



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, April 07, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Govt trying to fetch foreign investments, says Finance Minister

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ICCI chief for broader eco reforms

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Wants permanent end to war

Iran rejects ceasefire proposals

Israel strikes Iran's largest Petro-chemical installation

DNA

JERUSALEM: Iran has rejected ceasefire proposals and urged that it would only accept any proposal seeking a permanent end to war. The Iranian foreign minister Abbas was quoted as saying by various news outlets. The Iranian foreign minister made it clear that his country wants a permanent end to war. He made it clear that a condition that Iran will open Strait of Hormuz after ceasefire agreement was signed, was not acceptable. Meanwhile, Defense Minister Israel Katz said Monday that Israel had conducted a "powerful strike" on Iran's largest petrochemical complex, after Iranian media reported multiple explosions at the site. The military "just carried out a powerful strike on Iran's largest petrochemical facility, located in Asaluyeh - a central target responsible for about 50 percent of the country's petrochemical production," Katz said in a video statement. Israel carried out a similar strike on

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We can destroy Iran in one night and that maybe today: Trump

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday addressed a press conference following a high-risk military operation that successfully rescued a downed American fighter jet pilot from inside Iran. Trump hailed the rescue as one of the most complex and daring missions in U.S. military history, stating that the injured pilot had been safely recovered after being stranded in hostile territory for hours. The operation involved extensive air support and careful planning amid ongoing conflict. Emphasizing U.S. military strength, the president said no country possesses the level of equipment or capabilities that the United States has. "Nobody is even close to us," he remarked, underscoring Washington's technological and operational superiority. Issuing a stern warning, Trump said that "tomorrow night could be a dreadful night for the enemy" if no agreement is reached, signaling the possibility of further escalation. His remarks come amid reports of ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire, though tensions remain high. Reiterating Washington's long-standing position, Trump stressed that Iran must not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, calling it a red line for the United States.

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Three cops martyred in Bannu firing

APP

PESHAWAR: In two separate firing incidents in the district of Bannu, unidentified armed assailants martyred three police personnel, creating panic and fear in the area on Monday. According to Bannu police, the first incident occurred in the Kinger Jan Bahadur area of Mandan, where a police official identified as Sher Muhammad Khan was shot dead. Police said he was on his way to duty when targeted by unknown attackers. Immediately after the incident, the area was cordoned off, and the body was shifted to a nearby hospital. A search operation was launched to

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi receives 15 Eco-Smart Electrical Vehicles for Islamabad Capital Territory Traffic Police from Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Iran finalizes ceasefire response

34 Killed in fresh US, Israeli strikes

The development comes amid ongoing international efforts, including mediation initiatives, to secure an immediate ceasefire and prevent further regional escalation

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran has formulated its official response to recent ceasefire proposals, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday, as intense fighting with the United States and Israel continues to escalate. According to the spokesperson, Tehran's response has been prepared and conveyed through diplomatic channels, stressing that Iran's position is based on its national interests and rejects what it termed as "excessive demands" and negotiations under pressure. The development comes amid ongoing international efforts, including mediation initiatives, to secure an immediate ceasefire and prevent further regional escalation. However, differences remain significant, with Iran reluctant to accept

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Iran accuses UN nuclear watchdog of inaction

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Inaction by the UN nuclear watchdog "emboldens aggression" against nuclear facilities such as the Bushehr power plant, Iran's atomic energy chief Mohammad Eslami said on Monday in a letter addressed to the International Atomic Energy Agency's director. Eslami said Iran's only functioning nuclear power plant had so far been targeted four times, with the most

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EU chief says targeting civilians 'illegal'

DNA

BRUSSELS: Striking civilian infrastructure installations during war is illegal, EU chief Antonio Costa said in a social media post on Monday. "Any targeting of civilian infrastructure, namely energy facilities, is illegal and unacceptable," Costa, the president of the European Council, said. "This applies to Russia's war in Ukraine and it applies everywhere. The Iranian civilian population is the main victim of the Iranian regime. It would also be the main victim of a widening of the military campaign." The post came after US President Donald Trump threatened to devastate civilian infrastructure in Iran if it does not reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Kremlin says the whole Middle East is 'on fire'

DNA

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Monday said that the Iran war was escalating in both geography and economic impact, and that the whole Middle East region was "on fire" due to the US and Israeli attacks on the Islamic Republic. US President Donald Trump, in an explosive-laden Easter Sunday social media post, threatened to target Iran's power plants and bridges on Tuesday if the Strait of Hormuz is not reopened. When asked by Reuters about Trump's remarks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Russia had

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Briefs

Markets may be shut at 8 pm

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has ordered the closure of markets and shopping malls in all provinces except Sindh at 8pm from April 7 as part of energy conservation measures amid the ongoing Middle East conflict. The decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on petroleum products on Monday. The measures come as Pakistan moves to mitigate the impact of rising global fuel and energy costs, triggered by the ongoing war in the Middle East. The more than month-old conflict erupted after the United States and Israel launched joint attacks on Iran on February 28. According to the PM Office hand-out issued today, starting April 7, markets, shopping malls, departmental stores.

Pak, Egypt joint exercise starts

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan-Egypt Joint Exercise Thunder-II is a bilateral counter-terrorism exercise conducted between the armies of Pakistan and Egypt. Two weeks long exercise commenced on 06 April 2026 at the Special Operations School, Cherat, Pakistan. Troops from the Special Services Group of the Pakistan Army and Special Forces of the Egyptian Army are participating in the exercise. The Commandant Special Operations School, Cherat, graced the opening ceremony as Chief Guest. The exercise is aimed at enhancing professional skills through joint training, while further strengthening the longstanding military-to-military relations between the two friendly countries.

Pakistan says

No official comment on regional conflict

Pakistan Condemns Vandalism Targeting UAE Embassy in Damascus

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Responding to media queries regarding recent reports on developments in the ongoing regional conflict, the Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tahir Andrabi, stated: "We have taken note of several media reports, including on social media platforms, that cite so-called 'official government sources' concerning the ongoing conflict in the region and Pakistan's efforts to promote peace and dialogue. We categorically reject these false and misleading insinuations attributed to purported official sources. Such claims are entirely baseless and a product of imagination. Any attribution to official Pakistani sources in this context is completely incorrect and unfounded. It is particularly concerning that the official briefing held on Friday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been misrepresented, with references made to issues that were neither discussed nor even alluded to during the session. At this time

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Japan FM phones Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Monday received a telephone call from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Toshimitsu Motegi. Both leaders exchanged views on the regional situation in the Middle East and the wider region, emphasizing the importance of urgent de-escalation, according to a Foreign Office statement. Foreign Minister Motegi appreciated and supported Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating dialogue and diplomacy for regional peace and stability. DPM Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting

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Pakistan, Turkiye sign MoU to enhance judicial cooperation

The agreement was signed at a ceremony held at the Supreme Court in Islamabad attended by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi and Özkaya




SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on judicial cooperation with Turkiye's Constitutional Court. On Sunday, the SC said it will be hosting a high-level delegation from Turkiye's Constitutional Court from April 6 to

9, led by its president Kadir Özkaya, for the signing of an MoU. The agreement was signed at a ceremony held at the Supreme Court in Islamabad attended by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi and Özkaya. Addressing the ceremony before the signing, CJP Afridi expressed hope that the agreement will "provide a forward-looking framework for collaboration between the two judiciaries". "One that emphasises the exchange of judicial knowledge and best practices, the promotion of comparative constitutional jurisprudence, strengthening of institutional linkages and the advancement of capacity building through joint programmes, research, and judicial exchanges," CJP Afridi said. He noted that under the MoU, a joint working group comprising judges from the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) and SC would be formed, which "will ensure our cooperation remains active [...] rather than remaining symbolic". CJP Afridi noted that the delegation's visit reflected the "enduring, historic, fraternal relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye - one that transcends formal diplomacy".




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Early market closures, energy-saving steps in KP

To prevent misuse, exemptions will strictly apply only to the primary licensed activity, and mixed-use businesses will not qualify. Authorities have also banned decorative and excessive lighting, including illuminated billboards and floodlights, after closure hours

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced a series of temporary energy conservation measures, including early closure of markets and commercial activities, in view of the evolving regional situation and increasing pressure on fuel supplies.

that commercial establishments include private offices, consultancies, banks (customer-facing operations), private academies, retail outlets, gyms, small hotels (common areas), catering services, and branded outlets. No other category of commercial activity will be treated as exempt.

permitted timings has also been prohibited. Industrial and production units, including manufacturing and export-oriented enterprises, will remain exempt, provided they limit unnecessary lighting. However, attached retail or showroom components must follow prescribed closure timings.



QUETTA: MNA Jamal Khan Raisani meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Plantation portal established

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) has launched a "Plantation Portal" to monitor the "Plantation for Generation" campaign and ensure effective, ground-level implementation, officials said on Monday.

UAE envoy, PRCCSF ED discuss boosting coop

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, His Excellency Salem Mohammed Al Zaabi, held an important meeting with Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), during the latter's visit to the UAE Embassy in Islamabad on Monday.

role in promoting dialogue, cultural understanding, and people-to-people linkages through research-driven initiatives and institutional engagement. Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram expressed gratitude for the Ambassador's proactive diplomatic efforts in enhancing Pakistan-UAE relations.

Progress on children hospital, nursing projects reviewed

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Health Minister, Khawaja Salman Rafique chaired a meeting on Monday to review progress on the Children's Hospital Rawalpindi and the proposed 'Centre of Excellence for Nursing'.

Call for 25% increase in the education budget

PESHAWAR: Ahead of the upcoming provincial budget for 2026 to 2027, girl leaders from the Rise and Shine Girls' Education Leadership Network have called for at least 25% increase in the development education budget, with a strong focus on girls' secondary education across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene facilities in schools. They also stressed the need for stipends, learning materials and safe school environments to ensure retention and completion.

sis." Muhammad Ali, Partnership Manager at Malala Fund Pakistan, added, "When girls understand systems and raise their voices, they can influence policies that shape their futures. Their leadership must be recognized and supported."

Encroachments on GT Road Several vehicles shifted to police station

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration took action against illegal roadside setups on GT Road led to the seizure of 1 vehicle and the shifting of several people to a police station, as authorities moved to clear obstructions affecting traffic flow in the federal capital.

Sindh CM launches digital fuel subsidy for motorcyclists

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has launched a digital registration system for a targeted motorcycle fuel subsidy programme, alongside a broader relief package aimed at shielding citizens from the impact of rising fuel prices and inflation.

to confirm ownership and apply digitally. Applicants are required to enter their CNIC and bank account (IBAN) details, after which they receive an automated confirmation. In a major facilitation measure, the government has abolished the Rs 500 transfer fee for motorcycles to encourage ownership correction.

against any violation of the agreed fare structure. The chief minister also announced that a farmer subsidy programme worth Rs3 billion will begin this week, providing financial assistance to small growers. Overall, the targeted subsidy framework includes Bike subsidy: Rs13.4 billion, Transport subsidy (in coordination with the federal gov): Rs14.3 billion per month, Fare stabilisation support: Rs3.4 billion, Farmer support package: Rs3 billion.

Advertisement for the National Plantation Portal. It includes a title 'کستونمنٹ بورڈ راولپنڈی' and 'شاندار نیلام عام ایگزیکٹو واٹس روومز گروپ لیٹرین'. It lists three points: 1) WhatsApp group for public plantation, 2) WhatsApp group for private housing plantation, 3) WhatsApp group for forest plantation. It also provides contact information for the portal and mentions that it is a result-oriented, formalized initiative to ensure strict geo-tagging and timely reporting to achieve 100% results.

