fuel subsidy, as differences persist over funding and implementation for millions of consumers.

The Centre and the provinces also discussed the possibility for targeted subsidy on diesel for farmers for the upcoming harvesting of wheat, as well as public and goods transport, but no consensus could be achieved. The Centre has informed the provinces that they have provided a subsidy on fuel to the tune of Rs125 billion so far by keeping the prices unchanged, and now they are unable to provide more subsidy.

The Centre possessed Rs25 billion to Rs35 billion on account of PM's Austerity Fund and the Centre could contribute through targeted subsidy on behalf of Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir if the provinces agreed upon a unified targeted subsidy for two and three-wheelers. "It has been largely agreed that the full or partial prices of fuel will be hiked in the upcoming review and a targeted subsidy will be provided," said the official sources.

According to the data shared by the provinces, there are 22 million motorbikes in Punjab, 8 million in Sindh, 1.5 million in KP and remaining in Balochistan as well as in ICT, GB and AJK. The provinces will have to contribute from their NFC share to the tune of Rs150-200 billion for the targeted subsidy. According to a finance ministry's statement issued on Tuesday, a high-level meeting involving the federal government and the top political leadership of the provinces on petroleum prices and targeted subsidy modalities was held at the Finance Division. The finance minister underscored the importance of collaborative decision-making and maintaining close coordination between the federation and the provinces.

Chinese embassy to host event in Gilgit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: on 4th April 2026 at the Chinese Cemetery in Gilgit will mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, along with the observance of the Chinese Tomb Sweeping Festival.

The program is expected to host approximately 200 participants, including members of the local community, students, and invited guests. Students from the Chinese language classroom will present cultural performances to highlight the spirit of friendship and cultural exchange between the two nations.

The event is sponsored by Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, and will be organized by the Association of Overseas Chinese Community Gilgit and local Chinese language school. Pakistani media representatives will also be invited to cover the program, ensuring wider outreach and visibility.

The objective of this event is to honor the longstanding(75 years) friendship between China and Pakistan, promote cultural understanding, and pay respect during the Tomb Sweeping Festival in a dignified and meaningful manner.

PSX buoyed by hopes of near-term resolution to war

Benchmark KSE-100 index gains 7,719.98 points or 5.19% to jump to 156,463.29 points

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) staged a sharp rise as investor sentiment improved following remarks by US President Donald Trump signalling a near-term resolution to the Iran conflict, alongside a broader rally in global equities. The benchmark KSE-100 index gained 7,719.98 points or 5.19% to jump to 156,463.29 points, up from the previous close of 148,743.31 points.

Trading was temporarily halted around 12pm after the KSE-30 index remained above the 5% threshold for five consecutive minutes, triggering an automatic market suspension mechanism. It resumed at 1:09pm. Trump has said that the US could leave Iran "within two weeks, maybe two weeks, maybe three", while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington could hold direct talks with Iran at some point, signalling a potential diplomatic opening. China and Hong Kong stocks joined a global relief rally on Wednesday, and the yuan firmed against the dollar after Trump signalled an end to the Iran war that had roiled markets. Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 4% while benchmarks in and Seoul also rose.

"Remarks by the US President signalling a potential near-term resolution to the ongoing conflict, coupled with a concurrent rally across US equity markets subsequently mirrored in Asian trading sessions, have materially bolstered investor confidence," said Ahfaz Mustafa, Chief Executive Officer of Ismail Iqbal Securities. "A scheduled address by the President to the nation this evening is further underpinning sentiment, with markets widely anticipating a constructive announcement.

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani meets UN chief

NEW YORK: New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, the first Muslim and South Asian to lead the US largest metropolis, met with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday at the organization's headquarters in Manhattan, the first such meeting between the two leaders.

