



Islamabad POST

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Australia picks up a woman to head the army

Detailed News On Page-08

PM Shehbaz to visit Russia in June: envoy

Detailed News On Page-08

Bilawal Bhutto urges support for polio teams

Detailed News On Page-03

Nato allies refuse to join Trump's plan

US blockade equivalent to piracy: Iran

Several analysts argue the step is premature. A deadline related to the situation reportedly extends to April 21, leaving several days for potential de-escalation or further diplomacy

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has strongly condemned the United States' announced naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, labeling any interception of ships as "tantamount to piracy" and signaling it is preparing a multifaceted response to protect the vital waterway. Iranian officials stated that the US move, set to begin enforcing restrictions on maritime traffic to and from Iranian ports starting today, represents a dangerous escalation. "Any blockage or interference with vessels in the Strait of Hormuz by US forces will be considered an act of piracy under international law," a senior Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. According to reports, Iran is now devising a comprehensive plan to safeguard the strait, which handles a significant portion of global oil transit. Details remain limited, but sources indicate the strategy involves heightened naval readiness, potential countermeasures, and diplomatic outreach to deter further US actions. The US announcement follows failed peace talks in Islamabad and comes amid ongoing tensions from the broader Iran conflict. President Donald Trump ordered the blockade after negotiations collapsed, with US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirming operations targeting Iranian port traffic while allowing some

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Israel seeks to declare Türkiye its new enemy

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel "cannot live without an enemy" and its government is now trying to portray Türkiye as one, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Monday. "After Iran, Israel cannot live without an enemy," Fidan said in a televised interview with Anadolu Agency. "We see that not only Netanyahu's administration but also some figures in the opposition — though not all — are seeking to declare Türkiye the new enemy," he said. "This is a new development in Israel... turning into a state strategy," he added. Türkiye, a fierce critic of Israel, had joined diplomatic efforts with Pakistan and Egypt aimed at de-escalation during the US-Israeli war on Iran. Tensions between Türkiye and Israel have steadily escalated since

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Pak-China reaffirm strong ties

Senator Dar emphasized that Pakistan will remain actively engaged with all stakeholders to promote de-escalation and peace

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a significant meeting today with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong at the Foreign Ministry. The discussions primarily focused on the recent developments following the collapse of US-Iran peace talks hosted in Islamabad. Senator Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's firm commitment to supporting dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward to ease escalating tensions in the region. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong praised Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating the direct talks between the United States and Iran, describing Islamabad's efforts as "important and timely." Both sides expressed full satisfaction with the deep-rooted Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and agreed to continue close coordination on regional issues, particularly the volatile situation involving the Strait of Hormuz.

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Japanese PM phones Shehbaz

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday received a telephone call from Prime Minister of Japan Sanae Takaichi, who appreciated Pakistan's diplomatic role in facilitating the ceasefire and talks between the United States of America and Iran. During their warm and cordial conversation, the two leaders discussed the recently held Islamabad Talks, hosted by Pakistan. Prime Minister Takaichi expressed Japan's full support for the peace process and its importance for regional stability and global energy security. While thanking the Japanese prime minister for her good wishes, Prime Minister Shehbaz said that he was grateful to both the US and Iranian delegations for their extensive discussions in Islamabad and said that Pakistan would continue its efforts to ensure that the ceasefire was maintained.

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ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a significant meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong. — DNA

Middle East tensions

US-Iran ceasefire still holding, says PM Shehbaz Sharif

Islamabad facilitated high-level direct talks between US and Iran for first time, says premier Shehbaz

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that Pakistan remains fully engaged in efforts to resolve pending issues between the United States and Iran, commending the political and military leadership for their role in hosting the historic talks in Islamabad. Islamabad emerged as key mediator in the US-Iran war after PM Shehbaz mediated a two-week ceasefire between the two sides on April 8. Delegations from Washington and Tehran then arrived in Islamabad and held negotiations for over 20 hours at his invitation over the last weekend. However, the negotiations could not result in an agreement. Addressing the federal cabinet, the prime minister said that Pakistan played an important role in bringing the United States and Iran to the table after

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PM Shehbaz to visit Saudi Arabia

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to visit Saudi Arabia within the next 48 hours following an invitation from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. During the visit to Riyadh, a long-standing ally of Pakistan, the premier is expected to hold consultations on key regional and international developments, signalling continued diplomatic engagement between the two countries. The visit follows much-anticipated talks in Islamabad, which ran from Saturday into early Sunday and were the first direct US-Iranian meeting in more than a

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Cop guarding polio vaccination team martyred

Four police personnel injured as team escorting vaccinators comes under attack on first day of inoculation drive

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: A policeman deployed to protect an anti-polio team was martyred and four others were injured when unidentified assailants opened fire on them in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hangu on Monday. Hangu SDPO Mujahid Hussain said that the attack targeted a police van carrying a team of five personnel assigned to provide security to a polio vaccination team in the Chapri

Waziran area. All of the policemen sustained bullet wounds in the shooting, but one of them later succumbed to his injuries, he revealed. The remaining injured personnel were shifted to a medical facility, the SDPO added. The Pakistan Polio Programme officially commenced its second National Immunisation Days (NIDs) campaign of 2026 today, to make Pakistan a polio-free nation. The five-day countrywide campaign aims to immunise over 45 million children under five years of age. This effort is seen as a decisive step in the country's final push to stop poliovirus transmission and achieve eradication by the end of 2025. NECC confirmed the first wild polio case of 2026 in a

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Briefs

Pope Leo blasts 'neocolonial' conflicts

"I will continue to speak out loudly against war," says Pope

NEWS DESK

ROME: Pope Leo blasted violations of international law by "neocolonial" world powers in a forceful speech on Monday during an Africa tour, hours after US President Donald Trump's direct attack on the leader of the 1.4-billion-member Church. Leo is travelling to Africa "as a witness to the peace and hope that the world so ardently desires," he told political leaders in Algeria, his first stop on a whirlwind four-nation trip. "The future belongs (to) those who do not allow themselves to be blinded by power or wealth," the first US pope said.

Minimum marriage age: Punjab PA passes bill

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Assembly's Standing Committee on Local Government and Community Development approved the Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2026 on Monday, even as some members, including the panel's chairperson, expressed reservations regarding the legislation. The meeting was chaired by PML-N MPA Pir Ashraf Rasool, and members of the Women Parliamentary Caucus were also invited to witness its proceedings. The bill discussed during the meeting sets 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage for both boys and girls in Punjab.

