



Islamabad POST

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Romanian envoy celebrates Easter with friends & staff

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Hopes still alive

Vance says talks failed to reach deal with Iran

US vice president says any shortcomings in talks not due to Pakistan, which had "done an amazing job" in facilitating dialogue

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: US Vice President JD Vance departed Pakistan on Sunday after announcing that intensive negotiations with Iran had failed to produce an agreement, despite more than 21 hours of discussions. Vance boarded Air Force Two at 7:08am and waved to Pakistani officials from the top of the stairs. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi among others were present on the occasion. His departure came almost an hour after he addressed a press conference after the trilateral 'Islamabad talks', mediated by Pakistan, which continued for almost 21 hours after they began on Saturday afternoon. During the press conference, Vance said talks with Iran lasted around 21 hours and covered a range of critical issues. "The bad news is that we have not reached an agreement, and I think that's bad news for Iran much more than it's bad news for the United States of America," he added. "We have made very clear what our red lines are, what things we are willing to accommodate them on and what things we are not willing to accommodate them on," said Vance, adding that the Iranian delegation had "chosen not to accept our terms". At the outset of the presser, Vance thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Munir for their hospitality, acknowledging Pakistan's efforts to bridge differences between Washington and Tehran. He said any

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UK prime minister say US and Iran should avoid escalation

DNA

SYDNEY/LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman spoke Sunday about the failed peace talks between the US and Iran and said further escalation should be avoided, a spokesperson said. "They discussed the peace talks held in Pakistan over the weekend and urged both sides to find a way through," Sophie Clare said in a readout of the call from London. "It was vital there was a continuation of the ceasefire, and that all parties avoided any further escalation, the leaders agreed." Starmer, who just returned from the Middle East during meetings with allies, said international partners are continuing to work toward restoring safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. He also pledged the UK's commitment to protecting Oman. UK government minister Wes Streeting on Sunday said it was "disappointing" that negotiations between the United States and Iran in Islamabad had

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Trump says Islamabad talks with Iran were positive

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump described the high-level U.S.-Iran negotiations held in Islamabad, Pakistan, as largely constructive, noting that significant consensus was achieved on multiple issues despite the failure to resolve the core dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions. In a detailed statement on Truth Social following nearly 20 hours of face-to-face talks led by Vice President JD Vance, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, President Trump said: "The meeting with Iran began early in the morning, and lasted throughout the night—

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Iran reports 3,375 people killed so far

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's Forensic Medicine Organization has identified 3,375 people killed during the recent conflict involving the United States and Israel, according to the head of the agency, Abbas Masjedi Arani. In a statement released to Iranian state media, Arani said the death toll includes 2,875 men and nearly 500 women (reported as 496 in some updates). The highest casualties were recorded in the provinces of Tehran, Hormozgan, and Isfahan. "During the war in the month of Ramadan, the Forensic Medicine Organization confirmed the identities of 3,375 people killed," Arani stated.

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ISLAMABAD: US Vice President JD Vance talking to media persons, at the Islamabad Serena Hotel, before his departure for America. – DNA

Middle East tensions

'Diplomacy never ends', says Iran after Islamabad talks concluded sans accord Tehran, Washington reach understanding on "number of issues"; difference remains on some "important" matters: Iran

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has stressed that diplomacy never ends after the much-anticipated talks between Iran and the United States ended without an agreement in Islamabad, according to Tasnim news agency. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Bagaei, the news agency reported, said that Tehran and Washington had reached an understanding on a "number of issues" and that there were "differences of opinion on 2-3 important" matters. The talks in Islamabad were the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic revolution. The United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, sparking retaliation from Tehran that has plunged the Middle East into conflict and the global economy into tumult. After ending the 21-hour-long marathon discussion, US Vice President JD Vance said that he was leaving after giving

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Iran's Ghalibaf thanks Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led Tehran's delegation in Islamabad Talks, has expressed gratitude to Pakistan for facilitating recent ceasefire negotiations with the United States, while underscoring Tehran's continued distrust of Washington. In a statement following the talks, Ghalibaf thanked Pakistan, describing it as a "friendly and brotherly country," and extended his regards to the Pakistani people for their role in supporting the dialogue process. He noted that prior to the negotiations, Iran had demonstrated "good faith and willingness," but said past experiences—particularly

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Briefs

Asha Bosle dies aged 92

DNA

MUMBAI: Legendary Indian playback singer Asha Bosle passed away on Sunday at the age of 92, according to Indian media reports. 92-year-old legendary Indian singer Asha Bosle was admitted to Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital. The renowned artist experienced breathing issues and a heart attack. Asha Bosle began her illustrious musical career in 1943 at the age of ten, after receiving classical music instruction from her father, Dinanath Mangeshkar. Over the course of eight decades, she has recorded approximately 12,000 songs in 20 different Indian languages. According to Guinness World Records, her voice can be heard in more than 1,000 Bollywood films, making her the most recorded singer in history.



Pakistan says

Imperative that parties continue to uphold ceasefire commitment

Ishaq Dar told the media that he, along with the Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir helped mediate several rounds of "intense and constructive" negotiations between the two sides

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Sunday announcing the end of Islamabad Talks between the United States of America and Iran said that it was imperative that the parties continued to uphold their commitment to ceasefire. "We hope that the two sides continue with the positive spirit to achieve durable peace and prosperity for the entire region and beyond. It is imperative that the parties continue to uphold their commitment to ceasefire," the deputy prime minister, briefing the media here on the conclusion of the peace talks. Dar told the media that he, along with the Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir helped mediate several rounds of "intense and constructive" negotiations between the two

sides that continued through the last 24 hours and ended on Sunday morning. He reaffirmed that Pakistan had been and would continue to play its role to facilitate engagement and dialogue between Iran and the United States in the days to come. Dar thanked both the countries for responding to the call made by the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for an immediate ceasefire in the region as well as for accepting Prime Minister's invitation for holding peace talks in Islamabad. He said that the US delegation headed by the US Vice President JD Vance and the Iran's headed by the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Bagher Ghalibaf, arrived on Saturday here to participate in Islamabad Talks. "On behalf of Pakistan, I would like to express gratitude to the two sides for appreciating Pakistan's efforts to help achieve the ceasefire and its mediatory role," Dar added.

Pakistan's diplomacy and path to global stability

OPINION

SARDAR TAHIR MEHMOOD




AT a time when national security is paramount, Pakistan has reminded the world that responsible diplomacy is as important as deterrence. Our nuclear capability provides the ultimate shield, and the gaps identified last May are being addressed, yet the greatest strength lies in leveraging that security for peace. The United States-Iran war, now in its seventh week, has killed thousands and shaken global markets. By hosting negotiations in Islamabad, Pakistan has turned its hard won security into a platform for peace. Pakistan's role as mediator: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif built trust with both Washington and Tehran.

On April 7 he announced a ceasefire and invited delegations to Islamabad. Analysts note that Pakistan has been reaching out to the Trump administration while maintaining a functional relationship with Iran and cultivating ties to regional powers; the result is that Islamabad is the only broker both sides can trust. The capital was placed under unprecedented lockdown, with thousands of paramilitary and army troops deployed, as Vice President JD Vance and his team flew in. Pakistan's mediation signals that our nation, once seen as peripheral, now punches above its weight in global diplomacy. Leadership that bridged the divide: Behind the scenes, the security establishment made diplomacy possible. Field Marshal Asim Munir spent the night coordinating with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, crafting a two step plan that would reopen the Strait of Hormuz and lead to a broader settle-





ment. Such tireless engagement from the Chief of Defence Forces underscores how Pakistan's military leadership is using its authority to build peace rather than just fight wars. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has also kept diplomatic channels open, pledging that Pakistan will continue to facilitate dialogue and maintain the fragile ceasefire. Their combined efforts ensure that security and diplomacy move in lockstep. Honouring Iran's resilience: Iran enters these talks scarred by war yet remarkably unbowed. Analysts point out that Iran is a civilisation that stretches back nearly 6,000 years, with a cultural and ideological foundation that prizes endurance and unity. Its decentralised leadership and layered national security structures mean that even the loss of senior leaders does not paralyse the system. This institutional depth, coupled with a population bound





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Kundi assures support to tobacco growers

ISLAMABAD :A delegation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tobacco Action Committee called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here on Sunday and discussed the challenges faced by tobacco growers in the province. The delegation, comprising Bilal Khan Tarakai, Irshad Khan and other office-bearers, informed the Governor that farmers in Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Buner and Mansehra were facing severe difficulties due to excessive taxation and low prices of tobacco. They said that instead of resolving their issues, government policies were aggravating their problems, adding that taxes were being increased every year. The delegation maintained that despite contributing over Rs 3.25 billion to the provincial economy, the current policies were forcing farmers to abandon tobacco cultivation. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed full solidarity with the growers and acknowledged tobacco as an important crop of the province. He assured the delegation of his complete support and said that efforts would be made to encourage farmers, citing the recent organization of a farmers' award in the province. He proposed the formation of a joint committee comprising representatives of farmers, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Customs and the Pakistan Tobacco Board to collectively address the issue through consultation. The Governor reiterated his commitment to extend full cooperation to tobacco growers in resolving their concerns. A luncheon was also hosted in honour of the Governor on the occasion.—APP

Islamabad talks to promote global peace: Info minister

LAHORE: Senior Minister Punjab and leader of the Muslim League (N) Mariyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday the results of Islamabad talks were expected to promote stability in the region and global peace. She thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, while terming the talks as an important and decisive moment in the history. She said that Pakistan had proven that diplomacy was a continuous process, not just an event, the results of talks were expected to promote stability in the region and global peace. She said that talks in Islamabad were a moment of pride at the national level, Pakistan's seriousness, perseverance and dignity were demonstrated, the country had further strengthened its reputation and trust at the global level. She said the future was safe in the hands of capable and far-sighted leadership. In the last four days, an example of high-quality arrangements for international guests was set, and Pakistan's hospitality and professional capabilities were recognized at the global level. Mariyum Aurangzeb said that Pakistan had established itself as a neutral and reliable peace negotiator, the rise of diplomacy was a rich manifestation of world-class hosting.—APP

Islamabad emerges as key diplomatic hub amid visit of US Senator J.D. Vance

ISLAMABAD: The visit of U.S. Senator J.D. Vance to Pakistan is being viewed as a significant diplomatic development that could mark a potentially historic moment for future engagement between the United States and Iran. At a time of heightened tensions and uncertainty in the Middle East, this visit goes beyond routine diplomacy and signals a genuine opportunity for meaningful progress through the "Islamabad Dialogue." According to strategic affairs analyst Dr. Hussain Thebo, this milestone has been made possible through the coordinated efforts and strategic vision of Pakistan's civil and military leadership, including Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their unified approach has positioned Pakistan as a balanced, responsible, and credible mediator on the global stage. By facilitating dialogue between Washington and Tehran, Pakistan is

not only contributing to regional stability but also reinforcing its diplomatic relevance internationally. The presence of Senator J.D. Vance underscores the seriousness of the initiative and reflects a willingness on the part of the United States to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at de-escalation. Dr. Thebo noted that Senator Vance's broader political stance—particularly his cautious approach toward prolonged military interventions—adds further significance to his visit. His emphasis on strategic restraint aligns with efforts to reduce tensions and pursue sustainable diplomatic solutions. As a prominent political figure and potential future leader, his support for such initiatives may help advance long-term peace and stability. Islamabad's role as the host city also carries symbolic and strategic importance. Moving such discussions beyond traditional Western venues reflects a shift toward more inclusive diplomacy, which may

help build trust among regional stakeholders, particularly Iran. The potential outcomes of the Islamabad Dialogue extend beyond politics. Positive developments could ease pressure on global trade routes, stabilize energy markets, and reduce the risk of broader conflict. For Pakistan, this presents an opportunity to strengthen international partnerships, enhance economic prospects, and reinforce its image as a proponent of peace and stability. While significant challenges remain—particularly the deep-rooted mistrust between the United States and Iran—diplomacy often begins with small but meaningful steps. Supported by Pakistan's leadership and institutions, this initiative represents an important move toward constructive engagement. The visit of Senator J.D. Vance to Islamabad stands as a hopeful and strategic development, with the potential to pave the way for tangible progress and a more stable, cooperative regional order.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Laborers busy in watching their cell phone for Iran-US talk's update, in the Federal Capital.

