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CDF Asim Munir asks commanders to be well-prepared

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PM Shehbaz says

Pakistan, Turkiye have vast potential in digital technology

Highlighting the deep-rooted brotherly ties between the two countries, the prime minister said that Pakistan and Turkiye were steadily advancing toward a comprehensive economic partnership

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday emphasized the growing scope of cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye in the judicial sector, particularly through the use of digital technologies to ensure faster and more efficient delivery of justice. He was speaking during a meeting with Kadir Ozkaya, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Turkiye, who called on him along with a high-level delegation. Highlighting the deep-rooted brotherly ties between the two countries, the prime minister said that Pakistan and Turkiye were steadily advancing toward a comprehensive economic partnership. He said Pakistan and Turkiye could benefit from each other's experiences to improve citizens' access to justice. "The Memorandum of Understanding signed during the recent visit of the Turkish delegation is the first step in this direction". The prime minister noted that Pakistan and Turkiye could benefit from each other's experiences in legislation and its implementation in

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PM Shehbaz, Saudi Crown prince MBS talk on phone

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Telephone call between the Prime Minister and the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this afternoon. During their warm and cordial conversation, the two leaders discussed the ongoing hostilities in the region. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering and unflinching solidarity and support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the wake of the ongoing attacks, and reiterated Pakistan's condemnation of the attack at the Al Jubail oil facility in Saudi Arabia earlier today. He assured His Royal Highness the

Crown Prince that the people and the Government of Pakistan would always stand shoulder to shoulder with their Saudi brothers and sisters, just as the Saudi leadership and people had always supported Pakistan, through thick and thin. The Prime Minister lauded the wisdom and sagacity of the Saudi leadership in exercising maximum restraint during the ongoing crisis, and stated that Pakistan was working assiduously for the success of the peace efforts, in partnership with other countries. He also apprised the Crown Prince on latest developments in Pakistan's mediation efforts to de-escalate the Middle East crisis. The Prime Minister conveyed his warm wishes and respectful regards for The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The Crown Prince appreciated Pakistan's peace efforts, aimed at restoring peace and stability in the region.

5 policemen injured in KP explosion

DNA

AKKI MARWAT: At least five policemen including an officer were injured in an explosion in the Shahbazkhel town of Lakki Marwat district, police said on Tuesday. A spokesperson for the district's police, Qudratullah, confirmed that the attack was carried out by Fitna-al-Khawarij on the Bannu-DI Khan section of the Peshawar-Karachi Indus Highway. Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He said that terrorists had fitted an improvised explosive device (IED) to a motorcycle parked along the roadside, which later exploded with a loud bang. The official added that a police patrol from Shahbazkhel police station was the target of the blast. A police van seen after being damaged in an attack in Lakki Marwat.

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IHC orders lawyer Salman Safdar's meeting with Imran

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday directed jail authorities to arrange a meeting between incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his counsel Barrister Salman Safdar at 2pm on Wednesday. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif issued the directives while hearing petitions related to the £190 million case and suspension of sentences of Khan and Bushra Bibi. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) special

Continued on Page 06

US-Iran war

Armed forces ready to match any threat, says field marshal

The statement said that the forum appreciated the hectic efforts by the government to bring an end to the War in the Middle East, echoing the call for restraint, dialogue, and de-escalation

STAFF REPORT / DNA

RAWALPINDI: The military's top brass on Tuesday strongly condemned the latest attacks on Saudi Arabia's petrochemical and industrial facilities, terming them an unnecessary escalation that risks undermining ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the Mideast conflict peacefully, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The statement came during the 274th Corps Commanders' Conference at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, chaired by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir, according to the military's media wing. "The forum noted with concern and vehemently condemned the latest attacks on KSA's petrochemical and industrial complex as an unnecessary escalation which spoils sincere efforts to resolve the conflict through peaceful means,"

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Opposition leader calls for formation of national govt

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai on Tuesday suggested the formation of a "national government" to build consensus among the country's political parties. Speaking in the NA during a debate on the Iran situation, Achakzai said, "We should at least agree on some points." Stating that the time had passed when they used to blame each other for mistakes, the opposition leader said,

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Russia and China veto watered-down UN resolution

One-fifth of the world's oil typically passes through the strait, and Iran's stranglehold during the war has sent energy prices soaring

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Russia and China on Tuesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution aimed at reopening the Strait of Hormuz that had been repeatedly watered down in hopes those two countries would abstain. The vote — 11 in favor, two against and two abstentions — took place just hours before an 8 p.m. Eastern deadline set by US President Donald Trump for Iran to open the strategic waterway or face attacks on its power plants and bridges. One-fifth of the world's oil typically passes through the strait, and Iran's stranglehold during the war has sent energy prices soaring. It's doubtful the resolution, even if it had

been adopted, would have impacted the war, now in its fifth week, because it was significantly weakened to try to get Russia and China to abstain rather than veto it. The initial Bahrain proposal would have authorized countries to use "all necessary means" — UN wording that would include military action — to ensure transit through the Strait of Hormuz and deter attempts to close it. After Russia, China and France, all veto-wielding countries on the 15-member Security Council, expressed opposition to approving the use of force, the resolution was revised to eliminate all references to offensive action. It would have authorized only "all defensive means necessary."

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Briefs

Pakistan repays \$ 1.43 external debt

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has repaid \$1.43 billion in external debt, including the \$1.3 billion Eurobond maturing on April 8, said Khurram Schehzad, adviser to the finance minister, on Tuesday. Schehzad made the announcement in a post on X, saying debt servicing continued to be executed, "... reflecting consistency, discipline, and strengthened capacity." The \$1.43 billion repayment also includes \$126.125 million in coupon obligations on other Eurobond issuances, he added. Schehzad attributed timely repayment to stable external buffers, improved liquidity, and continued macroeconomic stabilisation. He said that the performance was underpinned by govt's measures to strengthen investor confidence and a sustainable and disciplined debt trajectory.

Two killed in Istanbul shootout

NEWS DESK

INSTANBUL: A gunman was killed and two others wounded in a shootout on Tuesday with police outside the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, Turkish officials said, adding that two officers were lightly wounded. Governor Davut Gul confirmed the killing of one of the assailants during the attack that took place around 12:15pm (0915 GMT). It was not immediately clear if the intended target was the Israeli consulate. No Israeli diplomats "are currently on Turkish soil", a source familiar with the matter told AFP. Israeli diplomatic missions had been evacuated "not only in Turkiye but throughout the region for security reasons" shortly after the October 7, 2023, attacks by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Israeli soil, according to the same source.

Middle East tensions

Pak condemns Iranian attacks on Saudi Arabia

The Government of Pakistan considers these attacks a serious violation of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and a dangerous escalation that undermines regional peace and stability

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has strongly condemned the missile and drone attacks launched by Iran on energy facilities in the Eastern Region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In an official statement, Pakistan expressed deep concern over the attacks carried out last night and unequivocally condemned this act of aggression. The government mourned the loss of innocent lives and deplored the damage caused to vital infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan extended its heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and reaffirmed its complete solidarity with the Government and people of Saudi Arabia in this hour of grief. The statement described the Iranian attacks as a serious violation of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, terming it a dangerous escalation that threatens regional peace and stability.

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Pakistan, Egypt FMs emphasise de-escalation, dialogue

APP

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar spoke with Egypt's Foreign Minister, Badr Abdelatty to discuss the latest regional developments. During the conversation that took place on Monday night, both leaders underscored the need for de-escalation and dialogue. They also agreed to stay closely engaged as the situation evolves.

President receives credentials from envoys of 6 countries

SAIFULLAH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors-designate of the Republic of Cuba, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Portuguese Republic, Kingdom of Spain and United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the High Commissioner-designate of the Republic of Singapore, presented their credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr today. The President felicitated the envoys on the commencement of their diplomatic responsibilities in Pakistan and conveyed his best wishes for a productive tenure. He expressed the hope that their assignments would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and advancing cooperation in areas of mutual interest. During his interaction with Ambassador-designate of Cuba, H.E. Mr. Damian Cordero Torres, the President reaffirmed the longstanding and friendly relations between the two countries. He appreciated Cuba's support in healthcare and education, including medical scholarships, and emphasised the potential for cooperation in health, biotechnology and tourism, as well as continued collaboration at multilateral forums. The President also conveyed Pakistan's deep appreciation for Cuba's support during the 2005 earthquake, noting that this humanitarian assistance remains a lasting symbol of solidarity between the two nations. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate of Ethiopia, H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, the President welcomed the opening of Ethiopia's Embassy in

Islamabad and the resumption of direct flights. He noted the growing engagement between the two countries and emphasised the need to expand cooperation in trade, aviation, education and technology. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate of Portugal, H.E. Mr. Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues, the President underlined the importance Pakistan attaches to its relations with Portugal, both bilaterally and within the European Union framework. He noted the upward trajectory in trade and emphasised the need to expand cooperation in trade, investment, IT, agriculture and blue economy, while also highlighting the role of the Pakistani diaspora and prospects for labour mobility and academic exchanges. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate of Spain,

H.E. Mr. Carlos Aragón Gil de la Serna, the President noted the milestone of 75 years of diplomatic relations and appreciated Spain's commitment to multilateralism. He highlighted strong trade ties supported by GSP Plus, encouraged greater investment and cooperation, and underscored the importance of safe and legal migration, as well as cultural and academic exchanges. He appreciated the principled stance taken by Spain in the current Gulf crisis and noted that it reflects a commitment to dialogue, de-escalation and adherence to international law. Talking to Ambassador-designate of Tanzania, H.E. Lt. Gen. (R) Yacoub Hassan Mohamed, the President reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with Tanzania and the East African Com-

munity. He emphasised the need to enhance trade, investment and technical cooperation, and called for stronger business linkages, improved connectivity and greater people-to-people exchanges. Meeting the High Commissioner-designate of Singapore, H.E. Mr. Ishak Bin Ismail, the President highlighted Singapore's importance as a key regional partner and underscored prospects for expanding cooperation in trade, fintech, infrastructure and services. He also emphasised the role of the Pakistani diaspora, the potential for enhanced connectivity and collaboration in climate and digital economy initiatives. Upon arrival, the envoys were presented with a guard of honour. National anthems were played and the envoys reviewed the parade before proceeding to present their credentials.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of Cuba, Spain, Ethiopia, Portugal, Singapore, Tanzania (non-resident) presenting credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari. — DNA

Gilani for timely redressal of public complaints

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani appreciated the excellent performance of the Federal Ombudsman's institution and expressed hope that under Mr Baloch's dynamic leadership, the institution would continue to deliver services effectively and provide better relief to the public. He described the initiatives of the Federal Ombudsman as a milestone in promoting good governance, transparency, and public service

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan, Naveed Kamran Baloch, called on Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, at the Parliament House.

The meeting marked a goodwill visit following Karaman Baloch's assumption of office, during which he briefed the Chairman on the performance of the Federal Ombudsman's institution, the system for addressing public complaints, and the delivery of administrative justice, said a news release issued here on Tuesday.

During the briefing, Federal Ombudsman Naveed Kamran Baloch informed the Chairman that the institution successfully handled over 262,000 complaints related to maladministration in 2025, achieving compliance on approximately 97%

of its decisions. He highlighted that the Federal Ombudsman, through its extensive regional network across the country, is providing prompt, affordable, and effective administrative justice directly to citizens at their doorstep. He further stated that the institution is introducing a modern online portal for lodging and resolving complaints, ensuring that each complaint is addressed within 60 days. Special attention is being given to resolving issues faced by the middle class, while open courts and hearings in remote areas are being held to provide immediate relief to the public. Baloch emphasized that the prompt resolution of public grievances remains the institution's top priority. Measures are being taken to further strengthen a transparent, efficient, and effective system to ensure timely redressal of complaints arising from govern-

ment inefficiencies. Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani appreciated the excellent performance of the Federal Ombudsman's institution and expressed hope that under Mr Baloch's dynamic leadership, the institution would continue to deliver services effectively and provide better relief to the public. He described the initiatives of the Federal Ombudsman as a milestone in promoting good governance, transparency, and public service. The Chairman also extended his best wishes to Karaman Baloch for success in his new responsibilities. In response, the Federal Ombudsman Naveed Kamran Baloch lauded the political and social services of Chairman of the Senate Gilani, noting the significant role of the Gilani family in strengthening democracy and promoting public welfare in Pakistan.

Punjab orders early closure of markets

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab government has ordered early closure of markets, restaurants and marriage halls across the province under fresh austerity measures aimed at conserving energy. According to an official notification issued by the provincial government, all shops, markets and shopping malls will close at 8:00 pm throughout the week. However, exemptions have been granted to essential services including medical stores, hospitals fuel stations, tandoors, bakeries and milk shops. The notification further stated that all hotels, restaurants and food outlets must close by 10:00 pm, though take-away and home delivery services to remain open. Marriage halls, marquee and related functions, including those held at farmhouses and residences, have also been directed to conclude by 10:00 pm. The orders have been issued with immediate effect and will remain in force until further notice.

