



# Islamabad POST

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**Pakistan-UAE ties remain strong, says Kh. Asif**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Pakistan played key role in securing ceasefire**

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**IMF fiscal support call to rise soon**

Detailed News On Page-01



## Security beefed up

# Islamabad set for key talks

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and US Ambassador Natalie Baker met in Islamabad on Thursday to review preparations for high-level talks

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is gearing up for a significant round of diplomatic engagements as Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and U.S. Ambassador Natalie Baker met in Islamabad on Thursday to review preparations for high-level talks scheduled to take place tomorrow. During the meeting at the Ministry of Interior, the two sides held an extensive discussion on the evolving situation in the Middle East. They welcomed the recent ceasefire agreement, terming it a positive development for regional stability. Ambassador Baker acknowledged Pakistan's active diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation, praising Islamabad's "sincere and constructive role" in supporting peace initiatives. A key focus of the meeting was the finalization of arrangements for Wednesday's high-level talks, which are expected to draw significant international attention. Minister Naqvi briefed the U.S. envoy on the comprehensive security and coordination plan devised to facilitate the visit of senior American officials. He confirmed that U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance, businessman Steve Witkoff, and senior advisor Jared Kushner will attend

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## Iran, Saudi FMs hold first call

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan received a phone call from his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, the Saudi foreign ministry said on Thursday. It marked the first official contact between the countries since Tehran launched strikes against its Gulf neighbours in retaliation for Israeli-American attacks. "During the call, they reviewed the latest developments and discussed ways to reduce tensions to restore security and stability in the region," the Saudi ministry said. The phone call comes a day after the announcement of a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Israel. Following the ceasefire, Prince Faisal also held phone calls with his counterparts from the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Türkiye and Jordan, according to statements by the foreign ministry. Saudi Arabia welcomed the ceasefire, with its foreign ministry expressing hope that it would lead to a "comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation". It further expressed the hope that the ceasefire would enhance regional security and halt "any aggression or policies that infringe upon the sovereignty, security and stability of the region's countries". As per the statement, Saudi Arabia called for an end to attacks on countries in the Gulf and stressed that the Strait of Hormuz should be opened. It also commended the "productive efforts" undertaken by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir in securing the two-week truce.

## Iran war doubles Russia's main oil revenue

DNA

MOSCOW: Russia will see revenue from its biggest single oil tax double to \$9 billion in April due to the oil and gas crisis triggered by the US and Israeli attack on Iran, media calculations showed on Thursday. The media calculation is some of the first concrete evidence of a windfall for Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter, from the Iran war, which oil traders say has triggered the most serious energy crisis in recent history. Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz – a route for about a fifth of global oil and LNG flows – after US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran at the end of February, sending

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## IMF financial support demand to rise

DNA

WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday the global lender expected near-term demand for IMF financial support to rise to between \$20 billion to \$50 billion as a result of spillovers from the war in the Middle East. Georgieva said the now-paused war was testing the global economy, with a 13% cut in the daily flow of the world's oil and a 20% cut in liquefied natural gas triggering a supply shock that had sent energy prices soaring, while disrupting supply chains. In prepared remarks ahead of next week's meetings of the IMF and World Bank, Georgieva said the war had prompted the Fund to cut its global growth

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ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Asim Munir called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday. – DNA

## CDF, PM meet

# Pakistan vows all-out support to US and Iran for Middle East peace

PM Shehbaz, CDF Munir stress the need for maintaining peace and ceasefire by all parties, says PMO statement

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan's commitment to facilitate and provide all-out support to the US and Iran to arrive at a peacefully negotiated settlement. The resolve came after Field Marshal Munir called on PM Shehbaz at the Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. The dignitaries reviewed the progress of Pakistan's mediation efforts to achieve sustainable peace in the region, the statement said, adding that two leaders expressed satisfaction with the de-escalation achieved so far and stressed the need to maintain peace and a ceasefire by all parties. "The leadership appreciated the restraint demonstrated by all sides and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to facilitate and provide all-out support to both sides to arrive at a peacefully negotiated settlement," it added. The statement read that the prime minister lauded the commitment of the parties

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## Pakistan condemns Israeli aggression against Lebanon

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday condemned, in the strongest terms, the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon, resulting in the loss of innocent lives and the widespread destruction of infrastructure. The Israeli actions undermine international efforts to establish peace and stability in the region and constitute a blatant violation of international law and fundamental humanitarian principles, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs news release said. "Pakistan calls upon the international community to take urgent and concrete steps to end Israeli aggression against Lebanon," it said. The statement added that Pakistan reiterates its unwavering solidarity with the Government and people of Lebanon during this

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## Briefs

### Lebanon seeks Pak support

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam held a phone call with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, in which he sought Pakistan's support for bringing an immediate end to Israeli attacks on his country, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The statement said that during the call, PM Shehbaz strongly condemned Israel's ongoing aggression against Lebanon and expressed condolences over the loss of thousands of precious lives in these hostilities. "The prime minister said that Pakistan was engaged in sincere efforts for regional peace and it was in this spirit that the peace talks between Iran and the US were being convened," it said.

### NADRA to impose penalties

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) on Thursday warned citizens of additional fees and penalties for those who delay obtaining or renewing their identity documents. In a press release, the authority said that identity documents were issued for a specified time and it was every the responsibility of every adult citizen to ensure the timely renewal of their identity documents, particularly CNICs, before their expiry. "Failing this, essential services linked to these documents, including bank accounts, mobile phone SIMs, and other verification-based services may be adversely affected or suspended," it said.

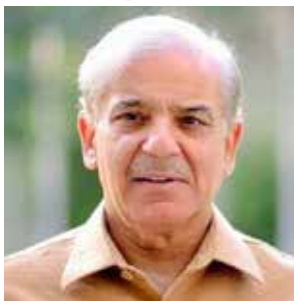
## Middle East crisis

# Pak thanks France for all-out support

During their warm and cordial conversation, President Macron congratulated the Prime Minister for Pakistan's mediation efforts that had resulted in the ceasefire between Iran and the US and brought both sides to the negotiating table

DNA

ISLAMABAD: This afternoon, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from H.E. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic. During their warm and cordial conversation, President Macron congratulated the Prime Minister for Pakistan's mediation efforts that had resulted in the ceasefire between Iran and the U.S. and brought both sides to the negotiating table. He conveyed his good wishes



to the Prime Minister for the success of the upcoming peace talks in Islamabad. While thanking President Macron for supporting Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, the Prime Minister reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to strive for peace and stability in the region. Both leaders expressed their serious concern over the ongoing aggression in Lebanon and stressed upon the urgent need to end the violence and killings, so that peace could be re-established in the entire region. The two leaders agreed to remain in contact.

## US-ISRAEL-IRAN TRUCE

# Ceasefire should also cover Lebanon, say EU leaders


Israel seeks Lebanon talks after bombardments threaten US-Iran truce

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: European powers are intensifying calls for the recently agreed US-Iran ceasefire to be extended to Lebanon, warning that ongoing Israeli military actions are placing the fragile truce under severe strain. EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas stated that Israel's "heavy-handed actions" in Lebanon are endangering the ceasefire. "Israeli actions are putting the US-Iran ceasefire under severe strain. The Iran truce should extend to Lebanon," she said, adding that Hezbollah must disarm. UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper and French officials echoed these concerns, urging the inclusion of Lebanon to prevent further regional destabilisation. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked UN Secretary-General António Guterres and other global partners for recognising Islamabad's diplomatic efforts in brokering the US-Iran ceasefire.







PM Sharif highlighted Pakistan's role in facilitating dialogue and expressed gratitude to countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt, and Qatar for their support. In a related development, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi – the first such high-level contact since the conflict began – to discuss ways to reduce tensions and restore security and stability in the region. Medical authorities in Iran reported that more than 3,000 Iranians were killed during the war that erupted in late February. Iran's forensic chief shared the figures with state media, noting significant challenges in identifying many of the deceased. On the ground in Lebanon, the Israeli military claimed it killed Ali Yusuf Harshi, the personal secretary and nephew of Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem, in a strike on Beirut. The operation is part of intensified

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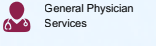
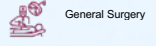

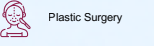
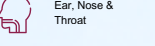
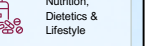
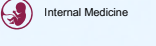
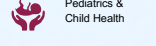
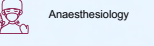
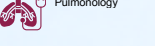
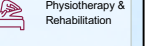
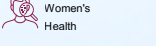
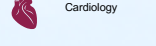
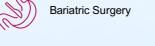
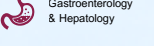
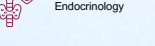
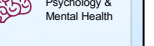
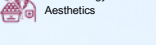
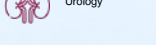
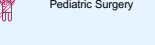
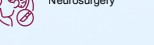
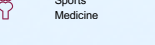
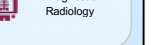
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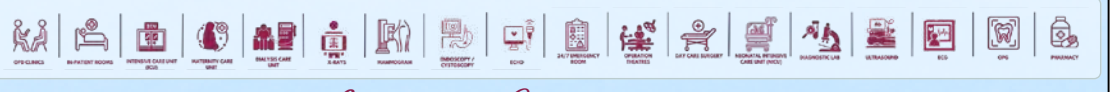
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## Ten including FIA Director, injured in road accident

KOHAT: At least ten people, including a senior FIA official, were injured when a motorcar collided with a flying coach near Taj Mahal Hotel in Tehsil Lachi here on Thursday. According to Rescue 1122 Kohat spokesperson Jawad Afridi, rescue teams responded promptly and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital, where they are receiving treatment. Medical Superintendent KDA Hospital Dr. Tahir Ali Shah and District Police Officer Kohat Shehbaz Elahi reached the emergency ward to oversee medical care and assess the situation. The injured were identified as Ali Raza (30) of Islamabad, Hafza (20) of Abbottabad, Hamida Bibi (36) of Abbottabad, Shehnaz (33) of Peshawar, Atta-ur-Rehman (44), serving as SP Bannu, Nilo (36) of Peshawar, Rani (35) of Nowshera, Mumtaz (40) of Bannu, Gul Bannu Zada (62) of Bannu, and Azlan (8). Rescue and police personnel remained at the site to manage the situation and ensure timely medical assistance.—APP

## Cultural mapping registration drive

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPC-TA) has formally launched a cultural mapping registration drive across the province to develop an authentic database of individuals and organizations associated with arts, culture, and heritage, with the deadline for online applications set as April 20, 2026. According to a spokesperson, the initiative aims to ensure comprehensive documentation of artists, cultural organizations, and institutions, promote cultural activities, and support future policymaking in the sector. Applications have been invited from individual artists, artist associations, art councils, cultural centers, societies, trusts, welfare organizations, and NGOs. However, only those entities will be eligible that are legally registered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and are actively engaged in the field of arts and culture.—APP

## Efforts afoot to improve KP varsities global rankings

PESHAWAR: On the directives of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, a key meeting was held here on Thursday to review and enhance the international rankings of universities in the province. The meeting took place in the Higher Education Department's committee room under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi. According to the spokesperson of the Higher Education Department, senior officials, including Secretary Higher Education Dr. Muhammad Israr Khan, Special Secretary Sharif Hussain, Director Higher Education Dr. Fareed-ullah Shah, Director Quality Assurance Dr. Imranullah Marwat, and members of the minister's advisory team attended the session.—APP

# Human smuggling networks exposed as 25 Pakistanis deported from Poland

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A total of twenty-five Pakistani nationals have been deported after attempting to illegally enter Poland through routes linked to Belarus, highlighting growing concerns over organized migration networks operating along Poland's eastern border with Belarus. The Polish authorities have confirmed the deportations were carried out under legal administrative procedures after the individuals were found in violation of immigration laws. The group was returned by air as part of Poland's ongoing efforts to secure its borders amid what European officials describe as a coordinated surge in irregular migration facilitated through Belarus, with alleged logistical backing linked to Russian influence in the region. European officials have repeatedly accused Belarus of enabling migrant flows towards EU borders as part of broader geo-

political pressure tactics. Poland, positioned at the front-line of this challenge, has significantly reinforced border security through fencing, surveillance systems, and rapid response mechanisms. Accounts from deported Pakistanis reflect the complex and risky nature of these routes. Several said they travelled through Russia before entering Belarus, where they were directed towards Poland's eastern border with Belarus by facilitators. Others reported entering Belarus directly, describing how agents organised movement through forests and remote terrain under the false promise of easy entry into the European Union. Many deportees said they paid between Rs4.5 million and Rs50 million to human smugglers, often through loans or by selling family assets. They described being misled about the realities of the journey, facing harsh conditions and eventual abandonment once intercepted by authorities. European officials have consistently warned that such routes are driven by organised smuggling networks

operating from the Belarusian side, raising concerns about structured facilitation mechanisms behind these crossings. The deportees themselves cautioned others against attempting similar journeys, stating that agents exploit vulnerable individuals with false assurances, leaving them stranded in dangerous conditions. Poland has adopted one of the firmest enforcement positions within the European Union, maintaining that strict border controls are necessary to counter irregular migration and ensure regional stability. Authorities say deportations are conducted in accordance with legal frameworks. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond to queries regarding the deportation of its nationals. He reaffirmed that the cease-fire should now be consolidated through sustained dialogue, confidence-building and a clear commitment to peaceful resolution, reiterating Pakistan's support for all efforts that advance peace, stability and mutual respect.