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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 Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI chief calls for broad-based eco reforms

Highlighting key growth drivers, he stressed that Pakistan must prioritize export-led growth through structural reforms in agriculture, industry, and technology, while simultaneously reducing dependence on imports by strengthening domestic production capabilities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has emphasized that while Pakistan has firmly established its strategic strength as a nuclear power, the nation must now demonstrate an equal resolve in building a resilient, self-reliant economy. Addressing a delegation of visiting businessmen at the Chamber House on Monday, he stated that a strong defence framework remains indispensable for national security; however, long-term sovereignty and prosperity are ultimately anchored in economic stability and sustainability. He emphasized the urgent need for the government to move beyond

repetitive taxation of compliant taxpayers and instead adopt pragmatic measures to broaden the tax base. Expanding the tax net, he noted, is crucial for ensuring fairness, enhancing revenue collection, and promoting economic confidence. Highlighting key growth drivers, he stressed that Pakistan must prioritize export-led growth through structural reforms in agriculture, industry, and technology, while simultaneously reducing dependence on imports by strengthening domestic production capabilities.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood further called for decisive action to rationalize public expenditure, advocating for transparent and responsible fiscal management. He remarked that disciplined financial governance and deep-rooted structural reforms are essential for positioning Pakistan

as a robust economic power alongside its strategic capabilities. The ICCI President also urged the government to introduce a comprehensive and investor-friendly incentive framework for overseas Pakistanis, particularly to attract capital into the real estate and construction sectors. He noted that overseas Pakistanis have consistently been a cornerstone of economic support, and with improved facilitation, stronger investor protection, and competitive incentives, their contributions can be significantly enhanced.

Increased investment in real estate and construction would act as a catalyst for economic activity, generating employment and stimulating a wide range of allied industries, thereby contributing meaningfully to sustainable economic growth, he concluded.

Quality healthcare remains govt's priority: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Monday emphasized that a healthy nation forms the foundation of a developed and stable state. On the occasion of World Health Day, he said the serves as a reminder that providing quality, timely and equitable healthcare to all citizens is a fundamental responsibility of the state. Ayaz Sadiq highlighted that Pakistan faces multiple challenges in the health sector, including limited access to services, shortage of resources and a rapidly growing population. He stressed that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive strategy, sustainable policymaking and practical measures to ensure that every citizen can access basic healthcare without discrimination. Ayaz Sadiq said that while the government and relevant institutions are taking steps to improve the sector, more coordinated and effective efforts are needed, particularly in remote and underdeveloped areas.—APP

FCCP seeks record on GB proposed legislation

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan on Monday sought a detailed record from the government regarding proposed legislation related to Gilgit-Baltistan and adjourned the hearing. A three-member bench headed by Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi heard the case. During the proceedings, Justice Rizvi observed that instead of litigation, such matters should be discussed with senior political leadership. Justice Rozi Khan observed that the issue appeared to be political in nature and should be resolved by the government itself. Additional Attorney General Aamir Rehman informed the court that while the government is competent to legislate, permission was being sought in light of a decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He submitted that there was currently no legislation regarding the pension of the Chief Justice and other judges of Gilgit-Baltistan, and proposals were under consideration to address this matter.—APP



Islamabad: Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the modernization of Pakistan Railways.

Rs 580m programs planned to modernise archival heritage

ISLAMABAD: In a move aimed at strengthening the preservation and management of the country's documentary heritage, two projects worth Rs580 million have been proposed for the National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2026-27. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the two schemes include a Rs285 million national programme for the digitisation and restoration of archival heritage, and a Rs295 million project for the rehabilitation and upgrading of NAP under Phase-II. Out of Rs285 million national programme for the digitisation and restoration of archival heritage, an amount of Rs 200 million has been proposed for year 2026-27.

The proposed digitisation and restoration programme is intended to preserve valuable historical records by focusing on archival materials that are vulnerable to physical deterioration and loss. The documents note that the initiative seeks to protect such records through modern digitisation and restoration techniques, allowing historically significant material to be preserved in safer and more durable formats. The move is also expected to improve access to archival resources for researchers, scholars and institutions by making records easier to retrieve, manage and preserve over the long-term. The documents further note that the programme would help strengthen institutional capacity through improved archival man-

agement practices, the adoption of international standards, and greater awareness of Pakistan's documentary heritage. Alongside this, the government has also proposed a Rs295 million infrastructure project under NAP Phase-II. The scheme is aimed at rehabilitation, upgrading and construction work to improve the functionality, safety and efficiency of archival facilities. The project would restore and upgrade existing infrastructure to meet current standards, and also develop new facilities to support future institutional needs. It is expected to improve service delivery, durability and overall performance, thereby enhancing the NAP's capacity to preserve and manage important national records.—APP

Pakistan, WHO mark World Health Day

The event served as a reminder of the critical role of science, innovation, and international collaboration in advancing public health and saving lives

ISLAMABAD: The World Health Organization (WHO) and Ministry of Health on Monday marked World Health Day by highlighting the transformative role of medical science in saving millions of lives and strengthening public health over the past decades. Secretary Health Muhammad Aslam Ghauri said that trusting medical science is essential for a safer future, noting that Pakistan has made significant progress in combating diseases and improving healthcare outcomes since becoming a founding member of WHO 78 years ago. "Trusting and following medical science is not an option—our future and the future of our families depend on it," he said, reaffirming Pakistan's continued commitment to global health cooperation. He noted that scientific advancements have enabled the prevention and treatment of once-deadly diseases, including tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis C, and cancer, while also supporting efforts to eradicate polio and tackle malnutrition. Highlighting a broader perspective, Ghauri emphasized the importance of the One Health approach, which recognizes the interconnection between human, animal, and environmental health. WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr. Luo Dapeng underscored the impact of medical science with key statistics, stating that vaccines have saved over 150 million lives globally in the past 50 years. In Pakistan alone, around seven million children and 5.5 million women of childbearing age are reached annually with life-saving immunization services. He added that polio vaccination efforts have reduced cases in Pakistan by 99.8% over the past three decades, while tuberculosis treatment has saved more than 83 million lives globally and benefited over five million people in Pakistan in the last decade. Dr. Luo also highlighted ongoing collaboration between WHO and the government, including life-saving treatment for approximately 70,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition each year. Reaffirming WHO's long-standing partnership with Pakistan, he encouraged young people to support science and contribute to building a healthier future. The event served as a reminder of the critical role of science, innovation, and international collaboration in advancing public health and saving lives.—DNA

SECP proposes ESG mutual funds

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has proposed the launch of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Mutual Funds to promote sustainable investment and offer new opportunities to investors. The proposed ESG funds will allow investors to earn returns while supporting businesses and projects that meet environmental, social, and governance standards, said a press release issued by the SECP here on Monday. The initiative is expected to channel savings into responsible investments, promote sustainable development, and strengthen Pakistan's capital markets in line with global trends. The proposal is part of SECP's broader ESG Regulatory Roadmap, which focuses on improving transparency, encouraging responsible business practices, and aligning Pakistan's financial sector with international standards. In recent years, SECP has taken several steps to build an ESG ecosystem. These include issuing ESG Disclosure Guidelines, adopting international sustainability reporting standards such as IFRS S1 and S2, strengthening corporate governance frameworks, and developing ESG data platforms like ESG Sustain. To address the lack of structured sustainable investment products, SECP has proposed a clear and regulated framework for ESG mutual funds. The framework is principle-based and flexible. It requires at least 70 percent of investments to be made in ESG-aligned assets, while allowing asset managers to adopt different investment strategies. The framework also introduces strong disclosure requirements, governance standards, and assurance mechanisms to ensure transparency and prevent greenwashing. These measures aim to build investor confidence and ensure the credibility of ESG products. For equity-based ESG funds, investments will be aligned with the Pakistan Stock Exchange's upcoming Sustainability Index. Until its launch, asset management companies will rely on internal ESG assessment methods. Debt-based funds will invest in green, social, and sustainability-linked instruments under Pakistan's Green Taxonomy and SECP guidelines.—APP

IHC seeks comments on contempt case against CDA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday issued notices and sought a report in a contempt of court petition filed against the Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) over alleged tree cutting in violation of court orders. Justice Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas heard the petition filed by citizen Muhammad Naveed Ahmed. The petitioner's counsel argued that despite a court order dated January 15, 2026, restraining tree cutting in Islamabad, work on the expansion of Ataturk Avenue from D-Chowk to Ayub Chowk is ongoing, resulting in the cutting of old trees. The petition also names the newly appointed CDA Chairman, Sohail Ashraf, as a respondent. The court was requested to halt the ongoing project, summon the chairman in person, and initiate action against officials responsible for the alleged violations. The court issued notices to the respondents and sought a detailed report. The hearing was adjourned for an indefinite period. Meanwhile, the hearing of the £190 million case involving the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi was deferred till tomorrow at the Islamabad High Court due to the unavailability of the bench. The Chief Justice was engaged in official commitments, leading to the cancellation of the day's cause list. The registrar's office has now scheduled the case for hearing tomorrow. The case will be heard by a division bench comprising Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif.—APP

CCP's study on solar market flags barriers to competition

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has released a study on the solar market, titled, "Unlocking Green Potential: A Market Competition Study of Solar Energy in Pakistan," proposing targeted reforms to remove entry barriers, enhance market transparency, and boost investment in the solar sector. The study identifies key structural challenges and outlines practical measures to strengthen grid infrastructure, improve policy clarity, and enforce quality standards, aimed at fostering competition and driving sustainable growth in the sector, said a release issued here on Monday. Among the key recommendations, the CCP has called for urgent modernization of distribution networks, noting that outdated feeders and substations are ill-equipped to handle two-way power flows from distributed solar generation, leading to voltage fluctuations and limiting net-metering expansion. The CCP has also emphasized the need for a national smart metering rollout and grid automation, including the deployment of advanced systems such as Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and Distribution Management Systems (DMS), to improve real-time monitoring, reduce losses, and enable efficient integration of renewable energy. Highlighting delays in power market reforms, the CCP has urged the government to fast-track implementation of the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM), suggesting interim measures such as pilot bilateral contracts for renewable energy, particularly for industrial clusters and Special Economic Zones, to unlock cheaper electricity and stimulate competition. The study raises serious concerns over product quality and consumer protection, recommending the establishment of accredited solar testing laboratories, mandatory compliance with international standards.—APP

NDMA warns of heavy rain, snowfall in next 24 hours

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) on Monday warned of widespread rain, snowfall, and thunderstorms across Pakistan in the next 12-24 hours, urging citizens to stay cautious and follow safety advisories. According to the advisory, most parts of the country are expected to receive rain during the next 12 to 24 hours, accompanied by strong winds, thunderstorms, and dust storms. Hailstorms are also likely at scattered locations. According to the forecast, rain accompanied by strong winds, dust storms, and thunderstorms is expected in Islamabad and several cities of Punjab over the next 12 to 24 hours. The areas likely to be affected include Murree, Rawalpindi, Attock, Gujar Khan, Jhelum, Chakwal, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sialkot, and Mandi Bahauddin. Further rainfall has also been forecast in Narawal, Sargodha, Jhang, Faisalabad, Lahore, Sahiwal, Kasur, Okara,

Burewala, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. According to the NEOC forecast, snowfall is expected in the upper and mountainous regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the next 12 to 24 hours. Rain accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds is also expected in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kalam, Mingora, Battagram, Peshawar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Nowshera, Mardan, Charsadda, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, and Waziristan during the same period. Heavy rain with thunderstorms and strong winds is expected in Sindh over the next 12 to 24 hours, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Sajawal, Jamshoro, Dadu, Khairpur, Sukkur, Larkana, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Naushahro Feroze, Shaheed Benazirabad, Sanghar, Umerkot,

Tharparkar, Mirpur Khas, Tando Alahyar, and Tando Muhammad Khan. Rainfall is also forecast in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, affecting Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Astor, Diamer, Kharmang, Shigar, Ghizer, Nagar, Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Rawalakot, Haveli, Poonch, Kotli, Mirpur, Bhimber and Neelum Valley. Rain accompanied by strong winds and dust storms is expected in several cities of Balochistan over the next 12 to 24 hours. The affected areas include Quetta, Zhob, Loralai, Dera Bugti, Ziarat, Qalat, Qilla Saifullah, Qilla Abdullah, Chaman, Pishin, Barkhan, Sibi, Dera Bugti, Nushki, Khuzdar, Awaran, Washuk, Panjgur, Turbat, Gwadar, and Lasbela. NDMA has directed provincial and district authorities to remain alert for possible severe weather, warning that strong winds, lightning, and hail could damage weak structures, trees, crops, and power lines.—APP