Aleem gets briefing on projects

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Communications Aleem Khan on Monday visited the National Highway Authority (NHA) Regional office and received briefing on different projects. The Minister received briefing on the projects of Sindh Region including maintenance works in South Zone. He was also apprised of NHA RMA receipts and payments for 2025-26 by GM Finance, GM Revenue and Regional Members. The NHA officials informed the Minister of procurement process of M-6 and ROW matters too. —APP

NARC's Lentil-24 variety shows strong performance

ISLAMABAD: The National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) has developed a high-yielding lentil variety, NARC Lentil-24, which is performing well in field trials. "The new variety is expected to significantly boost productivity across the country, enhancing farm incomes and strengthening food security," Dr. Shahid Riaz Malik, Principal Scientific Officer and Program Leader at the NARC, told Wealth Pakistan. He said NARC Lentil-24 combines high yield potential with climate resilience, resistance to multiple diseases, and improved plant architecture, making it suitable for mechanized harvesting. This variety has wide adaptability and can perform well across diverse agro-ecological zones and cropping systems in the country. Dr. Shahid noted that pulses occupy around 1.16 million hectares — about 5% of Pakistan's total cropped area — compared to cereals dominating 56%, and highlighted the need to enhance their share in

the cropping system. He said major pulses grown in Pakistan include chickpea, lentil, mung bean, mash, and kidney beans, while the country's total cropped area is 22.51 million hectares. He highlighted that Pakistan's pulses sector offers significant opportunities for growth and improvement, particularly in enhancing productivity and resilience. He noted that while pulses are largely cultivated under rainfed conditions and face natural climate variations, these factors also present avenues for innovation and better farm management practices. Explaining the scope for progress, Dr. Shahid said a notable yield potential exists in the pulses sector. While the national average yield is around 553 kg per hectare, progressive farmers are already achieving nearly 1,500 kg per hectare, with potential yields reaching up to 3,000 kg per hectare. "This strong variation reflects the vast untapped potential in the sector and highlights how improved seeds, better agronomic prac-

tics, and modern technologies can significantly enhance productivity," he said. He further pointed out that expanding access to quality seeds, mechanization, and efficient irrigation, along with strengthening extension services and post-harvest management, can play a transformative role in boosting output. To unlock this potential, he emphasized the importance of advanced breeding and genetic innovations, including the development of climate-resilient and high-yielding varieties through modern tools such as genomics, speed breeding, and artificial intelligence. Dr. Shahid noted that the National Agricultural Research Centre is already making progress in this area by promoting improved crop management practices, focusing on water-use efficiency, enhanced nitrogen fixation, and climate-smart agriculture, supported by its speed breeding facility. He stressed the need to further strengthen seed production and supply systems to ensure timely availability of quality seeds. —DNA

Punjab CM okays free transport project

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved a free transport pilot project in Gujranwala, Multan, and Sialkot, while directing the Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (PERA) to regulate LPG prices across the province and improve cleanliness within two weeks. Chairing a meeting, here on Tuesday, the CM sought a report within 24 hours to determine transport fares per kilometre and instructed officials to explore launching free transport in 17 districts where public transport is currently unavailable. The meeting reviewed the impact of global oil prices on transport fares, alongside a detailed assessment of prices of 23 essential food items, including onions, tomatoes, potatoes, bananas, and pulses across all districts, including Lahore. Officials informed the meeting that flour prices in Punjab remain significantly lower compared to other provinces, with a difference of Rs 427 compared to Sindh, Rs 823 compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Rs. 790 compared to Balochistan. Prices of pulses, fruits, and vegetables were also reported to be relatively stable, with sufficient stocks of lentils and gram available. The CM urged citizens to avoid purchasing commodities above officially notified rates and ordered strict action against hoarding. She directed assistant commissioners to conduct surveys of ponds and water bodies in every street, while commissioners were instructed to submit daily reports with photographic evidence. Ensuring safety measures for ponds in every union council was also emphasized. Highlighting key performance indicators, the CM stressed focus on tree plantation, prevention of dog bites, installation of zebra crossings, maintenance of street lights, and improvement of green belts. She also ordered the resumption of cleanliness drives in graveyards under the "Suthra Punjab" programme. Expressing displeasure over poor sanitation in Jhang, she ordered complete cleaning of selected union councils within 24 hours. A detailed review of beautification and upgradation projects across districts, including Attock, Rahim Yar Khan, and Faisalabad, was also conducted. She appreciated the quality of work in Attock and commended the Deputy Commissioner, while also praising improvements around the Clock Tower area in Faisalabad, particularly the resolution of drainage issues and removal of overhead electric wires. The CM expressed serious concern over fatalities caused by open drainage systems, warning that the presence of unsafe ponds would be treated as administrative failure. She termed complaints of garbage accumulation in various cities as unacceptable. —DNA

Businessmen ready to implement austerity steps

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Clean and Green Islamabad Movement and Patron-in-Chief of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, stated that the business community will fully cooperate in implementing government directives to improve discipline, business activities, and civic facilities. He expressed these views during a meeting with Additional Deputy Commissioner General Islamabad, Sahibzada Yousaf, SSP Operations Islamabad Police, Ali Qazi, and SHO Kohsar, Malik Asif. On this occasion, Chairman Police Committee ICCL, Saif ur Rehman Khan, along with Haris Bakhtawari, Raja Faizan, and others were also present. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the implementation of government directives concerning market timings, and various proposals were considered to ensure their effective enforcement. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community has always supported government policies in the national interest and will continue to extend full cooperation in this regard. He suggested reducing the working hours

of government offices so that people can complete their daily affairs earlier. He also proposed that bank timings be set from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, enabling cit-

izens to manage their banking needs and subsequently carry out shopping and other household activities with ease.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, General Levent ERGÜN, visited Naval Headquarters Islamabad and called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf. — DNA

ITP issues rain advisory

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued a traffic advisory as intermittent rain continued in the federal capital, urging commuters to adopt precautionary measures for safe travel. An ITP official told APP on Tuesday that motorists should use fog lights during rain and keep their speed low to avoid accidents on slippery roads. He said drivers and motorcyclists must strictly follow lane discipline while traveling on city roads. The official advised commuters to ensure proper use of side mirrors and indicators during travel to maintain safe driving practices. He said motorcyclists should use the extreme left lane and ride at a slow speed during rainy conditions. He added that Islamabad Traffic Police officers were present on roads to facilitate and guide citizens. —APP

Efforts afoot to boost primary, secondary healthcare

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister Health, Khalid ur Rehman has said that the provincial government is taking comprehensive measures to strengthen primary and secondary healthcare facilities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement, he said that steps are being taken to address shortages of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff on an emergency basis to ensure timely and quality medical services for the public at nearby health centres. —APP

Balochistan bans govt vehicles use after office hours

Monitoring through safe city cameras

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has introduced strict measures to enforce national austerity policies, including a ban on the use of government vehicles after office hours. The decision was taken during a high-level review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti at the Chief Minister's Secretariat. According to the directives, all government vehicles will undergo a comprehensive audit, and fuel supply will be restricted to verified and authorized vehicles only. The meeting also approved the phased auction of vehicles older than 2005 and rationalization of the government

fleet. The meeting also decided the immediate retrieval of government vehicles from unauthorized individuals, including former governors, ex-chief ministers, ex-ministers, retired officers, and others. The government imposed complete ban on the use of government vehicles after office hours, except with prior approval from the competent authority. In the meeting it was decided that the installation of trackers in all government vehicles to monitor movement. It also prohibited that taking government vehicles outside Balochistan without permission. Monitoring of vehicles


within cities through Safe City cameras to strengthen transparency and oversight. Chief Minister Bugti emphasized that misuse of public resources would not be tolerated. "Strict implementation of austerity measures is essential to ensure the efficient and transparent use of government assets," he said, directing authorities to take indiscriminate action against unauthorized or unnecessary use of official vehicles. Officials confirmed that these steps are part of a broader austerity drive aimed at safeguarding public resources and ensuring accountability across government departments. —APP

KP moves toward cashless economy

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has prepared legislation to transform the province into a cashless economy by introducing the "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Digital Payment Act 2026." Under the proposed law, all businesses across the province will be required to adopt digital payment systems, with mandatory display of QR codes at shops and commercial centers to facilitate transactions. According to the draft bill,

educational institutions, clinics, and hospitals will also be bound to accept digital payments, while customers will not be charged any additional fee for using such services. The legislation further states that businesses refusing to accept digital payments will face penalties, adding that the use of QR codes will help promote transparency and strengthen the economy. Monitoring officers will be authorized to inspect business premises at any time


to ensure compliance with the law. Additionally, newly registered businesses will be granted tax exemptions for two years. Banks and service providers will be required to offer technical support, while the provincial government will take steps to encourage citizens to shift towards a cashless economy. The bill was presented in the provincial assembly by Law Minister Aftab Alam during its previous session and awaits the approval. —APP





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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

- April 04/Senegal National Day
- April 07/W. H. O. World Health Day
- April 12/Somalia Armed Forces Day
- April 15/DPR Korea The Day of the Sun
- April 16/Denmark National Day
- April 17/Iran Army Day
- April 17/Syria Independence Day
- April 18/Zimbabwe Independence Day
- April 24/Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
- April 25/DPR Korea Armed Forces Day
- April 26/Tanzania National Day
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- April 27/South Africa Freedom Day
- April 30/Sweden Birthday of His Majesty
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- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Embassy of Romania marks one year of Opera in Pakistan

The Embassy of Romania in Islamabad warmly invites all those interested to join the ongoing courses and contribute to the development of a vibrant and dynamic cultural community in Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Romania in Pakistan proudly celebrates one year since the launch of the first opera course in the history of Pakistan, a landmark cultural initiative carried out in partnership with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad. Launched in April 2025, the program represents a pioneering effort to introduce and promote the art of opera in Pakistan. The courses

are held weekly, every Wednesday and Friday, under the guidance of Romanian soprano Georgiana Costea-Glugă. This initiative aims to foster cultural dialogue between Romania and Pakistan while opening new artistic horizons for young talents. Through the dedication and expertise of Ms. Costea-Glugă, the program highlights the vital role of music and culture in building bridges between nations and encouraging creative exchange. Romania has a rich and longstanding operatic tradition, rooted in European classi-

cal heritage and sustained by renowned institutions such as the Romanian National Opera and the National Opera of Cluj-Napoca. This strong cultural foundation informs Romania's commitment to sharing its artistic expertise internationally. Cultural diplomacy remains a key pillar of Romania-Pakistan bilateral relations, strengthening people-to-people ties and complementing growing cooperation in areas such as education, trade, and institutional partnerships. Over the past year, the opera

course has brought together a growing community of young music enthusiasts, offering them a unique opportunity to explore and engage with the world of opera. The initiative reflects Romania's strong commitment to promoting cultural diversity, artistic education, and mutual understanding. The Embassy of Romania in Islamabad warmly invites all those interested to join the ongoing courses and contribute to the development of a vibrant and dynamic cultural community in Pakistan.