## Wana people celebrate Pak's diplomatic success

PESHAWAR: People in large numbers hold a rally in Wana, the headquarters of South Waziristan Lower district, to celebrate Pakistan's recent diplomatic success and to pay tribute to the country's leadership for their role in promoting peace on the global stage. Participants, including tribal elders, local leaders, civil administration officials and citizens, gathered in significant numbers. The rally attendees carried Pakistani flags and placards expressing support for the government's diplomatic efforts. Speakers at the event praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir for their leadership in helping ease tensions between Iran and United States. They highlighted Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating a ceasefire between the two countries during a period of heightened conflict.—APP

# PRBC to boost maritime coop after KPT-Constanta MoU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor and Chief Operating Officer, Pakistan Romania Business Council (PRBC) Atif Farooqi called on Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed, Sitara-e-Imtiaz (Military), Sitara-e-Basalat, at Karachi Port Trust (KPT) to discuss the advancement of maritime collaboration between Pakistan and Romania. During the meeting, Mr. Farooqi extended an open official invitation on behalf of the Port of Constanta authorities to the Chairman and Secretary of KPT to visit Romania, marking the next step in the implementation phase of the newly signed port cooperation framework, said a press release received here on Thursday. This high-level engagement follows the recent signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KPT and the Port of Constanta, Romania on March 31, aimed at boosting maritime cooperation, trade connectivity, and economic relations. The partnership links Pakistan's principal port with the largest on the Black Sea, facilitating a new trade route between South Asia and Europe, as envisioned by H.E Dr. Dan Stoensescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan. Sohail Shamim Firpo,



Chairman Pakistan Romania Business Council, was also present in the meeting. On the occasion, Atif Farooqi appreciated Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoensescu for his dynamic leadership and vision, stating Dr. Dan Stoensescu, Ambassador of Romania has played an instrumental role in conceiving and executing this great initiative of maritime cooperation. His vision to connect Pakistan and Romania through their key ports has set the stage for a new era of bilateral trade and friendship.

In response, Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed, Chairman Karachi Port Trust, commended the efforts of Romanian Ambassador's team in Karachi. Mr. Atif Farooqi and Sohail Shamim Firpo, noting: "We deeply value the proactive efforts of Atif Farooqi and PRBC in strengthening this strategic cooperation with Romania. The relationship between KPT and the Port of Constanta will open broader avenues for economic progress and regional connectivity."

# PIDE sounds alarm on war-driven economic volatility in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) organized a timely webinar titled "War and Economic Volatility in Pakistan" to examine the far-reaching economic consequences of regional conflict, oil market disruption, and external sector instability for Pakistan. The session featured Prominent Business and Economy Journalist Khurram Husain as speaker and was moderated by Dr. Faheem Jehangir, Dean, Policy Advocacy, PIDE. Opening the session, Dr. Faheem Jehangir highlighted the significance of the topic, noting that Pakistan remains particularly vulnerable to external shocks due to its dependence on oil imports, exposure to inflation, exchange rate pressures, fiscal strain, and reliance on remittances from Gulf economies. He observed that the evolving regional situation has once again brought into focus the difficult policy choices facing the government in areas such as fuel prices, energy transition, transport costs, and overall macroeconomic stability. Presenting expert views on the topic, Khurram Husain argued that war does not merely create temporary disruption; it leaves behind long-term economic and institutional consequences. Drawing on Pakistan's economic history, he explained that episodes of war-related volatility in 1965, 1990, and 1998-99 produced reserve pressures, inflation, import restrictions, foreign exchange rationing, and an expanded role of the state in determining economic outcomes. He noted that the 1965 war contributed to reserve depletion, high deficit spending, inflation, and tighter state control, developments that eventually fed into the nationalization era. Likewise, the crises surrounding the 1990 standoff, the nuclear tests, and the Kargil conflict accelerated financial liberalization, foreign exchange restrictions, and later privatization. His central argument was that while volatility may fade, the policy structures and institutional responses it creates often endure for years. Turning to the present, Husain observed that even if Pakistan is not directly involved in the conflict, it remains highly exposed to its global economic spillovers. He identified the country's external sector as the main channel of vulnerability, especially through pressure on reserves, uncertainty around foreign deposits, and rising imported energy costs. He described oil price volatility linked to the Strait of Hormuz as the most serious immediate threat to Pakistan and the wider global economy. Husain warned that the full impact of the oil shock had not yet materialized and argued that the world had been moving toward an exceptionally severe energy crisis before the recent ceasefire offered temporary relief. According to him, had the disruption continued, it could have triggered a crisis of extraordinary scale, with panic buying, rationing, and deep global instability. He further noted that the current episode may leave behind one especially important legacy for Pakistan: an expanded role of the state in economic management. Unlike earlier moments of volatility, he said, the present situation combines stronger crisis-driven state intervention with relatively weak political contestation, suggesting that the state's increased role may persist well beyond the immediate emergency. He also said that learning from this episode, Pakistan must revisit its energy policy and transition decisively toward renewable energy sources to meet its energy needs through a more sustainable, resilient, and cost-efficient model. During the question-and-answer session, Husain said that Pakistan's inflation outlook will depend heavily on the direction of oil prices and the speed with which maritime trade and shipping normalize. However, he cautioned that even under a de-escalation scenario, disruptions in the Gulf could continue to keep inflation elevated through 2026. In the short run, he stressed, Pakistan's priority would remain crisis management: protecting reserves, addressing external financing pressures, and keeping the IMF program on track.—DNA

# Kundi discusses relief, climate action with Tirah elders

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday held separate meetings with a delegation of Tirah elders and representatives of Pakistan Development Foundation (PDF) at Governor House, discussing issues related to relief activities and climate change. A delegation of Tirah elders, led by tribal leader Shamsuddin, apprised the Governor about the difficulties being faced by the affected people of Tirah. The delegation highlighted challenges in the provision of aid, obstacles in relief distribution, and expressed concerns regarding the situation on the ground. They urged the Governor to ensure that rehabilitation efforts and relief operations are made more effective and transparent. The delegation also appreciated the provision of assistance through the Red Crescent and acknowledged the governor's efforts in sup-

porting the affected communities. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said that he had consistently raised his voice for the assistance of Tirah affectees at every forum. He added that relief had been provided through the Red Crescent at different times and assured that the process would continue in the future. He stressed the need for transparency in relief activities to ensure timely and fair distribution of aid to deserving individuals. The Governor also supported the proposal of involving local youth in surveys and related activities to create employment opportunities and enhance transparency. In another meeting, a delegation of Pakistan Development Foundation led by Chairman Bilal Sethi including Sobia Kiramat Chugharmani and Sehrish Zafar of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University also met the Governor. The delegation included repre-

sentatives from Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University. During the meeting, both sides discussed the role of Governor House in addressing climate change challenges in the province. The delegation presented various proposals aimed at tackling environmental issues and raising awareness. Governor Kundi said that climate change has become a serious global issue, affecting not only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but the entire country. He emphasized that youth have a major responsibility in addressing climate challenges and can play a key role in this regard. He underscored the importance of incorporating climate considerations into policymaking, awareness campaigns, and practical measures to ensure a safer and better environment for future generations. Both sides agreed to promote joint efforts and enhance youth participation to effectively address climate change challenges in the province.—DNA

# Country sees surge in ROP cases

ISLAMABAD: Health experts on Thursday expressed serious concern over rising cases of Retinopathy of Prematurity in Pakistan, which ranks fourth among countries affected, with 32-35 per cent of premature infants at risk, stressing urgent screening and timely treatment. A renowned eye specialist from Al Shifa, Dr. Aunaza Maqbool, explained that Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) occurs when abnor-

mal blood vessels develop in the retina, adding, "If not detected through timely screening, ROP can progress to untreatable retinal detachments, ultimately causing permanent blindness." She added that symptoms in infants can include unusual eye movements, crossed eyes, white pupils, or difficulty focusing, though often the disease has no visible early signs, making screening critical. Babies born be-

fore 30 weeks of gestation or weighing less than approximately three pounds are particularly at risk. Dr. Aunaza emphasized that early screening within four weeks after birth is essential to detect ROP before it causes irreversible damage. "Early identification is the key to preserving vision and preventing lifelong blindness," she noted. Dr. Aunaza highlighted the importance of awareness among parents and healthcare providers.—APP

# Aziz lauds Pakistan diplomatic role

Aziz Ahmed Awan said that the approach adopted under the leadership of Pakistan's Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has charted a new path for establishing global peace. His insight, wisdom, and effective diplomacy have conveyed the message to the world that solutions to problems can be achieved through dialogue and wisdom rather than through force

DNA






that solutions to problems can be achieved through dialogue and wisdom rather than through force. The Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society stated that if this war had broken out, the loss of millions of precious lives would have been certain; however, Pakistan's timely intervention averted this danger. The Society described this initiative as a great service not only to Pakistan but to all of humanity. The statement demanded that Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his extraordinary services in establishing global peace. According to the Society, he is truly deserving of this honor because his efforts saved the world from a major catastrophe and gave birth to new hope for peace. In conclusion, the Society expressed its resolve that Pakistan will continue to play its role in promoting global peace, stability, and brotherhood in the future as well.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### APRIL

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

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- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
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- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666

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- Met Office.....9250360-6
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- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Pak, Ethiopia explore trilateral maritime alliance

Ambassador Dr. Oumer calls on Maritime Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have explored possible prospects of maritime cooperation to enhance regional connectivity and boost bilateral trade. The important discussion to this end held during a meeting between Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, and H.E. Muhammad Junaid Anwar, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs in Islamabad. The two sides agreed to establish institutional cooperation, exchange delegations and share technical expertise in maritime sector to further promote trade and investment between the two nations. The Ambassador briefed the Federal Minister about homegrown economic reforms, strategic importance of Ethiopia and its connectivity with the rest of region and beyond. He said Ethiopia values its relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, noting that the increased maritime cooperation is crucial for promoting bilateral trade and investment. The Federal Minister assured the Ambassador of his full support in enhancing the bilateral cooperation in the maritime sector, reiterating Pakistan Government's commitment to strengthen its relations with the African nations including Ethiopia.



## PIDE sounds alarm on war-driven economic volatility in Pakistan

Islamabad: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) organized a timely webinar titled "War and Economic Volatility in Pakistan" to examine the far-reaching economic consequences of regional conflict, oil market disruption, and external sector instability for Pakistan. The session featured Prominent Business and Economy Journalist Khurram Husain as speaker and was moderated by Dr. Faheem Jehangir, Dean, Policy Advocacy, PIDE. Opening the session, Dr. Faheem Jehangir highlighted the significance of the topic, noting that Pakistan remains particularly vulnerable to external shocks due to its dependence on oil imports, exposure to inflation, exchange rate pressures, fiscal strain, and reliance on remittances from Gulf economies. He observed that the evolving regional situation has once again brought into focus the difficult policy choices facing the government in areas such as

fuel prices, energy transition, transport costs, and overall macroeconomic stability. Presenting expert views on the topic, Khurram Husain argued that war does not merely create temporary disruption; it leaves behind long-term economic and institutional consequences. Drawing on Pakistan's economic history, he explained that episodes of war-related volatility in 1965, 1990, and 1998-99 produced reserve pressures, inflation, import restrictions, foreign exchange rationing, and an expanded role of the state in determining economic outcomes. He noted that the 1965 war contributed to reserve depletion, high deficit spending, inflation, and tighter state control, developments that eventually fed into the nationalization era. Likewise, the crises surrounding the 1990 standoff, the nuclear tests, and the Kargil conflict accelerated financial liberalization, foreign exchange restric-

tions, and later privatization. His central argument was that while volatility may fade, the policy structures and institutional responses it creates often endure for years. Turning to the present, Husain observed that even if Pakistan is not directly involved in the conflict, it remains highly exposed to its global economic spillovers. He identified the country's external sector as the main channel of vulnerability, especially through pressure on reserves, uncertainty around foreign deposits, and rising imported energy costs. He described oil price volatility linked to the Strait of Hormuz as the most serious immediate threat to Pakistan and the wider global economy. Husain warned that the full impact of the oil shock had not yet materialized and argued that the world had been moving toward an exceptionally severe energy crisis before the recent ceasefire offered temporary relief.—APP

## ICCI President welcomes property transfer fee reduction

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has expressed profound gratitude to Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and Chairman Capital Development Authority Lt. (R) Sohail Ashraf for their timely and business-friendly decision to reduce the property transfer fee from 3% to 1% in a statement issued here on Thursday, Sardar Tahir Mehmood termed the decision a landmark step towards revitalizing economic activity in the federal capital. He emphasized that the reduction

would provide a significant boost to the real estate and construction sectors—two critical drivers of economic growth, employment generation, and allied industries. The ICCI President highlighted that this achievement reflects the consistent efforts and constructive engagement of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in close coordination with the broader business community. "This is not just a policy change; it is the collective success of the entire real estate sector, which has long advocated for rationalization of taxes and charges to promote ease of doing business," he remarked. He further noted that the move would help

stabilize the property market, enhance investor confidence, and encourage both local and overseas Pakistanis to channel their investments into Islamabad's real estate sector. "Lower transaction costs will stimulate market activity, improve documentation, and ultimately contribute to sustainable economic growth," he added. Sardar Tahir Mehmood also called for a reduction in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) charges for commercial buildings, aligning them with the incentives already provided to the motel and hotel industry. He stressed that such reforms are essential to unlock the true investment potential of Islamabad.