Briefs

MNA visits
Jheka Gali
landslide
site

RAWALPINDI: Member National Assembly MNA Osama Ashfaq Sarwar visited the site of a landslide at Jheka Gali to review ongoing rescue operations. During his visit, MNA Sarwar reviewed the rescue activities and instructed all relevant administrative and emergency agencies to operate at full capacity and maintain uninterrupted efforts to ensure timely relief for those affected. Rescue 1122 personnel, equipped with emergency vehicles and essential tools, are working on the ground and remain fully prepared to respond to any urgent situation. The district administration and Rescue authorities have urged residents and tourists to avoid non-essential travel, take necessary safety precautions, and immediately contact helpline 1122 in case of any emergency.—APP

ANF seizes
over 220 kg
of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Monday carried out seven operations across Pakistan, arresting eight suspects and seizing 220.98 kilograms of narcotics valued at more than Rs 82.9 million. According to an ANF spokesperson, the operations were conducted in multiple cities under the force's ongoing crackdown on drug trafficking. In Panjgur, near the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Road, authorities recovered 138 kg of methamphetamine (ice), 29 kg of heroin and 9 kg of hashish from a vehicle, arresting the suspect on the spot. In Islamabad, 8.4 kg of hashish was seized from a vehicle near Khanna Bridge, with one suspect taken into custody. Separately, in Lahore, ANF recovered 5 kg of heroin from two motorcycle riders near Band Road, while another operation near Ashraf Shaheed Post led to the seizure of 520 grams of heroin and the arrest of two suspects. In Peshawar, 1 kg of hashish was recovered from a suspect near a university.—APP

IRSA releases
80,100 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 80,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 153,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1458.40 feet which was 58.40 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 38,800 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1145.95 feet, which was 95.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 50,500 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 89,200, 41,100, 36,900, and 12,200 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 42,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 16,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

IGP Rizvi
honors
retiring DSP

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi met with retiring DSP Zulfiqar Haider and paid tribute to his long and dedicated service in the police department. An official told on Monday that the IGP Rizvi appreciated the professionalism, honesty, and commitment of DSP Zulfiqar Haider during his career. An honorary shield was also presented to the retiring officer in recognition of his valuable services. Rizvi said officers who serve with integrity and dedication are an asset to the department and a source of pride. He extended his best wishes to Zulfiqar Haider for his future endeavor.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust warns screening
gaps raise blindness risk

Pakistan records high ROP burden due to limited screening capacity. Absence of national protocol leaves thousands of infants at risk of vision loss

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Premature babies in Pakistan are losing their sight at rates far above global averages as a treatable eye condition, retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), continues to go undetected across large parts of the country, according to data compiled by Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital. ROP develops when abnormal blood vessels grow in the retina of premature infants, which can lead to permanent blindness. Although timely screening and treatment can prevent most cases, access to ROP services remains limited, with only a small number of hospitals offering consistent screening. Pakistan recorded an estimated 921,600 preterm births in 2020, placing it among the highest globally. The country's preterm birth rate of 14.4 percent ranks Pakistan fourth worldwide in total preterm births and third in neonatal deaths. Clinical studies show that 32.2 percent of eligible premature infants in Pakistan develop ROP, nearly double the 12 to 18 percent reported in high-income countries. A 2025 study published in BMC Ophthalmology linked the higher burden to improved survival of premature babies without a parallel expansion in screening and treatment capacity. Infrastructure shortages remain a major obstacle. In Peshawar, only two of seven neonatal intensive care units with ophthalmology services had staff capable of conducting ROP screening. In Balochistan, surveyed NICUs lacked essential screening equipment. At Lahore General Hospital, researchers found that only 46.7 percent of 3,521 eligible infants were screened between 2015 and 2021. Untreated ROP can have severe consequences; one study found that 76.4 percent of affected chil-



children became completely blind, while 23.6 percent developed severe visual impairment. Prof. Dr. Sumaira Altaf, Senior Consultant and Head of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said the trust has been providing free ROP screening since 2010. A five-year study at the hospital found that 1,610 premature infants required more than 8,000 visits, leading to the diagnosis of 543 cases and urgent treatment for more than 250 infants. The hospital has a dedicated ROP

coordinator to track at-risk newborns and ensure follow-up screening, an approach uncommon in many hospitals. The trust conducts workshops and training sessions for ophthalmologists. As a result, at least four hospitals in the twin cities now have Al-Shifa-trained specialists providing ROP services, while the screening network has expanded to hospitals in major cities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. A January 2026 analysis of Global Burden of Disease data identified Pakistan as having the highest

prevalence of vision loss linked to ROP globally, a trend likely to persist without policy intervention. Infants born at 35 weeks of gestation or earlier, or weighing two kilograms or less, face the highest risk and require screening within four weeks of birth. Each year, around 7,200 infants born before 32 weeks of gestation can develop ROP. Despite the scale of the problem, Pakistan still lacks a national ROP screening protocol, leaving thousands of preventable cases of childhood blindness unaddressed.

Punjab CM
directs early
completion
cancer
hospital

RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif conducted a virtual tour of different sections of Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research. She inspected the main entrance hall, radiology, mammography suite, and CT scan room; besides radiology therapy, treatment planning room, simulator, and seminar room. She also inspected state-of-the-art setting room and AHU (Air Handling Unit) room for patients, and set a target for its early completion, and directed the relevant authorities to carry out construction work in three shifts for the purpose. Chief Minister Punjab was briefed by the responsible authorities that 219 posts were advertised for NSICTR, 32 candidates have been selected, while approval has been granted to advertise next week 415 posts of NSICTR. She directed them to appoint best professionals for the posts of Dean, Director, and other vacancies at the hospital.—APP

NDRMF
appoints
Goraya as
CEO

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) appointed Mr. Amir Goraya as its new Chief Executive Officer on Monday, marking a strategic shift to strengthen Pakistan's disaster and climate resilience framework through enhanced governance and innovative financing amid escalating climate threats. Goraya, a seasoned expert in public sector reform and large-scale development programmes, assumes charge immediately, bringing his proven track record in institutional strengthening and strategic leadership to the helm of the fund. The Board of Directors welcomed the appointment, expressing confidence that Goraya's leadership will solidify NDRMF's position as Pakistan's premier platform for disaster risk management. This transition arrives at a pivotal moment, as the fund expands its role in risk-informed development nationwide, particularly in the wake of frequent climate-induced calamities. Under Goraya's stewardship, NDRMF plans to sharpen its implementation capacity, boost operational efficiency, and forge deeper ties with federal and provincial governments, development partners, academia, and the private sector.—APP

Islamabad Safe City
to be upgraded to
'Capital Smart City'

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to transform the Islamabad Safe City project into a fully integrated Capital Smart City, aimed at modernizing policing, traffic management, and civic services. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqi visited the Safe City Headquarters in Islamabad, where he chaired a high-level meeting to review progress on Phase-II of the Safe City project. During the briefing, it was decided that all ongoing work under Phase-II will be completed by May 30. The minister directed authorities to ensure the timely completion of the project without any delays. Naqi announced that the Central Command and Control System in Islamabad will be upgraded, adding that advanced systems for traffic management and crime control will be fully integrated under the Capital Smart City framework. He stated that every possible resource is being utilized to make Islamabad a safer city. The meeting also approved the new design of the Safe City Headquarters. Inspector General of Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi briefed the minister in detail, revealing that 75% of Phase-II work has already been completed. The installation of modern cameras and monitoring systems is in progress, while 152 kilometers of fiber-optic cable has been laid. According to the briefing, Phase-II work will be completed by May 20, after which the testing phase will begin. The meeting was attended by Interior Secretary Khurram Agha, DG FIA Dr. Usman Anwar, IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi, DG Safe City Haroon Joya, and other senior officials.—DNA

PM prays for
recovery as drone
debris injures 3
Pakistanis in UAE

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday prayed for the swift recovery of the civilians, including three Pakistani nationals, who were injured by the falling debris from an intercepted projectile at the Khor Fakkan Port of the United Arab Emirates. "Deeply concerned at the incident at Khor Fakkan port in the UAE, where an intercepted projectile caused injuries to civilians, including Pakistani nationals," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He said that the government was in close contact with the UAE authorities to ensure that all necessary support was extended to the Pakistani citizens. "Pakistan stands in solidarity with the brotherly people of the UAE and reiterates the urgent need for restraint and de-escalation in the region," Prime Minister Shehbaz remarked. According to the UAE authorities, four people were injured in the incident, including a Nepalese national who was seriously injured, and three Pakistani nationals with minor to moderate injuries, on April 5 when the forces engaged nine ballistic missiles, one cruise missile, and 50 drones from Iran. Since the beginning of the conflict in the region, the attacks have resulted in the killing of two members of the armed forces and 10 civilians of various nationalities, including Pakistani, Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Palestinian, Indian, and Egyptian. Besides, around 217 people sustained injuries in the attacks. In total, four Pakistani nationals have lost their lives in the United Arab Emirates - three in Abu Dhabi and one in Dubai - due to the debris of the intercepted projectiles in different localities.—DNA

China-Pakistan
art ties flourish

ISLAMABAD: As China and Pakistan mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the cultural and artistic partnership between the two nations has evolved from steady exchanges into a dynamic and multifaceted collaboration, according to Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, Director General of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) is the country's premier national arts institution. Established in 1973, it maintains active partnerships with regional art councils across all provinces, China Economic Net reported on Monday. From visual arts and classical music to puppetry, theatre, and cultural diplomacy, PNCA enables artistic growth through exhibitions, education, residencies, publications, and public events. In an exclusive interview to CEN, Mr. Ayoub Jamali reflected on the deepening ties between the two countries' artistic communities and outlined his vision for future cooperation. "From the coasts of Balochistan to the mountains of

Gilgit-Baltistan, our artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, designers, and performers step into the spotlight and take pride in their craft," the Director General said. By working with China, they can gain access to a bigger stage. A landmark development in bilateral cultural cooperation came in May 2016, when the China Cultural Center signed a venue lease agreement with the PNCA and officially settled within the PNCA complex in Islamabad. The PNCA complex, which houses 14 modern exhibition halls of varying sizes and a theater capable of seating 500 spectators, became the permanent home of the China Cultural Center - a physical co-location that has enabled regular programming exchanges ever since. "This physical co-location has transformed our cooperation," Mr. Ayoub Jamali said. "We have carried out many joint programming initiatives and cultural exchanges, including the mutual dispatch of performing troupes." These activities include art exhibitions, children's painting competitions, and programs for Pakistani students from

schools and universities who want to learn the Chinese language and extend their artistic understanding. Over the past decade, PNCA has engaged in a wide range of collaborative initiatives with Chinese institutions. Notable examples include the PNCA dance troupe's participation in the 5th China Xinjiang International Ethnic Dance Festival in 2017, the 2022 China-Pakistan Folk Music Concert, which brought together traditional musicians from both countries, and the 2023 Sino-Pak feature film "Ba Tie Girl", a co-production screened at PNCA that showcased cross-cultural storytelling through cinema. To mark the 75th anniversary, two major China-Pakistan friendship art exhibitions have already been held at PNCA this year, with more exhibitions and artistic exchanges planned for May and beyond. Looking further ahead, the Director General revealed plans for visits to China involving Pakistani officials and artists to exchange experiences and expertise in the visual arts.—DNA

China, Pak honor martyrs at Gilgit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As China and Pakistan mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, a commemorative event titled "Mountains and Rivers as Witness, passing on the Light" was held at the Chinese Martyrs' Cemetery in Gilgit, Pakistan, China Economic Net reported. The ceremony, held on the occasion of China's traditional Qingming Festival, a day dedicated to honoring ancestors and remembering the departed, paid tribute to the enduring ironclad friendship between the two nations forged through decades of shared sacrifice and mutual support. The Chinese Martyrs Cemetery in Gilgit, also known as the China Memorial Cemetery, is located in Danyou, approximately ten kilometers from Gilgit city across the Gilgit River. Established in the early 1970s and officially completed in 1978, the cemetery serves as the final resting place for 88 Chinese engineers and workers and engineers

who lost their lives during the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KHH) between 1966 and 1979. During the event hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, a five-minute commemorative short film, "Echoes of the Karakoram," was screened. Centering on the construction of the Karakoram Highway and continuing with a Chinese language lesson, the film showcased the arduous journey and unwavering dedication of Chinese aid workers in Pakistan. Veteran Tian Niansheng, who participated in the construction of the Karakoram Highway, movingly recounted the difficult years of building the highway, sharing touching stories of Chinese and Pakistani builders working side by side and helping each other. Ali Ahmed, the elderly tomb keeper of the Chinese Martyrs Cemetery, slowly approached the martyrs' tombstones, "I am not guarding a cemetery," he said, "but the souls of my Chinese brothers." Ali Ahmed began voluntarily guarding the cemetery nearly five dec-

ades ago. A recipient of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Friendship Award" from the Chinese government, he once said he would keep guarding "until I can no longer do it," and expressed hope that his son would continue the duty. Today, that legacy of devotion lives on. Students from the Chinese Language Classroom of the Pakistan Chinese Education Association performed a poetry recitation of "Nostalgia" by the renowned Chinese poet Yu Guangzhong. Manzoor Hussain, a son of the late Madad Ali who dedicated his life to guarding the Chinese graveyard in Gilgit and has now taken over this decades long family mission, joined representatives from the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community, teachers and students of the Pakistan Chinese Education Association, road construction veterans and their families, caretakers of the martyrs' cemetery, and delegates from the Overseas Chinese Association Gilgit Baltistan at the event.