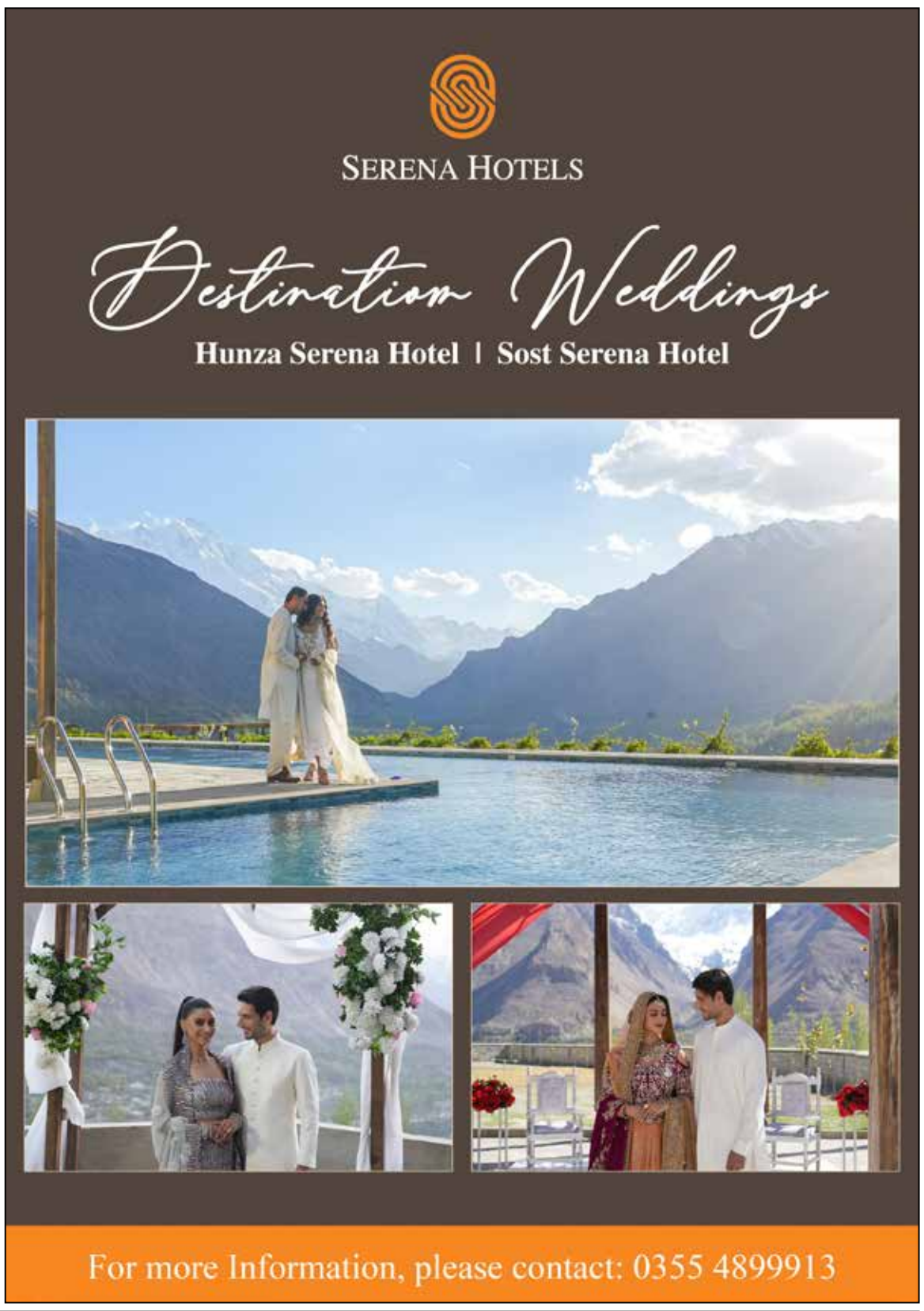
"The Secretary-General thanked the Mayor for the outstanding relationship and support received from the host city," a readout from UN chief's spokesperson states.

"Noting the critical role that cities play in today's world, the Secretary-General discussed with the Mayor how to deepen the cooperation with the City of New York. The Secretary-General looks forward to continuing the dialogue between the United Nations and New York City."

Beyond hosting the United Nations international headquarters since 1950, New York City also established a new position at City Hall in 1962, the Commissioner for the United Nations (known today as the Mayor's Office for International affairs), which acts as a liaison between the diplomatic community and local residents, businesses, and government agencies that interface with the intergovernmental organization.

"We are so proud to be the host of the United Nations," Mamdani told UN News on his way into the iconic 39-story Secretariat building in the Turtle Bay neighborhood.

"This is the city where more than 3 million New Yorkers, myself included, were born outside the country and the United Nations is something that we are proud to welcome each and every day and we are excited to continue that partnership." – **APP**



Finance Minister Senator Aurangzeb, IFC discuss expanding investment

The Minister welcomed Mr. Andrews on his recent appointment and appreciated the IFC's enhanced engagement in Pakistan over the past few years, particularly in investment, trade finance, and advisory support

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Mr. Simon Andrews, Divisional Director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), who called on the Minister at the Finance Division along with Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, and Ms. Naz Khan, Country Manager IFC.

The Minister welcomed Mr. Andrews on his recent appointment and appreciated the IFC's enhanced engagement in Pakistan over the past few years, particularly in investment, trade finance, and advisory support. He acknowledged the positive impact of IFC's on-ground leadership and responsiveness, noting that increased senior-level presence has significantly strengthened collaboration and delivery.

The IFC delegation briefed the Minister on its growing portfolio in Pakistan, which now exceeds $2 billion annually, with approximately $2.7 billion committed this year. Key areas of engagement include financial sector support through risk-sharing and guarantee facilities to promote trade and SME financing, expansion of local currency financing to mitigate foreign exchange risks, and upcoming initiatives such as a diversified payment rights facility and a green bond issuance with a leading local bank.

Discussions focused on further scaling private sector investment, particularly in infrastructure and public-private partnerships. While progress has been made in areas such as urban water management and distribution efficiency projects, both sides acknowledged the need to develop a stronger pipeline of bankable projects and enhance coordination to unlock larger-scale private investment in sectors including energy, transport, and logistics.

The Minister emphasized the importance of adopting a client-centric approach to financing solutions, particularly in facilitating local currency lending to support private sector growth and reduce exchange rate vulnerabilities. He underscored that such initiatives complement, rather than substitute, foreign currency inflows and are essential for sustainable economic expansion.

The meeting also covered collaboration on job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation, including proposals for developing a venture capital ecosystem and strengthening private sector engagement in policy formulation. Both sides discussed mechanisms to further institutionalize dialogue between government and business stakeholders to support effective and responsive policymaking.

Broader discussions addressed regional economic connectivity, particularly with Central Asian countries, and the importance of leveraging emerging opportunities in agribusiness, infrastructure, and trade linkages. The Minister also briefed the delegation on the government's ongoing efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability amid global uncertainties, including proactive management of energy supply chains, fiscal discipline, and targeted subsidy frameworks.

Published by Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Printed at Rohani Art Press, Islamabad Ph: 051-8488394 Email: newsroomisbpost@gmail.com