Govt handled petroleum crisis responsibly: Saira

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Saira Shara Afzal Tarar Tuesday said the government demonstrated responsibility and commitment in handling the recent petroleum crisis despite difficult economic conditions and global challenges. Speaking in the National Assembly, she said the prime minister and his cabinet, including ministers directly and indirectly involved in managing the fuel crisis, worked tirelessly and deserved appreciation for their efforts. She acknowledged that inflation remains a major issue for the public but urged a broader perspective, noting that conditions in some countries are far worse, with severe shortages of food and energy. Responding to criticism over fuel price hikes, Tarar said the increase was driven by unprecedented global factors. She explained that

the premium on refining crude oil had surged to over \$60, a level never seen before, making price adjustments unavoidable. Recalling the day when fuel prices were raised by Rs55, she said long queues formed at petrol pumps, with many outlets rationing fuel. She described the decision as difficult but necessary to ensure continued supply and prevent panic shortages. She further clarified that the government increased prices despite existing stock at petrol pumps to maintain supply continuity and avoid market disruption. The minister said the government also reduced the petroleum levy by Rs80 to provide relief, particularly under constraints linked to international financial commitments, including programmes with global lenders. She added that some decisions were taken collectively at the federal level, with participation

from provincial leadership, including the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Highlighting agricultural concerns, Tarar said farmers, particularly in Hafizabad, suffered losses due to adverse weather, including rain and hailstorms that damaged around 25 percent of the wheat crop. She added that many farmers had shifted to alternative crops like watermelon due to poor wheat prices last season, but they too faced losses. She urged the government to extend further relief to farmers, including rescheduling agricultural loans taken from Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited, especially for those owning more than 25 acres who are also facing financial pressure. She also called for ensuring that relief provided to public transport is effectively passed on to the general public, and that the private transport sector is also regulated to deliver benefits to ordinary citizens.—APP

IMF demand for fuel levy to deeper poverty in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Tuesday that pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to immediately withdraw fuel price support could deepen poverty and fuel public unrest in Pakistan. He said millions of farmers, transporters, and low-income households depend on affordable diesel to sustain their livelihoods, and removing the subsidy at a time of severe energy shocks would place an unbearable burden on struggling segments of society. The IMF has expressed concern over fuel price distortions, particularly the absence of the petroleum development levy (PDL) on high-speed diesel. The levy currently stands at zero, compared with the Rs80 per litre target envisaged in the federal budget. Shahid Rasheed Butt said restoring the levy at the present moment would significantly raise diesel prices, triggering a chain reaction across the economy. Diesel is the backbone of Pakistan's freight and agricultural systems, and rising transport costs have already begun feeding into the prices of flour, fertiliser, and other essential goods. He warned that the timing of the proposed policy shift is especially problematic as the wheat harvest season approaches. Combine harvesters, threshers, irrigation pumps, and the trucks transporting grain to flour mills all run on high-speed diesel, meaning higher fuel prices could directly translate into higher food costs. Public transport operators have already raised fares by up to 35 percent without formal approval, further squeezing low-income commuters who rely on buses and vans for daily travel. Pakistan imports nearly 80 percent of its oil needs, leaving the economy highly exposed to global price volatility. The recent surge in international energy prices has increased import costs, undermined export competitiveness, and intensified pressure on Pakistan's external accounts. According to the World Bank, Pakistan's poverty rate reached 40.5 percent in fiscal year 2024, while the Benazir Income Support Program reaches only a portion of vulnerable households. Butt said the government should negotiate flexibility with the IMF to temporarily retain targeted relief on diesel during the harvest season. He added that rigid fiscal targets should not apply when external conflicts, rather than domestic policy failures, are driving the economic shock.—DNA

3-Day National Youth Summit Gwadar begins

GWADAR: The National Youth Summit Gwadar 2026, a three-day event organized by the Department of Youth Affairs, Government of Balochistan officially began on Tuesday. All preparations are well completed, with participants—including youth delegates, experts, scholars, and professionals from across the country—already arriving in Gwadar. Taking place from April 7 to 9, 2026, at the auditorium of GDA Public School, the summit aims to provide young people with a powerful platform to contribute to leadership, innovation, and socio-economic development, Gwadar Pro reported. The central theme of the summit is "Learn, Innovate, Lead." Each day will focus on a different topic. The first day will center on leadership and digital innovation, with the opening ceremony, panel discussions, workshops, and sessions aimed at highlighting the potential of youth. Day two will focus on entrepreneurship and the blue economy, featuring workshops, business pitch competitions, media and information literacy sessions, as well as study visits to Gwadar Port and the Fish Harbour. The third day will address climate resilience and women's empowerment, with discussions on women's leadership, environmental protection, and the critical role of youth in these areas. The summit will feature speeches from prominent provincial and national leaders, ministers, and experts. Informational and exhibition stalls will also be available to participants. In addition to the educational sessions, there will be cultural activities and a comedy show, offering both learning and entertainment opportunities.—APP

IRSA releases 73,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 73,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 130,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1459.56 feet which was 59.56 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 27,500 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1148.00 feet, which was 98.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 45,000 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 70,900, 72,600, 36,900, and 11,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 37,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 14,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Govt promoting solar energy

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that the government is actively promoting solar energy and clean power through a balanced and sustainable policy. Responding to a calling attention notice, drastic change in net metering policy for solar prosumers and decision to propose 18% tax on solar panels, she said Pakistan has introduced policies to support renewable energy in line with global practices, adding that the government remains committed to expanding clean energy initiatives. She said the country's updated climate commitments show a clear move towards sustainable energy, including a decision not to set up new power plants based on imported coal. The

minister said Pakistan would instead use its local coal resources while gradually shifting to cleaner energy sources. She noted that earlier policies, such as net metering, helped promote solar energy and led to increased public interest and wider adoption of solar systems. She said the revised policy aims to balance benefits for consumers with the overall stability of the energy sector, while also protecting investor confidence. She clarified that consumers and investors who had signed agreements under previous policies would continue to receive benefits under those contracts until they expire, after which new rules would apply. She added that solar energy remains beneficial, as consumers can use affordable electricity during the day and sell extra power to the national grid. While acknowledging that the payback period for solar investments may increase slightly under the new policy, she said such projects are still financially viable and attractive. She reiterated that the government's goal is to ensure long-term stability of the energy sector while continuing to promote clean, affordable energy across the country.—APP

Yemen's precious scarce dragon blood trees and need for their preservation

AYSAL ELHAM

On the remote island of Socotra, off the coast of Yemen, stands one of the world's most extraordinary trees the dragon's blood tree (*Dracaena cinnabari*). With its umbrella-shaped crown and crimson resin, this ancient species has long symbolized resilience in a harsh landscape. Yet today, the dragon's blood tree is fading, and its decline tells a sobering story about the fragility of biodiversity in the face of modern pressures. Scientists warn that natural regeneration is alarmingly slow, with seedlings struggling to survive against relentless goat grazing, storm damage, and the creeping effects of climate change. Once thriving across the island's highlands, the species now clings to fragmented habitats, its future hanging in the balance. The dragon's blood tree is more than a botanical curiosity; it is a living relic of Earth's ecological past. Classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, it represents one of the last surviving remnants of ancient forest communities dating back millions of years. Its resin, prized for centuries in medicine, dyes, and ritual practices, connects human history to natural heritage. Ancient civilizations

valued this "dragon's blood" for its healing properties and symbolic power, making the tree not only an ecological treasure but also a cultural one. Today, however, this heritage risks being lost as the species faces mounting threats from unsustainable land use and a rapidly changing climate. Conservationists have begun to act. Local nurseries and protective enclosures nurture young saplings, while mapping projects aim to safeguard remaining populations. International collaborations stress the need for community-based conservation, recognizing that the people of Socotra must be central to any long-term solution. Yet these efforts remain fragile, often underfunded and overshadowed by broader political and economic challenges in the region. Without sustained support, the dragon's blood tree may become another casualty of global neglect. The fading crown of the dragon's blood tree should serve as a wake-up call. In an era of accelerating climate change, the survival of such unique species depends on our collective will to act. Protecting the dragon's blood tree is not simply about saving a species; it is about preserving the cultural and ecological identity of Socotra itself. It is also about recognizing that biodiversity loss in one corner of the world reverberates

globally, weakening the resilience of ecosystems everywhere. International organizations must treat Socotra's dragon's blood tree as both a local conservation priority and a global climate symbol. The way forward requires strengthening on-site conservation by funding nurseries, protective enclosures, and ecological monitoring; integrating the species into global biodiversity frameworks under UNESCO and the Convention on Biological Diversity; investing in climate adaptation pilots such as fog harvesting, soil restoration, and water-efficient irrigation; raising awareness globally through education and cultural diplomacy; and securing funding and policy support, including international conservation funds and corporate accountability frameworks that channel resources toward fragile ecosystems. Protecting this ancient sentinel is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The dragon's blood tree reminds us that conservation is inseparable from climate resilience, and that the survival of one species can symbolize the endurance of many. If we fail to act, we risk losing not only a tree but a living testament to nature's ability to withstand millennia of change. Its fading crown is a warning, but also an opportunity: to nurture, to protect, and to reaffirm our commitment to the delicate balance of life on Earth.

Briefs

Key reforms aimed at rationalisation and future readiness

ISLAMABAD: A productive "Technical Committee Meeting on the New National Curriculum of Pakistan" was convened with the participation of the Minister of State of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Mrs. Wajeeha Qamar and Secretary, MoFE&PT, Mr. Nadeem Mahbub. The session was co-chaired by Dr Nasir Mehmood, Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU). Dr Tabassum Naz, Director National Curriculum Council (NCC), presented the proposed Scheme of Studies, highlighting key reforms aimed at rationalisation, coherence, and future readiness. The Secretary Education engaged all stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue, particularly emphasizing a progressive shift in language policy. The Minister of State appreciated the direction of reforms and reaffirmed that we are moving on the right path. Dr Nasir Mehmood, V. C AIU, thoughtfully addressed the concerns raised by participants, ensuring a balanced and inclusive discussion. The meeting witnessed active participation from stakeholders across Islamabad and all federating units, including AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, reflecting a strong spirit of inter-provincial collaboration.—APP

Prof Zafar assigned acting VC charge of QAU

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal was assigned the acting charge of Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) for the period of 3 months or till the appointment of regular incumbent, which ever is earlier. According to the notification issued on Apr 6, "In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 12 of the Quaid-e-Azam University Act, 1973, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan / Chancellor, Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad, is pleased to assign the acting charge of the post of Vice-Chancellor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, to Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal for a period of three (03) months or till the appointment of a regular incumbent, whichever is earlier, with immediate effect and until further orders.—APP

ANF seizes over 164 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Tuesday seized 164.38 kilograms of narcotics worth over Rs26.2 million in eight operations across the country, arresting eight suspects. According to an ANF spokesperson, the operations targeted international, inter-provincial and domestic drug trafficking networks. In international interdiction efforts, officials recovered 7.8 kg of methamphetamine (ice) soaked in clothing from a parcel destined for Australia at a courier office in Lahore. In a separate operation at another courier facility in the same city, 503 grams of hashish concealed in AB straps were intercepted in a consignment bound for Saudi Arabia. In inter-provincial action, ANF teams seized 78 kg of hashish from two vehicles near Chahal Kalan Toll Plaza in Sheikhpura and arrested three suspects. Meanwhile, in Karachi, 39.6 kg of hashish was recovered from an individual near Gulshan-e-Iqbal, while 30 kg was seized from a vehicle near Gadap Town, leading to the arrest of two persons. In Rawalpindi, ANF recovered 4.8 kg of methamphetamine and 300 grams of heroin from a suspect near the railway station. In another operation near Faizabad Bus Terminal, 1 kg of methamphetamine was seized from an accused. — APP

UK lauds Pak's mediation efforts, energy coop discussed

Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik stated that Pakistan remains committed to supporting peace and stability through dialogue and diplomatic engagement. He emphasized that the Government is actively working to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with Ms. Jane Marriott, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Pakistan, to discuss the evolving regional situation, its implications for global energy markets, and avenues for strengthening bilateral cooperation in Pakistan's energy and minerals sectors. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the regional crisis and its impact on petroleum supply chains, price volatility, and overall energy security. The High Commissioner appreciated Pakistan's constructive diplomatic role and thanked for its mediation efforts aimed at easing tensions and promoting global peace, noting that Pakistan has effectively utilized its goodwill and relations with key stakeholders, including the United States and Iran. She also discussed Pakistan's petroleum supply situation and commended the Government's efficient handling of the supply chain, observing that despite international uncertainty, Pakistan successfully ensured uninterrupted availability of petroleum products and avoided market distortions. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik stated that Pakistan remains committed to supporting peace and stability through dialogue and diplomatic engagement. He emphasized that the Government is actively working to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Speaking on domestic energy management, the Minister noted that Pakistan had taken timely measures to maintain supply continuity. "We do not want to repeat the path of populism, as witnessed in 2022, which can undo hard earned economic achievements," he said. He added that the Government prioritized keeping the supply chain intact,



as a supply disruption would have been worse than any price shock. The Minister expressed gratitude to friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman for facilitating petroleum supplies during the period of uncertainty. Recalling Qatar's support in the past, he noted that Qatar supplied LNG to Pakistan at around \$10 when global prices were near \$30, and also demonstrated cooperation by renegotiating contractual arrangements. Highlighting the role of Pakistan's domestic exploration and production sector, the Minister praised

local E&P companies for stepping up during the challenging period. He noted that fertilizer prices in Pakistan are one third of that in neighboring countries. He further shared that the Government continues to protect vulnerable segments of society through targeted subsidies. The UK High Commissioner underscored the importance of long term cooperation between the two countries in the energy domain and highlighted the technical collaboration between the British Geological Survey and the Geological Survey of Pakistan. The Minister acknowledged the

UK's continued support for Pakistan and discussed prospects for collaboration in regulatory and institutional strengthening, including capacity building of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA). The British side expressed keen interest in supporting such initiatives. Both sides agreed to further strengthen bilateral engagement through technical cooperation, institutional partnerships aimed at promoting energy security, investment facilitation, and sustainable development in Pakistan's energy and mineral sectors.

