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Christian playing key role in Pak peace, progress

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KP CM Afridi meets tribal jirga people

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Minister reviews work on Murree Expressway

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Briefs

US forces rescue 2 airmen

DNA

NEW YORK: United States President Donald Trump said on Sunday that US forces had safely recovered a second airman downed in Iran, calling it "one of the most daring search and rescue operations in US history". The announcement came as Iran launched missiles and drones at Israel and Kuwait earlier on Sunday, and a day after Trump warned the Islamic republic it had 48 hours to cut a deal or face "all Hell". "This brave Warrior was behind enemy lines in the treacherous mountains of Iran, being hunted down by our enemies," Trump said on Truth Social. "He sustained injuries, but he will be just fine," he added. "This miraculous Search and Rescue Operation comes in addition to a successful rescue of another brave Pilot, yesterday, which we did not confirm, because we did not want to jeopardise our second rescue operation. "This is the first time in military memory that two US Pilots have been rescued, separately, deep in Enemy Territory. WE WILL NEVER LEAVE AN AMERICAN WARFIGHTER BEHIND!" Trump asserted.

Israeli army strikes in Lebanon

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said Sunday that it had begun striking Hezbollah targets in the Lebanese capital Beirut. "The IDF has begun striking Hezbollah infrastructure sites in Beirut," the military said. Israeli strike on south Lebanon kills 7, including family of 6: civil defense An Israeli strike on southern Lebanon's Kfar Hatta, far from the border with Israel, killed seven people on Sunday including a family of six, a source from the Lebanese civil defense told AFP. The Israeli military had ordered the evacuation of the town. The source said the family, lacking a car and already displaced from a town further south, were waiting for a relative to come pick them up. That man was also killed in the strike. - Agencies

Multan Sultans defeat Quetta Gladiators

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Steven Smith struck a fifty as Multan Sultans clinched a six-wicket victory over Quetta Gladiators in the 13th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. Set to chase a modest 167-run target, the 2021 champions comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and 15 balls to spare. The Sultans got off to a high-flying start to the run chase as their opening pair of Sahibzada Farhan and Smith raised 71 runs in just five overs before Alzarri Joseph dismissed the former on the first delivery of the subsequent over. Farhan made a handy contribution with a brisk 32 off just 14 deliveries, comprising four fours and two sixes. The Sultans suffered another setback an over later as Josh Philippe fell victim to Saud Shakeel after scoring a 15-ball 18. With the scoreboard reading 96/2 in eight overs, Shan Masood joined Smith in the middle, and the duo knitted a quick 40-run stand to put the Sultans within touching distance before the latter was eventually dismissed by Hasan Nawaz in the 14th over.

Middle East tensions

Iran targets Gulf states, Israel after Trump salvo

Israel says hit 120 targets in Iran over past day; Iranian media claims US plane downed in Isfahan; US-Israeli strikes kill 5 IRGC members in northwest Iran: state media

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran launched missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf countries early Sunday, a day after President Donald Trump said Tehran had 48 hours to cut a deal or face "all Hell." Iran's central military command rejected the ultimatum, with General Ali Abdollahi Aliabadi saying Trump's threat was a "helpless, nervous, unbalanced and stupid action." Echoing Trump's language, he warned that "the gates of hell will open for you." Abu Dhabi authorities said they were dealing with several fires that broke out at the Borouge Petrochemicals facility after being hit by falling debris following successful projectile interceptions. "Operations at the factory have been suspended immediately pending an assessment of the damage. No injuries have been reported. An update will be provided once further information is available," Abu Dhabi Media Office said on X. The plant is in Ruwais, near the UAE's western border with Saudi Arabia. The plant is a joint venture of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. and Borealis of Australia. The UAE Defense Ministry earlier reported its forces were dealing with missile and drone threats early Sunday. "UAE Air Defences ... are actively engaging with missiles and UAV threats," the ministry posted on X.

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US strikes on southwestern Iran claim 9 lives

DNA

WASHINGTON: US and Israeli strikes on southwestern Iran's petrochemical facilities in the Mahshahr area (Khuzestan province) have reportedly killed at least nine people, according to Iranian sources, amid an ongoing escalation in the 2026 Iran conflict (sometimes referred to as Operation Epic Fury). Iranian state media and officials linked the deaths to attacks on the Mahshahr Petrochemical Zone, a key industrial hub, with earlier reports citing five killed and over 170 wounded in one strike, later updating the toll. Additional strikes have targeted Iranian infrastructure, including areas near universities and other sites. The strikes occurred against the backdrop of a downed US F-15E fighter jet over southwestern Iran, with one American officer rescued and search efforts continuing for another crew member.

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Brotherly connection

Pakistan, Turkiye set to ink MoU on judicial cooperation today

Agreement to focus on judicial exchange, capacity building, and sharing best practices in adjudication

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan will host a high-level delegation from the Constitutional Court of Turkiye from April 6 to 9, during which both sides are set to formalise a judicial cooperation framework through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The visiting delegation will be led by the President of the Turkish top court, Kadir Ozkaya, accompanied by judges and senior officials. The MoU signing ceremony is scheduled to take place at the SC on April 6. According to an official statement issued on Sunday, the agreement aims to establish a structured framework for

collaboration between the two countries' superior courts, focusing on judicial exchange, capacity building, and sharing of best practices in adjudication. The initiative reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Turkiye to strengthening constitutional governance, upholding the rule of law, and reinforcing judicial independence. It also seeks to promote closer institutional linkages between their judicial systems. A key component of the cooperation will be professional development within the judiciary, particularly at the district level. This will include joint training programmes, academic exchanges, and exposure to comparative judicial practices.

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KP, Balochistan order early closure of wedding halls

Pharmacies, tandoors exempt as the two provinces enforce energy-saving measures

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The provincial governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have ordered early closure of markets, wedding halls and restaurants as part of energy conservation measures. In notification issued by the KP chief secretary, markets, shopping centers, commercial establishments and night-time sports activities in divisional headquarters were directed to close by 9pm. The provincial government also directed all restaurants, cafes and eateries to shut by 10pm; however, home delivery and take-away may continue. Similarly, all marriage halls, marquees, event halls, event lawns and public or private events should conclude by 10pm across the province. Private offices, banks, academies, shops and gyms are also included in the restrictions. According to the notification, agricultural

Continued on Page 06

Transport fares to remain unchanged

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Sunday announced that public transport fares would not be increased across the province, assuring commuters of relief amid rising fuel costs. Addressing a press conference, CM Shah said he had made it clear two days earlier that public transport fares should not be increased in the province, following which the transport department held consultations with various stakeholders. The move follows a sharp increase in fuel prices, with petrol rising to Rs458.41 per litre after a

Continued on Page 06



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting to review implementation of government's subsidy package for petroleum products in the wake of regional situation. Lahore, 5 April 2026. - DNA

President, PM extend Easter greetings

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended the Christian community for its "admirable services" and invaluable role in Pakistan's development. The president and the premier made the remarks in their separate messages issued on the occasion of Easter. The Christian community across Pakistan is celebrating Easter with religious devotion and joy, marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pastor Stephen John of The Fellowship United Pakistan Church in Islamabad told APP that Easter is the most important festival for Christians, as it reminds them that after every hardship, there is ease and a new start. He said that churches begin special worship before 12am on Saturday, so that believers enter

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Operation Ghazab lil-Haq

796 Afghan Taliban operatives killed; over 1043 inured

At least 45 people have been killed and 105 injured after heavy rains triggered roof and wall collapses across multiple districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since March 25, said PDMA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has said that 796 Taliban regime personnel and terrorists have been killed and over 1043 injured during the ongoing Operation Ghazab lil-Haq. In a post on X summarising Afghan Taliban losses, the minister said that 286 posts of the Afghan Taliban regime have been destroyed and 44 captured. Giving details, he said that the Kabul regime's 249 tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery guns and drones were destroyed by the security forces. Meanwhile, at least 45 people have been killed and 105 injured after heavy rains triggered roof and wall collapses across multiple districts of Khy-

ber Pakhtunkhwa since March 25, said the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The PDMA said that those killed include 23 children, 17 men and five women, while the injured comprise 45 men, 16 women and 44 children. A total of 442 houses have been damaged, including 382 partially and 60 completely destroyed. The incidents were reported in several districts, including Bannu, Abbottabad, Mardan, Bajaur, Hangu, Mohmand, Kohat, North Waziristan, Peshawar, Khyber, Nowshera, Dera Ismail Khan, Kurram, Lakki Marwat, Shangla, Battagram, Lower Kohistan, Mansehra, Torghar, Swat, Upper Dir, Charsadda, Buner, Malakand,

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Ehsaas Fuel Support Program for motorcyclists in KP

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced on Sunday the launch of "Ehsaas Fuel Support Program" aimed at providing financial relief to low-income population. According to official sources on Sunday, eligible beneficiaries will receive a monthly fuel subsidy of PKR 2,000 under this scheme. The initiative specifically targets motorcycle and scooter owners. To qualify for the program, the vehicle must be registered in the applicant's name and the ownership transfer process must be fully completed.

Citizens can apply through the "Dastak App", where they will be required to submit their personal information, vehicle details and relevant documents. Applications will be verified through e-Sahulat, while the final approval will be granted by the Excise and Taxation Office. Applications containing incorrect information or incomplete registration will be rejected. The registration process will officially begin on April 6. Officials believe that this initiative will help reduce the financial burden of fuel expenses on low-income households across the province.—APP

Punjab intensifies anti-drug drive: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari has said that the government is giving special focus to eliminating the menace of drugs and strengthening rehabilitation programs for drug addicts. She expressed these views during a meeting with the Honorary Consul General of Sri Lanka, Yaseen Joyia, on Sunday. Both sides held detailed discussions on enhancing bilateral cooperation between Punjab and Sri Lanka in various sectors, along with promoting people-to-people contacts. Speaking on the occasion, Azma Bokhari stated that the Punjab government's stance against drug traffickers is firm and uncompromising. She emphasized that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has made a drug-free province her top priority, adding that there is no longer any safe space for those involved in the drug trade. She further said that protecting the younger generation from the harmful effects of narcotics is a key mission of the government. In this regard, extensive awareness campaigns have been launched in educational institutions to prevent drug abuse. The Information Minister also appreciated the role of the Drug Advisory Training Hub in combating narcotics, stating that the Punjab government will continue to work closely with the institution to eradicate drugs and promote public awareness. Secretary Information Punjab Tahir Raza Hamdani, social figure Zulfiqar Hussain, and Syed Mohsin were also present at the meeting.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A horse-drawn carriage, commonly called a buggy, passing through Murree road, in the Federal Capital.

Islamic risk-sharing product to boost micro finance

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the country's first Shariah-compliant credit risk-sharing product, enabling Islamic financial institutions to expand financing to underserved sectors such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and agriculture. The product, developed by National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL), reduces credit risk through a risk-sharing mechanism, while enabling greater access to finance and ensuring compliance with Shariah principles. The new product provides an alternate to existing conventional credit guarantees through a Shariah-compliant risk-sharing model. Under this structure, participating institutions contribute to a pooled fund on a donation (Tabarru) basis, managed by NCGCL as an agent (Waklee) under a Wakalah arrangement. Losses from eligible defaults are covered from this pool, ensuring genuine risk sharing without guaranteed returns.—APP

Govt rolls out targeted subsidies amid regional challenges

Kayani said ensuring uninterrupted availability of petroleum products remained the government's foremost priority. "From day one, the government focused on maintaining adequate reserves and arranging alternative supply routes to avoid any shortages," he added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani on Sunday said the government had maintained an uninterrupted fuel supply chain across the country since the onset of the regional crisis, while introducing targeted subsidies to shield vulnerable segments from its economic impact. Addressing a news conference along with Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja, he said the evolving regional situation had affected economies worldwide, including Pakistan, necessitating timely and coordinated policy measures under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "The ongoing war in the region has had an impact on all economies of the world. Pakistan has also been affected," Kayani said, adding that both developed and developing countries were facing similar challenges. He said Pakistan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, had been making all-out efforts since the

outset of the crisis to protect citizens from economic shocks. Kayani said ensuring uninterrupted availability of petroleum products remained the government's foremost priority. "From day one, the government focused on maintaining adequate reserves and arranging alternative supply routes to avoid any shortages," he added. He said the prime minister had constituted a high-level committee at the outset of the crisis, which met daily to monitor the situation and take prompt decisions. As part of relief measures, he said, the government absorbed a significant portion of the global price hike for three consecutive weeks to prevent its transmission to consumers. "There was going to be a substantial increase in fuel prices, but the prime minister ensured that this burden was not passed on to the public. For three weeks, the government held back the increase, spending Rs129 billion," he added. The minister said the government, in consultation with provinces and coalition partners, including the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Mutthahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, had adopted a collective strategy to mitigate the impact of rising fuel costs. Highlighting targeted relief measures, Kayani said the government had reduced the petroleum levy by Rs80 per litre and introduced subsidies

for key segments. "Motorcycle users are being provided a subsidy of Rs100 per litre, while Rs1,500 per acre support to farmers," he said, adding that registration for these schemes had already begun in the provinces. He said further relief measures were being extended to public transport users, goods transporters and intercity commuters in collaboration with provincial governments. "The government is also working on additional subsidies to ease the burden on middle and lower-income groups," he added. Referring to urban transport facilitation, he said services such as metro buses had also been made free to support commuters. Kayani said the government had financed these measures through prudent fiscal management, including expenditure rationalization in the last quarter of the current financial year and reallocation of resources. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to continue taking necessary steps, in coordination with provincial governments, to safeguard citizens from the economic fallout of the regional situation. "The government, under the leadership of the prime minister, will continue to take all possible measures to protect the people of Pakistan," he remarked.

