



# Islamabad POST

Friday, April 03, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Military operation to liberate Strait of Hormuz unrealistic**

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**Briefs**

**Security Forces kill 8 khwarij terrorists**

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security Force successfully foiled the movement of a group of khwarij along Pakistan Afghanistan border in North Waziristan and killed eight khwarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna al Khwarij in a precise and skillful engagement. "Own troops effectively engaged this group of khwarij. As a result of precise and skillful engagement, eight khwarij belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna al Khwarij were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from Indian sponsored killed khwarij," said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). "The engagement once again substantiate our repeated stance regarding the abject failure of Afghan Taliban regime to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. Afghan Taliban Regime must fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by khwarij and involvement of its citizens in terrorism inside Pakistan," the news release said.

**18 witnesses recorded in May 9 case**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Thursday recorded statements of 2 more witnesses in the May 9 protest case against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers, taking the total number of recorded witnesses to 18. The Anti-Terrorism Court, presided over by Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra, heard the case. During the hearing, the prosecution presented two additional witnesses, whose statements were recorded by the court. With these testimonies, the total number of witnesses recorded in the case has reached 18. The court directed the prosecution to produce more witnesses at the next hearing to continue the trial process. The court also directed defence lawyers to prepare for the cross-examination of the witnesses in the upcoming proceedings. After completing the day's proceedings, the court adjourned the hearing until April 8. The next hearing will focus on recording more witness statements and continuing cross-examination.

**Pakistan, China hold consular talks**

DNA

BEIJING: The 10th Round of Pakistan-China Consular Consultations was held between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs on 31 March 2026 in Beijing. Mr. Tariq Wazir, Director General (China) led the Pakistani delegation while the Chinese side was led by Mr. Long Zhao, Director General, Department of Consular Affairs. The two sides reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral consular matters and expressed satisfaction at the continued growth of people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening consular cooperation and enhancing facilitation for each other's nationals. Consular Consultations are an institutionalized mechanism between Pakistan and China that reviews the entire range of consular matters.

**Before it is too late**

## Trump says Iran should make a deal

In a 19-minute address from the White House, he said the US would hit Iran "extremely hard over the next two to three weeks," but did not make any revealing announcements

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has described the U.S.-Israeli coordinated military operation against Iran as "overwhelming success", yet faces criticism for lacking a clear exit strategy as the war continues. In a 19-minute address from the White House, he said the U.S. would hit Iran "extremely hard over the next two to three weeks," but did not make any revealing announcements. While boasting of decisive victories and threatening further escalation, he has not provided a timeline for withdrawal, prompting concerns over a potential "forever war". Instead, he described the military action against Iran as an overwhelming success and seemingly pleaded for concerned Americans uneasy about its costs and open-ended timeline to "keep this conflict in perspective." Trump ticked through the durations of the United States' involvement in past conflicts, including the wars in Iraq and Vietnam, for the purpose of reminding Americans that the campaign against Iran had just entered its second month. "If there's no deal, we are going to hit

**UK talks to 30 states for Hormuz**

DNA

LONDON: Foreign ministers from nearly three dozen countries will meet on Thursday in a bid to ramp up diplomatic pressure to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route choked off by the US-Israeli war on Iran. The United States is not among those attending the meeting, which comes after Donald Trump said securing the waterway was not Washington's responsibility and criticised European allies for failing to support the war. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the virtual meeting, chaired by Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, would assess "all viable diplomatic and political measures" to restore freedom of navigation, ensure the safety of stranded

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**Iranian president**

## 'We harbor no enmity toward American people'

The president added that both confrontation and engagement between Iran and the US are accessible, adding that Iran will endure any aggression by the US

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a letter addressed to the American people on Wednesday that his country harbors no enmity toward ordinary Americans. He said in his letter that portraying Iran as a threat was "neither consistent with historical reality nor with present-day observable facts." The president added that both confrontation and engagement between Iran and the US are accessible, adding that Iran will endure any aggression by the US. "Today, the world stands at crossroads. Continuing along the path of confrontation is more costly and futile than ever before. The choice between confrontation and engagement is both real and consequential; its outcome will shape the future for generations to come," said Pezeshkian. "Throughout its millennia of proud history, Iran has outlasted many aggressors. All that remains of

Continued on Page 06

**China says Attacks on Iran are 'clear violation of international law'**

DNA

BEIJING: Tensions in the Middle East have intensified as the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran enters its fifth week, with fresh diplomatic backlash, concerns over civilian infrastructure damage, and signs of shifting global energy flows. Chinese Foreign Minister Condems Strikes as Violation of International Law Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that the US and Israeli strikes on Iran, launched without UN Security

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## Space for war between two nuclear states inconceivable

Kh. Asif says the Pahalgam episode that took place on April 22 last year saw tourists being attacked in India-occupied Kashmir. New Delhi, without evidence, linked it to Pakistan, which led to a brief military escalation between the two countries from last year



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Thursday reminded his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh that the "illusion of space for war between two nuclear states is inconceivable and has drastic consequences". The reprimand was ostensibly in reaction to Singh's recent statement, in which he warned Pakistan against any attempting "misadventure" under the shadow of the ongoing

Middle East war, as reported by Indian media. A post on X, in which Asif did not specifically refer to the statement but tagged Singh, said: "Repeated rhetoric reflects not strength, but visible strategic anxiety as the anniversary of the staged false flag operation in Pahalgam approaches – an episode that failed to withstand international scrutiny and exposed New Delhi's reliance on manufactured crises. "Such threat-mongering is not new; it is part of a predictable pattern – externalising internal fragility, and attempting to provoke escalation under the garb of unsubstantiated allegations for vested political interests," he said. The Pahalgam episode that took place on April 22 last year saw tourists being attacked in India-occupied Kashmir. New Delhi, without evidence, linked it to Pakistan, which led to a brief military escalation between the two countries from last year. Islamabad had strongly denied responsibility for the attack while calling for a neutral investigation. The Pakistan Army later named the period of conflict with India since the April 22 Pahalgam attack to the May 10

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting to review austerity measures in the wake of regional situation. Islamabad, 2 April 2026. – DNA

**Petrol prices increased**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In a major development that is set to hit household budgets and transportation costs hard, the Indian government has approved a significant increase in retail prices of petrol and diesel across the country. Effective immediately, the price of petrol has been raised to Rs 458.40 per litre, while diesel now stands at Rs 520.35 per litre. Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and Petroleum Minister Ali Malik announced these decision. The gov also announced targeted subsidy whereby bikers would get Rs 100 per litre relief, while the agriculture sector will also get Rs 1500 relief. This marks one of the steepest single-day revisions in recent memory, driven primarily by the ongoing US-Israeli military operations against Iran, which have caused global crude oil prices to surge dramatically and disrupted supplies through the Strait of Hormuz. Key Details of the Price Revision Petrol:

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**Aurangzeb, Natalie talk cooperation**

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting with the United States Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, Ms. Natalie Baker, who called on the Minister at the Finance Division today. During the meeting, both sides held a comprehensive exchange on Pakistan-US bilateral relations, ongoing economic developments, and avenues for enhanced cooperation in trade, investment, and energy. Ms. Natalie Baker highlighted a recent symposium held in Washington, D.C., hosted by the Pakistan Caucus in the US Congress,

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**US-Israel-Iran war**

## Pakistan in close contact with US for dialogue: FO

Foreign Office spokesperson says Iran, US express confidence in Pakistan's role; delegation sent to China

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan remains in close contact with the United States leadership and is actively engaged in continuous diplomatic consultations aimed at reducing tensions and paving the way for meaningful negotiations, the Foreign Office said. "Pakistan is actively working to create a conducive environment for de-escalation and dialogue," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi told reporters in Islamabad, adding that the next phase would focus on meaningful negotiations among relevant stakeholders. The more than month-long war between the US, Israel and Iran, which began on February 28 and has affected the wider Middle East. The conflict has also had serious economic consequences, with Iran's effective blockade of oil and gas shipments through the Strait of Hormuz since the attacks began, causing economic challenges across the world. Pakistan also recently hosted key regional ministers – from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt – and relayed messages between Washington and Tehran. The spokesperson,

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**8 Muslim-majority countries condemn Israel's death penalty law**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The foreign ministers of Pakistan and seven other Muslim-majority countries on Thursday strongly condemned a new Israeli law, allowing the imposition of the death penalty against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, warning that the move risks escalating tensions and undermining regional stability. In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of Türkiye, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined Pakistan in condemning legislation passed by the Israeli parliament that allows the death penalty to be imposed in the occupied territory and its effective application

Continued on Page 06

WATER JUST GOT BETTER!!

MURREE SPARKLETTS

Bottled Drinking Water

Carbonated Water Also Available in Glass Bottle

f/Mureesparkletts | officialmureesparkletts

## KP govt speeds up clearance of media dues

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Thursday accelerated efforts to clear long-pending dues of newspapers and strengthen public outreach through its FM radio network during a high-level meeting of the Information Department. The meeting, chaired by Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Information Shafi Jan, reviewed progress on payments to media organizations and the performance of departmental FM radio stations. Senior officials, including Secretary Information Matiullah and Director General Muhammad Imran, attended the session. Officials informed the meeting that payments to newspapers are being processed at an improved pace in line with court directives and decisions of the provincial cabinet. Coordination with relevant departments is ongoing to ensure timely settlement of outstanding liabilities, with initial results described as encouraging. The forum was also briefed on the role of FM radio stations in raising public awareness on social issues and relaying citizens' concerns to authorities. It was noted that the department's radio network currently reaches around 41 percent of the province's population, with 10 stations operational across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was told that a structured mechanism is being developed to address old liabilities in a transparent manner, while improving overall financial management within the department. Speaking on the occasion, Shafi Jan directed officials to further expedite reconciliation and payments, stressing the need for complete transparency in advertisement releases and financial matters. He said the government is committed to modernizing the Information Department to meet contemporary media needs and enhance effective communication with the public.—APP

## Meeting discuss affairs of provincial youth deptt

PESHAWAR: Chairman Standing Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Sports, Iftikhar Ullah here on Thursday chaired a meeting to discuss affairs and working of provincial sports and youth affairs department. The meeting was attended by Advisor to Chief Minister on Sports Taj Muhammad Khan Tarand, MPAs Farzana Shireen and Aimen Jaleel Jan, Secretary Sports Muhammad Asif, Director General Sports, Tashfeen Haider and other officials of the department. Officials from the Sports and Youth Affairs Department gave a detailed briefing to the Chairman, Advisor, and assembly members on administrative, financial and operational matters. The briefing covered key departments including the Directorate General Sports, DG Sports Merged Districts, Ehsaas Naujawan Program, Directorate of Youth Affairs and Directorate of Works besides ongoing development projects. DG Sports informed the participants about sports activities held across the province, ongoing development schemes and upcoming matches.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The residents of Golra Sharif area still use old method to pull water from well.

# Kundi highlights Pakistan's progress in health sector

LAHORE: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that Pakistan has made significant progress in the health sector, noting a shift from importing healthcare-related items to moving towards exports, which he termed a positive and encouraging development. Speaking to the media after visiting the Pak Pharma and Healthcare Expo at the Expo Center on Thursday, he said that national-level initiatives have helped improve Pakistan's global image. He added that following success in the war with India, the country's international standing has strengthened, and the global community was now inviting Pakistan to play a mediatory role in resolving key conflicts. Kundi expressed optimism that if Pakistan continues contributing to global peace efforts, Islamabad could emerge as a major center for peace initiatives and even achieve global recognition, including prestigious awards like the Nobel Prize. He said the country's leadership, including the Field Marshal and the Prime Minister, is working tirelessly for national progress and stability, while Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is also playing an active political role. He emphasized that effective coordination between the federation

and provinces is essential for ensuring lasting stability. Addressing the law and order situation, the Governor said that conditions in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain unsatisfactory and require urgent attention. He noted that concerns raised by the Chief Minister regarding lack of consultation on security operations are being addressed, and the decision to convene an Apex Committee meeting is a positive step. Criticizing the pace of development in the province, Kundi said that over the past 13 years, progress has remained slow, with insufficient development of stadiums and healthcare infrastructure. He also pointed out that Afghan soil has been used against Pakistan, leading to necessary security operations, which were temporarily halted during Eid on the request of friendly countries. Responding to questions, he said that the next constitutional amendment would be the 28th Amendment. He added that when the Pakistan Peoples Party came into power, the country faced a highly volatile situation, which the party worked to stabilize through effective measures. The Governor expressed hope that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would succeed in the upcoming elections and become Prime Minister.—DNA

## Baitul Mall, HMC ink MoU for implant surgery

This initiative marks an important step toward promoting inclusive healthcare, reducing the burden of hearing disabilities, and improving the quality of life for affected children and their families