Punjab CM orders early sewerage projects completion

LAHORE :Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed that all ongoing draining and sewerage projects across 15 major cities of the province be completed before June and ordered round-the-clock work to ensure timely completion ahead of monsoon season. Chairing a special meeting here on Sunday, the chief minister emphasized urgent completion of sewerage lines and rainwater drainage systems to avoid urban flooding during monsoon rains. She instructed that all projects must maintain fast-track execution with strict monitoring at every level. The drainage projects were underway in Sargodha, Dera

Ghazi Khan, Gujrat, Okara, Jhang, Multan and Sialkot, while similar work was also in progress in Jhelum, Hafizabad, Sahiwal, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib and Rawalpindi. According to the plan, 2,265 kilometers of sewerage lines and 189 kilometers of storm water drainage pipelines would be laid across the 15 cities. In the first phase, 86 disposal stations and nine underground storage tanks would be constructed to strengthen drainage capacity. Upon completion of the projects, 752 kilometers of roads would also be reconstructed under the development

scheme. The meeting also approved the design of WASA complexes for all 15 cities. The complexes will include residential hostels for officers to improve administrative efficiency and operational support. The chief minister directed real-time monitoring of all ongoing schemes through a WASA dashboard and mobile application, ensuring transparency and timely progress tracking. She also instructed WASA Punjab to launch a large-scale desilting campaign of drains before the monsoon season to ensure smooth rainwater flow and effective drainage management.—APP

KP CM for resource allocation to Kotal Refugee Camp

Engaging directly with the residents, Chief Minister Afridi reaffirmed that provincial government remains committed to utilizing its available resources to provide essential care and support for Afghan refugee community

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Muhammad Sohail Afridi inspected living conditions of Afghan refugees in Hamza Baba Camp situated in Landi Kotal, district Khyber. According to a statement issued by Commissioner office on Sunday, Chief Minister received a comprehensive briefing regarding facilities and support system currently being managed by Peshawar administration. He was accompanied by Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud, various administrative officers, and members of both National and Provincial Assemblies. While touring the site, Chief Minister personally reviewed challenges facing camp's residents and issued immediate orders to address their grievances. He conducted a thorough inspection of basic amenities and directed the relevant authorities to mobilize all necessary resources to improve the refugees' quality of life. Engaging directly with the residents, Chief Minister Afridi reaffirmed that provincial government remains committed to utilizing its available resources to provide essential care and support for Afghan refugee community.—APP

Aseefa urges people coop in polio campaign

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari Sunday called on families and communities across Pakistan to fully cooperate with the upcoming nationwide polio vaccination campaign, set to begin on 13 April, and ensure that every child is protected from the disease. The campaign aims to vaccinate over 45 million children under the age of five across all provinces and regions as part of the ongoing national effort to eradicate polio. Pakistan, she noted, stands at a critical juncture in its fight against the virus. Years of sustained effort have brought the country closer to eradication, with the coming phase representing the final stretch where reaching every child is essential. From 13 to 19 April, frontline health workers will conduct door-to-door visits, covering urban centres as well as remote communities. In addition to administering polio drops, children will also receive Vitamin A supplementation to support immunity and healthy growth. The First Lady highlighted measurable progress. In 2025, 31 cases of polio were reported nationwide, while in 2026 only one case has been recorded so far. She cautioned, however, that the threat persists. As long as the virus exists anywhere, it remains a risk everywhere. She stressed the need for consistency, urging parents and caregivers to ensure their children receive vaccination in every campaign, alongside routine immunisation. The campaign will be conducted in coordination with Afghanistan, reflecting a shared commitment to interrupt cross-border transmission and close remaining gaps. Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also acknowledged the contribution of frontline workers, whose continued efforts remain central to reaching every household. She called for collective resolve, emphasising that ending polio is now within reach and depends on the participation of parents, families, communities and institutions alike. No child, she underscored, can be left behind.—DNA

IPP to finalize by-election strategy

ISLAMABAD: The central leadership of Isteqam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) will meet in Islamabad on Tuesday to deliberate on the upcoming by-elections in Punjab constituency PP-83 Noor Porthal and other key political and organizational matters. The meeting would be chaired by IPP President and Federal Minister, Abdul Aleem Khan, who has already initiated consultations with senior party leaders regarding the by-election on the vacant seat, said a press release issued on Sunday. In this regard, IPP Member National Assembly, Gul Asghar Khan Baghoor from the constituency gave a detailed briefing to the Party President and the political situation of the constituency, previous election results and future strategy were discussed. It is pertinent to mention that IPP candidate Ehsanullah Khan had secured around 30,000 votes in the 2024 general elections from PP-83, reflecting a significant support base in the area. The meeting would be attended by Punjab President Rana Nazir Ahmed Khan, North Punjab President and Federal Parliamentary Secretary Engineer Gul Asghar Khan Baghoor.—APP

96 shops sealed over austerity policy violations

LAHORE: The district administration has intensified enforcement of the Chief Minister Punjab's austerity policy, sealing 96 shops, arresting five individuals while conducting over 3,900 inspections across various tehsils. On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Ali Ijaz, Assistant Commissioners across City, Cantt, Shalimar, Ravi, Nishtar, Allama Iqbal and Raiwind led extensive field operations in areas including Saddar Bazaar, H-Block Market, Paragon City, Bedian Road, Dharampura, Johar Town G-1 Market, Multan Road, Canal Road, Bagbanpura, Daroghawala, Harbanspura and Singhpura Bazaar. Late-night monitoring also continued in Bedian and Burki Road areas to ensure compliance with prescribed business timings. In detailed enforcement actions, Assistant Commissioner Ravi Humaera Shah conducted 1,324 inspections, sealing

33 shops and arresting three individuals, while Assistant Commissioner Nishtar Muhammad Saleem Aasi carried out 786 inspections, sealing 19 shops over violations. Assistant Commissioner Iqbal Town Tariq Shabbir sealed six shops, whereas Assistant Commissioner Raiwind Zohaib Mumtaz sealed a marriage hall during surveillance operations. Earlier, in City, Cantt and Shalimar tehsils, over 1,800 inspections were conducted, resulting in sealing of 35 shops, imposition of Rs75,000 fines and arrest of two individuals. The administration ensured strict checking of marriage halls on Allama Iqbal Road and directed enforcement of the one-dish rule, along with closure of dine-in services at restaurants. In State Life Housing Society, two supermarkets were sealed, while complete compliance was observed in Ashiana Road, DHA Phase-V, Central Park,

Lake City Market and Adda Plot. Saddar Bazaar also witnessed full closure following warnings issued by authorities. The DC directed officers to ensure strict implementation of austerity timings, warning that violations would lead to immediate sealing of premises and penalties. He emphasized continued field monitoring, particularly during late hours, to maintain compliance across markets and commercial centers. Deputy Commissioner Ali Ijaz said that effective implementation of austerity measures had significantly contributed to energy conservation and ensured timely closure of markets in the public interest. He added that full compliance was essential to achieve the objectives of the campaign and reiterated that the district administration remained fully mobilized to enforce the policy in letter and spirit while facilitating citizens.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

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- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Romanian Ambassador celebrates Orthodox Easter with friends

This celebration aligns with Ambassador Stoescu's ongoing efforts to strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between Romania and Pakistan. He has previously organized events highlighting shared values, interfaith dialogue, and bilateral friendship, including Romania's National Day receptions and cultural exchanges



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Romania's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dan Stoescu, hosted a warm celebration of Orthodox Easter with friends and family members from various missions. In a post shared on social media, Ambassador Stoescu highlighted the event as a moment of cultural sharing and interfaith connection. The gathering featured

traditional Romanian Easter elements, including painted eggs and cozonac (a sweet braided bread), alongside friendly conversations that underscored the power of diplomacy in building bridges. "Great to celebrate Orthodox Easter in Islamabad together with the Embassy of Romania team, alongside our Bulgarian, Serbian, and German friends," Stoescu wrote. "From sharing traditional Easter eggs and sweet cozonac to warm conver-

sations, it was a beautiful reminder that faith and friendship transcend borders." He also praised Islamabad as "the city of peace" on a day marked by important talks and dialogue, noting that such events reinforce diplomacy's core values: trust, understanding, and human connection. The post used hashtags #IslamabadTalks and #OrthodoxEaster. This celebration aligns with Ambassador Stoescu's ongoing efforts to strengthen cultural and people-to-people

ties between Romania and Pakistan. He has previously organized events highlighting shared values, interfaith dialogue, and bilateral friendship, including Romania's National Day receptions and cultural exchanges. The event brought together representatives from several Orthodox and European nations in a spirit of unity during the Easter period. This spirit reflects the quiet but meaningful work of diplomacy in fostering goodwill amid global challenges.

Educationist sounds alarm on drug epidemic impacting youth

ISLAMABAD: Educationist on Sunday highlighted a sharp rise in drug addiction among youth, attributing it to the growing gap between parents and their children, a divide that is quietly spreading through educational institutions and fueling a crisis affecting around 7.6 million people nationwide, and calls for increased awareness and urgent action from families and communities. Talking to PTV News, leading educationist Col (R) Prof. Malik Ayub Awan highlighted Pakistan's severe drug addiction crisis, warning that while public and private partnerships were crucial, the real frontline. He called for a massive shift in parental awareness to bridge the generational disconnect, insisting that parents must start engaging with their Gen Z children right now, in parallel with state-level interventions. He noted that millions of people across the country continued to grapple with the grip of addiction, which remained a pressing social and health issue. Prof. Awan acknowledged that

the government has taken significant steps to address the crisis, including implementing rehabilitation programs and conducting crackdowns on drug trafficking networks. These efforts have helped to curb the availability of illicit substances and provide support to those seeking recovery. However, he emphasized that despite these measures, much more needs to be done to raise public awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. Prof. Awan pointed out that prevention through education and stronger family involvement was crucial to reducing the number of new addicts and helping the youth resist peer pressure. He called on communities, parents, and educational institutions to work together closely with the government to build a more informed and vigilant society capable of tackling this epidemic before it grows further out of control. He further expressed regret over the widening communication and trust gap between parents and today's generation of youth,

known as Gen Z. Prof. Awan pointed out that this disconnect contributed significantly to the vulnerability of young people, making them more susceptible to drug addiction. He highlighted alarming cases of university students falling into substance abuse, underscoring the need for immediate intervention within educational institutions. According to Prof. Awan, raising treatment awareness was essential to encourage addicts to seek help without fear of stigma. He stressed the importance of providing accessible and effective rehabilitation services, coupled with community support to ensure a successful recovery journey for those affected. He urged parents to engage more openly with their children, fostering trust and understanding to bridge the gap that often drives youth towards harmful behaviors. With combining family involvement with government initiatives and educational programs, Prof. Awan believed that Pakistan could make significant progress in combating the drug addiction crisis.—DNA

Pakistan gains recognition after bringing peace talks

RAWALPINDI: Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Sunday said Pakistan had earned international recognition as a responsible state committed to promoting sustainable peace after successfully bringing the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States to the negotiating table. He said Pakistan's diplomatic efforts had helped create conditions for a ceasefire and direct engagement between the two sides, a development widely viewed as a significant contribution to regional stability. Speaking to media after inaugurating an upgraded Safari Train rake at the Rawalpindi Railway Station, the minister credited the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for strengthening Pakistan's role as a facilitator of dialogue. Abbasi termed the engagement between the United States and Iran a positive step and said Pakistan's contribution to the process was a matter of national pride. He added that the country was increasingly being recognised globally for its constructive diplomatic role. Member National Assembly, Tahira Aurangzeb and senior railway officials were also present on the occasion. Highlighting reforms in Pakistan Railways, the minister said a comprehensive programme was under way to transform the department into a modern, efficient and passenger-friendly system. He said services, including the Safari Train, were being upgraded in line with international standards. He said the Safari Train had been converted into a tourism-oriented service, offering facilities such as air-conditioned coaches, improved seating and better arrangements for families.—DNA

Religious scholars stress continuous worship

ISLAMABAD: The Islamic month of Shawwal is underway after Eid-ul-Fitr marking continued spiritual reflection gratitude and voluntary worship for Muslims worldwide. Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, carries particular religious importance as it follows the holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims observe fasting, prayer, and acts of charity. Religious scholars and officials have highlighted the spiritual significance of Shawwal, urging believers to maintain worship and other spiritual practices. Talking to APP, religious scholar and Information Secretary of the Jamaat-e-Islami Women Wing Islamabad, Sadia Saif shed light on the additional virtues of the month of Shawwal. She highlighted the significance of observing six voluntary fasts during this month, explaining that those who observe these fasts were rewarded as if they had fasted throughout the entire year. Referring to a Hadith narrated by Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (RA), she said that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) stated: "Whoever fasts during Ramadan and then follows it with six days of fasting in Shawwal, it is as if he has fasted for a lifetime" (Sahih Muslim). She further clarified that these six fasts might be observed at any time during the month of Shawwal, offering flexibility and ease for believers. She emphasized that voluntary acts of worship serve as a means of seeking forgiveness for one's shortcomings and mistakes. "Allah is Most Merciful and desires to bestow His mercy upon His servants," she stated adding, a prayer that Allah grant everyone the ability to benefit from His countless blessings and mercy. She concluded by encouraging Muslims to continue their worship and spiritual practices beyond the month of Ramadan and to make the most of the opportunities for spiritual growth in Shawwal. The official spokesperson of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Muhammad Umar Butt, told APP, "Shawwal holds great significance in Islam. Its first night is known as Laylat al-Jaiza (the Night of Reward), referring to the night of divine recompense. On the first of Shawwal, Muslims around the world celebrate Eid ul-Fitr, expressing gratitude to Allah and partaking in His blessings". He said those who observed the fasts of Ramadan and then keep six additional fasts in Shawwal are greatly rewarded, as established in authentic Hadith, particularly in the narrations of Sahih Muslim. It is stated that whoever fasts six days in Shawwal after Ramadan is considered as having fasted for the entire year. "Shawwal is one of the months of Hajj. The Hajj season comprises three months, Shawwal, Dhul-Qa'dah, and Dhul-Hijjah, with Shawwal being the first of these," he noted. He further shared that during the entire month of Shawwal, the Ministry of Religious Affairs would finalize preparations for Hajj pilgrims, including training, vaccinations, travel documentation, and other arrangements. This is to ensure that Hajj flights could commence from the first of Dhul-Qa'dah and continue throughout the month. In this regard, Shawwal holds particular importance.—APP