IFJ training calls out gender bias in media

ISLAMABAD: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) here on Sunday conducted a one day training workshop titled "Rewriting the Story: Media, Gender and Politics", where more than 20 journalists from different media platforms were engaged to address gender stereotypes in political reporting and promote reforms in newsroom practices under a project focusing on labour rights, gender equality and freedom of association in Pakistan's media, according to a press release. The training directly addressed barriers to the fair representation of women and men in political and public life, while fostering engagement, leadership and change in editorial policies and media culture. The participants observed that media coverage of women in politics often centred on personal attributes such as family background, marital status, wealth and appearance, while

neglecting their professional competence and policy contributions. This imbalance, they noted, reinforces stereotypes, undermines credibility and diminishes women's visibility in governance. The discussion also highlighted how mainstream and digital platforms amplify such biases, with social media further intensifying the issue by turning sexist remarks into viral trends, thereby normalizing misogyny in political discourse. Through interactive sessions, the workshop enhanced participants' understanding of gender concepts, identification of bias and inclusive reporting practices. It also introduced practical tools including media framing analysis, ethical journalism standards and strategies to improve diversity and representation in political coverage. As a key outcome, participants proposed a set of recommendations, including structured

training programmes for media leadership, ensuring gender balance in recruitment and newsroom decision making, and providing equal opportunities in assignments and coverage for both male and female journalists. They also emphasized fair representation with journalists' unions at both regional and national levels. Highlighting the need for sustained reform, participants stressed the importance of institutional policies promoting gender equality, alongside ensuring journalists' safety, equal pay and job security, as well as the adoption of gender-sensitive editorial guidelines across media organizations. The initiative, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, was described as a significant step towards strengthening responsible journalism and enabling citizens to make informed decisions, particularly in electoral contexts.—DNA

KP CM meets tribal peace jirga leaders, emphasizes stability

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, here on Sunday met with leaders of the national peace jirga in Bajaur to discuss the overall security situation and efforts for lasting peace in the region. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister praised the role of tribal elders, saying that their struggle for maintaining peace in the region is commendable. He acknowledged their wisdom in handling difficult circumstances, calling their efforts valuable and worthy of appreciation. Afridi stressed that peace was the foremost priority and an essential prerequisite for development and prosperity. Without peace, he said, no progress can be achieved. He added that the current provincial government was fully committed to ensuring sustainable peace across the province. He further revealed that a unanimous declaration had been presented on the floor of the provincial assembly, with leaders from all political parties and schools of thought agreeing that operations are not a solution to the problem. Highlighting the consequences of past conflicts, the chief minister said that war against terrorism had severely damaged infrastructure, institutions, and the youth. "We cannot afford such a situation again," he said. Afridi emphasized that all stakeholders were united on the goal of peace and prosperity and would continue their collective struggle. He added that efforts were being made to ensure that the region does not return to the conditions of instability it once faced. He also underlined the importance of institutions performing their duties within their defined limits, stating that such discipline would help maintain peace and prevent future issues. Announcing a major development initiative, the chief minister said that a special package worth Rs1 trillion is being prepared for the merged districts, with a particular focus on improving health and education sectors.—DNA

Sun peeps thru clouds after 3 days rains in Galiyat hills

AYUBIA: After three days of intermittent torrential rains, the sun has finally peeped through the heavy clouds over the scenic hills of Galiyat, transforming the landscape into a breathtaking haven and drawing a surge of weekend tourists. The rain-washed mountains of Galiyat appeared rejuvenated and their lush green slopes glistening under the soft sunlight have attracted eco-tourists in droves from KP and Punjab on Sunday amid cold breeze of Kashmir. Free from haze and pollution, the valleys of Thandyani, Nathiagali, Ayubia, Khanaspur and Bagnotar offered crystal-clear views that captivated visitors arriving from nearby cities in search of peace and natural beauty. As sunlight filtered through drifting clouds, the region came alive with the gentle sounds of chirping birds and the fresh bloom of spring flowers. The cool, crisp air and serene surroundings created a tranquil escape, inviting families and nature lovers to unwind amid the quiet charm of the lush green hills. Tourists strolling along forest trails and viewpoints described the experience as refreshing

and uplifting. "It feels like the mountains of Galiyat have come back to life," said Ehtisham Qaiser, a lecturer of Peshawar, admiring the freshly washed landscape at Ayubia. Alaike, the washed forested hills of Nathiagali and Ayubia turned into a living postcard on Sunday after the last three days intermittent rains followed by rainbow and sunshine transformed the region into a spring wonderland. Against backdrop of Nathiagali's snow clad hills, horses clip-clopped along powdery trails, carrying excited tourists through the historic Ayubia-Nathiagali route and offering a journey that felt both timeless and magical. For horse riders like Faraz Khan, the spring season has brought both joy and income for professionals at Galiyat. "Ayubia turns into a spring wonderland. We have never seen so many visitors at this time of year," he said. "The rainfall-sunshine interplay followed by rainbow gives these rides a magical feel. Tourists want to experience the colonial era snow tracks between forests of Nathiagali-Ayubia, the silence, rain, rainbow

and snowfall—all in one trip." Visitors engaged in a variety of activities—from snow games and trout tasting to scenic chairlift rides and hiking. Adventure seekers glided over dense pine forests on the three-kilometer Ayubia chairlift, landing near the picturesque Mukeshpuri Top. "Riding on horses, chairlift and sharing photographs on social media make my visit to Ayubia memorable" said Nasir Khan, a tourist from Nowshera. Nasir said that it is his fifth visit to Ayubia and whenever he came here take a ride on the chairlift and horse ride on colonial era Ayubia-Nathiagali trail. Others preferred the slower, scenic horse rides along the four-kilometer historic trail, soaking in the seasonal beauty at every step. He said Pakistan can earn substantial revenue by highlighting such beautiful places through social media and magazines write ups. The tourists surge also proved a boon for local photographers. White valleys contrasting with dark pine forests created perfect backdrops for families, honeymoon couples, and groups eager to capture lifelong memories.—DNA



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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

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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Murree Expressway upgradation completed: Aleem

During a visit to Murree, the minister inspected various sections of the Murree Expressway. He along with NHA authorities inspected on the spot situation of traffic on IMDC particularly at Lower Topa and directed authorities to take immediate measures to further improve traffic flow, there, said a press release

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Sunday expressed satisfaction over the completion of upgradation work on the Murree Expressway and announced additional facilities, including more Rest House on both sides, to further improve travel convenience. During a visit to Murree, the minister inspected various sections of the Murree Expressway. He along with NHA authorities inspected on the spot situation of traffic on IMDC particularly at Lower Topa and directed authorities to take immediate measures to further improve traffic flow, there, said a press release. Abdul Aleem Khan instructed the National Highway Authority (NHA) officials to ensure modern design of new Roundabout at Lower Topa to ensure better facilities of traffic especially to the visitors. He stated that the Murree Expressway has been made more beautiful, safe and comfortable than before. He also approved the construction of more Rest Areas along both sides of the Murree Expressway to provide better travel facilities to tourists coming from far-off areas. While visiting newly constructed Rest Areas and Mosques, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that there should be no compromise on cleanliness, provision of clean drinking water and other basic facilities. He appreciated the availability of separate prayer arrangements for women and stressed maintaining this standard. Abdul Aleem Khan stated that proper follow up



of quality facilities must be ensured at all costs. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan also directed the NHA to adopt high-quality designs and international-standard facilities in all new development projects.

During his visit, citizens traveling also met the Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan at various locations and expressed their appreciation. They shook hands and took photographs with the minister. Abdul Aleem

Khan acknowledged that the cooperation of the local population in improving the Murree Expressway is commendable and emphasized the need to further promote such positive collaboration in the future.

GDA unveils uplift projects

GWADAR: Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Director General Moin-ur-Rehman Khan and Provincial Lawmaker Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, have jointly inaugurated several development projects today under the GDA Old Town Rehabilitation Plan in Gwadar. These projects include Shaheen Chowk, B&R Chowk, Hospital Road, Thana Ward, and B&R Link Road, according to Gwadar Pro on Sunday. On this occasion, inauguration plaques were also unveiled at Shaheen Chowk and B&R Chowk. The ceremony was attended by Chief Engineer GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Superintending Engineer Roads Nadir Baloch, Project Director Water Meer Jan Baloch, Deputy PD Old Town Rehabilitation Project Muhammad Asif, former Chairman Municipal Committee Sharif Mian Dad, consellers, and a large number of GDA officials. Speaking at the event, MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman stated that in the past, these areas would resemble ponds and face flood-like conditions after rainfall. However, due to GDA's development projects, these areas now appear clean and in much better condition just a few days after rain. He added that under the Old Town Rehabilitation Plan, the drainage system in most parts of the city has improved, and its positive impact was clearly visible during the recent rains. He further mentioned that development work will soon begin in the remaining areas, including TTC Colony, Bakhsli Colony, Shambay Ismail Ward, and other parts of the old town, to ensure uniform improvement across the city. On the occasion, DG GDA Moin-ur-Rehman Khan said that GDA is developing Gwadar on a large scale in accordance with the master plan, aligning it with modern requirements. At the same time, work is ongoing on upgrading old residential areas, construction and expansion of roads and streets, and rehabilitation of drainage and sewerage systems—DNA

Thar coal reforms to boost energy efficiency in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Power Division has launched a series of reforms in Thar coal mining operations aimed at reducing costs and improving efficiency, with projected annual savings of \$25 million to \$30 million. Gwadar Pro reported quoting the Ministry of Energy-Power Division. The Thar coal project is a key component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), aimed at strengthening Pakistan's energy security and reducing reliance on imported fuels. The initiatives were introduced under the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the leadership of Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari to address operational challenges in Thar coal mining and reduce reliance on imported fuels. According to a statement issued by the ministry, the reforms are expected to signifi-

cantly cut diesel consumption, lower electricity generation costs and ease pressure on foreign exchange reserves. Daily diesel savings are projected at around Rs25 million, contributing to annual foreign exchange savings of \$25 million to \$30 million. The cost of coal production is also expected to decrease by approximately \$0.7 per ton, making electricity generated from Thar coal more affordable. Officials said diesel-based power generation costs for mining operations, currently around 33 cents per kilowatt-hour, are expected to drop to 13 cents per unit, marking a reduction of over 60%. The statement noted that one of the key operational challenges, dewatering during mining, previously required about 35,000 liters of diesel daily, while total diesel consumption ranged between 200,000 and 250,000

liters per day. Under the new plan, mining operations will transition from diesel-based systems to grid-connected infrastructure through an investment of Rs 5.3 billion. The project includes 132kV grid connectivity from the Islamkot Grid Station to supply around 60 megawatts of electricity to mining sites. The reforms are also expected to deliver environmental benefits, including an estimated annual reduction of 80,000 tons of carbon emissions. Diesel-powered mining vehicles will gradually be converted to electric systems to improve efficiency and support long-term decarbonization goals. The Power Division said the reforms reflect a broader strategy to reduce operational costs, enhance energy efficiency and mitigate the impact of global energy challenges on Pakistan's power sector.—DNA

Punjab govt launches digital price control system

Strong coordination with chambers of commerce and other relevant institutions is also underway to ensure effective price regulation under the vision of the CM Punjab, with a firm commitment to strict accountability for violators and a technology driven enforcement system, he expressed

ISLAMABAD: Director General Enforcement Punjab, Imran Qureshi, Friday said that under the leadership of the CM Punjab, the government has intensified its efforts to safeguard consumer rights by rolling out a modern digital price control system and launching a massive province-wide crackdown against violators.