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Parliament in the Grip of Inflation

ZARYAB ZAIB

AFTER weeks of drift and public unease over rising prices, the resumption of proceedings in the National Assembly of Pakistan on April 6 signals a return to formal politics. Yet the chamber the government has reconvened is not the one it last left behind. Inflation has hardened public attitudes, coalition arithmetic has grown more delicate, and the opposition particularly factions aligned with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf appears intent on using the floor of the House as much as the street to press its case. The immediate test will be whether the Assembly can move beyond ritual confrontation. Lawmakers are expected to train their fire on the cost of living, a subject that now shapes nearly every political conversation. The treasury benches will likely defend recent measures as necessary stabilisation, while the opposition will portray them as avoidable burdens placed on already strained households. Such exchanges are not new, but the tone this time may be sharper. The public mood is less forgiving, and the margin for political missteps has narrowed. For the government, the session offers both risk and opportunity. On one hand, it must shepherd legislation tied to the economy — revenue measures, adjustments to subsidies, and changes in regulatory frameworks — through a chamber that is increasingly restive. On the other, it has a chance to demonstrate that parliamentary processes still matter in a climate often dominated by executive decision-making. The credibility of the House will depend on whether debate is allowed to be substantive rather than perfunctory, and whether dissent is managed through procedure rather than curtailed by it. The opposition, for its part, seems poised to adopt a two-track strategy. Inside the Assembly, it will seek to corner the government through pointed questioning and procedural tactics. Outside, it may attempt to amplify parliamentary arguments through public mobilisation. This approach carries its own risks. A strategy that relies too heavily on disruption can blur the line between scrutiny and obstruction, potentially eroding

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

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Phone: 051-8488394

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



the very platform the opposition seeks to use. Yet, given the stakes, restraint may be in short supply. Another area to watch is the government's legislative agenda on security. Regional uncertainties and internal challenges have already pushed security considerations to the forefront. Any attempt to introduce or amend laws in this domain is likely to invite close scrutiny. The opposition may question both the necessity and the scope of such measures, while civil society voices will be alert to the implications for rights and freedoms. Here, too, the manner in which debate is conducted will matter as much as the outcome. Coalition management will remain a quiet but decisive factor. With allies holding the balance in several key votes, the government cannot afford complacency. Differences over economic policy or constituency concerns could surface during the session, complicating the passage of legislation. Skilled floor management and timely concessions may prove essential in keeping the coalition intact. Beyond the arithmetic of votes, the session will also serve as a barometer of institutional health. In recent years, questions have been raised about the centrality of parliament in decision-making. A productive session one that features informed debate, meaningful committee work, and transparent lawmaking could help restore some confidence. Conversely, a descent into acrimony without output would reinforce the perception that the real decisions lie elsewhere. There is also the question of pace. The urgency of economic challenges might tempt the government to fast-track legislation. While expediency has its place, it should not come at the expense of scrutiny. Laws passed in haste often require revision, creating uncertainty for both citizens and markets. A careful balance between speed and deliberation will be necessary. Ultimately, the significance of this session extends beyond the bills it passes or the speeches it hosts. It will shape the trajectory of political engagement in the weeks ahead. A chamber that accommodates contestation while producing outcomes can lower the temperature outside it. One that mirrors the polarisation of the street risks amplifying it. As the Assembly convenes, expectations are modest but not insignificant. At a time when economic strain and political rivalry are both intensifying, the country's elected forum has an opportunity and a responsibility to assert its relevance. Whether it rises to the occasion will become clear soon enough.

How did the China-Pakistan Five-Point Initiative come about

Ambassador Jiang Zaidong



The China-Pakistan Five-Point Initiative has received support and positive responses from many countries and international organizations, pooling efforts to restore peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East. This fully demonstrates that a ceasefire and an end to hostilities are what the people truly desire, and that peace and stability are what countries around world looking for.

AGAINST the backdrop of escalating conflict between the U.S., Israel, and Iran, and its increasing pressure on regional stability and the world economy, on March 31st, China and Pakistan jointly issued the "Five-Point Initiative of China and Pakistan For Restoring Peace and Stability in the Gulf and Middle East Region" in Beijing. The initiative calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities, start of peace talks as soon as possible, security of nonmilitary targets, security of shipping lanes, and the primacy of the United Nations Charter. The Five-Point Initiative represents not only the common position of China and Pakistan, but also aligns with the universal expectations of the international community. Consequently, it has received high attention and widespread support once proposed. As iron-clad friends, China and Pakistan have consistently maintained close communication and collaboration on major hotspot issues, dedicated to promoting regional as well as global peace and stability. This is not only historical strengths of our all-weather strategic cooperation and also an inherent part of the China-Pakistan community with a shared future. Since the outbreak of the U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict, China—as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a responsible major power—has maintained close contact with relevant parties, including the parties to the conflict, to promote ceasefire and initiate diplomatic negotiations. Pakistan has actively facilitated dialogue and mediation using its own advantages, making sincere efforts to prevent further escalation of the situation. During this process, China and

Pakistan maintained close communication and coordination through channels of Beijing and Islamabad as well as in the UN Security Council. Our two Foreign Ministers conducted two phone calls and held talks in Beijing to jointly voice the call for peace and justice. Currently, as once-in-a-century changes accelerate and the international landscape becomes increasingly complex, the fumes of the U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict has once again made the world fully aware of the heavy price of war. Facing escalating hegemonism, high-handedness, and bullying, and the repeated erosion of the UN authority, the international community—especially the Global South—earnestly looks forward to reforming the international governance structure and upholding international fairness and justice. At last year's Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Tianjin Summit, President Xi Jinping, bearing in mind the future of humanity and grasping the trends of the times, solemnly proposed the Global Governance Initiative (GGI). In the GGI, he emphasized adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practicing multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach, and focusing on taking real actions. It is a systematic solution for building a fairer and more reasonable global governance system. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who attended the summit, expressed firm support on the spot. The Five-Point Initiative jointly proposed by China and Pakistan serves as a vivid practice of both sides implementing the Global Governance Initiative with concrete actions. The China-Pakistan Five-Point Initiative has

received support and positive responses from many countries and international organizations, pooling efforts to restore peace and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East. This fully demonstrates that a ceasefire and an end to hostilities are what the people truly desire, and that peace and stability are what countries around the world looking for. History has repeatedly shown that the use of force is not a solution to any problem, and that dialogue and negotiation are the only right way forward. China will continue to work with Pakistan to unite all peace-loving countries and peoples of the world, and urge the parties concerned to stop this war that should not have happened in the first place, so as to restore peace and tranquility to the region at an early date and ensure the unimpeded flow of global energy supplies and international industrial and supply chains. This year marks the inauguration of China's "15th Five-Year Plan" and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. We will work with Pakistan to fully implement the important consensus reached by President Xi Jinping and Pakistani leaders, intensify high-level exchanges, advance practical cooperation, enhance people-to-people connectivity, and deepen multilateral coordination. We will implement the four Global Initiatives through concrete actions, strive to advance the reform of the global governance system, uphold international fairness and justice, and make new contributions to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

— The writer is the Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Pakistan.

How International Law Is Being Violated in the Iran War

Qamar Bashir



The conduct of hostilities is governed by the Geneva legal regime, which imposes strict obligations on all parties irrespective of their cause. Under Common Article 3, civilians must be protected from violence and inhumane treatment. Additional Protocol I reinforces this protection through Article 48, which mandates the principle of distinction—requiring parties to differentiate between civilian and military targets. Article 51 prohibits direct attacks on civilians and explicitly forbids disproportionate strikes that cause excessive...

TUESDAY will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! Open the Fuckin' Strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in Hell — JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah. President DONALD J. TRUMP! This statement, attributed to Donald J. Trump, is not merely political rhetoric; it is a declaration that carries profound legal implications under international law. When a head of state publicly threatens to target infrastructure such as power plants and bridges—facilities essential for civilian survival—it raises immediate concerns under the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Conventions. The language itself reflects a shift from calibrated diplomacy to coercive escalation, and in legal terms, it may constitute a prohibited "threat of force," especially if the action implied would itself be unlawful. The war that erupted following the February 28 strikes on Iran has quickly transformed into a multi-front regional conflict, but beyond the battlefield it has triggered a deeper and more troubling crisis—the erosion of international law. What is unfolding today is not merely a contest of military strength between the United States, Israel, and Iran; it is a test of whether the global legal framework, painstakingly built after the devastation of the Second World War, still holds meaning. When examined through the provisions of the UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions, and established customary norms, the conduct of all major actors reveals patterns that raise serious legal concerns. At the foundation of international law lies Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which clearly prohibits both the use and the threat of force against the sovereignty of any state. If the United States, acting in coordination with Israel, initiated or expanded military operations against Iran without explicit authorization from the United Nations Security Council or without satisfying the strict conditions of self-defense under Article 51, then such actions fall into a legally contentious domain. Even more significant is the nature of public rhetoric accompanying the war. Threats to destroy critical infrastructure—electric grids, bridges, and economic lifelines—are not simply political statements; they constitute "threats of force," which international jurisprudence, including rulings of the International Court of Justice, treats as violations when the implied action itself would be unlawful. The conduct of hostilities is governed by the Geneva legal regime, which imposes strict obligations on all parties irrespective of their cause. Under Common Article 3, civilians must be protected from violence and inhumane treatment. Additional Protocol I reinforces this protection through Article 48, which mandates the principle of distinction—requiring parties to differentiate between civilian and military targets. Article 51 prohibits direct attacks on civilians and explicitly forbids disproportionate strikes that cause excessive civilian harm. Reports of civilian casualties, including the killing of schoolgirls in the early phase of the conflict,