PESHAWAR: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Thursday between Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) Peshawar to provide free cochlear implant surgeries and related medical facilities to deserving and hearing-impaired patients. According to the HMC spokesperson, the MoU was signed by Director Lal Badshah on behalf of Pakistan Baitul Mal and Hospital Director Colonel (Retd.) Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Khan on behalf of Hayatabad Medical Complex. Associate Professor Dr. Saeed Khan, Chairman of Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) Department, was also present on the occasion. Under the agreement, Pakistan Baitul Mal will bear the expenses of cochlear implant surgeries and post-operative care for deserving, underprivileged, and hearing-impaired children, especially those who are congenitally deaf. This initiative reflects the Government of Pakistan's commitment to providing quality and accessible healthcare services to vulnerable segments of society. MTI - Hayatabad Medical Complex, as a leading teaching and healthcare institution, will provide comprehensive medical services related to cochlear implants, including diagnostic evaluation, surgical procedures, and post-operative rehabilitation and follow-up. The hospital will also ensure the availability of all necessary medical facilities and technical support to achieve the best outcomes for patients. Both institutions expressed their commitment to promoting mutual cooperation under the terms of the MoU to improve healthcare services for hearing-impaired patients. This partnership is expected to significantly enhance access to modern hearing rehabilitation treatments for financially disadvantaged individuals in the region. This initiative marks an important step toward promoting inclusive healthcare, reducing the burden of hearing disabilities, and improving the quality of life for affected children and their families.—DNA

# Call for faster sports infrastructure rollout in KP

The committee also decided to invite officials from the Planning and Development and Finance departments to the next meeting to streamline funding and implementation of sports projects

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Standing Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs on Thursday called for expediting sports infrastructure projects across the province, with a special focus on resolving land-related hurdles delaying playground construction. The committee met under the chairmanship of MPA Iftikhar Ullah Jan and reviewed the overall performance of the Sports and Youth Affairs Department. Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports Taj Muhammad Khan Tarand, MPAs Farzana Shireen and Aimen Jalil Jan, along with senior officials, attended the session, said a press release. During the briefing, officials outlined administrative and financial challenges facing the department and shared updates on ongoing

development schemes, youth initiatives, and institutional structures, including the Directorate of Youth Affairs and projects in merged districts. The committee was informed that multiple schemes, ranging from construction of sports complexes and grounds to youth centres and tartan tracks are underway across the province. Progress on programs such as Ehsaas Naujawan and activities targeting madrassa students, orphans and marginalized groups, including the transgender community, was also reviewed. Highlighting key bottlenecks, the meeting noted that land disputes and documentation issues were slowing down several projects. Adviser on Sports Tarand directed officials to compile and submit complete re-

ports of such cases, assuring that they would be taken up with relevant elected representatives to ensure timely resolution. He reiterated that the government aims to establish playgrounds at the tehsil level and expand access to sports facilities, terming youth development a top priority. Chairman Iftikhar Ullah Jan emphasized better utilization of available resources to engage youth in healthy activities and directed the department to include facilities such as walking tracks for senior citizens in future planning. The committee also decided to invite officials from the Planning and Development and Finance departments to the next meeting to streamline funding and implementation of sports projects.—DNA


## Record-low complaints against absent teachers, doctors hailed

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti announced Thursday that sweeping institutional reforms and enhanced monitoring have led to a dramatic reduction in staff absenteeism across the province. For the first time in Balochistan's history, public complaints about absent teachers and doctors have fallen below 1 percent, marking a major milestone in the government's "good governance" agenda. In a post shared on X (formerly Twitter), the Chief Minister emphasized that rigorous oversight of service delivery is producing tangible results. Sarfraz Bugti added that absenteeism among teachers in schools and doctors in hospitals had long been a major public concern raised during open

public forums, known as "khuli kachehris." However, through a coordinated strategy, strict oversight, and timely grievance redressal, the government has managed to significantly curb the issue. "Over the last three months, complaints related to absenteeism have dropped to less than one percent, which reflects the effectiveness of our monitoring system and governance reforms," he said. The chief minister added that key indicators in education and healthcare are showing noticeable improvement, strengthening public trust in government initiatives. He emphasized that ensuring staff attendance in public institutions has led to a marked improvement in service delivery. — APP



**METROPOLITAN CORPORATION ISLAMABAD**  
Directorate of Municipal Administration



## OPEN AUCTION NOTICE

### ESTABLISHMENT OF DIGITAL/ CASHLESS CATTLE MARKETS OF SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS IN ISLAMABAD ON EID-UL-AZHA 2026

Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad intends to conduct open auction at the following sites for Establishment of Digital / Cashless Cattle Markets of Sacrificial Animals in Islamabad for the period of 13 days w.e.f 1st Zilhajj to 13th Zilhajj on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha for the year 2026.

2. The auction will be held in the Conference Room, Office of the Chief Officer, Mayor Secretariat Civic Centre G-6 Islamabad on schedule date & time mentioned against each:-

| S # | Site of Cattle Market   | Last date of issuance of TORs / Document | Auction Date & Time              | Alternative Date & Time                                  | Earnest Money                        |
|-----|---|--|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Cattle Market at Sector 1-12 Islamabad                              | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.10,000,000/- (Rupees Ten Million) |
| 2.  | Cattle Market at near Fato Cement Factory Sangani Islamabad         | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.10,000,000/- (Rupees Ten Million) |
| 3.  | Cattle Market/Shop at Bharakaha, Islamabad                          | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.3,000,000/- Rupees Three Million  |
| 4.  | Cattle Market near Sultana Foundation Lehrzar Road Islamabad        | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.3,000,000/- Rupees Three Million  |
| 5.  | Cattle Market near Za Masjid Express Highway Islamabad              | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.3,000,000/- Rupees Three Million  |
| 6.  | Cattle Market at Jagan Road Ghinder Stop, Islamabad Express Highway | 20-04-2026 (Monday)                      | 21-04-2026 (Tuesday) at 1100 Hrs | 22-04-2025 (Wednesday) 23-04-2025 (Thursday) at 1100 Hrs | Rs.3,000,000/- Rupees Three Million  |

3. Only such interested bidders shall be entitled to take part in the open auction who provide following documents before the commencement of auction process:-

- Company/ Firm Registration Certificate.
- Copy of CNIC
- Copy of NTN Certificate
- Tender document/ TORs of cattle market shall be given to the interested parties contractor on the written request Firm's letterhead along with copy of NTN certificate along with pay order/bank draft of earnest money (refundable) and pay order/bank draft of Rs. 10,000/- (non-refundable) in favor of DDO/DMA/MCI.
- Earnest money for each site separately in shape of pay order in favor of DDO/DMA/MCI.
- The successful bidder will charge the following rates from animals sellers:-

| S. # | Animal Type                      | Fee per animal       |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1.   | Big Animal (Camel, Buffalo, Cow) | Rs.3000/- per animal |
| 2.   | Small animal (Goat Sheep)        | Rs2000/- per animal  |

Note:-The above Rates are inclusive of open space charges, electricity / generator/ lighting and water for general public as well as animals.

Vehicles entry fee to be charged is scheduled as under:-

| S# | Type of Vehicles                    | Rates of levies loaded per Vehicles | Rates of levies un-loaded per Vehicles |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Truck (with multi axels) 10 Wheeler | 400                                 | 200                                    |
| 2. | Truck (with multi axels) 06 Wheeler | 280                                 | 140                                    |
| 3. | Mini Truck / Mazda                  | 200                                 | 100                                    |
| 4. | Pickup Shahzore Etc.                | 120                                 | 60                                     |
| 5. | Pick Up Suzuki                      | 80                                  | 40                                     |

5. The possession/ work order for establishment of Cattle Markets shall be handed over to the successful bidder subject to submission of 100% payment through pay order in favor of DDO/DMA/MCI in advance within specified period mention in bid acceptance letter. Detail of payments under:-

- 100% payment of bid value.
- 10% of bid value as a security deposit.
- 10% of bid value as a W.H.T through pay order in favor of F.B.R or to be paid directly to F.B.R and provide the receipt of W.H.T voucher. Failing to provide the same, the security shall be forfeited.
- In case of default/ failure of the highest bidder to fulfill the conditions mentioned at clause 5 of the advertisement, the bid shall be cancelled and the earnest money shall be forfeited.
- In that case, 2nd highest Bidder will be offered to fulfill the same mentioned in clause 5 of the advertisement. In case of non-compliance, the bid security of 2nd highest bidder shall also be forfeited and the same to be offered to 3rd highest bidder, vice versa subject to decision of competent authority.
- In case of non-completion of open auction on schedule date & time, the same will be conducted on alternative days as mentioned above.
- All allied facilities i.e Drinking Water for cattle, Electric generators, security (watch & ward), shall be responsibility of the bidder / contractor/ vendors etc. The bidder/ contractor shall follow all S.O.Ps of all relevant authorities and follow instructions from time to time accordingly.
- The earnest money of 2nd and 3rd highest bidders will be retained by the authority until acceptance of bid offered.
- DMA/MCI reserves the rights to cancel the auction proceedings as whole or any individual bid without assigning of any reason.
- No tender/ token will be issued on the date of auction.
- Only those applicants will be allowed to participate in the bid who have been issued the token numbers on deposit of earnest money of each site and will purchase (TOR'S) well time.

**DR. ANAM FATIMA (PAS)**  
Chief Officer/ Director Municipal Administration  
Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad  
Fire Headquarter Building G-7/1 Islamabad. (Ph: 051-9252838)

PID(0) 8024/25

## 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

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- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9225596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

### Enquiry

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

### Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- DhQ Hospital.....9270907-11
- CHT.....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

## National design competition for WFCs discussed

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan hosted a high-level consultative session on Thursday, led by the Chief Justice of Pakistan in his capacity as Chairman of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, to advance the Gender-Responsive Justice Initiative (GRJI) 2026-27.

The session focused on the proposed National Design Competition for Women Facilitation Centers (WFCs), bringing together senior judicial leadership, institutional representatives, development partners, gender experts, and members of the architectural community.

Among the participants were officials from the Supreme Court and IJCP, representatives of the National Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women Pakistan, and the Institute of Architects Pakistan, along with representatives from provincial women development departments. Registrars of the Federal Constitutional Court and all high courts also joined the meeting virtually.

Welcoming the participants, the Chief Justice noted that the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee has identified gender-responsive justice as a priority reform area for the fiscal year 2026-27. He highlighted that the initiative envisages establishing Women Facilitation Centers within judicial complexes across the country to provide safe, structured, and accessible support services to women litigants.

The proposed centers will function as integrated platforms offering legal facilitation, court-annexed mediation, supervised family visitation arrangements, and support services for gender-based violence cases in a secure and dignified environment.

Participants were informed that a concept note and Business Requirement Document outlining the functional, architectural, and operational framework of the centers had already been shared with stakeholders. The session focused on finalizing the framework for the national design competition, aimed at developing a standardized and adaptable architectural model through nationwide participation. The discussion reflected broad support for shifting from an adjudication-centric approach to a more user-centric model of justice delivery, emphasizing accessibility, inclusivity, and institutional responsiveness. During deliberations, participants stressed that the design of the centers must ensure privacy, safety, accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability, while also addressing acoustic considerations in mediation and counselling spaces to maintain confidentiality and a calm environment.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Tariq Sadiq, Chairman & Founder Group; Zubair Ahmed Malik, Former President FPCCI; Khalid Iqbal Malik, Former President ICCI; Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG; Ijaz Abbasi, Former President ICCI; and Choudhry Masood, Council Member, along with Omais Khattak, President Industrial Area Association; Mian Amir, Senior Vice President; Mian Arif, Vice President; Ch. Waheed Ud Din; Mian Shouqat Masood; and others, in a group photo during the ceremony to congratulate the newly elected office bearers of Islamabad Industrial Area Association. DNA

## IMCG (PG) G-10/4 celebrates 23rd convocation in grand style

As the curtains drew close, the event culminated in a collective capture of memories and a delightful spread of refreshments, marking a fitting end to a truly spectacular affair.

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Under the venerable patronage of Chief Guest Dr. Khalid Maqbool Federal Minister of Education, IMCG (PG) G-10/4 dazzled with its 23rd convocation ceremony. Among the eminent souls illuminated were Ms. Rabia Naseem Farooqi Parliamentary Secretary, DG FDE Syed Junaid Akhlaq, Mr. Hassan Saqlain Additional Secretary, Director Academics Ms. Rifat Jabeen and Director Administration Mr. Javed Iqbal Mirza whose gracious presence transformed the occasion into the tableau of prestige. The atmosphere was set aglow with the ceremonial entry of the teaching fraternity, paving the way for the prestigious degree conferral upon 166 graduates. Among them, 40 outstanding achievers were honoured with the roll of honour and coveted prizes. In the much-awaited segment of Prize Distribution, the stage acknowledged victors by bestowing accolades to those who excelled in examinations, alongside re-

markable accomplishments in academics and co-curricular. Highlighting the essence of excellence, Ms. Kirn Zubia from BS Zoology, Session 2020-2024 was adorned with a prestigious gold medal in attaining a flawless 4 CGPA. Moreover, there was a special salute to long-serving champions Miss Zeenat Firdous, Miss Sobia Naveed among the teaching staff and Mr. Zaheer-ud-Din, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed and Ms. Bushra Yasmin among assisting staff, marking 25 years of dedicated service. In a gesture of appreciation, exemplary teachers were applauded for their remarkable contributions to academia and allied institutional functions, fostering excellence in BS disciplines and intermediate. The event echoed with the names of Ms. Uzma Nazeer, Ms. Sumaira Qurat ul Ain, Ms. Farah Gul, Ms. Sadia Iftikhar, Ms. Zara Mansoor, Ms. Sabeel-e-Hafi, Ms. Zainab Khatoon, Ms. Fazeelat Hussain and Ms. Birjees Anwar epitomizing the spirit of educational excellence and Ms. Dilshad alone honouree from our support staff. In a truly inspiring address, our Chief Guest hailed teachers as gardeners of brilliance

and sculptors of destiny, and women as guiding stars illuminating generations.