While speaking to PTV News, Imran Qureshi said that a digital "Qeemat App" and toll-free numbers had been activated to facilitate consumers, enabling them to lodge complaints easily and even anonymously against overpricing and profiteering. He emphasized that these systems were fully operational and designed to ensure quick response and transparency in addressing public grievances. He stated that under the strict directives

of the CM Punjab, the Directorate was taking firm and uncompromising action against violators. The enforcement teams have intensified operations across the province, particularly targeting sugar hoarders and profiteers through coordinated raids and inspections to stabilize market prices and protect consumers. Highlighting recent actions, he said the enforcement teams proceeded against multiple individuals involved in overpricing of vegetables and pulses, as well as hoarding practices. Several violations were detected, leading to the registration of two FIRs and the arrest of those found guilty, sending a clear message of zero tolerance against market manipulation, he said. He further added that modern tools such as Geo-tagging, daily routine monitoring,

and digital notifications were being utilized to strengthen enforcement. Close coordination is also being maintained with chambers of commerce and other relevant institutions to ensure effective implementation of price control measures under the vision of the CM Punjab, he added. The DG Enforcement Punjab further added that modern tools such as Geo-tagging, daily monitoring, and automated alerts were being used to enhance enforcement efficiency. Strong coordination with chambers of commerce and other relevant institutions is also underway to ensure effective price regulation under the vision of the CM Punjab, with a firm commitment to strict accountability for violators and a technology-driven enforcement system, he expressed.—DNA

Ghulam Farid Sabri's legacy honored

ISLAMABAD: The thirty-second death anniversary of legendary Qawwali Ghulam Farid Sabri was observed on Sunday (April 5) with fans and media paying glowing tributes and remembering his timeless contributions that helped shape Qawwali and Sufi music, keeping his legacy alive for generations. According to media reports, Ghulam Farid Sabri, along with his brother Maqbool Sabri, formed the legendary Qawwali duo known as the Sabri Brothers, whose soulful performances brought Sufi music to audiences around the world. Renowned for their powerful voices, intricate rhythms and deep spiritual expression, the Sabri Brothers earned immense fame and respect in the realm of Qawwali, captivating listeners with timeless renditions of devotional poetry. Over the decades, they performed in countless concerts both in Pakistan and internationally, leaving an indelible mark on the global music scene and inspiring generations of musicians. Their contributions not only popularized Qawwali beyond South Asia but also strengthened the cultural and spiritual heritage of Sufi traditions, making the Sabri Brothers synonymous with devotion, passion, and musical excellence. Some of the most acclaimed qawwalis of Ghulam Farid Sabri and the Sabri Brothers include "Mera Koi Nahin Hai Tere Siwa," "Bhardo Jholi Meri Ya Muhammad," and "Tajdare-Haram," which continue to resonate with audiences around the world. Their soulful renditions, blending powerful vocals with deep devotion, helped bring Qawwali to international prominence and cemented their legacy as icons of Sufi music. Ghulam Farid Sabri passed away on this day in 1994 in Karachi, leaving behind a rich musical heritage that continues to inspire generations of musicians and fans alike. His contributions, alongside those of his brother Maqbool Sabri, remain a benchmark for excellence in Qawwali and Sufi performance.—DNA

15 tandoors sealed for selling roti at exorbitant prices

ISLAMABAD: The district administration on Sunday has sealed 15 tandoors and arrested 18 people during a city-wide campaign to enforce fixed prices of roti in the Federal Capital. On the second day of the drive, officials inspected 138 tandoors to ensure that roti and naan are sold at government rates. The action is part of an ongoing effort to control prices and ensure that citizens receive basic food items at fixed rates. Assistant Commissioners carried out inspections in different areas and took action on the spot where violations were found. During the inspections, 15 tandoors were sealed for selling roti and naan at higher prices than those set by the administration. In addition, 18 individuals were taken into custody for overcharging customers. They were shifted to police stations for further legal process. Officials said that the campaign will continue without interruption. The Deputy Commissioner Islamabad has directed all Assistant Commissioners to conduct daily inspections and ensure full implementation of official price lists at all tandoors. According to the administration, the price of roti has been fixed at Rs20, while naan is set at Rs25. Authorities made it clear that any shopkeeper charging more than these rates will face strict action. The Deputy Commissioner stated that overcharging will not be allowed under any circumstances. He also urged citizens to play their role by reporting tandoors that are not following the fixed prices. Residents can register complaints about overpricing by contacting the control room at 051-9108084. The administration has asked people to share information so that timely action can be taken against violators. To monitor the situation closely, Assistant Commissioners have been directed to submit daily reports on their enforcement activities. These reports will help the administration track progress and ensure that all areas are covered during the campaign. The district administration said that the purpose of this drive is to provide relief to the public and maintain price control across the city. Officials added that inspections will continue in the coming days, and action will be taken wherever violations are observed. Authorities have emphasized that all tandoor owners must clearly display the official price list and follow the notified rates. Failure to comply will result in sealing of shops, fines, and arrests. The administration reiterated its commitment to ensure that essential food items remain available at fixed prices. Citizens have been encouraged to stay informed about the official rates and report any case of overcharging to help maintain compliance.—APP

Workshop held on mental health

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, in collaboration with Rozan, organized a dedicated workshop for female police officers on "Balancing Duty & Well-being: Mental Health in Women's Policing Roles." An official told APP on Sunday that the workshop focused on highlighting the importance of mental health and maintaining a balance between professional responsibilities and personal wellbeing in women's policing roles. SP Headquarters Pari Gull Tareen addressed the participants and emphasized the vital role of women in modern policing. She stressed the importance of maintaining both mental and physical health alongside professional duties, encouraging officers to adopt a balanced and healthy approach to their responsibilities. The official said the session provided valuable insights into stress management, resilience, and workplace wellbeing for female officers. At the end of the programme, shields and certificates were distributed among participating women officers in recognition of their participation.—APP

ICT put drug peddler behind bars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Bani Gala Police have intensified operations against drug peddlers under the special campaign "Nasha Ab Nahi," arresting an accused and recovering 20 litres of illicit liquor. An official told APP on Sunday that, following directions of senior officers, SHO Bani Gala Inspector Asif Khan, along with his team including ASI Imtiaz Ahmed, HC Muhammad Akram and HC Waheed Abbas, conducted a successful operation in the Nogaazi Jagoti area. He said the police arrested accused Aftab Hussain, son of Muhammad Saeed, resident of Dhoke Kalriyan, Darkala Nilore Islamabad. The official said 20 litres of locally manufactured liquor were recovered from the possession of the accused. He said a case has been registered against the accused under FIR No. 170/26 dated 04.04.2026 under sections 3/4 of the Prohibition (Enforcement of Hadd) Order at Bani Gala Police Station. During further investigation, the accused was found to be a previous record holder, involved in multiple drug-related cases, including cases registered at Koral and Nilore police stations. The official said further investigation was underway, adding that Islamabad Police were continuing operations to eliminate drug menace from society.—APP

HEC opens Video Contest to mark Pak-China diplomatic ties

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has opened submissions for a national short video contest to mark 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. The competition is being organized in collaboration with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan and invites Pakistani university students to showcase stories highlighting friendship, cultural ties and shared aspirations between the two countries, Gwadar Pro reported. According to details released by the HEC, the theme of the contest is "China-Pakistan Friendship—Passed on from Generation to Generation." Suggested topics include "75 Years of China-Pakistan Friendship," "Chinese Stories Around Me," and "China-Pakistan Youth Striving Together for a Shared Future."—APP

Briefs

India can't unilaterally suspend IWT

ISLAMABAD: Former Punjab Minister for Irrigation Mohsin Leghari has said that India cannot unilaterally suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), emphasizing the accord's strong legal and institutional framework. Mohsin Leghari, senior water policy expert currently associated with UNDP Pakistan's National Governance Programme, described the Indus Waters Treaty as one of the world's most successful water-sharing accords, noting that nearly 12 years of negotiations preceded its signing in 1960. In an interview with APP, Leghari emphasized that the agreement contains robust legal safeguards, making it difficult for either country to withdraw unilaterally. Any such move, he added, would trigger international arbitration mechanisms. He said he has consistently raised the issue on various forums and underscored the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement. Addressing the ongoing concerns surrounding the treaty, Leghari said resolving disputes requires urgent diplomatic efforts despite India's boycott of the arbitration tribunal. "Channels of communication must remain open, and Pakistan should continue engaging with the international community," he added. He also stressed that Pakistan must continue legal proceedings to build a strong record.—APP

Police deploy 2,000+ personnel

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police finalized comprehensive security and traffic arrangements for the Christian community's festival of Easter, deploying more than 2,000 officers across the federal capital. An official told on Sunday that traffic police personnel had been deployed to ensure smooth flow of traffic around churches and key routes during the festivities. He said all patrolling units and special squads were actively performing duties in different areas to maintain security. SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza said strict security measures had been put in place, adding that entry into churches would only be allowed after complete body search. He directed officers to remain on high alert, keep a close watch on surroundings and suspicious individuals, and ensure a secure environment. Qazi emphasized that personnel should deal with worshippers in a polite and respectful manner. He said all available resources would be utilized to ensure protection of minority rights and maintain law and order during the occasion.—APP

Police on high alert for Easter

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Sunday remained fully alert and actively deployed to ensure security at churches on the occasion of Easter, performing duties with professionalism and vigilance to protect lives and property of citizens. An official told APP that SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza visited various locations and reviewed security arrangements at churches and surrounding areas. SSP Qazi met with security personnel on duty and issued necessary instructions to ensure effective monitoring and smooth security arrangements. Qazi directed officers to remain alert at all times, maintain strict vigilance, and keep a close watch on suspicious individuals and activities. He emphasized that no negligence in security duties would be tolerated and instructed personnel to perform their responsibilities with dedication and professionalism. The SSP Qazi also directed officers to deal with worshippers in a polite and respectful manner while ensuring a secure environment.—APP

Pak Navy inducts niche technologies, says chief

Concluding his address, Naval Chief extended best wishes to PNS KHAIBAR crew while reaffirming Pakistan Navy's resolve to defend sovereign seas and uphold its responsibility as guardian of the maritime frontiers



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, emphasized the importance of a strong, balanced and technologically advanced Navy during the induction ceremony of the 2nd PN MILGEM Class Corvette, PNS KHAIBAR, into Pakistan Navy's fleet. Addressing the gathering, CNS

highlighted that Pakistan's strategic location along vital maritime trade and energy corridors demands a potent naval force to safeguard national interests and ensure secure Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). Naval Chief underscored that during Marka-e-Haq, Pakistan Navy was poised to sink Indian Navy Aircraft Carrier which forced Indian Navy to remain retreated in their perceived safe havens. The

mastery and conduct of Naval operations during Marka-e-Haq delivers an unequivocal message that any attempt to challenge Pakistan's maritime interests will be met with an appropriate response. Naval Chief emphasized that Pakistan Navy is being equipped with state of the art platforms and niche technologies enabling it to target critical infrastructure/ vulnerabilities and naval assets of adversary. Inductions of

advanced platforms like PNS KHAIBAR and the forthcoming HANGOR Class Submarines mark a milestone in PN's modernization; enhancing operational flexibility, combat power and the strategic reach. Concluding his address, Naval Chief extended best wishes to PNS KHAIBAR crew while reaffirming Pakistan Navy's resolve to defend sovereign seas and uphold its responsibility as guardian of the maritime frontiers.

SHOs among 10 officers transferred in capital

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have transferred and posted 10 officers, including six Station House Officers (SHOs), on administrative grounds with immediate effect. An official told APP on Sunday that the transfers were made through an order issued by the Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Qazi Ali Raza. He said SHO Nilore Muhammad Yousaf has been posted as SHO Lohi Bher, while SI Nasrullah Khan has been appointed as SHO Nilore from Police Station Secretariat. The official said SHO Kirpa Zulfiqar Ali has been transferred as SHO Aabpara, while SI Mazhar Ali has been posted as SHO Kirpa from I-9 Police Station. He said SI Khurram Shahzad has been appointed as SHO Sumbal, while SI Aoun Abbas has been posted as SHO Sihala from Ramna. He added that SI Fawad Khalid has been transferred from SHO Lohi Bher to R-15, while SI Nawazish Ali Khan has been posted as Additional SHO I-9 from Aabpara Police Station. SI Muddasir Ahmed has been transferred from SHO Sihala to Ramna, while SI Samar Abbas has been posted from SHO Sumbal to R-15. The official said the transfers were part of routine administrative adjustments aimed at improving operational efficiency and policing in the federal capital.