PM for maximum opportunities for youth

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday describing the youth as the "future of the nation" directed the relevant authorities to speed up ongoing projects and intensify the efforts to provide maximum opportunities to young Pakistanis. The prime minister, in a meeting with Chairman of Prime Minister Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan here, said that providing employment, education, technical training, and other opportunities to the youth were among the government's priorities. He said that the government was striving to introduce Pakistan's youth as the best workforce in the global market. During the meeting, Chairman Rana Mashood briefed the prime minister on the progress of various projects being implemented under the Prime Minister Youth Programme.—APP

Traffic flows smoothly on Rawalpindi roads amid rain

RAWALPINDI: Traffic flow on major roads in Rawalpindi remained smooth on Tuesday despite intermittent rainfall as personnel of the City Traffic Police (CTP) stayed deployed across key arteries to ensure uninterrupted movement. According to a CTP spokesman, wardens continued to regulate traffic in adverse weather conditions, assisting road users and preventing congestion on busy routes. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Farhan Aslam urged motorists to exercise caution while driving in the rain, advising them to maintain a safe distance from the vehicle ahead and reduce speed to avoid skidding on slippery roads. He said motorcyclists should use the extreme left lane while drivers must ensure the use of fog lights, indicators and side mirrors, particularly during heavy rainfall. The CTO further emphasised that motorists should remain patient and considerate, especially towards motorcyclists and pedestrians, to prevent accidents. Farhan Aslam also directed traffic staff to extend prompt assistance to road users during rain and ensure traffic continued to flow smoothly for the convenience of citizens.—APP

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to deepen cultural ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, met with Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi on Tuesday to explore new avenues for bilateral cooperation in culture and heritage, agreeing on a series of concrete initiatives to translate diplomatic goodwill into lasting cultural partnership. Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin requested that a Pakistani cultural troupe be dispatched to Astana ahead of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming official visit to rehearse and perform a musical welcome ceremony upon the Prime Minister's arrival. The visit follows an invitation extended by Kazakhstan's President to Prime Minister Sharif during his recent state visit to Pakistan. In response, the Federal Minister confirmed that a delegation of musicians including singers and a Qawwali troupe would be sent to Kazakhstan, underscoring Pakistan's world-renowned Qawwali tradition as a defining symbol of its musical heritage. Secretary of the National Heritage and Culture Division, Asad Rehman Gillani, briefed the Ambassador that Pakistan is already presenting its architectural and artisanal heritage, rooted in ancient civilizations such as Gandhara and Mohenjo-Daro, in multiple countries, and confirmed this showcase would also be featured during the

Astana visit upon request.

Following earlier bilateral discussions, it was decided that a "Centre for Musical Instruments" will be housed at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), with formal approval to be sought at an upcoming Board of Directors meeting. The Ambassador noted that educational linkages between the two countries had already been strengthened and that the cultural sector would now receive renewed focus. Aurangzeb Khichi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing cultural collaboration and pledged continued support for implementing existing Memorandums of Understanding in the cultural domain. The Ambassador expressed interest in visiting the Lahore Museum and the National Museum Karachi, where experts from both countries would jointly select artefacts for an exhibition to be held in Astana. The Minister assured full facilitation for these visits.

The Ambassador extended a formal invitation to Federal Minister Khichi to visit Astana, which he accepted. The Minister, in turn, invited a Kazakhstani cultural troupe to visit Pakistan, citing precedent from successful exchanges with Turkey and Tajikistan. Emphasising the significance of cultural diplomacy, Aurangzeb Khichi stated that cultural exchange is a cornerstone of bilateral relations, and that the Government of Pakistan places special priority on deepening ties with Central Asian states.

Fruits worth of \$251m exported in 08 months

ISLAMABAD: Fruits exports from the country during the first eight months of current financial year grew by 6.25 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-February, 2025-26 471,264 metric tons of fresh fruits of different kinds valued at \$251.947 million were exported as compared to the exports of 462,292 metric tons worth of \$237.130 million of the same period of the last year. However, the exports of vegetables from the country during the period under review decreased by 46.45 percent as compared to the exports of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During last eight months, over 423,840 metric tons of vegetables worth of \$121.681 million were exported from the country as compared to the exports of 803,849 metric tons costing \$227.224 million of the same period of the last year. On year on year basis, the exports of fruits from the country grew by 1.24 percent in the month of February 2026 as compared the same month of the last year. About 59,508 metric tons of fruits valued at \$26.935 million were exported from the country during the month of February as against the exports of 57,355 metric tons worth of \$26.204 million of the same month of the last year. The country earned \$15.151 million by exporting 62,458 metric tons of vegetables during the month of February, 2026 as against the exports of 286,072 metric tons worth of \$62.289 million of the same month of the last year.—DNA

Envoy Dr. Oumer presents credentials to President of Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba presenting his credentials to President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari during an official ceremony at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), presented his Letters of Credence to H.E. Asif Ali Zardari, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, during an official ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad on Tuesday. Following the ceremony, the Honorable President held a bilateral meeting with the Ambassador to review the full spectrum of Ethiopia-Pakistan relations. Both sides, during the meeting, reaffirmed a shared commitment to deepen their cooperation across both bilateral and multilateral platforms. Their discussions focused on exploring the immense potential in strategic sectors such as climate change, aviation, agriculture and business to further strengthen the bi-

lateral relations. On the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Oumer conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie and H.E. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali (PhD) to the President and the people of Pakistan. During the exchange, the Ambassador expressed Ethiopia's profound appreciation for Pakistan's "Look Africa and Engage Africa" policies and its resolute commitment to strengthen ties with the East African nations including Ethiopia. H.E. President Asif Ali Zardari reciprocated the warm greetings to the leadership of Ethiopia and wished the Ambassador a successful tenure. The Honorable President emphasized Pakistan's desire to elevate the diplomatic and economic relations with the FDR Ethiopia. Ambassador Dr. Oumer reaffirmed his commitment to work closely with the Government of Pakistan to foster a robust and mutually beneficial partnership during his mission in Islamabad.

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Pakistan's Struggle for Civilian Space



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

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

Parallel to this ascent was the growing influence of religious actors. The mosque, as a social and political space, gradually evolved into a powerful platform capable of mobilising public sentiment. While religious scholars had initially played a limited role in the nationalist movement, their significance increased as successive governments sought legitimacy through Islamic symbolism. This convergence was neither accidental nor entirely organic. It was, in many ways, a product of deliberate policy choices. The state, in moments of political weakness, turned to religion as a unifying force. The Objectives Resolution of 1949 marked an early step in embedding religious principles into governance. While framed as a compromise between modern statehood and Islamic ideals, it opened the door to future contestations over the role of religion in law and policy. The military's involvement deepened this dynamic. During periods of direct rule, generals often invoked religious narratives to justify their authority. The most pronounced example came during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, whose Islamisation policies left an enduring imprint on Pakistani society. Laws were reconfigured, educational curricula reshaped, and public discourse reframed in explicitly religious terms. The mosque, in this period, was not merely a place of worship but an extension of state power. Yet, the relationship between military and mosque has never been entirely harmonious. It is marked as much by cooperation as by tension. Religious groups have often been both allies and adversaries. At times, they have been instrumentalised for strategic purposes, particularly in regional conflicts. At other moments, they have challenged the state's authority, questioning its commitment to Islamic principles. This duality has had profound consequences. On the one hand, it has enabled the state to harness religious sentiment in pursuit of political or strategic

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goals. On the other, it has empowered actors whose agendas do not always align with state priorities. The result is a complex landscape where lines of authority are blurred and accountability is often elusive. The impact on democratic development has been particularly stark. Civilian governments, already constrained by institutional weaknesses, have found themselves navigating a delicate balance. Efforts to assert parliamentary sovereignty are frequently overshadowed by the enduring influence of the military establishment. Simultaneously, political leaders often invoke religious rhetoric to bolster their legitimacy, further entrenching the mosque's role in governance. This interplay has also shaped public discourse. Questions of identity, citizenship, and rights are frequently framed in religious terms, limiting the space for pluralism. Minority communities, in particular, have borne the brunt of this dynamic, as debates over faith and belonging intersect with political power. The promise of equal citizenship, envisioned at independence, remains unevenly realised. Education and media have not been immune. Narratives constructed over decades have reinforced a particular understanding of Pakistan's ideological foundations, often privileging religious identity over civic values. This has contributed to a societal environment where dissenting voices can be marginalised, and critical inquiry discouraged. Yet, it would be reductive to view Pakistan solely through the prism of military and mosque. The country is also home to vibrant civil society movements, an assertive judiciary, and a resilient, if contested, democratic tradition. Periodic transitions to civilian rule, though imperfect, reflect an ongoing struggle to recalibrate the balance of power. In recent years, there have been signs of both continuity and change. The military remains a central actor in national affairs, though its role is increasingly scrutinised in public debate. Religious groups continue to wield influence, particularly at the grassroots level, but their political appeal is not uniform. Urbanisation, technological change, and a growing youth population are reshaping the contours of political engagement. The challenge for Pakistan lies in redefining this relationship in a manner that strengthens democratic institutions while respecting the country's religious sensibilities. This requires a careful disentangling of state authority from both military overreach and the instrumental use of religion. It calls for a renewed commitment to constitutionalism, where power is exercised within clearly defined limits and accountability is upheld. Equally important is the need to reclaim the mosque as a space of spiritual reflection rather than political mobilisation. Religion, in its essence, offers ethical guidance and social cohesion. When subsumed into the machinery of power, it risks losing its moral authority and becoming a tool of division. The path forward is neither simple nor linear. It demands political will, institutional reform, and societal introspection. Pakistan's history offers ample lessons on the costs of imbalance whether in the form of authoritarian rule or ideological rigidity. The task now is to forge a more inclusive and stable order, where neither the barracks nor the pulpit overshadow the will of the people. Ultimately, the story of Pakistan between military and mosque is one of negotiation between power and principle, authority and faith. How this negotiation unfolds will determine not only the nature of the state but also the aspirations of its citizens. In that sense, the question is not merely about institutions, but about the kind of society Pakistan seeks to become.

The Man Between Fire and Peace: Asim Munir

Qamar Bashir



Munir's emergence as a central mediator is neither accidental nor symbolic. It is rooted in a demonstrated ability to navigate crisis, build trust across rival blocs, and deliver results under pressure. Having stabilized Pakistan during a period of acute economic, political, and social turmoil—through strategic engagement with China, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar—Munir now applies the same disciplined approach to a far more volatile international theatre. At the core of his current diplomatic effort lies what has come to be known as the Islamabad Accord, a structured, two-phased framework designed not only to halt hostilities but to address the deeper causes of conflict

THE Middle East today stands dangerously close to the edge of an abyss. What began as a regional confrontation between Israel and Iran has expanded into a multi-layered conflict involving the United States, proxy actors, and a widening arc of instability stretching from the Gulf to the Eastern Mediterranean. Civilian populations are bearing the brunt of the devastation, critical infrastructure lies in ruins, and the global economy trembles under the threat of disruption to vital energy routes. At the heart of this unfolding crisis—where the specter of a wider, even nuclear, confrontation looms—stands one pivotal figure attempting to reverse the tide: Pakistan's Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Munir's emergence as a central mediator is neither accidental nor symbolic. It is rooted in a demonstrated ability to navigate crisis, build trust across rival blocs, and deliver results under pressure. Having stabilized Pakistan during a period of acute economic, political, and social turmoil—through strategic engagement with China, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar—Munir now applies the same disciplined approach to a far more volatile international theatre. At the core of his current diplomatic effort lies what has come to be known as the Islamabad Accord, a structured, two-phased framework designed not only to halt hostilities but to address the deeper causes of conflict. Unlike previous fragmented peace attempts, this initiative integrates immediate de-escalation with a pathway toward sustainable peace. The framework rests on a series of clearly defined points, factors, and conditions that collectively shape the possibility of ceasefire, stabilization, and long-term resolution. The first and most urgent pillar is the immediate ceasefire, intended to halt ongoing military operations across all fronts. This is not merely a pause in fighting but a critical intervention to stop further civilian casualties, prevent destruction of infrastructure, and create diplomatic breathing space. Closely tied to this is the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery through which a significant portion of global oil and gas flows. Restoring navigation through this chokepoint is essential not only for regional stability but for preventing a cascading global economic crisis. The second phase of the Islamabad Accord envisions a **time-bound negotiation window—ranging from 15 to 45 days—**during which all stakeholders would engage in structured dialogue aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement. This phase is designed to transform a temporary truce into a durable peace agreement by addressing the underlying drivers of conflict.