He called upon our graduates to soar beyond the skies, bearing the luminous torch of Pakistan's promise, hope, and future. In a stirring address to the students, the Guest of Honour called upon them to awaken their potential, champion women's empowerment, embrace the brilliance of innovation, excel in multitasking, and define success as the courage to conquer life's challenges with poise and vision. With far-seeing vision, the Principal Prof. Sadia Ibrar unfolded the college's voyage of purpose and promise, draping the graduates in words of blessing as they rise to script their own constellations of destiny. In the spirit of academic camaraderie, the esteemed guests encouraged the students to embrace the path of hardwork and kindness, propelling them towards limitless horizons. As the curtains drew close, the event culminated in a collective capture of memories and a delightful spread of refreshments, marking a fitting end to a truly spectacular affair.

## Naqvi reviews Jail, Police college and public services

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi, conducted visits to four different projects over a continuous period of four hours. He inspected the Model Jail, Capital Police College, and Police Facilitation Center, and also laid the foundation stone for the expansion project of Atatürk Avenue.

The Interior Minister reviewed the progress of the under-construction Islamabad Model Jail project. Work on the barracks, admin block, and boundary wall is nearly complete. On the Minister's directive, it has been decided to designate the first phase of the Model Jail as a high-security prison. He also directed that the training of personnel to be deployed at the Model Jail be completed by April 30.

Upon his arrival at the Capital Police College, the Minister was presented a guard of honor by a smartly turned-out police contingent. He handed over two Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) vehicles to Islamabad Police. The Minister sought a plan for the upgradation of the Capital Police College and assigned a target to increase the training capacity from 450 to 4,000. He directed that training courses be aligned with modern requirements, with special focus on AI, IT, and physical training. The Interior Minister visited classes of DSP and Inspector promotional training courses and interacted with trainee officers, inquiring about their training and promotion processes.

Mohsin Naqvi also visited the Police Facilitation Center in F-6, where he reviewed the facilities being provided. He visited various counters and observed the service delivery process. He met with citizens and inquired about their issues. Citizens expressed satisfaction over the facilities provided at the center. He directed further improvement in the service delivery system, stating that transparent and efficient services at police facilitation centers are the top priority.

Interior Minister emphasized that the government will continue making all-out efforts at every level to improve public services. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Director General FIA Dr. Usman Anwar, IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi, and other senior officials were also present.—DNA

## Gilani, NAB chief discuss transparency, anti-corruption

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani met Chairman NAB Nazir Ahmad at Parliament House on Thursday to discuss transparency in institutions and measures for eliminating corruption. Gilani underscored the need for effective steps to root out corruption, stressing that transparency across institutions was vital to achieving sustainable development. He said NAB's initiatives were aligned with global development goals, lauded its role in the fight against corruption as commendable, and emphasized that strong institutions were the foundation of sustainable progress. He further noted that transparency and accountability were the fundamental pillars of good governance, highlighting the joint resolve of the Senate and NAB to advance accountability. He added that institutional cooperation was key to strengthening transparency and reinforcing the accountability process. Gilani said an effective accountability system was essential for national prosperity. He termed NAB's historic recovery of over Rs6 trillion as commendable and appreciated its digital reforms and public-friendly initiatives. He also described the NAB Report 2025 as an important document reflecting transparency, adding that a corruption-free Pakistan was key to development. Chairman NAB Nazir Ahmad reaffirmed the Bureau's commitment to further strengthen the accountability process, stating that all possible measures would be taken to promote transparency while continuing efforts to safeguard national resources.—DNA

## 19 held, illegal structures removed in G-8, I-8

19 arrested, illegal structures removed in G-8, I-8 anti-encroachment operations

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration carried out operations in Islamabad's G-8 and I-8 sectors, removing illegal structures and taking 19 individuals into custody, officials said. The action was led by assistant commissioners as part of efforts to clear public spaces and address encroachments in busy areas of the city.

During the operations, teams moved through different parts of both sectors where structures had been set up without approval. These included extensions outside shops, temporary setups, and other forms of encroachments that were affecting access to roads and public pathways. Officials said such activities were creating problems for traffic flow and pedestrians. Heavy machinery was used to remove the structures, while enforcement teams supervised the process to ensure compliance. Items placed on public land were also confiscated during the operation.

Authorities said the action was taken after repeated notices had been issued to those involved, but the violations continued. A total of 19 people were arrested during the drive for establishing encroachments despite warnings. They were shifted to police custody for further legal proceedings. Officials said the arrests were made to ensure that the law is followed and to prevent the re-establishment of illegal setups. The assistant commissioners overseeing the operation stated that such actions will continue in other parts of the city. They said the goal is to keep public spaces clear and ensure that roads and walkways remain open for general use. They also urged traders and residents to avoid setting up any structure without approval. According to the administration, these operations are part of a wider campaign against encroachments in Islamabad. Officials said teams are monitoring different areas and will take action wherever violations are found.—APP



## MINISTRY OF FEDERAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

### DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Directorate General of Special Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, invites bids on EPADS from contractors duly registered with the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in the appropriate category and holding a valid PEC license for the work detailed below:

| S.# | Name of work   | NIT Cost (PKR) | Bid Security (PKR) | Date and Time of submission of Bids on EPADS | Date and Time of opening of Bids |
|-----|--|----------------|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1.  | Construction and Renovation of Centre of Excellence for Autism at H-8/4, Islamabad | 595,153,234    | 29,000,000         | April 20, 2026<br>02:00 pm                   | April 20, 2026<br>02:30 pm       |

**Conditions:**

- ◆ Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, are available on EPADS (www.eprocure.gov.pk). Bids must be submitted electronically through EPADS on or before the date and time mentioned above. No bid shall be accepted after the closing time. Manual submission of technical bids is not required.
- ◆ Bidders shall submit all required documents in the technical bids, duly signed and stamped, including firm profile, address, authorized representative details, valid PEC registration (relevant category and codes), tax registration certificates, and completion certificates of similar works executed during the last eight (08) years, as specified in the bidding documents.
- ◆ Bid security, in the form of a Call Deposit in favour of the Director (Admin), DGSE, Islamabad, issued by a scheduled bank, shall be uploaded with the bid. In addition, the original hard copy of the bid security must be submitted at the prescribed address before the closing time failing which, the bid shall be rejected.
- ◆ A pre-bid meeting will be held on April 07, 2026 at 02:00 PM in the Committee Room, DGSE, Hanna Road, G-8/4, Islamabad, for clarification of the bidding documents.
- ◆ The procurement shall be conducted in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, e-Pak Procurement Regulations, 2023, and applicable guidelines issued by PPRA from time to time.
- ◆ The Procuring Agency reserves the right to reject all bids prior to acceptance, in accordance with the applicable procurement rules.

**Project Director Center of Excellence for Autism**  
**Directorate General of Special Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training**  
**Hanna Road G-8/4, Islamabad, 051-9107542**  
**PID (I) 7997/25**

## Briefs

## Experts stress timely care on World Autism Day

ISLAMABAD: Experts on World Autism Day called for urgent focus on timely therapy, parental engagement and societal support for autistic individuals, underlining that more than 350,000 children are affected by ASD and need well-equipped vocational centres, trained teachers and modern instruments. While speaking to a local news channel, Dr. Maheen Norani, educationist and child psychologist, highlighted that autism is a neuro-developmental disorder affecting communication, social interaction and behavior. She explained that early diagnosis and timely therapy can significantly improve a child's development and quality of life. Dr. Norani also noted that children with autism often face challenges in learning, sensory processing, and social engagement, which require tailored interventions and continuous support from both family and educators. She urged the public to promote awareness and understanding of autism, emphasizing that inclusion and acceptance are crucial, adding that parents should engage actively with their children, participate in therapy sessions and collaborate with trained teachers, while society should provide autism-focused education, vocational training, and access to modern technology and facilities to ensure these children can reach their full potential. Associate Professor at Children's Hospital Lahore, Dr. Ayesha Fareed, added that early therapies are crucial for children with autism. She stressed that parents should limit screen time and focus on their child's physical health and daily activities to support overall development. Dr. Fareed noted that timely intervention can bring significant improvements in a child's behavior and learning abilities. She emphasized that early diagnosis is essential, as delayed detection often reduces the effectiveness of therapies. Highlighting causes, she explained that autism can result from a combination of genetic factors and environmental influences. Raising awareness and educating families and communities can help identify cases earlier and provide the necessary support to affected children.—APP

## Pak-UK meeting focuses on trade, regional stability

The meeting concluded with both sides agreeing to maintain close coordination and continue dialogue to address shared challenges and further strengthen Pakistan-UK relations in trade, energy, and regional stability

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held in Islamabad between Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and The Rt Hon Edward Llewellyn, Director General Political of the United Kingdom, where both sides discussed bilateral trade, regional security, and the ongoing global energy situation. British High Commissioner Ms Jane Marriott also accompanied the DG. During the meeting, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening trade relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, said a release issued here on Thursday. They reviewed progress on the Pakistan-UK Trade Dialogue and appreciated the establishment of the working group on Healthcare and Life Sciences. Both sides agreed on the need to activate working groups to enhance cooperation in IT, Agriculture, Profes-

sional Services and Education and Skills. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Jam Kamal Khan said that Pakistan is fully committed to continuing structural reforms to improve its trade environment and attract foreign investment. He noted that the government's tariff policy and regulatory improvements are aimed at making Pakistan a more competitive and business-friendly destination. He emphasized that "consistency in policy and gradual reforms are key to building long-term investor confidence." Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul also highlighted that the ongoing trade dialogue could serve as a strong foundation for future cooperation. He proposed that both countries should consider moving towards a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the longer term, terming it a natural progression of the growing economic partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The UK side requested to consider their suggestions regarding proposed changes in Pa-

kistan's intellectual property framework and stressed the importance of maintaining policy certainty. In his remarks, Ed Llewellyn underlined that investor confidence depends not only on policies but also on clear signalling from the government. He said that timely consultation and transparency would help reassure international businesses and encourage further investment. Both sides also discussed the issue of GI and Trade Mark registration of Pakistani Basmati Rice and agreed to continue engagement on the matter. Both sides discussed the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, expressing concern over rising shipping costs and risks to global trade. Pakistan raised the issue of increased maritime charges affecting its exports and called for a fair assessment of risk zones. The meeting concluded with both sides agreeing to maintain close coordination and continue dialogue to address shared challenges and further strengthen Pakistan-UK relations in trade, energy, and regional stability.

## ICT Police launch grand combing operations

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police launched large-scale grand combing and search operations against criminal elements and illegal residents across various areas of the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that the operations were conducted in the jurisdictions of Tarnol, Bhara Kahu, Khanna, Karachi Company, Sabzi Mandi, and Koral police stations under the supervision of zonal SPs. He said lady police officials also participated in the search operations to ensure effective checking and facilitation. During the operations, a total of 767 individuals and 333 households were checked, while 149 shops and 32 hotels were also inspected. The official said 241 motorcycles and 80 vehicles were examined during the drive. He said 64 suspicious individuals and 36 motorcycles were shifted to relevant police stations for further verification. He said the IGP Islamabad had issued special directives to conduct grand search operations across the district to eliminate crime and ensure the safety of citizens. The official urged citizens to cooperate with police during checking and immediately report any suspicious activity.—APP

## 86 ICT Police officials promoted

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have promoted 86 officials to higher ranks following a promotion committee meeting held on the special directions of IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. An official told APP on Thursday that 18 head constables were promoted to the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), while 16 ASIs were elevated to the rank of Sub-Inspector. He said more than 49 constables were promoted to the rank of head constable, adding that three officials from ministerial staff were also promoted to higher ranks. The official said the promotions were aimed at encouraging merit, boosting morale, and enhancing the overall efficiency of the police force. IGP Rizvi directed all promoted officers to perform their duties with dedication and professionalism. He emphasized that public service and facilitation must remain the top priority of police officers.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Additional Foreign Secretary Hamid Asghar Khan visited the Algerian embassy to condole the sad demise of the former Algerian president. High Commissioner of Sri Lanka is also present on the occasion. DNA

## Pakistan benefiting from shifting regional dynamics

In a statement, Butt said Pa-

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prominent entrepreneur and former Executive Member of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Omar Butt on Thursday said Pakistan is emerging as an important diplomatic intermediary in the ongoing regional tensions and could play a stabilising role in the Middle East in the post-conflict environment.



kistan's diplomatic engagement and balanced approach have enhanced the country's global standing and opened

new economic opportunities. He credited the political and military leadership, particularly the Prime Minister and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal General Asim Munir, for strengthening Pakistan's position at a critical time in regional geopolitics. He said Pakistan's ability to maintain communication channels with multiple stakeholders has created space for the country to contribute to peace efforts and facilitate dialogue where required. Omar Butt noted that changing security dynamics could also create opportunities for Pakistan's defence industry. He said global demand for relatively low-cost defence technologies, particularly unmanned aerial systems and surveillance equipment, is likely to increase following the conflict. According to him, Pakistan's growing expertise in cost-effective defence manufacturing places the country in a favourable position to expand its defence exports in the coming years.