Grand combing operations launched

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have launched large-scale combing and search operations across the federal capital, detaining 88 suspects including four illegal Afghan nationals during the drive against criminal elements and illegal residents. An official told APP on Sunday that the operations were conducted under the supervision of zonal SPs. He said lady police officials also participated in the operations to ensure effective checking. During the operations, a total of 2,679 individuals and 1,133 households were checked, while 338 shops and 98 hotels were also inspected. The official said 958 motorcycles and 356 vehicles were examined during the drive. He said 88 suspicious individuals, including four illegal Afghan nationals, along with 74 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.—APP

Hope, peace mark Easter 2026

ISLAMABAD: The Christian community across Pakistan celebrated Easter on Sunday with religious devotion and joy, marking the resurrection — the rising again — of Jesus Christ, a victory over death and the good news of eternal life, and spreading a message of hope, forgiveness and new beginnings. Pastor Stephen John of The Fellowship United Pakistan Church, G-7 Markaz Islamabad, told APP on Sunday that Easter is the most important festival for Christians, as it reminds them that after every hardship, there is ease and a new start. He said that churches start special worship before 12 midnight on Saturday, so that believers enter Sunday — the day of victory — in a state of prayer and devotion. A member of the Christian community, Khurram Masih, told APP that he reached the church around 11 pm and remained busy in prayers and worship till around 4 am, continuing the night-long vigil. He said that Christians observe fasting for 40 days, which are completed over 46 days, as Sundays are not counted as fasting days, making Easter a moment of reward after patience and devotion. Easter is also called by many as the sacred message of "Eid Qayamat-ul-Masih," reflecting the belief in resurrection and new life. Easter is observed on different dates every year, as it follows a system based on the moon. According to the decision of the First Council of Nicaea, Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following March 21. This year, the full moon appeared on April 2, making April 5 the day of Easter. The festival comes after Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday. Palm Sunday marks the arrival of Jesus

Christ in Jerusalem, while Maundy Thursday recalls the Last Supper. Good Friday, observed on April 3 this year, is a day of sorrow, remembering the crucifixion. He said that Easter Sunday is a day of happiness, as it represents the resurrection of Jesus Christ and gives believers hope, courage and faith for a better future. Referring to the Bible, he said that the importance of resurrection is clearly highlighted in First Epistle to the Corinthians 15:17, which explains that without resurrection, faith would lose its true meaning. In Pakistan, special prayers were held in churches, including services in Islamabad and other cities, where people gathered in large numbers. Families met each other, exchanged greetings and shared meals, showing unity and love. Pastor Stephen John said that Christians in Pakistan celebrate their religious festivals with the same spirit of joy as their Muslim brothers, as both communities live together and share happiness. He said that giving gifts, visiting relatives and spending time with family are also part of Easter celebrations in the country. Across the world, Easter is celebrated in different ways, including decorating eggs, exchanging gifts and holding special gatherings, but the message of peace, renewal and kindness remains the same. Meanwhile, global attention also remained on Pope Leo XIV, who delivered his first Easter message from the Vatican, which was watched by millions worldwide.

Religious leaders urged people to promote harmony, patience and respect, saying that the true spirit of Easter lies in spreading love and hope in society.—DNA

Iranian FM statement showing trust in Pakistani

ISLAMABAD: In an evolving and highly volatile regional environment, Masood Khan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations, and former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has underscored that Pakistan has attained an unprecedented diplomatic standing, emerging as a credible and trusted mediator in efforts to de-escalate tensions surrounding the Iran conflict. Commenting on recent developments, Khan noted that the situation remains fluid, with rapid shifts in diplomatic positions and military dynamics. He highlighted the significance of the statement by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who expressed confidence in Pakistan's mediation efforts and acknowledged Islamabad's constructive diplomatic role. This endorsement, Khan emphasized, reflects the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and strategic ties between Pakistan and Iran, as well as growing international trust in Pakistan's diplomatic outreach. Khan observed that Pakistan moved swiftly at the onset of the

crisis, engaging key regional and global capitals, including Tehran, Washington, and Gulf states, through sustained diplomatic contacts and backchannel engagement. These efforts, he said, have positioned Pakistan at the forefront of mediation, effectively establishing a new "diplomatic corridor" at a time when the international community remains fragmented. Describing the moment as historic, Khan stated that Pakistan has reached one of the highest diplomatic thresholds in its history—comparable only to its pivotal role in 1971. He pointed out that major global and regional actors, including China, Russia, the United States, the European Union, and Gulf countries, now view Pakistan as a credible interlocutor capable of bridging divides. However, Khan cautioned that significant challenges persist. The United States has advanced rigid conditions, leaving limited space for counter-proposals from Iran, while Tehran has asserted its sovereignty, particularly regarding the Strait of Hormuz, which has emerged as a critical flashpoint with global economic implications. He stressed that the role of mediators, including Pakistan, is to identify a viable middle ground that can facilitate meaningful negotiations. Khan further noted that domestic political dynamics in the United States, including public opinion and electoral considerations, may influence the trajectory of the conflict. While President Trump's core support base remains intact, prolonged conflict or potential casualties could alter political calculations. Addressing regional complexities, Khan emphasized that Pakistan must remain vigilant, particularly given security concerns along its eastern border. Concluding, Khan reaffirmed that Pakistan's principled diplomacy and proactive engagement have earned it global recognition, marking a pivotal moment in its foreign policy trajectory and reinforcing its role as a key advocate for peace and stability.—APP

Record turnout for free travel

These efforts have been widely appreciated for strengthening domestic resilience and fostering regional harmony

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senior leader Hafiz Mian Muhammad Nauman on Sunday lauded the federal and Punjab governments for taking swift emergency steps to provide relief, saying free transport facilities have attracted massive public response while the government continues to ensure fuel supply in a crisis-hit world. Hafiz Mian Muhammad Nauman, while speaking to a local news channel, observed that the free transport system is currently experiencing an unusually high demand, adding, citizens are taking full advantage of the relief measures, resulting in a rush far exceeding normal levels. The increased usage reflects both the public's reliance on the initiative and the success of the government's efforts to make transportation accessible during challenging times, he added. He further emphasized that fuel availability is being actively maintained, ensuring that essential services and travel can continue without interruption. Nauman reassured the public that measures are in place to prevent shortages, even amid a global crisis affecting energy supplies. proactive approach, he noted, is critical to keeping daily life stable and supporting sectors that rely on continuous transportation. Nauman also drew a comparison with other coun-

tries, such as India, where similar relief measures have not always been as smooth or reliable. He suggested that the coordinated planning and support in his own country have allowed citizens to benefit more consistently. By highlighting these differences, he underscored the importance of efficient policy implementation in times of crisis and the positive impact it can have on society. Responding to the query, he stated that Pakistan desires strong, cooperative relations with all Islamic countries and supports unity among Muslim nations. He emphasized that the government seeks peace and normalcy, urging an end to conflicts that strain regional stability and harm economic and social well-being. The leadership of Pakistani government policies and relief measures have been designed to protect citizens and alleviate hardship, earning appreciation from many for their proactive approach amid ongoing global challenges. He emphasized that the government's policies and measures prioritize the well-being and stability of the Pakistani nation, while also playing a constructive mediator role to promote peace among Islamic countries. These efforts have been widely appreciated for strengthening domestic resilience and fostering regional harmony.—APP

Ayaz extends greetings to Christian community on Easter

He called upon everyone to collectively strive for building a peaceful, prosperous and inclusive society. Ayaz Sadiq prayed for peace, stability and prosperity in Pakistan and across the world

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended heartfelt greetings to the members of Parliament belonging to the Christian community, as well as to the entire Christian community in Pakistan, on the joyous occasion of Easter. Ayaz Sadiq said that Easter conveys a universal message of love, hope, and peace. He acknowledged that the Christian community residing in Pakistan is playing a significant role in the country's development and progress. Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that religious festivals serve as an important means to promote interfaith harmony, mutual respect, and brotherhood. He said that Easter teaches the values of sacrifice, forgiveness and service to humanity, adding that all religions advocate peace, tolerance and coexistence. Ayaz Sadiq underlined that the protection of minority rights in Pakistan is both a constitutional and national responsibility. He reaffirmed that the Parliament of Pakistan remains committed to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. Referring to the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, the Speaker said that minorities in Pakistan enjoy complete religious freedom and are an integral part of the nation. He stressed that national unity, cohesion, and mutual respect are essential for achieving sustainable development and prosperity. Ayaz Sadiq urged the entire nation to demonstrate love, solidarity and harmony. He called upon everyone to collectively strive for building a peaceful, prosperous and inclusive society. Ayaz Sadiq prayed for peace, stability and prosperity in Pakistan and across the world.—APP

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Baluchistan: Between Truth and Propaganda

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL



IN an age where information travels faster than truth, the case of Baluchistan has increasingly become a theatre not merely of conflict, but of narratives—some grounded in fact, others carefully constructed to serve vested interests. It is, therefore, imperative to examine with sobriety and discernment the claims propagated by separatist elements and their external patrons, and to

place before the world a clearer picture of realities as they exist on the ground. There is little doubt that certain separatist factions operating in Baluchistan draw sustenance not from indigenous grievances alone, but from the calculated encouragement of hostile actors beyond Pakistan's borders. Misguided elements in India and Afghanistan, long opposed to Pakistan's stability and cohesion, have extended financial, logistical, and propagandistic support to these groups. Their intent is neither concealed nor benign; to foment discord, weaken the federation, and tarnish Pakistan's image in the councils of the world. Through orchestrated campaigns, often amplified on international platforms, these actors seek to construct a narrative of alienation and oppression, divorced from the complexities and truths of the region. Pakistan, however, has not remained oblivious to these machinations. Through diplomatic engagement and the presentation of evidence, it has succeeded in drawing international attention to the role of externally sponsored terrorism in Baluchistan. Indeed, several of the organisations involved have been designated as terrorist entities by multiple states, a testament to the credibility of Pakistan's position and the gravity of the threat posed. The recent remarks made by Mexican human rights lawyer Ms. Ana Lorena Delgado Pérez at a conference organised by the Baloch National Movement in Geneva on 27 March 2026 exemplify the dangers of one-sided narratives. While Pakistan holds in high regard the mandate of international human rights mechanisms and remains committed to constructive dialogue, it must be stated, with due respect, that such interventions, when predicated upon selective information and unverified claims, risk distorting reality rather than illuminating it. Baluchistan is, and has always been, an integral part of Pakistan. This is not merely a constitutional assertion but a fact recognised by the international community in accordance with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in international law. The security measures undertaken by Pakistan in the province are not acts of repression, but lawful responses to a persistent threat of terrorism. They are conducted within the framework of domestic law and in consonance with international obligations, including the inherent right of self-defence. According to authentic and credible findings, Groups such as the Baluchistan



Liberation Army and the Baluchistan Liberation Front have been responsible for heinous acts of violence against civilians, security personnel, and critical infrastructure. Their actions betray not a struggle for rights, but a campaign of terror that undermines peace and development. The designation of these groups as terrorist organisations by countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom further reinforces the legitimacy of Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts. International bodies, including the United Nations Security Council, have likewise condemned attacks in Baluchistan and called for cooperation in bringing perpetrators and their sponsors to justice.

It is equally important to recognise the role played by certain organisations operating under the guise of advocacy. The Baloch National Movement and its affiliates, including elements associated with some particular Committee, function as the political and propagandistic extensions of militant outfits. By glorifying militants as martyrs and manipulating the sensitive issue of missing persons, they seek to blur the distinction between legitimate grievances and terrorist agendas. Numerous instances have come to light where individuals reported as "disappeared" have later resurfaced as active participants in militant activities, exposing the deliberate misuse of humanitarian concerns for political ends.

Pakistan acknowledges that issues such as enforced disappearances are serious and demand transparent and accountable mechanisms. In this regard, the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances reflects the state's commitment to due process and judicial oversight. Thousands of cases have been examined and resolved through legal channels. It is also a matter of record that many reported cases involve individuals who have either joined militant groups, absconded, or are subject to lawful detention under anti-terrorism laws. Allegations of widespread abuses, including mass graves or systematic extrajudicial actions, remain unsubstantiated by independent verification. Far from neglecting the human dimension of the conflict, Pakistan has undertaken initiatives aimed at addressing its root causes. The establishment of rehabilitation and deradicalisation centres in Baluchistan represents a forward-looking approach, seeking to reintegrate individuals influenced by extremist ideologies into society through education, counselling, and skill development. Such efforts underscore a commitment not merely to security, but to human dignity and sustainable peace. At the heart of the matter lies a fundamental distinction; between genuine human rights concerns, which Pakistan is willing and prepared to address through dialogue and institutional mechanisms, and orchestrated propaganda designed to delegitimise the state and embolden violent actors. To conflate lawful counter-terrorism measures with human rights violations is not only misleading but also unjust to the thousands of innocent Pakistanis—civilians and security personnel alike—who have fallen victim to terrorism. Pakistan remains steadfast in its adherence to the rule of law and its obligations under international human rights frameworks. It continues to engage constructively with the United Nations and other international partners, while firmly rejecting narratives that are selective, unverified, and politically motivated. The path to peace in Baluchistan lies not in the amplification of divisive rhetoric, but in the collective resolve to confront terrorism, promote development, and uphold justice. Finally, the truth about Baluchistan cannot be reduced to slogans or soundbites. It demands a balanced understanding, an appreciation of context, and a commitment to fairness.