Blockade makes no sense: Spain

China urges US and Iran to avoid reigniting war

China has offered to host follow-up talks, while several European nations, including Spain, are calling for an immediate diplomatic initiative to prevent further bloodshed

DNA

BEIJING/ISLAMABAD/MADRID: China has expressed hope that the United States and Iran will exercise restraint and prevent a full-scale war following the failure of peace talks in Islamabad, as tensions continue to spiral over the Strait of Hormuz. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Wei stated during a regular briefing: "China hopes all parties, especially the US and Iran, will remain calm and refrain from actions that could reignite conflict. The failed talks in Islamabad should not become an excuse for escalation. Dialogue remains the only viable path." The Islamabad negotiations, mediated by

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Trump says he is not a big fan of Pope

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump told reporters that he is "not a big fan" of Pope Leo XIV, after the global leader of Catholics made a plea for peace amid the war in the Middle East. The 70-year-old American pope publicly implored leaders on Saturday to end

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United States-Iran talks: the way forward

OPINION

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



THE much-anticipated talks between the United States and Iran, recently held in Islamabad, have ended in what can only be described as a diplomatic fiasco. While both sides attempted to project a sense of guarded optimism before the negotiations, the outcome has laid bare the deep-rooted mistrust and rigid positions that continue to define relations between Washington and Tehran. Iranian officials were quick to point out that expecting a breakthrough in a single sitting was unrealistic, while American representatives maintained that the onus for progress lay with Iran. In reality, however, both sides emerged from the talks claiming that the ball was in the other's court a familiar refrain that underscores the persistent deadlock. At the heart of the failure lies the core issue that has long plagued US-Iran relations: Iran's nuclear program. The United States reiterated its long-standing demand that Iran hand over its enriched uranium and abandon its nuclear ambitions altogether. For Washington, this remains a non-negotiable requirement, framed as essential for regional and global security. Iran, on the other hand, categorically rejected this demand, viewing it as an infringement on its sovereignty and its right to pursue peaceful nuclear technology. This fundamental disagreement

proved insurmountable, rendering discussions on other matters largely inconsequential. Indeed, while topics such as the Strait of Hormuz, the situation in Lebanon, and Iran's ties with groups like Hamas were reportedly discussed, these issues were peripheral compared to the central dispute over the nuclear program. Without movement on the core issue, progress on these secondary matters was always unlikely, the US Vice President also mentioned in his media talk. The talks, therefore, became an exercise in reiterating established positions rather than exploring new avenues for compromise. One of the most critical factors contributing to the failure of the Islamabad talks was the absence of a credible and influential mediator. Pakistan deserves recognition for hosting the talks and providing a neutral venue, reflecting its genuine desire to promote peace and stability in the region. However, Islamabad's role was largely limited to that of a facilitator. It did not possess the leverage necessary to influence either side in a meaningful way or to push them towards compromise. Effective mediation in high-stakes international disputes requires not only neutrality but also significant political, economic, and strategic clout. In this context, countries such as China and Russia or even a collective entity like the European Union are better positioned to play the role of mediator. While reports suggest that representatives from China and Russia were present during the Islamabad talks, their participation was limited to that of observers. They did not actively engage in the negotiations or attempt to bridge the gap between the two sides. This lack of active mediation proved to be a crucial

shortcoming. Mediation is not a passive exercise; it requires sustained engagement, creative diplomacy, and the ability to apply pressure or offer incentives where necessary. Without such intervention, the talks were bound to flounder, as both the United States and Iran remained firmly entrenched in their traditional positions. Despite the failure of the talks, it would be unfair to dismiss Pakistan's role as insignificant. On the contrary, Islamabad's initiative has positioned it as a country willing to contribute constructively to global peace efforts. At a time when tensions in the Middle East continue to pose a threat to international stability, Pakistan's willingness to host such high-level negotiations sends a positive signal to the global community. It demonstrates a commitment to dialogue and diplomacy, even in the face of daunting challenges. The Islamabad talks, though unsuccessful, have also created a framework that can potentially be built upon in the future. Diplomatic processes are rarely linear, and setbacks are often an inherent part of negotiations of this magnitude. What is important is that the channels of communication remain open and that efforts to resolve the conflict continue. Looking ahead, the way forward requires a more structured and inclusive approach. Major global powers, particularly China, Russia, and the European Union, must take a more active role in facilitating dialogue between the United States and Iran. These actors possess the economic influence and political leverage necessary to bring both sides to the negotiating table and to encourage them to adopt more flexible positions. For the United States, this may require a reassessment of its demands regarding Iran's nuclear

program. While concerns about proliferation are valid, insisting on complete abandonment may not be a realistic objective. A more pragmatic approach, focusing on limitations, transparency, and robust verification mechanisms, could provide a viable path forward. For Iran, greater flexibility is equally essential. While safeguarding national sovereignty is important, engaging constructively with the international community and addressing concerns about its nuclear activities could help build trust and pave the way for sanctions relief and economic stability. Iran must weigh the long-term benefits of compromise against the costs of continued isolation. The stakes are too high for both sides to remain locked in a cycle of confrontation. The potential consequences of failure extend far beyond bilateral relations, affecting the stability of the entire Middle East and the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global energy supplies, remains a flashpoint that could have far-reaching implications in the event of escalation. Similarly, ongoing conflicts and proxy dynamics in the region add further complexity to an already volatile situation. The challenge now is to build on this foundation and to inject new momentum into the process. This will require not only the involvement of major powers but also a willingness on the part of the United States and Iran to move beyond entrenched positions. Confidence-building measures, incremental agreements, and a focus on common ground could help create the conditions necessary for a broader settlement. — The detailed analysis will appear in the April issue of CENTRELINE journal.

Sindh CM launches province-wide anti-polio campaign

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah formally inaugurated the province-wide anti-polio campaign, reaffirming the government's unwavering commitment to eradicating the crippling virus through sustained immunisation efforts, public awareness and coordinated action at all levels. Launching the campaign at Government Boys Secondary School, Khayaban-e-Shujaat in Defence, the Chief Minister personally administered polio drops to children and later visited classrooms, where he also administered polio drops to children under five. The ceremony was attended by Education Minister Sardar Shah, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, IGP Sindh Javed Alam Odho, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary School Education Zahid Abbasi, Additional IGP Karachi Azad Khan, Health Secretary Tahir Sangi, In-charge EOC Shehryar Gul, along with senior police officials and others. The seven-day campaign, running from April 13 to 19, aims to vaccinate over 10.6 million children under the age of five across Sindh. In addition, Vitamin A supplements will be administered to approximately 9.4 million children to boost immunity and improve overall health outcomes. Highlighting the scale of the initiative, the chief minister said that more than 83,000 trained frontline workers will conduct

door-to-door visits to ensure that no child is left unvaccinated. To ensure the safety of teams, over 24,000 security personnel have been deployed, including more than 2,400 female police officers assigned to support and protect polio workers. "These comprehensive measures reflect our strong commitment to safeguarding both our children and the frontline workforce," said Murad Ali Shah, urging parents to cooperate fully with vaccination teams and ensure access to children under five years of age. The chief minister noted that Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the only two countries where polio persists, stressing the urgency of sustained national efforts to eliminate the virus, he shared that Pakistan reported 74 polio cases in 2024 and 31 cases last year, while Sindh recorded nine cases in 2025, with nearly 80 per cent of environmental samples testing positive for the virus. Encouragingly, he added, significant progress has been made in 2026, with environmental positivity rates declining to 24 per cent and only one case reported so far from district Sujawal. "We are closely monitoring the affected child, and thankfully no disability has occurred," he said, adding that the government remains committed to ensuring full recovery and preventing further transmission. Murad Ali Shah emphasised that repeated vaccination campaigns