## Pakistan sees 18% drop in violence

ISLAMABAD: During the first quarter of 2026, Pakistan recorded a nearly 18% quarter-on-quarter decline in violence related to terrorism and counter-terrorism, along with a mix of promising and concerning trends in the country's security landscape. The Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) tallied as many as 813 violence-linked fatalities and 518 injuries - among civilians, security personnel, and outlaws - across at least 248 incidents involving both terrorist attacks and the state's counter-terrorism operations. In terms of comparative impact, the reported drop in violence between Q4, 2025 to Q1, 2026 (from 990 to 813 deaths) was largely driven by the sharp reduction in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which recorded over 57% less fatalities compared to the last quarter i.e. 311 vs 727. However, this aggregate decline masks a significant deterioration in other parts of the country. For instance, the Balochistan province saw over 104% percent surge in violence, with fatalities jumping from 217 to 443 - marking the highest toll in the last thirteen years. The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) saw a 185 percent surge (13 to 37), driven largely by a suicide attack at a Shiite Mosque on February 6 that marked the capital's deadliest incident since 2008. Punjab, while starting from a low base, recorded a 367 percent rise (3 to 14), signalling a concerning expansion of violence into the country's most populous province.—DNA

## The Hour to expel the occupier

SADAF NOREEN AWAN

FOR more than a century, the Middle East has stood as the beating heart of the global economy, its vast energy reserves and strategic waterways acting as the lifeblood of modern civilization. The region's oil and gas resources are not merely commodities; they are a trust and a power that belongs to the people of this land. However, this very wealth has made the region a target for external powers, first the British Empire and now the United States, who have sought to control these resources through a sprawling network of military bases. Today, the map of Middle East is scarred by nearly twenty major American military installations and a force of over 50,000 foreign troops. These are not outposts of peace; they are the machinery of a foreign occupation that treats this sovereign territory as a launchpad for their own agendas. This sprawling military network, embedded in Arab countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Oman, Syria, Turkey, Libya and the United Arab Emirates, has failed its most basic promise and that is protection. Despite the presence of over 10,000 troops at Al Udeid in Qatar and massive air wings at Al Dhafra in the UAE, these forces did not stop the rain of missiles from reaching the heart of cities Middle East. Today, the once-glimmering credibility of Dubai and Abu Dhabi is crumbling as the "Dubai Dream" turns into a nightmare of insecurity. Foreigners and investors, who once considered these the safest hubs in the world, are now fleeing in droves, leaving luxury hotels and malls eerily empty. We must ask: Why did the Americans not protect these harbors? The truth is bitter, they are not here to defend the Arab people, they are here to loot the resources and use our soil as a shield. Even now, as the conflict escalates, Donald Trump has signalled his interest in forcing Arab nations to foot the multi-billion-dollar bill for the war against Iran. He is pressuring the Arab world to enter a war they did not choose, effectively asking them to pay for its own destruction among Muslim ummah. Iran has no inherent war with its Arab neighbours; its strikes were aimed specifically at the illegal U.S. bases in Middle East that launched attacks on Iranian soil. It is a moment of reckoning for the Arab world to realize that hosting these American bases does not bring safety, but it only invites the fire. The recent and devastating escalations in

Iran have finally shattered the myth of the "superpower." When the United States and Israel launched "Operation Epic Fury" on February 28, 2026, they used these very bases from these neighbourhoods to strike Iranian soil. The horrific massacre at the Shajarah Tayyebah school in Minab, where approximately 170 innocent schoolgirls were slaughtered by precision strikes, and when a journalist pressed the American President on the 170 lives lost at the Minab school, he simply replied, "I don't know about that. What a shame for calling it an intelligence failure, it's a failure of 'humanity'." American officials later admitted the strike was based on "stale intelligence," a cold excuse for the lives of children. In direct response, Iran's retaliatory strikes against U.S. bases in Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE proved that these bases do not provide a "security umbrella"; they are lightning rods that invite war into their homes. They turn Arabs civilian hubs like Jebel Ali into targets because we have allowed an occupier to nest among us. When the missiles flew, the billion-dollar Western defence systems failed to protect the sanctity of their trade and its people. The mask of diplomacy has fallen, and the true face of the occupier is one of utter contempt. We have all heard the vulgarity of Donald Trump, who recently mocked Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, the Guardian of Harmain Shareefain, at a public rally, claiming the Prince had ended up "kissing his ass" for protection. This is not just a personal insult; it is a profound humiliation intended for every Muslim and every Arab. This is the language of a master to a subordinate, spoken by a man whose legacy is tied to the depraved "Epstein" network, a circle defined by the exploitation of the innocent and the "drinking of children's blood." By allowing these forces to remain, and by even sending pieces of the holy Ghilaf-e-Kaaba to those who harbor such filth, we have invited this disrespect. Why do we provide bases to those who insult our dignity while arming the hand that destroys hospitals and kills thousands of children in Gaza to fulfill the expansionist dream of a "Greater Israel"? Every American base on our soil is a silent endorsement of the illegal occupation of Palestine. The illusion of Western protection died the moment missiles bypassed billion-dollar defence systems to strike the heart of Arabs trade centres. The world now sees that when power is used for oppression, it becomes useless against a people determined to be free. Iran has proven that faith and resistance can dismantle hegemony, even after 45 years of sanctions. We must recognize our

own dignity and realize that we are capable of protecting ourselves. By tethering our fate to a fading empire distracted by its own failures in Ukraine and its internal moral decay, we are committing strategic suicide. The time has come for a total and immediate evacuation of all American military bases from the Middle East. To achieve this, Muslim countries must move beyond "shuttle diplomacy" and form a concrete, independent security architecture. Arab nations must stop looking toward Washington and instead look to each other through the formation of an Islamic Defense Council. This council would integrate the financial power of the Gulf with the military and nuclear might of Pakistan. As the world's only Islamic nuclear power, Pakistan's deterrent is a shield that belongs to the Ummah, not to a foreign superpower. Furthermore, a strategic pact that includes Iran would end the "divide and conquer" strategy used by the West to keep the region in a state of perpetual conflict. Instead of spending billions on Western weapon systems that can be "switched off" by their makers, Muslim nations must invest in a joint defence industry. Iran's drone technology and Pakistan's missile programs are the foundations of a sovereign defence. We must use our oil and gas as a strategic tool for our own security, not as a bribe for foreign protection that never arrives. We must ask ourselves: if the Prophet (SAW) abolished all internal divisions, why do we allow external forces to define our boundaries? In his Final Sermon at Makkah, he levelled every wall of arrogance, declaring, "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over a white, except by piety (Ta'qwa) and good action." This is not merely a statement of equality; it is a strategic command. The Ummah must recognize its colossal, collective strength and unite on a single, sovereign forum. Imagine a region where the financial power of the Gulf, the nuclear shield of Pakistan, and the advanced technology of a resilient Iran are united under a single banner. Such a pact would make the Middle East impenetrable. We must stand with Iran in this matter and refuse to let the occupiers stay. We must forge a Grand Ummah Pact, utilizing our own resources, our own geography, and our own faith. For the sake of the martyrs of Gaza and the little schoolgirls of Minab, we must unite now. The era of the foreign soldier is over; the era of the united Islamic world has begun. Let it be remembered, the greatest shield against any foreign shadow is the light we create when we stand side-by-side. Our strength is not in our numbers, but in our refusal to be divided.

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## Wars, global warming and human health - the hidden crisis we rarely discuss

PROF DR SHUJAUUL MULK KHAN

FOR decades, global warming has been discussed largely through the lens of industry, transportation, and deforestation. Governments negotiate emission targets, industries promise cleaner technologies, and individuals are encouraged to reduce personal carbon footprints. Yet one of the most powerful contributors to environmental degradation and one with profound consequences for human health - remains largely overlooked: war.

Over the past century, armed conflicts have reshaped nations, displaced millions, and redrawn political boundaries. Less visible, however, is the environmental and health damage that accompanies warfare. Modern conflicts, particularly those occurring in energy-rich regions, transform oil reserves, gas infrastructure, and industrial facilities into massive and uncontrolled sources of pollution. The smoke produced on battlefields does not remain local; it spreads through the global atmosphere, affecting climate systems and human health far beyond conflict zones. The environmental devastation of warfare became globally evident during the 1991 Gulf War, when hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells were deliberately set on fire. Thick black smoke covered skies for months, releasing enormous quantities of carbon dioxide, soot, sulfur dioxide, and toxic hydrocarbons. These pollutants not only intensified global warming but also triggered immediate health emergencies. Respiratory illnesses surged among civilians and soldiers alike. Asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, eye infections, cardiovascular stress, and skin diseases increased dramatically as communities inhaled polluted air day after day. Such events illustrate an important but often ignored reality: climate pollution generated by war directly translates into public health crises. Burning oil fields and destroyed industrial facilities release fine particulate matter known as PM 2.5 - microscopic particles capable of penetrating deep into human lungs and entering the bloodstream. Long-term exposure increases risks of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and premature death. Children, pregnant women, and the elderly remain particularly vulnerable. Modern warfare continues to repeat this pattern. During conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere, oil refineries, pipelines, and fuel depots frequently become strategic targets. Each explosion releases clouds of toxins containing heavy metals, carcinogenic compounds, and greenhouse gases. These emissions not only warm the planet but contaminate water supplies and agricultural lands, creating lasting health risks long after fighting ends. The health impacts of war extend beyond dramatic fires and explosions. Contemporary militaries themselves represent one of the world's largest institutional consumers of fossil fuels. Fighter jets, naval fleets, armored vehicles, and global logistical operations require vast quantities of petroleum. The resulting emissions contribute to climate change, which in turn produces indirect health consequences such as heatwaves, food insecurity, water scarcity, and the spread of infectious

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue150

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diseases. Climate change acts as a "health threat multiplier." Rising temperatures intensify heat-related illnesses, especially among vulnerable populations lacking adequate healthcare or infrastructure. Extreme weather events—floods, droughts, and wildfires - disrupt sanitation systems and increase outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea. Mental health consequences also grow severe as communities face displacement, uncertainty, and loss of livelihoods. War accelerates these risks by collapsing environmental governance and healthcare systems simultaneously. When conflict erupts, environmental regulations disappear, monitoring systems fail, and medical services become overwhelmed or destroyed. The Syrian civil conflict demonstrated how damaged energy infrastructure forced communities into improvised oil refining practices, exposing populations to toxic smoke and chemical contamination. Hospitals struggled to treat increasing cases of respiratory disease, cancer risks, and developmental problems among children exposed to polluted environments. Recent conflicts have further illustrated how environmental damage quickly becomes a humanitarian health crisis. Destruction of power plants and industrial zones releases hazardous chemicals into air, soil, and water systems. Explosions ignite forests and agricultural lands, reducing food production and worsening malnutrition. Contaminated groundwater exposes populations to heavy metals and toxic residues linked to neurological disorders and long-term chronic illness. Equally concerning are the invisible psychological health impacts of environmentally damaged war zones. Continuous exposure to smoke-filled skies, destroyed landscapes, and unsafe living conditions contributes to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Climate stress combined with conflict trauma creates a generation facing both physical and mental health burdens. The environmental consequences of war do not end when ceasefires are signed. Reconstruction introduces another phase of climate and health challenges. Rebuilding cities requires massive quantities of cement, steel, and energy-intensive materials, all of which generate significant greenhouse gas emissions. Rapid urban reconstruction often prioritizes speed over sustainability, locking countries into pollution-heavy infrastructure that worsens air quality and long-term health outcomes. International organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme increasingly emphasize that post-war recovery must integrate environmental restoration and public health protection. Rebuilding hospitals powered by renewable energy, designing greener urban systems, restoring forests, and cleaning contaminated lands can reduce disease risks while supporting climate goals. The connection between conflict, climate change, and health forms a dangerous cycle recognized by scientific assessments from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Environmental stress—drought, water scarcity, and declining agricultural productivity—can contribute to social instability and conflict. Wars then intensify emissions and environmental destruction, worsening climate change and creating further health vulnerabilities. Humanity risks entering a feedback loop in which insecurity, environmental degradation, and illness reinforce one another. Despite these realities, warfare remains largely absent from global climate negotiations. International agreements focus primarily on industrial emissions while military emissions and wartime environmental damage receive limited attention. This gap leaves a significant portion of global pollution unaccounted for and ignores a major driver of human health risk. Recognizing peace as a public health strategy may be one of the most important lessons of the twenty-first century.

