



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan greatly Values realtions With KSA: PM

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Iran does not want war, says supreme leader

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Balochistan CM Sarfraz Bugti opens Museum

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Middle East tensions

JD Vance hopes Islamabad talks will be fruitful

Vance indicated that President Donald Trump had provided him with "some pretty clear guidelines" for the discussions. The vice president is heading a high-level US delegation that includes special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. The talks, mediated in Pakistan, are scheduled to begin this weekend and represent the most significant direct US-Iran engagement in years

NEWS DESK / DNA

WASHINGTON: Vice President JD Vance left Washington on Friday for Islamabad, Pakistan, where he will lead U.S. negotiations with Iran aimed at solidifying a fragile ceasefire and potentially ending the recent conflict involving the U.S., Israel, and Iran. Speaking to reporters before boarding Air Force Two, Vance expressed optimism about the upcoming talks while delivering a firm warning to Tehran. "We're looking forward to the negotiation. I think it's going to be positive," Vance said. "As the president of the United States said, if the Iranians are willing to negotiate in good faith, we're certainly willing to extend the open hand. If they're going to try to play us, then they're going to find the negotiating team is not that receptive." Vance indicated that President Donald Trump had provided him with "some pretty clear guidelines" for the discussions. The vice president is heading a high-level U.S. delegation that includes special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. The talks, mediated in Pakistan, are scheduled to begin this weekend and represent the most significant direct U.S.-Iran engagement in years. The mission comes amid efforts to build on a recent ceasefire. Vance, long known as a skeptic of

Continued on Page 06

Netanyahu signals war with Iran 'unfinished' business

APP

NEW YORK: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that the war with Iran is not over and remains "unfinished business" as many of Israel's objectives have not been achieved, according to a report in The New York Times. Following a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire that went into effect around April 7-8, 2026, he said in a televised address to Israeli public, that the "double existential threat" of Iran's ballistic missiles and its nuclear programme has been "distanced," he said, but not eliminated. The Times pointed out that his address was less about victory than unfinished business. "We still have goals to complete," Netanyahu said, "and we will achieve them either by agreement or

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ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia H.E. Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 10 April 2026. - DNA

Pak Navy rescues 18 crew members

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Navy carried out an operation in the Arabian Sea and rescued 18 crew members, including foreign nationals, of a merchant vessel following a distress call, a statement issued by the PN said on Friday. The statement said: "In a swift humanitarian operation, Pakistan Navy successfully rescued and evacuated 18 crew members, including nationals of China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia, following a distress call from merchant vessel (MV) Gold Autumn, operating in North Arabian Sea at 200 nautical miles (approximately 370 km) off Pakistan's coast." It added that upon receiving the emergency alert, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) activated its Maritime Rescue

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Announces cut in petrol prices

Islamabad talks: it's make or break event, says PM Shehbaz

New fuel prices effective immediately: High-Speed Diesel price has been cut by Rs135 per liter. The new price is now Rs385 per liter (down from the recent high of over Rs520). Petrol price has been reduced by Rs12 per liter. The new price stands at Rs366 per liter

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressed the nation on Friday, welcoming the immediate ceasefire between the United States, Iran, and their allies. He expressed deep gratitude to both Washington and Tehran for agreeing to halt hostilities, describing the development as a significant step towards regional stability. "Peace is in everybody's interest," the Prime Minister declared. He stressed that a

Continued on Page 06

UK PM all praise for Pak mediatory role

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, His Excellency Keir Starmer, this evening. Prime Minister Starmer deeply appreciated Pakistan's

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

China, Taiwan will unite says Xi Jinping

DNA

BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping met Taiwan's opposition party leader Cheng Li-wun in Beijing on Friday, telling the visiting delegation he had "full confidence" that Taiwanese and Chinese people would be united. Kuomintang (KMT) chairwoman Cheng is the party's first leader to visit China in a decade, but her trip has sparked debate in Taiwan with critics accusing her of being too pro-Beijing. China severed high-level contact with Taiwan in 2016 after Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidency and rejected Beijing's claims that the self-ruled island is part of its territory.

Pakistan ramps up security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is pressing ahead with its preparations for high-stakes talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad, expected to focus on extending the fragile two-week ceasefire into a lasting peace. Chairing a meeting to review security and administrative preparations for the talks in the federal capital, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed authorities to ensure foolproof security and exceptional hospitality for all visiting foreign guests.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

US-UK divisions

Starmer says NATO in US's 'interests' as Gulf tour ends

Starmer's comments followed US President Donald Trump's renewed attacks this week on the Western military alliance and his threats to withdraw from it, after a refusal by NATO allies to join the US-Israel war against Iran

DNA

DOHA: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer insisted on Friday that NATO was "in America's interests" as he ended a three-day visit to the Gulf to discuss bolstering the "fragile" Middle East truce. Starmer's comments followed US President Donald Trump's renewed attacks this week on the Western military alliance and his threats to withdraw from it, after a refusal by NATO allies to join the US-Israel war against Iran. "It is in America's interests. It's in European interests," Starmer told UK broadcasters of the nearly 80-year-old security bloc. "NATO is a defensive alliance, which for decades has kept us much safer than we would otherwise have been," he added, while

Continued on Page 06

Macron seeks to draw Trump to G7

NEWS DESK

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has invited US President Donald Trump to a sumptuous dinner at the ornate Palace of Versailles the day after a G7 summit in mid-June, although it remains unclear if Trump will attend either event, sources said. France is the host of this year's G7, with a leaders' summit in the lakeside resort of Evian-les-Bains at the foot of the French Alps scheduled for June 15-17 - dates

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'World doesn't have a plan B', says Bilawal

"It's up to us, up to the disputing parties, up to all countries, to push all sides to agree to that peace so that we don't get drawn into potentially broader conflict than what we have seen over the course of last month"



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the world does not have a "plan B" if the US-Iran talks fail to yield the desired results and emphasised the need

for the negotiations to lead to a peaceful resolution to the Middle East war. Bilawal shared these thoughts in an interview with Sky News, where he was asked ahead of the talks scheduled in Islamabad for Saturday, "don't result in a formal treaty" during the two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran, "do you have a plan B to prevent a return to full-scale hostilities". In his response, Bilawal said: "I think the international community doesn't have a plan B. Our Plan A needs to be achieving a peaceful resolution to this conflict and a more permanent peace. I think the way this conflict has played out has proven that a war of this nature, a war of this scale, is not an option." He continued: "It's up to us, up to the disputing parties, up to all countries, to push all sides to agree to that peace so that

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Cyber Crime Unit to combat online harassment in Punjab

Reaffirming her government's commitment, Maryam Nawaz Sharif stated that no individual has the right to violate the privacy of others and vowed that cyber criminals will be brought to justice, setting a strong precedent for the protection of citizens in the digital space

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved a major initiative to address the growing menace of harassment and blackmailing on social media, particularly targeting women and children, by establishing a dedicated Punjab Cyber Crime Unit. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting on Friday where it was agreed that special mobile units will be set up to facilitate minor boys and girls affected by online harassment and blackmailing. These mobile units will enable victims to lodge complaints without the need to visit police stations or government offices. Under the new system, victims—especially women and children—will also be able to register complaints through a Virtual Police Station,

the Cyber Crime Unit front desk, and the "PKM" mobile application. Authorities have assured that complete confidentiality of victims' identities will be strictly maintained. The provincial government has also decided to introduce stringent legislation to ensure exemplary punishment for individuals involved in social media harassment and blackmailing. In this regard, work has already begun on drafting the Punjab Online Safety Act 2026, which will soon be presented for formal approval. The meeting further resolved to establish a Cyber Patrol Wing and a Cyber Police Academy under Punjab Police to strengthen institutional capacity. Additionally, an advanced intelligence system will be introduced for effective monitoring and surveillance of social media platforms. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the concerned authori-

ties to adopt a proactive approach in curbing cybercrime and ensuring robust data protection measures. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister stated that cybercrime has emerged as a serious challenge in the modern era, and safeguarding the younger generation remains a top priority of her government. She emphasized that modern technology and tools will be fully utilized to protect young girls from blackmailing and exploitation. She also urged parents to closely monitor their children's social media activities and raise awareness about online safety. Reaffirming her government's commitment, Maryam Nawaz Sharif stated that no individual has the right to violate the privacy of others and vowed that cyber criminals will be brought to justice, setting a strong precedent for the protection of citizens in the digital space.



LAHORE: Sindh Governor Nehal Hashmi meets former Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz at Model Town.

Protecting citizens' lives, property top priority

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Ismail Khan Ghulam Mubashir Mekan on Friday emphasized that safeguarding the lives and property of citizens was the highest responsibility of the police, calling on personnel to remain courageous, united, and committed in the ongoing fight against terrorism. He expressed these views while addressing a police darbar here at Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines. The event was attended by District Police Officer (DPO) Dera Ziauddin Ahmed, SPs of FRP, CTD, Sardar, Elite Force, SDPOs, officers from various units, and a large number of police personnel. The RPO termed his posting in Dera as an honor and paid rich tribute to the courage and determination of police personnel, acknowledging their frontline role and sacrifices in challenging circumstances. He said their contributions would be remembered in history. Emphasizing discipline and teamwork, he directed personnel to remain steadfast, support each other during difficult situations, and face every challenge with courage and resilience. He also stressed the need for respectful behavior towards the public, noting that public trust is vital for effective policing and counterterrorism efforts. Highlighting the importance of maintaining peace, he said ensuring law and order in the region was the foremost responsibility of police and reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism will continue with public support.—APP

Provision of info key to accountability, governance: Khattak

PESHAWAR: Additional Deputy Commissioner (Human Rights) Mardan, Iqbal Hussain Khattak, has said that providing information to citizens is a fundamental responsibility of the state, as guaranteed under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013. Addressing a seminar titled "Safe, Free and Effective Media," organized in collaboration with IRSP and TDEA at a local hall, he stated that citizens have a constitutional and legal right to access information from public institutions. He added that this

right promotes transparency and plays a vital role in strengthening the democratic system. Iqbal Hussain Khattak emphasized that public accountability and good governance cannot be achieved without access to information. He said the Right to Information law serves as an effective tool for building trust between the public and the state, urging institutions to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to avoid misunderstandings and facilitate prompt resolutions of public issues.

He praised the role of media, stating that a free, responsible, and professional media is essential for bringing positive change in society. He noted that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is taking measures to strengthen citizens' access to information, including capacity-building of relevant institutions. The seminar was attended by representatives of government departments, civil society members, political workers, lawyers, students, teachers.—DNA

Pak's role as mediator in Iran-U.S war highly hailed

PESHAWAR: Former Mayor of Peshawar and senior leader of Pakistan People's Party, Arbab Muhammad Tariq on Thursday said that it is a matter of joy for us and the people of Pakistan that our Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, brokered peace in the world by playing the role of mediator in the Iran-US war. The role played by our country elders have proved that Pakistan has never been in favor of terrorism, but Pakistan has always opposed terrorism and today, through the Islamabad peace talks, two big powers are leading the region towards peace. Addressing a press conference here at the Peshawar Press Club, Arbab Muhammad Tariq said that even today peace has been established in the world, but Israel is continuously staining its hands with the blood of Muslims. Arbab Tariq said he salute the spirit and courage with which the Iranian people faced missiles and bombs. Iran has proven that it fought well with the forces hostile to Islam. He added that God willing, Islamabad would prove to be the capital of peace and Pakistan's role is exemplary for peace.