are essential to building immunity among children and eliminating the virus permanently. He reiterated that the polio vaccine is safe, effective, and certified by the World Health Organization. Appealing to various segments of society, the chief minister called on parents, school administrations, media, religious scholars, and civil society to play their role in supporting the campaign. He urged the media to promote awareness and counter misinformation, while encouraging religious and community leaders to advocate for vaccination. He also acknowledged the contributions of polio workers and security personnel, commending their dedication in reaching remote and high-risk areas under challenging conditions. Referring to continued national efforts, the chief minister appreciated the support of First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari in promoting polio eradication, recalling that Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed had set a historic precedent by administering polio drops to her daughter during earlier campaigns. Concluding his remarks, Murad Ali Shah reiterated that eliminating polio is vital for the country's future and called for collective action to ensure that every child receives life-saving vaccination, paving the way for a polio-free Pakistan.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: A man reading morning newspapers daily Islamabad Post, covering headlines news regarding United States, Israel, Iran war, at a stall.

PM congratulates Hungary's Peter Magyar

ISLAMABAD :Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday congratulated Peter Magyar after he obtained a landmark victory in the parliamentary elections in Hungary. "I congratulate H.E. Peter Magyar on his victory in the Parliamentary elections in Hungary," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He said that Pakistan valued its bilateral relations with Hungary, and that his government looked forward to further strengthening them. The Tisza party, led by Peter Magyar, is projected to win a supermajority in Hungary's parliament after a record voter turnout, with the vote count still underway. Nationalist Viktor Orban, who has ruled the country for 16 years, conceded defeat.—APP

GB sets June 7, as Polling Day for general polls

GILGIT: The Election Commission of Gilgit-Baltistan has officially announced the polling day for the upcoming general elections of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly. According to a press release issued by the Public Relations Wing of the Election Commission Secretariat, the Chief Election Commissioner of Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Shahbaz Khan, has, under Section 57(1) of the Election Act 2017, formally declared Sunday, June 7, 2026, as the polling day for the general elections. The announcement has been made in accordance with Article 48(1)(a) of the Gilgit-Baltistan Order 2018. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Election Commissioner stated that the entire electoral process will be conducted in a transparent, free, fair, and impartial manner in line with constitutional and legal requirements. The Election Commission has directed all relevant institutions to ensure necessary arrangements for the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections. It has also urged the general public to actively participate in the democratic process and exercise their right to vote responsibly.—APP

Call for enhancing varsities' academic collaboration

DERA ISMAIL KHAN :A delegation of senior academic and administrative officials from Gomal University called on Vice Chancellor of Agricultural University, Professor Dr. Latif Gondal to discuss matters pertaining to the academic collaboration. The meeting was attended by Gomal University's Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Naimatullah Babar, Dean Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences Professor Dr. Zahid Awan, Dean Faculty of Sciences Professor Dr. Asma Saeed, Director Tank Campus Dr. Ihsan Danish, and Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dr. Saeqa Sadiq Danish.

During the meeting, both sides discussed in detail the promotion of inter-university collaboration, improvement of academic standards, enhancement of research activities, and provision of better educational facilities for students. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Latif Gondal emphasized that collaboration among higher education institutions played a vital role in the promotion of knowledge and research, adding that merit and transparency remain top priorities at the university. Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Naimatullah Babar said that institutional collaboration significantly improved teaching and research standards. Professor Dr. Zahid Awan highlighted the importance of strong governance for institutional development, while Professor Dr. Asma Saeed stressed the need for modern research and innovative teaching practices. Director Tank Campus Dr. Ihsan Danish noted that efforts are underway to improve campus facilities and provide better guidance to students. Dr. Saeqa Sadiq Danish remarked that collaboration between institutions created new opportunities for research.—APP

AI-based livestock reforms discussed

LAHORE: Adviser to the Chief Minister Punjab on Artificial Intelligence and Special Initiatives Ali Dar said that the provincial government was considering adopting successful "White Revolution" models to strengthen the livestock and dairy sector through modern and technology-driven interventions. He made these remarks during a meeting with a high-level delegation led by Nestlé Pakistan Chairman Syed Yawar Ali on Monday. The delegation also included Chairman Punjab Cattle Market Ibrahim Tariq Shafi, CEO Fauji Foods and Chair-

man Pakistan Dairy Association Usman Zaheer, along with other senior stakeholders. The delegation also visited the Office of Artificial Intelligence and Special Initiatives and was briefed on initiatives undertaken over the past decade. Speaking on the occasion, Ali Dar said that the Punjab government was keen to introduce internationally tested practices to enhance livestock productivity, efficiency and sectoral competitiveness. He said Chief Minister Punjab's vision prioritized comprehensive support for initiatives aimed at modernizing agriculture and allied sectors. He stressed that artificial intelligence and emerging technologies could play a vital role in transforming the livestock sector, particularly in improving animal health management, productivity monitoring and supply chain efficiency. Ali Dar further said consensus had been reached on promoting public-private partnerships to directly benefit farmers and livestock owners. He added that the initiative would be taken forward on a priority basis under the Chief Minister's Special Initiatives Program to ensure sustainable growth, innovation and sectoral uplift.—DNA

69pc express satisfaction with Punjab CM leadership

LAHORE: A survey conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) on the two-year performance of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has shown that a majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with her leadership and the overall direction of development in the province. According to the survey report, 69 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with the chief minister's performance, with 32pc rating it "outstanding" and 31pc terming it "good". The report noted that a majority of young respondents also supported her leadership. The survey further indicated that 65pc of respondents believed Punjab was moving in the right direction in terms of development, while 56pc said ongoing development projects had contributed to an increase in the chief minister's popularity. It added that, based on two years of performance, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) enjoys 42pc public popularity in Punjab, while 55pc of respondents said they would vote for the chief minister on the basis of performance. Among government initiatives, the "Clean Punjab Programme" received the highest approval rating at 33pc. Improvements were also reported in women welfare and protection (30pc), public transport (29pc), education (27pc), law and order (26pc), and infrastructure (25pc). The survey, conducted among 7,000 respondents, included equal participation of men and women, with 57pc from rural areas and 43pc from urban centres. It found that 69pc of participants aged 18 to 40 expressed positive views. Overall, 56pc of respondents expressed satisfaction with sanitation and municipal services, while public opinion also reflected perceived improvements in cleanliness, health, education reforms, inflation relief measures, public transport and cultural revival initiatives such as Basant.—APP