# How Iran Humiliated U.S. and Israeli Power

Qamar Bashir



President Donald Trump's announcement of a withdrawal within weeks, echoed by Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that the Iranian threat has been neutralized, collides directly with what is unfolding across the region. Iran remains operationally active, strategically coherent, and economically consequential. The Strait of Hormuz remains under pressure, global markets remain unsettled, and U.S. and Israeli deterrence has been openly challenged. This was a war launched to break Iran. Instead, it has exposed the limits of American and Israeli power. From the outset, the strategy was clear: decapitate leadership, shatter command and control

THE synchronized declarations from Washington and Tel Aviv—that objectives have been achieved and the war is nearing its end—are being projected as victory. Yet the ground reality tells a harsher story. When a war concludes with one side still striking, still deterring, still shaping the battlefield, and still holding the world's most critical energy artery at risk, declarations of success begin to sound less like triumph and more like an organized exit. President Donald Trump's announcement of a withdrawal within weeks, echoed by Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that the Iranian threat has been neutralized, collides directly with what is unfolding across the region. Iran remains operationally active, strategically coherent, and economically consequential. The Strait of Hormuz remains under pressure, global markets remain unsettled, and U.S. and Israeli deterrence has been openly challenged. This was a war launched to break Iran. Instead, it has exposed the limits of American and Israeli power. From the outset, the strategy was clear: decapitate leadership, shatter command and control, demoralize the military, and trigger internal collapse. But Iran did not behave like previous targets of such doctrine. It was prepared. Leadership was decentralized. Decision-making was distributed. Authority was layered. Even after successive eliminations of senior figures, the system did not collapse—it adapted. It continued. It responded with discipline and precision. This was not survival by chance. It was survival by design. Instead of paralysis, there was continuity. Instead of panic, there was proportionate retaliation. Iranian forces did not wait for instructions from the top; they operated with clarity at multiple levels, responding in a coordinated and calculated manner. This single factor alone dismantled one of the core assumptions of the war—that Iran could be broken from the top down. At the same time, Iran demonstrated a level of strategic reach that redefined the conflict. It struck where necessary, deterred where required, and maintained pressure across multiple fronts. It challenged U.S. positions, responded to Israeli actions, and signaled its ability to extend the battlefield beyond conventional limits. Even the perceived threat to maritime flows in the Strait of Hormuz was enough to shake global confidence, disrupt trade, and push major economies into White Washington and Tel Aviv adjusted narratives, Iran maintained a consistent posture. It framed itself as resisting aggression, responding proportionally, and defending sovereignty. That narrative gained traction. In modern conflict, perception is

power, and Iran captured that domain with striking effectiveness. What, then, has this war actually produced? For Iran, the gains are unmistakable. It has shattered the myth of American military invincibility. It has broken the perception of Israeli untouchability. It has proven that a sanctioned nation can withstand and counter the most powerful military alliance in the world. It has elevated its status from a constrained regional actor to a central force capable of influencing global economics and geopolitics. Most critically, it has turned geography into power. By demonstrating its ability to control or disrupt the Strait of Hormuz, Iran now holds leverage over a significant portion of the world's energy supply. This changes everything. Countries that once supported sanctions must now consider their own survival. Their ships must pass through waters influenced by Iran. Their economies depend on uninterrupted flow. Sanctions, in this new reality, begin to lose meaning. A country that can influence the movement of global trade cannot be easily isolated. On the contrary, nations may find themselves negotiating with Iran—not from a position of strength, but necessity. The possibility emerges that Iran could impose conditions: removal or dilution of sanctions, economic concessions, and even transit fees on shipping. In effect, the war may have handed Iran the very tool to recoup its losses—by monetizing the artery the world cannot avoid. For Israel, the losses are equally significant. The aura of invincibility is gone. The ability to act without consequence has been challenged. The assumption of uncontested regional dominance has been exposed as fragile. Israel has not been destroyed, but it has been reduced to size—forced into a strategic reality where every action carries a cost and every escalation invites a response. This has direct implications for the broader region. In Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, the strategic environment has shifted. The space for unchecked expansion or unilateral military action is narrowing. The vision of dominance now faces a counterweight that is both capable and willing to respond. For the United States, the implications are even broader. After decades of spending trillions to build the most powerful military machine in history, it now faces a sobering conclusion: superiority does not guarantee victory. A sanctioned nation, isolated for years, has not only survived but imposed costs and shaped outcomes. This is not merely a battlefield setback—it is a blow to credibility, deterrence, and global perception. Yet beyond strategy, missiles, and geopolitics, the war has revealed something deeper about Iran itself. The strength of the Iranian system did not lie only in its weapons or its geography, but in its political cohesion and societal re-

solve. Despite sustained attacks, leadership losses, and economic pressure, the state did not fracture. Its constitutional structure held. Its political hierarchy remained intact. Most importantly, its people did not turn inward—they rallied. Instead of division, there was unity. Instead of fatigue, there was resolve. Instead of collapse, there was collective resistance. This reflects a nation bound not only by institutions but by identity—by a shared commitment to sovereignty, independence, and the legacy of its revolution. In the face of external aggression, the Iranian population appears to have responded not with fear but with heightened patriotism, reinforcing loyalty to the state and its leadership. Such moments often define nations. Rather than weakening the system, the war may have strengthened belief in it. Rather than undermining the revolution, it may have reaffirmed its relevance. And with that renewed confidence, a new possibility emerges: that Iran, secure in its strength, may now have both the space and the incentive to pursue internal political reforms while engaging more openly with the global economy—on its own terms, and from a position of power. Yet even as declarations of withdrawal dominate headlines, the war itself may not be over. The possibility remains that these announcements are tactical—designed to calm global markets, stabilize oil prices, and ease domestic pressures—while leaving room for renewed escalation, including potential ground operations. The United States has, in past conflicts, shifted objectives even after signaling de-escalation. That pattern cannot be ignored. Iran, for its part, appears prepared for that possibility. But if the withdrawal proves genuine—if escalation does not follow and hostilities truly subside—then the conclusion becomes unavoidable. In that case, the war stands as a strategic victory for Iran: a conflict in which it withstood the combined force of the United States and Israel, preserved its system, expanded its leverage, and reshaped the regional balance of power. This was a war intended to break Iran. Instead, it has strengthened it. Strengthened its system. Strengthened its people. Strengthened its place in the world. And if this war truly ends here, history will not remember the declarations of victory—it will remember the reality that a nation under pressure did not break, did not bend, and instead emerged more united, more confident, and more powerful than before. —The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France Former Press Attaché to Malaysia Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan

# Bhutto: The architect of defining moments

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The story of Pakistan is, in essence, a chronicle of devotion, endurance, and unyielding faith. From the towering leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the countless unnamed workers who toiled silently for a dream they might never fully witness, every soul that contributed to the Pakistan Movement deserves our reverence

NATIONS are not built in a moment, nor do they rise to dignity without sacrifice. The story of Pakistan is, in essence, a chronicle of devotion, endurance, and unyielding faith. From the towering leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the countless unnamed workers who toiled silently for a dream they might never fully witness, every soul that contributed to the Pakistan Movement deserves our reverence. It is upon their sacrifices that the edifice of our freedom stands today. The journey from subjugation to sovereignty was neither smooth nor certain; it was marked by trials that tested the very spirit of the nation. Yet, by the grace and mercy of Almighty Allah, Pakistan endured, emerging resilient from each storm that threatened its existence. As the nation traversed its early decades, leadership in various forms continued to shape its destiny. Among those who left an indelible imprint on the political and ideological landscape of Pakistan was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a figure both celebrated and contested, yet undeniably consequential. History, by its nature, judges individuals through multiple lenses. No man is entirely free of flaws, nor is any legacy devoid of complexity. Yet there are moments in the life of a nation when certain actions transcend criticism and become part of the collective pride of a people. In the case of Bhutto, three such contributions stand out with remarkable clarity. First, the provision of a consensual constitutional framework in the form of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973. At a time when the nation was grappling with internal disarray and the trauma of disintegration, this constitution provided not merely a legal structure but a renewed sense of unity and direction. It was a document born of consensus, reflecting the aspirations of a diverse federation and offering a roadmap for democratic governance. Second, his role in addressing the sensitive and contentious issue of Qadianism through constitutional means marked a defining moment in Pakistan's ide-

ological history. By facilitating a parliamentary decision that declared it outside the fold of Islam, Bhutto responded to a demand deeply rooted in the sentiments of the Muslim populace. This action, while lauded by many, also invited a storm of opposition and intrigue, setting in motion forces that would later converge against him. Yet, from the perspective of his capable, it was an act that fortified the religious identity of the state and addressed a long-standing source of discord. Third, and perhaps most symbolically powerful, was his leadership in convening the historic Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Summit 1974 Lahore. At a time when the Muslim world was fragmented and searching for cohesion, this summit brought together leaders from across the Islamic world under one roof in Lahore. It was not merely a diplomatic gathering but a moment of collective assertion, where the Muslim Ummah glimpsed the strength that lay in unity. The Western media, observing this unprecedented convergence, remarked upon Pakistan's emerging stature with a sense of both awe and apprehension, likening its influence to a unifying force within the Islamic world. Tragically, the lives of many leaders who participated in that summit were later cut short under mysterious or unnatural circumstances, adding a layer of poignancy to that moment of unity. Yet the legacy of that gathering endures, reminding us that solidarity among Muslim nations is not an unattainable ideal but a lived reality that once illuminated the political horizon. In the contemporary world, where the Muslim Ummah faces trials of division, weakness, and external pressures, the memory of that unity becomes ever more relevant. The crises of today call not merely for rhetoric but for a revival of the spirit that once brought diverse nations together in a shared cause. Pakistan, by virtue of its history, its sacrifices, and

its capabilities, continues to hold a position of significance within the Islamic world. It is perceived, in many quarters, as a source of strength and a guarantor of resilience, a nation whose stability carries implications far beyond its borders. The life of Bhutto, however, was not destined to conclude in tranquility. On the somber day of April 4, 1979, he was executed, a moment that remains etched in the collective memory of the nation with a mixture of sorrow and controversy. Death, though inevitable, does not diminish the weight of a man's contributions. In the case of Bhutto, his deeds—particularly those that shaped the constitutional, ideological, and diplomatic contours of Pakistan—have ensured that his name endures in the annals of history. It is often said, with a blend of sentiment and conviction, that Bhutto lives on. This is not a literal assertion but a recognition of the reality that certain deeds transcend mortality. When a leader imprints his vision upon the soul of a nation, he becomes part of its enduring narrative. Such legacies are not confined to the pages of history books; they live in the consciousness of a people, in their institutions, and in their collective memory. As we reflect upon the journey of Pakistan and the figures who shaped it, it becomes imperative to rise above narrow judgments and appreciate the broader canvas of history. Nations thrive when they acknowledge their past with honesty, gratitude, and wisdom. The Pakistan of today, with all its challenges and achievements, is the product of countless sacrifices and pivotal decisions. May Allah, in His infinite mercy, illuminate the graves of those who served this nation with sincerity and grant them eternal peace. And may He guide Pakistan to embody the unity, strength, and purpose that once defined its most inspiring moments, so that the sacrifices of its great sons continue to bear fruit for generations to come.

## Briefs

## Trump says Iran should make a deal

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each and every one of their electric generating plants very hard and properly simultaneously." Trump demanded that Iran negotiate to end the war, just a day after he suggested to reporters in the Oval Office that he did not need Iran to reach a deal to end the conflict. The President framed the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, a major conduit for oil worldwide, as an issue for other nations, even though earlier on Wednesday he said on social media he would not agree to any cease-fire deal unless it opened. Iran has choked off oil shipments through the strait, causing oil and natural gas prices to surge. "We will be helpful, but they should take the lead in protecting the oil that they so desperately depend on," he said of other nations. Trump also said that Iran's "ability to launch missiles and drones is dramatically curtailed." The U.S. and Israeli militaries have destroyed many of Iran's ballistic missiles and launchers in airstrikes. But a large number are undamaged, and Iran continues to fire missiles in the region.

## UK talks to 30 states for Hormuz

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ships and crews, and resume the flow of critical goods. Iranian attacks on commercial vessels — and the threat of further strikes — have brought traffic through the strait to a near standstill, disrupting a key artery for global oil supplies and sending prices sharply higher. There have been at least 23 attacks on commercial ships since the war began on Feb. 28, killing 11 crew members, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence. Remaining tanker traffic is now dominated by sanctions-evading vessels carrying Iranian oil, with Tehran effectively controlling passage through the waterway. In a televised address on Wednesday, Trump said countries reliant on the strait "must grab it and cherish it" — signalling that the US would not intervene. No country appears willing to attempt reopening the strait by force while fighting continues, given Iran's ability to target vessels with missiles, drones and naval mines.

## Space for war between two...

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conclusion of its operation, Bunyanum Marsoos, as Marka-i-Haq (battle of the truth). In his post, Asif said history stood as a stark reminder that miscalculation had consequences. "Marka-i-Haq remains fresh in our minds. The next time our response will be even more forceful and decisive," he warned. "Let there be no ambiguity: Pakistan remains committed to peace and regional stability, but its resolve to defend sovereignty is absolute, its preparedness complete, and its response will be swift, calibrated, and decisive."

## Pakistan in close contact...

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while speaking during the weekly briefing, said both Iran and the United States had expressed confidence in Pakistan's role and appreciated its facilitation efforts. Pakistan has also offered to host and facilitate negotiations as part of its broader diplomatic outreach. Addressing questions, FO official Tahir Hussain Andrabi said there was no information regarding Israel's role or participation in the ongoing negotiation process. He added that Pakistan remained in contact with the United States, European partners, as well as OIC and GCC countries. "Despite challenges and obstacles, Pakistan will continue its efforts to promote facilitation and dialogue," Andrabi said, stressing that the country's objective was to achieve de-escalation and a sustainable solution through meaningful negotiations.