raise serious questions about whether these principles are being upheld. The law does not prohibit war, but it strictly regulates how war is conducted, placing civilian protection at its core. Equally critical is the protection of civilian infrastructure. Additional Protocol I, Article 52 safeguards civilian objects, while Article 54 prohibits attacks on objects indispensable to civilian survival, such as water systems, food supplies, and electricity networks. The threat or destruction of power plants and bridges—facilities that sustain entire populations—may therefore constitute violations unless they are directly and exclusively used for military purposes. Furthermore, Geneva Convention IV, Article 33 prohibits collective punishment, meaning that actions which impose suffering on entire civilian populations as a means of pressure are unlawful. When infrastructure destruction leads to widespread deprivation of electricity, water, or food, the legal implications become profound. Israel's conduct across multiple theatres—whether in Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, or the West Bank—must also be assessed within this framework. Numerous United Nations resolutions emphasize the obligation to protect civilians and avoid disproportionate use of force, particularly in densely populated areas. Under Geneva Convention IV, occupying powers are required to ensure the safety and welfare of civilians (Articles 27–34) and are prohibited from extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity (Article 53). Repeated allegations of high civilian casualties and large-scale destruction, if substantiated, suggest tension not only with specific provisions but with the broader humanitarian principles underpinning international law. Iran, while invoking its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, is similarly bound by legal constraints. The right of self-defense is not absolute; it must meet the criteria of necessity and proportionality, as affirmed in ICJ jurisprudence, including the Nicaragua case. Iran's cross-border strikes targeting U.S. bases and Israeli interests in third countries raise serious concerns regarding the violation of state sovereignty, a principle protected under Article 2(4). Attacks conducted without the consent of host states or beyond immediate defensive necessity risk breaching this foundational rule. Additionally, indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks—particularly those affecting civilian areas—would violate Additional Protocol I, Articles 51 and 57, which require both proportionality and precautions in attack. The expansion of the conflict across the Middle East further complicates the legal landscape. Lebanon, Iraq, the Gulf states, and beyond have been drawn into hostilities, often suffering civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. This widening of the war raises issues related to neutrality and non-intervention, as states not originally party to the conflict become affected. The use of proxy forces and non-state actors adds another layer of complexity, yet international law remains clear: states can be held responsible for actions

carried out under their direction or control, as outlined in the International Law Commission's Articles on State Responsibility. At the strategic level, Iran's approach reflects a calculated effort to impose costs rather than seek immediate victory. By targeting economic chokepoints such as energy infrastructure and the Strait of Hormuz, and by employing asymmetric warfare tactics, Iran aims to globalize the consequences of the conflict and force diplomatic engagement. While this strategy may be effective in military terms, it must still operate within the boundaries of international law. Economic disruption that disproportionately harms civilians or neutral states risks crossing into unlawful territory, just as conventional military excess does. The greatest weakness, however, lies not in the law itself but in its enforcement. The UN Security Council remains constrained by geopolitical divisions, with veto powers often blocking decisive action. The International Criminal Court faces jurisdictional limitations and political resistance, delaying accountability. There is no standing international enforcement mechanism capable of swiftly investigating violations or compelling compliance. Sanctions are inconsistently applied, monitoring systems are fragmented, and victims lack immediate access to reparations. This gap between law and enforcement undermines deterrence and allows violations to persist. Strengthening enforcement is therefore essential. A voluntary restraint on veto use in cases of mass atrocities could enable the Security Council to act more effectively. Permanent, independent investigative mechanisms with real-time capabilities could ensure that evidence is preserved and violations are documented. Expanding ICC jurisdiction, supporting hybrid tribunals, and establishing automatic sanctions linked to verified breaches would enhance accountability. A global reparations framework could ensure that victims are compensated without delay, while embedding legal compliance systems within military operations could promote adherence to humanitarian norms. Above all, robust mediation backed by enforceable guarantees could redirect conflicts toward diplomacy rather than escalation. The Iran war ultimately reveals a sobering reality: international law is only as strong as the willingness of states to uphold it. If this trajectory continues, the consequences will extend far beyond this conflict. The erosion of legal norms risks creating a world in which power dictates outcomes and law becomes secondary. The Iran war, therefore, is not just a regional confrontation; it is a defining moment for the credibility of international law itself. The choice before the global community is clear: reinforce the rules that govern war, or witness their gradual disappearance in the face of unchecked force.

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

Briefs

Iran rejects ceasefire proposals

FROM PAGE 01
The Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Zone in southwest Khuzestan province on Saturday, a local Iranian official said, adding that five people were killed. "At this point, the two facilities, which together account for roughly 85 percent of Iran's petrochemical exports, have been taken out of operation and are no longer functioning," Katz said. "This represents a severe economic blow amounting to tens of billions of dollars to the Iranian regime." Israel also carried out strikes last month on gas facilities at the South Pars Special Economic Zone in Asaluyeh. The South Pars/North Dome mega-field — the largest known natural gas reserve in the world — is shared between Iran and Qatar. In recent days, Israel has targeted key industrial sectors as part of the ongoing military campaign against Iran. On Friday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli strikes had destroyed around 70 percent of Iran's steel production capacity, significantly undermining Tehran's ability to manufacture weapons. Steel is a strategically important material used in industrial and military production, including for missiles, drones and ships. Katz said he and Netanyahu had ordered the military "to continue striking with full force Iran's national infrastructure."

No official comment on regional conflict

FROM PAGE 01
of heightened regional sensitivity, responsible diplomacy demands discretion, accuracy, and restraint. We therefore strongly urge all media organizations and platforms to exercise due diligence, refrain from speculation, and rely solely on officially issued statements and media readouts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for accurate information." Meanwhile, Pakistan strongly condemns the incident of vandalism and unrest targeting the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Damascus. Such acts violate the sanctity and security of diplomatic missions, which are protected under international law, including the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and undermine the norms governing peaceful diplomatic engagement between states. Pakistan reiterates its commitment to the principles of international law and diplomatic norms, and emphasises the importance of maintaining peace, stability and mutual respect among nations.

Pakistan, Turkiye sign MoU...

FROM PAGE 01
He maintained that the MoU was not only a "simple document of cooperation between courts, but it also represents our shared vision and resolve to strengthen constitutional governance, uphold the rule of law, ensure judicial independence and protect fundamental rights". Justice Afridi stressed that judicial institutions cannot function in isolation, adding that "common challenges such as rapid technological change, evolving understanding of rights, and complex constitutional questions require us to engage in global judicial conversation". He was of the opinion that with the help of such agreements, "courts learn from each other and strengthen their collective capacity to deliver justice".

We can destroy Iran in one ...

FROM PAGE 01
The press conference reflects a mix of military assertiveness and diplomatic signaling, as Washington weighs both intensified action and potential negotiations in the evolving conflict.



ISLAMABAD: Focal person PM youth program Sheikh Dawood in opening of Photojournalist Association snooker tournament in a ceremony held at National Press Club on Monday. — DNA

PHF announces schedule for U-18 National Championship

According to the PHF, the participating teams have been divided into four pools. Pool A comprises Pakistan Customs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2, Punjab 4 and Gilgit-Baltistan. Pool B includes Punjab 1, Sindh 2, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1. In Pool C, Police, Punjab 2, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad will compete, while Pool D features Pakistan Education Board, Sindh 1, Punjab 3 and Pakistan Army.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) on Monday unveiled the schedule for the Youth Under-18 National Hockey Championship 2026, set to be played from April 9 to April 19. A total of 16 teams from across the country will participate in the 11-day tournament, aiming to clinch the national title while providing a platform for emerging players to showcase their talent for future national selection.

According to the PHF, the participating teams have been divided into four pools. Pool A comprises Pakistan Customs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2, Punjab 4 and Gilgit-Baltistan. Pool B includes Punjab 1, Sindh 2, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1. In Pool C, Police, Punjab 2, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad will compete, while

Pool D features Pakistan Education Board, Sindh 1, Punjab 3 and Pakistan Army. The championship will commence on April 9 with four matches, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2 taking on Gilgit-Baltistan, Sindh 2 facing Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1 meeting Punjab 1, and Pakistan Customs playing against Punjab 4. The group stage matches will continue until April 14, followed by a rest day on April 15. The quarterfinals are scheduled for April 16, where winners and runners-up of respective pools will face off. The semifinals will be held on April 17 at 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm. The event will conclude on April 19, with the third-place match slated for 1:30 pm, followed by the final at 3:30 pm. The PHF expressed confidence that the championship would help unearth fresh talent from across the country and contribute to strengthening the future of Pakistan hockey.

Hockey festival concludes:

A hockey festival organized jointly by the Fatima Hockey Academy and Crescent Hockey Club concluded here on Monday with various teams competing in women, junior, and senior categories. In the decisive matches of the league, Fatima Women Hockey Academy (Color) defeated Fatima Women Hockey Academy (White) by 1-0, securing the best-of-three series with a 2-1 lead. In the junior category, Mian Zafar Hockey Academy Sargodha beat ABJ Hockey Academy Juniors 1-0 in the final league match; however, ABJ Hockey Academy stood first in the points table with six points, while Mian Zahid Hockey Academy secured second place with five points. In the senior category, ABJ Hockey Academy defeated Crescent Hockey Club Sargodha 3-2 in the final match, although Crescent Hockey

Club retained the top position with six points overall. The prize distribution ceremony was attended by Chief Guest Malik Muhammad Hassan, CEO of FIEAURA, and senior hockey player Manzoor Haider, who distributed trophies and awards among players and officials. The guests congratulated the winners and vowed to continue their efforts for the promotion of hockey in the region. During the event, APP reporter Rana Muhammad Waqas and cameraman Muhammad Atif Ali Khichii were also honored with shields for their excellent media coverage of the festival. Event organizer Hassan Haider Shah stated that the tournament showcased high-quality skills from all teams and emphasized that with government patronage, Sargodha could produce more national and international players, particularly from the women's category.

Wrestling federation slams PSB decision

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation, Nawab Furqan Khan, has expressed deep concern and strong disappointment over the decisions taken in the 36th Board Meeting of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), in which the Pakistan Padel Federation was reportedly granted interim affiliation.

He stated that this decision appears to be a clear violation of Pakistan's National Sports Policy and the Public Notice/Circular No. F.20-2/2022-PSB(NF) dated 27 January 2026 issued by the Pakistan Sports Board, which clearly outlines mandatory affiliation requirements, including SECP registration, performance record, and completion of all administrative and legal formalities. Ignoring these fundamental conditions while granting interim affiliation raises serious questions over transparency, consistency, and fairness. Nawab Furqan Khan further said that Rule 20 of the PSB Constitution provides a clear framework for affiliation, and any deviation from it not only damages the credibility of the institution but also creates uncertainty for other sports federations across the country. He added that the Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation has been applying for affiliation for several years despite fulfilling all legal requirements, yet it has continuously been ignored. The federation also faced unnecessary obstacles in obtaining NOCs and was forced to approach the court, where the Honourable High Court issued orders in its favour. Despite this, delays and procedural hurdles continued to be imposed by the Pakistan Sports Board. While complete applications are being ignored on one hand, new federations are being granted affiliation on the other, which is a clear injustice. Nawab Furqan Khan raised the question: Has Mansoor Ali Khan or Jahangir Khan ever played padel? Have they fulfilled all requirements of the National Sports Policy and PSB Constitution for interim affiliation? — DNA

International youth explore China's green innovation

BEIJING: A group of 19 international students from six countries embarked on a journey of discovery on March 31, exploring the cutting edge of China's green technology, digital infrastructure and cultural heritage in a tour that offered them a window into the country's vision for the future. Students from Pakistan, Indonesia, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Russia and Morocco, are all active content creators on their social media platforms. Studying at Nanjing Forestry University and Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, they represent a growing community of international youth who are documenting their experiences in China and sharing them with audiences around the world. Their itinerary took them through a range of sites in Nanjing's Xuanwu district that showcase the city's advances in technology and sustainability. At the Jiangsu International Data Port, a provincial-level digital infrastructure hub, they witnessed the backbone of China's data economy—a network of high-capacity computing and storage facilities that enable everything from cross-border e-commerce to artificial intelligence development. A visit to the Jiangsu Carbon Peak and Carbon

Neutrality Construction Exhibition Center introduced them to the country's ambitious climate goals, where they learned about innovative technologies driving emissions reduction across industries, from green manufacturing to renewable energy integration, CEN reported. The students also explored Hongshan Forest Zoo, an urban ecological preserve renowned for its conservation efforts and its beloved "internet-famous" animals, which have drawn millions of visitors and sparked widespread interest in wildlife protection. A tour of the China Legal Industry Park offered insight into the country's legal services sector and its role in supporting innovation and business development. At the Xuanwu Modeler Academy, they experienced firsthand new models of artificial intelligence talent cultivation, engaging with curricula designed to equip the next generation with skills in machine learning, data science and AI ethics. A Tai Chi session provided a moment of connection with traditional Chinese culture, illustrating the harmony between heritage and modernity that characterizes China's development path. For Urooj Rehmani, a PhD student in environmental ecology from Pakistan, the

visit to the China Global Carbon Valley—a key feature of the carbon neutrality exhibition—was a profound inspiration. "The most shocking, incredible thing for me is the use of technology in China as we can access each and everything at our doorstep," she shared. "It really inspired me how technology combines environmental protection, bringing together companies to create projects and reduce carbon. Nanjing is going towards a greener future, and we are heading towards a protective future." Danish Manzoor, a PhD student in meteorology also from Pakistan, found the experience deeply relevant to his academic research. He was particularly struck by the AI models presented during the tour. "AI models—especially the iFlytek Spark Model—were very new for us. It was a great experience from a scientific perspective," he said, noting how such technologies are increasingly being applied to climate modeling and environmental monitoring. Ishmael from Zimbabwe was equally enthusiastic about the intellectual exchanges throughout the day. He described the experience as highly engaging and highlighted the value of cross-cultural dialogue and the opportunity to learn from China's approach to innovation and sustainability. — APP