Artists seek restoration of agreement

HYDERABAD :A meeting of fellow members of the Arts Council of Hyderabad was held at Syed Zowar Naqvi's house in Tando Jhanyan, in which a large number of people related to various fields of fine arts participated, recognizing the Arts Council Hyderabad as its only representative forum. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, the current Minister of Culture Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and the public representatives related to Hyderabad have demanded that they take notice of the continuous injustices done to the art and artists of Hyderabad and also the Arts Council of Hyderabad. In the meeting, it was demanded that the agreement signed by Arts Council

of Hyderabad San Culture Department should be restored immediately and the way of the backers of conspiratorial elements against the artists of the second largest city of Sindh should be blocked. The meeting also decided that by fully participating in the general body called by the Arts Council of Hyderabad, the plan of struggle for the restoration of the agreement, the representation of Hyderabad in the Artists Law Grant and Endowment Fund Committee of Hyderabad will be presented. Renowned writers and artists Taj Joyo, Dr. Ishaq Samejo, Syed Zowar Naqvi, Mirza Saleem Baig, Mansoor Qadir Junejo, Aziz Gopang, Rauf Chan-

dio, Idris Jatoti, Akhtar Rand, Munir Chandio, Dr. Ismail Kanbar, Sulaiman J. Abro, Ashfaq Soomro, Dr. Tehmina Mufti, Bakhtawar Jam, Bilqis Abro, Benazir Junejo, Mohsin Salim, Salim Gadaw, Ramesh were present in the meeting. Kumar, Manzoor Danish, Talib Hussain Mughal, Qazi Zulfiqar Palli, Ishaq Raju, Tanveer Siddiqui, Abdul Ghani Ansari, Naeem Yamin, Abbas Koso, Nawaz Faqir, Allah Bakhsh Kanbar, Khalid Bhar, Mansoor Seetai, Wahid Kandharo, Wahid Pars Hesbani, Sattar Sirohi, Anwar Mansoor, Afaq Kokar, Sajid Sindhi, Muhammad Ashraf Baloch, Adeel Abaro, Abdullah Khan, Raja Babu, Ali Zeeshan, Dr. Gulzar Usman, Ismail.—APP

KP, Balochistan face similar security challenges: Kundi

He further said that despite being the highest producer of oil and gas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa still lacked an oil refinery

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday said that KP and Balochistan were facing similar challenges, particularly terrorism due to their proximity to the Afghan border, stressing the need for intelligence-based operations to ensure lasting peace. He expressed these views while talking to participants of the 19th National Workshop Balochistan, who visited Governor House Peshawar under the leadership of Brigadier Bilal Ghafoor. The delegation, comprising students from Balochistan universities, media persons, and members of political and social sectors, discussed with the Governor various issues including the overall situation of the province, NFC Award, and merged districts. The Governor said that Pakistan's successful facilitation of US-Iran talks in Islamabad reflected effective diplomacy, adding that the country not only avoided the impact of potential conflict but also brought both sides to the negotiation table, enhancing its global stature. Responding to questions, he said the province was facing Indian-backed terrorism along the Afghan border and reiterated that intelligence-based operations were crucial for sustainable peace. He added that Afghan nationals had been found involved in several terrorism incidents in the province. Highlighting financial constraints, he said only Rs4 billion had been allocated for 34 public sector universities in the province, which was insufficient to achieve desired educational outcomes. He further said that despite being the highest producer of oil and gas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa still lacked an oil refinery.—DNA

38 migratory cranes rehabilitated, released in natural habitat

It contributes to the broader understanding and conservation of international bird migration systems, he remarked

PESHAWAR:In a significant step toward wildlife conservation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department has successfully rehabilitated and released 38 migratory Demoiselle cranes into their natural habitat at D.I.Khan, reinforcing efforts to protect endangered species and sustain global bird migration routes. The birds were seized from poachers a year earlier while shifting to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Balochistan province, informed Conservator Wildlife South KP, Khan Malook. This effort not only reflects the department's effective approach to preventing smuggling of wild species, but also plays a vital role in the rehabilitation of captive birds and sustaining the natural migration patterns of various bird species. Khan Malook told APP. The raiding teams of the Wildlife department seized these cranes from an inter-provincial smuggling gang and shifted them to Bannu Pheasantry, where a rehabilitation process for the illegally captured birds is carried out. "During the rehabilitation period, adequate nutritious feed was

ensured, along with regular veterinary check-ups and timely administration of prescribed medications," he added. The dedicated care provided by Wildlife staff enabled the captive birds to recover their physical strength, overall health and natural wild instincts. Release of rehabilitated cranes was arranged at Hattala, a rural area located in the Kulachi Tehsil of Dera Ismail Khan district. Hattala is an ecologically significant location due to its position along the Indus Flyway, a major international corridor through which thousands of migratory birds travel annually from Siberia to India. It serves as an important stopover and passage point for bird migration, highlighting its value for biodiversity and conservation. Khan Malook observed. The timing of crane's release is also crucial, as it allows the freed birds to join flocks migrating back to Siberia before the onset of the summer season. Khan Malook said Pakistan, especially the Southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, plays an important role in the international migration of different kinds of

cranes. Rehabilitating captive cranes and releasing them on time into their natural habitats is vital to sustaining the migration of thousands of birds. In response to a question about the reasons behind keeping birds at Bannu Pheasantry for a period of one year, Khan Malook said the rehabilitation process takes months to enable the bird to fly back. He said the seized birds are under severe stress, as smugglers often tie their legs and wings during transport from one province to another. Furthermore, their flight feathers are cut, and it takes months for them to regrow. After recovery, the birds are released at an appropriate time when flocks pass through the area during their return migration. The initiative undertaken by the Bannu, D.I. Khan, and Waziristan Wildlife Divisions demonstrates a strong scientific approach in the care, rehabilitation, and timely release of migratory birds. It contributes to the broader understanding and conservation of international bird migration systems, he remarked.—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

Emergency



Rescue (Police).....	15
Bomb Disposal.....	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....	1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....	9266044
Motorway Police.....	9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....	9222596
Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20

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Edhi Ambulance.....	115
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Railway Inquiry.....	117
Railway Exchange.....	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555489
CAA.....	9258102

Hospitals

CMH.....	5611111
MH.....	5611116
Cantt Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

Departments

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CDA.....	9208301-04
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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Islamabad residents frustrated over widespread Police check posts

Public frustration has peaked following the recent cold-blooded murder of a prominent businessman in Islamabad. According to eyewitnesses and police sources, a group of armed men arrived at his residence, opened fire, killed him and injured others, then fled the scene without any resistance

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Citizens of Pakistan's capital are increasingly voicing anger over heavy police check posts and road blockades set up on almost every major and minor road within the city, saying the measures are causing severe daily inconvenience while failing to improve security. Commuters report long queues, frequent vehicle searches, and traffic jams that have turned routine travel into a nightmare. "We are stuck for hours every day," said a resident of F-8 sector. "Schools, offices, and hospitals are all affected. This is not security — this is harassment."

Public frustration has peaked following the recent cold-blooded murder of a prominent businessman in Islamabad. According to eyewitnesses and police sources, a group of armed men arrived at his residence, opened fire, killed him and injured others, then fled the scene without any resistance. Despite the dense network of check posts across the city, the attackers reportedly escaped easily. "When criminals want to do something, they come, commit the crime, and go freely," one angry resident told local media. "But law-abiding citizens are the ones suffering at every corner. Many point out that the heavy internal checkpoints have done little to stop serious crimes while severely disrupting normal life."