He appealed to all stakeholders participating in the Islamabad peace talks to show patience and tolerance on the points presented by Iran and the United States for peace so that real peace can be established in the region and humanity does not have to be ashamed. Arbab Muhammad Tariq said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir worked day and night for peace during the critical period of the US-Iran war, and to establish peace in the entire region to day, hoping that the talks would be successful.—APP

Karachi Safe City Project with 2,300 smart cameras

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday approved Phase-II of the Karachi Safe City Project, a major step towards strengthening urban security, surveillance and law enforcement capacity in the metropolis, with the installation of over 2,300 smart cameras and advanced monitoring infrastructure. Presiding over a meeting of the Sindh Safe Cities Authority (SSCA) at the CM House, the chief minister underscored that ensuring public safety through modern technology remains a top priority of his government. The meeting was attended by Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, IG Police Javed Odho, PSCM Agha Wasif, Secretary Home Iqbal Memon, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatui, Secretary Excise Saleem Rajput, DG SSCA Sarfraz Nawaz, Agha Fakhar, and DG PDMA Salman Shah. The members of the authority, MPAs Syed Sarfraz Shah, Ali Hassan Hingorjo, Sumta Afzal, Humaira Faraz and others. The meeting was informed that Phase-II of the project envisages the installation of 2,314 smart surveillance cameras, including 870 for general surveillance, 1,300 equipped with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and facial recognition, 80 for traffic enforcement, 56 mobile surveillance units, and 8 dedicated to traffic signal monitoring. These cameras will be deployed across Karachi's districts, with the highest coverage in District South (322 cameras), followed by East (220), Ko-

rangi (27), Keamari (17), Malir (16), and West (1), significantly expanding the city's monitoring network. The project, estimated approximately Rs 9.98 billion, is scheduled for completion within 12 months, with work expected to commence in May. The infrastructure components include nine Points of Presence (PoP) sites equipped with solar and generator backup, a smart surveillance tower, 50 public panic buttons linked to a central command system, eight response vehicles with onboard cameras, and 10 surveillance drones. Murad Ali Shah highlighted that the government had achieved cost savings of over Rs1 billion through negotiations on procurement, demonstrating financial prudence while maintaining quality standards. "This is not just a development project - it is a critical investment in public safety and national security," he said. The chief minister directed authorities to expedite approvals and ensure timely execution, warning that delays could lead to cost escalations, particularly given the rising global prices of surveillance equipment. To strengthen operational readiness, the SSCA has completed a transparent recruitment process for technical staff through a multi-stage, merit-based evaluation system involving expert panels and oversight committees. The chief minister approved moving forward with the appointments under the relevant provisions of the SSCA Act.—DNA

Balochistan CM launches heritage restoration

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has announced a series of integrated measures aimed at preserving the province's cultural heritage, empowering women, and addressing public grievances during his visit to Panjgur. The initiatives include restoration of historic sites, establishment of skill development centers for women, and new projects to boost local infrastructure and economy, said a CM's Secretariat handouts here Friday. During the visit, the chief minister inaugurated the restoration and renovation of the shrine of Sufi saint Shaho Qalandar, which had fallen into disrepair. The project, funded with Rs. 18 million by the provincial government, was executed by Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan South with technical support from institutions including the Walled City of Lahore Authority. Mir Sarfraz Bugti praised the timely and high-quality completion of the work, calling it a model effort and announced that FC Balochistan (South) will also oversee restoration of other historic landmarks such as Khudabadan Fort in Panjgur and Punnu Fort in Turbat. In a move to empower women, the chief minister inaugurated the Women Skill Development Center (WSDC) under the FC Balochistan (South) Parwaaz Foundation. The center offers courses in IT, tailoring, embroidery, art, basic healthcare, and religious education. Classes have already begun for 300 students, with another 280 registered. To expand capacity, Sarfraz Bugti announced Rs. 1 million monthly support for faculty, Rs. 500,000 for administrative expenses, and an increase in IT lab capacity from 20 to 100 women. The chief minister also held an open court at the FC headquarters in Panjgur, where he listened to citizens' concerns and issued immediate directives to officials. He announced the establishment of an olive oil plant to strengthen the local economy, provision of two green buses and one pink bus to improve public transport, and Rs. 10 million for the repair of the terrorism-affected Government Boys Degree College Khudabadan. He further directed the setting up of an FIA immigration desk at the border crossing and ordered swift resolution of issues arising from the new One Document Regime. Addressing education, the Chief Minister instructed the provincial education department to resolve problems faced by the University of Makran's Panjgur campus, reaffirming the government's commitment to providing quality education and facilities to youth.—DNA

Draft policy to prevent violence against women in KP reviewed

The consultation concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to continue collaborative efforts for promoting the rights, safety, and dignity of women and girls across the province

PESHAWAR: Key stakeholders including representatives from the legislature, government departments, United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations on Friday held a consultative meeting here to discuss the draft policy to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). The consultation, organized by Aurat Foundation with support from the European Union and UN Women, focused on reviewing the draft policy and incorporating input from key stakeholders to strengthen strategies for preventing violence against

women and girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking on the occasion, Resident Director of Aurat Foundation, Shabina Ayaz, emphasized the need for joint efforts among government institutions, civil society, and development partners to promote prevention-focused approaches. The draft policy was presented by Saima Munir, who highlighted its key objectives and strategic priorities, stressing the importance of addressing root causes of violence through coordinated and preventive measures. Participants took part in group dis-






cussions and proposed recommendations aimed at improving policy provisions, enhancing institutional coordination, and promoting community-based prevention strategies. Deputy Country Representative of UN Women, Fahmida Khan, appreciated the initiative and termed it an important step towards developing a comprehensive and effective prevention policy. She underscored the need for sustained collaboration to address violence against women and girls. Member Provincial Assembly Shazia Tehmas and Additional Secretary So-

cial Welfare Department Umra Khan also addressed the session, acknowledging the significance of prevention-focused policies and appreciating the inclusive consultation process. The speakers noted that the feedback gathered during the session would help refine the draft policy, making it more responsive and effective. The consultation concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to continue collaborative efforts for promoting the rights, safety, and dignity of women and girls across the province.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Women buying cloth from a stall at local market in the Federal Capital.

Daycare centres proposed in ICT, AJK, GB under Rs 2.8b project

It will focus on organising training programmes, seminars, and conferences, while also supporting evidence-based policymaking and institutional coordination

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Human Rights has proposed the establishment of daycare centres in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as part of a broader Rs2.87 billion project aimed at promoting human rights and women's development. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the initiative is part of the "Umbrella PC-I: Human Rights & Women Development Initiatives". The project comprises multiple components designed to strengthen institutional capacity, promote gender equality, and support working women. A key feature of the proposal is the establishment of daycare centres in ICT, AJK and GB with an estimated allocation of around Rs 570 million. The initiative is intended to provide safe childcare facilities, particularly for working women in public-sector institutions, and to help improve female participation in the workforce. The document indicates that this component had already received approval from the Departmental Development Working Party (DDWP) in April 2025. Another major component

of the umbrella project is the establishment of the Federal Institute of Human Rights (FIHR), for which approximately Rs 1.5 billion has been proposed. The institute is envisioned as a national platform for research, training, and policy development in the human rights sector. It will focus on organising training programmes, seminars, and conferences, while also supporting evidence-based policymaking and institutional coordination. In addition, the project includes a Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme with an estimated allocation of around Rs 800 million. This component aims to promote women's rights awareness, strengthen gender-responsive policies, and enhance institutional mechanisms for the protection and empowerment of women. It also seeks to encourage community-level engagement on gender issues. Once approved, the initiative will play a significant role in strengthening Pakistan's human rights framework while addressing structural barriers faced by women, particularly through practical interventions such as accessible childcare facilities.—DNA

JazzCash appointed as exclusive disbursement partner

ISLAMABAD: JazzCash, Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform, in partnership with Mobilink Bank, has been appointed as the exclusive disbursement partner for the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Ehsaas Fuel Support Scheme, marking a major step in the large-scale digital delivery of fuel subsidies and reinforcing the growing role of digital infrastructure in ensuring timely, transparent support for citizens across the province. Aligned with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's broader efforts to digitise public service delivery and enhance the transparency and efficiency of welfare programmes, the scheme streamlines the disbursement process. Eligible beneficiaries are identified and verified by relevant government departments, with subsidies transferred directly into their JazzCash wallets for immediate access. Commenting on the initiative, Sohail Afridi, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said, "The Ehsaas Fuel Support Scheme reflects our responsibility to stand with the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a time of rising costs and economic pressure. Our focus is to ensure that relief reaches households in a way that is both accessible and dignified. By leveraging digital platforms such as JazzCash, we are strengthening our ability to deliver support directly to citizens." JazzCash leverages a nationwide network of over 1 million Raast QR-enabled merchants and agents, allowing beneficiaries to conveniently

access and use funds in both urban centres and remote areas. With its experience in facilitating large-scale government disbursements, JazzCash will be supporting the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in delivering funds securely and on time. JazzCash has also set up a dedicated social welfare helpline -0800-00444 -to support verified beneficiaries. Murtaza Ali, CEO of JazzCash, added: "Our role in this initiative is to ensure that financial assistance moves efficiently from the system to the citizen. With the scale of our digital platform and our experience in supporting large public programmes, we are focused on making the process straightforward for beneficiaries so that they can access support without any delays.—DNA

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Islamabad talks present golden opportunity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The crucial talks in Islamabad present a rare and timely opportunity for both the United States and Iran to step back from escalating tensions and pursue meaningful diplomacy imperative for lasting peace and stability in the region. After weeks of conflict between Iran and US and a two week ceasefire reached due to momentous efforts of Pakistan, both sides now have a platform to address core disagreements, including nuclear policy, oil trade through straits of hormuz, regional security, economic sanctions besides turning the two weeks ceasefire into Islamabad peace accord. With global energy markets shaken and instability spreading across the Middle East, constructive dialogue in Islamabad could help rebuild trust and create a pathway toward long-term peace and stability in Middle East. Moreover, Pakistan's role as a neutral host further strengthens the chances of open communication and balanced negotiations between delegations of both the countries at Islamabad. The experts said if approached with sincerity and flexibility, these talks could mark a turning point in US-Iran relations besides reducing prices of oil and

petroleum products in world. For Washington, it offers a chance for smooth opening of strait of hormuz and stabilize a volatile region besides preventing further economic and oil disruption, while Tehran can seek relief from sanctions, safeguarding its sovereignty and assert its position through diplomatic means rather than confrontation. However, experts said that deep mistrust and conflicting demands remain major obstacles, making compromise essential for progress and turning fragile ceasefire into Islamabad peace accord. Experts said even a partial agreement would be a significant step forward, signaling that dialogue—not conflict—is still a viable path in resolving one of the world's most complex geopolitical rivalries. Academicians in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday commended Pakistan's growing diplomatic engagement in facilitating dialogue between the United States and Iran, terming it a constructive and timely effort toward ensuring regional peace and global stability. Leading scholars from the University of Peshawar emphasized that Pakistan's evolving role as a mediator reflects its commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and multilateral diplomacy at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle

East. Professor Dr. Z.A. Hilali, former Chairman of the Political Science Department, highlighted Islamabad's sustained diplomatic outreach aimed at bringing the two long-standing adversaries to the negotiating table. Talking to APP, he said that Pakistan's proactive diplomacy underscores its intent to promote dialogue over confrontation. "Pakistan has emerged as a credible mediator at a critical juncture when the Middle East is engulfed in instability," he said, adding that the country's balanced foreign policy and strong ties with regional stakeholders have enabled it to play a bridging role between Washington and Tehran. Professor Dr. Ejaz Khan of the International Relations Department said Pakistan has intensified diplomatic engagement in recent months, facilitating backchannel communications between the two sides following Iran-US conflict. He revealed that Islamabad is hosting crucial interactions involving representatives from the United States and Iran, with the aim of reducing tensions and paving the way for formal negotiations. "All eyes are on Islamabad as delegations from both countries started arriving for the crucial dialogue," he remarked.

Bakhtawari welcomes CDA's reduction in transfer fee

ISLAMABAD: Welcoming CDA's decision to reduce the transfer fee from 3 percent to 1 percent, Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of the United Business Group (UBG), said that this was a long-standing and important demand of the citizens, traders, and business community of Islamabad, and by fulfilling it, CDA has taken a wise and people-friendly step. He said that Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf deserves appreciation for demonstrating seriousness and practical vision by understanding public concerns and responding to them in a timely manner. Zafar Bakhtawari stated that in the past, the high transfer fee had slowed down the process of property transfers and had badly affected sale and purchase activity. However, with this reduction, business activity will increase, public confidence will be restored, and the real estate sector along with its allied industries will regain momentum. He said that this decision would also increase CDA's revenue, as the lower rate would encourage more legal transactions and property transfers. He further said that this initiative has projected a positive image of the new CDA leadership and has sent a clear message to the people of Islamabad that Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf is serious about resolving public issues and fully understands the importance of business growth and economic activity.—DNA

NCA, Chinese embassy launch competitions to mark diplomatic ties

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the People's Republic of China, in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC), is organising a series of student competitions to commemorate 75 years of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations. In this regard, the National College of Arts (NCA) has invited its students to participate in two competitions, an essay writing contest and a short video competition. For the essay competition, students may write on topics including China-Pakistan friendship, stories of bilateral cooperation, and the future of the relationship between the two countries. Essays must be written in English, must not exceed 2,000 words, and are due by April 20. Each department may nominate only one best essay, and plagiarism will be strictly penalised by HEC. According to an official of NCA, the short video competition required students to submit three-minute videos on themes such as 75 years of China-Pakistan friendship, Chinese stories, and youth cooperation between the two nations. Participants are encouraged to use Chinese AI tools for scriptwriting, video production, and dubbing. Videos must be submitted via Google Drive or OneDrive through the Head of Department, with each department nominating only one entry. The deadline for video submissions is June 15. Entries from both competitions will be evaluated at the national level by a joint China-Pakistan committee at the HEC Secretariat. For further information, students may contact the office of Deputy Controller of Examinations, Ms Nomera Adil. The initiative is open to currently enrolled students of the National College of Arts.—APP

Weekly inflation up by 1.93pc

On the other hand, prices of garlic declined by 3.78 percent, bananas by 3.39 percent, chicken by 1.05 percent, wheat flour by 0.73 percent and vegetable ghee by 0.24 percent. Prices of cooking oil, pulse mash and gur also witnessed a decrease.