ITP issues traffic advisory

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has issued an important traffic advisory, announcing diversions on Islamabad Expressway, Srinagar Highway and Murree Road to Club Road leading towards the Red Zone due to security arrangements. An ITP official told APP on Sunday that entry of all public transport had been restricted on these arteries, while transporters were directed not to stop at bus stops or loops. He said the Red Zone and extended Red Zone would remain completely closed for all types of traffic. The official said the following major routes would remain closed: Kashmir Chowk Club Road towards Zero Point/Srinagar Highway Srinagar Highway from Zero Point to Serena Chowk Shakarparian Road from Chand Tara Chowk to 7th Avenue Jinnah Avenue from Khayaban Chowk to Blue Area Margalla Road from Faisal Chowk to Trail-3 He urged the citizens to avoid unnecessary travel except in case of emergency and follow the alternate traffic plan to prevent inconvenience. The official appealed to the public to cooperate with law enforcement agencies during the implementation of security measures. He added that traffic updates would be available through Islamabad Traffic Police's WhatsApp channel as well as Islamabad Police social media platforms.—APP

Pakistan showcases higher education excellence at EURIE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan made a strong and impactful mark at the Eurasia Higher Education Summit (EURIE) 2026 in Istanbul, Türkiye, with a high-level academic delegation and a dedicated Pakistan Pavilion, underscoring the country's growing academic strength, global outlook, and commitment to international collaboration in higher education. A 45-member delegation, led by Chaudhry Abdul Rehman under the platform of the Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP), represented the country at one of the world's leading academic forums. The delegation comprised chairmen of boards of governors, presidents, vice chancellors, and senior academic leaders from 17 prominent universities and key organizations, reflecting a unified and strategic national presence on the global stage. The participating institutions included Superior University, University of Lahore, University of Faisalabad, University of Sialkot, Lahore Leads University, Iqra University, Riphah International University, Preston University, City University, CECOS University, Institute of Business Management, and GIFT University. Key organizations such as OIC-COMSTEC.—APP

Vigilance, diplomacy urged to safeguard IWT

He reiterated Pakistan's longstanding position that any attempt to stop the flow of western rivers, though technically unfeasible, would be considered an act of war. "Pakistan should maintain its stance while actively pursuing diplomatic avenues to ensure the treaty is upheld," he concluded

ISLAMABAD: Trans-boundary water issues and water governance expert Dr. Azeem Ali Shah on Sunday emphasized the need for Pakistan to remain vigilant and actively engaged diplomatically to safeguard its interests under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). Talking to APP, Dr. Shah clarified that India placed the treaty in abeyance in April 2025 but did not abrogate it, meaning the agreement still legally exists between the two countries. He pointed out that in August 2025, the Permanent Court of Arbitration gave its landmark judgment, rejecting India's stance on design efficiency in hydro power projects. The court directed India to strictly adhere to design provisions for run-of-the-river projects as outlined in Article III, Annexure D of the treaty. "This effectively nullifies the precedent set by

India in the case of the Baglihar Dam, where design efficiency was pursued in violation of treaty provisions," he said. Dr. Shah expressed confidence that India was unlikely to openly violate the treaty by constructing large storage reservoirs on western rivers, which was prohibited. However, he warned that violations of design provisions in permissible projects remained a concern. He identified the Sawalkot Dam on the Chenab River as a key test case, noting that India has recently approved the project. The expert stressed that Pakistan must utilize all diplomatic and political channels, alongside the mechanisms provided under the IWT, to highlight any violations at the international level. He also pointed to the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty between India and Bangladesh, which was set to expire later this year, as another important develop-

ment to watch. "Whether this agreement is renewed or renegotiated will reflect India's broader approach to water sharing with neighboring countries," he noted. Outlining the way forward, Dr. Shah advocated continued bilateral engagement with India under the treaty framework. He cited communication between the two countries during the floods in 2025 through diplomatic channels, although not via the Indus Water Commission, as an indication of a willingness to engage on hydrological matters. He reiterated Pakistan's longstanding position that any attempt to stop the flow of western rivers, though technically unfeasible, would be considered an act of war. "Pakistan should maintain its stance while actively pursuing diplomatic avenues to ensure the treaty is upheld," he concluded.

Briefs

President Zardari congratulates Nizar Amidi

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, on Sunday, congratulated Nizar Amidi on his election as President of the Republic of Iraq, conveying his best wishes for his success in the new role. "In his message, the President expressed confidence that under President Amidi's leadership, Iraq would continue its efforts towards stability, progress and national cohesion," President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release. The president reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its fraternal relations with Iraq and enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest. President Zardari also conveyed his good wishes for the continued prosperity and well-being of the people of Iraq.—APP

EOBI investment portfolio reaches Rs 691.91 bln by Feb

ISLAMABAD: The Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution's (EOBI) investment portfolio reached Rs 691.91 billion by February 28, with fixed-income instruments continuing to dominate the fund's asset mix and income generation. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the EOBI remains heavily invested in fixed-income assets, which account for Rs 592.12 billion, or 85.58%, of the total portfolio. Within this category, the Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) form the backbone of the portfolio at Rs 540.35 billion, while accrued profit on PIBs stands at Rs 49.61 billion and corporate fixed income at Rs 2.16 billion. The concentration underscores the EOBI's preference for relatively safer and more predictable income streams, as it manages funds meant to support pension liabilities. Equity exposure remains limited in comparison. The documents show that available-for-sale equity amounts to Rs 26.38 billion, while held-for-trading (equity) stands at Rs 14.86 billion, taking total equity holdings to Rs 41.24 billion, or 5.96% of the overall portfolio. Real estate forms the third component of the investment base. According to the documents, real estate properties are valued at Rs 42.36 billion, while real estate projects account for Rs 16.20 billion, bringing total real estate exposure to Rs 58.55 billion, equal to 8.46% of the portfolio. The documents also illustrate how these assets are translating into income. For FY2025-26, the EOBI's total investment income is budgeted at Rs 78.89 billion. For the period from July 2025 to February 2026, the actual investment income stood at Rs 56.453 billion against a budgeted figure of Rs 52.593 million for the same period. Most of the income came from fixed-income investments. The documents show that fixed income generated Rs 47,151 million during July 2025-February 2026, compared to a budgeted Rs 45,391 million. Equity also contributed meaningfully, with dividend income on shares at Rs 4,788 million and capital gain on shares at Rs 3,751 million, taking total equity income for the period to Rs 8,539 million.—APP

Pakistani envoy eyes Chinese agri-tech to revitalise farming sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is seeking to secure Chinese technical expertise in buffalo genetics and molecular biology to address domestic food security and modernise its agricultural exports, Pakistani ambassador to China said. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi said, while speaking at the International Rural Innovation and Development (IRID) Expo 2026 in China's Hefei, Gwadar Pro reported. He invited Chinese firms and research institutions to partner with Pakistan on high-yield hybrid seeds and climate-resilient farming techniques. We are prioritising digital agriculture and the revitalisation of our rural economy," Hashmi told delegates at the Global Summit on Sustainable Agriculture (GSSA) Forum. He specifically identified livestock genetics—aimed at boosting dairy and meat output—and the development of advanced wheat molecular biology as critical pillars for bilateral cooperation. The ambassador also highlighted the potential for value-added industrial investment, citing polylactic acid (PLA) production as a strategic interest. This technology, which converts agricultural surpluses such as corn into biodegradable plastics, was a focal point of a diplomatic tour of the Anhui BBKA Biochemical Complex, which maintains an annual capacity of 40,000 tonnes. Hashmi further proposed the establishment of a dedicated agriculture sub-forum at future IRID editions and invited the GSSA secretariat to host its next global summit in Pakistan to facilitate direct engagement between Chinese investors and Pakistani stakeholders.

Balochistan to provide subsidised fibreglass boats to Gwadar fishermen

The Balochistan Fisheries Department has announced the distribution of 92 modern fibreglass boats to low-income fishermen in Gwadar under a provincial subsidy programme, officials said. The 24-foot vessels, part of the "Green Fibreglass Boats Scheme," are equipped with 85-90 horsepower engines and modern insulated holds designed to preserve catch quality and reduce spoilage, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro. Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch, a member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) for Gwadar, was briefed on the initiative during a visit to the Surbandar fisheries office. Fisheries officials stated that the total cost for each boat is set at 5.295 million rupees (\$19,000). Under the scheme's terms, the Balochistan government will cover 90 per cent of the cost. Registered fishermen are required to pay the remaining 10 per cent—approximately 529,500 rupees—through instalments over a four-year period. "This scheme is an important step towards improving the eco-

economic conditions of the coastal fishing community and will help modernise the fisheries sector," Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman said. The distribution will be conducted through a transparent balloting process overseen by a committee led by the Director General of Fisheries. Quotas have been allocated based on the number of registered fishermen in various coastal districts, with six boats specifically reserved for the Surbandar area. Authorities have urged eligible fishermen to submit applications at their respective Fisheries Assistant Director offices within the specified timeframe. A field survey for the upgrade of Pakistan's Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project has commenced on the Karachi-Rohri section, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said. The minister described the survey as a critical phase in the modernisation of the country's national rail infrastructure. Teams from the National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) are currently conducting detailed assessments of land, crops, trees, and existing structures along the route. Abbasi said this data would ensure a transparent compensation process for project-affected persons. The public is requested to fully cooperate with the survey teams and utilise the provided contact numbers to lodge any complaints with the project directors in Karachi and Sukkur," the minister said in a statement. The ML-1 project is expected to increase train speeds, enhance passenger facilities, and provide a stimulus to the national economy, he added. The project reached a policy milestone in October 2025 when the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) referred the preliminary designs and the 16.26 billion rupee (\$58 million) Havelian Dry Port project to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for final approval. The upgrades are being executed under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



ISLAMABAD: People walk at local park in evening time in the Federal Capital.

ICCI sees US–Iran talks as turning point for eco stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has welcomed the commencement of high-level talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad. It termed them a historic and decisive step toward restoring regional economic stability and global confidence. In a statement issued here on Saturday, Sardar Tahir Mehmood President ICCI said that Pakistan's successful facilitation of these crucial negotiations reflects its growing stature as a responsible and peace-oriented nation on the global stage. He noted that the talks come at a critical juncture when the world economy is facing severe uncertainty due to prolonged tensions in the Middle East. He observed that the ongoing dialogue between the two countries aims to transform a fragile ceasefire into a sustainable peace framework after weeks of conflict that disrupted global energy supplies and trade routes. The ICCI President emphasized that stability in the Middle East is directly linked with global economic health, particularly due to the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery for international oil shipments.

He said that any positive outcome from these talks would help ease pressure on energy markets, reduce inflationary trends, and revive investor confidence across the region. Sardar Tahir Mehmood further stated that Pakistan's role as a mediator in bringing both sides to the negotiating table demonstrates its commitment to peace, dialogue, and constructive diplomacy. He added that hosting such high-profile engagements enhances Pakistan's global image and opens new avenues for economic cooperation and regional connectivity. He remarked that the business community of Pakistan views these talks with optimism, as peace in the Gulf and broader Middle East region would have a direct positive impact on Pakistan's economy by ensuring stable energy supplies, improving trade flows, and encouraging foreign investment. He stressed that sustainable peace can only be achieved through continuous engagement and mutual understanding, urging all stakeholders to remain committed to dialogue and avoid escalation. He concluded that the Islamabad talks have the potential to mark a turning point not only in regional geopolitics but also in revitalizing global economic stability, which is essential for sustainable growth and prosperity.

Archbishop lauds Shehbaz, Asim Munir for Iran-US dialogue

ISLAMABAD: The Catholic community of the Archdiocese of Rawalpindi-Islamabad has expressed deep appreciation for the Government of Pakistan's leadership in promoting global peace and regional stability. In a formal statement on Saturday, Archbishop Dr Joseph Arshad, Archbishop-Bishop of Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Ex. President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Pakistan commended Honourable Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif and Excellency Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for their continued commitment to diplomacy and constructive engagement at the international level. The archbishop particularly acknowledged Pakistan's significant role in facilitating dialogue between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Transport fares drop 20-30 pc

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday chaired an online meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC), reviewing prices of essential commodities, transport fares and the overall supply chain situation across the country. The meeting was briefed by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) that transport costs had witnessed a significant decline due to government subsidies, with fares reduced by 20 to 30 per cent in several cities, a news release said. However, taking notice of increased fares in Karachi, the minister directed the Sindh government to take immediate corrective action. Data presented in the meeting showed that prices of eight essential items decreased during the last week, while 28 items recorded an increase. The prices of garlic, bananas, chicken and wheat flour declined by 3.78 per cent, 3.39 per cent, 1.05 per cent and 0.73 per cent, respectively, whereas diesel, petrol, tomatoes, LPG and potatoes registered notable increases. The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) remained broadly stable, recording an overall rate of 1.93 per cent during the week under review. The prices of ghee and edible oil also remained stable, while domestic fertilizer prices were kept under control despite rising global trends. The Committee expressed concern over the significant gap between wholesale and retail prices in certain cities, particularly Karachi, where tomato and potato prices showed disparities of up to 142 per cent and 117 per cent, respectively.—DNA

Pakistan emerges as central architect of peace

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United States and Iran concluded 21 hours of direct, high-level talks in Islamabad, marking their first face-to-face engagement since the 2015 nuclear negotiations. While the session ended without a final agreement, both sides signaled a willingness to continue dialogue, with Islamabad confirmed as the primary channel for future engagement. Officials described the outcome as a pause rather than a breakdown, with diplomatic contacts expected to continue in the coming weeks. Analysts said sustaining dialogue itself represents a critical first step toward de-escalation after weeks of heightened tensions. Business leader and former Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Shahid Rasheed Butt said that, in a rare convergence,

statements from Washington and Tehran acknowledged Pakistan's facilitation role. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir were named in ceasefire-related communications, a move observers described as unusual given the deep mistrust between the two sides. Butt noted that few countries command sufficient trust from both capitals to host such engagement. The talks coincided with a temporary ceasefire under which Iran confirmed it would allow the resumption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. The announcement triggered an immediate response in global markets, with oil prices easing and equities recovering. However, supply chain disruptions may persist for months even if maritime flows normalize. For Pakistan, the developments carry direct economic implications. The country

relies heavily on imported fuel, and any sustained decline in global oil prices could ease inflationary pressure and support the external account, both of which remain under strain amid ongoing fiscal consolidation and an IMF-supported programme. At the same time, uncertainty over the durability of the ceasefire continues to pose risks for energy costs and exchange rate stability. Diplomatic representatives from China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt were present in Islamabad in indirect facilitation roles, underscoring the broad regional and global stakes in preventing further escalation. Shahid Rasheed Butt added that while the diplomatic visibility may improve Pakistan's global standing, tangible economic gains will depend on sustained regional stability and policy continuity at home.