## England's Brook, Bethell warned after New Zealand nightclub incident

England's off-field behaviour in Australia came under heavy fire, with allegations of a "drinking culture"

LONDON: England white-ball captain Harry Brook and team-mate Jacob Bethell have been warned about their future conduct after a nightclub incident on the pre-Ashes tour of New Zealand last year. The Cricket Regulator — a body independent of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) responsible for enforcing regulations — on Wednesday issued cautions to Brook and Bethell for breaching player conduct rules. Brook claimed originally that he was on his own when he got involved in an altercation with a bouncer at a Wellington nightclub on the eve of a one-day international on November 1, an incident that was only revealed two months later. Brook was fined £30,000 (\$40,000) by the ECB and given a final warning. He later admitted that Bethell and fast bowler Josh Tongue had been present, explaining he had lied to try to protect his team-mates and publicly apologised. Brook and Bethell both played in the match the next day, which England lost by two wickets to complete a 3-0 series defeat. No action was taken against Tongue, who was not in the one-day international squad at the time. The Regulator "issued a caution notice to Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell in relation to their conduct", said a statement. It added that both players had accepted they were in breach of the professional conduct regulations. Many observers believed Brook was lucky to retain the captaincy for the T20 World Cup, where he led England to the semi-finals before losing to India in Mumbai. England's off-field behaviour in Australia before and during the 4-1 Ashes defeat came under heavy fire, with allegations of poor preparations, muddled team selection and a "drink-



ing culture". England players were photographed spending hours in bars during a mid-series beach resort break, with a video of an apparently drunk Ben Duckett circulating on social media. England Test captain Ben Stokes, coach Brendon McCullum and director of men's cricket Rob Key all kept their jobs after an ECB review of the tour. —DNA

## KP assembly body for faster sports infrastructure rollout, resolution of land issues

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Standing Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs on Thursday called for expediting sports infrastructure projects across the province, with a special focus on resolving land-related hurdles delaying playground construction. The committee met under the chairmanship of MPA Iftikhar Ullah Jan and reviewed the overall performance of the Sports and Youth Affairs Department. Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports Taj Muhammad Khan Tarand, MPAs Farzana Shireen and Aiman Jalil Jan, along with senior officials, attended the session, said a press release. During the briefing, officials outlined administrative and financial challenges facing the department and shared up-

dates on ongoing development schemes, youth initiatives, and institutional structures, including the Directorate of Youth Affairs and projects in merged districts. The committee was informed that multiple schemes, ranging from construction of sports complexes and grounds to youth centres and tartan tracks are underway across the province. Progress on programs such as Ehsaas Naujawan and activities targeting madrasa students, orphans and marginalized groups, including the transgender community, was also reviewed. Highlighting key bottlenecks, the meeting noted that land disputes and documentation issues were slowing down several projects. Adviser on Sports Tarand directed officials to compile and submit complete

records of such cases, assuring that they would be taken up with relevant elected representatives to ensure timely resolution. He reiterated that the government aims to establish playgrounds at the tehsil level and expand access to sports facilities, terming youth development a top priority. Chairman Iftikhar Ullah Jan emphasized better utilization of available resources to engage youth in healthy activities and directed the department to include facilities such as walking tracks for senior citizens in future planning. The committee also decided to invite officials from the Planning and Development and Finance departments to the next meeting to streamline funding and implementation of sports projects.

## Mental Health Camp held at Pak-China Hospital

GWADAR: The Pak-China Friendship Hospital, operated by the Indus Hospital and Health Network under the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), organized a one-day free medical camp, offering mental health consultations and treatment to local residents at no cost, Gwadar Pro reported. UK-based psychologist Dr. Naeem ur Rehman Khan led the camp at the GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital, where he examined patients and provided expert consultations. A large number of men, women, and children from different parts of the city participated in the initiative. "During the camp, more than 50 patients received free medical check-ups, professional psychological consultations, treatment, and medications," read an official statement, adding that the services focused on addressing conditions such as depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, substance abuse, and other mental health issues. As per the statement, the camp was held under the special direction of GDA Director General Moin ur Rehman and aimed to improve access to mental health services in Gwadar. The initiative was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen community health services and raise awareness about mental well-being in the region. Head of Campus Dr. Affan Faiz Zada highlighted that mental health conditions can no longer be neglected in society and stressed the need for continued outreach programs. He added that similar camps would be organized in the future to expand access to essential healthcare services.

## Rising hockey stars picked for regional battle

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad's next generation of hockey talent stepped into the spotlight as the one-day Under-18 regional trials concluded successfully at the Madina Town Hockey Stadium, with a panel of Olympians who finalized a merit-based squad to represent the division in the upcoming championship. A spokesman of Divisional Sports Department said here on Thursday that the trials drew a large number of young players from across the region, all competing for a place in the final lineup. Divisional Sports Officer Syed Manzar Fareed supervised the process directly while Punjab Sports Board's representative Aslam Shah was also present on the occasion. He said that highly experienced selection committee comprising of renowned Olympians and seasoned players evaluated skills and performance of the participants. The committee included Olympians M Khalid, Malik Shafiq and Muhammad Shabbir along with Shahid and Tanveer Gill. Following the trials, the selected players would enter a training camp starting from Friday (April 03), where they would undergo modern structured coaching to further refine their abilities. The finalized team would represent Faisalabad division in the Inter-Region Hockey Championship commencing from April 07 for making a strong mark against competing regions. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Manzar Fareed emphasized that young sticks have big dreams.—APP

## PSB Board endorses reforms agenda

The Board also reaffirmed a zero-tolerance policy on doping especially in Pakistan Weightlifting Federation, officials of which were found involved in doping

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 36th Board Meeting of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), chaired by Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination and President PSB Rana Sana Ullah Khan, was held at the PSB Headquarters on 31 March 2026, where a comprehensive reform and development agenda for sports in the country was endorsed. Director General PSB, Yasir Pirzada, presented the bi-annual performance report (July-December 2025), highlighting key initiatives in governance reforms, infrastructure development, athlete support, and international participation. The Board appreciated the efforts of the PSB management and unanimously approved the report, terming it a reflection of improved institutional performance and direction. The Board approved a landmark Long-Term Athlete Development Programme (LTADP), shifting Pakistan's sports system from an activity-based approach to a results-oriented

model aligned with international best practices and Olympic cycles. All national sports federations have been directed to submit four-year development plans within 90 days, with financial support to be linked to performance and compliance. In a major policy decision, the Board also approved a significant enhancement in PSB's budget, recommending an increase from approximately Rs. 1.2 billion to Rs. 4.9 billion to meet growing demands of athlete training, international participation, coaching, and infrastructure. The matter will be taken up with the Prime Minister for approval. On governance matters, the Board reviewed compliance with tenure rules for sports federations as per National Sports Policy 2005 and emphasized the need for transparent and fair elections, proposing the development of standardized guidelines. The Board also reaffirmed a zero-tolerance policy on doping especially in Pakistan Weightlifting Federation, officials of which were found involved in doping.

## Rising fuel costs drive uptick in Chinese Electric Scooters

This growing shift toward electric two-wheelers—particularly Chinese EV scooters—reflects a broader transformation in Pakistan's urban mobility landscape, offering both economic and environmental benefits

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is steadily shifting toward electric mobility as rising global oil prices and increasing fuel costs push commuters to seek affordable and sustainable alternatives. Electric vehicles (EVs), particularly scooters and small bikes, are becoming increasingly popular in urban areas, with women emerging as a key segment of new riders. Recent months have seen petrol and diesel prices reach record highs due to global market trends, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Thursday. The steep rise in fuel costs has prompted many commuters, especially in cities, to look for cost-effective alternatives, accelerating the adoption of electric scooters and bikes. Experts believe that for many women and first-time riders, EV scooters offer both financial savings and convenient, low-maintenance urban mobility. While EV adoption in Pakistan is still in its ear-

ly stages, sales—particularly of electric bikes and scooters—have grown rapidly over the past few years. Industry figures indicate that sales rose from about 2,000 units in 2022 to 6,000 in 2023, jumped to nearly 33,000 in 2024, and surged to around 57,800 units in just the first seven months of 2025. Total two-wheeler sales are projected to surpass 100,000 units by the end of 2025, while electric car sales remain limited to the hundreds, highlighting the early stage of the four-wheeler market. Leading Chinese EV brands, including Yadea, Luyuan, Revoo, Crown Electric, and Eveen, are driving much of this growth. Their models, equipped with lithium-ion or graphene batteries, are widely distributed through partnerships with Road Prince and AGN New Energy Vehicles, offering ranges between 80-120 km—suitable for daily urban commuting. Industry estimates indicate that

Chinese EV brands are benefiting from the surge in two-wheeler sales. Yadea Pakistan targeted capturing 20% of the local EV market, while other brands like Revoo, Eveen, and Crown Electric are expanding their model lineups and dealership networks. The total projected EV two-wheeler market is expected to exceed 100,000 units in 2026, with continued growth in the coming years. Market Snapshot: Top Chinese EV Scooters in Pakistan: Feedback from riders reflects strong acceptance of these vehicles. One rider shared that a Chinese EV scooter "is pretty good... around 40 km/h, perfect for females looking into riding scooters," while another noted, "the experience is really good... covers around 80 km on a full charge." Although some concerns remain over battery life and charging infrastructure, overall sentiment emphasizes cost savings, ease of use, and suitability for short-distance travel. Com-

menting on the growing trend, Ousai Khan said that "electric scooters are an eco-friendly and cost-saving solution for daily transport." However, he also pointed out the significant price gap compared to China: "In China, they cost just \$90-\$175, while in Pakistan they reach around Rs 235,000 due to high taxes and customs. Reducing duties will make clean transport accessible for everyone." Government-backed subsidy programs, supportive policies, and potential local assembly plans are anticipated to boost EV adoption further. Meanwhile, international companies are showing interest in Pakistan's evolving EV sector, signaling a shift toward cleaner, cost-effective transportation. This growing shift toward electric two-wheelers—particularly Chinese EV scooters—reflects a broader transformation in Pakistan's urban mobility landscape, offering both economic and environmental benefits.—Agencies

## Petrol prices increased

FROM PAGE 01  
New price — Rs 458.40/litre (increase of substantial magnitude from previous levels) Diesel: New price — Rs 520.35/litre (sharp upward revision)

## 'We harbor no enmity toward...

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they are tarnished names in history, while Iran endures — resilient, dignified, and proud." Pezeshkian did not mention a ceasefire offer last week by President Trump, though he accused Israel of dragging the US into a war against Iran. "Is it not also the case that America has entered this aggression as a proxy for Israel, influenced and manipulated by that regime?" asked Pezeshkian.

## Attacks on Iran are 'clear...

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Council authorization while negotiations were ongoing, constitute a clear violation of international law. He made the remarks during a phone call with his Kuwaiti counterpart, emphasizing the need for an immediate cessation of military operations to prevent further escalation. Chinese officials have repeatedly described the actions as "illegal military action" and the root cause of disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, warning of broader regional spillover. UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned Thursday that the conflict risks spiraling out of control, stating: "We are on the edge of a wider war that would engulf the Middle East with dramatic impacts around the globe." He called for an immediate halt to US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Iranian retaliatory attacks on neighbors, citing rising energy and food prices affecting vulnerable populations worldwide.

## 8 Muslim-majority countries...

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against Palestinians, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs news release said. The ministers described the legislation as a dangerous escalation, particularly due to what they termed its discriminatory application against Palestinian prisoners, warning that such measures could further inflame tensions on the ground and destabilize the region. They also cautioned against what they called increasingly discriminatory Israeli practices that entrench a system of apartheid and promote narratives denying the inalienable rights and existence of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Expressing deep concern over the conditions of Palestinian detainees held by Israel, the ministers cited credible reports of alleged abuses, including torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, starvation, and denial of basic rights. They said such practices reflected a broader pattern of violations against Palestinians.

## Aurangzeb, Natalie talk cooperation

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which brought together policymakers, diaspora representatives, and business leaders to review progress in bilateral ties and explore future opportunities. She noted the positive trajectory of engagement between the two countries. The Finance Minister apprised Ms. Baker of ongoing efforts to manage energy sector challenges, including procurement, pricing mechanisms, and targeted subsidies. He noted that while supply arrangements were being maintained, the government was working on improving price transmission and ensuring that subsidies are better targeted towards vulnerable segments such as small farmers and public transport users. Discussions also touched upon developments in the energy sector and broader economic outlook.