Matloob Ahmed clinches 12th J.A Zaman Memorial Title

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Matloob Ahmed of Garrison Golf Club delivered a commanding performance to clinch the 12th J.A Zaman Memorial Championship, pulling away from the field in emphatic fashion on the final day. Starting the day tied with his long-time rival M. Shabbir, Matloob wasted no time in asserting control, carding an early birdie on the second hole. He maintained the momentum through the front nine, adding another birdie on the 6th, while Shabbir struggled to find rhythm, with uncharacteristic errors and bogeys creeping into his round due to errant shots. The defining moment of the championship came on the 7th hole. After Shabbir's tee shot drifted left, forcing him to play safe into the fairway, Matloob seized the opportunity with a brilliant approach, landing his ball just feet from the pin in two shots. Under pressure, Shabbir faltered, pulling his approach into the greenside bunker and eventually carding a bogey. Matloob calmly converted his eagle putt, resulting in a decisive three-shot swing that shifted the momentum firmly in his favor. Minhaj claimed third place with a solid final round of 3-under par, finishing at -4 overall. While not at his peak throughout the tournament, his late surge earned him a podium finish. Other notable performances included Talat Ijaz at -3 and Alam at -2 for the championship. In the senior professionals category, Tariq continued his dominance, capturing his fourth consecutive title. The junior professionals title was awarded to Ashraf from Karachi, who finished with a total score of +3. Marking a significant milestone for the tournament, the ladies professionals category was introduced this year and won by

Zehbunissa. The 2026 edition of the championship witnessed record participation, with over 600 golfers from across Pakistan, making it the largest golf tournament in the country in terms of player turnout. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Chief Patron Hamid Zaman expressed gratitude to the Zaman family for their

unwavering support in promoting the game of golf in memory of their father. He paid tribute to the late Mr. J.A Zaman, describing him as an avid golf enthusiast and a man of remarkable character. The continued success of the championship in his honor stands as a testament to his legacy and contribution to the sport in Pakistan.



Japan FM phones Dar

FROM PAGE 01
all initiatives aimed at de-escalation and the achievement of lasting peace and stability.

34 Killed in fresh US, Israeli strikes

FROM PAGE 01
proposals tied to conditions it views as coercive. Meanwhile, the conflict intensified overnight as at least 34 people were killed in fresh US-Israeli airstrikes targeting multiple Iranian cities, according to regional reports. The latest attacks are part of a broader military campaign that has caused heavy casualties and widespread destruction since the conflict began. Diplomatic efforts continue despite the escalating violence, but analysts warn that without immediate consensus on ceasefire terms, the situation could further destabilize the wider Middle East region.

Kremlin says the whole Middle East is 'on fire'

FROM PAGE 01
seen them but that the Kremlin preferred not to comment directly. "We note that the level of tension in the region is growing and continues to grow," Peskov said. "In fact, the entire region is on fire. These are all very dangerous and negative consequences of the aggression that was unleashed against Iran." "The geography of this conflict has expanded, and now we are all aware of the consequences that we have, including very, very negative consequences for the global economy."

Three cops martyred in Bannu firing

FROM PAGE 01
apprehend the attackers. In another incident, armed men opened fire at the NADRA office in Baka Khel, resulting in martyrdom of constable Rafiullah and security guard Gul Shah Noor. Police said a heavy contingent was dispatched to the scene following the attack, and an investigation is underway. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out by Khawarij militants outside the NADRA office in Bannu. In a statement, the minister expressed deep sorrow over the incident and paid glowing tribute to the police constable and security guard who embraced martyrdom while performing their duty. Naqvi said that Guard Gul Shah Noor and Constable Rafiullah attained the highest honour of martyrdom in the line of duty. "By sacrificing their lives in the path of duty, both men have set a remarkable example of courage and dedication," he stated. The Interior Minister extended heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the families of the martyrs, assuring them that the government stands with them in this hour of grief.

Iran accuses UN nuclear watchdog of inaction

FROM PAGE 01
recent attack in its vicinity on April 4 killing a security staff member and injuring others. He warned that such attacks could risk the release of radioactive material from an operating reactor and could have "irreparable consequences" for people, the environment and neighboring countries. He described the attacks as a clear breach of international law, and criticized what he called the agency's "lack of decisive action," saying mere expressions of concern were insufficient and would embolden further attacks. The chief of the UN nuclear watchdog on Monday warned attacks near Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant "pose a very real danger to nuclear safety and must stop."

Briefs

Japan's imperial family inspect recovery efforts

TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Naruhito, Empress Masako and their daughter Princess Aiko visited Fukushima Prefecture on Monday to inspect the recovery efforts since the devastating earthquake and tsunami that triggered a nuclear plant meltdown 15 years ago. The overnight trip includes visits to Futaba and Okuma, the towns that host the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, as well as other towns located within a 20-kilometer radius of the facility. On the first day, they are expected to lay flowers at the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum, take a tour of an exhibition on the earthquake and nuclear meltdown and later meet with survivors. They will stay at the J-Village sports facility, which was used as a disaster response base. On Tuesday, the imperial family are scheduled to travel to Tomioka to view an exhibition of the tsunami's destruction, observe classes at town-run educational facilities, meet survivors in Okuma, and visit a rest stop in Namie.—APP

Services' exports up by 18.38% to Rs 6.4b

ISLAMABAD: The export of various services witnessed 18.38 percent increase during the first eight months (July-February) of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. According to the latest PBS data, Pakistan earned \$6.463 billion from the export of services during July-February 2025-26 as compared to services' export of \$5.459 billion in July-February 2024-25. The services' imports also witnessed an increase of 14.17 percent during the months under review and were recorded at \$8.604 billion as compared to the imports of \$7.536 billion in July-February 2024-25. Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit increased by 3.08 percent during the months under review as compared to the corresponding months of previous year. The services trade deficit was recorded at \$2.140 billion during current months against the deficit of \$2.076 billion during same months of last year. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of services in February 2026 increased by 16.89 percent to \$812.25 million from \$694.90 million in February 2025. On the other hand, the imports declined by 4.43 percent by going down from \$952.19 million to \$910.02 million, according to PBS data. On month-on-month basis, the export of services decreased by 7.33 percent in February 2024 when compared to the exports of \$876.48 million in January 2026.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs279.07 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs279.10. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs279.05 and Rs280.20, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs0.63 to close at Rs322.81 from the previous day's close of Rs322.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen gained 01 paise and closed at Rs1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs0.49 and closed at Rs369.99 compared to the previous day's Rs369.50. The exchange rate of the Emirati and the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 paise each to close at Rs75.97 and Rs74.33, respectively.—APP

Progress on women's digital empowerment project reviewed

The minister stressed that integrating women into Pakistan's digital economy is critical to formalizing the largely informal sector, which accounts for about 50 percent of the country's GDP. She said greater participation of women would strengthen the workforce, enhance per capita productivity, and help build a sustainable talent pipeline

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT), which chairs the National Steering Committee (SC) for the Digitalisation for Women Economic Empowerment (D4WEE) Project, convened a high-level meeting at the UN Women Country Office in Islamabad to review progress and strengthen coordination on the initiative. The D4WEE Project is a four-year programme (2024-2028) funded by KOICA. The Steering Committee serves as the project's highest governing body, providing strategic oversight, guiding policy integration, and ensuring accountability. Key government and private sector stakeholders attended the meeting to assess ongoing efforts and ensure the effective delivery of programme objectives. Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja highlighted the committee's mandate to embed project outcomes into institutional strategies, ensure sustainability beyond the project cycle, and track gender-disaggregated results in real time. She noted Pakistan's progress in digital inclusion, stating that the gender gap in mobile internet usage declined from 36-38 percent to 25 percent over the past year. She also highlighted the creation of over 800,000 digital wallets by women under the Ramazan digital payments initiative. Additionally, she emphasized government efforts to expand access to digital services and financial inclusion by providing seven million free SIMs to underserved women. The minister stressed that integrating women into Pakistan's digital economy is critical to formalizing the largely in-



formal sector, which accounts for about 50 percent of the country's GDP. She said greater participation of women would strengthen the workforce, enhance per capita productivity, and help build a sustainable talent pipeline. She also called for strategic preparedness for emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, to ensure they serve as

equalizers rather than widen existing disparities in access to opportunities. The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to enhance inter-agency collaboration, accelerate programme implementation, and translate progress into lasting policy reforms.

By tracking measurable outcomes and embedding digital inclusion into core strategies, the Steering Committee, chaired by MoITT, aims to ensure women play a central role in Pakistan's rapidly growing digital economy under the Digital Nation Vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

In China's shadow, Filipino villagers carve out normal life on disputed island

THITU ISLAND: When Mary Joy Suelo set off for Thitu Island in 2024, it took five days at sea on a Philippine navy ship to get there — a journey that made her realize how very far she was from her family and the life she knew. She arrived with a group of other teachers to work at the island's only school. As soon as they disembarked, they saw it was surrounded by Chinese military vessels. "At night, their lights would flicker. It almost looked like you were in a park. We even counted them. Before, they could reach up to around 50 ships. Now, there are fewer," she said. "We really felt sadness because we were far from our families and had to adjust to a completely new environment... We really felt fear. But we embraced it — not just for our work, but for the children here." Thitu Island is the largest Philippine-occupied feature in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, and the only one with a civilian population. It is located some 480 km northwest of mainland Palawan province and surrounded by shallow coral ranges. The Philippine military took over the island in the early 1970s and renamed it as Pagasa, which means "hope" in Filipino. While it is also claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, the Philippines has controlled it for the past half-century and incorporated it into the Palawan province. Covering just 37 hectares — roughly a tenth of Central Park in Manhattan — the island has a civilian population of a few hundred people and hosts military personnel who maintain the Philippines' claim and provide security. "The community is united. There are no conflicts or disputes among residents. There are about 418 of us living here," Danilo Belono, a municipal worker, told Arab News. Belono decided to move to the island in 2010, as working there guaranteed a steady income and various subsidies on staple goods, allowing him to save enough to properly educate his four children, who now attend college on the mainland. Goods are transported to the island by boat, while residents — most of whom work as fishermen — often supplement the local market with seafood. "There are times when they get a good catch, especially when the weather is good. There are times when they get blocked (by the Chinese) when they try to go to the fishing grounds," Belono said. China Coast Guard and military ships are visible from every corner of the tiny island, which can be circled in just half an hour on foot. Despite the Chinese presence, however, the island's infrastructure has been steadily expanding. Since Belono's arrival, it has gained a sheltered port and an airstrip. "Sometimes, those bringing construction materials are afraid to come here because they are also being blocked by the Chinese," he said.—DNA