## Advisory urging citizens to renew expired CNIC

NADRA has urged citizens to take immediate action by renewing expired documents and ensuring issuance of CNICs for individuals who have reached the age of 18

ISLAMABAD: The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) issued important guidelines for citizens, stressing the legal obligation to renew identity documents especially the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) before expiry to avoid disruption of essential services. Under Pakistani law, NADRA issues identity documents for a specified validity period, and adults are required to ensure timely renewal. Failure to do so may lead to suspension of services linked with identity verification, including bank accounts, mobile phone SIMs, government subsidies, welfare programmes, and transactions such as property and vehicle transfers. Despite having the legal authority to impose penalties for delayed renewal, NADRA has so far refrained from doing so to facilitate the public. However, the authority has noted widespread non-compliance. According to NADRA data, 27.475 million CNICs, 2.309 million Overseas Cards, 11.65 million Child Registration Certificates, and 0.229 million Juvenile Cards have expired and not renewed in time. SMS reminders have already been sent, including to parents whose children have turned 18 but have yet to obtain their first CNIC. The advisory also follows a public notice by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on April 8, requiring mobile users to maintain valid identity documents for uninterrupted service. SIMs registered against expired or deceased individuals' CNICs risk being blocked at any time. Currently, over 8.1 million active SIMs are linked to approximately 4.5 million CNICs that require renewal, while 223,000 cards have been expired for more than a decade. Additionally, 1.5 million SIMs remain registered in the names of deceased persons, and users are advised to transfer them to their own valid CNICs. NADRA has urged citizens to take immediate action by renewing expired documents and ensuring issuance of CNICs for individuals who have reached the age of 18.—DNA

# Aurangzeb discusses eco situation with business leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a virtual meeting with presidents and senior office bearers of Chambers of Commerce and Business Entities from across the country to discuss the prevailing economic situation, upcoming budget priorities, and avenues for strengthening economic recovery and growth. The meeting, which lasted nearly 90 minutes, was also attended by Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, along with senior officials of the Finance Division, Revenue Division, and Tax Policy Office. Opening the session, the Finance Minister welcomed the participants and appreciated their continued engagement with the government. He highlighted Pakistan's growing prominence on the global stage amid evolving regional dynamics and underscored the importance of maintaining regular and structured dialogue with the business community. He noted that the interaction was particularly timely as he prepares for important engagements with international financial institutions and global counterparts, and emphasized the need to gather first-hand insights from key economic stakeholders. The Minister explained that the purpose of the meeting extended beyond discussions on taxation and the upcoming budget, focusing equally on identifying practical and forward-looking ideas to leverage current opportunities for enhancing trade, attracting investment, and promoting sustainable economic growth. He noted that Pakistan had entered the recent challenging phase from a position of relative macroeconomic stability, supported by fiscal discipline and strengthened external buffers, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining economic resilience while ensuring inclusive and durable recovery. Highlighting recent economic developments, the Minister pointed to improvements in fiscal management, fulfillment of external obligations, and targeted support measures for vulnerable segments. He emphasized

that economic recovery is grounded in strengthening fundamental economic indicators and institutional discipline, achieved in partnership with the private sector. He further encouraged participants to share actionable proposals to capitalize on emerging opportunities, particularly in trade facilitation, logistics, and regional connectivity, including the growing potential of Pakistan as a transshipment and investment

hub. Following the Minister's remarks, the floor was opened for discussion, with participants presenting a broad range of proposals and recommendations aimed at supporting economic activity and enhancing competitiveness. The discussion focused on improving the overall business environment, facilitating exports, strengthening productivity, and aligning policy frameworks with regional benchmarks.



## Gilani condoles death of mother of Syed Imran

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday expressed deep sorrow and grief over the demise of the mother of Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmed Shah. In a condolence message, the Chairman of the Senate extended heartfelt sympathies to Syed Imran Ahmed Shah and his bereaved family. He said that the loss of a mother is an irreparable tragedy, adding that a mother's love and affection can never be replaced. Gilani prayed that Allah Almighty may grant eternal peace to the departed soul and bestow patience upon the bereaved family. He also expressed solidarity with Syed Imran Ahmed Shah and his family in this hour of grief.—APP

## Mehdi, Aleem discuss Road projects

ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Balistan Syed Mehdi Shah on Thursday called on Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan to discuss infrastructure development and improvement of road networks in the region. During the meeting, both leaders exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and expressed satisfaction over Pakistan's recent diplomatic achievements, congratulating each other on the success, said a press release issued here on Thursday. Abdul Aleem Khan remarked that by the grace of Almighty Allah, Pakistan's dignity and prestige have significantly increased. The meeting also included discussion on the proposed Motorway Project from Mansehra, Naran, Kaghan and Babusar Top to Jalkhand (MNJ). Abdul Aleem Khan stated that this Motorway would serve as an alternative to the Karakoram Highway KKH and reduce travel distance by 100 kilometres as well. He added that facilitating easier travel and promoting tourism in this project will be a game changer for the region. Governor Gilgit-Balistan, Syed Mehdi Shah highlighted various issues related to the Communications Sector in Gilgit-Balistan. In response, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan assured full cooperation and promised the provision of Emergency Service 1122 on highways in the region. Aleem Khan further stated that the Government aimed to improve roads in tourist areas on priority basis to attract more visitors, thereby creating employment and business opportunities for local communities. He reiterated the commitment to ensuring uniform development across the country and prioritizing the construction of quality road infrastructure in all regions especially in northern areas. Governor Gilgit-Balistan expressed satisfaction with the performance of the National Highway Authority and appreciated the Federal Minister's support for the development of Gilgit-Balistan.—APP

## Briefs

## DIG Security, CTO review Red Zone security

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Security Muhammad Ateeq Tahir, along with SSP Traffic Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, visited various duty points in the Red Zone to review security arrangements and assess preparedness of deployed personnel. An official told APP on Thursday that the officers conducted inspections at key locations and evaluated on-ground security measures. DIG Ateeq Tahir briefed officers and jawans on security protocols and directed them to perform their duties with full alertness and responsibility. The DIG emphasized maintaining strict vigilance, ensuring effective monitoring, and responding promptly to any situation. He further instructed personnel to uphold professionalism and remain fully prepared to deal with any security challenge.—APP

## IGP, Chief Commissioner chair high-level meeting

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf held an important meeting with police and district administration officers to review security arrangements in view of the arrival of foreign delegations. An official told APP on Thursday that the meeting discussed in detail the current security situation and measures to ensure foolproof arrangements across the federal capital. He said both officials reviewed coordination between Islamabad Police and district administration, emphasizing effective implementation of security protocols. The participants were directed to remain on high alert and ensure strict monitoring at sensitive locations. Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi stressed that all available resources should be utilized to maintain law and order and ensure the safety of citizens and visiting delegations. Chief Commissioner Sohail Ashraf also emphasized enhanced coordination and timely response to any situation to ensure smooth execution of security arrangements.—APP

## SSP reviews security in Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza visited the Red Zone and various duty points across the city to review security arrangements and assess the performance of deployed personnel. An official told APP on Thursday that the SSP Qazi conducted inspections at key locations and checked preparedness of officers assigned to security duties. Qazi directed personnel to remain on high alert, maintain strict vigilance, and ensure effective monitoring of their respective areas. The SSP Qazi emphasized that ensuring protection of citizens' lives and property remained the top priority, adding that no negligence in duty would be tolerated.—APP

## Brother killing sister reflects grave moral decay: SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has observed that a brother killing his sister is not merely a criminal act but a manifestation of serious moral degeneration. The court on Thursday issued a detailed written judgment rejecting the appeal of convict Muhammad Munawar and upholding his life imprisonment in a case involving the murder of his sister. The judgment, authored by Justice Ishaq Ibrahim, stated that the prosecution had successfully proved the case against the accused. According to the judgment, Muhammad Munawar was charged with murdering his sister in 2013 in Faisalabad.—APP

## Dastgir affirms Pak leading role in US-Iran dialogue

He concluded by stressing that this unified leadership is crucial for ensuring long-term stability and prosperity for the nation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior PML-N leader Khuram Dastgir Thursday commended the ongoing US-Iran dialogue, noting that it not only recognizes Pakistan's critical role on the global stage but also highlights the country's leadership in fostering permanent solutions for lasting peace and contributing to global economic stability. In an exclusive conversation with a local media channel, Khuram Dastgir emphasized Pakistan's crucial role in the ongoing US-Iran talks, highlighting the country's leadership in fostering a lasting, permanent solution for global stability. He praised Iran's strategic position, acknowledging its strong stance while pursuing a well-calculated strategy in both war and negotiations, as it contin-

ues to assert its interests in the ongoing dialogue. Dastgir also commended the role of Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan in facilitating the talks and bringing both the US and Iran to the table. He stressed that these sensitive discussions offer a real opportunity for permanent solutions that would enhance regional and global peace. Dastgir expressed deep admiration for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, acknowledging his exceptional vision and commitment to enhancing Pakistan's diplomatic stature on the world stage. He particularly praised Sharif's strategic acumen in strengthening Pakistan's position in international affairs, highlighting how the current government's efforts have propelled the nation towards greater global recognition and influence. Dastgir also lauded the leadership of Field Marshal Asim Munir,

recognizing the instrumental role played by Pakistan's armed forces in safeguarding national interests and ensuring security. He emphasized that under Field Marshal Munir's command, the Pakistan military continues to be a strong pillar of the nation, reflecting discipline, courage, and resilience. Dastgir praised the armed forces for their unwavering commitment to defending Pakistan's sovereignty, playing a crucial part in the country's global standing. Reflecting on Pakistan's military history, Dastgir highlighted the historic victory at the Battle of Marke Haq against India, describing it as a defining moment. He regarded this victory as a symbol of Pakistan's resolve and determination, not only as a military achievement but also as a significant milestone in the nation's struggle for sovereignty. HE noted that this victory demonstrated

the strength of both Pakistan's armed forces and its leadership, which continue to shape the country's position on the global stage. Further reinforcing Pakistan's growing role, Dastgir noted the increasing global recognition of Pakistan's flag at international forums. He emphasized that such acknowledgment signifies the country's rising diplomatic influence and its contributions to regional and global peace efforts. The PML-N leader attributed much of this progress to the concerted efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, whose leadership in both the political and military spheres has elevated Pakistan's stature worldwide. He concluded by stressing that this unified leadership is crucial for ensuring long-term stability and prosperity for the nation.

## PM congratulates to Lam

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday congratulated To Lam on his election as the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. "Congratulations to President To Lam on his election as President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He said that Pakistan looked forward to deepening its warm and friendly ties with Vietnam and expanding cooperation in trade, investment, and people-to-people exchanges for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. Vietnam's lawmakers unanimously elected Communist Party General Secretary To Lam as the country's state president for the next five years. He is mandated to serve as president for the 2026-2031 term.—APP

## ITP issues diversion plan for April 9-10

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued a comprehensive traffic diversion plan for April 9 and 10 in view of the arrival of foreign delegations in the federal capital. An ITP official told on Thursday that citizens were advised to use alternate routes to avoid inconvenience as traffic diversions would be implemented at different times across the city. Traffic coming from GT Road Peshawar towards Rawalpindi would be diverted via Taxila Motorway, Chakri, Chak Beli Road, and Rawat. Meanwhile, commuters traveling from Lahore GT Road towards Peshawar should use Rawat, Chak Beli Road, Chakri, and Taxila Motorway. Traffic from Margala Road (F-5 and F-6 sectors) heading towards Rawalpindi would be diverted to 9th Avenue. Vehicles from Faisal Avenue towards Zero Point would also be redirected to 9th Avenue. Similarly, commuters traveling from Bhara Kahu towards Rawalpindi were advised to use Ring Road and Bani Gala Road. Meanwhile, traffic from Rawalpindi to Islamabad via Saddar Murree Road should use 9th Avenue. Traffic movement on Expressway from Zero Point/Faisal Avenue to Koral Chowk would remain closed during the specified timings. Vehicles coming from Colonel Sher Khan Road towards Faizabad should use Stadium Road via 9th Avenue signal. In addition, heavy traffic traveling from Peshawar to Lahore would be diverted via Taxila Motorway and Tarnol Phatak to Fateh Jang Motorway. Likewise, heavy traffic from Lahore GT Road towards Islamabad and Rawalpindi would be routed through Chak Beli Road and Chakri Motorway.—APP

## CDA cuts property transfer fee

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Sohail Ashraf, presided over the 3rd CDA Board meeting held on Thursday at CDA Headquarters. The meeting was attended by Member Administration Esfandyar Baloch, Member Estate Zaman Wattoo, Member Environment Abdullah Khuram Niazi, Member Finance, Planning and Design Muhammad Umair, Member Engineering Syed Nafasat Raza and Professor Dr. Muhammad Ali, Vice Chancellor of Punjab University. Several agenda items were discussed during the 3rd CDA board meeting. A significant decision was taken regarding the reduction in transfer fee charged by CDA on property transfers. The existing transfer fee was reduced from 3 percent. This decision will not only promote investment in Islamabad but will also bring improvement in the housing and real estate sector. The reduction in fee will provide direct relief and benefit to citizens involved in buying and selling properties. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Sohail Ashraf, said that instead of increasing property taxes in the Federal Capital, Islamabad efforts should be made to broaden the tax base. CDA Board also approved the award of contract for hiring Creative Consultants (City Curator) to transform Islamabad into a cultural and tourism hub. The meeting was informed that all procurement processes and legal requirements for acquiring the services of Creative Consultants have been duly fulfilled. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that this initiative will prove to be a milestone in improving the cultural and tourism sectors of the Federal Capital, Islamabad. He fur-



ther said that hiring Creative Consultants will significantly enhance the landscaping and beautification of parks and green belts and help transform Islamabad into a modern, attractive and vibrant city. CDA Board also deliberated on the outsourcing of solid waste management (Package I and II) for Islamabad. Based on the recommendations of the Grievance Redressal Committee and Procurement Committee, it was decided to terminate the ongoing procurement process. It was further decided to review successful models from other cities and restart the outsourcing process for solid waste management. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that after reviewing the best models from other cities, an immediate, sustainable and efficient system will be adopted.