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Settler terrorism has become the norm in the West Bank

YOSSI MEKELBERG

YOU might be forgiven for wondering what is the point of repeatedly warning about injustices that take place repeatedly in the same place, perpetrated by the same people against the same other people, and condemning them when hardly anyone in a position of power is prepared to put their head above the parapet and make their voice and influence count.

This is the case with the constant increase in violence by Israeli settlers which, for the sake of accuracy, we should describe as what it is: terrorism.

The simple answer to the question is that although for now it might seem like the warnings and condemnation fall on deaf ears, the sheer scale, intensity and brazenness of the violations are increasing and have become systemic, and so they must be highlighted, loud and clear. Events since Oct. 7, 2023, have resulted in a war on several fronts – including, most recently, a 40-day US-Israeli conflict with Iran that was halted by a ceasefire agreement this week – and as a result, developments in the West Bank have been almost completely sidelined, or at least relegated, in the hierarchy of international concern. Gaza, Iran, Lebanon and Ukraine are at the forefront of people's minds, not to mention domestic issues such as the cost of living and migration. Nevertheless, while ignoring the entrenchment of the occupation of the West Bank and the settler violence might be convenient in the short term, it is immoral and also dangerous. It cannot and should not be divorced from the other fronts on which Israel is engaged, and above all from the extremely fragile situation in Gaza where, despite the so-called ceasefire, hundreds of Palestinian civilians have still been killed since the truce was called.

For many Israelis, what is taking place in the West Bank is of little or no interest. They remain largely oblivious to how it will affect future relations with the Palestinians, with countries that have already normalized relations with Israel or are considering doing so, or to the country's already declining international image. Moreover, it has become apparent that among the more extreme elements of the nearly 740,000 Jewish settlers in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, there has emerged a segment, by no means small, that is religious, messianic and, above all, dismissive of the rule of law. They do not respect the authority of either the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority, and show little regard for the principals of international law or human rights. They have developed a repugnant supremacist ideology, which the vast majority of Israeli Jews, including many of their fellow settlers, do not share.

To these supremacists, the entirety of Historic Palestine belongs to the Jewish people, and Palestinians should not be allowed to enjoy any national or political rights – and in many cases not even basic human rights. Their ultimate goal is



the annexation of the West Bank, with as few Palestinians remaining there as possible, through the expansion of settlements, thereby increasing the Jewish population, and, in parallel, "encouraging" Palestinians to leave.

Part of this "encouragement" involves the use of violence, acts of terror against the local population designed to make life unbearable. In its most recent report, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that "violence across the West Bank continues to claim lives and deepen people's needs," whether perpetrated by the security forces or settlers. Following the start of the recent escalation involving Iran in late February, there were more than 150 attacks by settlers in the space of a month, affecting about 90 communities, an average of more than six attacks per day. For many Israelis, what is taking place in the West Bank is of little or no interest. While global attention has been focused elsewhere, these settlers have acted opportunistically. As a consequence, nearly 1,700 Palestinians have been displaced in this short period alone, alongside military restrictions on access. To put the pace of the deterioration into perspective, less than three months into 2026 this figure had already surpassed the total number of Palestinians displaced during the whole of 2025. This is precisely the outcome these extremist settlers seek: the gradual emptying of Palestinian communities. Once vacated, these areas provide opportunities for the establishment of new settler outposts, regardless of formal government approval; often there is the expectation that they will eventually be connected to infrastructure and legalized under Israeli law.

Needless to say, none of these settlements are considered legal under international law. The International Court of Justice has ruled the occupation itself unlawful and called for it to end. What we are witnessing, therefore, is illegality compounded by further illegality and enforced through violence. Attacks on Palestinians are becoming increasingly severe: civilians killed or injured; the burning of homes, cars and fields; destruction of property; theft of livestock; and random assaults. Reports by the media and human rights organizations point to a clear pattern: Settlers, sometimes wearing military uniforms, enter communities, harass residents and attempt to drive them out permanently. They increasingly operate like militias, whether through coordinated action or ad hoc initiatives, often with complete impunity. While Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for his own political convenience and to avoid alienating pro-settler figures in his coalition, remains largely silent on the issue of settler violence, and the opposition has not prioritized the issue, it has fallen to the Israeli military's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, to condemn it. He described such acts "morally and ethically unacceptable," and a threat to security.

Yet there are numerous documented cases of soldiers either escorting armed settlers or turning a blind eye as they attack Palestinian towns and villages, and herd communities. In such circumstances, Palestinians risk arrest or even being shot if they attempt to defend themselves. It is within the power of the military leadership to issue clear orders, enforce discipline, hold perpetrators accountable and remove offenders from the West Bank for prosecution. However, such steps have not been taken, decisively, perhaps reflecting a reluctance to confront a political leadership that is at best indifferent to the issue, and at worst sympathetic to or even encouraging it. One can only wonder how the government believes that allowing extremist groups to break the law and terrorize a population, the security of which it is responsible for, can possibly serve Israel's interests. It is equally astonishing that such activity continues largely unchecked.

USA-Iran Talks Collapse, Illusions Remain

Qamar Bashir



This tension was dramatically illustrated during the talks themselves. Washington announced that two U.S. Navy destroyers had entered the strait to begin mine-clearing operations, signaling an attempt to project authority and normalize passage. Iran, however, rejected this narrative, asserting that any movement in the waterway falls under its control and that its forces had challenged the U.S. presence. Regardless of which version is accepted, the strategic conclusion is unavoidable: the United States cannot exercise uncontested control over the Strait of Hormuz

AS the dust settles over Islamabad, the much-anticipated direct negotiations between the United States and Iran have ended not with a breakthrough, but with a pause—one that exposes the deep structural fault lines of this conflict. After an intense 21-hour uninterrupted diplomatic marathon, the talks concluded without agreement, confirming that despite urgency, pressure, and global attention, the gap between the two adversaries remains wide and unresolved. The United States delegation, led by JD Vance, acknowledged the deadlock with unusual clarity. Despite what he described as "intensive" and "substantive" discussions, Iran "chose not to accept" American terms. This was not a procedural delay or technical pause—it was a strategic failure to reconcile competing visions of the post-war order. The talks did not collapse abruptly; they exhausted themselves, which in many ways is even more revealing. What makes this outcome more striking is the contradiction at the highest level of American leadership. Even as negotiations were ongoing—and indeed as they stretched deep into the night—Donald Trump maintained that the United States had already won the war. His assertion that "we win regardless" now stands in sharp contrast to the reality of failed negotiations. If victory had truly been secured, diplomacy would have been a formality. Instead, it has become a necessity—one that has, so far, failed to deliver results. At the center of this deadlock lies the Strait of Hormuz, the most critical strategic chokepoint in the world. Control over this narrow waterway—once responsible for nearly 20% of global energy flows—remains the primary point of contention. The United States insists on restoring full navigational freedom and removing Iranian leverage, while Iran views control over the strait as its most powerful bargaining chip. This tension was dramatically illustrated during the talks themselves. Washington announced that two U.S. Navy destroyers had entered the strait to begin mine-clearing operations, signaling an attempt to project authority and normalize passage. Iran, however, rejected this narrative, asserting that any movement in the waterway falls under its control and that its forces had challenged the U.S. presence. Regardless of which version is accepted, the strategic conclusion is unavoidable: the United States cannot exercise uncontested control over the Strait of Hormuz. This reality not only weakened Washington's negotiating position but also injected additional mistrust into an already fragile diplomatic process. Another major factor shaping the outcome of the talks was the rigidity of core demands on both sides. The United States insisted on a binding commitment that Iran would not develop nuclear weapons—a position that remains non-negotiable in Washington. Iran, on the other hand, presented equally firm red lines: a cease-

fire in Lebanon, reparations for war damage, lifting of its sovereign rights under international frameworks. These positions were not merely negotiating stances; they were strategic doctrines, leaving little room for compromise within a single round of talks.

Compounding this complexity is the evolving regional dynamic—particularly the role of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Early in the conflict, the United States explored leveraging Kurdish groups operating in and around Iran as proxy forces. This approach, however, was swiftly blocked by Turkey. Viewing Kurdish factions as extensions of the PKK insurgency, Ankara issued strong warnings that any U.S. support for such groups would directly threaten Turkish national security.

President Erdoğan leveraged Turkey's NATO position and his direct engagement with President Trump to force a policy reversal. The United States ultimately stepped back from arming Iranian Kurdish groups and offered assurances to Turkey. This episode is crucial—it demonstrates that even in wartime, U.S. strategic options are constrained by alliance politics, and that regional actors like Turkey can decisively shape the trajectory of conflict. Equally telling was the hesitation among Kurdish groups themselves, many of whom feared becoming disposable instruments in a larger geopolitical struggle. Their reluctance further undermined Washington's proxy strategy, leaving it with fewer tools to exert pressure on Iran.

Meanwhile, the economic narrative surrounding the war has taken an unusually blunt turn. President Trump has openly framed the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz as beneficial to the United States, arguing that it forces global markets to turn toward American oil and gas. In this interpretation, the war becomes a commercial advantage, a mechanism for redirecting global energy dependence. This perspective has sparked widespread criticism. It suggests that geopolitical conflict is being evaluated not in terms of stability or human cost, but through the lens of economic gain. Thousands have been killed, infrastructure has been devastated, and entire populations have been displaced. To frame such destruction as economically advantageous raises profound moral and strategic questions about the nature of modern warfare.

At the same time, Israel's continued military operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah played a significant role in the failure of the talks. Iran insisted that any ceasefire must extend to Lebanon, while Israel—under Benjamin Netanyahu—refused to halt its campaign. This divergence created an additional layer of conflict that the Islamabad negotiations could not bridge. Public sentiment across the region and beyond is also shifting. In Israel, protests are growing against what many see as endless war without clear strategic benefit. In

the United States, both traditional and digital media are increasingly questioning the rationale behind continued military engagement and the broader influence shaping American foreign policy decisions. Despite suffering significant damage, Iran has emerged from the conflict with enhanced strategic leverage. Its control over the Strait of Hormuz remains intact, and its negotiating position has hardened rather than weakened. Moreover, Iran's exploration of alternative financial systems—bypassing the U.S. dollar and traditional banking channels—poses a longer-term challenge to American economic dominance. The broader Middle East is also undergoing a quiet transformation. Gulf states are reassessing their reliance on U.S. security guarantees, while regional powers like Turkey are asserting greater independence. These shifts point toward a more multipolar regional order, where American influence, while still significant, is no longer uncontested.

Amid this complexity, Pakistan's role as mediator stands out as a rare diplomatic success. By bringing the United States and Iran to the same table, Islamabad demonstrated its capacity to act as a bridge between adversaries. The involvement of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and military leadership underscores Pakistan's growing importance in global diplomacy. The uninterrupted 21-hour negotiation itself remains a critical takeaway. It reflects a shared recognition of the stakes and a willingness to engage deeply. However, the failure to reach agreement highlights the depth of mistrust and the rigidity of strategic positions on both sides. The talks did not fail due to lack of effort—they failed because the foundations for compromise are not yet in place. What happens next remains uncertain. There are indications that talks may resume, suggesting that diplomacy is not entirely dead. But the pause in negotiations also signals that any future progress will require significant shifts in position—something neither side appears ready to undertake immediately. In this context, President Trump's declaration of victory appears less like a reflection of reality and more like a political narrative aimed at shaping perception. It may also signal an underlying recognition that the limits of military power have been reached. In the final analysis, the events in Islamabad reveal a sobering truth. This is not a conflict that can be resolved through force alone. It is a war defined by interdependence—of energy, alliances, economics, and diplomacy. The collapse of talks does not mark the end of the process, but it does expose the illusion at its core. Victory has been declared—but no outcome has been secured.

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Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan

When Pakistan Reaches Its Defining Moment

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



It soon became apparent that the path to complete success was obstructed by formidable obstacles; the unrelenting blackmail and aggressive posture of Israel, the intransigent stance maintained by elements within the American establishment, and a host of other complicating factors beyond Islamabad's control. Yet even without a definitive breakthrough, Pakistan emerged triumphant.