Public debt surges to Rs 81.4t, Senate panel voices concern

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on Monday briefed that Pakistan's total public debt has reached Rs. 81.4 trillion, comprising both foreign and domestic components. The Director (Debt), Ministry of Finance, briefed the Committee that Pakistan's total public debt has reached Rs. 81.4 trillion, comprising both foreign and domestic components, with over Rs. 21 trillion attributed to external debt. A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs was held here on Monday under the chairmanship of Senator Saifullah Abro. The meeting was attended by Senators Kamran Murtaza, Syed Waqar Mehdi, Haji Hidayatullah Khan, Kamil Ali Agha, and Rubina Khalid. He further informed that, based on the latest census, the per capita debt burden stands at approximately Rs. 325,000 per citizen. The Committee was told that the persistent rise in federal fiscal debt is primarily due to government expenditures exceeding revenues, with oil imports being a major contributing factor. An important point highlighted during the briefing was that while the government regularly services domestic debt, it often does so by acquiring additional loans. Expressing con-

cern, the Chairman questioned how long the country would continue to rely on borrowing for its financial sustainability. He also raised concerns that why the government is not considering the cuts in grants to parliamentarians and urged the Finance Division to formulate policies that are financially beneficial for the nation. The Chairman further sought details regarding a Rs. 65 billion loan extended to banks by the State Bank of Pakistan. The Committee directed the Finance Division to provide province-wise details of debt liabilities in the next meeting. The Committee also discussed a proposal suggesting that outstanding per capita debt be offered to affluent citizens for voluntary repayment. Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that any funds collected under such a mechanism must be strictly utilized for debt servicing and safeguarded against misuse. The Committee was also briefed on the National Health Support Program, initially funded by the World Bank for Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). It was informed that the World Bank later withdrew funding for AJK and GB, limiting the project to ICT due to its policy of not financing projects in disputed territories. The Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, informed that the project, initiated in late 2022, aims to strengthen existing healthcare infrastructure, human resources, and provision of essential medicines and equipment in rural areas. However, the Committee noted with concern that progress has been extremely slow, with only an office established so far. It was further revealed that the government has already paid USD 4.178 million in interest without tangible progress. The Chairman termed such projects a "question mark" for the nation and summoned the Secretary, Ministry of National Health Services, for the next meeting. Officials from the National Health Support Program, Health Department, Government of Sindh, also briefed the Committee on ongoing health initiatives in the province, emphasizing their focus on improving equitable access and quality of essential healthcare services at the primary level. The Chairman pointed out that a village located just 2.5 kilometers from GarhiKhuda Bakhsh still lacks basic health facilities.—APP

ME supply woes keep oil markets on edge

Exports from the Black Sea port of Tuapse are set to rise to 794,000 metric tons in April, up 8.7 percent on a daily basis from 755,000 metric tonnes planned for March, according to two traders and Reuters calculations

LONDON: Oil prices fell in choppy trade on Monday, as investors awaited clarity on the status of talks between the US and Iran and remained wary about sustained supply losses due to shipping disruptions. Brent crude futures inched 36 cents lower, or 0.33 percent, to \$108.67 a barrel at 3:22 p.m. Saudi time. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were trading down 0.86 percent, or 96 cents, at \$110.58 per barrel. The pricing moves in Asia trading on Monday were dwarfed by an 11 percent surge for WTI and an 8 percent rise for Brent during the previous trading session on Thursday, the biggest absolute price increase since 2020. The US and Iran received the framework of a plan to end hostilities, but Iran rejected immediately reopening the Strait of Hormuz, after President Donald Trump threatened to rain "hell" on Tehran if it did not make a deal by the end of Tuesday. Iran also said it had formulated its positions and demands in response to recent ceasefire proposals conveyed via intermediaries. The Strait of Hormuz, which carries oil and petroleum products from Iraq, Saudi

Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE, remains largely closed due to Iranian attacks on shipping after the war began on Feb. 28. Some vessels, however, including an Omani-operated tanker, a French-owned container ship and a Japanese-owned gas carrier, have passed through the Strait of Hormuz since Thursday, shipping data showed, reflecting Iran's policy to allow passage for vessels from countries it deems more friendly. "The market is trying to realise what to expect going forward. The most important headline this weekend has been that some ships passed through the Strait," said SEB Research analyst Ole Hvalbye. Hvalbye also highlighted that Europe continued to lose physical barrels and products to Asia due to the market tightening. The Middle East supply disruptions have led to refiners seeking alternative sources for crude, particularly for physical cargoes in the US and Britain's North Sea. Spot premiums for US West Texas Intermediate crude have jumped to all-time highs on competition between Asian and European refiners. Indian refiners have also postponed main-

Syria, US intervened to halt Israeli strike on Lebanon-Syria border crossing

BEIRUT: Syrian intervention helped halt a planned Israeli strike on the Masnaa border crossing between Lebanon and Syria, a vital commercial and civilian lifeline, Lebanese officials told Arab News on Monday. Israel had issued warnings that it would target the crossing and the international road linking Lebanon to Syria, prompting urgent diplomatic contacts involving Beirut, Damascus and Washington to prevent the strike. A Lebanese official source said Lebanese and Syrian authorities communicated with relevant parties after the Israeli threat, stressing that the crossing is used by thousands of civilians and is Lebanon's main overland trade route to Arab countries. Public Works and Transport Minister Fayez Rasamny told Arab News that the Masnaa crossing is subject to strict security oversight and coordination between Lebanese and Syrian authorities. "The Masnaa crossing is under full supervision and monitoring by Lebanese security forces, where inspections, checks and scans are carried out with the utmost seriousness and discipline," he said. Rasamny denied claims about possible smuggling operations, particularly of weapons, as "not based on any factual evidence, given the strict security measures and coordination between the Lebanese and Syrian authorities." The Israeli army had warned travelers and residents to evacuate the crossing area and the M30 international road, claiming Hezbollah was using the crossing for military purposes and weapons smuggling. However, security sources at the crossing said Hezbollah no longer uses the Masnaa route, particularly after political and security changes in Syria altered control and oversight along the border. "Since the fall of the previous regime in Syria, Lebanon's official land crossings have lost their security function for Hezbollah. The group has retreated from using the Masnaa crossing, which it had previously considered a main route," a security source told Arab News. Authorities on both sides of the border took precautionary measures within hours of the Israeli warning, moving trucks, transferring detainees and clearing administrative offices and equipment from the crossing area to minimize risks in event of an attack. Syrian authorities also cooperated by allowing stranded trucks to return to Syrian customs yards, while traffic through the crossing was suspended until the threat subsided. The Masnaa-Jeidet Yabous crossing is currently the only operational land crossing between Lebanon and Syria and is Lebanon's main land route for trade, agriculture, tourism and transit to other Arab countries. Economic groups warned that any closure or destruction of the crossing would have severe consequences for Lebanon's already collapsing economy. Ibrahim Tarchichi, head of the Bekaa Farmers' Association, said all trucks passing through Masnaa are subject to thorough inspections by several Lebanese security agencies. "Closing Masnaa would harm all of Lebanon — commercially, touristically, industrially and agriculturally — as it is the only land route connecting Lebanon to Arab countries," he said. "More than 300 trucks pass through Masnaa daily, carrying over 5,000 tonnes of goods in imports and exports. The threat to close the crossing marks a turning point in this devastating war we are living through," he said.—APP

Belarus has about 50 doctors per 10,000 residents

MINSK: World Health Day is marked annually on 7 April. In the run-up to this day, the National Statistical Committee of Belarus has prepared a statistical overview, BelTA reports. As of the end of 2025, Belarus had 536 hospital organizations, 1,381 outpatient and polyclinic facilities, 42,240 practicing physicians, and more than 110,000 mid-level medical workers. Last year, Belarus recorded 108.4 million physician consultations, including both clinic appointments and home visits, which is 11.9 per person. Belarus has 46.9 practicing doctors and 121.9 mid-level medical workers for every 10,000 residents. This puts the country ahead of Bulgaria, Lithuania, Switzerland, and Spain in physician availability, and ahead of the Netherlands, Iceland, Denmark, and Austria in mid-level medical staffing. A sample survey of households conducted in early 2026 asked individuals aged 16 and older to rate their own health. The results showed that 94.1% of the population considered their health to be good. Additionally, 32.2% of Belarusians participate in physical activity, whether through exercise or sports.—APP

Flooding kills three in S Russia

MOSCOW: Flooding sparked by heavy rains killed three people in southern Russia, the emergency ministry said Monday, adding that 4,000 people had been evacuated with search and rescue efforts ongoing. Social media videos showed flooded villages and highways engulfed by water in Russia's Dagestan republic in the Caucasus mountains, with overturned cars lying on the roadside. A multi-story apartment house partly collapsed in the regional capital Makhachkala. "Water levels rose after heavy rain, leading to further flooding of streets and residential areas," the ministry said. "Unfortunately, two people were killed, including one child," as water inundated a highway, overturning two cars, according to the emergency ministry. Another person died in a landslide, it said. Some water filtration plants in the region had to be stopped due to power cuts, said the local authorities. Thousands of rescuers were continuing work as further heavy downpours were expected, the ministry said. Dagestan was hit with a previous major flood just last week that had triggered widespread power cuts and forced authorities to announce a regional state of emergency.—APP

Qatar PMI slumps to 38.7 as war hits non-energy sector

RIYADH: Qatar's Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 38.7 in March from 50.6 in February, signaling a sharp contraction in the non-energy private sector as regional conflict disrupted demand. The S&P Global PMI dropped well below the 50 threshold that separates expansion from contraction, marking one of the steepest deteriorations in business conditions in recent years. The decline was driven by a sharp fall in new business, which contracted at the fastest pace since the survey began in 2017, as companies reported delays, suspended operations and reluctance among clients and investors to commit to new projects. The slowdown in Qatar's non-energy sector growth is occurring against the backdrop of rising escalation triggered by the outbreak of war between the US and Israel against Iran in late February. The conflict has severely disrupted flight operations and shipping routes, while increasing economic uncertainty throughout the Gulf region. Across the region, PMI readings were mixed, with the UAE easing to 52.9 from 55, Kuwait falling to 46.3 from 54.5, and Egypt slipping to 48 from 48.9.—APP

Briefs

Couple guilty of Rs 132.6 mln immigration fraud

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Human Trafficking Circle of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore has concluded an inquiry that found Dr. Zahid and his wife, Sughra Zahid, formerly associated with Zara Medical Centre, Gujjar Khan, guilty of large-scale fraud and deception. According to the inquiry report, the couple deceived Muhammad Ayub Khan, a resident of Gujranwala, in 2022 by promising to send him, his wife, their three children, and ten additional individuals to Portugal. They also assured the victims that employment, housing, and other facilities would be arranged upon arrival. In return for these promises, the accused collected a total of Rs. 132.6 million from the victims through various bank transactions and cash installments. During the inquiry, conducted in the presence of the complainant and witnesses, including Rizwan Tufail and Khurshid Ahmed, it was revealed that the couple neither sent the family to Portugal nor fulfilled any of the agreed-upon arrangements. They also failed to return the money. — APP

Pak to repay \$4.8bn in external obligations, UAE payments part of plan

MONITORING DESK
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has made arrangements to repay \$4.8 billion in external obligations by June, including \$3.5 billion payable to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through three different facilities, official sources told. The development comes after the federal government decided to return \$2 billion to Abu Dhabi by the end of the current month. The amount had been placed with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) as a deposit, on which the country has been paying around 6% interest. According to the sources, Islamabad also received assurances of more than \$5 billion in financial support from two friendly countries to help manage its external financing requirements. The sources added that a \$1.3 billion Eurobond, issued for a 10-year period, is maturing this week and will be repaid accordingly, adding to near-term repayment pressures. In the past, the UAE had rolled over such deposits annually. However, in December 2025, the facility was extended only for short durations — initially for one month and then for two months — reflecting tightening financial conditions.