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation increased by 1.93 percent during the week ended on April 09, 2026 for the combined consumption group, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to PBS data, SPI for the week under review for the group rose to 355.66 points as compared to 348.94 points recorded in the previous week. On year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 12.15 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 0.75 percent to 334.17 points from 331.69 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 increased by 1.02 percent, 1.17 percent, 1.56 percent and 2.50 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 28 items (54.90 percent) increased, 08 items (15.69 percent) decreased, while 15 items (29.41 percent) remained stable. Major increase was observed in the prices of diesel which surged by 54.71 percent, followed by petrol 17.86 percent, tomatoes 9.35 percent, LPG 8.61 percent, potatoes 4.13 percent, onions 3.84 percent, eggs 3.77 percent, beef 1.07 percent and mutton 1.05 percent. Prices of cooked daal, bread and georgette also recorded increase during the week. On the other hand, prices of garlic declined by 3.78 percent, bananas by 3.39 percent, chicken by 1.05 percent, wheat flour by 0.73 percent and vegetable ghee by 0.24 percent. Prices of cooking oil, pulse mash and gur also witnessed a decrease. On year-on-year basis, the SPI for the week under review increased by 12.15 percent compared to the corresponding week of last year. During the period, major increase was recorded in the prices of diesel by 101.02 percent, LPG 65.86 percent, petrol 48.70 percent, onions 37.80 percent and wheat flour 30.10 percent. Prices of tomatoes, chillies powder, mutton, beef, powdered milk and bananas also increased. Meanwhile, prices of potatoes declined by 46.32 percent, pulse gram by 18.83 percent, salt powder by 12.78 percent, pulse masoor and sugar by 11.52 percent each, chicken by 9.69 percent and pulse moong by 1.87 percent over the same period of last year, PBS reported.—APP

Key advisory issued for diversions

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued an important traffic advisory, announcing diversions on Srinagar Highway and Islamabad Expressway in connection with the movement of foreign delegations. An ITP official told APP on Friday that citizens were advised to avoid unnecessary travel during this period except in case of emergency. He said commuters should use alternate routes during the diversions to avoid inconvenience. The official said entry into the Red Zone would remain strictly restricted for all types of traffic except official vehicles. He urged citizens to completely avoid traveling towards the Red Zone during this time. He said security across the city had been put on high alert, with strict checking being carried out at entry and exit points. The official appealed to citizens to cooperate with law enforcement agencies to ensure smooth implementation of security arrangements. He added that traffic updates would be shared through Islamabad Traffic Police's WhatsApp channel, social media platforms, and ITP FM 92.4 for public guidance.—APP

Agha calls Iran-US ceasefire breakthrough Pak's victory

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, senior APMC leader and President of Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian, Agha Syed Hassan Al-Moosvi Al-Safvi hailed Pakistan's role in brokering the ceasefire between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States, calling it a historic diplomatic success and a major setback for forces hostile to peace and humanity. According to Kashmir Media Service, in a statement issued in Srinagar, Agha Moosvi said the two-week ceasefire following the ceasefire was not merely a diplomatic pause but a significant achievement marked by resilience, foresight and collective sacrifice. He attributed the development to the sacrifices of the Iranian leadership and people, highlighting the role of the martyred leader Supreme Leader, and the wisdom and strategic leadership of Ayatollah Syed Mojtaba Khamenei. He said the world was at a decisive turning point where the struggle between truth and falsehood continued to shape global affairs. "While the ceasefire may appear as a diplomatic development, it carries a deeper narrative of perseverance, strategy and sacrifice," he added. Referring to what he described as illegal and aggressive actions of global powers, Agha said Iran's response had become a source of pride and encouragement for the Muslim Ummah.—APP

Briefs

Inflation reversal on agenda

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan Friday reaffirmed the government's commitment to reducing inflation, vowing that the upcoming budget will bring relief to the public without adding further financial burden, while also terming the ongoing US-Iran negotiations a positive step that could open new avenues for regional stability and economic confidence. During an exclusive conversation with a local media outlet, Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan said the government has taken all necessary austerity measures wisely to deal with the ongoing economic challenges, which are not only affecting Pakistan but the entire world. He said that present government is fully aware of public difficulties and is working on a clear strategy to stabilize the situation. Ihsan Afzal Khan assured that no further burden will be placed on the public in the upcoming budget or in the coming months, adding that efforts are underway to bring stability and ensure that economic conditions gradually improve, leading to relief for the common man. Responding to a query, he emphasized the need to boost exports and strengthen the NFC framework, adding that cooperation between all political parties and provinces is essential for sustainable economic progress.—APP

Gilani mourns passing of Zulfikar Ali Khosa

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has expressed deep sorrow over the death of former Punjab governor Sardar Zulfikar Ali Khosa. In his condolence message, Gilani paid tribute to the late leader, calling him an experienced politician, a visionary statesman, and a committed public servant who dedicated his life to serving the nation. He said Khosa's political and social contributions were valuable and would always be remembered. He added that the late leader belonged to Dera Ghazi Khan and represented the people of the area with honesty and dedication, working to solve their problems. Gilani said Khosa's leadership and people-focused approach would continue to inspire others. He termed his death a major loss to national politics and said his services would always be respected. He also prayed for the forgiveness of the deceased and extended sympathies to the bereaved family, asking Allah to grant them patience and strength in this difficult time.—APP

HEC awards 98 scholarships to Balochistan coastal youth

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has awarded 98 undergraduate scholarships to students from Balochistan's coastal regions, aiming to expand access to higher education while preparing local youth for emerging opportunities linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The HEC said that, in addition to the 98 awardees, the selection process for more students from the coastal region is underway. The HEC is executing the Coastal Region Higher Education Scholarships for Undergraduate Programmes for Balochistan. The programme, launched in 2022-23 under the Government of Pakistan's Southern Balochistan Development Package, expands access to quality undergraduate education for students holding domicile/local certificate of the Gwadar, Lasbela, Kech (Turbet) or Awaran districts of Balochistan. The core objective of the scholarship programme is to provide higher education opportunities to the students of the region by sponsoring 200 students for BS studies in the HEC-recognised universities of Pakistan. As per HEC, so far, 98 scholarships have been awarded across three batches. Over 800 applicants have now applied against HEC's call for applications in batch-IV of the programme, which reflects the high interest of youth from the region. The programme that covers all academic disciplines has increased access to higher education for students from coastal regions of Balochistan, particularly benefiting underprivileged and female students.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Police personnel stand guard near the President House in the Red Zone area, as Pakistan prepares to host the US and Iran for peace talks, in Federal Capital.

Pakistan to shape protection standards to preserve heritage

The adoption of these ISO standards is expected to enhance the scientific rigour of local restoration projects, ensuring that cultural assets are maintained according to internationally recognised criteria

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has joined a China-led 15-nation international working group to help develop further global technical standards for mural conservation, as the country moves to advance the preservation of its diverse Mughal and Gandharan-era heritage. The working group, under the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage Conservation (ISO/TC 349), was formally established on 26 March 2026. It is led by the Dunhuang Academy, whose director Su Bomin serves as convener, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The group's work builds on a landmark ISO standard on mural deterioration classification, developed by experts from 11 countries. That standard establishes a common technical language to categorise forms of damage, ranging from optical and

chemical changes to biological degradation, and aims to resolve long-standing inconsistencies in how heritage sites are assessed and documented globally. The initiative is particularly relevant for Pakistan's ongoing conservation efforts. The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) is currently in the final stages of restoring the Tomb of Anarkali, with fresco conservation expected to be completed as part of the overall project by June 2026. Pakistan has a vast repertoire of wall art in need of protection: ancient Buddhist paintings in the Gandhara region, Mughal and Sikh-era frescoes, and the extensive tile-mosaic and fresco works at the Fort and Shalamar Gardens in Lahore, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The adoption of these ISO standards is expected to enhance the scientific rigour of local restoration projects, ensuring that cultural assets are maintained according to internationally recognised criteria.

Path to regional peace runs through Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former executive member of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Omar Butt on Friday welcomed Pakistan's role in facilitating a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran, describing the development as an important moment for the country's diplomatic standing and a positive signal for investors and trading partners. Omar Butt said the ceasefire, announced after intensive diplomatic engagement by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, demonstrated that Pakistan has the diplomatic capacity, trusted relationships and institutional resolve to play a constructive role in resolving complex international disputes. He said the development had generated a sense of pride among many Pakistanis, noting that the country rarely receives international attention for a positive contribution to global stability. According to him, the outcome showed that Pakistan could act as a credible interlocutor between countries with limited direct communication channels. Butt noted that the business community had been closely monitoring the escalating tensions in the region, particularly because Pakistan relies heavily on stable maritime routes for energy imports and trade with Gulf countries. The partial disruption of shipping

through the Strait of Hormuz during the conflict had already begun increasing freight and energy costs, pressures that were gradually being passed on to businesses and consumers across Pakistan.

He said the ceasefire and the expected reopening of the strategic shipping route would likely ease some of those pressures by stabilising transport and energy supply chains. Lower uncertainty in regional trade routes, he added, could also help restore confidence among importers, exporters and logistics firms that had been adjusting operations since hostilities escalated earlier this year. He said Pakistan's role in the diplomatic effort was significant not only because of the ceasefire itself but also because of the manner in which it was achieved. He said the country acted as a trusted intermediary for parties that lacked direct communication channels, reflecting decades of diplomatic engagement across multiple regions. The goodwill created by the mediation effort could translate into stronger trade ties, increased foreign investment interest and improved access to international financial markets for Pakistani businesses. The development is expected to strengthen Pakistan's economic diplomacy, deepen political engagement, and enhance the country's credibility offering greater confidence to exporters, manufacturers, and entrepreneurs seeking opportunities in regional and global markets. It will also encourage several regional and global powers to pursue stronger economic and trade ties with Pakistan.

Agha Syed Hassan commends Pakistan's role

He said Kashmiris had full faith in Pakistan's peace efforts, expressing hope that these would also push India to abandon its rigid approach and resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with its commitments

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, senior APHC leader and President of Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian, Agha Syed Hassan Al-Moosvi Al-Safvi hailed Pakistan's role in brokering the ceasefire between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States, calling it a historic diplomatic success and a major setback for forces hostile to peace and humanity. According to Kashmir Media Service, in a statement issued in Srinagar, Agha Moosvi said the two-week ceasefire following the ceasefire was not merely a diplomatic pause but a significant achievement marked by resilience, foresight and collective sacrifice. He attributed the development to the sacrifices of the Iranian leadership and people, highlighting the role of the martyred leader Supreme Leader, and

the wisdom and strategic leadership of Ayatollah Syed Mojtaba Khamenei. He said the world was at a decisive turning point where the struggle between truth and falsehood continued to shape global affairs. "While the ceasefire may appear as a diplomatic development, it carries a deeper narrative of perseverance, strategy and sacrifice," he added. Referring to what he described as illegal and aggressive actions of global powers, Agha said Iran's response had become a source of pride and encouragement for the Muslim Ummah. He noted that the steadfastness of the Iranian nation had demonstrated that oppressive structures ultimately collapse before the strength of truth. He emphasized that the ceasefire should not be seen as a sign of weakness but as a principled and prudent decision through which Iran compelled its adversaries to

engage in negotiations without compromising its sovereignty and dignity. He maintained that acceptance of Iran's principled stance indicated the emergence of a new global balance of power. The APHC leader also appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in easing regional tensions and promoting dialogue. Meanwhile, President of Muslim Students Federation, Dr Qamar-uz-Zaman Zargar, in a statement in Srinagar, hailed Pakistan's role in facilitating the ceasefire and termed the planned meeting between Iran and the United States in Islamabad on Friday a positive step.

He said Kashmiris had full faith in Pakistan's peace efforts, expressing hope that these would also push India to abandon its rigid approach and resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with its commitments.—DNA

Pakistan invites investment in five priority sectors

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Consul General in Shanghai, Shehzad Ahmad Khan, has extended a formal invitation to Chinese enterprises to focus on five priority areas — agriculture, textiles, renewable energy, communication technology and consumer goods manufacturing — as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) enters its 2.0 phase. Addressing a forum in Suzhou on April 8, the Consul General highlighted the vital role played by Chinese businesses in Pakistan's economic transformation and long-term development, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday. He made these remarks at the "Asia Investment and Development Cooperation Forum", held on the sidelines of the CLNB 2026 11th New Energy Industry Expo at the Suzhou International Expo Centre. The forum brought together consuls general from five countries — Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Uzbekistan and Mongolia — for in-depth discussions on regional economic cooperation, investment opportunities and multilateral industrial collaboration. As the global industrial chain undergoes a fundamental realignment and regional economic cooperation deepens, Asia is cementing its position as the world's most dynamic growth pole. The forum underscored Asia's rising centrality in global investment flows and marked a practical roadmap for deepening cross-border industrial partnerships, with Pakistan positioning itself as a frontline destination for Chinese investment under the CPEC 2.0 framework. Highlighting Pakistan's vast potential, Consul General Shehzad pointed out that of the country's 260 million population, 64 percent were under the age of 30-representing both a vast consumer market and a rich talent pool. He also detailed Pakistan's investor friendly policies. The Consul General provided a systematic update on CPEC, noting that Phase 1 has already completed over \$46 billion worth of projects, added more than 8,000 megawatts of power generation capacity, and directly created approximately 200,000 jobs — effectively resolving Pakistan's chronic energy shortages and transportation bottlenecks. The strategic focus of CPEC 2.0 has shifted to industrialization, agricultural modernization, information technology, technological innovation and improving people's livelihoods. On the occasion, Jocke Zhu, President of the Foreign Investment Working Committee of the China-Asia Economic Development Association (CAEDA), announced next steps at the forum.—DNA