Among the most critical factors shaping the success of this process is the issue of mutual security guarantees. Iran has made it clear that any agreement must include firm assurances against future attacks by the United States and Israel. Without such guarantees, Tehran remains reluctant to commit to even temporary concessions. On the other side, Washington seeks verifiable commitments regarding Iran's nuclear program, including assurances that it will not pursue nuclear weapons. Bridging this gap requires a carefully balanced framework that provides both deterrence and reassurance. Equally significant is the question of sanctions relief and economic normalization. The proposed framework includes provisions for the release of frozen Iranian assets and the gradual lifting of sanctions in exchange for compliance with agreed terms. This economic dimension is not merely transactional; it is fundamental to rebuilding trust and integrating Iran into a stable regional order. Another key factor is the establishment of a regional security architecture, particularly concerning the Strait of Hormuz. The proposal envisions a cooperative mechanism involving regional stakeholders to ensure freedom of navigation while addressing Iran's security concerns. This would mark a shift from unilateral control and confrontation toward shared responsibility and oversight. The success of the Islamabad Accord also hinges on addressing the pervasive trust deficit that defines the current conflict. Years of hostility, broken agreements, and proxy warfare have created deep skepticism among all parties. As observers have noted, this is not merely a strategic conflict but a psychological one, driven by ego, fear, and historical grievances. Overcoming this requires not only policy solutions but credible mediation—something Munir has worked to establish through sustained engagement with all sides. In this regard, his ability to maintain direct lines of communication with key actors is critical. He is actively coordinating with Donald J. Trump, whose shifting negotiation posture adds complexity to the process, as well as with Iranian leadership, which remains firm in its demands. His ongoing dialogue with JD Vance, Steve Witkoff, and Abbas Araghchi reflects a continuous effort to align positions and narrow differences. Beyond these immediate stakeholders, the framework also incorporates broader regional and global considerations. Engagement with countries such as Turkey and coordination with major powers like China and Russia are essential for ensuring that any agreement is not only accepted but supported by the wider international community. This multi-layered diplomacy acknowledges that the conflict's

implications extend far beyond the immediate parties involved. Timing, too, plays a decisive role. The narrow window leading up to critical diplomatic deadlines has intensified negotiations, creating both urgency and pressure. While parties seek to maximize their strategic advantage, there is also a growing recognition that prolonged conflict offers diminishing returns and escalating risks. This convergence of urgency and pragmatism may provide the opening needed for agreement. Yet the path forward remains fraught with challenges. Iran's reluctance to accept externally imposed deadlines, the United States' demand for rapid compliance, and the broader geopolitical rivalries at play all complicate the process. The possibility of miscalculation or escalation cannot be ruled out. However, the very intensity of the current crisis has also created a shared awareness of the catastrophic consequences of failure. In this volatile environment, Munir's role transcends that of a traditional mediator. He operates as a strategic bridge—linking adversaries, aligning interests, and crafting solutions that acknowledge both the realities of power and the necessity of compromise. His approach combines firmness with adaptability, recognizing that peace is not achieved through idealism alone but through pragmatic, incremental progress. The Islamabad Accord, therefore, is more than a diplomatic proposal; it is a comprehensive framework that integrates ceasefire, economic stabilization, security guarantees, and long-term conflict resolution. It reflects an understanding that sustainable peace requires addressing both immediate triggers and structural causes of conflict. As the world watches the unfolding negotiations, the stakes could not be higher. A successful agreement would not only end the current hostilities but also set a precedent for resolving complex, multi-actor conflicts through inclusive diplomacy. Failure, on the other hand, risks plunging the region—and potentially the world—into deeper chaos. At this critical juncture, Field Marshal Asim Munir stands as a central figure in the effort to avert disaster. His leadership, shaped by experience and defined by resolve, offers a pathway—however narrow—toward peace. Whether that path is taken will depend on the willingness of all parties to move beyond confrontation and embrace the difficult but necessary work of compromise.

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

Power That Roars only at the Weak

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Yet, one day, an incident occurred that revealed a truth more instructive than any medical justification. A dispute arose between him and a neighbour whose social standing was not negligible—one son held a senior position in the police, while another resided in the United States. The matter was brought before a Panchayat

THERE was a man among my relatives who possessed considerable wealth and, with it, an authority that seemed to extend beyond material comfort into the temper of his dealings with others. He was habitually prone to anger. When matters did not unfold according to his will or temperament, he would erupt in fits of indignation, directing his harsh words toward those whom he considered socially or financially inferior. His friends and relatives, rather than confronting his conduct, would excuse it with a convenient explanation; that he suffered from high blood pressure, and therefore his anger was involuntary, even pardonable. In this manner, his excesses were tolerated, if not silently endorsed. Yet, one day, an incident occurred that revealed a truth more instructive than any medical justification. A dispute arose between him and a neighbour whose social standing was not negligible—one son held a senior position in the police, while another resided in the United States. The matter was brought before a Panchayat. There, in a gathering where voices carried weight and consequences were not easily dismissed, the neighbour spoke plainly and firmly. To the surprise of many, my relative did not lose his temper. His blood pressure, so often cited as the cause of his fury, remained perfectly under control. He listened, measured his words, and responded with restraint. An elderly man present at the gathering remarked with quiet irony that his anger and blood pressure were indeed most discerning; they rose only in the presence of the weak. This seemingly ordinary episode carries within it a profound reflection on human conduct, particularly on the nature of power and its exercise. Anger, often portrayed as a spontaneous and uncontrollable emotion, is in many cases neither blind nor indiscriminate. It is calculated, selective, and frequently directed where resistance is least expected. The strong, it appears, are often spared the harshest expressions of wrath, while the weak are made its habitual recipients. It is this recollection that comes to mind when one ob-

serves, in recent times, the language employed by political leaders on the global stage. The conduct of statesmen has traditionally been guided by a sense of decorum, shaped by the recognition that their words carry consequences far beyond personal sentiment. Diplomacy, by its very nature, demands restraint, dignity, and a careful calibration of language. Yet, history and contemporary events alike demonstrate that this standard has not always been upheld. The President of the United States, Donald Trump, has recently used language in reference to Iran that departs markedly from the conventions of diplomatic discourse. His remarks, laced with profanity and overt hostility, stand in sharp contrast to the measured tone expected in international relations. It is difficult to imagine that similar language would be employed against nations such as China, Russia, or North Korea without inviting a formidable and immediate response. The asymmetry is telling. Just as in the case of my relative, the harshness of expression appears to find its direction where the likelihood of equal retaliation is perceived to be limited. This is not, however, an entirely new phenomenon in American political history. The use of coarse or profane language by presidents has been documented across generations, though often confined to private conversations, later revealed through memoirs, recordings, or historical inquiry. Harry S. Truman was known for his blunt expressions, once referring to General Douglas MacArthur in terms that would scarcely befit formal address. John F. Kennedy, admired for his eloquence in public, was reputed to employ decidedly less refined language in private moments. Lyndon B. Johnson carried this tendency further, his speech often coloured by rustic and unvarnished expressions that reflected both his personality and political style. Perhaps the most striking example emerged during the presidency of Richard Nixon, whose secretly recorded conversations, later released in the wake of the Watergate scandal, revealed a pattern of language that shocked the public conscience. These recordings exposed not only pro-

fanity but also remarks that carried undertones of prejudice and intolerance. In more recent times, even leaders such as George W. Bush and Barack Obama have, on occasion, been associated with informal or coarse expressions, though generally in private or less formal contexts. What distinguishes the present moment is not merely the use of such language, but its open and public deployment, particularly through the immediacy of social media. President Donald Trump has frequently articulated his views in terms that blur the line between political rhetoric and personal invective. His recent statements concerning Iran, including explicit threats accompanied by profane expressions, exemplify a departure from the traditional norms of statecraft. The gravity of international conflict, especially in a region as sensitive as the Middle East, would ordinarily call for language that seeks to de-escalate rather than inflame. The implications of such a shift are not confined to matters of etiquette. Language shapes perception, and perception, in turn, influences action. When the discourse of leadership descends into vulgarity, it risks normalising a tone that erodes respect, both domestically and internationally. It diminishes the moral authority that nations seek to uphold and complicates the delicate task of diplomacy. The lesson, whether drawn from a modest Panchayat or the corridors of global power, remains consistent. Strength is not demonstrated through the ability to intimidate the weak, nor is authority enhanced by the abandonment of restraint. True leadership lies in the capacity to exercise power with wisdom, to speak with dignity even in moments of tension, and to uphold standards that inspire respect rather than fear. Here's the bottom line, anger that discriminates between the strong and the weak is neither a sign of sincerity nor of strength. It is, rather, a reflection of calculation. And when such calculation finds expression in the language of those who shape the destinies of nations, it becomes not merely a personal flaw, but a matter of global consequence.

Briefs

Pakistan, Turkiye have vast...

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areas such as climate change, counter-terrorism, immigration, and other sectors. In his remarks, the head of the Turkish Constitutional Court thanked Pakistan for its warm hospitality during the visit. "Love for Pakistan resides in the veins of every Turk," said Kadir Ozkaya adding that the Constitutional Court of Turkiye was 64 years old and was ready to initiate a pilot project with Pakistan to share its vast experience. The meeting was also attended by judges of the Constitutional Court of Turkiye, Ridvan Gulec and Recai Akcel, as well as Turkiye's Ambassador to Pakistan, Irfan Neziroglu.

Pakistan condemns Iranian...

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Pakistan reiterated its unwavering support for the security and stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Full Statement by the Government of Pakistan: The Government of Pakistan expresses its deep concern and unequivocal condemnation of the missile and drone attacks carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran last night against energy facilities in the Eastern Region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Pakistan mourns the loss of life resulting from these attacks and strongly deprecates the damage inflicted on vital infrastructure. The Government of Pakistan conveys its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and firmly stands in solidarity with the Government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during this difficult time.

Armed forces ready to match...

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read the statement issued by the ISPR. It further noted that restraint and calibration so far exhibited by KSA, despite grave provocations, enabled mediation and diplomatic resolution; however, such unwarranted aggressions have serious repercussions, to spoil the ongoing peaceful options and conducive environment. Earlier in the day, the Foreign Office also denounced Iranian attacks on energy facilities in Saudi Arabia, terming them a "serious violation" of the country's territorial integrity and a "dangerous escalation" in the ongoing war in the Middle East. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia last year signed a "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement" in Riyadh, under which any attack on either country would be regarded as an act of aggression against both.

Opposition leader calls for formation...

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"We will have to move toward a national government." "The system that came after the elections has collapsed," he claimed, referring to the PML-N led coalition government formed after the Feb 8, 2024, general elections. This country, Achakzai said, could only move forward through "collective wisdom". He maintained that the "establishment" tried to break ex-premier and PTI founder Imran Khan but failed. Achakzai, also the head of the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan (TTAP), warned of "resistance" if any effort was made to sideline Imran. "We will have to agree on some points. We will have to ask the establishment to give some space," he said. The opposition leader also pointed out the absence of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif from the house. "Shehbaz Sharif is not here; otherwise, I would have spoken to him," he said.

Kalam-Mahudhand lake a scenic wonderland

"The valleys, the peaks, the snow everything feels magical," he said, smiling as cold winds swept across the mountains of Swat

SWAT: A gentle curtain of rain on Tuesday transformed the lush valleys of upper Swat into a breathtaking spring wonderland, drawing families, adventurers, and nature lovers into its misty embrace. Since last night, intermittent showers have washed over Kalam and surrounding valleys, painting the landscape in vibrant hues of green while snow still clings to distant peaks. The result is nothing short of magical but a rare meeting of winter's farewell and spring's arrival. Across Kalam, Bahrain, Madyan, Malam Jabba, and Ushu, laughter echoes through the valleys as tourists escape the hustle of city life. Many have traveled from the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Islamabad, eager to experience a season where blooming flowers, chirping birds, and drifting clouds create a living postcard. "Swat offers a blend of adventure, culture, and serenity unmatched elsewhere in the country," said Farooq Khan, Assistant Professor, as he warmed himself against the valley's lingering chill. He said Pakistan was blessed with all re-

sources including second highest world mountains peak K2, killer mountain Nangaparbat, longest desert at Thar and Cholistan, ancient Gandhara and Indus Civilizations if properly showcased through digital lens can bring an economic turnaround through tourism. As result of Govt pro tourism policies, he said Pakistan has been ranked 83rd in the 2021 edition of the Travel and Tourism Development Index that includes 117 countries, which is up from 89th place in the index's previous edition of 2019. Overall, Japan has occupied the top spot on the latest edition of the index, followed by the USA, Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Singapore and Italy, which have been ranked top 10, respectively. The surge in domestic tourism made a positive impact on overall tourism growth and rural economy, he reiterated. For visitors like Khayam Ali from Nowshera, the experience feels almost surreal. Standing amid snow-dusted slopes in Malam Jabba, he described the moment as a dream fulfilled. "The valleys, the peaks,

the snow everything feels magical," he said, smiling as cold winds swept across the mountains of Swat. Nearby, families gather along the banks of the Swat River, where freshly caught trout sizzle over open flames. It's a ritual as much as a meal tourists snapping photos before savoring one of the valley's simplest yet most cherished delights. Adventure seekers, meanwhile, find their thrill in Swat's diverse terrain. From skiing in Malam Jabba to potential rafting routes along the 150-kilometer stretch of the Swat River, the region promises untapped excitement. Towering peaks like Falakser, Mankial, and Elum stand as silent challenges for trekkers and mountaineers, while dense deodar forests offer solace to those seeking quiet communion with nature. The Swat's charm is not limited to its landscapes a history whispers through its valleys. At the Saidu Sharif museum, visitors like Idress Khan from Bannu marvel at Gandhara-era relics, connecting with a civilization that once flourished in these mountains. "We came for trout and left

inspired by the history of Gandhara civilization," he shared. Improved connectivity via the Swat Motorway has made the valley more accessible than ever, bringing a surge of visitors during weekends and holidays. Markets bustle, hotels fill, and ski slopes come alive with activity. But the growing popularity comes with concerns due to overcharging by hoteliers. Tourists have raised alarm over rising hotel prices particularly in Kalam and Malam Jabba and called for regulation to keep the destination affordable. Others point to poor road conditions in upper areas as a challenge that still needs attention. Officials said plans are underway to expand tourism infrastructure, including new adventure sports, tourist zones, and facilitation centers aimed at easing pressure on popular spots while promoting sustainable travel. Omair Khattak, GM Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism and Culture Authority said that Integrated Tourism Zones at Swat and Thandayani Abbottabad were planned to promote sustainable tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. — Agencies

Russia and China veto...