## RCB launches crackdown on dengue breeding sites

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) has launched a strict crackdown against dengue breeding sites, warning residents against allowing stagnant water to accumulate in their surroundings. According to the details, the inspection teams are actively monitoring residential and commercial areas, and legal action, including fines and notices, will be taken against those found negligent. Common breeding spots identified by the board include flower pot trays, leaking water coolers and refrigerators, bird feeders, old tyres, discarded junk and uncovered water containers. Nasir Kamal, Deputy CEO RCB, urged citizens to change water in pots and coolers regularly, keep containers covered and dispose of waste items that can collect rainwater. He informed APP that the board was continuing fogging and indoor and outdoor spraying operations across the cantonment to eliminate mosquitoes and larvae. Residents have been asked to cooperate with inspection teams and take preventive measures to help curb the spread of dengue following recent rains.—APP

## Rs 85.5b spent on Balochistan road projects

ISLAMABAD: Nine major road projects in Balochistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have so far utilized Rs 85.49 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 191.67 billion under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) from 2022-23 to 2025-26, according to a document available with Wealth Pakistan. These projects are in progress in the western zone of Balochistan, with varying levels of financial and physical advancement. The Khuzdar-Kuchlak N-25 (330 km) project accounts for the largest share, with Rs 60.6 billion allocated and Rs 28.98 billion spent so far. The Karachi-Kararo & Wadh-Khuzdar N-25 (273 km) and Kararo-Wadh and Kuchlak-Chaman N-25 (187 km) projects have each been allocated Rs 33 billion, with expenditures of Rs 8.69 billion and Rs 7.67 billion, respectively. The Awaran-Naal M-8 (168 km) section shows notable progress, utilizing Rs19.01 billion out of an allocation of Rs23.03 billion, making it one of the most advanced projects in terms of spending. The other ongoing schemes include Hoshab-Awaran M-8 (146 km) with Rs 5.25 billion spent out of Rs 11.29 billion allocated, Nokundi-Mashkel (103 km) with Rs 4.85 billion spent from Rs 7.36 billion, and Quetta Western Bypass N-25 (22.7 km), where Rs 3.27 billion has been utilized against an allocation of Rs 5.91 billion. Similarly, the Basima-Khuzdar N-30 (106 km) project has recorded expenditures of Rs 3.66 billion out of Rs 5.90 billion, while the Zhoab-Kuchlak N-50 (298 km) section has utilized Rs 4.11 billion from its Rs 11.58 billion allocation.—APP

## Pakistani leadership at forefront of global stability efforts

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Apr 9 (dna):Pakistan People's Party Senior Leader and former US envoy Sherry Rehman hailed Pakistan's diplomacy as a historic global breakthrough, crediting it with averting a major crisis and calling for continued negotiations to ensure lasting stability. Speaking exclusively to a local news channel, Rehman said Pakistani leadership has won widespread international acclaim for defusing critical world tensions, playing a pivotal role in the historic U.S.-Iran ceasefire. She described the agreement as a landmark achievement at a time when the world was on the edge of turmoil. Rehman stressed that dialogue must continue uninterrupted, with flexi-

bility maintained on core issues, and warned that spoilers on social media or any violation of the ceasefire could undermine progress.

She emphasized that sustained diplomacy and constructive engagement remain the only path to enduring peace. While highlighting Pakistan's global recognition, she said that while much of the world faced uncertainty, Pakistan's leadership brought relief and stability to its citizens. She urged internal politics to be set aside in such historic moments, calling this achievement unprecedented in decades and describing it as nothing short of a miracle, reflecting Pakistan's strong, capable and respected role on the world stage. She specifically lauded President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq

Dar and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, noting their relentless efforts and strategic engagement. She also added that their decisive leadership was instrumental in steering the world away from the brink of crisis, earning Pakistan global recognition.

Sherry also suggested that Islamabad could host extended peace talks in Pakistan's capital to build on the ceasefire momentum, urging both the United States and Iran to use this window to address core issues such as sanctions, security guarantees and a road map for long-term stability.

She reiterated that a sustained negotiation framework was vital to prevent a relapse into conflict beyond the initial truce period, adding, both sides should show greater flexibility and mutual trust in upcoming discussions.

## Pakistan takes center stage in global diplomacy

Expressing concern over the response of occupation authorities, he said cases had been registered against protesters and several youths detained. He demanded their immediate release and called for the withdrawal of all cases against them

ISLAMABAD :Senior National Conference leader and Srinagar MP Agha Ruhullah Mehdi has lauded Pakistan's decisive and effective diplomatic leadership in brokering a crucial ceasefire between the United States and Iran, while sharply criticizing the policies of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to Kashmir Media Service, Ruhullah Mehdi stated in a social media post that Pakistan's proactive and timely diplomatic efforts in facilitating the ceasefire played a decisive role in averting a potentially catastrophic conflict that could have engulfed not only the region but the wider world. He emphasized that Pakistan's intervention reflected responsible leadership and a strong commitment to peace and stability. He also shared a tweet by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, quoting: "I had a warm and substantive conversation with President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran this afternoon. I conveyed my deep appreciation for the wisdom and sagacity of the Iranian leadership in accepting Pakistan's offer to host peace talks. Criticizing Narendra Modi, Ruhullah Mehdi said such principled and peace-oriented statements were once expected

from India during times of regional crisis, but current policies have marked a clear departure from that tradition. He added that the BJP's anti-Muslim approach has not only weakened India's internal political and social fabric but has also undermined its credibility and standing at both regional and global levels. Referring to the Iran-US conflict, Mehdi said the United States was ultimately compelled to agree to a ceasefire, calling it not just a victory for Iran but also a triumph of faith and trust in God that enabled the nation to remain steadfast. He further said the martyrdom of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was a major shock for the Muslim Ummah, but added that the Iranian people demonstrated resilience and determination in the face of aggression. Mehdi also noted that protests were held across the Kashmir Valley following Khamenei's martyrdom, during which slogans were raised against the United States and Israel. Expressing concern over the response of occupation authorities, he said cases had been registered against protesters and several youths detained. He demanded their immediate release and called for the withdrawal of all cases against them.—DNA

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EXPORTERS OF  
MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS  
IN  
PAKISTAN

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## Trump Faces Fire Over Iran War Outcome

QAMAR BASHIR

THE United States entered the 2026 Iran war with overwhelming military superiority, a coalition backing Israel, and a declared objective to dismantle Iran's military, cripple its nuclear ambitions, and restore unrestricted global access through the Strait of Hormuz. Thirty days later, the outcome is being fiercely debated—not in Tehran, but within the United States itself. A growing chorus of American analysts, politicians, and opinion makers is now openly questioning whether Washington has, in effect, blinked first. The ceasefire announced by President Donald J. Trump—just hours before a self-imposed deadline to unleash massive destruction—has triggered a wave of criticism across the American political and intellectual spectrum. While the administration has framed the move as a tactical pause and a strategic success, critics argue that it reflects something else entirely: a reluctant retreat that leaves Iran stronger, more emboldened, and in control of one of the world's most critical economic chokepoints. At the heart of this debate lies the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly a fifth of global oil supply flows. Despite weeks of sustained U.S. and Israeli military operations, Iran not only retained its ability to influence this waterway but emerged with enhanced leverage over it. Analysts note that Tehran now effectively controls the terms of passage, even floating proposals to charge tolls on shipping—a development that signals a dramatic shift in regional power dynamics. For many in Washington, this outcome is deeply unsettling. The war, initially justified as a preemptive strike to neutralize Iran's capabilities, appears to have fallen short of its primary objectives. Iran's regime remains intact, its missile infrastructure partially operational, and its regional influence undiminished. Instead of weakening Iran, critics argue, the conflict has entrenched its position and provided it with a powerful new bargaining chip. The backlash has not been confined to one political camp. Prominent Democrats have described Trump's strategy as reckless and ultimately ineffective, pointing out that the ceasefire leaves Iran's nuclear material untouched and its military capabilities largely intact. Some lawmakers have gone further, branding the entire campaign a strategic miscalculation that risked global catastrophe without delivering meaningful results. Even within Trump's own political base, cracks have begun to appear. Influential conservative voices and MAGA-aligned commentators have expressed frustration, accusing the administration of stopping short of victory and allowing Iran to regroup. For a movement built on the promise of strength and decisive action, the perception of hesitation—or worse, retreat—has proven difficult to reconcile. Among policy analysts and foreign affairs experts, the critique has taken a more structural form. Many argue that the ceasefire reflects a deeper failure of strategy rather than a single misstep. The war's objectives, they contend, shifted repeatedly—from deterrence to regime change to control of energy routes—creating

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confusion both domestically and internationally. This lack of clarity, combined with escalating rhetoric, has led some to conclude that the United States entered the conflict without a coherent endgame. Economic analysts have also weighed in, highlighting the paradox at the center of the conflict. While the ceasefire briefly calmed global markets, it did little to address the underlying instability. The Strait of Hormuz remains vulnerable, and Iran's enhanced leverage over it introduces new uncertainties into the global energy system. In effect, the war may have transformed a temporary disruption into a long-term strategic risk. Perhaps the most striking criticism, however, comes from the language used by American politicians themselves. Trump's threats—at one point warning that an entire civilization could be destroyed—were widely condemned as excessive and dangerous. Some lawmakers described his rhetoric as "unhinged," while others raised concerns about the legal and moral implications of targeting civilian infrastructure. This combination of aggressive rhetoric followed by a sudden ceasefire has fueled a narrative that the United States escalated the conflict to the brink of catastrophe, only to step back without achieving its stated goals. Critics argue that this sequence undermines American credibility, signaling to both allies and adversaries that Washington may not be willing—or able—to follow through on its threats. Adding to this perception is the timing of the ceasefire itself. Reports suggest that the decision came amid mounting domestic and international pressure, as well as concerns about the economic and humanitarian consequences of a prolonged war. To some observers, this reinforces the idea that the United States was "searching for an exit ramp," rather than executing a carefully planned strategic maneuver. Iran, for its part, has wasted no time in shaping the narrative. Iranian officials have framed the ceasefire as a victory, claiming that the United States was forced to accept key elements of Tehran's position, including recognition of its role in managing Hormuz and broader regional dynamics. Whether or not this claim is fully accurate, it has gained traction in international discourse—and, crucially, within segments of American opinion. The broader geopolitical implications are significant. By retaining control over Hormuz and emerging from the conflict without regime change or major concessions, Iran has demonstrated resilience against a coalition led by the world's most powerful military. This outcome challenges long-standing assumptions about U.S. dominance in the region and raises questions about the effectiveness of military force as a tool of policy. For Israel, the situation is equally complex. While the war was initially framed as a joint effort to neutralize a shared threat, the ceasefire leaves many of Israel's security concerns unresolved. Critics in the United States have pointed out that the enormous costs—both financial and strategic—have not translated into a decisive advantage for either Washington or Tel Aviv. Public opinion within the United States further underscores the growing skepticism. Polling during the conflict showed widespread opposition to military action and a strong desire for a rapid end to hostilities. This disconnect between public sentiment and policy decisions has fueled additional criticism of the administration's approach. Taken together, these reactions paint a complex and contested picture. On one hand, the ceasefire has prevented immediate escalation and opened the door to negotiations. On the other, it has left unresolved questions about the purpose, conduct, and outcome of the war. For critics, the conclusion is stark: the United States entered the conflict with maximalist objectives and exited with minimal gains, while Iran retained—and in some respects enhanced—its strategic position.