Chinese firm to do \$120m additional investment

ISLAMABAD: Chinese enterprise Service Long March Tyres (Private) Limited has announced an additional investment of US \$120 million, signalling growing international trust in the country's manufacturing and export potential. The announcement came during a high-level meeting between Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and a visiting Chinese delegation led by company chairman Jin Yongsheng. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, Minister Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitating high-performing sectors. The Chinese delegation highlighted the success of bilateral industrial cooperation, describing it as a cornerstone of the tyre sector's rapid growth. The company's manufacturing facility in Nooriabad was cited as a model industrial unit, employing approximately 2,000 workers and incorporating renewable energy solutions. Both sides agreed on enhancing public-private collaboration to accelerate industrial expansion. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to policy stability, increased investment, and positioning Pakistan as a competitive manufacturing hub in emerging sectors.—APP

ICT Police tighten security

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police enhanced security across the federal capital and conducted large-scale grand combing and search operations in multiple areas. An official told on Friday that the operations were carried out in the jurisdictions of Secretariat, Bhara Kahu, Khanna, Shams Colony, and Sumbal police stations under the supervision of zonal SPs. He said lady police officials also participated in the operations to ensure effective checking. During the operations, a total of 901 individuals and 323 households were checked. The official said 74 shops and 26 hotels were also inspected during the search. He said 180 motorcycles and 73 vehicles were examined during the drive. The official said 26 suspicious individuals along with 13 motorcycles were shifted to relevant police stations for further verification. He said a drug peddler was also arrested and 285 grams of ice (crystal meth) were recovered from his possession. He said special checking points had been established at entry and exit routes of the city to further strengthen security. All patrolling units and special squads were actively performing duties across the city, he added.—APP

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When War Theories Go Viral

ZARYAB ZAIB

A Short video, reportedly circulating on Chinese social media, has stirred a familiar mix of fascination and scepticism in strategic circles. In it, a Chinese individual appears to explain how Iran could use mobile infrared-based defence systems to detect and potentially target advanced stealth aircraft such as the F-35 Lightning II. The narration is technical, confident, and presented as if offering a tactical workaround to one of modern warfare's most prized capabilities: stealth. At first glance, such content seems to signal an unusual phenomenon private citizens sharing sensitive military ideas across borders in real time. More intriguingly, it is being framed in some quarters as a form of informal, decentralised support for Iran in its long-standing confrontation with the United States and its regional allies. Yet, beneath the surface, the episode raises deeper questions about the nature of information warfare, the limits of open-source military knowledge, and the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping strategic narratives.

The claim itself warrants careful scrutiny. The F-35, developed by Lockheed Martin, is widely regarded as one of the most advanced multirole combat aircraft in operation today. Its stealth design is optimised primarily to evade radar detection, reducing its visibility to conventional air defence systems. However, stealth does not render an aircraft invisible across all spectrums. Infrared search and track (IRST) systems, which detect heat signatures rather than radar reflections, have long been discussed as a potential countermeasure to stealth technology. In theory, mobile infrared systems could detect the heat emitted by an aircraft's engines or airframe, particularly under certain atmospheric conditions. Countries such as Russia and China have invested in such technologies, integrating them into both airborne and ground-based platforms. Iran, too, has claimed progress in indigenous air defence capabilities, often showcasing domestically developed systems in military parades and official statements.

But translating theory into operational success is another matter entirely. Detecting a stealth aircraft using infrared sensors is only the first step in a complex chain that includes tracking, targeting, and engaging a highly manoeuvrable and electronically sophisticated platform. The F-35 is equipped with advanced countermeasures, sensor fusion, and situational awareness tools designed precisely to neutralise such threats. Moreover, modern air combat rarely unfolds in isolation; it is embedded within a broader ecosystem of electronic warfare, satellite surveillance, and networked command structures. This is where the viral video's narrative begins to blur the line between technical possibility and practical feasibility. Open-source discussions of military technology are not new. Defence analysts, hobbyists, and former personnel routinely publish detailed breakdowns of weapons systems, often drawing on publicly available data. What is different today is the speed, scale, and reach of such content, amplified by

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algorithms that reward engagement over accuracy. The suggestion that Chinese citizens are deliberately sharing sensitive insights to assist Iran introduces another layer of complexity. It would be simplistic to interpret such actions as coordinated state policy. The Chinese state maintains tight control over information flows, particularly in areas related to national security. While online discourse in China can be vibrant, it is also closely monitored, and content that touches on military matters is unlikely to remain entirely outside official oversight. At the same time, the digital age has blurred the boundaries between state and non-state actors. Individuals with technical training—engineers, students, or enthusiasts can access a vast repository of information and share their interpretations with global audiences. Whether motivated by ideology, curiosity, or a desire for online visibility, their contributions can shape perceptions even if they do not alter realities on the battlefield.

For Iran, the circulation of such material may carry symbolic value. The country has long faced sanctions and restrictions that limit its access to advanced military hardware. In response, it has emphasised self-reliance and asymmetric strategies, investing in missiles, drones, and layered air defence systems. Narratives that suggest vulnerabilities in Western technology can bolster domestic confidence and project an image of resilience. However, there is a risk in overestimating the practical impact of online technical advice. Military effectiveness depends not only on hardware but also on training, integration, and operational doctrine. A fragmented set of ideas—however sophisticated—cannot translate into a cohesive defence strategy without the institutional framework to support it. For the United States and its allies, such developments are unlikely to trigger immediate concern at the operational level. The performance of platforms like the F-35 is continuously tested and refined against a range of simulated and real-world threats. Nevertheless, the proliferation of quasi-technical narratives online does contribute to a broader information environment in which perceptions can be as influential as capabilities. This is particularly relevant in regions already marked by tension. The strategic rivalry involving Iran, the United States, and other regional actors is not confined to physical domains. It extends into cyberspace, media, and public discourse, where narratives compete for legitimacy and influence. In this context, even a short video can become part of a larger contest over credibility and psychological advantage.

It is also worth noting that misinformation and disinformation can travel in both directions. Not all viral content is accurate, and some may be deliberately misleading. Technical jargon, when presented convincingly, can create an illusion of expertise that is difficult for non-specialists to evaluate. This underscores the importance of critical engagement with such material, particularly when it touches on complex subjects like advanced military technology. Ultimately, the episode serves as a reminder of how warfare and its representations are evolving. The battlefield is no longer confined to land, sea, air, and space; it now includes the digital realm, where ideas, claims, and counterclaims circulate with unprecedented speed. In this environment, the distinction between knowledge and speculation becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. The viral Chinese video may fade from attention as quickly as it emerged. Yet, the questions it raises about the diffusion of technical knowledge, the role of individuals in geopolitical contests, and the power of digital narratives are likely to persist. For policymakers and observers alike, the challenge lies not only in assessing the credibility of such claims but also in understanding the broader dynamics they reflect.

Pakistan at the Heart of a High-Stakes Global Chess Game

Qamar Bashir



The economic consequences alone would have been devastating. Iran's infrastructure losses could have ranged between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. Israel, under sustained retaliation, might have faced damages of \$150 billion to \$300 billion. The Gulf economies, dependent on energy exports and stability, could have suffered losses exceeding \$1 trillion. For the United States, prolonged military engagement combined with economic fallout—rising oil prices, inflation, and market disruption—could have pushed total losses beyond \$2 trillion.

THE flames of war that engulfed the Middle East in recent weeks carried within them the terrifying potential to redraw the map of the world through destruction. What began as a regional confrontation between the United States, Israel, and Iran rapidly escalated into a crisis with global consequences. Military rhetoric crossed dangerous thresholds, with open threats targeting Iran's critical infrastructure—its nuclear facilities, power grids, bridges, and military backbone—raising fears of a full-spectrum assault designed to force submission. Had such an operation been executed, the consequences would have been catastrophic. Iran, with its vast missile arsenal and advanced drone capabilities—and widely believed to be at the threshold of nuclear capability—would not have remained passive. A retaliatory strike on Israel could have unleashed unprecedented destruction, targeting cities, strategic installations, and possibly even triggering a nuclear exchange. Gulf states hosting U.S. bases would have become immediate targets, dragging Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain into direct conflict. The Strait of Hormuz—the artery through which nearly 20 percent of the world's oil flows—would almost certainly have been shut down. The economic consequences alone would have been devastating. Iran's infrastructure losses could have ranged between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. Israel, under sustained retaliation, might have faced damages of \$150 billion to \$300 billion. The Gulf economies, dependent on energy exports and stability, could have suffered losses exceeding \$1 trillion. For the United States, prolonged military engagement combined with economic fallout—rising oil prices, inflation, and market disruption—could have pushed total losses beyond \$2 trillion. Globally, the shutdown of Hormuz and the collapse of energy supply chains could have triggered a shock of \$3 to \$5 trillion, bringing total worldwide losses into the staggering range of \$5 to \$10 trillion. Beyond numbers, the human and civilizational cost would have been immeasurable. A region that carries millennia of history—Persian, Arab, Islamic, and global heritage—could have been reduced to rubble. Under international law, threats to destroy an entire civilization are not merely rhetoric; they raise grave concerns under the Genocide Convention and the laws governing armed conflict. The world was not just approaching war—it was approaching the edge of irreversible devastation. At that moment, when diplomacy appeared exhausted and escalation seemed inevitable, an unexpected actor emerged to alter the course of events. Pakistan, often underestimated in global strategic discourse, stepped into the center of the geopolitical chessboard. It was not the wealthiest nation, nor the most militarily dominant, but it possessed something far more decisive in that moment:

access, credibility, and the ability to communicate with all sides. Pakistan's intervention was deliberate, sustained, and executed under extreme pressure. Its leadership maintained simultaneous engagement with Washington, Tehran, Riyadh, Ankara, and Beijing—building a web of communication when mistrust had paralyzed direct dialogue. The challenge was unprecedented: active hostilities, hardened positions, and a rapidly shrinking window before irreversible escalation. In the final hours, direct engagement with decision-makers in the United States proved decisive. As military deadlines approached and the threat of devastating strikes loomed, Pakistan urged restraint. That call was not ignored. A pause was granted, opening the narrowest window for diplomacy to take hold. At the same time, Pakistan leveraged its credibility with Iran. Convincing Tehran to accept a ceasefire required overcoming deep suspicion and fear of strategic deception. The ceasefire was framed not as submission, but as a tactical pause—one that preserved sovereignty while preventing catastrophic loss. This delicate balance could only be achieved by a state trusted by both sides, and Pakistan fulfilled that role. The diplomatic architecture that followed was equally significant. Pakistan facilitated broader alignment by engaging China, whose influence provided additional assurance to Iran. Regional powers were brought into the process, reinforcing momentum toward de-escalation. In this intricate framework, Pakistan acted as the central connector—linking adversaries, global powers, and regional actors into a single, fragile but functional process. The outcome was a breakthrough that few had considered possible. A ceasefire was secured at the last possible moment. Oil markets stabilized, global panic subsided, and the world stepped back from the brink. More importantly, a pathway to dialogue was established, with negotiations shifting to Islamabad—transforming Pakistan into the epicenter of high-stakes diplomacy. This moment marked a profound shift in Pakistan's global standing. A country often viewed through the prism of regional challenges had demonstrated its capacity to operate at the highest level of international diplomacy, managing a crisis involving nuclear-capable adversaries under active conflict conditions. The significance of this achievement extends beyond the Middle East. It has reshaped perceptions across the region, particularly in South Asia. In India, Pakistan's emergence as a central diplomatic actor has triggered a wave of political and media reaction. Sections of the Indian media have expressed visible frustration, portraying Pakistan's role as an unexpected and uncomfortable development in a domain where India has long sought recognition as a rising global power. Political opposition within India has reportedly ques-

tioned the government's relative absence from this critical geopolitical moment. The narrative gaining traction is one of missed opportunity—where India, despite its economic and strategic ambitions, found itself on the sidelines while Pakistan occupied the diplomatic center stage. Commentators and analysts have debated whether India's foreign policy posture—often perceived as aligned with specific blocs—limited its ability to act as a neutral mediator in a conflict requiring balanced engagement with all sides. This contrast has amplified the perception of Pakistan's diplomatic success. While Islamabad engaged across divides, maintaining working relationships with both Western and regional powers, India's position appeared more constrained. The result has been a rare reversal in regional diplomatic optics, where Pakistan is viewed as a facilitator of peace while India faces scrutiny over its strategic positioning.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's role has continued beyond the ceasefire. Diplomatic channels remain active to ensure the truce holds and to prevent escalation in secondary theaters such as Lebanon. The effort now is not only to sustain the ceasefire but to transform it into a durable peace framework—an undertaking far more complex than securing the initial pause in hostilities. This evolving role reflects a deeper transformation. Pakistan has moved from being a participant in regional dynamics to becoming a platform for resolving them. It has demonstrated that influence in the modern world is not solely a function of economic size or military strength, but of trust, access, and the ability to act decisively in moments of crisis. The road ahead remains uncertain. The ceasefire is fragile, and the underlying issues remain unresolved. Yet the immediate danger—the descent into a war that could have caused trillions in damage and untold human suffering—has been averted. History often remembers the moments when destruction was prevented rather than inflicted. At a time when powerful nations were speaking the language of annihilation, Pakistan spoke the language of restraint and negotiation. It convinced adversaries to pause, brought them to the table, and created a pathway where none existed. If the current process leads to lasting peace, this moment will be recorded as a turning point—not only in the conflict itself, but in the evolution of global diplomacy. And at the center of that transformation will stand Pakistan, a nation that, against all expectations, helped steer the world away from the brink of catastrophe and toward the possibility of peace.