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A vote had been expected on Saturday. But instead the resolution was further weakened to eliminate any reference to Security Council authorization — which is an order for action — and limit its provisions to the Strait of Hormuz. Previous drafts had included adjacent waters. The resolution vetoed Tuesday "strongly encourages states interested in the use of commercial maritime routes in the Strait of Hormuz to coordinate efforts, defensive in nature, commensurate with the circumstances, to contribute to ensuring the safety and security of navigation across the Strait of Hormuz." This should include escorting merchant and commercial vessels, and deterring attempts to close, obstruct or interfere with international navigation through the strait, it says. The resolution also demanded that Iran immediately halt attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and stop impeding their freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and attacking civilian infrastructure. In response to the US and Israeli attacks beginning on Feb. 28, Iran has targeted hotels, airports, residential buildings and other civilian infrastructure in more than 10 countries, including the Islamic Republic's Gulf neighbors, some of the world's major exporters of oil and natural gas. Iran's blockade in the strait is seen by Gulf nations as an existential threat. Bahrain, a Gulf nation that hosts the US Fifth Fleet and is the Security Council's Arab representative and its president this month, has been pressing for UN action. At the same time, Trump on Monday demanded again that Iran reopen the Strait of Hormuz after heaping praise on the US military for the daring rescue of two crewmen of a fighter jet shot down in Iran. The Republican president warned Iran that the "entire country can be taken out in one night, and that might be tomorrow night."

PSL 11: Farhan, Philippe lead Sultans to comfortable win over Pindiz

Multan Sultans chase down 183-run target for the loss of three wickets and 22 balls to spare

DNA

LAHORE: DSahibzada Farhan and Josh Philippe scored fifties as Multan Sultans beat Rawalpindiz by seven wickets in the 14th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday. Set to chase a 183-run target, the Sultans comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just three wickets and 22 balls to spare.

The leaders, however, had a contrasting start to their pursuit as Mohammad Amir dismissed their in-form opener Steve Smith (five) in the second over with just 12 runs on the board. But the early setback did not bother the Sultans as in-form Farhan and Philippe turned the game on its head by putting together a blazing 110-run partnership for the second wicket, which saw both batters amassing their respective half-centuries.

The monumental stand was eventually broken by Amir in the 12th over when he outfoxed Philippe with a slower delivery, who remained a notable run-getter for the Sultans with a brisk 56 off 30 deliveries, comprising six fours and three sixes. Farhan, on the other hand, followed suit 11 balls later, getting cleaned up by Amir Khan after top-scoring for the Sultans with 68 off 36 deliveries, studded with five sixes and four fours.

Following the back-to-back departure of set batters, skipper Ashton Turner and his deputy Shan Masood batted sensibly at the back-end and steered their side to glory on the second delivery of the 17th over with an unbeaten 47-run partnership. Masood remained unbeaten with a 15-ball 27, while Turner made 26 not out from just 10 deliveries. Mohammad Amir was the pick of the bowlers for the Pindiz, taking two wickets for 32 runs in his three overs, while Mohammad Amir Khan bagged one. Put into bat first, the seventh-placed side racked up 182/8 in their 20 overs despite Faisal Akram's four-wicket haul. The Pindiz got off to a shaky start to their innings as their opener Yasir Khan (five) was dismissed by Muhammad Ismail in the third over with just 15 runs on the board. Following the early stutter, captain Mohammad Rizwan (19) was joined by Kamran Ghulam in the middle, and the duo batted sensibly to raise an anchoring 33-run partnership for the second wicket, which culminated with the former's dismissal off Arafat Minhas in the sixth over.

PTF Secretary Turns Coach, Sparks Taekwondo Row

The development has intensified debate within the sport, with stakeholders calling for clearer governance and defined roles to avoid potential conflicts of interest at the federation level

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Taekwondo Federation (PTF) has come under scrutiny after its newly elected Secretary, Najia Rasool, appointed herself as coach of the national junior team for the upcoming World Junior Taekwondo Championship, raising concerns over a potential misuse of authority within the federation. According to details, Najia Rasool, who recently assumed office following federation elections, has been accused of overstepping her administrative role by taking on a coaching position for the international event scheduled to be held in Uzbekistan from April 12 to 17. The move has reportedly sidelined other qualified coaches and triggered unease within taekwondo circles across the country. Officials and insiders claim the decision has led to internal disputes, with critics questioning the transparency and fairness of the selection process. Concerns have also been raised over reports that Najia Rasool is allegedly receiving monthly payments under an IOC scholarship programme in a coaching capacity. Responding to the criticism, Najia Rasool defended the decision, stating there is no restriction on a federation secretary serving as a coach. She emphasized that she had prior experience as a coach before assuming her administrative role, adding that the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) had not provided any funding for the tour. The development has intensified debate within the sport, with stakeholders calling for clearer governance and defined roles to avoid potential conflicts of interest at the federation level.

5 policemen injured in KP...

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The police spokesperson said that "the explosion was heard throughout the area and left one assistant sub-inspector (ASI) and four constables injured", adding that the police van they were patrolling in was also damaged in the blast. The official elaborated that the injured cops were moved to the District Headquarters Hospital after the attack for medical treatment. "After the blast, a large police contingent reached the town, surrounded the area and launched a search for the perpetrators of the attack," he added. Lakki Marwat District Police Officer (DPO) Nazir Khan, along with personnel from Counter-Terrorism Department and Bomb Disposal Squad, inspected the blast site. The DPO issued instructions to subordinate officials to beef up security and trace and arrest the perpetrators of the terrorist attack.

IHC orders lawyer Salman...

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prosecutors Javed Ashraf and Rafi Maqsood appeared before the court, while Barrister Safdar represented the PTI founder. The directives followed the court's earlier decision in February to appoint Barrister Safdar as a "friend of the court". After his visit, he reported that the PTI chairman had complained of losing 85% of the vision in his right eye. At the outset of the hearing on Tuesday, the court was informed that the hearing could not take place a day earlier due to the bench's unavailability. The proceedings resumed with both the main petitions and related miscellaneous applications taken up together, including requests for early hearing of Bushra Bibi's plea and facilitation of a lawyer-client meeting. During the hearing, Safdar referred to a court order issued on March 31. The chief justice inquired about the nature of the miscellaneous application, to which the counsel requested permission to meet his client.

PHF Announces New National Selection Committee, Appoints Head Coaches for All Tiers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has officially announced the appointment of a new National Selection Committee (NSC) along with head coaches for Pakistan's senior, junior, and U-18 teams, according to a notification issued on April 7, 2026. The notification, approved by PHF President Mohiyuddin Ahmad Wani, states that the appointments have been made following recommendations of the Professional Development Committee (PDC) and in line with agreed terms and conditions. Former Olympian Samiullah Khan has been named Chairman of Selectors. The selection committee also includes Naeem Akhtar, Kashif Jawad, Muhammad Khalid, Atif Bashir, and Nasir Ali as members. In parallel, the PHF has appointed key coaching staff for different levels. Manzoor ul Hassan will serve as Head Coach of the Pakistan senior team, while Ayaz Mehmood has been assigned as Head Coach of the junior team. Qamar Ibrahim will take charge of the U-18 squad. According to the notification, the respective head coaches will also be part of the selection process for their teams, ensuring coordination between coaching and selection functions. The move is seen as part of broader efforts by the PHF to restructure and strengthen Pakistan hockey at all levels, aiming to revive the country's performance in international competitions.

Sindh Strikers dominate National Talent Hunt Boxing Championship

HYDERABAD: Sindh Strikers delivered an outstanding performance to clinch the top position with seven gold medals at the National Talent Hunt Boxing Championship, while Punjab Thunders finished second and Balochistan Eagles secured third place. Organised by the Pakistan Boxing Federation in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, the boys' and girls' championship was held at the Hyderabad Club, featuring participation from 210 boxers representing 10 teams from across the country. Competitions were conducted across 21 weight categories, including 13 for boys and eight for girls.

Major General Yahya Suleman Gondal was the chief guest at the closing ceremony and distributed prizes among the winners along with Pakistan Boxing Federation President Col (ret'd) Nasir Tang and Secretary General Maj (ret'd) Irfan Younis. Senior Vice President of the federation and President of Sindh Boxing Association Asghar Baloch, along with other officials and dignitaries, were also present on the occasion. According to the results, Sindh Strikers secured seven gold, one silver and three bronze medals to top the standings. Punjab Thunders claimed second place with four gold, two silver and five bronze medals. Balochistan Eagles and Balochistan Bulls shared third position with three gold medals each. Among other teams, KP Tigers won two gold, three silver and one bronze medal, Sindh Stallions secured one gold, five silver and three bronze medals, and Punjab Warriors claimed one gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Islamabad bagged two silver and six bronze medals, KP Lions earned one silver and three bronze medals, while Azad Kashmir secured one bronze medal. In the junior category, Sindh's Ayesha Khan was declared the best boxer

of the championship. Organisers said the championship aimed to promote boxing across the country and provide a platform for emerging talent, a goal that was successfully achieved through the event. — DNA

Gwadar Implements business hour restrictions

GWADAR: Authorities in Gwadar have imposed temporary business hour limits to manage expected energy shortages tied to regional instability. This move aims to protect operations in Pakistan's key China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) port city, Gwadar Pro reported. The restrictions follow instructions from Balochistan's Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti. Deputy Commissioner Nageebullah Kakar consulted with local traders and business leaders, officials said. According to the new regulations, shopping malls and commercial centers must close by 8:00 PM, while restaurants, hotels, and most offices—including the passport office—must shut by 10:00 PM. Medical stores and tandoor shops are exempt to ensure access to essential services. Officials pointed to growing uncertainty surrounding Iran and broader regional tensions as factors that could disrupt energy supplies. Authorities stressed the importance of maintaining stability in Gwadar, given its strategic role in regional trade and China-Pakistan economic cooperation. Police have warned that violations will lead to strict legal action but assured business owners that restrictions are temporary and will be lifted once conditions improve. — APP

Fakhar Zaman breaks silence on T20I retirement speculations

"I want to finish my T20 career on a high note," says left-handed batter

DNA

KARACHI: Renowned Pakistan batter and Lahore Qalandars opener Fakhar Zaman on Monday broke his silence on speculations about his retirement from T20 International cricket. Zaman, who has been a key performer both for Pakistan and in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), clarified that he has no plans to end his T20I career. The left-hander revealed that he had briefly considered retiring after the conclusion of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, which was hosted in India and Sri Lanka. However, he has since decided against it. "After the World Cup, I had decided to retire from T20 cricket. However, I no longer intend to retire and want to finish my T20 career on a high note," Zaman stated. It is pertinent to mention that the 35-year-old has been a standout performer for the Green Shirts in the T20I format, having played 120 matches and scored 2,494 runs at an impressive strike rate of 132.51, including 14 fifties. He has also excelled for Lahore Qalandars in the PSL, representing the franchise for



the 11th consecutive season. So far, he has played 99 matches, scoring 3,018 runs at a strike rate of 141.82, which includes 24 fifties and two centuries. Recently, Fakhar was charged with a Level 3 offence under Article 2.14 of the Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel for allegedly breaching Article 41.3 of the playing conditions, which prohibits any action that alters the condition of the ball, during Lahore Qalandars' PSL 11 match against arch-rivals Karachi Kings on March 29. Consequently, he was handed a two-match ban after match referee Roshan Mahnama conducted a disciplinary hearing, following a thorough review of all evidence and providing Fakhar an opportunity for a personal hearing. Fakhar, who denied the allegations throughout the process, had requested a full disciplinary hearing under the PSL Code of Conduct. However, the Pakistan Super League Technical Committee dismissed his plea to review the suspension. Today, the committee, comprising Professor Javed Malik, Dr Mumraiz Naqshband, and Mr Syed Ali Naqi, upheld the two-match ban after reviewing all evidence and hearing submissions from relevant parties.