## Pakistan's Moment of Honour on the World Stage

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Allah has said that He grants honour to whom He wills and He humbles whom He wills. In this testing hour, honour was bestowed upon Pakistan. The world witnessed its role. It saw a nation that chose peace over conflict. It saw a people who valued stability over chaos. This was not the first time that Pakistan stood for global peace. In the war against terror, when the world sought support...

SOMETIMES, a nation hits those rare moments when pure determination feels like it can tip the balance of destiny in its favor. Such moments are not born of chance. They rise from toil and sacrifice. They're shaped by challenges and fueled by a noble purpose. When passion is pure and effort is sincere, then the mercy of Allah descends. He grants honour where He wills. On 14 August 1947, such a moment was witnessed. The long-held dream of having a separate homeland has finally come true. The people of this land had faced challenges beyond anything imaginable. They had given blood and tears for an idea. When freedom finally came, their faces lit up with joy. They were overflowing with gratitude. They realized how fortunate they were to enjoy their independence. From that day onward, the journey of Pakistan began. It was not an easy path. Storms arose at every turn. There were hardships and trials. There were moments when the road seemed uncertain. Yet the ship of the nation kept moving. It did not lose direction. Like a mountaineer who climbs with faith and courage, Pakistan pressed forward. The peak was distant, yet the resolve was firm. Today, by the grace of Allah, that long journey has reached a remarkable height. Pakistan stands tall in the world. It has shown strength in diplomacy. It has upheld values of morality. It has worked for peace. In every sphere of life, it has striven to make its mark. Such moments are rare. Nations wait for them across generations. The recent past has tested the region in a severe manner. Dark clouds gathered. The fear of conflict loomed large. The air was heavy with tension. It seemed as if a great disaster was near. Human life was under threat. The

global economy trembled. The system of life itself appeared to falter. In such a time, wisdom was needed. Courage was required. Above all, sincerity of purpose was essential. It was then that Pakistan rose to the occasion. Its civil and military leadership acted with foresight. They understood the gravity of the moment. They worked with calm and resolve. Through careful diplomacy, they helped avert a crisis that could have engulfed the world. It was a service not only to the region but to humanity at large. Allah has said that He grants honour to whom He wills and He humbles whom He wills. In this testing hour, honour was bestowed upon Pakistan. The world witnessed its role. It saw a nation that chose peace over conflict. It saw a people who valued stability over chaos. This was not the first time that Pakistan stood for global peace. In the war against terror, when the world sought support, Pakistan did not hesitate. It did not calculate its losses. It did not weigh its sacrifices. It stepped forward with sincerity. The cost was heavy. Thousands of lives were lost. The economy bore a severe strain. Yet Pakistan remained steadfast. It chose the path of responsibility. Even in those difficult days, when the region stood on the brink of destruction, Pakistan played a vital role. It acted as a bridge. It brought opposing sides closer. It created space for dialogue. It proved that even in the harshest conditions, diplomacy can succeed where force fails. Today, the world acknowledges this role. Voices of appreciation are heard from every side. Media outlets that once remained silent now speak with respect. This change is not sudden. It is the result of consistent effort. It reflects the trust that Pakistan has earned through its actions.

In this process, Pakistan has extended support to many nations. It has helped restore their stability. It has contributed to their dignity. It has acted as a facilitator with sincerity. All this has been done in the spirit of humanity. It has been done for the sake of peace. It is only fair that those who have benefited remember these efforts. They should not forget the sacrifices made by Pakistan. They should see its pain as their own. They should stand with it in times of need. True friendship is tested in moments of difficulty. Across the border, a different response is visible. India has watched these developments with concern. Its media has been compelled to take note. In these circumstances, even reluctant voices have acknowledged Pakistan's success. This is the power of truth when it becomes evident. Pakistan has witnessed such diplomatic triumphs before. On the twentieth of February in 1999, a historic moment took place. The Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, visited Lahore at the invitation of Nawaz Sharif. It was a gesture of goodwill. The following day, he went to Minar-e-Pakistan. There, he acknowledged the reality of Pakistan. It was a moment of great diplomatic significance. Today, history seems to echo once more. Pakistan has achieved another milestone. It shines on the global stage like a bright star. Its voice carries weight. Its actions inspire confidence. It has shown that a nation guided by faith and determination can rise above challenges. May this light continue to shine. May Pakistan remain a beacon of peace. May it always uphold the values that brought it into being. And may Allah, in His infinite mercy, protect and honour this nation for all times to come.

## How the Iran-US De-Escalation Reshapes Pakistan's Financial and Strategic Future

Oshaz Fatima

The risks extend beyond pricing. Pakistan shares a border of approximately 900 kilometers with Iran, and any escalation could disrupt cross-border trade and regional connectivity. Projects aimed at enhancing economic integration between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East could face delays, affecting long-term growth prospects. As the geographic center of global diplomacy shifts closer to Pakistan's region, the country's exposure to both opportunity and instability increases simultaneously. For ordinary citizens, these macroeconomic shifts translate into tangible changes in daily life. A decline in fuel prices can reduce commuting costs, stabilize public transport...

THE recent ceasefire understanding between Iran and the United States has triggered immediate reactions across global financial and energy markets, and for Pakistan, the economic implications are both measurable and significant. With leaders across the world expressing their support and gratitude, it's not just words, there's tangible economic change. In the weeks leading up to the de-escalation, global crude oil prices had climbed close to 95 to 100 dollars per barrel, driven largely by fears of disruption in the Gulf. Within hours of the ceasefire announcement, prices eased by an estimated 3 to 5 percent, reflecting a rapid correction in risk premiums. For a country like Pakistan, which imports nearly 85 percent of its petroleum needs and spends between 15 and 17 billion dollars annually on oil imports, even a marginal decline in global prices can translate into savings of hundreds of millions of dollars over a fiscal year. This immediate relief is closely tied to the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 million barrels of oil per day pass, accounting for roughly one-fifth of global supply. During peak tensions, shipping insurance premiums for tankers operating in this corridor rose by as much as 30 to 40 percent, significantly increasing the landed cost of fuel for importing countries. Following the ceasefire, these premiums began to normalize, reducing freight costs and easing pressure on energy-importing economies. However, the sensitivity of this route means that any renewed escalation could push prices sharply upward, potentially crossing 110 to 120 dollars per barrel within a short span. Pakistan's financial markets responded quickly to the easing of tensions. On the first trading day after the ceasefire announcement, the KSE-100 Index surged by approximately 1,000 to 1,500 points in intraday trading, reflecting a gain of nearly 1.5 to 2 percent. Trading volumes increased markedly, signaling renewed investor confidence, particularly in sectors such as energy, cement, and banking, all of which are highly sensitive to fuel costs and macroeconomic stability. The Pakistani rupee also showed signs of recovery, appreciating by around 0.5 to 1 percent in early interbank trading, indicating reduced pressure on foreign exchange reserves. The broader macroeconomic impact is equally significant. Fuel prices directly and indirectly influence nearly 30 to 40 percent of Pakistan's Consumer Price Index. A sustained reduction of 5 dollars per barrel in global oil prices can lower domestic inflation by approximately 0.5 to 1 percentage point. For an economy that has struggled with double-digit inflation in recent years, such a de-

cline can ease the cost of living, stabilize food prices, and reduce transportation costs. Moreover, lower oil prices can narrow the current account deficit. Historically, a 10 percent increase in global oil prices adds nearly 1.5 to 2 billion dollars to Pakistan's annual import bill. The reverse effect, therefore, provides critical fiscal relief. This easing of economic pressure also strengthens Pakistan's position in its ongoing engagement with the International Monetary Fund. Lower import costs and improved market confidence enhance the country's fiscal outlook, potentially providing greater flexibility in negotiations related to loans, subsidies, and structural reforms. In a context where external financing remains essential, even short-term improvements in economic indicators can have meaningful implications for policy space. Beyond immediate economic gains, the ceasefire carries substantial diplomatic value for Pakistan. In earlier decades, major ceasefires and conflict resolutions were largely negotiated in European capitals, reflecting a concentration of geopolitical influence in that region. The gradual shift of such engagements toward the Middle East and South Asia signals a redistribution of global power. Pakistan's involvement, whether direct or indirect, positions it closer to the center of this evolving landscape. Acting as a bridge between competing powers enhances its credibility and elevates its standing in international diplomacy. This enhanced geopolitical position has economic implications of its own. Countries that play constructive roles in conflict resolution often gain increased access to investment, trade opportunities, and strategic partnerships. Pakistan's ability to engage with both Iran and the United States without fully aligning with either demonstrates a level of diplomatic maturity that can attract international confidence. Improved perception at the global level can influence everything from foreign direct investment flows to bilateral trade agreements, contributing to long-term economic growth. However, the benefits of this situation are closely tied to its stability. A ceasefire is inherently fragile, and any breakdown could reverse economic gains rapidly. If tensions escalate again, oil prices could surge beyond 110 dollars per barrel, increasing Pakistan's import bill by billions of dollars. This would likely lead to a rise in domestic fuel prices by 20 to 30 rupees per liter, depending on exchange rates and fiscal policies. The resulting inflationary pressure would affect all sectors, from food and transport to manufacturing and services, with the greatest

impact on lower- and middle-income households. The risks extend beyond pricing. Pakistan shares a border of approximately 900 kilometers with Iran, and any escalation could disrupt cross-border trade and regional connectivity. Projects aimed at enhancing economic integration between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East could face delays, affecting long-term growth prospects. As the geographic center of global diplomacy shifts closer to Pakistan's region, the country's exposure to both opportunity and instability increases simultaneously. For ordinary citizens, these macroeconomic shifts translate into tangible changes in daily life. A decline in fuel prices can reduce commuting costs, stabilize public transport fares, and lower the price of essential goods. Conversely, any increase has immediate consequences. A 10 percent rise in fuel prices can lead to a 3 to 5 percent increase in transportation costs and a noticeable rise in food prices due to higher logistics expenses. School transportation fees, delivery charges, and agricultural input costs are all directly influenced by fuel prices, making the impact of global events deeply local. At a structural level, the ceasefire highlights the importance of economic resilience. While Pakistan cannot control global geopolitical dynamics, it can reduce its vulnerability by diversifying energy sources, improving efficiency, and strengthening fiscal management. Investments in renewable energy, better public transportation, and energy conservation can help mitigate the impact of future shocks. At the same time, maintaining diplomatic balance will be crucial in preserving the gains achieved through this moment of de-escalation. Ultimately, the ceasefire between Iran and the United States is not just a political development but an economic event with far-reaching implications. The immediate rise in the KSE-100 index, the stabilization of oil prices, and the easing of inflationary pressures demonstrate the tangible benefits of geopolitical calm. At the same time, Pakistan's growing role in regional diplomacy enhances its international standing and opens new avenues for economic engagement. However, these gains remain contingent on the durability of the ceasefire and the country's ability to navigate a complex and evolving global landscape. The challenge for Pakistan lies in converting short-term relief into long-term stability, ensuring that moments of opportunity are not lost to recurring cycles of uncertainty. - The author can be reached at oshazfatima@kemu.edu.pk

## Briefs

## Islamabad set for key talks

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the discussions as special guests. Naqvi assured that foolproof security measures are in place to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of all meetings and movements. The meeting underscored the continuing cooperation between Pakistan and the United States, particularly in areas of regional security and diplomatic coordination. Both sides expressed optimism that the upcoming engagements in Islamabad would help strengthen bilateral ties and contribute to broader regional stability.

## Ceasefire should also cover...

FROM PAGE 01  
Israeli actions against Hezbollah targets despite the broader US-Iran truce. Separately, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar discussed the latest regional developments in a telephone conversation with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, with both sides agreeing to stay in close contact on matters of mutual interest. The ceasefire between the US and Iran, described as a two-week pause, remains under pressure as fighting continues in Lebanon and concerns grow over its long-term sustainability. European leaders, including those from the UK and France, are pushing for swift diplomatic steps to broaden the truce and prevent a wider escalation.

## Pakistan vows all-out support...

FROM PAGE 01  
involved in the process and wished them success in their pursuit of peace. "He [PM] also renewed his invitation to the arriving delegations and assured them of the highest consideration and support by Pakistan," the statement concluded. The meeting takes place as Pakistan is set to host the US and Iran delegations this weekend following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire brokered by Islamabad. The war began when Israel and the United States launched strikes on Iran that assassinated its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on February 28, sparking retaliatory attacks from Tehran on Gulf nations and Israel.

## Iran war doubles...

FROM PAGE 01  
Brent futures shooting well past \$100 per barrel. Russia's main revenue from its vast oil and gas industry is based on production. Export duty on crude oil has been nullified from the start of 2024 as part of the so-called wider tax manoeuvre, a years-long tax reform of the industry. According to Reuters calculations based on preliminary production data and oil prices, Russia's mineral extraction tax on oil output will increase in April to around 700 billion (\$9 billion) from 327 billion in March. The revenue is up by some 10% from April last year. For the whole of 2026, Russia has budgeted for 7.9 trillion from the mineral extraction tax.