## Briefs

## Rupee gains 01 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs279.11 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.12. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs279.1 and Rs280.20, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 1.60 to close at Rs321.87 from the previous day's close of Rs 323.47, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decline of Rs1.76 and closed at Rs368.85 compared to the previous day's Rs370.61. The exchange rate of the Emirate remained unchanged to close at Rs75.99, and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise and closed at Rs74.35.—APP

## Bulgaria must present itself as safe destination

SOFIA: With sound policies and good organization, Bulgaria can achieve a successful tourism season by presenting itself as a safe destination offering quality services at competitive prices, President Iliana Iotova said at a meeting with caretaker Tourism Minister Irena Georgieva and her team, President's Press Secretariat reported here on Thursday. The meeting was initiated by the head of State as part of a series of talks on the need for effective measures to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis in the Middle East. Iotova and Georgieva agreed that effective support measures for the tourism industry should be developed in dialogue with sector representatives. Georgieva briefed the President on the current state of tourism, risks for the upcoming season, and the measures taken by the industry to address the impact of the crisis and ease the burden on businesses, both economically and through regulatory changes. Georgieva said that amid current concerns in the sector, longstanding issues persist, chief among them a shortage of workforce. The Ministry said it would propose to the Council of Ministers within two weeks an economic package of measures. Iotova said that businesses should be supported in view of rising energy costs and that increases in service prices for both Bulgarian and foreign tourists should be avoided. She also noted that Bulgaria could benefit from a decline in tourist flows to destinations closer to the Middle East conflict by promoting itself as a safe country. Iotova warned against pre-election rhetoric that could exploit public fears and negatively affect Bulgaria's image as a secure holiday destination.—APP

## Putin floats idea of 'grain and energy hub' in Egypt

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that Russia and Egypt could discuss plans to create a "grain and energy hub" in the North African country. Putin raised the idea at a meeting in the Kremlin with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, saying that there were "many interesting ideas" to discuss. Abdelatty, speaking through an interpreter, said Egypt welcomed the Russian initiatives. In the televised part of their meeting, neither elaborated on what the "hub" proposal would involve. Russia has been seeking new ways of distributing its energy and commodities exports in response to waves of Western sanctions over the war in Ukraine. Egypt plays an increasingly important role in handling Russian commodities and could serve as a logistics and storage point for supplies heading to Africa and the Middle East. Separate discussions at a business level have also taken place about the possible creation of a grain hub in Oman. Putin has previously talked up the idea of creating a "gas hub" in Türkiye, but there has been little tangible progress.—APP

## PRCS, TRCS blood donation drive held at Turkish embassy

Dr. Irfan Neziro lu appreciated the efforts of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in organising the blood donation drive and acknowledged its continued commitment to promoting voluntary blood donation and supporting vulnerable communities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Regional Blood Donor Center of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) organised a blood donation drive at the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Islamabad in collaboration with Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent Society), reflecting the strong humanitarian partnership and shared commitment of both sister National Societies. Dr. Irfan Neziro lu, Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, along with diplomats and embassy staff, actively participated in the drive and donated blood, demonstrating solidarity with patients in need and support for this lifesaving humanitarian cause. The event was also attended by Honorable Chairperson, Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Mrs. Farzana Naek, TRCS Head of Delegation in Pakistan, Ms. Beyza Taner, as well as PRCS and TRCS staff, underscoring the close cooperation and longstanding humanitarian partnership between the two sister National Societies. On the occasion, Dr. Irfan Neziro lu appreciated the efforts of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in organising the blood donation drive and acknowledged its continued commitment to promoting voluntary



blood donation and supporting vulnerable communities. He said that in view of the current humanitarian challenges and crucial situation being faced by communities in need, such collective humanitarian initiatives are of immense importance. He emphasized that extending support to one another in difficult times is both a religious and

moral obligation, and that blood donation remains one of the most meaningful and lifesaving ways to stand in solidarity with humanity. Honorable Chairperson PRCS, Mrs. Farzana Naek, while thanking the Ambassador, the diplomats, and the embassy staff for their generous participation, termed the initiative a highly meaningful and impact-

ful humanitarian gesture. She said that voluntary blood donation is one of the noblest acts of humanity, as a single unit of blood can save precious lives and bring hope to patients in critical need. She noted that this was a great initiative with greater humanitarian impact, and stressed that collaborative efforts are the need of the hour

to respond effectively to growing humanitarian needs and ensure the availability of safe blood for those who depend on it. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society remains committed to promoting voluntary blood donation and strengthening partnerships that contribute to lifesaving services and community wellbeing across the country.

## Indonesia, Malaysia roll out work-from-home to conserve energy

JAKARTA: Indonesia and Malaysia are set to implement work-from-home measures for civil servants later this month in an effort to conserve energy, becoming the latest nations in Asia to make the move amid disruption to global fuel supply triggered by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Governments in many Asian countries dependent on oil imports have moved to implement energy-saving measures to mitigate the ongoing supply crisis after the attacks on Feb. 28 led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz — a critical chokepoint where around 80 percent of the crude oil and liquefied natural gas passing through is destined for Asian markets. Indonesia announced Fridays as a remote workday for civil servants as part of a series of "adaptive and preventive" measures to address the global supply crisis. "The government has established a work culture transformation policy to encourage a more efficient, productive and digital-based work culture," Chief Economic Affairs Minister Airlangga Hartarto said during a virtual press conference earlier this week. "This policy includes several key steps ... (including) the implementation of a one day a week work-from-home policy for civil servants for both central and regional governments every Friday." The measure, which will come into force next week, will not apply to public service workers in essential fields like healthcare and security, or to those in strategic industries such as energy, transportation and finance. The Manpower Ministry is also urging the private sector and state-owned companies to implement a similar policy, as officials encourage Indonesians to be more "energy-efficient," mainly through prioritizing the use of public transportation. According to Hartarto, the work-from-home policy alone could save the government around 6.2 trillion rupiah (\$364 million) in state budget, as the government expects its overall energy-saving measures to save a combined 59 trillion rupiah in public fuel spending. Neighboring Malaysia will also introduce a work-from-home policy for civil servants starting from April 15, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said late on Wednesday.—DNA

## Russia repels drone attack on gas pipeline to Türkiye

MOSCOW: Russian forces repelled a drone attack early Thursday on part of the TurkStream gas pipeline that connects southern Russia and Türkiye, the pipeline's operator Gazprom said in a statement. Several European countries, including Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia, receive gas supplies via the pipeline Russia has accused Ukraine of attacking it multiple times, most recently in March. "The Russkaya compressor station, which ensures the reliable export of gas via the TurkStream pipeline, came under attack from three aircraft-type unmanned aerial vehicles," Gazprom said. "The attack was repelled and no damage was caused to the Gazprom facility." Ukraine made no immediate public comment. The Russkaya compressor station is the starting point of TurkStream Ukraine has struck Russian energy infrastructure throughout the nearly four-year war, in a bid to sap Moscow's ability to finance its offensive. Russian strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities have cut power and heating to millions of people since 2022.—APP

## Body formed to fast-track SME visa, export facilitation

He was of the view that enhanced global branding of "Made in Pakistan" products would not only boost exports but also contribute significantly to the country's economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday chaired a meeting on SMEDA clusters and the challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in accessing international markets. Among others, the meeting was attended by the Additional Secretary for Industries and Production Asad Islam Mahni, CEO SMEDA Nadia J Seth, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and members of various SME clusters. During the meeting, representatives of SME clusters expressed serious concerns over visa-related issues faced while participating in international exhibitions. They highlighted that visa applications of SME representatives were often delayed, rejected, or remain pending, which hampered Pakistan's effective representation at global platforms and limits the exposure of Pakistani products. Addressing the concerns, Haroon Akhtar Khan stressed the need for coordinated efforts among SMEDA, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to resolve visa-related challenges. He

directed that concrete measures be taken to facilitate SMEs in participating in international exhibitions and conferences. The SAPM also proposed the establishment of a dedicated facilitation desk for SMEs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to streamline visa processing and address related concerns efficiently. Highlighting the Prime Minister's vision, Haroon Akhtar Khan reiterated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed all relevant institutions to actively promote the potential of SMEs at both national and international levels. He noted that with proper facilitation, "Made in Pakistan" products have the potential to gain significant recognition and attention in global exhibitions. To ensure timely resolution of these issues, a committee comprising representatives from SMEDA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and TDAP has been formed. Additionally, SMEDA has been instructed to coordinate with commercial attachés in various countries to create more opportunities for Pakistani SMEs on international platforms. Haroon further directed that commercial attachés across the world to actively promote SME products and clusters in international conferences and exhibitions. He was of the view that enhanced global branding of "Made in Pakistan" products would not only boost exports but also contribute significantly to the country's economic growth.

## Pakistan-France trade, investment forum held in Paris

The event witnessed participation of over seventy French and Pakistani companies representing diverse sectors, including agriculture, information technology, textiles, energy, and tourism—reflecting growing confidence in Pakistan as an emerging destination for trade and investment

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan-France Trade and Investment Forum was held in Paris, bringing together senior government officials, business leaders, industry experts, and representatives of trade bodies from both Pakistan and France. The Forum was organized in implementation of the understanding reached in 2024 between Emmanuel Macron and Shehbaz Sharif to promote a strong and sustainable economic partnership between the two countries, said a release issued here on Thursday. The objective of the Forum was to connect businesses, exchange ideas, explore new avenues of bilateral cooperation, and showcase Pakistan's trade and investment potential. The event witnessed participation of over seventy French and Pakistani companies representing diverse sectors, including agriculture, information technology, textiles, energy, and tourism—reflecting growing confidence in Pakistan as an emerging destination for trade and investment. Pakistan's Ambassador to France, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, inaugurated the Business Forum and highlighted Pakistan's economic progress and its potential as an attractive trade partner. She outlined investor-friendly initiatives and institutional facilitation mechanisms aimed at promoting trade and investment. She encouraged businesses from both countries to explore collaborative opportunities, develop joint ventures, and build long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. Prominent speakers from the French side, including Thierry Pfimlin, Chairman of the France-Pakistan Business Council at MEDEF International, Patricia Glasel, Vice President of the Conseillers du Commerce Extérieur de la France (CCEF), and Ardavan Amir-Aslani, highlighted the positive momentum in Pakistan-France economic relations. They underscored the significant opportunities for trade and investment with Pakistan and emphasized the importance of strengthening private-sector linkages to further enhance bilateral cooperation. Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, conveyed his appreciation for the successful organization of the

event. He termed the Forum a timely and strategic initiative that reflects Pakistan's forward-looking trade vision and commitment to deepening economic engagement with France. He also appreciated the efforts of the Embassy of Pakistan in Paris and all stakeholders involved, noting that such platforms are essential for expanding Pakistan's global trade footprint and facilitating international investors. The plenary session was followed by breakout

and Business-to-Business (B2B) sessions, where participants engaged in detailed discussions and identified concrete avenues for collaboration in key sectors including textiles, agriculture and dairy, and information technology. The successful convening of the Forum marks an important step forward in strengthening Pakistan-France economic ties and advancing shared goals of trade, investment, and sustainable growth.—DNA



## Oman, Belarus sign healthcare coop roadmap

MUSCAT: Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, received today Alexander Khodzhayev, Minister of Health of the Republic of Belarus. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest and reviewed ways to expand the scope of partnership and cooperation between the two countries across various health-related domains. The two sides signed a roadmap concerning cooperation in the field of healthcare and pharmaceuticals, which encompasses general guidelines for the legal framework of cooperation, as well as key areas including the regulation of medical care, medical education, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. Dr. Hilal affirmed that international cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and other nations serves as a fundamental pillar for benefiting from the experiences and expertise of other countries across various fields. He noted that the visit of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Belarus to the Sultanate of Oman is part of the ongoing exchange of visits between the two countries. This visit was preceded by a visit of officials from the Omani Ministry of Health to the Republic of Belarus, during which a memorandum of understanding for health cooperation was signed between the two friendly nations.—APP

## Romania ranks 1st in EU for sunflower

BUCHAREST: Plant-based agricultural production increased in 2025 across all major crops, particularly due to higher yields per hectare, while the cultivated area expanded for most crops, according to provisional data published by the National Institute of Statistics (INS). The INS data show that in 2025, compared with the previous year, the cultivated area increased for oilseed crops, grains, vegetables and potatoes, and decreased for dried pulses. Furthermore, agricultural crop production increased in all crops: cereals for grains, oilseeds, vegetables, dried pulses and potatoes. At the European Union level, Romania ranked first in the area cultivated with sunflower and maize grains, and in first place, respectively third place in terms of production. In 2025, there was an increase in areas and yields (average production per hectare) for the main crops. The area cultivated with cereals for grains increased by 0.7% to 5.1 million hectare and the production by 37.2% to 24.51 million tonnes, mainly due to the increase of the yields per hectare. The area cultivated with wheat in 2025, at 2.31 million hectare, represents 45.3% of the total area cultivated with cereals for grains, while the area cultivated with maize for grain (1.97 million hectare) accounts for 38.6%. The cereal production increased mainly due to the increase of 36.6% in the production of wheat grains, 12.69 million tonnes, which held a share of 51.8% in the production of cereals.