Residents and traders have now started demanding immediate relief. A growing number of people are calling for check posts to be removed from inside the city limits and restricted only to entry and exit points of Islamabad. "Check posts at the main entrances of the city make sense for screening outsiders," said a local trader association member. "But putting barriers on every internal road is pointless and counterproductive. It only creates problems for residents and gives criminals time to escape while we are delayed. Several social media campaigns and resident welfare groups have begun raising the issue, urging the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration and police to review the

security strategy. Official Response Awaited When contacted, Islamabad police officials defended the checkpoints, saying they were put in place after intelligence reports of possible threats. However, they acknowledged receiving multiple complaints about traffic disruption and promised to "review the placement of some barriers."

"As public discontent grows, the recent murder incident has become a flashpoint, with many questioning whether the current blanket security approach is actually making the capital safer or simply more chaotic. Further protests and meetings by residents are expected in the coming days if the situation is not addressed."



Islamabad : Chief Editor of Thandi Aag Gujarat Daily Gulzar Ahmed Noshi meeting with President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Tahir Mahmood. Director Board of Islamabad Chamber Muhammad Imran Minhas was also present on the occasion. DNA

Call for legislation on groundwater extraction

ISLAMABAD :Groundwater depletion is going worse to worst touching its dangerous levels in various parts of Pakistan because of its excessive domestic, agricultural and commercial consumption of water and so far, there is no strict regulation on its extraction, said Naseer Memon, the renowned water expert and Senior Advisor of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) He was speaking at the second leg of a Special Talk on the 'Water Resources Management in Pakistan', organized by the SDPI here, said a press release issued on Monday. Memon said Indus Basin aquifer that primarily cover Pakistan has been ranked as the 2nd most over-stressed underground water reserve in the world that needs immediate attention of the government. He said that urban population in Pakistan has increased from 46 million in 1997 to 94 million in 1923, thus population explosion was the single largest con-

cern that demanded special attention of the policy makers to ensure water security. In Quetta, he said, water table has dropped from about 50 metres in 2,000 to over 150 metres by 2023; In Lahore, the water table drops by an average of 2.61 feet annually; in Rawalpindi, water table decreases by approximately 30 feet since 2013 while Karachi receives 650 MGDs against a daily demand of over 1,200 MGDs. He maintained that over one-third (35 to 40 per cent) of piped water is wasted through leakages and theft in the water distribution networks that needs to be checked and stopped. He said agriculture consumes over 90% of the extracted groundwater where as over 60% of irrigation requirements in Indus Basin are met by pumping. Number of agricultural tubewells in the Punjab has soared from 334,000 in 1994 to over 1.2 million in 2024 which withdraw over 51 MAF of groundwater annually, he added. Mr Memon

said that over-extraction of groundwater has caused water tables to drop below 6 meters in more than 50% of irrigated areas. He suggested adopting water conservation techniques such as sponge cities, managed aquifer recharge, rainwater storage, etc. He also suggested making flood channels for groundwater recharge, wetlands and natural depressions to store floodwater to overcome the future water crisis. Earlier, Dr Shafiqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI introduced Naseer Memon as a professional water governance expert and member to many high-level forums and held senior leadership positions in different national and multinational organizations. He said groundwater depletion is matter of grave concern for the people of Pakistan as its wastage cannot be tolerated on the pretext that it is a natural commodity. It is not only essential to life but also linked to policy and governance.—DNA

Telemedicine project saved Rs 8m in 3 months

Officials said that joint efforts between the administration and the public can help address the issue and maintain order in public spaces

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Syed Mustafa Kamal, on Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review the overall performance and impact of an ongoing telemedicine project. The meeting was attended by the Sehat Kahani team, led by CEO Dr Sara Saeed Khurram, who briefed the minister on the financial aspects of the telemedicine project. She highlighted that the initiative resulted in an estimated cost saving of approximately PKR 8 million by reducing patient travel, avoiding expensive private consultations, and ensuring timely access to medicines and treatment. During the meeting, CEO

also presented a comprehensive briefing on the three-month performance of Sehat Kahani's telemedicine integration across Basic Health Units (BHUs) in Islamabad and dispensaries in Karachi. She noted that the project has been successfully implemented across eight facilities, serving thousands of patients through both general and specialist consultations. The briefing outlined that key specialties included gynecology, pediatrics, and dermatology, with the highest patient volumes recorded in the 0-9 and 20-49 age groups. Notably, 65% of the beneficiaries were women, reflecting improved access to healthcare services for women. Under this initiative, 15 major disease are-

as were effectively managed. A significant increase in patient footfall was observed, particularly in previously underutilized and remote facilities. The telemedicine model enabled timely access to specialist care within communities, reducing delays and improving the overall quality of care. On the occasion, the Federal Minister for Health appreciated the efforts of the Sehat Kahani team and termed the initiative a significant step towards strengthening primary healthcare delivery in Pakistan. He emphasized that the integration of technology in healthcare is essential to expand access, particularly in underserved and remote areas.—DNA

Masood terms Islamabad talks diplomatic breakthrough

ISLAMABAD: Former ambassador to the United States, China and the United Nations, and former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Masood Khan here on Monday, described the recent Islamabad talks between the United States and Iran as a landmark diplomatic breakthrough, noting that despite intense pressure and unresolved disputes, both sides chose dialogue over escalation. Reflecting on the 21-hour marathon negotiations, Ambassador Khan stated that Pakistan's facilitation enabled meaningful engagement between Washington and Tehran, even as critical disagreements persisted. He noted that while both sides issued positive statements and maintained a constructive tone, two key issues—the nuclear framework and the governance of the Strait of Hormuz—emerged as major sticking points. He emphasized that the talks did not collapse, nor did either side signal a return to full-scale conflict. Instead, a temporary ceasefire remains in place, providing a fragile but crucial window for continued diplomacy. "This itself is a success," he remarked, highlighting that both parties departed Islamabad on a more positive footing than when they arrived. Ambassador Khan cautioned, however, that parallel developments could undermine progress. Statements regarding a potential blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and threats to target critical Iranian oil infrastructure risk escalating tensions. He noted that such actions could trigger wider conflict, deepen the global economic crisis, and draw in major powers, including China, given its significant energy interests in the region. He observed that both the United States and Iran perceive themselves to be negotiating from positions of strength—Washington due to its military impact, and Tehran due to its resilience and strategic leverage in the region. This dynamic, he explained, has made compromise more difficult, with both sides reluctant to concede ground. Ambassador Khan also highlighted the broader geopolitical complexities, including external influences and ongoing regional conflicts, particularly in Lebanon, which continue to cast a shadow over the negotiations. He warned that any escalation in these theatres could derail diplomatic efforts.—APP

FJWU launches mentoring programme

RAWALPINDI: Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), on Monday launched the Mentoring Programme for Universities (MPU) to promote a mentoring culture within the institution. The initiative began with an orientation session focusing on core competencies required for effective mentoring. During the session Prof Dr. Sarwat Rasul highlighted key skills including active listening, reflective engagement and goal-oriented guidance. A second session titled "The Connect Effect: Owning Your Role in Meaningful Mentorship" was held conducted by Dr. Huma Ayub emphasizing the importance of building meaningful connections.—DNA

Pakistan's role in Iran-US talks historic

WAH CANTT: Minister for State, Barrister, Aqeel Malik on Monday rejected claims of a deadlock in ongoing talks between Iran and the United States and said the process reflected a gradual but meaningful move toward peace. Speaking to media in Taxila, Malik said disputes spanning decades could not be resolved overnight but noted encouraging developments.