## IMF financial support...

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forecast, echoing a message she shared with Reuters on Monday. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced a two-week ceasefire with Iran, but Israel's continued bombardment of Lebanon threatens to derail talks to forge a permanent peace. "Even in a best case, there will be no neat and clean return to the status quo ante," Georgieva said. Qatar's Ras Laffan complex, which produces 93% of the Gulf's LNG, for instance, had been shut since March 2 and could take three to five years to return to full capacity. "The fact is, we don't truly know what the future holds for transits through the Strait of Hormuz, or for that matter, for the recovery of regional air traffic," she added.

## Pak demands accountability, adherence to int'l law

*"To this day, no one has been held accountable for their deaths," he stressed, expressing regret that, since he took up his post in 2019, "the threats to humanitarian personnel have only grown in scale, intensity and frequency"*

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Amid rising levels of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel killed in armed conflict, the UN Security Council Wednesday explored ways to strengthen protection, with Pakistan calling for "practical measures" to end violence against them. "If those who carry out humanitarian action and UN responsibilities are no longer protected, then the entire edifice of civilian protection is weakened," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council, which debated "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (SC Resolution 2730)". In this regard, he called for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2730, which reaffirmed the obligation of all parties to armed conflict to respect and protect humanitarian workers, including local aid workers and UN personnel. "The continued rise in attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel reflects a dangerous erosion of respect for international law," the Pakistani envoy said, while pointing to the implementation of international humanitarian law as the starting point for reversing trends. "Humanitarian

workers and UN personnel, including peacekeepers, must be respected and protected in all circumstances." Further, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said accountability must be strengthened. "Impunity only invites repetition." "When such attacks are not met with consequences, the result is predictable: violations increase and risks deepen," he said, calling for prompt, impartial, transparent and effective investigations. "Perpetrators must be identified and held accountable," Ambassador Asim Ahmad demanded. He urged member states to operationalize resolution 2730 through practical measures under UN auspices, notably to improve the monitoring of attacks, reporting on trends and follow-up on investigations. Protection also must be better integrated in to operational planning, the Pakistani envoy, while underscoring the need for conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, and early action, all for promoting peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter. "Those who protect civilians must not themselves be left unprotected," Ambassador Asim Ahmad emphasized. Opening the debate, Tom Fletcher, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, reported that in 2025 at least 326 humani-

tarian workers were killed across 21 countries, bringing the total over the past three years to more than 1,010. By comparison, 377 humanitarian workers were killed globally in the preceding three years. This almost threefold increase "is not an accidental escalation — it is the collapse of protection," he said, adding that of those deaths, more than 560 occurred in Gaza and the West Bank, 130 in Sudan, 60 in South Sudan and 25 each in Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Fletcher questioned whether the international community still stands by Security Council resolution 2730 — a text adopted amid a marked deterioration in the security environment for humanitarian personnel and UN and associated staff operating in armed conflict settings. The resolution was led by Switzerland and co-sponsored by more than 90 Member States, reflecting broad cross-regional support. "It seems insulting to the more than 1,000 colleagues killed to simply echo the commitments of that resolution — protection, integrity, accountability," he added. "We come here not to remind you of these commitments, but to challenge you to uphold them." Gilles Michaud, UN Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security,

recalled the killings of a member of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) when a drone hit a home in Goma (DRC) in March 2026, a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) in an attempted kidnapping in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) in November 2025 and a member of the Department for Safety and Security by a tank in Gaza in May 2024. "To this day, no one has been held accountable for their deaths," he stressed, expressing regret that, since he took up his post in 2019, "the threats to humanitarian personnel have only grown in scale, intensity and frequency". Unfortunately, Michaud added, attacks against humanitarian workers no longer come only from non-State armed groups, but from the same member states "who profess an attachment to international humanitarian law while paying little attention to such law in practice". To make matters worse, recent budget cuts have led to reduced security support globally. This, he said, leaves "our people ever more exposed and our programmes — in fact, your mandates — more vulnerable". Michaud called for "real, consequential measures" against anyone that compromises the safety and security of women and men whose work saves lives. Otherwise, they are, at best, "signs of helplessness".

## Pakistan condemns Israeli...

FROM PAGE 01  
difficult time and supports Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as its peace and stability.

## PM talks to Prime Minister of Italy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, Her Excellency Giorgia Meloni, today. Appreciating Pakistan's successful diplomatic efforts for the U.S.-Iran ceasefire and resumption of dialogue, Prime Minister Meloni felicitated the Prime Minister on hosting the forthcoming peace negotiations between the U.S. and Iran, in Islamabad. While underscoring the genuine and sincere desire of Pakistan for peace and stability in the region, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the joint statement issued by key European and international leaders, including Prime Minister Meloni, in support of Pakistan's peace efforts. The two leaders also expressed their serious concern over the ongoing hostilities in Lebanon, and agreed on the need for coordinated international efforts to prevent further escalation, so as to pave the way for lasting peace and stability in the region.

## Dar talks to Turkish foreign minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: DPM/PM Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar @MishaqDar50 held a telephonic conversation this evening with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan @HakanFidan. They exchanged views on the latest developments in the regional situation. FM Hakan Fidan appreciated and extended full support to Pakistan's for its role in helping secure the recent ceasefire. Underscoring the importance of continued engagement, both leaders hoped that the ceasefire would pave the way for lasting peace and stability in the region. They reaffirmed strong and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Türkiye and agreed to remain in close contact.

## Sindh govt to probe plaza fire incident

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Thursday constituted a high-level committee to "ensure the execution of the inquiry report" of the Gul Plaza inferno, which claimed the lives of more than 70 people in January. The deadly fire erupted on the night of Jan 17 and took nearly two days to be fully extinguished, leaving the ground-plus-three-storey building of Gul Plaza in ruins, with some of its sections collapsed. Subsequently, a one-member judicial commission was formed to probe the incident, and it handed over its report to the Sindh government on Tuesday.

A statement issued by the Sindh Home Department said the decision to form a committee for the report's implementation was taken during a meeting of the provincial cabinet's sub-committee, where the report was reviewed. "This decision follows significant progress made after the investigation into the unfortunate fire incident at Gul Plaza Shopping Centre, Karachi," the statement read. The commission, headed by Justice Agha Faisal of the Sindh High Court, identified the causes of the incident, determined responsibility, and presented recommendations for future action, it said. The statement added that the committee formed for its implementation comprised Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar as the convener, Sindh Local Government Minister Nasir Hussain Shah and Sindh Industries Minister Ikrumullah Dharejo as members and Sindh Home Department's additional chief secretary, Iqbal Memon, as a member and the secretary. — APP

## Easypaisa leads Disbursement for Fuel Package 2026

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan — 7th April 2026: easypaisa digital bank, Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform and digital bank, is proud to support the Government of Pakistan in the implementation of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif's Fuel Package 2026, enabling fast, secure, and transparent disbursement of financial assistance to millions of eligible citizens nationwide. easypaisa is the first digital wallet to facilitate the transfer of the first batch to trucks successfully. This will be followed by tank lorries, buses, and motorcycles. As part of this initiative aimed at providing relief amid rising fuel costs, ea-

sypaisa has played a pivotal role in digitizing subsidy distribution. Under the initiative, easypaisa disbursed PKR 1.2 billion to over 32,000 beneficiaries, including operators of buses, trucks, long-haul vehicles, and delivery vans. Leveraging its extensive digital payments infrastructure and vast network of users and agents, easypaisa has ensured that beneficiaries can conveniently receive and access funds without the need for long queues or complex procedures. Through its robust mobile wallet ecosystem, easypaisa facilitates real-time transfers directly to beneficiaries, enhancing financial inclusion and reducing dependency

on traditional cash-based systems. The platform's secure and user-friendly interface allows recipients to easily withdraw funds, pay bills, or make purchases digitally. "We are honored to partner with the Government of Pakistan in delivering timely financial relief to citizens," said Jahanzeb Khan, President & Chief Executive Officer, easypaisa digital bank. "Our mission has always been to relentlessly simplify and secure access to financial services, unlocking opportunities and empowering all Pakistanis. This initiative reflects the impact digital banks, like easypaisa, can have in driving efficiency

and transparency in public welfare programs." Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, said, "Digital payments are a key pillar of Pakistan's modern financial system, enabling transparency, efficiency, and inclusion at scale. Platforms like easypaisa are playing a vital role in ensuring that government support reaches citizens quickly and securely. Under the digital nation vision of the Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, digital finance can directly improve lives while advancing our vision of a cashless and digitally empowered Pakistan." — APP

## Peshawar Zalmi cruise past Karachi Kings in PSL 11 encounter

Peshawar Zalmi register PSL's biggest win, beating Karachi Kings by record 159 runs

DNA

KARACHI: Kusal Mendis' explosive century and a commanding bowling display propelled Peshawar Zalmi to a record 159-run victory over Karachi Kings in the 17th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Thursday. Set to chase a daunting 247-run target, the 2020 champions could muster 87 runs before getting bowled out in 16.1 overs and thus succumbed to their first defeat in the ongoing eight-team tournament. Wicket-keeper batter Azam Khan remained the top-scorer for the Kings with a cautious 25 off 27 deliveries with the help of three fours and a six, while fellow middle-order batters Saad Baig (14) and Khushdil Shah (10) were the others to amass double figures. Nahid Rana, Sufiyan Muqem and Iftikhar Ahmed jointly led the Zalmi's bowling charge with three wickets each, while Shoriful Islam chipped in with one. Mendis earned Player of the Match after smashing 109 off 52 balls, including 14 fours and four sixes. Kings captain David Warner's decision to field first backfired as the 2017 champions accumulated a mammoth 246/3 in their 20 overs.

## NASA to end moon mission

NEW YORK: Four astronauts travelling back to Earth from the far side of the moon on Nasa's Artemis II mission spoke of their emotions as they wrapped up the unprecedented flight and prepared to re-enter the atmosphere in a "fireball", during their first press conference from space on Wednesday. The Artemis II crew, flying in their Orion capsule since launching from Florida last week, are due to splash down off the Southern California coast on Friday evening after reaching the moon earlier this week. They cruised along a path that took them past the shadowed, lunar far side to become the farthest-flying humans in history. On the trip back home, they will reach speeds of up to 38,365 kph as they enter Earth's atmosphere, a high-risk phase of the mission that will put Orion's heatshield to the test as it gets battered by intense atmospheric friction. "I've actually been thinking about entry since April 3, 2023 when we got assigned to this mission," said Artemis II mission pilot Victor Glover, when asked how he was feeling about the return. "There's so many more pictures, so many more stories, and gosh, I haven't even begun to process what we've been through. We've still got two more days, and riding a fireball through the atmosphere is profound as well." — APP

## Babar Azam becomes fastest batter to score 12,000 T20 runs

Right-handed batter breaches 12000-run barrier in his 338th innings

DNA

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi's skipper Babar Azam on Thursday rewrote the history books as he became the fastest batter to score 12,000 runs in men's T20 during his side's Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 fixture against Karachi Kings at the National Bank Stadium. The right-handed batter entered the fixture with 11,987 runs to his name in just 337 innings and breached the 12,000-run barrier with a six off Kings' Khushdil Shah on the third delivery of the fourth over. As a result, the 31-year-old became just the 12th batter in the history of the men's T20s to reach the milestone, joining the likes of West Indies' Chris Gayle and Kieron Pol-

lard, India's Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, and compatriot Shoaib Malik in the elusive list. Interestingly, Babar is the fastest among the 12 batters to breach the 12,000-run barrier, taking just 338 innings, five fewer than Gayle, who conceded 345 innings. He is followed by Kohli and Australia's David Warner, with 360 and 368 innings, respectively. Meanwhile, Gayle still holds the top spot on the list of batters with the most runs in men's T20s with 14,562 runs in 455 innings, comprising 22 centuries and 88 fifties, closely followed by compatriot Pollard with 14,482 runs. Legendary Pakistan all-rounder Malik holds the seventh spot with 13,571 runs in 515 innings. Batters with 12,000-plus runs in men's T20s  
Chris Gayle (West Indies) — 14562

runs in 455 innings  
Kieron Pollard (West Indies) — 14482 runs in 652 innings  
Alex Hales (England) — 14449 runs in 523 innings  
David Warner (Australia) — 14121 runs in 434 innings  
Jos Buttler (England) — 13909 runs in 466 innings  
Virat Kohli (India) — 13612 runs in 398 innings  
Shoaib Malik (Pakistan) — 13571 runs in 515 innings  
James Vince (England) — 13102 runs in 470 innings  
Rohit Sharma (India) — 12361 runs in 452 innings  
Quinton de Kock (South Africa) — 12322 runs in 439 innings  
Faf du Plessis (South Africa) — 12041 runs in 431 innings  
Babar Azam (Pakistan) — 12031 runs in 338 innings.