Trump's Fast-Tracking of America's Decline

Qamar Bashir



The message is clear: countries no longer trust the United States to act fairly. They see the dollar system as a tool of pressure and control. As a result, they are creating alternatives. This directly threatens one of the strongest pillars of U.S. power. Domestically, the situation makes this even worse. The United States is carrying over \$34 trillion in national debt

THE decline of great powers is rarely sudden, but it becomes unmistakable when leadership choices accelerate existing weaknesses. Under the leadership of Donald J. Trump, the United States has not strengthened its global position—it has exposed its limits. What was once the most dominant economic, military, and financial power in modern history is now visibly losing ground across every major arena. This is not speculation. It is unfolding in real time. For decades, the United States controlled the global system. It shaped institutions like the United Nations, dominated financial bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and ensured that the dollar became the backbone of global trade. This dominance worked because the U.S. was seen as stable, predictable, and powerful. That perception is now cracking. The first major failure came in the confrontation with China. The expectation in Washington was simple: impose tariffs, restrict trade, and China would fold. That did not happen. Instead, China hit back where it hurts most. It controls nearly 90% of the world's rare earth processing—materials essential for electronics, defense systems, and advanced manufacturing. When China restricted exports of key minerals, U.S. industries felt the shock immediately. Supply chains slowed, costs increased, and the strategy backfired. This was not a minor setback—it was a clear demonstration that the United States is no longer in control of global production systems. Instead of weakening China, the pressure forced the U.S. to quietly adjust its tone. The shift from confrontation to cautious engagement was not strategic brilliance—it was forced by reality. China proved it could not be bullied. The second major failure came in Europe. The idea of taking control of Greenland from Denmark was not just unrealistic—it exposed a complete misunderstanding of modern alliances. Europe pushed back firmly. This was not the Europe of the past that followed Washington's lead. It is now building its own military capability and reducing dependence on the United States. Defense spending across European countries has surged, and serious discussions are underway about strengthening Europe's role within or even beyond NATO. This is a direct consequence of U.S. unpredictability. Allies no longer trust Washington to act in a consistent or rational

manner. When trust is gone, leadership collapses. In the Western Hemisphere, the situation is no better. Aggressive actions toward Venezuela and pressure on Cuba have not strengthened U.S. influence—they have pushed these countries, and others in the region, toward alternative partners. China's economic footprint in Latin America has expanded rapidly, while U.S. influence has declined. The region is no longer under American control. But the most serious exposure of U.S. weakness is happening in the Middle East. The conflict involving Iran has shattered the long-standing myth of American military dominance. The expectation was a quick and decisive outcome. That did not happen. Instead, the conflict has dragged on, and Iran has demonstrated that it can resist, retaliate, and sustain pressure. Despite superior technology, the United States has not been able to impose control. Iran's use of missiles, drones, and decentralized warfare has neutralized many traditional advantages. U.S. bases in the region have been targeted, and allies have been drawn into a conflict that they did not want. The promise of a quick victory turned into a prolonged struggle. The economic consequences are severe. The Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20% of global oil flows, has become a pressure point. Oil prices have surged above \$110 per barrel. Shipping costs have increased. Insurance premiums have risen sharply. These costs are not being absorbed by the United States—they are being passed on to allies and global markets. Instead of controlling the situation, the U.S. is contributing to global instability. At the same time, the financial system that supports U.S. power is weakening. The expansion of BRICS is not symbolic—it is practical. Countries are actively reducing their reliance on the dollar. Trade is increasingly being conducted in local currencies. New financial arrangements are being built to bypass U.S.-controlled systems. The message is clear: countries no longer trust the United States to act fairly. They see the dollar system as a tool of pressure and control. As a result, they are creating alternatives. This directly threatens one of the strongest pillars of U.S. power. Domestically, the situation makes this even worse. The United States is carrying over \$34 trillion in national debt. Political divisions are deep. Policy direction changes with every administration. Infrastructure is aging.

Social systems are under strain. These internal weaknesses limit the country's ability to project power abroad.

The gap between what the United States claims to be and what it can actually do is growing wider. This gap is now visible to the entire world.

The most damaging aspect of Trump's policies is not just the mistakes themselves—it is the exposure of American limits. By pushing aggressively against China, Europe, Latin America, and Iran at the same time, the administration has tested the system from every angle. The result is clear: the system cannot sustain that level of pressure.

Instead of forcing others to submit, the United States has triggered resistance everywhere. China pushed back economically. Europe pushed back politically. Iran pushed back militarily. Even smaller nations are now acting with greater independence. This is how power declines—not in one dramatic, but through repeated failures that reduce credibility, weaken alliances, and expose limitations.

The world is no longer unipolar. Power is spreading across multiple regions. Countries are building their own systems, forming new alliances, and reducing dependence on the United States. This is not theory—it is happening now.

The United States still has significant strengths. It remains a major economy. It still leads in technology and innovation. Its military is still powerful. But these strengths are no longer enough to dominate the world.

The reality is simple and direct: the United States is no longer able to control global outcomes the way it once did. Trump's approach did not reverse decline—it accelerated it. By relying on pressure, threats, and force instead of strategy, cooperation, and long-term planning, his policies have pushed the world away from the United States.

The lesson is unavoidable. Power today depends on partnerships, stability, and adaptability. The United States has shown weakness in all three areas. If it does not change course, the decline will continue—not because others are attacking it, but because it is undermining itself.

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

Climate Change and Erratic Weather in Pakistan

Oshaz Fatima

In Pakistan, the situation is further influenced by western disturbances, which are weather systems originating from the Mediterranean region. Historically, these systems have brought winter and early spring rainfall that supports agriculture and replenishes water resources. However, recent trends indicate that their frequency and intensity are changing. Research published by the World Bank highlights that South Asia has seen an increase in erratic precipitation patterns, with rainfall events becoming more concentrated and less evenly distributed. This means that instead of light, spread-out rain, regions are more likely to experience sudden downpours followed by dry spells, a pattern that aligns closely with what is currently being observed

THIS April, across Punjab and much of Pakistan, the weather has not followed its usual rhythm. Instead of a steady transition into summer, many regions have been caught between bursts of heat, overcast skies, and repeated spells of nighttime rain. For people accustomed to predictable seasonal shifts, this pattern feels unfamiliar and difficult to explain, especially when warm afternoons are followed by cool, rain-soaked evenings. What once appeared to be a reliable progression from spring to summer now seems unsettled, raising an important question about whether this is simply unusual weather or part of a deeper and more persistent change. Under normal conditions, the transition from March to April in Punjab is relatively consistent. March brings moderate temperatures, with average highs ranging between 25°C and 28°C, along with occasional rainfall. By April, temperatures typically rise above 32°C, while rainfall declines significantly to an average of 15 to 25 millimeters for the entire month. However, recent observations suggest a departure from this pattern. Data from the Pakistan Meteorological Department has indicated higher-than-average rainfall events in early April in several parts of Punjab, along with unusual fluctuations in temperature. In some areas, short heat spells have been interrupted by sudden rainstorms, creating a pattern that does not align with historical climate behavior. These changes are not limited to Pakistan alone. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global surface temperatures have already risen by approximately 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, a shift that is sufficient to disrupt long-established weather systems. Warmer air holds about 7 percent more moisture for every 1°C increase in temperature, which directly contributes to more intense and unpredictable rainfall. This explains why regions that would typically experience dry conditions during this time of year are now witnessing sudden and sometimes heavy precipitation. In Pakistan, the situation is further influenced by western disturbances, which are weather systems originating from the Mediterranean region. Historically, these systems have brought winter and early spring rainfall that supports agriculture and replenishes water resources. However, recent trends indicate that their frequency and intensity are changing. Research published by the World Bank highlights that South Asia has seen an increase in erratic precipitation patterns, with rainfall events becoming more concentrated and less evenly distributed. This means that instead of light, spread-out rain, regions are more likely to experience sudden downpours followed by dry spells, a pattern that aligns closely with what is currently being observed. The consequences of these shifts extend well beyond daily inconvenience. Agriculture, which contributes nearly 19 percent to Pakistan's GDP and employs about 38 percent of the workforce, is highly dependent on predictable weather. Crops such as wheat, which is harvested in April, are particularly vulnerable to unexpected rainfall. Even a few days of untimely rain can damage grain quality and reduce yields, affecting both farmers' incomes and national food security. A

report by the Food and Agriculture Organization has warned that climate variability is already impacting crop productivity in Pakistan, with increasing risks expected in the coming decades.

Urban areas across Punjab face a different set of challenges. Rapid urbanization has reduced green cover and increased the amount of concrete infrastructure, which absorbs and retains heat. This creates urban heat islands, where temperatures can be several degrees higher than surrounding rural areas. At the same time, drainage systems in many cities are not designed to handle sudden, heavy rainfall. According to estimates from local government assessments, even moderate rain can lead to water accumulation in low-lying areas, disrupting traffic and increasing the risk of waterborne diseases. The combination of rising temperatures and erratic rainfall places additional strain on already stretched urban systems. Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change is widely recognized at the global level. Despite contributing less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, the country ranks among the top ten most climate-vulnerable nations, according to the Global Climate Risk Index. The floods of 2022 provided a stark illustration of this vulnerability. Triggered by extreme monsoon rainfall, the disaster affected more than 33 million people and caused economic losses exceeding 30 billion US dollars. While such large-scale events draw international attention, smaller but persistent changes, such as shifting rainfall patterns and temperature variability, are equally significant because they gradually reshape living conditions and economic stability.

The science behind these changes is well established. Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to a rise in global temperatures. This warming affects atmospheric circulation, altering the movement of weather systems and making them less predictable. At the same time, increased evaporation due to higher temperatures adds more moisture to the atmosphere, which can result in heavier rainfall when conditions trigger precipitation. Urbanization and deforestation further intensify these effects by reducing natural cooling processes and weakening the environment's ability to absorb excess water. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of mitigation and adaptation strategies. One of the most immediate priorities is improving urban infrastructure. Cities across Punjab need to upgrade drainage systems to manage heavier rainfall and reduce flooding risks. Expanding green spaces can help absorb rainwater and lower temperatures, while improved building designs can enhance resilience against heat. These measures are essential in preparing urban areas for increasingly variable weather conditions. Energy transition is another critical area. Pakistan's reliance on fossil fuels contributes to both local pollution and global emissions. Shifting toward renewable energy sources, particularly solar power, offers a practical solution. With high levels of solar radiation across much of the country, Pakistan has significant potential to expand solar energy use. According to the International Renewable Energy

Agency, increasing renewable energy capacity could significantly reduce emissions while also improving energy security. Government incentives and supportive policies can accelerate this transition and encourage wider adoption.

Protecting natural ecosystems is equally important. Forests and wetlands play a vital role in regulating climate by absorbing carbon dioxide and maintaining ecological balance. Pakistan's forest cover remains relatively low, at around 5 percent of total land area, compared to the global average of about 31 percent. Increasing forest cover through reforestation initiatives can help mitigate climate change while also improving local environmental conditions. Wetland conservation is also essential for managing water resources and reducing flood risks.

Agriculture must adapt to changing conditions to remain sustainable. Developing crop varieties that can withstand temperature fluctuations and irregular rainfall is crucial. Adjusting planting and harvesting schedules based on updated climate data can help reduce losses. Improving irrigation efficiency is also necessary, as water availability is becoming increasingly uncertain. Supporting farmers through education, financial assistance, and access to technology will be key to ensuring resilience in the agricultural sector. Public awareness and behavioral change are fundamental to long-term progress. While individual actions may seem small, they collectively contribute to significant impact. Reducing energy consumption, conserving water, and minimizing waste are practical steps that can be taken at the household level.

At the same time, raising awareness about climate change encourages broader societal engagement and supports policy measures aimed at environmental protection. Effective governance is essential in coordinating these efforts. Environmental regulations must be enforced consistently, and investments in research and data collection should guide decision-making. Collaboration with international organizations can provide access to resources and expertise, helping Pakistan strengthen its response to climate challenges. Policies must be adaptable and forward-looking, reflecting the evolving nature of climate risks.

Adaptation is equally important, as some impacts of climate change are already unavoidable. Early warning systems for extreme weather events can reduce risks and save lives. Strengthening public health systems can address climate-related illnesses, including heat stress and waterborne diseases. Infrastructure must be designed to withstand a wider range of weather conditions, ensuring long-term resilience. The changing nature of April across Punjab and Pakistan is a clear indication that climate change is no longer a distant concern. The increasing unpredictability of weather patterns reflects a broader transformation that is already underway. While occasional rain in April may seem like a minor deviation, it is part of a larger shift that has far-reaching implications. Recognizing this change is the first step toward addressing it. The responsibility now lies in taking informed and decisive action to ensure that future generations inherit a climate that remains manageable rather than one that continues to grow more uncertain.

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Briefs

Iran targets Gulf states, Israel after...

FROM PAGE 01 providing no details about the origin of the attack. Bahrain's Bapco Energies said on Sunday that a tank caught fire at one of its storage facilities on Sunday after an Iranian attack, with no injuries reported. The fire has been extinguished and damage is being assessed, the company said in a statement. Bahrain's interior ministry earlier said its civil defense forces managed to control a fire in a facility after an Iranian attack. Fire broke out at the Shuwaikh oil sector complex — home to the oil ministry and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation headquarters, state news agency KUNA reported. Two power and water plants also hit, causing material damage and the shutdown of two units. No casualties were reported. Israel was targeted by missiles launched from Iran on Sunday, the Israeli military said on social media.

US strikes on southwestern...