## WB supports Romania with uplift policy loan

BUCHAREST: The World Bank's (WB) Board of Executive Directors approved on Monday a Development Policy Loan (DPL) worth 650 million USD, designed to support Romanian Government's efforts to strengthen fiscal sustainability, boost the development of private sector and foster job creation, according to a release of the international financial institution. According to the WB, the loan, equivalent to 544 million euro, will create new opportunities for citizens and companies, from more accessible finance for small businesses to cleaner, more competitive industries and energy efficiency. The institution mentioned that this funding comes at a critical moment for Romania's economy. "In 2024, fiscal and current account deficits as a share of GDP were the widest in the EU. The government has responded with a robust reform program to put its public finances on a sustainable footing while laying the groundwork for stronger, more inclusive growth through a sound fiscal consolidation program. This loan will support the continued implementation of the government's reform agenda," according to the WB release.—APP

## Briefs

### PSX falls as Trump's Iran warning rattles sentiment

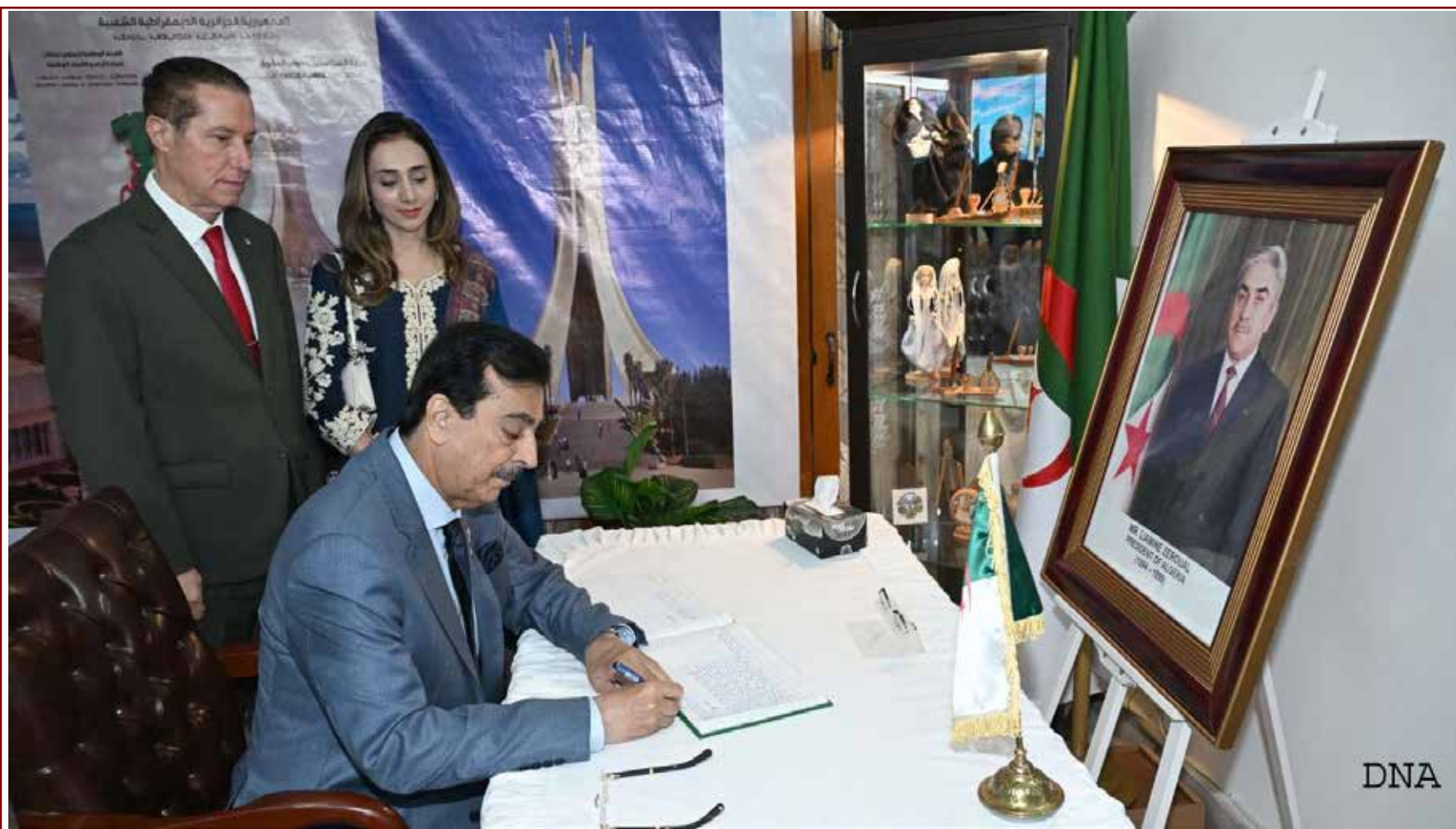
KSE-100 Index crashes to intraday low of 150,022.43, falling 5,489.13 points or 3.53%

STOCKS at the bourse opened lower on Thursday as investors turned risk-averse after Donald Trump threatened further action against Iran, while a spike in oil prices deepened pressure on sentiment. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's benchmark KSE-100 Index traded between a high of 152,052.19, down 3,459.37 points or 2.22%, and a low of 150,022.43, down 5,489.13 points or 3.53%, against the previous close of 155,511.56. "Yesterday's Trump statement to continue fighting for 2 to 3 weeks and Iran's comments on no ceasefire has increased oil prices today by 5 to 7%. That is dampening the mood," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. Trump, in his prime-time speech, said the US will strike Iran "extremely hard" over the next two to three weeks and hit the country into the "Stone Ages", sending stocks retreating. "The remarks signal potential escalation, keeping investors on edge and reinforcing a risk-off mood, with volatility likely to persist in the near term," said Huzafa Riaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited.

Oil surged after Trump's address did little to ease concerns over the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, with Brent climbing more than 4% to as high as \$105.55 and WTI rising 3% to \$103.16 after reversing earlier declines. Risk aversion also weighed on global equities, with US stock futures down 0.67%, European futures 0.1% lower and MSCI's broadest Asia-Pacific index outside Japan falling 0.75%. Japan's Nikkei also reversed course to trade 0.79% lower. On the domestic front, the government raised Rs753 billion in realised value at Wednesday's Treasury bill auction, with yields mixed, according to the State Bank of Pakistan. -APP

### 18 Police Personnel Dismissed

GILGIT: As many as 18 police officers and personnel have been dismissed from service following a departmental inquiry into the arson and unrest incidents that occurred in Skardu in March 2026. According to official orders issued by the Regional Police Officer (RPO) Baltistan Region, those dismissed include one Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors, as well as head constables and constables. The affected officers and personnel have been granted the right to file an appeal with the Inspector General of Police Gilgit-Baltistan within the stipulated period. Spokesperson for Gilgit-Baltistan Police stated that the enforcement of rule of law and the system of accountability and disciplinary action within the department is being ensured at all costs. -APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani signing the condolence book on the sad demise of the former President of Algeria Mr. LIAMINE ZEROUAL. The Senate chairman paid glowing tributes to the late president. Prime Minister's advisor Tariq Fatemi also signed the condolence book on Thursday. - DNA

### Russian to send 2nd oil ship to Cuba

DNA

MOSCOW: Russia will send a second ship carrying oil to Cuba as the island grapples with a US fuel blockade, Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev said Thursday.

Cuba has been suffering from an energy crisis since January, when US forces abducted Venezuela president and Cuban ally Nicolas Maduro. His removal deprived Cuba of its main oil supplier. Washington then threatened to tariff any country that sold or provided oil to the island, although it allowed Russia to deliver a tanker earlier this week for "humanitarian reasons." "A vessel from the Russian Federation broke through the blockade. A second one is now being loaded. We will not leave the Cubans in trouble," Tsivilev was quoted as saying by Russian state media. Moscow historically maintains close ties with Havana and has criticized Washington for attempting to block fuel deliveries. Since the blockade began, communist-run island has endured weeks of blackouts, fuel rationing and food shortages.

## Military operation to "liberate" Strait of Hormuz "unrealistic"

Macron reiterated that France is not a party to the current conflict and "will never take part" in operations to reopen the strait amid active hostilities

NEWS DESK

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron stated that a military operation to "liberate" or force open the Strait of Hormuz by force is "unrealistic." He emphasized that such an effort would be time-consuming and expose shipping to risks from Iranian forces and ballistic missiles. Macron reiterated that France is not a party to the current conflict and "will never take part" in operations to reopen the strait amid active hostilities. He indicated France could support escort missions for shipping only once the situation calms and diplomatic talks progress. This comes amid reported frustration with shifting or alternating statements from US President Donald Trump on the war and allied involvement in securing the vital oil transit route. Trump has publicly criticized European allies, including France, for insufficient support in the conflict and efforts related to

the strait, while Macron's office has pushed back on some of those characterizations. Iranian Reactions to Civilian Strikes Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei (also referred to as Esmail Baqaei) condemned US-Israeli military actions, describing strikes on civilian sites—including a sports hall in Lamerd (Fars Province) and nearby educational facilities—as part of a "systematic and brutal pattern of illegal warfare." He called the attacks "despicable" and argued they amount to more than war crimes, pointing to over 600 schools and educational centers allegedly targeted. Iran has labeled these incidents, including the Lamerd sports hall strike (reportedly involving a US Precision Strike Missile), as war crimes. The US military has denied responsibility for the Lamerd incident. Iran's Nuclear Stance Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Reza Najafi, told AFP that Tehran is not looking to "restart" uranium enrichment to weapons-grade levels. He described claims of resumed enrichment as "a

very big lie," insisting Iran has not restarted such activities following earlier strikes on its nuclear facilities. Najafi maintained that Iran's program remains peaceful. The same Iranian IAEA envoy warned that any attack on the Bushehr nuclear power plant—Iran's only operational nuclear reactor—would constitute a "war crime" and potentially a "crime against humanity" under international law. He highlighted risks of radioactive contamination affecting civilians and water supplies. The IAEA has reported multiple projectiles striking near or on the plant's premises in recent weeks (with no confirmed damage to the reactor or radiation leaks so far) and has urged restraint from all parties. These statements reflect heightened tensions in the month-long conflict, with disruptions to oil shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, mutual accusations of war crimes, and ongoing debates over military escalation versus diplomacy. The IAEA continues to monitor nuclear sites closely and call for de-escalation.

## Romania weighs canceling drone contract with Israel's Elbit Systems

Romania's defense budget for 2026 stands at 2.45 percent of economic output

NEWS DESK

BUCHAREST: Romania is weighing up canceling a 1.89 billion lei (\$427.2 million) contract to buy drones from Israel's Elbit Systems due to delivery delays, Defense Minister Radu Miruta said on Thursday. The deal, signed in 2022, envisaged deliveries beginning in 2025. Miruta said the company had requested three postponements citing force majeure, with his ministry accepting the first two. He said Elbit had accrued delay penalties totalling about 60 million euros. "I am analyzing whether we want to terminate this contract," Miruta told reporters. "There are some devices that have technical characteristics, which, if they are received a few years later, are no longer relevant." Romania, a European Union and NATO member, shares a 650-km (400-mile) land border with Ukraine and has had drones breach its airspace and fragments fall onto its territory

since Russia began attacking Ukrainian ports located across the Danube from Romania.

Romania's defense budget for 2026 stands at 2.45 percent of economic output.

Under the EU's new rearmament initiative SAFE, which will begin later this year, Romania has been allotted 16.6 billion euros (\$19.2 billion). The country plans to spend about 200 million euros for drone production.

In March, the presidents of Romania and Ukraine signed a statement of intent to produce Ukrainian defense systems, including drones, in Romania. On Wednesday, the Romanian government held a business-to-business matchmaking meeting between domestic defense firms and 15 Ukrainian companies to discuss technical cooperation on drone production. Miruta said on Thursday that Romania would shortlist Ukrainian drone makers that meet the Romanian army's requirements in the coming days and then start commercial talks on potential joint production.

## Brent crude surges past \$105 after Trump speech, WTI tops \$103

Both contracts had been falling before US president started his speech amid worries over closure of strategic oil route

DNA

LONDON: Oil prices surged Thursday after Donald Trump's address to the nation did little to soothe investor worries over the closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz, with the US president calling on other nations to help reopen it. Brent jumped more than 4% to as high as \$105.55, while West Texas Intermediate climbed 3% to hit \$103.16. Both contracts had been falling before the US president started his speech. The prospect of an end to the month-long

US-Israeli war with Iran has lifted global stocks and knocked the dollar off its recent highs in the past two sessions after a brutal March, where soaring oil prices sent risk assets into a tailspin. But Trump, in his prime-time speech, said the US will strike Iran "extremely hard" over the next two to three weeks and hit the country into the "Stone Ages." That sent stocks retreating, with US stock futures down 0.67% while European futures were 0.1% lower. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan slid 0.75%. Japan's Nikkei reversed course to trade down 0.79% in volatile trading.

## Beijing presses Islamabad to settle \$220m dues of Chinese energy firm

SSGC cites pending tax refunds as hurdle to payments

ISLAMABAD: China has urged Pakistan to clear \$220 million in outstanding payments owed to United Energy Pakistan (UEP), warning that delays risk undermining investor confidence and disrupting operations. According to sources in the Petroleum Division, Pakistan's ambassador in Beijing sent an urgent note stressing that the dues relate to gas supplied by UEP to Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC), which currently receives 260-270 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd). Liquidity constraints have reportedly forced the UEP to lay off staff in recent weeks. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has also called for immediate resolution of the dues, citing the importance of protecting foreign investor confidence. The SSGC, however, has claimed that its refunds from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), worth billions of rupees, are pending and must be cleared before it can settle UEP's payments. The UEP acquired BP Pakistan's assets in 2011, renaming the

company. In 2012, it secured a \$5 billion credit line from China Development Bank for local operations and potential acquisitions. In 2018, the UEP acquired OMC's gas fields in Pakistan for \$192 million, expanding its portfolio further. By 2019, the UEP had become the largest foreign oil and gas E&P company in Pakistan, ranking 9th among all exporters with \$227 million in exports. The company operates extensive gas fields across Sindh province, including Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Thatta, Hyderabad (rural), Matiari, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas and Khairpur. It also maintains four offshore exploration blocks in the Arabian Sea and recently won two onshore blocks, Digri and Sanghar South, adjacent to its Mirpurkhas-Khipro concessions. Officials warn that timely resolution of the dues is critical not only for UEP's operations but also to maintain investor confidence in Pakistan's energy sector, which is already under stress from liquidity and regulatory pressures. - DNA




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