## PSL 11: Peshawar Zalmi defeat Hyderabad Kingsmen in low-scoring thriller

Babar remains top-scorer with 43 runs; Saim leads Hyderabad's bowling with two wickets

DNA

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi beat Hyderabad Kingsmen by four wickets in a gripping low-scoring clash of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Wednesday. Zalmi comfortably chased down the 146-run target, losing six wickets in the final over, thanks to solid contributions from skipper Babar Azam and Kusal Mendis. The chase began on a shaky note as opener Mohammad Harris fell for 11 off six deliveries, including a four and a six, after playing a loose shot off Maheesh Theekshana, leaving the team at 17-1 in 1.5 overs. Babar and Mendis then stabilised the innings, forging a crucial partnership and guiding the team past the 50-run mark to lay the foundation for the chase. However, the 49-run stand was broken when Saim Ayub dismissed Mendis, who scored 27 off 23 deliveries, including one four and two sixes, leaving Zalmi at 66-2 in 8.2 overs. Michael Bracewell joined Babar at the crease and the duo kept the scoreboard ticking, adding a valuable partnership that took the total past the 100-run mark. Saim struck again to claim his second wicket, dismissing Bracewell for 25 off 19 deliveries, which included two fours and a six, ending the 38-run stand and reducing Zalmi to 104-3 in 13.4 overs. Babar Azam was dismissed on the final delivery of the 15th over as Hassan Khan end-



ed his innings of 43 off 37 deliveries, which featured six fours. Zalmi came under pressure when Mohammad Ali removed Farhan Yousaf for 15 off 13 deliveries, including two fours, followed by Hunain Shah, who

dismissed Abdul Samad for one, leaving the side at 125-6 in 17.1 overs. With 14 required off the final over, Hunain Shah conceded the remaining runs as Iftikhar Ahmed finished unbeaten on 15 off 10 deliveries, including a

four and a six, while Aamer Jamal chipped in with six runs to seal the victory. Iftikhar was named Player of the Match for his all-round brilliance, claiming four wickets and scoring a crucial 15 off 10 balls under pressure.

## Briefs

PSX  
witnesses  
bearish trend

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Thursday, losing 293.50 points, a negative change of 0.18 percent, closing at 165,517.51 points against 165,811.01 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 888.566 million shares with a traded value of Rs 54.281 billion, compared to 1,245.185 million shares valuing Rs 54.404 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.264 trillion from Rs 18.322 trillion a day earlier. Out of 489 active companies in the ready market, 162 advanced, 290 declined, and 37 remained unchanged. WorldCall Telecom topped the volume chart with 105.838 million shares, followed by F. Nat. Equities with 81.609 million shares and K-Electric Limited with 63.973 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company LimitedB, which increased by Rs 415.04 to close at Rs 18,015.05, and Raffhan Maize Products Company Limited, which gained Rs 131.06 to settle at Rs 9,263.41. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 177.45 to close at Rs 25,820.55, while Hoechst Pakistan Limited fell by Rs 41.89 to close at Rs 3,954.27. —APP

Gold prices  
decline by Rs  
9,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 9,500 to settle at Rs 494,662 compared to Rs 504,162 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold declined by Rs 8,145 to Rs 424,092 from Rs 432,237, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 7,466 to Rs 388,765 against Rs 396,231. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$95 to \$4,723 per ounce from \$4,818. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 300 to Rs 7,884 from Rs 8,184, while the price of 10 grams of silver also declined by Rs 257 to Rs 6,759 from Rs 7,016. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$3.0 to \$74.00 per ounce from \$77.00. —APP

Tanzanian  
leader orders  
smaller  
convoys,  
shared rides

DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, whose motorcades are reportedly among the largest in Africa, is cutting down on the number of official and luxury vehicles as part of measures to save fuel as oil prices rise. Several African governments have announced steps to cope with fuel shortages and rising prices. Madagascar on Tuesday declared a state of emergency to reduce fuel consumption, while South Africa cut the fuel levy, and Ethiopia introduced rationing. Senegal banned all but essential foreign trips for government ministers. "From today, whenever I travel, the officers accompanying me will use consolidated transport in small buses to reduce fuel consumption and operational costs during this period," Hassan said Wednesday. In the past, the president's convoy had dozens of luxury vehicles carrying government officials, protocol officers and security personnel. A video of her 30-car convoy was once shared online, sparking conversations about African presidential convoys. Hassan has one of the continent's longest motorcades. She said Tanzania had fuel reserves that could last up to three months, but cautioned businesses against inflating prices. The price of fuel has risen by \$0.40 per liter in the last two weeks, fueled by the Iran war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. —APP

Pak eyes tyre exports as JV  
announces \$120m expansion

Pakistan has emerged as the fifth-largest exporter of tyres to the United States and the seventh-largest to Brazil, marking a notable shift from virtually no presence in these markets just a few years ago

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a detailed meeting with Mr. Jin Yongsheng, Chairman of Service Long March Tyres (Private) Limited, and his delegation to discuss investment expansion, export growth, and tariff policy support for Pakistan's tyre industry. Federal Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and senior officials also attended the meeting, said a release issued here on Thursday. During the discussion, the company announced an additional investment of \$120 million in Pakistan, reaffirming its confidence in the country's industrial and economic potential. The delegation shared that the company is on track to achieve exports of \$70 million by June 2026 and is aiming to cross \$100 million in exports in the following financial year, a milestone that would place it among Pakistan's leading non-textile exporters within a short span of operations. The meeting was informed that Pakistan has made significant progress in global tyre markets, with exports to the United States and Brazil increasing rapidly. Pakistan has emerged as the fifth-largest exporter of tyres to the United States and the seventh-largest to Brazil, marking a notable shift from virtually no presence in these markets just a few years ago. This growth has largely been attributed to the transfer of technology and expertise through collaboration with Chinese partners, which has enabled local manufacturing to meet international standards and compete globally. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the



concerns raised by the industry and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting sectors that demonstrate strong performance and export potential. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced tariff policy that encourages local production while ensuring competitiveness. The minister noted that the government is working towards diversifying Pakistan's industrial base by promoting emerging industries with high growth potential. The delegation also highlighted the importance of the Pakistan-China industrial

partnership, describing it as a key driver behind the rapid growth of the tyre sector. The company's manufacturing facility in Nooriabad was cited as a modern and efficient industrial unit employing around 2,000 workers and incorporating renewable energy solutions, making it one of the more sustainable production facilities in the region. Both sides agreed on the need to strengthen collaboration between the government and industry to support export-oriented growth and industrial expansion. The minister underscored that Pakistan must focus

on diversification and leverage international partnerships to enhance its manufacturing capabilities and global competitiveness. The investors expressed confidence in Pakistan's economic outlook despite current global challenges and appreciated the government's continued engagement with the business community. The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to promote policy stability, encourage investment, and position Pakistan as a competitive hub for manufacturing and exports in emerging sectors such as tyres.

Ethiopia army base used to  
support Sudan paramilitary

KHARTOUM: An Ethiopian military base close to the Sudanese border is lending support to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, according to a report by a research unit at Yale University released Wednesday. The Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) said analysis of satellite imagery and open-source data shows activity "consistent with military assistance to the RSF" at an Ethiopian base in Asosa, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, between late December 2025 and late March 2026. The paramilitary group, which has been at war with Sudan's army since April 2023, was accused last month by the Sudanese military of launching drone attacks "from inside Ethiopian territory," the first public allegation of Ethiopian involvement in the conflict. Ethiopia has denied the claim and has also rejected allegations that it is hosting RSF camps. Yale's HRL has used remote sensing data and satellite imagery to monitor the war since it began. Its researchers said their findings "represent clear visual evidence over a five-month period" that RSF attacks on Sudan's southeastern Blue Nile State were being launched from within Ethiopia. The researchers identified repeated arrivals of commercial car carriers at the base unloading vehicles known as "technical," light pickup trucks commonly used by armed groups. HRL said these vehicles do not match those normally used by the Ethiopian military and have been observed supplying RSF units operating in Sudan's Blue Nile state. According to the report, some of the vehicles were later fitted with gun mounts "capable of holding heavy machine guns." Objects consistent with 50-calibre weapons were also observed nearby, the report said. HRL added that similar vehicles later appeared in open-source images from fighting around Al-Kurmuk, a strategic Sudanese border town roughly 100 kilometers (62 miles) by road from Asosa. Recent fighting has intensified around Al-Kurmuk, a key army position. This year, an estimated 28,000 people were displaced by fighting in Blue Nile, including more than 10,000 from Al-Kurmuk alone. Control of the state is divided between Sudan's army and RSF allies from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM?N), led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu. The paramilitaries have recently claimed victories in the area. The Yale lab also documented increased logistical activity at the Asosa base, including the arrival of shipping containers, fuel tanks and tents capable of housing up to 150 people. White armored vehicles inconsistent with Ethiopian military markings were also seen, alongside frequent movements of non-military transport trucks. Separately, satellite imagery showed significant expansion at Asosa airport, including "a new hangar and concrete pad" and defensive fighting positions. Imagery previously analyzed by AFP has shown significant development at the airport, which previously served as a drone base. The RSF last year brought thousands of fighters into Ethiopia, an RSF source and an army source told AFP.

Palestinian health ministry says  
Israeli fire kills one in West Bank

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian health ministry said on Thursday that Israeli forces fatally shot a Palestinian man in the occupied West Bank a day earlier, while the Israeli military said an off-duty soldier fired at a stone-thrower. The Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry said 28-year-old Alaa Khaled Mohammed Sbeih "was shot and killed" by Israeli forces on Wednesday night near the village of Tayasir in the northern West Bank. The military said troops were dispatched to the area on Wednesday "following a report of an incident between Palestinians and Israeli civilians, which included hurl-

ing rocks," adding that an Israeli and a Palestinian civilian were injured in the incident and taken to hospital. "From initial inquiry, it emerged that an off-duty soldier fired toward a Palestinian after he threw stones at the Israeli civilians," the statement said, adding that the incident was under review. The military often uses the term off-duty soldier to refer to Israeli settlers in the army and sometimes carry their weapons with them when off duty. Violence in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, has surged since the October 7,

2023 attack on Israel by the Islamist movement Hamas which triggered the war in Gaza. It has continued despite a ceasefire in Gaza in effect since October. According to an AFP tally based on figures from the Palestinian health ministry, at least 1,057 Palestinians - including many militants as well as civilians - have been killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war. At least 46 Israelis, both civilians and soldiers, have been killed in the same territory in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations, according to official Israeli data. —APP

Gul appointed as  
CEO KPEZDMC

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has appointed Shaharyar Gul as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC), with effect from 2 April 2026. The appointment comes at a pivotal moment for the province, as KP seeks to position its economic zones as credible and competitive destinations for domestic and international investment. Mr Gul brings more than 25 years of experience in private sector development, investment facilitation, and stakeholder engagement. His career spans donor-funded development projects and diplomatic missions, through which he has contributed to economic development initiatives across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He has a record of sustained engagement with government institutions, chambers of commerce, and international development partners. "KP has long had the ingredients for industrial growth - the geography, the workforce, the will. What the economic zones need now is focused, sustained effort: creation of an enabling environment, better facilitation for investors, stronger coordination across stakeholders, and consistent follow-through. That is what I intend to bring," said Mr Gul. As CEO, Mr Gul will lead KPEZDMC's mandate to develop and manage Economic Zones and Special Economic Zones across the province. His priorities will include strengthening investor facilitation services, deepening coordination with government bodies and the private sector, and advancing KP's profile as a destination for industrial investment and employment. —APP

Australia PM welcomes  
ceasefire, says Trump's  
threats not 'appropriate'

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese welcomed a two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran on Wednesday but said US President Donald Trump's threat to destroy Iran's civilian infrastructure had not been "appropriate. Trump had warned that 'a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again' if Iran failed to meet his deadline for a deal. Albanese said: "I don't think it's appropriate to use language such as that from the president of the United States, and I think it will cause some concern." But he welcomed news that the US and Iran had agreed to a ceasefire, barely an hour before Trump's deadline expired. "What we have called for is a de-escalation, and that is what has occurred, and that's a good thing," the Australian leader said. "This is positive news. We've been calling for a de-escalation for some time. We want to see a resolution of the conflict. —APP

Lebanese  
govt bans  
non-state  
weapons

BEIRUT: Lebanon's cabinet on Thursday instructed security forces to restrict weapons in Beirut exclusively to state institutions, a day after Israeli strikes across the country including in the heart of the capital. "The army and security forces are requested to immediately begin reinforcing the full imposition of state authority over Beirut Governorate and to monopolize weapons in the hands of legitimate authorities alone," Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said at the end of a cabinet meeting. Information Minister Paul Morcos said the decision prompted objections from Hezbollah's two ministers in the cabinet. The Lebanese government banned Hezbollah's military activities at the beginning of March, shortly after the start of war with Israel, but the decision has not stopped the Iran-backed armed group and political party - represented in cabinet and parliament - from conducting military operations. On Wednesday, Israel carried out its largest wave of strikes since the start of its war with Hezbollah on March 2, leaving more than 200 people dead. The conflict has cost more than 1,700 lives in just over a month, according to Lebanon's health ministry. In the wake of Wednesday's strikes across Lebanon, Salam said the government will submit "an urgent complaint" to the UN Security Council, and he denounced the "dangerous escalation in defiance of all regional and international efforts to stop the war in the region." Morcos said the government is engaged in diplomatic outreach to secure a ceasefire in Lebanon, after the US and Israel said they did not consider their truce with Iran to include the country. Iran on Thursday called Lebanon an "inseparable" part of the ceasefire. —APP