TODAY, Pakistan shines as a beacon of peace in a world often shaken by turmoil, earning a level of respect and admiration unlike any other time in its modern history. Through tireless diplomacy, steadfast resolve, and a profound commitment to harmony, the nation has carved out a role as an indispensable mediator, venturing to extraordinary and often unimaginable lengths to bring warring parties to the table. This sacred endeavour has not merely eased immediate tensions but has ushered in an entirely new chapter for Pakistan—one marked by accelerated development, profound national contentment, and an elevation of its global stature that fills every patriotic heart with pride. In the coming days, observers across the world will witness Pakistan assuming the steering seat of regional affairs, particularly within the vast expanse of the Islamic world, guiding it toward unity and stability with wisdom and grace.

The recent diplomatic initiatives hosted in Islamabad have elevated Pakistan's prestige and credibility to heights that once seemed distant. Fully cognisant of the intense pressures and complex ground realities, the United States extended a gesture of confidence by dispatching a high-powered delegation under the personal leadership of its Vice President. Similarly, the Islamic Republic of Iran, recognising Pakistan's unique position, sent its own distinguished representatives to the Pakistani capital. Although these crucial negotiations did not culminate in a final, binding accord, the earlier groundwork meticulously laid by Pakistan's seasoned diplomatic expertise had already begun to melt the ice of longstanding animosities and foster an atmosphere of cautious hope. It soon became apparent that the path to complete success was obstructed by formidable obstacles; the unrelenting blackmail and aggressive posture of Israel, the intransigent stance maintained by elements within the American establishment, and a host of other complicating factors beyond Islamabad's control. Yet even without a definitive breakthrough, Pakistan emerged triumphant

in the court of world opinion, its reputation as a sincere and capable peacemaker burnished brighter than ever before. From the very inception of these efforts, Pakistan's adversaries—ever vigilant and opportunistic—spared no exertion in attempting to sabotage the process. They employed every conceivable means to dissuade the contending parties from placing their trust in Islamabad, weaving intricate webs of misinformation and intrigue. But divine mercy, manifesting from the unseen realms, stood as Pakistan's invisible shield. Through the boundless grace of Allah Almighty, every conspiracy crumbled into dust, and the enemies' schemes dissolved like morning mist before the rising sun. This heavenly assistance not only preserved the sanctity of the mediation but also paved the way for a subsequent triumph that resounded across continents.

In a decisive confrontation on the battlefield, Pakistan delivered a resounding defeat to its eternal adversary, India. This victory was no mere military achievement; it was a resounding affirmation of national honour and sovereignty that simultaneously shielded the entire region—and indeed the wider world—from descending into a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. By its courageous actions, Pakistan has dealt a mortal blow to the long-cherished "Greater Israel" plan, that audacious design which once threatened to redraw the map of the Middle East through coercion and expansion. The Arab nations, long accustomed to viewing security from afar, have now come to a profound realization; true safety cannot be guaranteed by geographic distance or fleeting alliances alone. In an era of fluid geopolitics and rising uncertainties, closer bonds of fraternity among Muslim countries have become not only prudent but imperative. Herein lies Pakistan's unique and formidable strength. Endowed with a brave, intelligent, and professionally led armed forces—under the command of visionary leadership—and fortified by a credible nuclear deterrent, Pakistan possesses the military backbone essential for anchoring a new era of collective security. When this formidable capability is fused with the abundant natural and economic resources of fellow Islamic nations, the re-

sult could mirror the successful model of the European Union; a robust alliance wherein each member stands as guarantor of the other's peace and territorial integrity. Such a fraternity would render any aggressive designs against any Islamic state unthinkable, deterring even the most ambitious adversaries. A formal and auspicious beginning to this noble vision has already been forged. Pakistani warplanes, accompanied by a dedicated military contingent, have proudly landed on Saudi Arabian soil, serving as a living testament to Islamabad's solemn pledge to safeguard the Holy Land's security and sovereignty. This gesture resonates deeply, symbolising Pakistan's readiness to extend its protective umbrella across brotherly lands.

In the fullness of time, Muslim nations in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood—especially the prosperous Gulf states—will increasingly regard the country as their steadfast pillar of support and strategic anchor. This aspiration finds its most eloquent endorsement in the timeless words of the Holy Quran: "Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." Unity, after all, is the greatest source of strength for the Ummah, transforming potential weakness into an unassailable fortress of faith and fraternity. Through these multifaceted endeavours—diplomatic, military, and spiritual—Pakistan has not only burnished its own image but has rendered an enduring service to the cause of regional tranquility and Islamic solidarity. Challenges undoubtedly remain on the horizon, yet the foundations so carefully laid in these momentous times herald a future radiant with greater respect, unshakable security, and shared prosperity for Pakistan and its fellow Muslim brethren. In rising to its responsibilities with courage, sagacity, and an abiding trust in divine providence, Pakistan has reminded a watching world that authentic leadership often resides in the quiet, persistent pursuit of mediation and the resolute defence of justice. As it takes its rightful place at the helm of regional and Islamic affairs, the nation carries with it the fervent prayers and aspirations of millions who see in its ascent the promise of a brighter, more harmonious dawn for the entire Ummah.

Briefs

Vance says talks failed to reach deal with Iran

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shortcomings in the negotiations were not due to Pakistan, which had "done an amazing job" in facilitating dialogue. Responding to questions, Vance said Washington's core demand remained an "affirmative commitment" from Iran that it would neither pursue nuclear weapons nor develop capabilities enabling rapid weaponisation. "That is the core goal of the President of United States, and that's what we've tried to achieve through these negotiations," he added. He said the key issue remained a long-term commitment from Iran, stating: "Do we see a fundamental commitment of will for the Iranians not to develop a nuclear weapon, not just now, not just two years from now, but for the long term? We haven't seen that yet. We hope that we will." On the scope of discussions, Vance said: "We talked about all those issues... and we talked about a number of issues beyond that," adding, "we just could not get to a situation where the Iranians were willing to accept our terms." He maintained that the US delegation had shown flexibility: "I think that we were quite flexible. We were quite accommodating." Vance said the team remained in close contact with Washington throughout the negotiations. "We were talking to the president consistently... a half dozen times, a dozen times over the past 21 hours," he said, adding that they were also in touch with the wider national security team. He said Washington was leaving Islamabad with what he described as its "final and best offer," adding that it remained to be seen whether Iran would accept it. Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi for about two hours before a break, according to a source familiar with Pakistan's mediation efforts. The US departure came as a setback, after earlier indications that talks between the United States and Iran would continue despite remaining differences, with negotiations in Islamabad entering a second day and moving into a technical phase involving the exchange of written proposals. In a post on X, the Government of Iran said another round of talks concluded after about 14 hours and that technical teams from both sides were now sharing detailed "expert texts" following high-level discussions in Islamabad. "The talks will resume on Sunday after a break," it added.

UK prime minister say US...

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stalled, adding that US President Donald Trump's earlier social media comments had been "extraordinary." "It's obviously disappointing that we haven't yet seen a breakthrough in negotiations and an end to this war in Iran that is a sustainable one," Streeting told Sky News. "As ever in diplomacy, you're failing, until you succeed. So while these talks may not have ended in success, (it) doesn't mean there isn't merit in continuing to try," the health minister added. Streeting also criticized Trump's rhetoric during the crisis. "I don't think it's controversial to say posting on social media a threat to end the Iranian civilization, really... (is) quite extraordinary." Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong meanwhile urged a continuation of the Middle East ceasefire after US-Iran talks ended with no deal. "The priority now must be to continue the ceasefire and return to negotiations," Wong said in a statement, adding it was "disappointing that the Islamabad talks between the United States and Iran have ended without agreement."

Zalmi thrash hapless Qalandars to go top

Zalmi reached 150 for three in the 17th over, but Qalandars fought back strongly in death overs

DNA

KARACHI: Maintaining their impressive run in the HBL Pakistan Super League, Peshawar Zalmi thrashed Lahore Qalandars by 76 runs here at the National Bank Stadium on Saturday to climb to the top of the table and extend their winning streak. Chasing 174, former champions Qalandars collapsed dramatically to 97 all out in 17 overs, their batting order unraveling against a disciplined Zalmi attack. The defeat leaves Qalandars languishing in sixth place after completing half their league-stage matches, while Zalmi, unbeaten in several outings, now sit atop the PSL standings with momentum firmly on their side. Zalmi's innings was built around a commanding second-wicket partnership between Kusal Mendis and captain Babar Azam. After Mohammad Harris gifted his wicket early for 18 off 10 balls – toe-ending a cross-bat shot to mid-off off Shaheen Shah Afridi – Mendis walked in and immediately looked at ease. The Sri Lankan wicket-keeper/batter, fresh from a strong previous outing, played with confidence on a surface that offered grip and occasional slow bounce. Mendis reached his second successive half-century with a massive six off Usama Mir, finishing with a fluent 74 off 48 balls, studded with five boundaries and four sixes. His knock featured elegant drives, powerful heaves over mid-wicket and clever lap scoops. Babar, meanwhile, played the perfect anchor, rotating the strike intelligently and providing stability during the middle overs. The pair added 109 runs for the sec-

ond wicket before Babar mistimed one to long-on for 43 off 40 balls. "Next to me was Babar. He batted really well and he gave me a lot of confidence," Mendis said after the match. "I played my normal game in powerplay. The reason is Babar – I know he has played so many matches in Pakistan, he knows the conditions very well, that's why I played my normal game. He supported me a lot." Zalmi reached 150 for three in the 17th over, but Qalandars fought back strongly in death overs. Shaheen, leading from the front with the ball, claimed three wickets for 22 in four overs. He removed Harris early, then accounted for Mendis in the 17th over with a well-directed delivery that the batter holed out to long-on. Shaheen's final-over yorker also disturbed Farhan Yousuf's stumps. Mustafizur Rahman picked up two crucial wickets, including that of Michael Bracewell, using his variations expertly to restrict the flow of runs. Despite the presence of pinch-hitters Abdul Samad and Iftikhar Ahmed low down the order, Zalmi could not push beyond 173 for seven. Samad fell lbw for two, while Bracewell's breezy 21 off 10 ended when he flicked a low full toss to deep square leg. Iftikhar remained not out on seven as the innings closed at a competitive but not daunting total on a tricky pitch. Usama, one of Qalandars' spinners, acknowledged the challenge. "Full credit goes to Kusal Mendis for the way he assessed the wicket, read the conditions, and played accordingly. He played low-risk cricket, which allowed him to set such a big target," Usama said. In the chase, Qalandars never got going.

Fakhar Zaman and Mohammad Naeem started cautiously, but Shoriful Islam drew the first blood, inducing a thick edge from Naeem that was taken at mid-off. Abdullah Shafique played some crisp shots for his 21 off 15, but Nahid Rana's express pace produced a spectacular breakthrough, forcing Abdullah into a pull that was swallowed at deep square leg. Bracewell then turned the game decisively with his off-spin, claiming three wickets for 18 runs in four overs. He removed Fakhar, who was caught coolly by Babar at long-on; then accounted for Haseebullah Khan, caught by a diving Aamer Jamal and Sikandar Raza, who top-edged to Harris at deep mid-wicket. Bracewell's variations and flight exploited the conditions perfectly, exposing Qalandars' fragile middle order. Sufiyan Muqeem complemented Bracewell beautifully, taking three wickets for 21. His leg-breaks and googlies accounted for Asif Ali, Shaheen and Ubaid Shah. Nahid's raw pace added to the pressure, as the speedster troubled batters with his short balls to claim two wickets, including a sharp caught-behind, by a diving Mendis to dismiss Usama. Duniith Wellalage offered some resistance with 20 off 24, but Aamer sealed the victory by having him caught at deep backward point. Mustafizur remained not out on four as Qalandars' innings folded well short. **Scoreboard PESHAWAR ZALMI:** Mohammad Harris c Usama b Shaheen18 Babar Azam c Abdullah b Usama43 Kusal Mendis c Abdullah b Shaheen74 Michael Bracewell c Asif b Mustafizur21

Abdul Samad lbw b Ubaid2 Iftikhar Ahmed not out7 Aamer Jamal c Abdullah b Mustafizur0 Farhan Yousaf b Shaheen2 Sufiyan Muqeem not out1 EXTRAS (LB-2, W-3)5 TOTAL (for seven wickets, 20 overs)173 DID NOT BAT: Shoriful Islam, Nahid Rana FALL OF WICKETS: 1-18 (Harris), 2-127 (Babar), 3-150 (Mendis), 4-153 (Samad), 5-165 (Bracewell), 6-165 (Aamer), 7-168 (Farhan) BOWLING: Shaheen 4-0-22-3, Wellalage 4-0-40-0 (1w), Ubaid 3-0-29-1, Mustafizur 4-0-30-2, Usama 4-0-39-1 (1w), Sikandar 1-0-11-0 LAHORE QALANDARS: Fakhar Zaman c Babar b Bracewell21 Mohammad Naeem c Sufiyan b Shoriful1 Abdullah Shafique c Abdul b Nahid21 Sikandar Raza c Harris b Bracewell14 Haseebullah Khan c Aamer b Bracewell3 Asif Ali b Sufiyan0 Shaheen Shah Afridi b Sufiyan5 Duniith Wellalage c Farhan b Aamer20 Usama Mir c Mendis b Nahid1 Ubaid Shah st Mendis b Sufiyan4 Mustafizur Rahman not out4 EXTRAS (LB-1, W-2)3 TOTAL (all out, 17 overs)97 FALL OF WICKETS: 1-4 (Naeem), 2-43 (Abdullah), 3-45 (Fakhar), 4-55 (Haseebullah), 5-56 (Asif), 6-64 (Raza), 7-67 (Shaheen), 8-70 (Usama), 9-75 (Ubaid) BOWLING: Iftikhar 2-0-15-0, Shoriful 2-0-17-1, Bracewell 4-0-18-3 (1w), Nahid 3-0-15-2, Sufiyan 4-0-21-3 (1w), Aamer 2-0-10-1 RESULT: Peshawar Zalmi won by 76 runs. MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Kusal Mendis

'Diplomacy never ends', says Iran...