Briefs

PSX stays bullish, gains more 465 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 465.64 points, a positive change of 0.31 percent, closing at 151,673.46 points against 151,207.82 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 357.269 million shares with a traded value of Rs 20.436 billion, compared to 457.211 million shares valuing Rs 30.876 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 16.855 trillion from Rs 16.822 trillion a day earlier. Out of 477 active companies in the ready market, 223 advanced, 188 declined, and 66 remained unchanged.

K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 53.600 million shares, followed by Trust Brokerage with 26.371 million shares and Cnergyco PK with 16.666 million shares. The top gainers included Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, which increased by Rs 111.58 to close at Rs 9,041.83, and Khairpur Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 32.66 to settle at Rs 359.28. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 154.59 to close at Rs 24,801.03, while Khyber Textile Mills Limited fell by Rs 127.11 to close at Rs 1,217.89. In the futures market, turnover stood at 81.970 million shares with a traded value of Rs 5.167 billion, compared to 116.747 million shares worth Rs 8.190 billion in the previous session. Out of 312 futures-market companies, 155 recorded gains while 143 declined and 14 remained unchanged.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.06 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.07. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.00 and Rs 280.10, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.41 to close at Rs 322.40 from the previous day's close of Rs 322.81, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.37 and closed at Rs 369.62 compared to the previous day's Rs 369.99. The exchange rate of the Emirati Dirham increased by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 75.98 while the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close Rs 74.33.—APP

Nepal vows action against trekker rescue scam

KATMANDU: Nepal's government has developed tough measures to stamp out insurance scams involving unnecessary helicopter rescues of trekkers, an official said Tuesday, a long-running racket threatening the country's vital tourism industry. The Himalayan nation, home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks including Everest, attracts thousands of trekkers each year, many walking remote high-altitude trails where emergency airlifts are costly. But police say some operators have for years orchestrated fraudulent evacuations for insurance payouts, and 32 people have been charged after an investigation in an alleged \$19.69 million scam. "The government is taking several steps to ensure that there is investigation and immediate action against any fraudulent practices," Jaya Narayan Acharya, spokesman at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, told AFP. "Tourism is an important industry.—APP



Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a progress review meeting on performance of National Tariff Commission .

Tahir for govt-businessmen consultative decision-making

He expressed serious concern over the government's unilateral decision to close markets and shopping malls by 8:00 pm in response to the oil crisis, terming it counterproductive and detrimental to economic activity. He noted that such measures could significantly reduce business hours, disrupt commercial momentum, and ultimately impact national revenue generation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has stated that the business community of Pakistan remains fully aware of the prevailing economic challenges, particularly in the wake of the ongoing Middle East conflict, and is resolute in extending its full support to the government in navigating the situation successfully.

Addressing the visiting business leaders at the Chamber House on Tuesday, he emphasized that while the private sector stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the government during difficult times, it is equally impor-

tant that all decisions affecting businesses are made through meaningful consultation with the leadership of chambers and trade bodies across the country.

He expressed serious concern over the government's unilateral decision to close markets and shopping malls by 8:00 pm in response to the oil crisis, terming it counterproductive and detrimental to economic activity. He noted that such measures could significantly reduce business hours, disrupt commercial momentum, and ultimately impact national revenue generation. "The business community cannot afford abrupt decisions that directly affect its operations without prior consultation. We strongly urge the

government to review this decision and adopt a more inclusive approach by engaging stakeholders before implementing such policies," he added. Sardar Tahir Mehmood further assured the business community that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will continue to serve as a strong and effective platform, safeguarding the interests of traders and industrialists and raising its voice for policies that promote ease of doing business. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub remarked that the current economic scenario demands unity and coordination between the public and private sectors. He stressed that energy conservation is a shared responsibility, but its imple-

mentation must be pragmatic and business-friendly to avoid unnecessary disruption to economic activities.

Vice President Irfan Chaudhry also highlighted that early market closures would adversely affect small traders and daily wage earners, who rely heavily on evening business hours. He underscored the need for balanced policies that protect livelihoods while addressing national challenges. The meeting concluded with a consensus that a consultative framework between the government and business community is essential to ensure sustainable economic progress and to effectively tackle emerging challenges without undermining commercial confidence.

TGV train accident leaves driver killed, 27 people injured

PARIS: The driver of a high-speed TGV train was killed and 27 people injured in France on Tuesday when the train collided with a truck, officials said. The accident occurred in France's northern Pas-de-Calais region at around 7:00 am (05:00 GMT), said rail operator SNCF. "I am heading to the scene with the chief executive of the SNCF, Jean Castex," Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot said on X. Neither the SNCF nor the prefecture were able to provide details of the circumstances of the accident. The SNCF said that rail services would be suspended between Bethune and Lens until at least late Tuesday. In France, serious accidents involving high-speed rail lines are rare compared to traditional railways.—APP

Over 180 dead or missing in Mediterranean since March 28

GENEVA: More than 180 people are feared dead or missing in Mediterranean shipwrecks over the past 10 days, the United Nations said Tuesday, with nearly 1,000 deaths counted since the start of 2026. The UN's International Organization for Migration said that so far this year, around 765 people had died in the Central Mediterranean — over 460 more than during the same period in 2025. And "across the Mediterranean as a whole, at least 990 deaths have been recorded in 2026," IOM said, adding that it was "one of the deadliest starts to a year since 2014," when it began collecting this data. The agency said that just since March 28, at least 181 people had died or gone missing in five separate shipwrecks. In the latest incident on Sunday, the agency said more than 80 migrants had gone missing when their boat capsized in the Central Mediterranean after departing from Tajoura Libya, with around 120 people onboard. "The vessel took on water in rough weather before overturning," IOM said. Thirty-two survivors were rescued by a merchant vessel and a tugboat and later brought to Lampedusa by the Italian coast guard, it said, adding that two bodies had been recovered. In an earlier shipwreck on April 1, at least 19 migrants were found dead aboard a vessel off Lampedusa, IOM said, adding that 58 people, including women and children, had been rescued, with several in critical condition. Survivors said that boat had left Zuara in Libya overnight between March 28 and 29. "After three days at sea, the vessel was left adrift due to engine failure, fuel shortages and lack of food as weather conditions deteriorated," IOM said, adding that initial testimonies indicated "many victims died before rescue operations, possibly due to hypothermia.—APP

PRA discuss revenue from services sector

LAHORE: Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) Chairman Moazzam Iqbal Sipra said on Tuesday that government's top priority is to enhance tax revenues without burdening the business community. He was presiding over a meeting to review measures for enhancing revenue from the services sector. During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on expanding the tax net and bringing additional service sectors into taxation. Directions were issued to ensure registration of unregistered businesses and to promote e-filing and e-payment system on a priority basis. Various proposals were reviewed to make the tax system more transparent and user-friendly through digitalization and automation. The meeting was also briefed on awareness campaigns aimed at promoting tax compliance among the public. It was decided to soon launch a dedicated WhatsApp number at PRA to facilitate easy and prompt redressal of taxpayer complaints.—APP

Australia, China agree to seek regional energy security

SYDNEY: Australia and China agreed on Tuesday to back regional energy security as the world faced rising oil prices sparked by war in the Middle East, both governments said. Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese held a telephone call with Chinese Premier Li Qiang to discuss the importance of energy security "in light of the current global challenges," according to a Canberra summary of their conversation. "The Prime Minister and Premier Li agreed to increase government-to-government communication so that Australia and China are both working in support of regional energy security," it said. The two sides agreed that high-level engagement was central to a "mature, stable and constructive relationship." Li said that their economic cooperation has "enormous potential in the long run," adding that "both sides should accelerate the review and upgrading of the bilateral free trade agreement.—APP

Gold slips as Iran war, US jobs data lift dollar

LONDON: Gold prices rose on Wednesday to their highest in nearly two weeks, supported by a weaker dollar following US President Donald Trump's statement that the war with Iran could wind down in weeks. Spot gold rose 1 percent to \$4,717.82 per ounce by 07:12 GMT, its highest level since March 20. US gold futures for April delivery gained 1.4 percent to \$4,744.30. The US dollar fell 0.4 percent, making bullion more affordable for holders of other currencies. Gold fell more than 11 percent in March in its steepest monthly decline since October 2008 as elevated oil prices fueled inflation concerns and bets of a hawkish monetary policy response. "Market remains cautious about over-interpretation of the de-escalation remark as a clean pivot. We've already seen multiple rounds where talks appeared constructive before stalling," said Christopher Wong, a strategist at OCBC. While gold is often used as a hedge against inflation and geopolitical risks, high interest rates make the non-yielding bullion less attractive among investors. Spot silver fell 0.1 percent to \$75 per ounce, platinum gained 1.4 percent to \$1,975.74 and palladium was up 1 percent at \$1,487.26.—DNA

Fighter from Iraq's PMF killed

BAGHDAD: A strike killed a fighter from the former paramilitary coalition Hashed Al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Forces, in Iraq near the border with Syria on Tuesday, the alliance said, blaming the United States and Israel. "At 4 am (01:00 GMT) this morning the 45th Brigade... was subjected to a treacherous Zionist-American aggression in the Qaim district of Anbar province," the alliance said. The strike resulted in "the martyrdom of one of the fighters of the 45th Brigade," which belongs to the US-backed, pro-Iran group Kataeb Hezbollah.—APP

Angola flooding death toll rises to 30

LUANDA: Torrential rains that swept across Angola in recent days have killed more than 30 people, according to a new toll reported by Angolan public television on Tuesday. The storm has triggered flash floods that inundated streets and damaged infrastructure in the capital Luanda and the central city of Benguela on the Atlantic coast. President Joao Lourenco has said the country faces a "race against the clock" to find, rescue and provide medical care to those affected. Emergency services on Sunday had put the death toll at 15 and said thousands had been forced to leave their homes. Benguela has borne the biggest brunt of the flooding, with 23 people killed, TPA television said. Six people have died and one is missing in Luanda, the fire service said in a statement. In neighboring Namibia, the Zambezi River has risen sharply, forcing thousands of people living along its banks to flee. Officials said water levels had reached about 6.8 meters (22 feet), well above the usual four meters. Heavy downpours are not unusual in southern Africa during the rainy season but scientists say human-caused climate change is increasing the probability, length and severity of such extreme weather events.—APP

Strait of Hormuz traffic rises to highest level in weeks as passage deals expand

Oman, which shares the waters of the strait, confirmed on Sunday that it had held talks with Iran aimed at ensuring the smooth flow of maritime traffic

RIYADH: Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has risen to its highest levels since the early days of the war, as more countries appear to have reached agreements with Iran to ensure safe passage. The shipping lane saw 21 vessels pass through over the weekend, as an increasing number of energy-constrained governments negotiate the exit of ships, cargo, and crews from the Arabian Gulf, reinforcing Iran's control over the maritime corridor. This marks the highest total recorded over a two-day period since early March, when maritime traffic was in decline. Of these vessels, 13 were bound for the Arabian Sea. Iranian vessels continue to dominate traffic, although an oil tanker carrying Iraqi crude passed through the strait on Sunday after Iran granted what it described as an exemption to "brotherly Iraq." Moreover, eight liquefied petroleum gas tankers operated by India also transited the strait after New Delhi negotiated the exit of some of its ships and, for the first time in years, purchased Iranian liquefied petroleum gas. Although vessel traffic remains significantly lower than pre-war levels, when around 135 ships crossed daily on a regular basis, more countries are managing to se-

cur passage. Last week, two container ships linked to China passed through the strait on a second attempt, alongside two vessels associated with Japan. Strait of Hormuz in focus amid Trump threats The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime passage linking the Arabian Gulf to the wider world, has become a focal point as the war enters its sixth week, amid threats by US President Donald Trump to target civilian infrastructure and "unleash hell" on Iran if the passage is not reopened. In contrast, Tehran indicated that it will not proceed with reopening the passage until the transit fees it collects from vessels cover the damages caused by the war. According to Muyu Xu, a senior crude oil analyst at Kpler in Singapore, "Iran is responding to the requests of its partners while strengthening its control over the Strait of Hormuz. Transit remains subject to Iran's discretion, and the situation could change at any time if the conflict escalates." Tehran is also moving forward with legislation to formalize its control over the strait and establish transit fees, a step that would institutionalize a payment system that has operated informally for weeks, according to

shipowners. Safe passage deals with opaque terms Despite Tehran's negotiations with friendly countries, the terms of these agreements remain opaque, a situation that is also reflected in publicly acknowledged arrangements, such as the deal with Iraq over the weekend. The uncertainty is even greater in cases where it is not clear which parties have secured safe passage, including vessels linked to France and Japan. Last week, Pakistan was offered permission to move 20 ships out of the Arabian Gulf, a number exceeding the vessels currently stranded behind the Strait of Hormuz. The country is considering options, including deploying additional tankers and potentially reflagging vessels under different flags to secure supplies of fertilizers, oil, and other commodities. So far, most vessels granted the green light have sailed along a route apparently designated by Tehran, hugging the Iranian coastline. However, an increasing number have begun navigating along the opposite shore. Oman, which shares the waters of the strait, confirmed on Sunday that it had held talks with Iran aimed at ensuring the smooth flow of maritime traffic.—DNA

Briefs

LHC grants post-arrest bail to Canadian scholar Khan

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday granted post-arrest bail to a Canadian national, also a Pakistani PHD scholar, in a cybercrime case. In late February, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) had registered the case against Hamza Ahmad Khan under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) 2016 for allegedly making anti-state posts on social media platforms X and Instagram. After being denied post-arrest bail by a judicial magistrate and a sessions court, Hamza had approached the LHC for the same. Taking up the case today, Justice Muhammad Waheed Khan allowed the bail petition, subject to furnishing surety bonds of Rs200,000. Earlier, Advocate Asad Jamal appeared before the court on behalf of the petitioner and completed his arguments. The bail petition contended that the sequence of events raised doubts about the legality and transparency of the investigation against the petitioner. The lawyer argued that the case against the petitioner was false and manufactured with the malicious intent to rope him into unjust and unfair legal proceedings.