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

A Test of Global Order and Pakistan's Resolve

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Gratitude is essential in such times. A nation must acknowledge its blessings. Yet gratitude alone is not enough. It must also adopt a careful strategy. Gains must be preserved. Honor must be protected. The path ahead must be chosen with wisdom. Pakistan must also look inward. A strong role abroad requires strength at home

THERE was a time when the world, weary of war and ruin, gathered under one roof and formed the United Nations. The purpose was simple and noble. Nations would no longer rush to war without restraint. Disputes would be brought to a common forum. Wisdom would prevail over impulse. Peace would be guarded by collective will. This institution was not created to serve the designs of a few powerful states. It was not meant to grant license to those who imagine threats and then move to destroy them. It was not meant to justify action first and offer explanation later. The spirit behind it was justice. Its strength was meant to lie in impartiality. Yet the conduct of nations often strays from declared ideals. When power grows unchecked, it begins to see shadows as enemies. It creates fears and then seeks to remove them by force. Such actions shake the very foundations of international order. They weaken trust. They erode the faith of smaller nations in global institutions. In recent times, the world has witnessed a familiar pattern. This time, Iran was targeted, yet it stood firm as an obstacle in a region already weighed down with tension. The assumptions were clear. The response was expected to be weak. The outcome was thought to be certain. Yet events did not follow the script. Iran responded with resolve. Calculations proved wrong. The situation grew more fragile. In such a moment, the role of the United Nations became even more vital. The modern world is interconnected. A conflict in one region can ignite instability across continents. The risks are not limited to armies. They extend to economies, societies, and the fragile balance of peace. It was necessary that the global body act with urgency and clarity. It was expected to rise above politics and restore calm. But history repeated itself. Silence replaced ac-

tion. Hesitation took the place of leadership. The institution that was meant to prevent escalation once again stood constrained by the very forces it was created to regulate. In this delicate hour, Pakistan stepped forward in a manner that surprised many. It assumed a role that others had neglected. It sought to calm tensions. It engaged with responsibility. It demonstrated that even in a divided world, a nation guided by clarity of purpose can influence events beyond its size. There is a belief among many that Pakistan has been blessed in recent times. Since May 2025, it has carried itself with confidence. Its civil and military leadership have shown foresight. Decisions have been measured. The outcome has been dignity. Such moments are not accidental. They are shaped by resolve, unity, and faith. Gratitude is essential in such times. A nation must acknowledge its blessings. Yet gratitude alone is not enough. It must also adopt a careful strategy. Gains must be preserved. Honor must be protected. The path ahead must be chosen with wisdom. Pakistan must also look inward. A strong role abroad requires strength at home. The needs of its people cannot be ignored. Stability within gives credibility beyond. It must balance its external responsibilities with internal priorities. This balance is the true test of statesmanship. As Pakistan arises the role of a mediator, new questions arise. Mediation demands trust. It requires that all parties believe in fairness. Yet in this conflict, there exists a party whose credibility is doubtful. Agreements are meaningful only when they are honored. Without trust, even the strongest arrangements become fragile. There are voices that question the dynamics behind the scenes. Some analysts suggest that power-

ful states are themselves constrained. They speak of influence that operates quietly. They argue that power is sometimes guided rather than guiding. Whether such claims hold truth or not, they reflect a deeper uncertainty in global affairs. Others recall recent history. They point to moments when Pakistan assisted major powers in difficult situations. They suggest that once again, it has stepped in where others faltered. Such observations add another layer to the narrative. Mediation, however, is not merely about bringing parties to the table. It carries responsibility. In our traditions, when elders gather to resolve a dispute, their role does not end with an agreement. They remain guardians of that settlement. If one party breaks its word, it is their duty to intervene. They must correct the course. They must ensure justice. There is a simple wisdom in our culture. They say you can't clean a well if the source of the filth is still there. Drawing water again and again will not cleanse it. The problem must be addressed at its root. This wisdom applies to nations as well. Superficial solutions cannot resolve deep conflicts. Real peace requires honesty. It demands accountability. The world stands at a sensitive juncture. Institutions must rediscover their purpose. Powerful states must reflect on their actions. Smaller nations must assert their voice. And those who step forward in moments of crisis must do so with sincerity. Pakistan has shown that it can rise to the occasion. The challenge now is to sustain this role. To remain balanced. To remain just. And to ensure that its actions continue to reflect both strength and wisdom. The ideals that led to the creation of the United Nations still hold value. They must not be abandoned. They must be revived. For in their revival lies the hope of a more stable and peaceful world.

Briefs

Netanyahu signals war with Iran...

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by the resumption of fighting." He was speaking at the end of the deadliest day in Lebanon since the resumption of hostilities last month between Israel and Hezbollah fighters across Israel's northern border. On Thursday, under international pressure to dial down the violence, Netanyahu said he had instructed his government to open talks with Lebanon "as soon as possible." The negotiations would focus, he said, on establishing peaceful relations between Israel and Lebanon, and the disarmament of Hezbollah, which is also a significant political force in the country. Forty days after Israel and the United States launched their military offensive against Iran, life in Israel was getting back to normal, the Times said.

Starmer says NATO in US's...

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reiterating European members "need to do more" financial burden sharing. Starmer spoke before leaving Qatar, the last stop of his tour of the war-hit region which also included visits to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The British leader talked by phone to Trump late on Thursday, when he said he set out "the views of the region here" to the US president, primarily centered on the Strait of Hormuz. The crucial maritime chokepoint has remained largely closed in recent days. It was due to be re-opened under a temporary ceasefire between the United States and Iran, announced this week, but has been jeopardized by Israeli attacks on Lebanon and accusations that the truce is not being implemented. "We spent most of the time on the call talking about the practical plan that's going to be needed to get navigation through the Strait and the role that the UK is playing," Starmer said.

Macron seeks to draw Trump to G7

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that Macron has already moved to accommodate a mixed martial arts event Trump is hosting at the White House on his 80th birthday on June 14. Trump's relationship with many G7 members has grown increasingly strained over his war with Iran among other issues, notably in openly scathing comments regarding British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's early March offer of military support. He has also repeatedly lambasted NATO, of which all G7 members except Japan are part of, over its response to the conflict. The sources said it was not yet clear if Trump would be at Evian-les-Bains let alone Versailles, to which they said none of the other G7 leaders have been invited.

'World doesn't have a plan B'...

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we don't get drawn into potentially broader conflict than what we have seen over the course of last month." His remarks come a day before Islamabad is to host peace talks between the delegations of Washington and Tehran, after Pakistan brokered a temporary ceasefire between the two warring parties. During the interview, Bilawal said all eyes were on the visiting delegations arriving in Islamabad. "Pakistan, London, New York and many other countries in the Middle East have been affected by this war," he said, adding, "We can measure the toll of this conflict not only in the loss of human lives but the economic cost that is borne by the people in my country and in yours."

Pakistan Women Secure Record-Breaking Win in FIFA Series

The attacking dominance continued in the second half as Nadia Khan scored in the 56th minute with a well-placed header. Aqsa Mushtaq netted her second goal in the 76th minute with a stunning strike, while Layla Banaras also completed her brace with a fine effort from outside the box

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Women's Football Team made a sensational start to the FIFA Series, thrashing Turks and Caicos Islands 8-0 to register the biggest win in their history. The match, played at Stade Alassane Ouattara, saw Pakistan dominate from the outset. Four different players found the net in the first half – Zahmena Malik, Aqsa Mushtaq, Layla Banaras and Mariam Mahmood – to put the team firmly in control.

Pakistan opened the scoring in the 10th minute when Zahmena Malik calmly finished to give her side the lead. Just two minutes later, Aqsa Mushtaq doubled the advantage, slotting home after a rebound. Layla Banaras made it 3-0 in the 31st minute with a brilliant solo run and composed finish, before Mariam Mahmood added the fourth in the 38th minute with a superb volley at the back post. The attacking dominance continued in the second half as Nadia Khan scored in the 56th minute with a well-placed header. Aqsa Mushtaq netted her second goal in the 76th minute with a stunning strike, while Layla Banaras also completed her brace with a fine effort from outside the box. Isra Khan wrapped up the historic win in the 81st minute, sealing an emphatic 8-0 victory.

The win surpasses Pakistan's previous best result – a 7-0 victory over Maldives in 2022 – marking a historic moment and a powerful statement on the international stage. Meanwhile, Syed Mohsen Gillani, President of the Pakistan Football Federation, has congratulated the nation on the Pakistan women's team's record-breaking victory in their opening match of the FIFA Series, dedicating the achievement to the country's leadership. In his message, Gillani praised the team's outstanding performance and termed the victory a historic milestone for women's football in Pakistan. "At a time when our Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and



Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir are playing a historic role for peace, our girls have created history on the football field," he said. "We dedicate this victory to our leadership for their commitment and vision." He further expressed confidence in the future of the

sport, stating that Pakistan's women footballers are making the nation proud on the international stage. "The golden era for Pakistan women's football is dawning, and our players are proving to the world that they have the talent and determination to excel," he added.

Romania: Former great footballer Lucescu was buried with military honors

BUCHAREST: Former great footballer and coach Mircea Lucescu, who died at the age of 80, was buried on Friday with military honors at the Bellu Cemetery in the capital, with approximately 200 people attending the funeral, including football people, coaches, players, leaders and football lovers. The funeral service was officiated by a council of priests this morning at the Church of Saint Eletheria, with the procession arriving at the Bellu Cemetery around 12:00. Upon arrival, the coffin of the former coach covered with the Romanian flag was greeted by the Romanian Gendarmerie band.

A detachment of the Romanian Gendarmerie Honor Guard presented the honor and fired three artillery

salvos. The former national football team coach held the National Order 'Star of Romania' in the rank of Knight, in recognition of his entire footballing activity and his achievements as a coach, a distinction he had received from the Romanian Presidency in 2009. When the coffin was placed in the family tomb at the entrance to the Bellu Cemetery, Mircea Lucescu received the final applause from those present. According to the family's wishes, participation in the church service and the funeral ceremony at the Bellu Cemetery was strictly limited to family and close guests. However, approximately 100 football fans were able to watch the burial ceremony. Mircea Lucescu was accompanied on his last journey by

officials, club leaders, coaches and many of his former players. Among them were former footballers Mircea Rednic, George Hagi, Ionu? Lupescu, Ioan Ovidiu Sabau, Danu? Lupu, Marius ?umudica and Florin Constantinovici, former financiers George Copos, Vasile ?iman and Gigi Netoiu and politician Mircea Geoana. The lifeless body of the most successful Romanian coach in the history of Romanian football was laid to rest for two days at the National Arena in the capital, where approximately 15,000 people paid their last respects. The coffin, covered with the Romanian flag, was placed on a stage built on the esplanade at the Official Grandstand of the National Arena. A photo

of him and a white wreath of flowers were placed at the head of the former coach, and on the left and right are four members of the Guard of Honor of the Romanian Gendarmerie. The great coach Mircea Lucescu died on Tuesday, April 7, at the age of 80. The announcement was made by the Bucharest University Emergency Hospital, where the former coach was hospitalized. The Bucharest University Emergency Hospital stated that the death was declared around 8:30 p.m. Mircea Lucescu was urgently admitted to Bucharest University Hospital on March 29, after falling ill during a technical session prior to a training session of the national football team. – APP

PFF President dedicates historic win to national leadership

"The golden era for Pakistan women's football is dawning, and our players are proving to the world that they have the talent and determination to excel," he added

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Syed Mohsen Gillani, has congratulated the nation on the Pakistan women's team's record-breaking victory in their opening match of the FIFA Series, dedicating the achievement to the country's leadership. In his message, Gillani praised the team's outstanding performance and termed the victory a historic milestone for women's football in Pakistan.

"At a time when our Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir are playing a historic role for peace, our girls have created history on the football field," he said. "We dedicate this victory to our leadership for their commitment and vision." He further expressed confidence in the future of the sport, stating that Pakistan's women footballers are making the nation proud on the international stage.