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Tehran the "final and best offer". Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led his side's negotiations, said that the US failed to earn Iran's trust but did understand their logic and principles. Meanwhile, Baqaei said that the talks were conducted in an atmosphere of mistrust. "It is natural that we shouldn't have expected to reach agreement in just one session," the spokesperson was quoted as saying by Iranian media. He emphasized that "diplomacy never ends," and said: "This tool is for protecting national interests, and diplomats must perform their duties both in times of war and peace." Baqaei said the success of the talks depended on the "seriousness and good faith of the opposing side" and the acceptance of Iran's legitimate rights and interests. The spokesperson also pointed out the complexity of the issues, saying: "Some new issues, such as the issue of the Strait of Hormuz, were added to these negotiations, each of which has its own complexities."

Iran's Ghalibaf thanks...

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the last two conflicts—have left Tehran wary of the opposing side. Ghalibaf revealed that members of the Iranian delegation presented forward-looking proposals during the discussions. However, he said the US ultimately failed to win the trust of the Iranian side in this round of negotiations. "America has understood our logic and principles," he said, adding that it is now up to Washington to decide whether it can build trust with Iran.

Islamabad talks with Iran were...

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close to 20 hours. I could go into great detail, and talk about much that has been gotten but, there is only one thing that matters – IRAN IS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS! ... In many ways, the points that were agreed to are better than us continuing our Military Operations to conclusion, but all of those points don't matter compared to allowing Nuclear Power to be in the hands of such volatile, difficult, unpredictable people." Trump emphasized that while progress was made on several fronts during the marathon negotiations hosted by Pakistani leaders, the nuclear issue remained the decisive sticking point. He reiterated his long-standing position: "Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Iran reports 3,375 people killed so far

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This figure comes as high-level face-to-face talks between Iranian and US delegations in Islamabad, Pakistan, ended without a breakthrough. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf blamed the lack of trust on past experiences with the US, while a fragile ceasefire remains in place amid ongoing regional tensions. ContextThe announcement marks the latest official update on casualties from the US-Israel military campaign against Iran, which began in late February 2026. Independent estimates from groups like HRANA have placed the total death toll slightly higher, around 3,500-3,600, with a significant portion being civilians. The war has caused widespread destruction, displacement, and damage to infrastructure across Iran, with both sides exchanging strikes over several weeks before a temporary ceasefire took hold. This latest death toll figure is likely to feature prominently in ongoing diplomatic efforts and public discourse in Iran as the country assesses the human and material cost of the conflict.

Babar Azam becomes first PSL batter to surpass 4,000-run mark

Right-handed batter reached landmark in his 105th PSL appearance, maintaining career strike rate of 127.92

DNA

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam on Saturday made history as he became the first batter in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) history to cross the 4,000-run mark. The right-handed batter achieved the major milestone during their side's fixture against Lahore Qalandars at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Saturday. Babar played a key innings of 43 runs from 40 deliveries, striking three fours and one six. He reached the landmark in his 105th PSL appearance, maintaining a career strike rate of 127.92. His record



also includes 37 half-centuries and two centuries, highlighting his consistency in the tournament. The second-highest run-scorer in PSL history, Lahore Qalandars' aggressive batter Fakhar Zaman, remains well behind with 3,018 runs from 99 matches at a strike rate of 141.82, including 24 fifties and two centuries. PSL's leading run-scorers list now stands as follows: Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi) – 4,004* Fakhar Zaman (Lahore Qalandars) – 3,018 Mohammad Rizwan (Multan Sultans) – 2,853 Rilee Rossouw (Quetta Gladiators) – 2,366 Shoaib Malik (Quetta Gladiators) – 2,350.

No Compromise on CPEC Security

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Ismail Khan, Ghulam Mubashir Mekan, and RPO Sargodha, Dr. Shahzad Asif, on Sunday conducted a joint visit to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Motorway M-14 at the inter-provincial boundary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to review security arrangements. The visit was carried out in line with the directives of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, with the objective of assessing security measures at the junction of the two provinces and strengthening inter-provincial coordination. District Police Officer (DPO) Dera Ismail Khan, Ziauddin Ahmed, DPO Mianwali, Waqar Azeem, DPO Lakki Marwat, Nazir Khan, along with senior officials including Superintendent of Police (SP) Motorway Ateeq Khan, Counter Terrorism Department, Dera Region- SP Iftikhar Ali Shah, SP Paharpur Iqbal Khan, Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs), and other concerned officers were also present on the occasion. During the visit, the RPOs inspected various security points along the motorway and reviewed deployment of personnel, response mechanisms, and overall security arrangements in detail. Speaking on the occasion, the officers emphasized that CPEC was the economic lifeline of the country and ensuring its security was a national responsibility, adding that no compromise would be made in this regard. They agreed to further enhance intelligence-based operations against terrorists and criminal elements in and around the motorway, stressing that effective coordination, joint strategies, and integrated operations between Punjab and KP police would help strengthen peace and stability in the region. – APP

Pakistan teams reach Kathmandu for ITF Asia 12 & Under Team Competition

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan's Boys' and Girls' 12 & Under tennis teams have arrived in Kathmandu to participate in the International Tennis Federation Asia 12 & Under Team Competition (South Asia), scheduled to be held from April 11 to 18. The event will feature participation from South Asian countries, providing a valuable platform for young talent to compete at the regional level and gain international exposure, said a press release. Pakistan Boys Team included: Muhammad Aayan, Muhammad Faizan, Muhammad Ibraheem Hussain Gill and Heera Ashiq (Captain). Pakistan Girls Team included: Shahnoor Umer, Shahreen Umer, Wajeeha Fatima and Zoha Asim (Captain). Honda Pakistan has proudly sponsored the teams. The President Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), Secretary General PTF, and the entire PTF management have extended their best wishes to the teams, expressing confidence in their ability to perform well and represent Pakistan with pride. The PTF also extends its sincere appreciation to Honda Pakistan for sponsoring the trip and promoting tennis in Pakistan. – Agencies

Pakistan's diplomacy and path...

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together by faith and nationalism, has allowed Iran to absorb immense shocks. Acknowledging this resilience does not mean overlooking Iran's red lines—its delegation demanded compensation for wartime damage and the release of frozen assets when meeting with Shehbaz Sharif—but it does mean recognising that a proud nation will only accept a deal that respects its sovereignty. Recognising America's willingness to talk: The United States deserves credit for coming to the table. Vice President JD Vance left Washington expressing optimism, saying the negotiations "are going to be positive" and that Washington was willing to extend an open hand if Iran negotiated in good faith. He also signaled that the U.S. would not be manipulated. For an administration that had threatened strikes on Iranian infrastructure days earlier, agreeing to direct talks in Islamabad is a significant step. It acknowledges that war has yielded diminishing returns and that diplomacy—however messy—is the only path to lasting security. Why the world needs peace: The cost of continued conflict is not abstract. Closure of the Strait of Hormuz has halted 20% of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, triggering what the International Energy Agency calls the worst energy disruption in history.

The war has removed about 400 million barrels of oil from the market, driving prices up by roughly 50% and pushing countries from Thailand to Sri Lanka to ration fuel. Fertiliser shortages threaten to disrupt global food supplies. These cascading crises underscore why the ceasefire talks matter: reopening the strait and ending the war would provide relief to economies battered by the energy shock and allow oil, gas and fertiliser shipments trapped on hundreds of tankers to flow again. Only a durable peace can prevent lasting scars on global supply chains and energy markets. Toward a just and lasting settlement: For Pakistan, the negotiations are not about siding with either party but about safeguarding our own people. A successful settlement would stabilise trade routes, curb inflation and restore confidence in global markets. As Shehbaz Sharif said, the next phase is a make or break moment requiring courage and flexibility. Iran's resilience and America's readiness to talk should be matched by compromise. Pakistan has shown that with a strong deterrent, steadfast leadership and diplomatic creativity, even bitter enemies can be brought to the table. Now all parties must seize this chance, maintain the ceasefire and work toward a peace that honours dignity and justice for all. – The author is: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Hyderabad Kingsmen register first PSL 11 win after beating Karachi Kings

Maaz Sadaqat leads Hyderabad's batting with 37 runs while Hassan Khan scores unbeaten 33

DNA

KARACHI: Hyderabad Kingsmen opened their winning account in Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 with a four-wicket triumph over Karachi Kings at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Saturday. The victory marked the Kingsmen's first in their debut PSL appearance and came after four consecutive defeats against Lahore Qalandars, Quetta Gladiators, Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi, respectively. Hyderabad Kingsmen got off to a spirited start to the pursuit as their captain Marnus Labuschagne played a blistering 26-run cameo off just 10 deliveries until falling victim to Khushdil Shah in the third over with 36 runs on the board. Wicketkeeper batter Usman Khan joined opener Maaz Sadaqat in the middle, and the duo ensured retaining the momentum by knitting a quickfire 60-run off just 30 de-

liveries before both perished in quick succession. Sadaqat remained the top-scorer for the Kingsmen with a blazing 37 off 29 deliveries with the help of four fours and two sixes, while Usman chipped in with a 13-ball 27, featuring three fours and two sixes. Their back-to-back dismissals sparked a collapse, which saw the Kingsmen losing two more wickets of Saim Ayub (six) and Glenn Maxwell (two) and were thus reduced to 112/5 in 11.4 overs. No.7 batter Irfan then took charge of the Kingsmen's pursuit and shared an important 27-run partnership for the sixth wicket with Kusal Perera, who contributed with a 14-ball 17. Irfan was then joined by Hassan Khan in the middle, and the duo displayed nerves of steel to propel the Kingsmen to a much-craved triumph in the final over with an unbeaten 50-run partnership. Hassan dominated the match-winning partnership by contributing 33 off just 16 deliveries, while Irfan remained unbeaten with a

20-ball 29. Abbas Afridi was the pick of the bowlers for the Kings, taking two wickets for 30 runs in his four overs, while Hasan Ali, Khushdil Shah, Adam Zampa and Salman Ali Agha made one scalp apiece. Hassan was declared Player of the Match after a decisive 33-run knock off 16 balls. Kingsmen captain Marnus Labuschagne's decision to field first backfired as the home side piled up 188/8 in their 20 overs. The Kings, however, got off to a dismal start to their innings as they lost Reeza Hendricks (two) in the first over with just two runs on the board. Following the early stutter, Salman Ali Agha (24) joined Muhammad Waseem in the middle, and the duo batted sensibly to add an important 45-run partnership for the second wicket until the former fell victim to Hunain Shah in the final over of the batting powerplay. Hunain struck again in his next over, trapping Waseem lbw, who walked back after scoring 25 off 19, as the Kings slipped to

59/3 in 7.2 overs. Following the back-to-back dismissals, youngsters Saad Baig and Azam Khan took the reins of the Kings' batting charge and added valuable runs in the middle by putting together an anchoring 69-run partnership for the fourth wicket. Kingsmen captain Labuschagne broke the budding stand in his first over by dismissing Azam, who made 26 off 19 deliveries with the help of two sixes and a four. His dismissal, however, turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the Kings as it paved the way for stand-in captain Moeen Ali to walk out and bat at No.6, and the left-handed batter turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting. The left-handed batter played a blistering 44-run cameo off just 16 deliveries, smashing five sixes and a four until eventually falling victim to Mohammad Ali in the penultimate over. Baig, on the other hand, brought up his maiden PSL half-century in the same over and retired out after top-scoring with a 37-ball 53, studded with six fours.