Türkiye to connect its railways with Syria

ANKARA: Turkish Minister of transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloglu said that Türkiye plans to extend its current railway line to the city of Aleppo in Syria, as part of efforts to revive the historic Hejaz Railway. "We wish to revive the old line with a symbolic and historical character. However, if we are talking about freight transport and logistics, we will first begin by extending our current railway line to Aleppo — a project requiring approximately \$110 million. Between Aleppo and Damascus, there is already an operational railway line," Anadolu News Agency quoted Mr. Uraloglu as saying during his participation in an event for Türkiye's ruling Justice and Development Party in Afyonkarahisar province, western Türkiye. "We will also work on reviving the railway line extending from Nusaybin in southeastern Türkiye to Qamishli in northeastern Syria. This will enable us to establish connectivity with both Syria and Iraq, and these projects are included in our agenda." He added. — APP

Govt keen to fetch foreign investments, says Aurangzeb

The Finance Minister also highlighted the importance of promoting energy-efficient technologies and noted that improving awareness and implementation of existing initiatives would be essential to achieving intended outcomes

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a virtual meeting with a group of representatives from the electric fan industry, led by members of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Pakistan Electric Fan Manufacturers Association (PEFMA), to discuss sectoral challenges, export potential, and avenues for policy support. Welcoming the participants, the Finance Minister recalled his recent engagement with the business community at FPCCI Lahore and reiterated the Government's commitment to undertaking focused consultations with individual sectors to better understand their operational landscape and support their growth. The group provided an overview of the structure and economic significance of the fan industry, highlighting that it is a

major indigenous manufacturing sector with around 300 manufacturers concentrated in Gujrat and Gujranwala. The industry contributes significantly to employment, with approximately 40,000 direct and over 150,000 indirect jobs, and maintains a strong value addition profile. Members also shared insights into the sector's export footprint, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, while noting recent trends in export performance. Discussions also focused on the sector's transition towards energy-efficient DC fan technology. The group highlighted its capacity and readiness to support large-scale replacement of conventional fans, with potential implications for reducing electricity consumption. In this context, the Finance Minister noted that while the policy framework is in place, greater traction would require enhanced awareness and improved coordination with financial institutions. He emphasized the importance of addressing implementation

gaps to accelerate adoption. Access to finance for capacity expansion was also discussed, particularly in the context of scaling up production to meet potential demand under energy efficiency initiatives. The Finance Minister underscored the importance of facilitating investment in productive capacity and noted that existing financing frameworks would be reviewed to better align with sectoral requirements. During the discussion, members of the group drew attention to a number of structural and policy-related matters affecting the sector, particularly in relation to the availability and utilization of key raw materials such as copper and aluminum. It was noted that increased exports of these inputs in raw form have had implications for domestic value-added manufacturing, and the need for a balanced approach that promotes higher value addition within the country was emphasized. Matters relating to SME liquidity, including the processing of tax refunds, export facili-

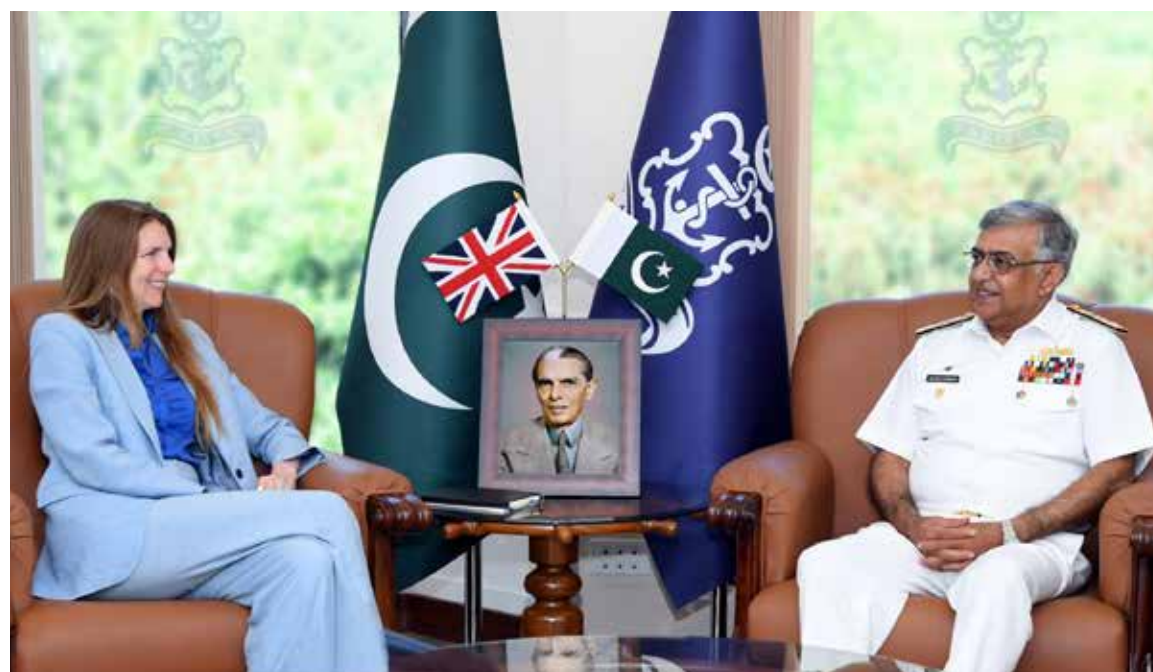
tation mechanisms, and tariff structures on inputs, were also deliberated. The Finance Minister emphasized that ongoing reforms are aimed at rationalizing input costs and improving the overall business environment, while encouraging the industry to share specific details for further review. The discussion further touched upon opportunities for expanding market access and enhancing competitiveness of the electrical appliances sector through targeted policy support and innovation. In his remarks, the Finance Minister underscored that sustainable export growth is contingent upon a combination of competitiveness, scale, and policy consistency. He noted that while taxation remains an important element, access to finance, energy efficiency, and market development are equally critical to strengthening industrial performance. He encouraged continued engagement between the industry and relevant government stakeholders to refine practical and forward-looking proposals.

FCCP irked over denial of sisterhood

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan on Monday expressed displeasure during the hearing of a property distribution case from Wazirabad, after one party denied the existence of a sister, prompting the court to seek a written affidavit. During the proceedings, Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan questioned the rationale behind multiple judicial decisions that reportedly allocated the shares of four sisters to a single sister. As the hearing progressed, counsel for one of the petitioner sisters argued that a previous court decision emerged after one sister had challenged the original distribution of the property. On the other hand, the counsel representing Sardar Begum informed the court that when his client sought her share in the inheritance, her status as a sister was outrightly denied. At this point, Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan inquired whether Sardar Begum was not the daughter of Abdullah. In response, the petitioner's counsel maintained that Sardar Begum was not Abdullah's daughter. The court then directed that, if so, a written affidavit be submitted to substantiate the claim. The court was further informed that following the father's death, the property had initially been distributed in 1989 among three sisters and two brothers. However, in 2018, one of the sisters, Noreen, challenged the distribution in court. Subsequently, the Commissioner Revenue ruled in favour of Noreen regarding the division of land. — APP

Gold prices surge by Rs 1,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold increased in the local market on Monday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 1,100 to settle at Rs 491,462 compared to Rs 490,362 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 943 to Rs 421,349 from Rs 420,406, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 864 to Rs 386,250 against Rs 385,386. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$11 to \$4,687 per ounce from \$4,676. — APP



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan H.E Ms Jane Marriott called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. — DNA

Korean spy agency believes Kim's daughter to succeed him

DNA

SEOUL: South Korea's spy agency now believes North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's teenage daughter has been positioned as his successor, lawmakers said on Monday, citing a recent public display of her driving a tank that was likely intended to dispel any doubts. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) told lawmakers its assessment was not based on circumstantial inference but on what it described as "credible intelligence" collected by the agency, according to briefings by ruling and opposition party members after a closed-door parliamentary meeting. The NIS said the imagery of the daughter driving a tank was intended to highlight her supposed military aptitude and dispel doubts over a female heir, lawmakers said. North Korea's state-run media KCNA last month published photos of Kim and his daughter driving a new tank, following earlier images showing her firing a rifle at a shooting range and using a handgun.

Such scenes are intended to pay "homage" to Kim's own public military appearances during the early 2010s when he was being prepared to succeed his own father, ruling Democratic Party lawmaker Park Sun-won said. The latest assessment of Kim's daughter, who is believed to be around 13 and to be named Ju Ae, is a progression from earlier analysis by the spy agency, which said she was likely being groomed to succeed her father. Ju Ae's repeated presence at defence-related events is aimed at easing doubts over a female successor and accelerating the construction of a succession narrative, the lawmakers said, citing the NIS. Lawmakers have previously said the agency believes her increasingly prominent role suggests she is already being treated as the de facto second-highest figure in the North's leadership. People Power Party lawmaker Lee Seong-kweon said the NIS noted that suggestions Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, might be unhappy about the focus on Ju Ae were misplaced, as Kim Yo Jong does not hold independent power.

PM directs timely completion of railway projects, swift reforms

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the Minister for Railways to ensure the timely completion of ongoing railway projects and utilize all available resources to provide the public with better, safer, and affordable travel facilities. The prime minister, in a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi here, said that in the prevailing economic conditions, the government was avoiding placing any additional burden on the masses and was also focusing on improving the railway system to increase its revenue. During the meeting, the overall performance of Pakistan

Railways, ongoing reforms, and future projects were discussed. Briefing the prime minister on the operational matters of Pakistan Railways, the railways minister said that keeping in view the public convenience amid the current Gulf situation, the fares for no train were increased across the country. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed to accelerate the reform measures to transform Pakistan Railways into a modern, safe, and reliable transportation system. He reiterated the government's commitment to the agenda of public welfare and said that by improving the performance of all institutions, the country would be put on the path of development. — APP

PTI announces rally at Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh on April 9

Barrister Gohar warns of legal action if authorities refuse permission for public gathering

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday announced a rally at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on April 9, warning they would take legal action if permission for the event was denied. The rally's date coincides with the day a no-confidence motion removed PTI founder and then prime minister Imran Khan from office in 2022. Khan, 73, has been jailed since August 2023 after convictions he and his PTI call politically motivated. Speaking at a news conference in Islamabad alongside Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and other party leaders, PTI KP president Junaid Akbar said that the former ruling party will hold the rally on April 9, emphasising their right to protest peacefully.

He warned that protests would take place wherever necessary if they were prevented from holding the rally. Addressing the conference, the KP chief minister emphasised that PTI workers were a "political" entity and not an "armed mob", alleging the ruling PML-N-led government's sole aim was to silence the PTI founder. He urged the PML-N-led government to issue the non-objection certificate (NOC) for the rally, saying the party would manage all arrangements itself for the political gathering. CM Afridi also criticised the federal government over the country's economic conditions, saying 45% of people live below the poverty line. The news conference comes shortly after opposition leaders held a meeting in the National Assembly opposition leader's chamber. Sources said that the meeting included discussions on Senate candidates and the broader protest strategy, with participants such as PTI chief Barrister Gohar, Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, Senate Opposition Leader Allama Nasir Abbas, and NA Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai attended the huddle.

Illegal kidney transplant case SC expresses dismay over accused doctor's absence

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday expressed strong displeasure over the absence of an accused doctor in a serious case involving illegal kidney transplants, terming the matter highly alarming and of an extraordinary nature. A two-member bench headed by Justice Hashim Kakar heard the case against Dr. Fawad Mumtaz, who is accused of performing illegal kidney transplants while posing as a plastic surgeon. During the hearing, Director Legal Punjab, Imran Ahmed, and defense counsel appeared before the court. The Director Legal informed the bench that the accused was arrested while carrying out illegal kidney transplant procedures in Sector B-17 of Islamabad, at a location lacking even a proper operation theatre. He further stated that the accused had previously been caught conducting similar unlawful procedures. Justice Kakar inquired whether the accused doctor was present in court. The defense counsel responded that Dr. Fawad Mumtaz had failed to appear. At this, the court expressed strong displeasure, with Justice Kakar remarking that it was incomprehensible how a plastic surgeon could perform such a complex procedure as a kidney transplant. The Director Legal Punjab informed the court that the accused is currently out on bail and is facing multiple cases. Justice Kakar observed that the doctor had been "stealing kidneys from people" and should fear God, adding that such an individual deserved a lengthy prison sentence. The court further remarked that the case was of a very serious nature, involving exploitation of poor individuals. Justice Kakar also inquired whether the affected patients were alive, to which it was confirmed that the patients undergoing transplant procedures were alive. During the proceedings, Justice Kakar noted that the accused appeared to possess surgical skills, which should have been used for positive purposes, even suggesting that such expertise could have been utilized at institutions like Quaid-i-Azam University instead of engaging in illegal activities. Subsequently, the court issued notices and adjourned the hearing until April 23. It is pertinent to mention that the Prosecution Punjab has filed an appeal seeking enhancement of the accused's sentence, while a high court had earlier reduced his sentence to the period already undergone. — APP