Pakistan's diplomatic success signals historic shift

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senator Afnan Ullah Khan Friday described Pakistan's unprecedented diplomatic efforts as a historic victory that brought nations together, crediting the leadership of country and emphasizing that this achievement will produce enduring positive outcomes in terms of passport respect and national honor on the international stage. In an exclusive conversation with a local media outlet, he stated that Pakistan's leadership including Field Marshal Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is being widely praised by nations around the world. He described it as a moment of immense national pride, reflecting Pakistan's rising global recognition, enhanced diplomatic stature and growing respect for its passport. He said Pakistan is steadily positioning itself as a key player at the global negotiation table, hosting what he termed a "historic moment" of diplomacy. He added that ongoing discussions and emerging trade and strategic agreements will further strengthen the national economy, empower the local currency, and produce long-term diplomatic and economic gains for the country. While responding to questions, he emphasized that Ishaq Dar and Shehbaz Sharif are trusted and strong pillars of Mian Nawaz Sharif's leadership and said that credit for these diplomatic successes also goes to the PML-N party. – APP

1,152 Khuddam complete specialized training

ISLAMABAD: In a major strategic shift to modernize Hajj operations, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has successfully completed the field deployment and a three-day specialized training program for 1,152 Khuddam-ul-Hujjaj. Under the newly introduced 'Smart Service Model,' each welfare staff member has been equipped with specialized skills tailored to their specific Job Descriptions (JDs). The initiative aims to ensure 'Zero-Defect' service delivery in the Holy Land, transforming the traditional role of Khuddam into 'Smart Guardians and Guides' for the pilgrims (Dhuyufur-Rahman). Coordinator Makkah and Khuddam-ul-Hujjaj, Zulfiqar Khan, stated that following the directives of the Federal Minister and Secretary for Religious Affairs, the training was conducted in two phases: a 10-day generalized orientation followed by a rigorous three-day specialized session divided into three key modules. On the first day, staff received audio-visual briefings on building inspections, induction of pilgrims, and wheelchair distribution mechanisms. Concurrently, supervisors (Nazmeen) were given comprehensive training on 'Mashair Strategy' to ensure seamless movement of pilgrims be-

tween Makkah, Mina, and Arafat.

The second day focused on logistics and digital monitoring. Practical exercises were conducted regarding bus requisitioning, drop-point duties, and kitchen menu supervision. A significant portion of the training was dedicated to the Digital Complaint Management System (CMS) for real-time grievance redressal.

The final day emphasized tracing lost baggage and handling specific operations in Madinah Munawwarah. To ensure the efficacy of the sessions, a comprehensive quiz was conducted at the conclusion of the training to evaluate the learning outcomes of the participants.

The Ministry has enforced a stringent Code of Conduct, making the use of prescribed uniforms (jackets) and GPS-tracking mandatory for all staff to monitor real-time field movement. The coordinator emphasized that the service of pilgrims must take precedence over personal voluntary prayers. He warned of a 'Zero-Tolerance' policy regarding professional misconduct, stating that any official found involved in corruption, accepting gifts, or neglecting duties will face immediate repatriation, forfeiture of allowances, and permanent blacklisting from future Hajj duties. – APP

JD Vance hopes Islamabad talks...

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prolonged US military engagements abroad, is stepping into a key diplomatic role at Trump's request. Pakistan is hosting the negotiations, positioning itself as a mediator in the sensitive talks. Vance's departure marks his highest-profile international assignment to date as vice president. Outcomes from the Islamabad meetings could shape the trajectory of U.S. policy in the Middle East for the remainder of the Trump administration.

Pak Navy rescues 18 crew members

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Coordination Centre (MRCC) and promptly initiated response protocols. "Accordingly, Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Hunain, patrolling in the assigned area, was immediately tasked to provide assistance to MV Gold Autumn," it added. The statement said that PNS Hunain "actively undertook the search and rescue operation, demonstrating professionalism and operational expertise". "Pakistan Navy Ship's team comprising specialists, provided medical assistance, supported in firefighting, conducted damage assessment of the vessel, and later rescued crew members." The evacuated crew members have been safely transported to Karachi for further medical care and subsequent repatriation to their respective countries," it said. The statement further said, "Humanitarian assistance rendered by Pakistan Navy Ship at extended ranges off Pakistan's coast reflects the Pakistan Navy's continued resolve and commitment to always be the first responder in maritime crisis situations in its respective area of responsibility."

Islamabad talks: it's make or...

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permanent ceasefire could only be achieved through sustained dialogue, calling the upcoming talks a "make or break" moment for peace in the region. Delegations from the US and Iran are expected in Islamabad for further negotiations. PM Shehbaz warmly praised Field Marshal Asim Munir for his pivotal role in making the ceasefire possible. He highlighted the Army Chief's diplomatic and strategic contributions that helped de-escalate tensions amid the recent Middle East conflict. The Prime Minister also announced immediate relief measures for the masses amid easing global oil prices. Following a slight reduction in international crude rates, the government decided to pass on the benefit to Pakistani consumers. New fuel prices effective immediately: High-Speed Diesel price has been cut by Rs135 per liter. The new price is now Rs385 per liter (down from the recent high of over Rs520). Petrol price has been reduced by Rs12 per liter. The new price stands at Rs366 per liter.

UK PM all praise for...

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effective diplomatic efforts in facilitating the U.S.-Iran ceasefire, and the resumption of dialogue. He felicitated Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on hosting the peace negotiations in Islamabad and offered his best wishes for the success of this endeavor. Reaffirming Pakistan's sincere commitment to regional peace and stability, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the joint statement issued by key European and international leaders, including Prime Minister Starmer, endorsing Pakistan's peace initiatives. Both leaders emphasized the importance of ensuring that the ceasefire remains in place and creates the necessary conditions for lasting peace and stability in the region. The two leaders agreed to work together to lend fresh impetus to the longstanding friendly ties.

Pak calls for building trust between Kosovo & Serbia
Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in February 2008 following years of ethnic tensions, but Serbia has not recognized the declaration

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: While last year's successful legislative elections in Kosovo featured broad participation, Pakistan has warned of the "complex and intricate web of challenges" ahead and called for Kosovo-Serbia dialogue for establishing peace and stability in the Southeast European region. "Trust building between the two sides remains essential for moving forward," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Wednesday. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in February 2008 following years of ethnic tensions, but Serbia has not recognized the declaration. The European Union has since been facilitating dialogue between the par-

ties on a range of practical matters. Speaking in the course of a debate on the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Pakistani envoy said divisive rhetoric, hate speech, and inter-communal tensions should not be allowed to take root and disturb peace and tranquillity. Pakistani, he said, believes that only a sustained and meaningful dialogue process, a toning down of political rhetoric, and the full implementation of commitments made under mutual accords can help overcome all challenges and lead to lasting peace and stability in the region.

"We appreciate European Union's steadfast commitment and efforts to facilitate dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina," the Pakistani envoy said, hoping that both sides will continue to build on the positive momentum, refrain from unilateral actions that stoke tensions, and continue construc-

ive cooperation to resolve all outstanding issues. Underscoring that "the Balkans have suffered enough from the failures of the past", Ambassador Jadoon urged: "The future, surely, must be different." Both parties must choose the path of "principle over prejudice and patience over provocation", he said. "What the region urgently needs is meaningful engagement, a firm commitment to the principles of mutual respect, recognition of mutual sensitivities, safeguarding social and economic rights of all peoples, and promotion of the spirit of peaceful co-existence, and inter-communal harmony, Ambassador Jadoon added. At the outset, Peter Due, Special Representative and Head of UNMIK, told the Security Council during his first briefing that while the December 2025 polls featured broad participation, the momentum is being tested. He noted that the process

of electing a new President remains incomplete, following a year of political stalemate. Due, who took the key role three months ago, emphasized that the return of Kosovo Serb mayors in the north was a positive step yet warned of "challenges" including administrative gaps and language barriers. "These are not merely technical issues," he said, urging continued engagement. Guided by Resolution 1244 (1999), UNMIK is focusing its efforts on community-level dialogue. "Trust among communities, and between communities and institutions, allows progress, dialogue and cooperation to take root," he stressed. The mission itself is navigating a UN-wide liquidity crisis, having reduced encumbered positions by nearly 30 per cent. Despite these financial constraints, Due insisted the mission remains vital in fostering an inclusive culture "where every community sees itself reflected in the path forward".

Briefs

Kuwait accuses Iran, proxies of drone attacks despite ceasefire

DUBAI: Kuwait accused Iran and its proxies of launching drone attacks targeting vital facilities despite a two-week ceasefire. Kuwait's Foreign Ministry, in a statement carried by state news agency KUNA, said the drone attacks struck "some vital Kuwaiti facilities" on Thursday night, adding pressure ahead of planned talks between the US and Iran in Islamabad, Pakistan. The ministry stressed that the continuation of these flagrant attacks launched by Iran and its proxies on Kuwait and other Gulf states undermine international and regional peace efforts. Bahrain's Defense Force likewise announced that the Kingdom's air defense systems confronted "successive waves of sinful Iranian terrorist attacks" during the day on Thursday. However, there were no attacks on Thursday night until the next day. In a post on X, the BDF said Iran has launched a total of 191 missiles and 515 drones toward the Kingdom since February 28. Meanwhile, the UAE enjoyed a quiet day for the first time in weeks as the ceasefire took hold.—APP

UN seeks global changemakers for SDG Action Awards

DUBAI: From refugee mental health platforms to grassroots climate solutions, the UN Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign is searching for its next "Heroes of Tomorrow" as it opens applications for the 2026 UN SDG Action Awards. The Heroes of Tomorrow: UN SDG Action Awards is a global initiative led by the UN SDG Action Campaign which recognizes individuals and organizations working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Launched as part of the SDG Global Festival of Action, the awards spotlight changemakers working across issues such as climate action, gender equality, education, and peacebuilding. The global Director of UN SDG Action Campaign, Marina Ponti, told Arab News that the campaign's core mission is to give a voice to unheard communities who are pioneering change. The global Director of UN SDG Action Campaign, Marina Ponti, told Arab News that the campaign's core mission is to give a voice to unheard communities who are pioneering change. (Supplied) "The Heroes of Tomorrow are people who choose to act — often in the face of incredible challenges. They're not waiting for perfect conditions or for someone else to step in. —APP

China FM calls for closer ties with N Korea

BEIJING: China and North Korea should "enhance coordination" on international and regional issues, Beijing's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during talks on Friday, according to Chinese state media. Wang is on a two-day trip to the diplomatically isolated nuclear state — his first visit since 2019 — to step up ties between the East Asian neighbors following their resumption of transport links halted since the COVID-19 pandemic. China is North Korea's top trading partner and a vital source of diplomatic, economic and political support. "China and North Korea should, while firmly safeguarding their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, further enhance communication and coordination in major international and regional affairs," Wang said during a meeting with Kim in Pyongyang on Friday, Xinhua reported. "China is willing to work with North Korea to ... maintain close communication and interaction, promote practical cooperation, and infuse new contemporary meaning into the traditional friendship between China and North Korea," Wang said.—APP

Mamdani brings unique star power to NY governance

As the mayor approached his 100th day — long a benchmark for judging an administration's opening vision — his team has moved to highlight the administration's commitment to the everyday responsibilities of the job

NEW YORK: In his first 100 days in office, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani has governed with a star power unusual in politics. Crowds of supporters show up to his news conferences. Basic municipal services have been infused with newfound excitement. Celebrities help him promote his agenda. In the process, he's been able to notch a few notable early wins. And he's reached a detente — at least for now — with President Donald Trump, a mercurial leader with an affinity for celebrities. But as Mamdani, a Democrat, marks an early milestone in his mayoralty, it remains to be seen whether he'll be able to leverage his fame into achieving the progressive policy proposals that propelled him to office. Though he's not without staunch critics, many of whom still view his past criticisms of the police department and Israel as major problems, the mayor has been able to ease concerns among at least some skeptics. "It's early but so far, so good," said Jay Jacobs, chair of the state's Democratic Party, who made waves for not endorsing Mamdani during the election. "We may not agree on everything philosophically, but he is getting the job done." "Work as hard and as fast as New Yorkers' As the mayor approached his 100th day — long a benchmark for judging an administration's opening vision — his team has moved to highlight the administration's commitment to the everyday responsibilities of the job. While much of those duties are typical for his local office — picking up trash, plowing snow and filling potholes — the 34-year-old mayor has leaned on his knack for viral content creation to drive interest and awareness of government programs. As a storm bore down on the city this winter, Mamdani's calls on social media for more snow shovel-

ers helped recruit thousands of new shovelers. Another social media video announcement from the mayor this winter, this time about the city's emergency alert system, brought more than 50,000 new subscribers to the program in a week, his office said. Alongside New York Liberty star Natasha Cloud of the WNBA, Mamdani announced a bracket-style competition where people could vote on small repairs they want the mayor to come and personally fix in their neighborhoods. In a few weeks, more than 21,000 votes were cast. And to hype up his child care program for 2-year-olds, Mamdani recruited Cardi B to help judge a jingle contest that will determine the program's theme song. "The challenge that we set out for ourselves was to work as hard and as fast as New Yorkers do," Mamdani told reporters on his 99th day in office this week. The celebrity status, though, can also prompt backlash. During a bitter cold snap, his surprise appearance on the "Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon" was seen by some as insensitive at a moment when the death toll of homeless New Yorkers was rapidly rising. "Too much styling and profiling," said Curtis Sliwa, a Republican who ran against Mamdani during last year's election, noting longstanding problems with street homelessness, public housing and infrastructure. Still, Sliwa, who hammered Mamdani during the campaign but recently appeared in a comedy skit with the mayor during the City Hall press corps' annual roast, appeared to give Mamdani some credit, even if it came with a caveat. "We just had Eric Adams, swagger man who'd party to the break of dawn, and now we have a guy who seems like he's got a normal working schedule," said Sliwa, referencing the city's previous

mayor. "So having Zohran as the alternative, I think for a lot of people even if they disagree with him, there's some stability." Budget woes Mamdani has also trained his outsized audience on another routine reality of city governance: budgeting. Earlier this year, Mamdani held an unusually dour press conference at City Hall about a massive gap in the city budget, saying either the state would have to raise taxes on the wealthy or he would have to increase local property taxes to balance the budget. The public play from the mayor was widely seen as a strategy to pressure New York Gov. Kathy Hochul into approving a millionaires tax, a key priority for Mamdani and his base. Hochul, a moderate Democrat who is up for reelection this year, has strongly opposed such a measure. After the City Council released a separate budget proposal that found different ways to close the gap, Mamdani slammed the plan and released a video calling out Council Speaker Julie Menin, resulting in some of his supporters attacking the speaker online. The city's budget woes, still unresolved, could prove a major hurdle for Mamdani as he pursues his agenda. Andrew Rein, president of the fiscally conservative Citizens Budget Commission, said Mamdani has an "extra challenging" budget process ahead of him, but that the mayor's communications savvy could help him navigate the rough terrain. "What we've seen is him bringing his newer strategies and tools to communications but in a very practical, old-school problem," Rein said. "When he uses his communications skills to get people more invested and to improve the functioning of government and to help New Yorkers the trade offs that have to be made, that is

going to be a great win." Still a star among supporters On the night of Mamdani's election party, hundreds packed the streets, some spontaneously, waiting for a glimpse of the mayor-elect leaving the venue. Departing campaign aides were cheered, by name, well after midnight. One attendee likened the street party to Beatlemania. "I feel like I'm at a presidential inauguration," said Medhavi Agnihotri, a 25-year-old tech consultant. "This is the first time in a while I've felt this hope."