Briefs

S&P Global affirms Egypt's 'B/B' ratings

RIYADH: S&P Global has affirmed Egypt's sovereign credit ratings at "B/B" with a stable outlook, citing strong momentum in macroeconomic reforms and improved external buffers. In its latest report, the credit rating agency stated that the affirmation reflects a balance between Egypt's reform progress over the past two years, its external buffers, and its medium-term growth outlook, against heightened risks from prolonged regional geopolitical tensions. Credit rating agencies are closely monitoring Egypt's reform trajectory as it works to strengthen external buffers and restore macroeconomic stability, even as regional tensions continue to pose risks to growth and investor confidence. Earlier this month, Moody's reaffirmed Egypt's long-term sovereign credit rating at "Caal" for both foreign and local currency obligations, while maintaining a positive outlook. Moody's attributed the rating to the country's continued fiscal consolidation, improving external balances, and the government's commitment to structural economic reforms. In its latest report, S&P Global said: "Egypt is entering the conflict with stronger external buffers than in previous crises. Over the past 24 months, the authorities have implemented significant reforms, including liberalization of the foreign exchange regime — that have unlocked the International Monetary Fund and other donor support and attracted sizable FDI inflows from the Gulf Cooperation Council." It added: "Until the Middle East war started on Feb. 28, these reforms had supported strong growth in tourism receipts, diaspora remittances, and non-resident portfolio inflows, contributing to a sharp accumulation of international reserves to \$52.8 billion as of March 2026." The analysis further said that recent reforms have supported Egypt's macroeconomic stabilization, including efforts to reduce inflation and rebuild reserves, while maintaining fiscal consolidation. Despite the resilience shown by economic activity, S&P expects real gross domestic product growth to moderate slightly to 4.7 percent in fiscal year 2025-2026.—APP

Oman gas output rises 1.3% as oil production increase

JEDDAH: Oman's natural gas output rose 1.3 percent to 8.77 billion cubic meters by the end of February, as higher oil production and exports offset weaker crude prices. Total gas production, including imports, increased from 8.65 billion cubic meters a year earlier, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, as reported by the Oman News Agency. The gain was driven by non-associated gas output, which rose 4.3 percent to 6.94 billion cubic meters. Associated gas production — linked to oil extraction — declined 8.5 percent to 1.83 billion cubic meters. Amid persistent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, Oman's energy sector continues to adapt, with modest growth in gas production and oil output reflecting efforts to maintain supply stability despite shifting market conditions. "At the consumption level, natural gas consumption in industrial projects increased by 6.2 percent to 4.88 billion cubic meters by the end of February 2026, compared with 4.59 billion cubic meters in the same period of 2025," ONA reported. Gas consumption in power generation plants increased by 13.2 percent to about 2.26 billion cubic meters, compared with 1.99 billion cubic meters in the same period last year. Gas consumption in oil fields, including losses, metering differences, and shrinkage factors, declined by 20.8 percent to 1.60 billion cubic meters, compared with 2.02 billion cubic meters in the same period of 2025.—APP

Over 500 held at pro Palestinian rally in London

Protester Denis MacDermot, 73, from Edinburgh, said he had been arrested before and had no hesitation about turning out again

LONDON: Police in London said they had arrested more than 500 pro-Palestinian protesters at a demonstration in support of the banned group Palestine Action on Saturday. Officers carried away activists to cheers and clapping from other demonstrators who gathered for the sit-down demonstration in the capital's Trafalgar Square. The protesters held placards in support of the banned group Palestine Action, making them liable for arrest. London's Metropolitan Police said on social media platforms X just before midnight that they had arrested 523 people aged between 18 and 87. Palestine Action was proscribed as a terrorist organization in July, making it a criminal offense to belong to or support the group, punishable by up to 14 years in prison. The High Court in London upheld a challenge to the ban in mid-February, saying it had interfered with the right to freedom of speech. The government has been granted leave to appeal against the decision. London's Metropolitan Police paused arrests in the wake of the High Court ruling before announcing in late March that they would

resume. "It's really important to continue to show up," said Freya, 28, manager of a London environmental organization, one of those sitting toward the front of the crowd of protesters. "It's important that we all continue to oppose genocide... The government might flip-flop in their legal argument but the morals of these people (here) do not change," she said. "Misguided crackdown" There have been nearly 3,000 arrests since the ban on Palestine Action was imposed, mainly for carrying placards defending it. Hundreds of people are facing charges. Protester Denis MacDermot, 73, from Edinburgh, said he had been arrested before and had no hesitation about turning out again. "I'm a supporter of these great people," he said, waving toward other protesters, adding that if the court process was definitive "there would be no need for all this." Protest organizers Defend Our Juries said hundreds of people had taken part in Saturday's demonstration, protesting against "the UK Government's complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza and the misguided crackdown on peaceful protest at home."

Police were "choosing to make arrests despite the government's ban on the group being ruled unlawful by the High Court, and leading lawyers warning that any arrests would be unlawful," it added in a statement. Amnesty UK condemned the arrests as "yet another blow to civil liberties in this country." "The Met rightly said it would stop making arrests. It has now gone back to its old, failed policy — mass arrests of people holding pieces of card, including today an elderly woman with walking sticks," it said in a statement on X. The ban, which put Palestine Action on a blacklist that also includes Palestinian militants Hamas and the Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah, has sparked severe backlash. A judge has put on hold all trials of people charged with supporting Palestine Action, scheduling a blanket review of cases for July 30. Set up in 2020, Palestine Action's stated goal on its now-blocked website is to end "global participation in Israel's genocidal and apartheid regime." It has mainly targeted weapons factories, especially those belonging to the Israeli defense group Elbit Systems.—DNA

Australia PM to travel to Malaysia, Brunei for fuel talks

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will travel to Brunei and Malaysia to discuss energy and food security, his office said on Sunday, continuing regional efforts to shore up fuel supplies for a nation reliant on imports. Albanese will travel to Brunei and Kuala Lumpur from April 14 to 17 to meet with Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, his office said in a statement. Australia is one of the world's top exporters of liquefied natural gas (LNG), but is largely reliant on Asia for fuel and the fertilizer needed for farmers to produce food crops. Asian nations have come under pressure from soaring global energy prices caused by the war in the Middle East. Australia and Singapore agreed to the continued flow of refined fuel and LNG during a visit by Albanese to Australia's top fuel supplier on Friday. Malaysia is Australia's third-largest source of refined fuel, while Australia supplies 95 percent of Malaysia's imported LNG. Brunei and Malaysia are also significant suppliers of fertilizer to Australia. "We are taking every step to reinforce relationships and engage with key partners to keep our fuel supply flowing," Albanese said in a statement. Australia has 38 days' supply of petrol, 31 days' supply of diesel and 28 days' supply of jet fuel, authorities said Saturday in a weekly update on fuel levels. Although demand and prices have spiked amid panic buying, the national fuel supply has remained steady since the Middle East war began on February 28. There are 57 tanker vessels on the way to Australia carrying fuel, the government said as it launched an advertising campaign urging the public to conserve petrol usage. Foreign Minister Penny Wong earlier on Sunday urged a continuation of the Middle East ceasefire and a return to negotiations after US-Iran talks ended with no deal.—APP

Saudi main market opens week at 11,314 points

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's benchmark Tadawul All Share Index started the week at 11,314.64, down 28.53 points, or 0.25 percent. The index opened at 11,299.58 and remained under pressure throughout the day, with 100 gainers against 159 losers. The parallel market NomuC outperformed, rising 128.68 points, or 0.57 percent, to finish at 22,800.07, while the MT30 index fell 0.31 percent to 1,525.52. Among the session's top gainers, Methanol Chemicals Co. rose 7.37 percent to close at SR9.18. Saudi Industrial Investment Group advanced 6.80 percent to SR14.44, while Alujain Corp. gained 4.09 percent to SR27.98. Saudi Industrial Export Co. increased 3.90 percent to SR2.40, and Arabian Drilling Co. climbed 3.80 percent to SR84.65. On the downside, Fourth Milling Co. declined 3.85 percent to SR3.75. Saleh Abdulaziz AlRashed & Sons Co. fell 3.23 percent to SR60.00, while Sports Club Co. dropped 2.97 percent to SR6.54. Thob Al Aseel Co. decreased 2.95 percent to SR3.62, and Al Majed Oud Co. recorded a 2.90 percent loss to close at SR157.30. On the announcement front, Al Moammar Information Systems Co. disclosed the receipt of a purchase order from the Ministry of Education valued at SR114.5 million, inclusive of VAT. The company stated that the contract reflects continued demand for its technology solutions in the public sector, with the financial impact expected to be reflected in upcoming results. Al Moammar Information Systems Co. closed up 1.32 percent at SR168.80, gaining SR2.20 on the day. Advanced Petrochemical Co. reported its estimated financial results for the three-month period ended March 31, 2026. The company posted sales of SR1.07 billion, up 75.7 percent year on year, driven by a 94 percent increase in sales volumes following the commencement of operations at Advanced Polyolefins Industry Co. in the third quarter of 2025. However, net profit declined 58.3 percent year on year to SR30 million, which the company attributed to higher depreciation, fixed costs.—APP



BANGKOK: Ambassador Ruksana Afzaal met Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed issues of common interest between the two countries and possible convening of the restructured Joint Commission this year at the Foreign Ministers level in Bangkok.

Israel PM slams Erdogan after comments on Iran ceasefire

"Israel will continue to defend itself with strength and determination — and he would do well to remain silent

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sharply criticized Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday after comments he made about the US-Iran ceasefire, vowing that Israel would continue fighting Tehran and its regional proxies. Shortly after the United States and Iran agreed to a ceasefire earlier this week, Erdogan warned US President Donald Trump of "possible provocations and sabotage" that could undermine the agreement, without specifying who might threaten the deal. On Saturday, Netanyahu responded by criticizing the Turkish leader. "Israel, under my leadership, will continue to fight Iran's terror regime and its proxies, unlike Erdogan who accommodates them and massacred his own Kurdish citizens," Netanyahu said on X. During his phone call with Trump, Erdogan also urged that the truce "not be compromised under any circumstances," saying Turkey would offer its full support to ensure as much. Turkey, while a fierce critic of Israel, joined diplomatic efforts with Egypt and Pakistan to reach a ceasefire in the conflict. Later on Saturday, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz also lashed out at Erdogan on X, calling him a "paper tiger. Erdogan "who did not respond to missile fire from Iran into Turkish territory and has proven to be a paper tiger, is now fleeing into the realm of antisemitism and calling for show trials in Turkey against Israel's political and military leadership." "What an absurdity. A man of the Muslim Brotherhood, who massacred the Kurds, accuses Israel — defending itself against his Hamas allies — of genocide." "Israel will continue to defend itself with strength and determination — and he would do well to remain silent.—APP

Ukraine, Russia trade Easter truce breach barbs

Recent months have seen several rounds of US-brokered negotiations fail to bring the warring parties closer to an agreement to stop the fighting, triggered by Russia's February 2022 invasion. The process has stalled further since the outbreak of the war in the Middle East, with Washington's attention having shifted towards Iran

KYIV: KYIV: Ukraine and Russia accused each other on Sunday of violating a truce in place for Orthodox Easter thousands of times, as the war dragged on into its fifth year. Both sides had agreed to observe the ceasefire for the religious holiday, with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday ordering the truce more than a week after Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy proposed a halt to hostilities. "As of 7:00 a.m. on 12 April, 2,299 ceasefire violations were recorded. Specifically: 28 enemy assault actions, 479 enemy shellings, 747 strikes by attack drones... and 1,045 strikes by FPV drones," the Ukrainian military's general staff said in a post on Facebook. "There were no missile strikes, guided aerial bomb strikes, or Shahed-type UAV strikes," it added. In turn, Russia's defence ministry accused Kyiv of nearly 2,000 breaches of its own. "A total of 1,971 ceasefire violations by units of the Ukrainian armed forces were recorded between 4:00 pm Moscow time on April 12 and 8:00 am on April 12," the ministry said, as reported by the TASS news agency. The Russian ministry claimed Kyiv had fired 258 times using artillery or tanks, carried out 1,329 FPV drone strikes, and dropped "various types of munitions" on 375 occasions, notably via drones. Moscow also accused the Ukrainian military of launching "three nighttime attacks" against Russian positions and also "four attempts to advance" along the front line, while claiming to have thwarted each. The truce had been due to last for 32 hours, from 4:00 pm (1300 GMT) on Saturday until the end of the day on Sunday, according to the Kremlin. A similar ceasefire was announced in Ukraine for Orthodox Easter last year, only for both sides to accuse each other of numerous violations. Recent months have seen several rounds of US-brokered negotiations fail to bring the warring parties closer to an agreement to stop the fighting, triggered by Russia's February 2022 invasion. The process has stalled further since the outbreak of the war in the Middle East, with Washington's attention having shifted towards Iran.—DNA

Planes fly from Beirut airport despite Israeli bombing

BEIRUT: Smoke from an Israeli strike still lingered in the air as a plane from Lebanon's national carrier took off from Beirut airport, which has stayed open despite the latest war between Israel and Hezbollah. The country's only international passenger facility, whose departure boards are now largely red with cancellations, is located on the Mediterranean coast at the edge of Beirut's southern suburbs. Israel has pummeled the southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, with strikes since the Iran-backed group fired rockets at Israel last month, drawing Lebanon into the Middle East war. "The airport has stayed open throughout this crisis" following risk assessments based on information received "mainly from the US embassy," said Mohammed Aziz, head of Lebanon's civil aviation authority. He said authorities received additional guarantees this week that the airport would be spared, after Israel on Thursday issued an evacuation warning for large areas of southern Beirut, including the main road leading to the facility and areas directly adjacent. Israel has so far not carried out its threat, which came a day after devastating strikes across the country, including on central Beirut and its southern suburbs,

killed more than 350 people. AFP images showed a flight by Lebanon's Middle East Airlines (MEA), whose logo is the country's beloved cedar tree, landing on Thursday evening just hours after the warning was issued. Israel and Hezbollah also waged a full-blown war in 2024, and then the airport stayed open and MEA kept flying. Aziz, who is also a former pilot, said the airport was seeing less than half the traffic it normally would at this time of year. Most airlines have suspended trips to Beirut, with MEA keeping up a reduced number of flights, including three a day to Turkey, compared to 11 normally. On Friday, just a few dozen travelers were in the usually packed departures hall, as porters sat on empty baggage carts and soldiers kept watch at the terminal entrance. Staring at the departures board, Mohammed Assaad, 48, an Australian of Lebanese origin who was heading back to Sydney via Cairo, said he was unfazed by the Israeli bombardment. "I'm just hoping that our flight won't be canceled. That's all I'm worried about," said Assaad, who was traveling with his wife and two daughters. Commercial planes are in the skies at the same time as Israeli military aircraft, including drones, but they travel along different air

corridors, an MEA pilot told AFP. "We have very specific air routes," he said, and "the Israelis know where our planes are — our transponders are turned on," he said on condition of anonymity. "Open and operational" Israeli military aircraft including drones generally fly at higher altitudes than commercial planes, he said, while such aircraft also show up on commercial planes' radars. There is little chance of Israel's military somehow bringing down "a plane by accident," he added. To manage traffic and avoid any incidents, "the Americans are the main intermediaries," the pilot said. Civil aviation authority chief Aziz said that "only on two or three occasions maximum" a commercial plane delayed a landing due to Israeli military action. A Western diplomatic source told AFP that Lebanese authorities were sharing information on flight movements with some other diplomatic missions in the country. "The Lebanese are working around the clock to guarantee the security of the airport," the source said, requesting anonymity. Jalal Haider, a Lebanese-American who took over as the airport's chief operating officer two months ago, also expressed full confidence in the airport, its surroundings and the airspace.—DNA

Briefs

Hamas to meet Egyptian mediators

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: A delegation from Hamas is set to hold talks with Egyptian mediators in Cairo on Sunday to address alleged Israeli violations of the Gaza ceasefire, according to two officials from the Palestinian group. Despite the ceasefire that took effect in October, violence has continued to unsettle the Palestinian territory. Both Israel and Hamas have accused each other of breaching the US-backed truce, which has largely halted the two-year war that devastated the enclave of 2.2 million. "The delegation will meet Egyptian officials on Sunday morning to discuss halting Israeli violations and implementing the remaining provisions of the first phase of the agreement," a Hamas official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak publicly. According to the official, Hamas will emphasize the need for Israel to cease all violations of the truce, dismantle its military positions in Gaza, fully reopen border crossings, increase the flow of travelers, and allow greater volumes of humanitarian aid into the territory. The group is also expected to press for a US-established Gaza administrative body of Palestinian technocrats to enter the enclave and assume its governing responsibilities.