"The ice has started melting," he said, adding that both sides were shifting from confrontation to dialogue, with early restraint measures marking a key breakthrough. Highlighting the significance of talks held in Islamabad, Malik described Pakistan's role in bringing the two countries to the negotiating table as a "historic achievement" that would be "written in golden words in diplomatic history." "What the outcome of negotiations will be is not important; what matters is that Pakistan has emerged as the center stage of peace—trusted even by a superpower," he said. Malik expressed confidence that the dialogue would have lasting implications for global geo strategic dynamics and further strengthen Pakistan's position as a credible mediator.—APP

IHC written order to stop CDA operation in Saidpur

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday issued a written order restraining the Capital Development Authority (CDA) from evicting the local population and demolishing their houses in the historic Saidpur village. A single-member bench of Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas issued a one-page order regarding the hearing of a petition filed by the affected residents. According to the petitioner's counsel, the court had already passed an order in Writ Petition No. 1488/2026. The lawyer requested the court to issue directives in accordance with the previously existing judicial orders. The court issued notices to the parties involved and sought their comments on the matter. "Parties are directed to submit their replies before the court prior to the next hearing," read the order. The bench further directed that the current petition be clubbed with the previously filed petition and fixed for hearing together. In a significant relief to the petitioners, the court ordered that the CDA shall not demolish or seal the properties of the petitioners until the next date of hearing. The hearing has been adjourned for a later date.—APP

Bilawal urges public support

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has termed the launch of the anti-polio campaign in Pakistan a significant step towards ensuring a healthier future for the nation. In his statement issued by the party secretariat, Bilawal Bhutto said that the ongoing anti-polio drive represents a collective fight against a serious threat to the country's future. He emphasized that polio, often spread due to negligence, can only be eradicated through increased public awareness and responsibility. Bilawal Bhutto paid tribute to frontline workers participating in the campaign, calling them "national heroes" who continue to perform their duties despite extreme heat and security challenges. He also urged parents to play their vital role in the campaign by taking personal responsibility and ensuring that their children receive polio vaccination drops.—APP

Briefs

Anti polio drive starts in Murree

RAWALPINDI: District administration in Murree has launched anti polio vaccination drive to on Monday during which maximum population of kids under the age of 5 years will be vaccinated. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Kamran Sagheer visited the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Murree to review arrangements of the campaign. During the visit, he inspected vaccination counters, reviewed the immunisation process and assessed medical facilities available at the site. He directed the health staff to ensure that no negligence would be tolerated during the campaign and stressed that administering polio drops to every child must remain the top priority. Kamran Sagheer also administered polio drops to children and urged parents to actively participate in the national drive, emphasising that polio is a crippling disease that can only be eradicated through regular immunisation. He said the government was taking serious measures to eliminate polio from the country but added that success of the campaign depended on public cooperation. Health experts, he said, believe that the polio virus can cause life-long disability in children, while timely vaccination remains the most effective prevention. The district administration reaffirmed that all available resources were being utilized to make Murree a polio-free district and to safeguard future generations from the disease.—APP

Education, innovation key to D-8 coop

ISLAMABAD: Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation Ambassador Sohail Mahmood has emphasized that education, science, and technology constitute vital pillars of D-8 cooperation, offering significant opportunities for strengthening institutional linkages and advancing collaborative initiatives. He expressed these views while meeting a high-level delegation of Pakistani educationists at the D-8 Secretariat in Istanbul, where discussions focused on D-8's origin and historical evolution, the current trajectory of D-8's sectoral cooperation in myriad fields, and the Organization's initiatives in the realm of higher education, research, and innovation, said a press release received here on Monday. The secretary-general particularly highlighted the D-8 Network of Pioneers for Research and Innovation (NPRI) as a flagship platform linking leading universities across member states, noting that the network currently comprises 28 prominent institutions. He encouraged more universities and higher education institutions from Pakistan to join the NPRI through relevant national ministries to further enhance academic collaboration within the D-8 framework. The Secretary-General also noted Pakistan's important role in hosting key D-8 affiliated bodies - including the D-8 NPRI Secretariat at COMSATS University, Islamabad; and the D-8 Research Center for Agriculture and Food Security (RCAFS) at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. The delegation comprised senior representatives from Pakistan's higher education and scientific community - including Dr. Abdul Basit, President of the Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP) - Federal Chapter; Mr. Sabur Sethi, President of City University of Science and Technology, Peshawar; and Mr. Muhammad Murtaza Noor, Focal Person and Coordinator for CCoE and Outreach at OIC-COMSTECH, Islamabad. The delegation appreciated the efforts of the D-8 Secretariat in promoting academic and scientific cooperation and expressed keen interest in expanding engagement with its initiatives, particularly under the NPRI platform. The participants noted that they were in Türkiye to attend the Eurasia Higher Education Summit (EURIE) 2026.—APP