FROM PAGE 01 Iran's Revolutionary Guards and local forces were involved in operations in the region. Trump's 48-Hour Ultimatum President Donald Trump issued (or reiterated) a 48-hour ultimatum to Iran, demanding it reach a peace deal or reopen the Strait of Hormuz—a critical global oil shipping route that Iran has partially disrupted. In a Truth Social post, Trump warned: "Time is running out — 48 hours before all hell will reign down on them," referencing an earlier 10-day deadline. The threat targets Iranian energy infrastructure, power plants, and other vital sites if demands are unmet. This comes as the US and Israel press military operations aimed at degrading Iran's capabilities, including nuclear-related and missile-production facilities. Tehran's Response Tehran has dismissed the ultimatum as "helpless, nervous, unbalanced, and stupid."

796 Afghan Taliban operatives...

FROM PAGE 01 Lower Dir, Orakzai, South Waziristan and Tank. The PDMA said it remains in contact with Rescue 1122, district administrations and other relevant institutions, with relief activities ongoing. Aid supplies have been dispatched to affected districts, and local administrations have been directed to accelerate relief efforts and ensure immediate assistance to victims. The authority warned of another spell of rain expected from April 6 to 9 and urged the public to avoid unnecessary travel, particularly to sensitive tourist areas, and to follow official advisories. The PDMA added that its Emergency Operations Centre remains fully functional, advising citizens to report any untoward incidents or seek information via the toll-free helpline 1700.

President, PM extend Easter...

FROM PAGE 01 Sunday in a state of prayer and devotion. In his message extending Easter greetings, President Zardari commended the Pakistani Christian community for its "continued role in national development, particularly in education, healthcare, national defence and social services". He said the day "carries a clear message of compassion, hope, renewal, rebirth, rejuvenation, redemption, and the triumph of life over death and good over evil". "In Pakistan, these values are not abstract. They are reflected in everyday life. Christian men and women serve in our schools, hospitals, public services and armed forces," he highlighted. The president noted that the Christian community's "contribution is part of the normal functioning of our society, and it deserves recognition and respect".

Pakistan's Asim Khan secures place in PSA World Championships 2026

Asim joins compatriots Noor Zaman and Muhammad Ashab Irfan in mega event

DNA

PAKISTAN'S emerging squash talent, Muhammad Asim Khan, defeated Malaysia's Joachim Chuah in a thrilling contest to claim the World Championship Qualifying Event-Asia title in Hong Kong on Saturday. The title victory propelled Asim into the PSA World Championships 2026,

scheduled to be held from May 8 to 16 in Giza and will feature the world's top squash players competing for a lucrative prize purse of \$700,000.

In an enthralling five-game final of the qualifying event, which lasted 82 minutes, Asim fought valiantly throughout to ultimately earn a narrow 3-2 victory, the expanded scores for which were 11-3, 13-11, 9-11, 3-11, 12-10.

Asim got off to a flying start to the summit

clash, winning the first two games 11-3, 13-11, but Chuah staged a remarkable comeback, prevailing in the subsequent two games, to force the decider.

In the decider, Asim held his nerves calm and narrowly clinched it 12-10 to round up a highly-rewarding victory, which helped him join compatriots Noor Zaman and Muhammad Ashab Irfan in qualifying for the mega event.

The 29-year-old kicked off his World

Championship Qualifying Event — Asia campaign with a thumping 3-0 victory over Japan's Naoki Hayashi, which earned him a berth in the quarter-finals. He faced tough competition in the quarter-finals against Hong Kong's Chi Him Wong, but managed to register a 3-2 victory to qualify for the semi-final, where he received equal resistance from Ming Hong Tang but once again emerged victorious with the same scoreline and qualified for the final.

PSL 11: Islamabad United outclass RawalPindiz with clinical all-round display

Sameer smashes 36-ball 70 to lead Islamabad United's chase of 157

ISLAMABAD United secured a commanding seven-wicket victory over RawalPindiz following Sameer Minhas' blistering half-century and a disciplined bowling performance in the 12th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday. Set to chase a modest 157-run target, the three-time champions comfortably knocked the runs for the loss of just three wickets

and 34 balls to spare. Leading the way for them was emerging opener Sameer, who made a quick-fire 70 off just 36 deliveries, studded with seven fours and three sixes.

His brilliance was backed by fellow top-order batter Mohammad Faiz (19) and the middle-order duo of Haider Ali and Mark Chapman, who remained unbeaten with 26 and 24, respectively.

For Pindiz, Rishad Hossain,

Jalat Khan and Mohammad Amir could pick up a wicket apiece. United captain Shadab Khan's decision to field first proved beneficial as the Pindiz could accumulate 156/7 in their 20 overs despite Kamran Ghulam's anchoring half-century.

The Pindiz got off to a dismal start to their innings as Richard Gleeson dismissed both their openers, Yasir Khan and captain Mohammad Rizwan, two each, inside four overs with just 15 runs on the

board. Meanwhile, Ghulam, who walked out to bat at No.3, took the reins of Pindiz's batting charge and attempted to launch a recovery by putting together a 51-run partnership for the third wicket with Daryl Mitchell, who contributed 19 off 15 deliveries. The right-handed batter continued his grit following Mitchell's dismissal and brought up his third PSL half-century off 37 balls by hitting United captain Shadab for a six on the final delivery of the 11th over.

He, however, failed to convert his half-century into a big knock as Faheem Ashraf got him caught behind on the fourth delivery of the subsequent over and thus walked back after top-scoring for the Pindiz with a 39-ball 50, comprising six fours and two sixes. Following his dismissal, the Pindiz continued to lose wickets at regular intervals and ultimately settled for a below-par total despite handy contributions by Abdullah Fazal and Dian Forrester, who made 23 and 44 not out, respectively. — APP



Ronaldo and Mane hit doubles

DNA

RIYADH: Al-Nassr claimed a comprehensive 5-2 win over Al-Najma on Friday night to extend their lead over Al-Hilal to six points at the top of the Saudi Pro League table. Al-Nassr now have 70 points from 27 matches, but their Riyadh city rivals can once again close that gap to three points if they win their game in hand against Al-Taawoun on Saturday night. The home fans were briefly stunned when Al-Najma took a shock lead on 44 minutes but Abdullah Al-Hamdan managed to ease their worries with an equalizer deep into first half stoppage time. It got worse for the visitors when Sadio Mane completed the turnaround to give Al-Nassr the lead in the eighth minute of added time. To their credit, Al-Najma came out fighting in the second half and levelled match only two minutes from the restart through Felipe Cardoso. It was time for the Cristiano Ronaldo show. The Portuguese legend gave Al-Nassr the lead from the penalty spot on 56 minutes before scoring his 97th Saudi Pro League goal on his 100th appearance in the 73rd minute, controlling Nawaf Bu Washl's low cross from the right before finishing in typical deadly fashion past Victor Braga in Al-Najma's goal. The player of the match award would follow at full time. Before that there was still time for Mane to score his second and Al-Nassr's fifth from close range in stoppage to seal a comfortable home victory and keep the Yellows firmly on course for the title.

Middle East non-Oil growth slows

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Non-oil business growth slowed across the UAE, Kuwait and Egypt in March as the Iran conflict disrupted trade, dampened demand and increased costs, S&P Global data showed. The UAE's PMI eased to 52.9 in March from 55 in February, its lowest level since July 2025, though it remained in expansion territory. Kuwait saw a sharper deterioration, with its PMI falling to 46.3 from 54.5, slipping into contraction for the first time in over a year. Egypt's index declined to 48 from 48.9, marking its lowest level in nearly two years. A PMI reading above 50 signals expansion, while a figure below that threshold indicates contraction. The broad-based slowdown comes amid escalating regional tensions following the outbreak of war involving the US and Israel against Iran in late February, which has disrupted flights and shipping routes and heightened uncertainty across Gulf economies. Andrew Harker, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said: "The S&P Global Kuwait PMI provides a clear indication of the impact of the war in the region on non-oil businesses during March." He added: "Companies reported that the suspension of flights and shipping were key factors leading to reduced new orders and business activity, with firms responding by limiting their employment and purchasing." Survey data showed Kuwait's non-oil firms recorded their

first decline in output and new orders in 38 months, with the pace of contraction the sharpest since May 2021. Export demand also weakened, as companies cited difficulties in securing international business amid the conflict. Alongside the decline in total new orders, new business from abroad also fell, with companies citing their inability to receive international business amid the war. Falling workloads prompted companies in Kuwait to reduce employment for the first time in just over a year, with staffing levels seeing a slight but the sharpest decline since July 2022. Non-oil business firms in Kuwait signalled a pessimistic outlook for the first time in 26 months, although some firms remained optimistic about growth thanks to aggressive marketing plans and competitive pricing strategies. "There were also concerns about the impact of the war on output in the months ahead, with business conditions for Kuwaiti firms largely dependent on how long the conflict persists," Harker concluded.

Egypt PMI: In Egypt, non-oil firms reported a sharper contraction in business conditions, driven by weaker demand and rising input costs linked to the regional conflict. New orders fell at a faster pace, while firms turned pessimistic about future output for the first time since the survey began. Higher material prices linked to the war drove a steep rise in input costs among Egyptian non-oil companies in March, with firms reporting the sharpest increase since the end of 2024. As a result, output prices were raised at the strongest pace in ten months.

No pressure for FIFA series: Maria Khan

"We are one team — from players to staff and management. Everyone is working towards the same goal," she said

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Women's National Team captain Maria Khan has boldly declared that the pressure will be on hosts Ivory Coast as Pakistan prepares for its historic participation in the FIFA Series. Speaking at a press conference, Maria Khan expressed confidence in the squad's unity and growing strength. "We are one team — from players to staff and management. Everyone is working towards the same goal," she said. Unfazed by higher-ranked opposition, Khan made it clear that Pakistan is ready for the challenge. "Playing strong teams is not new for us. We've gained experience and improved as a unit. The pressure is on Ivory Coast, not on us." She also highlighted the team's progress, noting that several players are now coming from professional leagues to represent Pakistan during FIFA windows — a strong sign of development in women's football. Reflecting on her journey, Khan said her most memorable moment remains her debut for Pakistan in 2022. "Hearing the national anthem while representing Pakistan is a feeling like no other." Mejjzaan Orakzai, Director of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Women's Department, credited PFF President Mohsen Gilani for making this participation possible. "This opportunity is the result of

strong leadership and collective efforts," she said, adding that competing against teams from different confederations will provide vital international exposure. She also emphasized that the all-wom-

en PFF department is working to develop opportunities not just for players, but also for female coaches, referees, and administrators. Head Coach Adeel Rizki termed the current lineup one

of the strongest squads Pakistan has assembled. "Our preparation has been solid, and we are ready to compete at the highest level," he said. He reiterated that team selection is purely merit-based.



Pakistan, Turkiye set to ink MoU on...

FROM PAGE 01

The collaboration is also expected to facilitate the integration of modern technologies into judicial processes to enhance efficiency, transparency, and access to justice. The MoU further provides for the establishment of a joint working group to ensure sustained engagement and effective implementation of agreed areas of cooperation. During their visit, the delegation will hold high-level institutional meetings and engage with key stakeholders in Pakistan's justice sector. Discussions are expected to focus on contemporary challenges in adjudication, judicial administration, and ongoing reform initiatives. In addition to official engagements, the delegation will visit Taxila and the Walled City of Lahore, highlighting Pakistan's cultural heritage and the importance of people-to-people ties. The MoU signing ceremony will be broadcast live and will be attended by judges of the SC and the Federal Constitutional Court, chief justices of high courts, senior government officials, and representatives of the legal fraternity.

KP, Balochistan order..

FROM PAGE 01

and construction activities, hospitals, laboratories and emergency services have been exempted. Medical stores will remain open 24 hours but will be restricted to the sale of medicines only. Tandoors, petrol pumps and public transport have also been granted limited exemptions. Industrial units and factories will be allowed to continue operations, though a ban has been imposed on unnecessary lighting. Decorative and flood lights at buildings, plazas and event venues have been prohibited, while markets have been directed to limit lighting to essential use only. Authorities have further ordered the closure of billboards, LED screens and signboards, alongside restrictions on the use of air conditioners, lifts and escalators after business hours. The use of generators for non-essential commercial activities has also been banned. The notification added that strict energy-saving measures will be enforced in government offices, with instructions to switch off all electrical appliances when not in use. Non-essential office activities after working hours have also been prohibited, except in emergencies.

Transport fares to remain...

FROM PAGE 01

Rs137.23 hike, and high-speed diesel climbing to Rs520.35 per litre, up by Rs184.49. However, a day later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reduced the petrol price to Rs378 per litre for a month and slashed the petroleum levy by Rs80 per litre. The turmoil in the Gulf region has led to a spike in global oil and energy prices, with countries around the world rushing to ration fuel and energy. Pakistan, ranked in the list of emerging markets "most at risk", has also rolled out a wide-ranging austerity and fuel conservation plan. Separately, the federal and Punjab governments introduced a key relief measure, announcing free public transport facilities to ease the financial burden on citizens. CM Shah, while adding the presser today, expressed satisfaction that transporters had agreed to support the government's stance, adding that they had decided to charge fares at the same rates as of February 28. The chief minister said the government had assured transporters that any financial losses incurred would be compensated. He announced that registered buses would receive Rs100,000 per vehicle from the provincial government, with additional operational costs also to be covered. He noted that the number of government-run buses in Sindh currently stands at 470, while around 11,000 buses operate across the province.