Drone strike in  
Darfur kills 12

KHARTOUM: A drone strike on the paramilitary-controlled town of Kutum in Sudan's North Darfur state has killed 12 civilians, including six children, a medical source and local activists said Thursday. A medical source told AFP that those brought to the town's hospital included 12 dead, among them six children, including three secondary school students. Sixteen others were injured, including women and children, and are receiving treatment. The El-Fasher Resistance Committee, a pro-democracy group, said the strike on Wednesday hit the Al-Salama neighborhood near Al'Um Girls' School, blaming the Sudanese army, which has been at war with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces since April 2023. —APP

Pope Africa  
tour to urge  
help for  
continent

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo leaves on Monday for a visit to four countries in Africa, in an ambitious tour to urge global leaders to address the needs of the continent where more than a fifth of the world's Catholics live on his first major overseas trip of 2026. Over 10 days from April 13-23, Leo will travel nearly 18,000 km (11,185 miles) to visit 11 cities and towns in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea as part of a whirlwind itinerary that includes 18 flights. The pope is making the visit with a mission "to help turn the world's attention to Africa," Cardinal Michael Czerny, a senior Vatican official and close adviser to Leo, told Reuters. "By heading to Africa so early in his pontificate, the pope shows that Africa matters," Czerny said. "Leo wants to make sure that Africa is not forgotten by countries and people caught up in their own concerns." Leo, who in recent weeks has emerged as an outspoken critic of the Iran war, has made only one big overseas trip since being elected last May, visiting Türkiye and Lebanon in November and December. He visited Monaco in March. Vatican officials and African Church leaders say the upcoming tour is a personal priority for Leo, the first US pope, and a sign of the value the Church places on the continent, the place where Catholicism is growing fastest. More than 20 percent of the world's Catholics live on the continent, according to Vatican statistics. —APP

## PIA fleet to expand to 60 aircraft

Business leaders call for economic reforms

DNA

KARACHI: Chairman of the Arif Habib Consortium, Arif Habib, has announced plans to expand the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) fleet to 60 aircraft, stating that currently 18 out of 30 planes are operational. He said that 5 to 6 aircraft are under repair and will soon be restored, increasing the operational fleet to 26 He expressed these views while addressing industrialists at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI). On the occasion, KATI President Muhammad Ikram

Rajput termed Arif Habib a "hero of the business community" and credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir for strengthening Pakistan's global standing. Arif Habib said Pakistan's economy has shown signs of stability, but emphasized that reducing the cost of production, particularly electricity prices, is essential for sustainable growth. He noted that better utilization of the existing power transmission system could significantly lower per-unit electricity costs. Business leaders including Zubair Chhaya, Hasan Bakhshi, and Khalid Tabwab stressed the need for forming a strong economic

think tank and urged the business community to consider managing loss-making public institutions. Speakers also highlighted challenges such as inconsistent policies, bureaucratic hurdles, and low investment levels, calling for unified efforts by the business community to present a collective voice. They emphasized focusing on key sectors like IT, agriculture, and mining to drive economic recovery. The event concluded with calls for improved governance, industrial infrastructure development, and long-term policy stability to boost investor confidence and economic growth.



## Briefs

**IMF to dispatch mission to Pakistan next month**

### NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plans to dispatch its mission to Pakistan next month to finalise the upcoming budget for 2026-27. The Fund envisages the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) tax collection target of Rs15.564 trillion for the next fiscal year. Keeping in view the geopolitical situation, the government has decided to kick-start the consultation process to finalise the contours of the coming budget. Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb has already held initial deliberations with the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and Overseas International Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OICCI), while the minister of state for finance and adviser to the PM on industries held a meeting with APTMA to remove their concerns over increased logistics and freight charges owing to the recent regional conflicts. It is the wish of the Pakistani budget makers to fix the FBR's target in the range of Rs15.232 trillion, knowing that the tax machinery will not be able to materialise the tax collection target of Rs13,979 billion for the ongoing fiscal year. The FBR wants a major reduction in the rates of super tax and the salaried class in the next budget. The government is also contemplating various options to request the IMF in its upcoming mission in May 2026 for the withdrawal of some withholding taxes, especially in case of those WHT where refunds are piled up massively.

### Pindi board delays matric exams

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education on Thursday postponed the matric examinations scheduled to be held on April 10 (Friday) — when the federal capital will be abuzz with diplomatic activity during talks between the US and Iran. In a statement, it said that the exams at 64 examination centres across the city had been postponed. However, it said that exams in other districts of Rawalpindi Division would continue as per the schedule announced. According to a statement issued by the Rawalpindi BISE, the postponed exams included compulsory Urdu and geography. A new date for the postponed papers would be announced later, and the candidates would be duly informed, the statement said. The district authorities of the twin cities have declared two local holidays in Islamabad and Rawalpindi on April 9 (today) and April 10 (Friday) to ensure security for the scheduled peace talks between Iran and the United States. — APP

# Pakistan helped prevent a global conflict: Qaisar Sheikh

Renowned business figures Chairman of Gulf group Syed Ahmed, Shoeb Ahmed and Ali Furqan hosted a diplomatic reception in honour of Federal Minister for Investment



ISLAMABAD: Renowned business figures Syed Ahmed and Shoeb Ahmed hosted dinner in honour of Federal Minister for Investment Qaisar Ahmed Shaikh. A large number of ambassadors/high commissioners attended the dinner. — DNA

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned business figures Chairman of Gulf group Syed Ahmed, Shoeb Ahmed and Ali Furqan hosted a diplomatic reception in honour of Federal Minister for Investment, Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh. A large number of

ambassadors and high commissioners attended the reception.

Diplomats from Norway, Morocco, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Poland, South Korea, Germany, Thailand, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, France, Indonesia, and Japan were present on the occasion. Addressing the diplomatic community, the minister briefed participants on Pa-

kistan's mediation efforts led by its civil and military leadership, which helped avert a potential war in the region and brought the United States and Iran to the negotiating table. Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh said that Pakistan not only facilitated a ceasefire between the United States, Israel, and Iran, but also helped prevent a broader global conflict.

He further stated that Islamabad's mediation initiative has received global support, as the conflict had implications for the entire world. Minister emphasized that the international community must continue to monitor the situation and play its role to ensure that the parties adhere to the ceasefire agreement, paving the way for a lasting and peaceful resolution in the region

## Pakistan-UAE ties remain strong, no signs of displeasure: Khawaja Asif

Khawaja Asif says matured loan amount to be repaid, UAE relationship based on generations-long ties

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said there were no signs of displeasure from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) towards Pakistan, stressing that ties between the two countries remained strong. He said Pakistan's relationship with the UAE was based on generations and had solid foundations. "On maturity, we will return the amount, which we have done before as well, and it can come back again," he added. Pakistan will return a \$3.5 billion loan to the United Arab Emirates this month, raising pressure on reserves. The repayment comes as Pakistan targets foreign exchange reserves above \$18 billion by June under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund programme. In the past, the UAE had rolled over such deposits annually. However, in December 2025, the facility was extended only for short durations — initially for one month and then for two months — reflecting tightening financial conditions. Khurram Shehzad, advisor to the finance minister, said on Tuesday the country had repaid \$1.43 billion in external deb.

## UN condemns deadly wave of Israeli strikes on Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations condemned a massive wave of Israeli strikes across Lebanon on Wednesday, saying reports that hundreds of people, including civilians had been killed and injured were "appalling" just hours after the Pakistan-brokered ceasefire between the United States and Iran. Israel's strikes on Lebanon have been the heaviest since the conflict with Hezbollah broke out last month, even as the militant group paused attacks on northern Israel and Israeli troops in Lebanon under a two-week U.S.-Iran ceasefire.

"The scale of the killing and destruction in Lebanon today is nothing short of horrific," U.N. Human Rights Chief Volker Turk said in a statement. "Such carnage, within hours of

agreeing to a ceasefire with Iran, defies belief. It places enormous pressure on a fragile peace, which is so desperately needed by civilians," he said. Turk's statement said a U.N. Human Rights team at the site of one of the strikes in the capital described a scene of devastation, and seeing several dead bodies amid the rubble. The attacks came within hours of the ceasefire announced between the United States and Iran following weeks of deadly hostilities that have disrupted lives, global trade and humanitarian operations in the Middle East and beyond. "Today's wave of Israeli strikes came just as hopes for an end to violence and destruction were rising," the U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert tweeted. — APP

## Crude rises, stocks fall on fears over nascent US-Iran ceasefire

OIL prices climbed and stocks fell Thursday on fears over the nascent US-Iran ceasefire after Tehran threatened to resume hostilities after Israel launched a major bombardment of Lebanon. Equity markets across the globe soared and crude plunged Wednesday after US President Donald Trump announced the two-week halt in the war, and the Islamic republic said it would reopen the Strait of Hormuz as peace talks took place. But with the deal less than a day old, cracks were already appearing as Tel Aviv said it did not include Israel's fight against Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon as it continued attacks on its northern neighbour. That view was echoed by Vice President JD

Vance, who said: "If Iran wants to let this negotiation fall apart... over Lebanon, which has nothing to do with them, and which the United States never once said was part of the ceasefire, that's ultimately their choice." Iran said that broke terms of the deal as reports said the vital Hormuz waterway — through which a fifth of world oil and gas passes — was shut again. However, that came as Tehran announced alternative routes for ships travelling through the Strait, citing the risk of sea mines. The country's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf posted on X that the "workable basis on which to negotiate" had already been violated, making further talks "unreasonable". — APP

## Pakistan's outreach united key players, secured ceasefire: envoy

Sheikh hopes ongoing efforts will yield positive results, and peace, stability in region will have far-reaching impact



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, said on Wednesday that Islamabad played a constructive diplomatic role in efforts leading to the US-Iran ceasefire, describing it as a success of dialogue and engagement. In an interview with Becky Anderson on CNN, he said Pakistan's diplomatic efforts had been underway for weeks and culminated in the announcement of a successful ceasefire and the start of negotiations.

"This is a victory of diplomacy and dialogue," he said. He added that Pakistan has always prioritised positive diplomacy throughout its history and expressed gratitude to all parties for placing their trust in Islamabad. "We are grateful to all sides for their confidence in Pakistan," he said. The envoy also acknowledged the role of regional and global partners, saying their collective efforts helped secure the ceasefire and open the path for talks. "We are thankful to Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt, Qatar, China and others whose joint efforts made the ceasefire possible and paved the way for dialogue," he said. Highlighting Beijing's role, he noted: "China, from day one, urged all sides to exercise restraint and pursue diplomacy." He said the country's top leadership was directly involved in the diplomatic push, adding that confidentiality remains key to the success of negotiations. "The success of the negotiation process requires discretion. Without pressure, the chances of a decisive outcome are higher," he said. He stressed that decisions ultimately rest with the concerned parties, while Pakistan's role remains that of a facilitator. "Pakistan is merely a facilitator and is making sincere efforts with full integrity," he said. Referring to ties with Gulf countries, he said Pakistan maintains longstanding relations with the region and remains in close consultation with Gulf leadership during the process. "Pakistan has deep-rooted ties with Gulf states, where around 5.5 million Pakistanis reside," he said. He expressed hope that the ongoing efforts would yield positive results, noting that peace and stability in the region would have a far-reaching global impact. "We hope this sincere and humble effort will prove fruitful. Peace and stability in the region will have a positive impact not only on the Gulf but on global politics and the economy," he said. — DNA

## Government appoints press attaches abroad

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has issued an official order appointing eight Information Group officers to press positions in various countries abroad. According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (External Publicity Wing) on April 8, 2026, the Prime Minister has approved the postings of these officers in Pakistan's Information Sections at different diplomatic missions.

Ms. Fatima Sheikh (BS-19) has been posted as Press Counsellor to Moscow, while Dr. Sohail Aftab (BS-19) will serve as Press Counsellor in Berlin. Ms. Zoobia Masood (BS-19) has been assigned as Press Counsellor to Washington, and Mr. Shabid Ullah (BS-19) will take up the role of Press Counsellor in Dhaka. In BS-18, Ms. Sidra Hussain has been appointed as Press Attaché in Ankara, Mr. Omar Liaquat as Press Attaché, Syeda Addila Rubab Kazmi as Press Attaché in Baku, and Ms. Zile Huma as Press Attaché in New Delhi. These appointments are part of routine diplomatic rotations aimed at strengthening Pakistan's external publicity and media outreach in key international capitals. The officers are expected to focus on projecting Pakistan's perspective effectively through public diplomacy and engagement with international media.

## NOW IN PAKISTAN

### Invisible Braces Dental Implants

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