Government aims to transform dairy sector

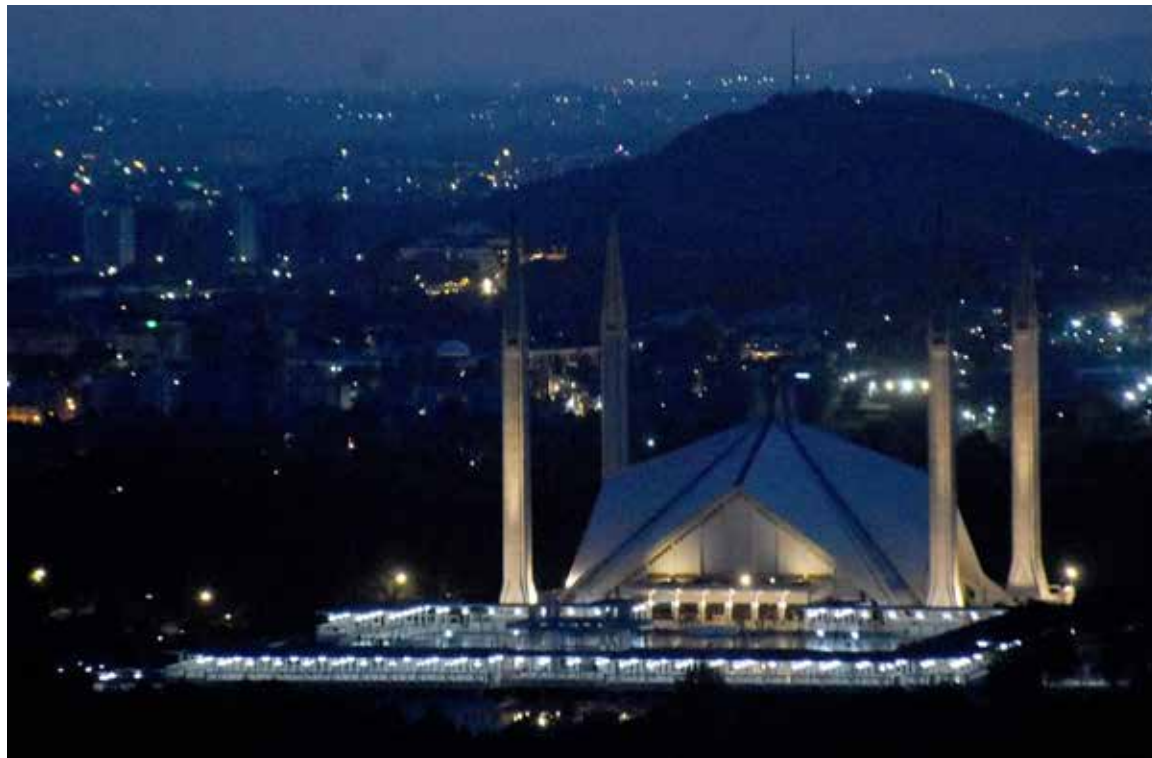
Minister Jam Kamal Khan welcomed these proposals and stressed that a comprehensive plan should be prepared for timely implementation, ensuring that Pakistan's dairy sector achieves higher productivity, better regulatory compliance, and contributes more effectively to the country's economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired a meeting with a delegation of the Pakistan Dairy Association, led by CEO Dr. Shehzad Amin. The meeting was also attended virtually by Rana Ihsaan Afzal, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Commerce, said a release issued here on Monday. The discussion focused on the challenges facing Pakistan's dairy sector, particularly regarding tariff and taxation issues, as well as improving productivity, genetic quality, and formalization of the sector. Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized that enhancing the genetic quality of dairy breeds and guiding farmers toward a formalized

business model is critical for the sector's development. Jam Kamal said that without proper genetic direction, farmers cannot achieve the desired milk yields and that structured support, regulation, and farmer education are essential to transform the sector. The Pakistan Dairy Association pointed out that the current GST on dairy products is 18 percent, while globally, and even in neighboring countries, such products often enjoy zero or minimal taxation. In response, Minister Jam Kamal Khan asked the Association to submit proposals for reducing the GST from 18 percent to 10 percent and asked Rana Ihsaan Afzal to take the lead in working closely with the Association to prepare a comprehensive proposal. The Minister also stated that he would write letters to the Chief Ministers and all relevant ministers to ensure coordination and support for implementing these proposals and

improving the formalization of the dairy sector across the country. The Association presented additional proposals including the provision of financial support and banking facilities for farmers, the implementation of regulatory measures to ensure only pasteurized or properly packaged milk is sold, and the initiation of pilot programs in major urban centers to transition farmers into formal business practices. They also highlighted the need for cross-breeding programs and farmer training to enhance genetic quality and improve overall milk production. Minister Jam Kamal Khan welcomed these proposals and stressed that a comprehensive plan should be prepared for timely implementation, ensuring that Pakistan's dairy sector achieves higher productivity, better regulatory compliance, and contributes more effectively to the country's economy.



ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of Faisal Mosque from Damm-e-Koh, in the Federal Capital.

Exams monitoring intensified in Murree

RAWALPINDI: Murree administration has intensified monitoring of examination centres to ensure transparency and prevent cheating in ongoing board examinations. Acting on directives of Deputy Commissioner Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Kamran Sagheer visited Government Boys High School Murree and reviewed arrangements for Class IX and X examinations. He inspected examination halls, seating arrangements and performance of the examination staff, directing officials to strictly enforce measures to eliminate cheating and ensure a fair examination process. He also reviewed security arrangements, including entry and exit points, deployment of security personnel and surveillance mechanisms, and instructed that safety of students must be ensured at all costs. The officer checked attendance of teaching and non-teaching staff and expressed satisfaction over overall discipline at the institution. He further reviewed cleanliness arrangements and directed staff to maintain a healthy and conducive environment for students. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Murree Captain (R) Arshad Iqbal also visited various examination centres and reviewed arrangements. He directed officials to ensure strict vigilance, prevent malpractice and provide all necessary facilities to students so that examinations could be conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner. Officials reiterated their commitment to ensuring a fair examination system in line with the Punjab government's policy, warning that no negligence would be tolerated.—DNA

5 beggars detained as anti-begging drive continues

ISLAMABAD: The district administration in the federal capital has stepped up its campaign against professional begging, with 5 individuals shifted to Aabpara Police Station during a recent operation led by Assistant Commissioner City Maheen Hassan. According to the administration, teams are carrying out operations in different areas to identify and take action against people

involved in organized begging. During the latest action, five beggars were taken into custody and moved to the police station for further legal proceedings. Officials said the campaign is part of ongoing efforts to control professional begging, which has been reported in several sectors and public places. Authorities believe that many individuals involved in begging operate in groups and move between locations to avoid action. Assistant Commissioner City Maheen Hassan supervised the operation and directed teams to continue checks in busy areas. The administration has also coordinated with police to ensure that detained individuals are processed under the law. Residents have been asked not to give money to beggars, as officials said this practice encourages organized begging. Instead, citizens are encouraged to inform the administration or police if they notice such activities in their areas. The district administration said that public support is important for the success of the campaign. Officials stated that cooperation from citizens can help identify repeat offenders and ensure consistent action. Authorities added that the campaign will continue in phases, covering more areas of the capital in the coming days. The administration aims to reduce the presence of professional beggars through regular monitoring and enforcement. Officials said that joint efforts between the administration and the public can help address the issue and maintain order in public spaces.—APP

ICCI President calls for smart reforms

Pushes for formulation of "RERA" to bring discipline and growth to property market

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Member of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Housing Development, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has called for immediate and practical reforms to revitalize Pakistan's real estate and construction sector, terming it a key driver of economic growth and investment. In a statement issued here on Monday, he observed that shifting global dynamics, particularly in the Middle East, are reshaping investment patterns, creating a timely opportunity for Pakistan to attract both local and overseas capital. "Pakistan possesses immense potential. What is required now is policy clarity and a system that inspires confidence among investors," he stated. Sardar Tahir Mehmood clarified that the business community is not seeking any relaxation of laws or undue facilitation. "Our stance is clear. We are not asking for laws to be bypassed. We are calling for an efficient, transparent, and time-bound system that operates



strictly within the legal framework," he said, adding that delays and procedural complexities are discouraging genuine investors and developers, whereas a predictable system would naturally promote compliance and documentation. He emphasized that reforms should focus on establishing a single-window system to reduce unnecessary delays, ensuring time-bound approvals with clearly defined timelines, digitizing processes to en-

hance transparency, and implementing uniform procedures for all stakeholders. On taxation, he stressed the need to rationalize transaction-related taxes and eliminate overlapping measures that are negatively affecting market activity. He further highlighted the importance of fast-tracking key legislations, including the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), foreclosure laws, and condominium frameworks to strengthen investor confidence and provide legal clarity to stakeholders. Sardar Tahir Mehmood noted that overseas Pakistanis represent a major untapped source of investment, stating that they are willing to invest but require trust in the system. "If we provide a simple, transparent, and predictable framework, overseas investment can increase significantly, enabling reverse capital flow into Pakistan," he remarked. He reiterated that the real estate and construction sector is closely linked with multiple industries and plays a vital role in job creation and economic expansion. "When this sector moves, the economy moves," he added.