His star power has not appeared to wane since then among some factions. Outside City Hall, New Yorkers and tourists frequently stop for selfies, peering through the iron gates in search of the mayor. This week, on the mayor's 97th day in office, a massive crowd gathered in the lobby of the busy Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, watching as Mamdani announced the city would start sending some people with serious medical illnesses to the hospital from the city's notorious Riker's Island jail. He entered to wows and applause from the large group, many appearing to be hospital staffers who held up cell-phones to record videos of the mayor speaking. Dozens more watched along from a set of elevated walkways. One man, Ricardo Granados, a 67-year-old retiree, was on his way to take his son to a medical appointment but stopped to see what all the hubbub was about. He appeared delighted to learn Mamdani was going to show up, saying he met Mamdani previously when Mamdani was campaigning in Granados' neighborhood. "I'm extremely fond of him. I think he's going to make a real difference," Granados said. "He wants to find out who needs what and he wants to help."—DNA

Israel approves 34 new West Bank settlements

RAMALLAH: Israel has approved the establishment of 34 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, according to Israeli media reports and the watchdog Peace Now, which said the decision was taken "secretly" in early April. "The security cabinet secretly decided to establish 34 new settlements," Peace Now said in a statement released late on Thursday. The 34 settlements come on top of 68 others already approved since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government came to power in 2022. The decision has not been officially published by any government body, and the defense ministry, in charge of settlements in the occupied West Bank, declined to respond to AFP's questions. "We are not addressing this issue," a spokesperson for the ministry told AFP. According to news channel i24News, 10 of the 34 settlements are already existing outposts, which are illegal under Israeli law, but will now be retroactively legalized under the decision. The remaining 24 are yet to be built.—APP

Aid convoy heads from Turkiye to Iran

ANKARA: The Red Cross and Turkiye's Red Crescent on Friday dispatched an emergency humanitarian aid convoy from Turkiye to Iran, as the organization warned of a "desperate" humanitarian situation in the country. "Humanitarian needs in Iran are extremely high," International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) spokesperson Scott Craig told AFP shortly before the convoy departed from the outskirts of Ankara. The relief effort comes as a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran looks to be on shaky ground, with both sides accusing the other of failing to respect the agreement. The conflict has left more than 2,000 people dead over the past five weeks. "The humanitarian situation in Iran is desperate," Craig said. "Needs will change according to how the situation evolves. But the needs will remain critical for a very long time. The health system in the country has been destroyed." He added that large-scale damage to infrastructure had compounded the crisis, with severe psychological and mental health impacts on the population. The convoy includes around 200 trauma kits containing emergency medical supplies for bombing casualties.—Agencies

Macron meets Pope to talk ME war

VATICAN CITY: French President Emmanuel Macron arrived Friday at the Vatican for his first meeting with Pope Leo XIV, a private audience expected to be dominated by the Iran war. The French leader, who arrived with his wife Brigitte after flying to Rome on Thursday, will meet the US pontiff and the Vatican's secretary of state, Pietro Parolin. Macron and the leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics were due above all to discuss "the resolution of the crisis in the Middle East," a spokesman for Macron's office told reporters. They are particularly focused on Lebanon, where deadly Israeli strikes threatened this week's temporary truce between the US and Iran. Leo XIV visited Lebanon late last year as part of his first trip abroad, which also included Turkiye, and has repeatedly prayed for the victims of conflict there. Macron has also made numerous appeals for Lebanon to be included in the ceasefire. He discussed the conflict on Thursday evening with representatives of the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio, an informal diplomatic channel of the Holy See that is very active on Middle Eastern and humanitarian issues. "Macron is a man of peace," and "can do a lot" to "support" the Lebanese authorities, the community's founder, Andrea Riccardi, told reporters, adding that Lebanon "must not be left alone.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling Gola Ganda (shaved ice desserts) at local market in the Federal Capital.

WFP warns Lebanon facing food security crisis

GENEVA: Lebanon is facing a food security crisis due to Israel's offensive against militant group Hezbollah, which has disrupted supplies of goods and pushed up prices, the United Nations World Food Programme said on Friday. A fragile two-day-old ceasefire has halted the campaign of US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran, but it has not so far calmed the situation in Lebanon, where Israel began pounding the country, in particular the south, on March 2 after Hezbollah fired on it in support of its patron Iran. "What we're witnessing is not just a displacement crisis, it is rapidly becoming a food security crisis," said World Food Programme country director Allison Oman, speaking via video link from Beirut. She warned that food was becoming increasingly unaffordable due to rising prices and demand among displaced families. The Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade said in a statement that Lebanon's food stocks on a national level are sufficient for three to four months, and supply chains and import-export operations are functioning normally at ports and land crossings. However, the price of vegetables has soared by more than 20 percent and bread prices have increased by 17 percent since March 2, the WFP said. "What we're now seeing is a very worrying combination: prices are rising, incomes are disrupted and demand is increasing as displacement continues for many families," Oman stated. Lebanon faces a two-layered crisis, in which some markets have fully collapsed — especially in the south, where more than 80 percent of markets are no longer functioning — while those in Beirut are under increasing strain, Oman said. While markets on a national level are broadly functioning, many traders in conflict-affected areas in southern parts of Lebanon are reporting less than one week of essential food stocks remaining, she added. The trade ministry said that strategic reserves of food and fuel are available. Delivering food aid into hard-to-reach areas in the south was also becoming increasingly difficult. While the Qasbiyeh bridge, which was previously struck, is now operational, movement remains challenging. Ten WFP convoys have reached the south to provide aid to some of the estimated 50,000 to 150,000 in need of humanitarian support in that part of the country. "This escalation is pushing vulnerable communities even closer to the edge," said Oman, adding that about 900,000 people across Lebanon were already facing food insecurity before the latest escalation and that number was set to rise.—DNA

Islamabad Talks

SANAA KHETRAN



AS the peace dialogue for US-Iran war is going to start soon in Islamabad, it has become talk of

the town and the world. Pakistan has emerged on the map of the world as a peace harbinger. Delegates from Iran and US are coming to sit together to focus on agenda that could take them to peace. Undoubtedly, the morale is high of people of Pakistan and there could be seen filled corridors in the arena of media, politicians and think tanks and even in civil society the discussion is only focused upon Islamabad Peace Talks. Geographic Reference Though the crisp and fine diplomacy trend set up by Pakistan recently has brought the results that are seen in conducting these peace dialogue in Islamabad, the expectations of the world and especially the Arab World are high. In these circumstances, the speculations are many and in such closed-door conversations it is difficult to get into the real story before the announcements are made. However, as Islamabad Talks, lets ponder over what could be the next move? The US-Iran

War that started on February 28, 2026 is still ongoing. Though a ceasefire with an expectation to last for two weeks has been announced to set a stage for dialogue. The peace dialogue with mediation of Pakistan between US and Iran will be starting from Saturday 12, 2026 in Islamabad. Before we would have the real results of dialogue, amidst of lurking fears that anything could happen before on the Israel front to sabotage the talks and there could be a slip between the cup and the lip, diplomacy in Pakistan has been reshaped and strengthened recently that has brought hope of peace and is determined to bring the desired outcome and that is continued ceasefire and to avoid major regional war. On the chess board the K which is US in this case with all its hegemonic approach as a super power alongside Israel the warmonger has remained on one side trying to annihilate Iran for more than a month. Facing this super power is Iran on

the other side that has strategically fought well and took every move so calculated that the super power has left with no choice but to be part of the dialogue if he known significantly as a peaceful super power and to remain a part of MAGA. J.D Vance has been supporter of MAGA, though the other main members of the delegation would see the glass half empty, but a mix of minds would not let US down on being MAGA and loose its role as a super power. The damage of the war still be recovered for US if talks would not be made shady through Israel non-stop attacks on allies of Iran. The US would enjoy the status of super power only if the talks could bring peace in the region. Otherwise, the loss is greater for US than Iran. The war would sweep away MAGA with it. In the beautiful weather of Islamabad, wherein great expectations are connected, Islamabad still talks about peace in the region if it may get heard.

Turkiye's opp under pressure as Istanbul mayor trial drags on
Sooner or later, they'll all be released, because they're all innocent," she added

ISTANBUL: The corruption trial of Istanbul's jailed opposition mayor entered its second month Thursday, in a case widely seen as a major setback for Turkiye's opposition. Jailed since March last year, Ekrem Imamoglu of the main opposition CHP party is accused of running a vast criminal network he allegedly influenced "like an octopus." Prosecutors want him jailed for 2,430 years. "In this case, there is only one criminal organization, and that is the prosecution!" said Imamoglu, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main rival, this week, again denying the accusations. "This is a political trial, in which the role of the law is very limited. But the lawyers are trying to steer the proceedings toward legal grounds," Istanbul Bar Association president Ibrahim Kaboglu told AFP. "However, that doesn't mean that in the end, we'll have a verdict that respects the law," he added. The mass trial at the Silivri courthouse on Istanbul's outskirts involves more than 400 defendants — 107 of whom remain in detention. The judge last week ordered the release of 18 of them pending trial. Kaboglu condemned the continued detention of a large number of defendants as "unconstitutional." "The defendants should, in principle, appear in court as free men," he told AFP. The efforts to keep our friends in prison ... are aimed at halting the CHP's march toward power," CHP leader Ozgur Ozel said Wednesday at the opening of a football pitch in Istanbul's Sisli district, whose mayor is also in jail. As the marathon trial drags on, legal pressure has tightened around the opposition. Four CHP mayors, including the mayor of Bursa in northwest Turkiye — the fourth-largest city — have been arrested since the Imamoglu trial began on March 9. Erdogan's ruling AKP party on Thursday won control of Bursa after its mayor was jailed last week on charges including leading a criminal organization and corruption, dealing another blow to the opposition. "They (the government) have turned Turkiye into an open-air prison ... for all those who pose a threat to the regime," said the CHP leader, who is widely seen as the potential opposition candidate in the 2028 presidential vote. Imamoglu was thrown in prison on the day he was named the CHP's presidential candidate. He is seen by many as the only figure capable of defeating Erdogan at the ballot box. Human Rights Watch has condemned "arbitrary restrictions" affecting journalists and lawyers covering the trial, saying they violate Turkish and international legal requirements for public hearings. Sevgi Sancar, a 60-year-old housewife who attended the CHP event at the football pitch this week said she believed Imamoglu and other jailed CHP officials "have no chance of being released before the presidential election." "I don't trust the justice system. There is no justice!" she said. "We don't trust the Turkish justice system, only God's justice," said Mine, a 50-year-old engineer who declined to give her last name. "But we haven't lost hope. Sooner or later, they'll all be released, because they're all innocent," she added.—Agencies

Briefs

Oil climbs as strikes on Saudi facilities stoke anxiety

NEWS DESK

RIYADH Oil prices climbed on Friday, driven by fresh anxiety over supplies from Saudi Arabia and as tanker traffic through the critical Strait of Hormuz remained largely frozen. Prices were still headed for a loss as nerves eased over a fragile two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran, while Israel signalled a potential diplomatic opening, saying it was ready to begin direct talks with Lebanon as soon as possible. Brent crude futures added 96 cents, or 1%, to \$96.88 a barrel as of 0604 GMT. West Texas Intermediate futures were up 78¢, or 0.80%, at \$98.65 a barrel. For this week, both contracts have so far lost about 11%, the biggest weekly decline since June 2025 when the previous Israeli-US strikes on Iran were halted. Attacks on Saudi energy facilities have cut the kingdom's oil production capacity by around 600,000 barrels per day and throughput on its East-West Pipeline by about 700,000 bpd, Saudi state news agency SPA reported on Thursday, citing an official source at the Ministry of Energy. Concerns of further oil supply disruptions were heightened after the report, ANZ analysts said in a Friday note. Ship traffic through the strait stood at well below 10% of normal volumes on Thursday despite the ceasefire as Tehran asserted its control by warning ships to keep to its territorial waters while doing so.