France's Sarkozy pleads innocent

NEWS DESK

PARIS: France's ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy at an appeals trial Tuesday said he was "innocent," rejecting charges he had sought Libyan financing for his 2007 election in exchange for helping improve Tripoli's image after deadly bombings. A lower court in September found the right-wing politician, who was president from 2007 to 2012, guilty of seeking to acquire funding from Muammar Qaddafi's Libya for the campaign that saw him elected and sentenced him to five years behind bars. The case saw Sarkozy, who has always denied any wrongdoing, become modern France's first president to have gone to jail. He served 20 days before he was released pending the appeal. In the initial trial, prosecutors had argued Sarkozy's aides, acting in his name, struck a deal with Qaddafi, promising in return to help restore the Libyan leader's international image after Tripoli was blamed for two airplane bombings.

Indonesia charges 19 over baby trafficking

DNA

BANDUNG: Indonesian prosecutors charged 19 people with human trafficking on Tuesday for their alleged roles in buying babies from new parents and selling them at a profit to clients at home and abroad. A man and 18 women, including alleged ringleader Lie Siu Luan, 70, were formally charged during an appearance at the Bandung district court in West Java province. If found guilty, they could face up to 15 years in prison under Indonesian laws governing human trafficking and child protection, officials said. The defendants were arrested last year after a parent reported an alleged baby kidnapping to police in West Java. Investigators tracked down a suspect who allegedly confessed to having traded more than two dozen infants, some as young as three months old. They were bought from people who did not want or could not afford to keep their babies. The person who reported the kidnapping had actually entered into an agreement with the syndicate but never got paid, police said.

Pakistan commmits to IMF on civil servants' NAB autonomy

Govt assures Washington-based lender, in writing, that it will review and improve appointment process for NAB chief

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has assured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of implementing key anti-corruption reforms, including public disclosure of civil servants' asset declarations and granting greater operational autonomy to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) under agreed structural benchmarks by January 2027. To provide independence and operational autonomy to the leading anti-corruption agency, NAB's institutional independence will be ensured through a transparent selection process for senior management and the publication of operating rules and statistics, under the new structural benchmark set for end-January 2027. The government has given a written commitment to the IMF that it will review and

improve the appointment process for the NAB chairman. Under the guidance of the Anti-Corruption and AML/CFT Committee, proposed amendments to the NAB Ordinance will be developed and laid before Parliament to: (i) adopt pre-determined qualification criteria (eg, years of experience, integrity standards); (ii) establish a merit-based, open and competitive selection process; and (iii) designate a multi-sectoral stakeholder commission (with representatives from the government, opposition, judiciary, civil service, academia and civil society) to conduct an open, rules-based, rigorous and transparent recruitment. "The government will also publish NAB's standard operating procedures and rules, as well as annual statistics regarding the investigation, prosecution and conviction of corruption offences on NAB's website," the government assured the IMF.

Pakistan and the IMF have agreed on the completion of the third review under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme. Under this agreement, Islamabad will strengthen institutional capacities and take further measures to fight corruption to support inclusive growth and a level playing field for businesses and investments. The publication of asset declarations of high-level federal civil servants will be accomplished by the end of December 2026. The Establishment Division has revised the Civil Servant (Conduct) Rules requiring: (i) centralised digital submission and collection of asset declarations; (ii) risk-based verification; and (iii) disclosure of declarations with limited restrictions on confidential personal information. The Establishment Division is set to revise the declaration form to specify restrictions on confidential personal information by the

end of May 2026, and in coordination with the FBR, will develop a framework for risk-based verifications. The FBR will develop a digital platform for the submission of asset declarations by the end of June 2026 to facilitate the implementation of the reform. To grant access to asset declarations for Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Financing of Terrorism (CFT) purposes, the SBP, FBR and FMU will continue to support banks' access to asset declarations of high-level federal public officials (BPS 17-22). The FBR has issued a notification to expand banks' access to cover asset declarations of any officer of the federal or provincial governments or autonomous bodies, corporations and companies owned by such governments. To enhance banks' awareness, by June 2026, the government will publish access statistics on the FBR's website.

14th anniversary of Giyari Sector tragedy

ISLAMABAD: The 14th anniversary of the Giyari Sector tragedy is being observed today. On this day in 2012, a tragic and heart-wrenching incident occurred at the Siachen Front, when a massive avalanche struck a position of the Pakistan Army, burying soldiers dedicated to the defense of the homeland. In this devastating incident, the Battalion Headquarters was completely buried under snow, marking one of the most sorrowful moments in the nation's history. 129 brave son of the soil present at the Battalion Headquarters embraced martyrdom in the incident. The impact of this tragedy was so severe that even foreign rescue teams declared the mission impossible. Driven by patriotism, the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers took on the responsibility of carrying out the rescue operation. Through the tireless efforts and courage of its officers and soldiers, this extremely difficult mission was successfully completed. In memory of the martyrs of the Giyari tragedy, Yadgar-e-Shuhada was also constructed at the Siachen Front. Today, the entire nation is paying tribute to the martyrs of the Giyari Sector tragedy. The great sacrifice of the martyrs of Giyari will always be remembered in the history of Pakistan. - APP

North Korean Ambassador meets PPP leaders



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Choe Chang Man, the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to Pakistan, visited the Central Secretariat of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). He held a meeting with senior PPP leaders, including Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, Secretary General of the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, and Humayun Khan (Incharge) along with Syed Sabt-ul-Haidar Bukhari, Secretary General of the Pakistan Peoples Party. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on mat-

ters of mutual interest, bilateral relations, and the overall regional situation. The two parties agreed to further strengthen relations between Pakistan and North Korea and to expand cooperation in various sectors. The PPP leaders expressed confidence that the friendly relations between Pakistan and North Korea would be further promoted in the future. At the conclusion of the meeting, Ambassador Choe Chang Man stated that relations with Pakistan would be further strengthened. He added that both the government and the people of North Korea highly value and appreciate the bilateral ties between the two countries. The North Korean Ambassador also thanked the PPP leadership for the warm and cordial welcome.

Asif calls for long-term energy strategy based on local resources



The minister said Pakistan should move towards an energy mix based on local resources, including solar and other low-cost options, adding that this shift is necessary for long-term sustainability

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif on Tuesday stressed the need for a long-term energy strategy based on local resources and renewable energy to ensure energy security and economic stability. Responding to a calling attention notice, a drastic change in net metering policy for solar prosumers and a decision to propose 18% tax on solar panels in the National Assembly, he said existing agreements in the power sector have limited the government's ability to make quick structural changes. The minister said Pakistan should move towards an energy mix based on local resources, including solar and other low-cost options, adding that this shift is necessary for long-term sustainability. He added that capacity payments remain a major financial burden, as the government is required to pay power producers under existing contracts even if electricity is not used. He said that although some efforts have been made to renegotiate these agreements, the relief achieved so far is limited and not enough compared to the scale of the obligations. Despite these challenges, he said the government would continue to explore options to reduce costs and gradually shift towards more affordable and sustainable energy solutions. - APP

Australian soldier arrested for alleged war crimes in Afghanistan

Federal police commissioner says soldier linked to string of murders while serving in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012



KABUL: One of Australia's most decorated soldiers was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly murdering unarmed prisoners while serving in Afghanistan, police and local media said following a sweeping war crimes probe. The Australian Federal Police said they arrested a 47-year-old former Australian soldier, who was widely named in local media as Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith. Federal police commissioner Krissy Barrett said the soldier had been linked to a string of murders while serving in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012. "The victims were not taking part in hostilities at the time of their alleged murder in Afghanistan," she told reporters. "It will be alleged the victims were shot by the accused, or shot by subordinate members acting on the orders of the accused." He would be charged with five counts of "war crime - murder", she said. A former member of the Special Air Service Regiment, Roberts-Smith was once lauded as Australia's most distinguished living war hero. But his reputation took a major hit in 2018, when a series of newspaper reports first linked him to the murder of unarmed Afghan prisoners by Australian troops. Those reports would eventually trigger an ongoing po-

lice investigation into alleged war crimes carried out by Australian soldiers. Roberts-Smith has maintained his innocence throughout, launching a multi-million-dollar legal suit against the newspapers that first reported on the allegations. Roberts-Smith won the Victoria Cross - Australia's highest military honour - for "conspicuous gallantry" in Afghanistan while on the hunt for a senior Taliban commander. He met Queen Elizabeth II and his image was hung in the hallowed halls of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. But after painstaking reporting, The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald alleged his public persona masked a pattern of criminal and immoral behaviour. The papers alleged Roberts-Smith had kicked an unarmed Afghan civilian off a cliff and ordered subordinates to shoot him. He was also said to have taken part in the machine-gunning of a man with a prosthetic leg, later using the limb as a drinking vessel with comrades. Australia deployed 39,000 troops to Afghanistan over two decades as part of US and Nato-led operations against the Taliban and other militant groups. As Australian veterans returned home, their actions have come into sharp legal focus. A 2020 military investigation found special forces personnel "unlawfully killed" 39 Afghan civilians and prisoners, revealing allegations of summary executions, body count competitions and torture by Australian forces. Under growing pressure, the government appointed a special investigator to probe whether current and former soldiers should face criminal charge. - DNA

Imran sisters arrested outside Adiala Jail

PTI leader Shahyan Bashir, who came from Lahore, said that police used tear gas shells, due to which several workers were injured and around a couple of dozen were arrested

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD/RAWALPINDI: The PTI said on Tuesday that the sisters of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan were taken into custody by law enforcement agencies as they attempted to stage a protest outside Adiala jail. The PTI had called for a "peaceful protest" outside the Adiala jail on Tuesday against the restrictions on meeting Imran. The party has also announced a protest in Rawalpindi on April 9 (Thursday), marking the day the former prime minister was ousted in a no-confidence motion in 2022. However, Section 144 was imposed in Rawalpindi under which gatherings were banned across the district for 15 days. Despite the imposition of Section 144 and the rainy weather in the twin cities, a large number of leaders and workers of PTI reached Adiala jail on Tuesday. "Law enforcement agencies had already vacated a hotel in the vicinity; they arrested Noreen Niazi and Uzma Khan, along with several workers, and shut down the shutters of the hotel after detaining them," she said. He said that PTI leaders had gathered at a rest stop in Kallar Kahar on the motorway. He said that they were coming toward Adiala jail, however, law enforcement agencies closed both the entry and exit points and arrested at least five members of the Punjab Assembly, including Opposition Leader Moeen Qureshi. Akram said that other leaders and workers were also arrested at the Chakri rest stop on the motorway. PTI leader Shahyan Bashir, who came from Lahore, said that police used tear gas shells, due to which several workers were injured and around a couple of dozen were arrested. "Several workers were injured by falling on the slippery road as there was mud due to rain. It is unfortunate that a meeting was not allowed even on the directions of the Supreme Court," he lamented. On the other hand, PTI Islamabad Chapter President Amir Mughal, along with Malik Amir Awan, Raja Sohail Satti, Raja Sajjad, Sabeen Younus, Khurshheed Jahan, Ayesha Iram, Memna Kamal, Meher Nigar, Saba Afzal and others, managed to reach Adiala jail.

Govt working to keep economy stable

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that the government is working to keep the economy stable and meet key targets. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding shortfall in tax revenue during the first eight months of the current financial year, he said factors such as moderate inflation and fluctuations in GDP growth had affected overall revenue collection. He added that the government's main goal remained achieving a primary budget surplus in line with commitments under the International Monetary Fund programme, carefully balancing fiscal and external accounts amid global challenges. - APP