Briefs

Egypt raises electricity prices for higher-use households

RIYADH: Egypt has raised electricity prices for higher-use residential consumers and commercial users starting in April, the electricity ministry said on Saturday, citing a severe global energy crisis linked to the war in the Gulf region.

The move is the latest in a series of steps by the government to curb energy use and contain mounting fiscal pressure as higher import costs strain the finances of the Arab world's most populous country. In a statement, the ministry said lower-consumption households would be shielded from the increases, which would be limited to higher-use segments and commercial users in an effort to maintain electricity supplies across the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. It said electricity prices for residential consumption bands of up to 2,000 kilowatt-hours per month would remain unchanged, while tariffs for higher residential brackets would rise by an average of 16 percent. Commercial electricity prices across all brackets would increase by an average of about 20 percent, it added.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said in March that Egypt's energy import bill had more than doubled since the war involving the US, Israel and Iran began, forcing the government to raise fuel prices, increase public transport fares and slow some state projects to ease pressure on public finances. Egypt began implementing measures in March to rationalise energy consumption, including earlier closing hours for commercial venues, as global oil prices rose amid the conflict.—APP

ME non-oil growth slows as Iran conflict disrupts trade

RIYADH: Non-oil business growth slowed across the UAE, Kuwait and Egypt in March as the Iran conflict disrupted trade, dampened demand and increased costs, S&P Global data showed. The UAE's PMI eased to 52.9 in March from 55 in February, its lowest level since July 2025, though it remained in expansion territory. Kuwait saw a sharper deterioration, with its PMI falling to 46.3 from 54.5, slipping into contraction for the first time in over a year. Egypt's index declined to 48 from 48.9, marking its lowest level in nearly two years. A PMI reading above 50 signals expansion, while a figure below that threshold indicates contraction. The broad-based slowdown comes amid escalating regional tensions following the outbreak of war involving the US and Israel against Iran in late February, which has disrupted flights and shipping routes and heightened uncertainty across Gulf economies.

Andrew Harker, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said: "The S&P Global Kuwait PMI provides a clear indication of the impact of the war in the region on non-oil businesses during March."

He added: "Companies reported that the suspension of flights and shipping were key factors leading to reduced new orders and business activity, with firms responding by limiting their employment and purchasing.—APP

Islamic risk-sharing product to boost micro finance

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the country's first Shariah-compliant credit risk-sharing product, enabling Islamic financial institutions to expand financing to underserved sectors such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and agriculture. The product, developed by National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL), reduces credit risk through a risk-sharing mechanism, while enabling greater access to finance and ensuring compliance with Shariah principles. The new product provides an alternate to existing conventional credit guarantees through a Shariah-compliant risk-sharing model. Under this structure, participating institutions contribute to a pooled fund on a donation (Tabarru) basis, managed by NCGCL as an agent (Wakel) under a Wakalah arrangement.—APP

Measles outbreak kills about 100 kids in Bangladesh

The WHO estimates as many as 95,000 measles deaths globally every year, mostly among unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children under the age of five, according to its latest statistics. There is no specific treatment for measles once caught

DHAKA: Bangladesh said it suspected measles killed at least 98 children in the past three weeks, official data showed Sunday, with Dhaka ramping up vaccination efforts in the worst-affected areas. Last week, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman directed two senior ministers to travel across the South Asian nation of 170 million people in an effort to assess the scale of the crisis to help coordinate a response. Health ministry data released on Sunday showed that children aged between six months and five years old with suspected measles symptoms soared to 6,476. "Compared with past years, the number of affected children is higher, and the death toll is higher too," Halimur Rashid, director at the Communicable Disease Control, told AFP referring

to the number in suspected cases. The largest number of suspected cases on record was in 2005 at 25,934, according to World Health Organization (WHO) data, though that number had significantly declined until this year. Rashid attributed the potential outbreak to "multifactorial causes, including a shortage of vaccines." Confirmed numbers of measles cases among the demographic stand at 826, with only 16 deaths, with experts saying in many cases, testing is either not done or patients die before testing can be done. Measles is one of the world's most contagious diseases, according to the WHO, and is transmitted when a person coughs or sneezes. While the disease can affect a person of any age, it is most common among children and can

cause complications, including brain swelling and severe breathing problems. Bangladesh has made significant advancements in vaccinations to tackle infectious diseases, but a measles drive due in June 2024 was delayed by a deadly uprising that same year that toppled the autocratic government of Sheikh Hasina. Most Bangladeshi children receive a vaccine at nine months, although many infected in the recent outbreak had been six months old, officials added. Mahmudur Rahman, chief of the National Verification Committee of Measles and Rubella, said that "we committed to reducing the number to zero by December 2025 but failed to achieve the target due to poor vaccination programs." Dhaka has identified 30 of the most affected areas in

the region and has started a vaccination program. Health Minister Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul said the vaccination drive will cover the "worst affected areas" before being expanded to other regions. Tajul Islam A Bari, a former official at the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and a public health expert, told AFP that although funds had been allocated for vaccine purchases, authorities had failed to procure them. "Now we see the result — the situation is scary," Bari added. The WHO estimates as many as 95,000 measles deaths globally every year, mostly among unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children under the age of five, according to its latest statistics. There is no specific treatment for measles once caught.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Christian attend Easter Sunday mass commemorating the resurrection of Jesus at the Fatima Church, in the Federal Capital.

Eight Israelis held after assault on Palestinian village

JERUSALEM: Israeli police said on Sunday eight suspects were arrested after an overnight attack by Israeli civilians on a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank. "Last night, forces... were called to the village of Qusra in Samaria following a report of an assault and arson of property by Israeli civilians," a police statement said, using a Biblical term for the northern West Bank. "During searches, eight suspects were arrested by the forces on suspicion of being in a closed military zone and of involvement in the incident, and were taken in for questioning." The suspects were aged between 18 and 48, and during their searches the police also found an M-16 assault rifle issued by the army. The Palestinian official news agency Wafa, citing local sources, reported that the assault had been carried out by Israeli settlers. Wafa said they had operated "under the protection of Israeli forces" and "set fire to two poultry farming structures. A 32-year old Palestinian man was assaulted, and rescuers said he had 'sustained a deep head wound.'" The news agency said the settlers had tried earlier on Saturday evening to attack homes in the village, but residents confronted them. Qusra, located between Nablus and Ramallah, on March 14 witnessed a deadly attack by settlers who gunned down a local resident and wounded two more, Palestinian officials said. Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel triggered the Gaza war.—DNA

British royals attend Easter service without Andrew

LONDON: The British royal family on Sunday attended a traditional Easter service at Windsor, making a show of family unity in their first appearance together since the arrest of the former Prince Andrew, whose family did not attend. On a sunny morning, King Charles III and his wife Camilla arrived at St. George's Chapel within the grounds of Windsor Castle, west of London, with a group of other royals that the BBC described as "slightly slimmed down." The family appeared together in public for the first time since the former Prince Andrew was arrested in February following revelations in the released messages of US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Charles, 77, is to make a state visit to the United States later this month, his first as monarch. Prince William and his wife Catherine, the Princess of Wales, wearing a beige suit and hat, attended the service with their three children. The family smiled and waved at well-wishers as they entered the chapel. Catherine attended the Matins service for the first time in three years. She was absent in 2024 as she underwent cancer treatment and her family opted not to attend last year's event. Also present were Charles' brother, Prince Edward and his son and Charles' sister Princess Anne with her husband. The Epstein files have exposed the convicted financier's longstanding ties with Andrew and his ex-wife Sarah Ferguson, who has also been stripped of her Duchess of York title. Neither attended this year's Easter service, while Andrew and Ferguson, who lived together until recently despite being divorced, made a surprise appearance at last year's event.—DNA

Two-day weekends to fight energy crunch in Nepal

KATMANDU: Nepal said on Sunday it was cutting the working week from six days to five for the civil service and educational institutions to cope with the energy crisis caused by the Middle East war Saturday had until now been the only day off each week for such workers in the Himalayan nation. Government spokesperson Samit Pokharel told reporters the two-day weekend would come into effect this week. "Given the present uncomfortable situation caused by fuel supply, the government and educational institutions remain closed for two days," Pokharel said. Government offices will now operate from 9 am to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. Pokharel said the government was also exploring legal measures to convert petrol and diesel vehicles to electric power but gave no further details.—APP

ME war hits Britain's fish and chip shops

LONDON: Before war erupted in the Middle East, fisherman Peter Bruce spent about £5,000 (\$6,600) on diesel to trawl the North Sea for haddock and cod, the main species used in fish and chips. "Now, the last trip we spent about £10,000," he told AFP, despite his crew reducing the speed of the boat to save fuel. Bruce, whose boat, Budding Rose, is based in the Scottish port of Peterhead, estimates the extra costs over a year could exceed £100,000. It was not yet clear whether the rise in energy prices would have an immediate effect on the price of fish, Bruce said. But he is worried that the hike in fuel prices will hit customer demand for the classic British meal that was already facing challenges on numerous fronts. Bruce's catch is sold at auction in Peterhead before being transported around Britain and abroad. He fears that customers "will stop buying so much fish and chips and they'll stop going out for meals so much." The classic recipe for fish and chips — white fish deep-fried in batter, chips, and mushy peas, often with tartare sauce on the side — dates back to the 1860s. Fish and chip shops usually serve nothing else and most are take-away. There were around 10,500 fish and chip shops in the UK in 2024 — roughly the same as a decade earlier — according to Seafish, a public body supporting the industry. This was more than the total number of outlets of the nine main fast-food dining brands — including KFC, McDonald's and Domino's Pizza, it boasted. Easter is a particularly busy time for the sector since many Britons eat fish on the Good Friday holiday. Andrew Crook, who owns a fish and chip shop in Lancashire, northwestern England, told AFP the number of customers can more than double on Good Fridays. Nonetheless, "we're definitely under pressure," said Crook, president of the National Federation of Fish Fryers. He blamed several factors. "We've got extremely high fish prices, we've got energy prices; wages go up continually," he lamented. The war in the Middle East, now in its second month, caused a record monthly rise in petrol and diesel prices in the United Kingdom in March was caused by the conflict, according to data from the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), a British auto services company. But there are other difficulties. Stricter fishing rules to conserve species, as well as the war in Ukraine — Russia previously supplied 30 to 40 percent of the country's fish — had weakened the sector in Britain already, says Crook, and forced it to raise prices.—DNA

Easter in Jerusalem disrupted by war, restrictions at Holy Sepulchre

An Israeli policeman explains from behind a security barrier to a group of Orthodox Christian pilgrims that they are not allowed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

DNA

JERUSALEM: In the usually lively alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, silence reigned on Easter Sunday, with the holiday overshadowed by war and restrictions on access to the Holy Sepulchre, where the faithful commemorate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. On routes approaching the church, where Christians believe Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and rose from the dead, police at checkpoints screened a small number of worshippers allowed near the site. All shops in the area were closed, heightening the sense of emptiness. "Happy Easter," said the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, shortly after dawn as he entered the church surrounded by a modest group of clergy, according to AFP journalists at the site. Outside, a few Catholics and Orthodox Christians tried to reach the church but were kept at a distance by security forces. "How can you tell me I cannot go to church, it is unacceptable," said one Catholic from Tel Aviv who had attended Easter worship at the site in previous years. Security has been stepped up in the Old City, located in annexed east Jerusalem and home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Israel has also imposed restrictions on large gatherings as a security precaution due to the constant threat of strikes during the ongoing Middle East war. On Palm Sunday, Cardinal Pizzaballa was prevented by Israeli police from entering the Holy Sepulchre for mass, provoking outrage, before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered he be allowed in. Since the start of the war on February 28, debris from Iranian missiles or interceptors has fallen in the Old City, including near the Holy Sepulchre, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and in the Jewish Quarter. Most Palestinian Christians belong to the Orthodox faith, which celebrates Easter on April 12. But for many other Christians, the curbs on worship have stripped the Easter celebrations of substance. "It's very hard for

all of us because it's our holiday... It's really hard to want to pray but to come here and find nothing. Everything is closed," said Christina Toderas, 44, from Romania. Like many other worshippers, she had resigned herself to watching the mass at the Holy Sepulchre on television. Father Bernard Poggi, who was preparing to attend mass in another church near the holy site, said he understood the security measures but added that

"it seems to be more and more that there's an unevenness in how the laws are put into practice." Inside the Holy Sepulchre, the celebrations were being held behind closed doors in front of a very small congregation, far removed from the crowds that usually gather. Around the Old City, where hymns and processions usually dominate at Easter, only whispers could be heard among the faithful moving discreetly through its passages.