President Zardari felicitates President of Vietnam

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday extended warm congratulations to President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, To Lam, on his election, noting that the unanimous vote of the National Assembly reflects the trust and confidence reposed in his leadership. In his letter, the President expressed confidence that, under President To Lam's stewardship, Viet Nam would continue to achieve greater progress and prosperity. Referring to Pakistan-Viet Nam relations, the President said that the two countries enjoy cordial and friendly ties based on mutual trust and goodwill. He conveyed his desire to work closely with President To Lam to further strengthen bilateral relations and advance shared goals of peace, stability and prosperity, while enhancing cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday extended felicitations to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on his election to the office, expressing confidence in the continued growth of bilateral relations between the two countries. - APP

Health Dept confirms 5 Mpx deaths, 14 cases across Sindh

KARACHI: At least 5 newborn babies lost their lives as 14 cases of the Mpx (Monkeypox virus) have been detected across Sindh this year, the provincial health department officials confirmed. According to official data, two cases were detected in Karachi and 12 in Khairpur district. All five fatalities were reported from Khairpur, where the victims were newborn babies. The Sindh Health Department has established isolation wards in major and district headquarters hospitals across the province to prevent the spread of the virus and ensure timely treatment of patients. Provincial Health Minister Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho confirmed the reported cases and said that monkeypox is a treatable disease, stressing that patients can recover if they seek timely medical care. - APP

ADP upgrades Pakistan economic growth rate

Pakistan is expected to sustain its economic performance in the medium term, with real gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast at 3.5pc in FY2026 and 4.5pc in FY2027, from 3.1pc in FY2025, as manufacturing recovers and investment increases, the Manila-based lending agency said in its flagship Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2026

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday upgraded Pakistan's economic growth rate to 3.5 per cent for the current fiscal year, but warned of downside risk from global economic uncertainty amid the Middle East crisis. "Pakistan is expected to sustain its economic performance in the medium term, with real gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast at 3.5pc in FY2026 and 4.5pc in FY2027, from 3.1pc in FY2025, as manufacturing recovers and investment increases", the Manila-based lending agency said in its flagship Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2026. However, it warned that "despite recent stabilisation and recovery, Pakistan's economic outlook faces significant downside risks from global economic uncertainty, leading to elevated inflationary, fiscal, and external account pressures". The bank had earlier forecast 3pc growth for the current fiscal year. "Pakistan's economy has stabilised and begun to show stronger

momentum, supported by progress in implementing key economic reforms amid a challenging global environment," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan. "Growth is expected to continue in 2026 and 2027, but downside risks are significant. Sustained reform efforts are critical to preserve the growth momentum and bolster fiscal and external buffers against global shocks," she said. Average inflation is projected to rise to 6.4pc in FY26 and 6.5pc in FY27 due to surging oil prices and disrupted trade routes amid the Middle East conflict, as oil and gas constitute a large share of Pakistan's imports, as per the report. The central bank is expected to ease monetary policy cautiously to stabilise inflation within its medium-term target range of 5pc-7pc. A prolonged Middle East conflict could significantly weigh on the economic outlook by slowing growth through higher energy and fertiliser costs, weakening agricultural and industrial output, reducing remittances, and widening the current account deficit, as per the report. The report recommended that adherence to the econom-

ic adjustment program is therefore critical to strengthening resilience and enabling sustainable and inclusive growth. In FY26, growth will be supported by a rebound in private-sector investment, driven by the recent progress on reform measures and a stable foreign exchange market. The effective implementation of the reform program is expected to foster a more stable macroeconomic environment and gradually remove structural barriers to growth. Economic activity in both industry and services will benefit from monetary easing, the report added. Construction activity will be backed by fiscal incentives introduced in the FY2026 budget, alongside post-flood reconstruction efforts. Addressing downside challenges will require prudent macroeconomic policies and steadfast implementation of structural reforms, according to the report. The FY26 increase reflects a quicker-than-anticipated recovery in manufacturing and less crop damage from floods than initially expected. Large-scale manufacturing output rebounded strongly in the first half of FY26 (July-December), growing by

4.8pc as automobiles, cement, and textiles picked up, supported by accommodative monetary policy, low inflation, and renewed confidence. Provisional first quarter (Q1) FY26 GDP data indicate that damage from flooding was much less than initially feared. Services are expected to benefit from increases in manufacturing and greater macroeconomic stability. Growth was provisionally recorded at 3.7pc in Q1 FY26, driven by livestock, large-scale manufacturing, construction, utilities, wholesale and retail trade, and transport and storage. Fiscal incentives for construction announced in the FY26 budget and reconstruction efforts after the floods have boosted construction, which grew by 21.0pc in Q1 FY26. On the demand side, private investment will continue to support growth. Investment is projected to increase due to accommodative monetary conditions, greater macroeconomic stability, and lower government financing requirements, freeing up funds for private sector lending, particularly for small and medium enterprises and agriculture.

PM pays tribute to framers of Constitution of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid special tribute to the framers of the Constitution, saying that the unanimously adopted Constitution of Pakistan on April 10, 1973 laid the foundation of a parliamentary democratic system of governance in the country and established a strong institutional framework for the state of Pakistan. He said the Constitution was a sacred contract between the people and the state, which defined the legal, moral, and administrative rights and responsibilities of both. "Today, we are celebrating the approval of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with a spirit of national pride," he said in his message on Constitution Day. The Constitution of 1973 is the guardian of the fundamental human rights of all citizens of Pakistan. This constitutional document not only elaborates these fundamental human rights in detail but also ensures a legal framework for their provision, the prime minister remarked. The Constitution of 1973 is a shining symbol of the Federation of Pakistan and national unity, he said adding that all federating units of Pakistan are fulfilling their constitutional roles effectively for national cohesion and overall economic development and prosperity, and are determined to work for a bright future. The prime minister said that this admirable unity reflected the blessings of Almighty Allah on this God-gifted country. "We bow our heads in gratitude to Almighty Allah for the honor and dignity bestowed upon Pakistan. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Security beefed-up in the Capital ahead of high-stake talks between the US and Iran. - DNA

Sindh enforces early closures of markets, hotels

All wedding halls and banquets shall operate between 8pm to 12 midnight, states notification

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh government has enforced new operating hours for markets, restaurants and wedding halls across the province with immediate effect, as part of its austerity policy aimed at conserving fuel amid the ongoing Middle East conflict. Sindh's move comes after the federal government announced the closure of markets and shopping malls in all provinces except Sindh at 8 pm from April 7. According to a notification from the Home Department, all shops, markets and shopping malls in districts other

than divisional headquarters will close at 8pm throughout the week, including weekends. In divisional headquarters, these businesses will be allowed to operate until 9pm. However, essential services have been exempted from the order, including standalone tandoors, milk and dairy shops, bakeries, medical stores and pharmacies, as well as medical laboratories, clinics, hospitals and fuel pumps. The notification further states that hotels, restaurants and other food outlets will be allowed to operate only during dinner hours, from 7pm to 11:30pm. There will be no restrictions on home delivery or takeaway services. Marriage halls and banquet facilities have also been assigned specific timings and will be permitted to operate between 8pm and 12 midnight. The government has directed commissioners and deputy commissioners, with the support of Sindh Police, to ensure strict implementation of these measures in their respective jurisdictions. Pakistan, which relies heavily on imported oil, has been significantly impacted by the energy crisis triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran, as global supply disruptions and rising prices strain the economy. In response, federal and provincial governments have announced austerity measures alongside targeted and general fuel subsidies to cushion the impact of the crisis on consumers and stabilise the economy. While Iranian and US delegations are expected to arrive in Islamabad, oil prices continue to climb amid heightened tensions.

Mojtaba Khamenei says Iran does not want war

Iran supreme leader says his country won't renounce rights under any circumstances



NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei said in his latest written message that his nation did not want war with the United States and Israel, but would protect its rights as a nation, state television reported Thursday. "We did not seek war and we do not want it," he said in the message read out on state TV, weeks after his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was mar-

tyred on February 28, the first day of the war. "But we will not renounce our legitimate rights under any circumstances, and in this respect, we consider the entire resistance front as a whole," he added, in an apparent reference to Lebanon where Israel is fighting with Tehran's ally Hezbollah. "All must know that, by Almighty God's will, we definitely won't allow the criminal aggressors who attacked our country to go unpunished." Iran this week agreed to a fragile two-week ceasefire with the United States that could lead to peace negotiations after threats of annihilation from US President Donald Trump. The supreme leader also urged the country's southern neighbours to carefully observe ongoing regional developments, describing them as a "miracle" and calling for a clear and informed stance. He said that Iran will move the management of the strategic Strait of Hormuz into a new phase. Khamenei told Iranians that they must "not imagine that talking to the streets is no longer necessary" despite the announcement of the ceasefire. "Your voices in public squares are undoubtedly influential in the outcome of the negotiations," he said. Likely wounded in the strike that martyred his father, Mojtaba Khamenei, has still not been seen in public since his leadership appointment. He has issued written declarations, most of them read out by presenters on state television. US President Donald Trump has even speculated that he could be dead, but Iran's state television said he is recovering from his injuries and posts photos of him, without specifying when they were taken.

Indian airlines hit hardest

DNA

NEW DELHI: Dubai has restricted foreign airlines to just one daily flight to its airports until May 31 due to the Iran crisis, igniting revenue loss fears among Indian carriers that had planned more flights than airlines from any other country, letters show. The Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), which represents top carriers IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet, has asked India to push Dubai authorities to lift the curbs and, failing that, to consider reciprocal measures on Dubai carriers, including Emirates and flydubai, according to a letter it sent to the Indian government on March 31. Indian carriers are already under financial pressure from higher fuel prices and longer routings to Western destinations because they have been banned from using Pakistani airspace since last year, following military tensions between the two neighbours. In a private email to airlines on March 27, seen by Reuters, Dubai Airports said carriers would be allowed one round trip per day to Dubai International Airport (DXB), normally the world's busiest international travel hub, and the smaller Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC) during the summer season between April 20 and May 31, extending restrictions implemented after the war began. "Carriers continue to be limited to one rotation per day, until capacity allows more to be facilitated... Additional slots will be allocated if capacity is available," it said. The FIA told the Indian government the curbs were not being applied to Dubai's airlines such as Emirates and flydubai, creating an uneven playing field that could lead to "substantial" revenue losses. Dubai Airports and Dubai's media office did not respond to repeated requests for comment. Flydubai said its flight schedules were approved by the relevant authorities. Emirates did not respond to a request for comment. The measures come after Emirates and other Gulf airlines have long complained about India's bilateral air service agreements that cap the number of seats that can be deployed between countries. Indian authorities have said such pacts protect Indian airlines in the cutthroat market. India was the largest source of passengers for DXB in 2025, with 11.9 million travellers passing through the hub. The Dubai caps will hit Indian airlines the hardest, according to April and May schedules data from Cirium. Air India and its budget carrier Air India Express have scheduled more than 750 flights into DXB in that period. IndiGo has 481, followed by Saudia and Gulf Air, which planned for 480 and 404, respectively. India's SpiceJet had planned 61.

Bogie derailment of Shalimar Express sparks panic

ISLAMABAD: A potential disaster was narrowly avoided on Friday when the Shalimar Express, traveling from Karachi to Lahore, derailed near Sheikhupura as a middle bogie went off the tracks, but fortunately all passengers remained safe and no casualties were reported. Railway officials said teams from the engineering department rushed to the scene immediately and relief operations are currently underway, local news channel reported. They added that train services have been suspended following the accident to ensure safety and facilitate recovery work. According to officials, the incident has affected nearly 6 kilometers of railway track, causing significant disruption to operations. - APP

NIFTYSPHERE INSTITUTE OF ARTS & DESIGN



How NSIAD works

NiftySphere Institute of Arts & Design is the finest creative learning Institute in Islamabad that offers a wide variety of diploma courses, including graphic designing, interior designing, fashion and textile designing, photography and editing, videography, and a diverse range of fine arts subjects. Students expand their knowledge of digital media by exploring different designers, processes, and concepts. At NiftySphere, each student gets dedicated and private time from tutors with a maximum class strength of six. We offer state-of-the-art studios where students can learn new techniques with advanced modern technology, all nestled in a pleasant and friendly environment.

What Sets Us Apart? At NiftySphere, we do not imbue our students with just a skill set to prepare them for the job market. We train them on the know-how on marketing and selling their creations as well. Students get a firm grip on digital and real-world marketing, selling strategies, client dealing, and marketing trends to give them the confidence to deal with today's business requirements. Whether it is a startup or an ongoing business, our students will have the know-how to deal with the day-to-day operations, as well as long-term strategies for making their business a success. NiftySphere provides you with a unique opportunity to make your future your own. We aim to equip you to Prepare, Start, Consolidate and Expand your own business.



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