Cambodia urges Thailand to resume talks

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia has urged Thailand to resume talks as soon as possible on their disputed border, a long-standing disagreement that led to deadly clashes last year. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Saturday that he "strongly hopes" the two neighbors will be able to work together "quickly and with sincerity." "This will be foundation for long-lasting peace that would allow our people living along shared border to live peacefully. Cambodia is fully ready," he said in a statement posted on social media. Thailand's Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said earlier Saturday that his country was not ready to resume talks, even though a new government had just been formed. When asked about Cambodia's renewed call for negotiations, he said it had the "right" to do so, but that Thailand had its "own procedures" to follow. The two Southeast Asian countries have been at odds for decades over the demarcation of their 800-kilometer border, a legacy of the French colonial era. The dispute erupted into several rounds of clashes last year, killing dozens of people and displacing more than a million in July and December. - APP

Dar talks to Turkish FM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar spoke this evening with the Foreign Minister of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan@HakanFidan. DPM/FM shared developments regarding the 'Islamabad Talks' and stressed the importance of all parties adhering to their ceasefire commitments. FM Fidan commended Pakistan's role in facilitating the dialogue between Iran and the United States. Both reaffirmed their support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at sustaining dialogue and promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond. FM Fidan also extended the invitation to DPM/FM for the upcoming Antalya Diplomacy Forum later this month.

"Gagarin's feat ushered in a new era, says Russian envoy

The ambassador paid tribute to the collective efforts of millions across the former Soviet Union whose contributions made the mission possible, adding that the milestone continued to inspire generations worldwide



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev on Sunday said Yuri Gagarin's historic spaceflight marked the beginning of a new era in human history, symbolizing mankind's quest for scientific progress and technological excellence. He expressed these views while addressing a wreath-laying ceremony held at the monument of Yuri Gagarin in Fatima Jinnah Park to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the first human spaceflight. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Albert P. Khorev termed April 12, 1961 a defining moment in human history, when Yuri Gagarin completed the first orbit of Earth aboard Vostok-1, ushering in a new era of space exploration. He said the historic achievement symbolized humanity's determination to achieve technological excellence and pursue ambitious goals. The ambassador paid tribute to the collective efforts of millions across the former

Soviet Union whose contributions made the mission possible, adding that the milestone continued to inspire generations worldwide. He also recalled that, as a tribute to the Soviet Union's achievements in space exploration, a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2011 adopted a Russian-initiated resolution proclaiming April 12 as the International Day of Human Space Flight. The resolution was co-sponsored by more than 60 countries worldwide. He further said that six months ago, in

November 2025, during the 10th session of the Russia-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, its co-chairs, Russian Minister of Energy Sergey Tsivilev and Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, inaugurated a bust of Yuri Gagarin at the same site. He noted that it was the first monument to a Russian personality in Pakistan. The envoy said the installation of Gagarin's bust marked an important step in strengthening bilateral ties and reflected the shared cultural values of both countries. Additional Foreign Secretary Ayesha Ali, in her remarks, said Gagarin's historic journey symbolized the boundless aspirations of humanity and continued to inspire people across borders and generations. She reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting the peaceful use of outer space and enhancing cooperation with Russia in diverse fields, including energy, education and cultural exchanges. She noted that such commemorations not only honored historic milestones but also strengthened mutual respect and friendship between nations. "Space exploration is a shared human endeavor that requires collaboration, innovation and a collective vision for the future," she added. The ceremony was attended by Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Belarus Andrei Metelitsa, Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Kylychbek Sultan, Ambassador of Tajikistan Sharifzoda Yusuf Toirali and Ambassador of Uzbekistan Alisher Tukhtaev, along with representatives of CDA and SUPARCO. Participants laid floral wreaths at the monument and reaffirmed their commitment to advancing international cooperation in science and space exploration.

Gaza aid flotilla aims to break Israeli blockade yet again

Israeli military halted roughly 40 boats assembled by same organisation last October

NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: A second flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza was due to set sail on Sunday from the Spanish port of Barcelona to try to break the Israeli blockade. About 30 boats planned to leave the Mediterranean port city laden with medical aid and other supplies on the Global Sumud Flotilla, and more vessels are expected to join along the route towards Palestine. The Israeli military halted the roughly 40 boats assembled by the same organisation last October as they attempted to reach blockaded Gaza, arresting Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and more than 450 other participants. Israel, which controls all access to the Gaza Strip, denies withholding supplies for its more than 2 million residents. Yet Palestinians and international aid bod-

ies say supplies reaching the territory are still insufficient, despite a ceasefire reached in October which included guarantees of increased aid. Liam Cunningham, an actor who starred in the Game of Thrones television series who is supporting the flotilla but not taking part, told Reuters: "Every kilogram of aid that is on these ships is a failure because all these people on these ships giving up their time to help their fellow human beings are doing what their governments are legally obliged to do." The World Health Organisation has said that even during armed conflicts, states are obligated under international humanitarian law to ensure that people are able to reach medical care in safety. "This is a mission that aims to open a humanitarian corridor so the aid delivery organisations can arrive," said Abukeshak, a Palestinian activist and member of the flotilla's organising committee, told Reuters. Swiss and Spanish activists on last year's flotilla said they were subjected to inhumane conditions during their detention by Israeli forces - an allegation that was rejected by an Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson.

Saudi Arabia says east-west pipeline, energy facilities restored

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said on Sunday that its key east-west oil pipeline and other facilities had been restored following attacks by Iran on targets across the Gulf. "Energy facilities and the east-west pipeline damaged by attacks have recovered and regained their operational capacity, enhancing the reliability of supplies," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, citing an energy ministry statement. Before Tuesday's start of a fragile, two-week truce between Iran and the United States, the Islamic republic had targeted critical energy infrastructure belonging to its oil-rich neighbours. Tehran accused the Gulf states of allowing US forces to carry out attacks from their territories during the war, which was triggered by Israeli-US strikes on Iran on February 28.

The Gulf states have vehemently denied the Iranian accusations. Saudi Arabia said operational and technical work had led to "restoring full pumping capacity through the east-west pipeline, amounting to approximately seven million barrels per day". The energy ministry explained the prior attacks had led to the "loss of approximately 700,000 barrels per day of pumping capacity through the east-west pipeline". Iran's campaign had impacted output at Saudi's Manifa field, where production was now restored, the ministry said, and at the Khurais oil field, where work was underway to restore full production capacity. On Friday, Riyadh confirmed the weeks-long Iranian attacks had impacted oil production capacity and killed one person. Three people in total have been killed in Saudi Arabia since the start of the war. An energy ministry official told the SPA news agency that one of the pumping stations on a vital east-west pipeline was hit in the attacks.

Teacher arrested for alleged role in student's death

Post-mortem confirms gunshot wound; principal, his wife among five nominated in harassment and abetment to suicide case

NEWS DESK

MIRPURKHAS: A pharmacy lecturer at a private medical college, who was also serving as a government primary school teacher, has been arrested in a case involving alleged harassment and the death of a female medical student in Mirpurkhas district. Fehmida Leghari, a third-year medical student, allegedly shot herself to death at her residence in Satellite Town three days earlier. Her body was recovered with a bullet wound, and a post-mortem examination was conducted while her mobile phone was taken into custody. According to the initial post-mortem report, the bullet struck the left side of her chest, damaged the heart and passed through the body, with death occurring about an hour after the injury. The victim's sister told police that the student had complained about harassment by some professors and fellow students at the college. A first information report (FIR) was later registered on the complaint of the deceased's uncle, nominating the college principal, his wife, who is also a professor, the lecturer and two students under charges of sexual harassment and abetment to suicide. Police said the principal and his wife had

obtained a 13-day pre-arrest bail from a court, while two other accused remained absconding. The incident triggered protests, with the victim's family and residents staging a sit-in at a toll plaza, demanding the arrest of all nominated suspects. The protest caused long queues of vehicles and continued for more than 12 hours, with demonstrators refusing to end it despite police requests. Protesters, joined by civil society members and a delegation of Sindhiyani Tehreek, vowed to continue the sit-in until arrests were made. However, the heirs and relatives called off their two-day protest sit-in following arrest of one suspect. The pharmacy lecturer, identified as Abid Leghari, was found to be employed as a primary school teacher in Tando Allah Yar district while also teaching as a pharmacy lecturer at a private medical college for a considerable period, according to the education department. Following the arrest, Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah suspended the teacher and issued a show-cause notice, stating that individuals with "criminal mindset" would not be tolerated in the education sector. Earlier, a three-member inquiry committee was formed under the supervision of the SSP, with a report sought within 10 days on the orders of DIG Faisal Abdullah.

Hazarganji firing incident in Quetta

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti took immediate notice of the attack, directing the Home Department and Inspector General of Police to submit a detailed report

QUETTA: The Hazarganji firing incident in Quetta has drawn strong condemnation from Balochistan's leadership, with the Chief Minister, Governor, and provincial ministers vowing strict action against those responsible. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti took immediate notice of the attack, directing the Home Department and Inspector General of Police to submit a detailed report. He denounced the incident as a cowardly act, expressing deep sorrow and sympathy with the affected families. Sarfraz Bugti ordered law enforcement agencies to ensure that those involved are swiftly brought to justice, stressing that "peace enemies cannot be allowed to play with innocent lives." He also instructed officials to provide the injured with urgent and quality medical care. Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail issued a statement condemning the attack, describing it as an attempt by terrorist elements to sabotage peace and spread fear. He urged citizens to cooperate with government efforts to maintain law and order and directed authorities to ensure immediate medical treatment for the injured. - DNA

Israeli strike kills infant girl

NEWS DESK

TYRE, Lebanon: Wrapped in bloodied bandages, Aline Saeed, seven, barely survived the Israeli strike on her home in south Lebanon last week. She was there to bury her father as hopes of a truce spread across the region, but a new strike killed her infant sister and other relatives. The strike on the Saeed family home in the village of Srafa took place on Wednesday, the first day of a US-Iran ceasefire that many in Lebanon hoped would apply to their country, too. Instead, Israeli strikes killed more than 350 across Lebanon and left the Saeed family with four more relatives to bury. "They said it was a ceasefire. Like all these people, we went up to the village. We went to the casket to read the prayers and walk home ... suddenly we felt like a storm was landing right on us," said Nasser Saeed, Aline's 64-year-old grandfather, who also survived. On Sunday, he joined other relatives in the southern port city of Tyre to pick up the bodies wrapped in green cloth. One of them, a fraction the size of the rest, contained his granddaughter Taleen, Aline's sister. She had not yet turned two. With bandages to his head and right hand and scratches on his face, Saeed mourned in silence as the women around him turned their faces up to the sky and screamed in agony. Taleen 'born in war and died in war' The latest war in Lebanon began on March 2, when Lebanese armed group Hezbollah fired onto Israeli positions in support of its patron Iran. Israel has since escalated its air and ground campaign in the country where its operations have killed more than 2,000 people, including 165 children and nearly 250 women. Wednesday was one of the deadliest days in Lebanon's recent history. "This isn't humanity. This is a war crime," Saeed told Reuters at the hospital where Aline's mother, Ghinwa, was still being treated.

Iran arrests 50 for sharing locations with 'enemy'

WEB DESK

IRANIAN authorities have arrested at least 50 people accused of sharing locations and information with the "enemy", Al Jazeera reported, citing the state-linked SNN news agency. According to the report, those detained were accused of "mercenary" activities and of collaborating with the United States and Israel by passing on sensitive locations, including service facilities and infrastructure. SNN said authorities also seized electronics, satellite equipment and weapons during the arrests. The report added that Iran has detained dozens of people on spying accusations during the recent conflict, following an earlier wave of arrests after last year's 12-day war with the United States and Israel. Under Iran's recently strengthened espionage law, those accused of spying can face the death penalty and confiscation of property.

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