Tanker loaded with Iraqi crude passes through Hormuz

LONDON: An oil tanker loaded with Iraqi crude was seen passing through the Strait of Hormuz close to the Iranian coast a day after Iran said Iraq was exempt from any restrictions to transit the vital sea route, data from LSEG and Kpler showed. The Ocean Thunder loaded about 1 million barrels of Basrah Heavy crude on March 2 and is expected to discharge its cargo in Pengerang, Malaysia, in mid-April, Kpler data showed. Iran initially closed the Strait, a corridor that carries about a fifth of global oil and LNG flows, after US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran in late February triggered a widening conflict. It later said it would allow passage for vessels without US or Israeli connections, and in recent days three Omani-operated tankers, a French-owned container ship and a Japanese-owned gas carrier have crossed the strait.—APP

Oman, Iran officials meet to discuss options for Hormuz transit

DUBAI: Senior officials from Oman and Iran met Sunday to discuss options to ensure a "smooth flow of transit through the Strait of Hormuz," which effectively remained shut after the war broke out on February 28. "A meeting was held between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran on Saturday, April 4, 2026, at the level of the undersecretaries of the foreign ministries of the two countries, attended by specialists from both sides," Oman's foreign ministry said on its account on X. "The meeting discussed possible options for ensuring the smooth flow of transit through the Strait of Hormuz amid the conditions currently prevailing in the region. During the meeting, experts from both sides presented a number of visions and proposals that will be studied." Oman had previously mediated indirect talks between Iran and the United States over Tehran's nuclear program.—APP

Aoun calls for Israel talks to prevent Gaza-style destruction

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun reiterated on Sunday a call for negotiations with Israel, saying he wanted to spare his country's south from destruction on the scale seen in Gaza. "It is true that Israel might want to do in southern Lebanon what it did in Gaza," Aoun said in a televised address, after Israel launched airstrikes and a ground offensive against Hezbollah, destroying several southern Lebanese villages. "Gaza was destroyed, over 70,000 people were killed, and they eventually sat down and negotiated, so why don't we negotiate... until we can at least save the homes that have not yet been destroyed?" he added.—APP

Bulgaria's tallest Ferris wheel unveiled in Sofia

SOFIA: A 40-meter Ferris wheel, the tallest in Bulgaria, was unveiled in the Boris Garden in Sofia as part of the city's newest event, Sun Fest Sofia. The opening of the Ferris wheel is included in the festive program marking 147th anniversary of Sofia as capital of Bulgaria. The attraction was manufactured in the Netherlands in 2024. The Ferris wheel features cabins with a capacity of up to six people each, accommodating a total of 150 visitors. The festival will offer a variety of attractions for both children and parents, as well as culinary delights. Germany's ambassador to Bulgaria, Irene Plank, said during the opening that she had already had the opportunity to ride the Ferris wheel. "A few days ago, I took a trial round and I can say the view is amazing. From above, you can even see the Vasil Levski Stadium," Plank said.—APP

Briefs

FIA to use AI-powered system to track down most wanted criminals

MONITORING DESK
ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) based system to track down criminals by visualising their appearance in real time, it emerged on Sunday. FIA Director General (DG) Dr Usman Anwar said that the agency's red book, containing details of most wanted criminals, was being updated with features, employing AI-based tools to generate a set of fresh visuals of their appearance based on old photographs. Even if the criminal has gone bald by now or sports a beard, the agency will now be able to track their identity. DG Anwar told Dawn that under the new system, it would be "impossible" for criminals to hide their identity by changing physical appearance. The other features of the modern red book to be available online to all FIA officers concerned – as well as the general public – also include details about family members and known associates of the accused; CNIC, passport and cellular phone numbers; distinguishing marks, bank account details; information on first information reports (FIRS); and status of court cases against them. FIA chief said that the updated red book will also include the modus operandi and areas of operation of human smugglers, including the routes they use and their last known location. A total of 143 human traffickers wanted in different cases registered in FIA's Anti-Human Trafficking circles are listed in the red book, he added.

Taiwan opposition leader to make China visit

BEIJING: Taiwan's main opposition leader will make a rare trip to China on Tuesday, weeks before US President Donald Trump, with Beijing expected to use the visit to increase its influence over the democratic island. Cheng Li-wu, who will become the first sitting chairperson of the Kuomintang (KMT) to travel to China in a decade, said she wants to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping to build cross-strait "peace". Taiwanese officials and experts, however, say Xi sees an opportunity to reinforce Cheng's standing in the KMT and stymie further US weapons sales to Taiwan. The KMT has long advocated for closer relations with China, which considers Taiwan part of its territory and has threatened to use force to seize it. But Cheng, whose unexpected rise to the top of the KMT drew congratulations from Xi in October, has been accused by critics, including inside the party, of being too pro-China. Cheng's visit comes as the United States – Taiwan's most important security backer – intensifies pressure on Taiwanese opposition lawmakers to approve a proposal for defence purchases, including billions of dollars worth of US weapons, to deter a potential Chinese attack. – Agencies

Iran internet blackout longest

PARIS: Iran's Internet blackout, first imposed well over a month ago, is now the longest nationwide shutdown on record, according to the monitor NetBlocks. "Iran's Internet blackout is now the longest nation-scale Internet shutdown on record in any country, exceeding all other comparable incidents in severity having entered its 37th consecutive day after 864 hours," NetBlocks said in a tweet. In another tweet, the monitor noted some countries had experienced intermittent or regional-level shutdowns over longer periods, while North Korea had never been connected to the global Internet at all. – APP

FOOTBALL WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of four nations competing in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers gathered in Islamabad, highlighting sporting friendship and unity through football. From left to right: the ambassadors of Uzbekistan, Morocco, Türkiye, and Bosnia and Herzegovina posed together at the event, organized to celebrate their countries' involvement in the road to the 2026 World Cup. – DNA

Pak external financing gap likely to expand after \$2bn repayment

Repayment will include 6% interest, scheduled to occur this month, \$1bn may follow in June or July

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's external financing gap is likely to expand after the government decided to repay \$2 billion in deposits to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), along with a 6% interest payment, this month. As a result, Islamabad will need to either manage the increased financing gap on its own or persuade the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to adjust the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) at the end of June 2026. On the eve of striking a staff-level agreement with the IMF under a \$7bn Extended Fund Facility programme, the foreign exchange reserves target for June 2026 was revised downward from \$17.8bn to \$17.5bn held by the SBP.

"The external financing gap was then estimated at around \$460 million, based on overall dollar inflows and outflows in FY26," top official sources confirmed to The News. It was assessed that deposits of \$3.7bn from the UAE and Kuwait would be rolled over in the ongoing fiscal year, but the latest development shows that Pakistan is all set to repay \$2bn in deposits to the UAE around mid-April 2026. It is assumed that the remaining \$1bn might be paid in June or July 2026 on its maturity date. Given the broader agreement with the IMF, the external financing gap would widen further, so the overall gap could reach \$2.46bn plus a 6% interest payment. When contacted, one senior official told The News that Pakistan is engaged at the highest diplomatic level to mediate in the geopolitical tensions.

Regarding the maturity of deposits, he said it is a matter of dignity to return the due amount to the lender with a bundle of thanks. He added that options are available and will be explored, but these cannot be disclosed without confirmation. The official further stated that Pakistan is in a comfortable position to pay back its external obligations. While this may result in some temporary reduction in foreign exchange reserves, it would not pose a challenge like the country experienced in the past on multiple occasions, such as after the nuclear detonation in 1998 and many other occasions. The official said the IMF would be convinced that the eruption of war has put pressure on the external front, and they are hopeful the Washington-based global lender would understand the situation and show a lenient attitude to-

ward Pakistan. When contacted, the IMF Resident Chief in Pakistan, Mahir Binci, said in a brief reply that they will follow up on this issue. Meanwhile, in an official statement on Saturday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorically rejected recent misleading and unfounded commentary regarding financial deposits from the UAE held with the SBP. It said that the deposits demonstrated "the UAE's strong support for Pakistan's economic stability and prosperity", it said in a statement. The FO clarified that the government, through the SBP, was returning the matured deposits to the UAE pursuant to mutually agreed terms. "This is a routine financial transaction, and any attempt to portray it otherwise is erroneous and misleading," it said.

Govt to replace Passco with Rs350 bn wheat firm to tackle debt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government plans to establish a Rs350 billion Wheat Stock Management Company (WSMC) to replace Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco), aiming to streamline wheat operations and address mounting debt and inefficiencies in the sector. The move targets chronic inefficiencies in wheat storage, mounting fiscal pressure and recurring food security risks. The company public limited is a special-purpose vehicle with authorised capital of Rs350 billion created to replace the debt-ridden Passco, take over national wheat reserves and absorb the debt. The government plans to appoint the secretary of Ministry of National Food Security and Research as chairman of the new Wheat Stock Management Company (WSMC). The aim is speed, control and policy alignment. WSMC is already registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan. It will take over wheat stocks. It will raise long-term bank financing under state guarantees. Besides, it will settle PASSCO's liabilities.

Russia says Ukraine strike hits oil facility

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian authorities said Sunday that a Ukrainian drone attack has damaged an oil pipeline near the Baltic port of Primorsk. Russian air defenses shot down 19 drones in the Leningrad region and debris from one "damaged a section of the oil pipeline near the port of Primorsk, and the pipeline is being safely burned out," regional governor Alexander Drozdenko said on Telegram. He said there were no casualties. Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Russian infrastructure targets in recent months. Primorsk, which is between the Finnish border and the key city of St. Petersburg, was also attacked in March when an oil depot was set ablaze.

Tarar extends Easter greetings

The minister also called upon the Christian community, along with all segments of society, to pray for the country's peace, prosperity, and progress, emphasizing that just as other communities had contributed to Pakistan's development, the role of the Christian community remained equally vital and commendable.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday extended heartfelt Easter greetings to the Christian community across Pakistan, acknowledging their significant contributions to national development, education, and defense. Talking to the media at Eternal Life Church, Kot Lakhpat, the minister said

he proudly represents thousands of Christians and considers it his responsibility to stand by the community in moments of joy and sorrow. He emphasized the need for unity among churches and urged the Christian community to form a joint committee representing various denominations, assuring that he would arrange a meeting with relevant federal authorities in Islamabad within the same week. Highlighting the services of prominent Christian figures, he paid tribute to national hero Cecil Chaudhry, terming him among the finest pilots in the world. He said the Christian community had rendered invaluable sacrifices alongside Muslims in the war against terrorism, adding that their blood and contributions were an integral part of Pakistan's security and resilience. The minister underlined that Christian educational institutions had played a pivotal role in shaping the country's academic landscape, adding that the community's services in the education sector were widely recognized and deeply appreciated. Attaullah Tarar, referring to the government's public welfare measures, said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had assured that the government would not leave the people alone during challenging times. He mentioned that the prime minister recently reduced the petroleum levy by Rs80, reflecting his commitment to providing relief to the masses. He added that public transport in Islamabad and Lahore had been made completely free to facilitate citizens. He said that the government would continue to take all possible steps to ease difficulties faced by the public and would not retreat in the face of challenges. – DNA

Spanish PM right hand man goes on trial

NEWS DESK

MADRID: A corruption trial of a former right hand man to Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez begins on Tuesday, a politically explosive case that has threatened to topple the Socialist-led minority government. Jose Luis Abalos is a disgraced ex-Socialist heavyweight, a former transport minister who helped propel Sanchez to power in 2018. The case is one of several corruption affairs rattling the fragile coalition. Abalos and his former adviser Koldo Garcia are suspected of having pocketed kickbacks for handing out public contracts worth millions of euros for sanitary equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Supreme Court in Madrid will judge them for alleged bribery, embezzlement, influence peddling, membership of a criminal organization and misuse of confidential information. The men deny the charges. Prosecutors want Abalos to serve 24 years in jail. They portray him as the mastermind of a scheme of illicit enrichment. They have called for a 19-year term for Garcia, who they say was a key intermediary. They argued in court that both men had abused their govern-

ment positions and contacts to favor the interests of businessman Victor de Aldama, who has already admitted his role in the vast and complex affair. Abalos has consistently protested that the investigation has been unfair. "I feel like I am living in a fiction," he told the conservative daily El Mundo in November, shortly before his arrest. "I cannot believe the prosecutor's office is asking for 24 years in jail for me." Garcia also protested in comments to an investigatory committee of the Navarre regional parliament. "I am in jail without proof that I've committed any crime," he said, speaking by video link from his place of pre-trial detention. More than 75 witnesses and about 20 experts are to testify during the proceedings, which are due to run through April. The investigation also appears to have ensnared Abalos's successor in the powerful post of Socialist organization secretary, Santos Cerdan. Caught up in another case of suspected corruption for public works contracts, he has been forced to step down from what is a key position in the party. The fall from grace of Abalos and Cerdan – two of Sanchez's closest allies – has embarrassed a leader who took power promising to clean up Spanish politics.

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