Interior Minister Naqvi pledges modernization

DG FIA Dr. Usman Anwar also addressed the conference. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry and Federal Secretary Interior Khurram Agha were also present on the occasion

ISLAMABAD : Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi attended a special conference as a chief guest of FIA officers in Islamabad. He met newly appointed Assistant Directors, Inspectors, and officers posted in Islamabad, and held detailed discussions on their professional responsibilities. The Interior Minister personally listened to the issues faced by FIA personnel and assured their resolution. Addressing the participants, he stated that with the appointment of the new DG, the FIA would be transformed into an active and efficient institution under dynamic leadership. A target has been set to make the FIA a modern, dynamic, and effective organization by December 31, 2026. Eliminating shortcomings and improving systems are top priorities. He emphasized that all necessary facilities would be provided to FIA staff and that promotion is the right of every employee, with improvements planned in the service structure. Ensuring promotions for officers is essential. The Interior Minister also announced the allocation of plots for the families of all FIA martyrs. He added that a comprehensive welfare plan is being developed, including education, healthcare, and other facilities. After ensuring the provision of all resources, a strict zero-tolerance policy against corruption will be implemented. No leniency or soft corner will be shown for those involved in corruption. Honest officers will be provided full protection and job security. "If you stand for truth and justice, the government will stand with you," he stated. Mohsin Naqvi further said that the strength of FIA personnel would be increased, as the current workforce from 2008 is insufficient to meet present challenges. The FIA will play a key role in the "Hardening the State" policy. It is the only federal institution capable of enforcing the writ of the federal government across the country. Strengthening the FIA into the most reliable and robust institution is a top priority. DG FIA Dr. Usman Anwar also addressed the conference. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry and Federal Secretary Interior Khurram Agha were also present on the occasion.—DNA

ITP issues advisory

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued a traffic advisory, announcing diversions on major roads in the federal capital due to the movement of foreign delegations. An ITP official told APP on Monday that diversions would be placed at different times from morning till late night on Srinagar Highway, Club Road, Murree Road and Islamabad Expressway. He said traffic flow on these roads was likely to be affected during the specified timings. The official urged citizens to plan their travel with extra time to avoid inconvenience. He also advised commuters to show patience during diversion hours and cooperate with traffic police officers on duty. The official said Islamabad Traffic Police personnel were actively engaged in ensuring maximum facilitation to road users. He added that further updates could be obtained through Islamabad Traffic Police's WhatsApp channel, Islamabad Police social media platforms and ITP FM 92.4.—APP

Ombudsman directs improved facilitation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman Naveed Kamran Baloch has directed officials to ensure maximum facilitation for complainants visiting the institution. He emphasized that if a complaint pertains to another federal or provincial ombudsman, it should not be rejected; instead, it must be received and forwarded to the relevant office along with an official letter. Chairing a monthly review meeting, the Ombudsman stated that initiatives such as the Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) program and open courts (Khuli Katcheries) will continue to provide justice closer to people's homes. He added that further measures are being planned to expand these efforts. He also noted that the Alternative Dispute Resolution program (IRD) is being expanded to resolve disputes between parties through mediation. Officials were instructed to ensure that complaints are resolved within the stipulated period of 60 days, said in a Press release issued here on Monday. During the briefing, it was revealed that a total of 62,734 complaints had been received up to March 31 this year. Currently, 213 federal government institutions are linked with the Computerized Management Information System (CMIS). Complaints pending for more than one month in these departments are automatically transferred to the Ombudsman's system for action. Efforts are underway to connect remaining institutions with this system.—APP

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Futility of Pakistan media exposed during US-Iran talks

THE recent US-Iran talks held in Islamabad were not only a test of diplomacy but also a moment of reckoning for Pakistan's media. While the negotiations themselves ended without any breakthrough, another, equally revealing story unfolded on the sidelines one that exposed the glaring shortcomings of the national media. Despite being provided with full access, state-of-the-art facilities, and a central location at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Pakistan's media failed to deliver even a single meaningful scoop. In contrast, both American and Iranian media outlets consistently broke news and kept their audiences informed in real time. The entire Pakistani media television channels, print journalists, and digital platforms was housed at the Convention Centre with all logistical support in place. There were no apparent restrictions that could justify the lack of reporting. Yet, as events unfolded, it became painfully clear that access alone does not guarantee journalism. What was missing was initiative, sources, and perhaps most importantly, the professional rigor required to operate in a high-stakes international environment. While Pakistani journalists remained largely passive observers, Iranian media demonstrated how effective communication between the state and media can shape narratives. Iranian government officials were actively engaging with their press, providing timely updates and strategic briefings. It was, in fact, Iranian media that first broke the news that the talks had failed well before any official confirmation reached Pakistani outlets. This was not accidental; it was the result of a coordinated effort to keep their media informed and empowered. Similarly, American media outlets maintained a steady stream of updates throughout the negotiations. Their reporters, backed by strong institutional networks and access to key officials, were able to provide insights and breaking news as events unfolded. Even when information was sensitive, American journalists managed to stay ahead of the curve, reflecting both their professionalism and the openness of their system in facilitating media engagement. In stark contrast, Pakistan's media appeared disconnected and uninformed. Many well-known anchors, seasoned analysts, and prominent journalists were present at the venue, yet none managed to break a single significant development. The absence of exclusive reporting was not just disappointing it was indicative of deeper structural issues within

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the media landscape. It raised serious questions about the credibility of those who dominate primetime talk shows and present themselves as authoritative voices on international affairs. The situation was further underscored during the media interaction held by the US Vice President at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. In a surprising yet telling move, Pakistani journalists were not invited to the briefing. Instead, the interaction was limited to a select group of American reporters. This exclusion was not merely a diplomatic slight; it was a reflection of the perceived irrelevance of Pakistani media in such high-level engagements. When journalists fail to demonstrate value, access is inevitably curtailed. This entire episode should serve as a wake-up call for Pakistan's media industry. The problem is not a lack of talent or resources but a lack of direction and accountability. Over the years, much of the media has become overly focused on sensationalism, political point-scoring, and repetitive talk shows that add little value to public discourse. The ability to cultivate sources, verify information, and break news core tenets of journalism seems to have been sidelined. There is also a need for introspection among media houses and individual journalists alike. Being present at an event of international significance is not an achievement in itself; what matters is the ability to report, analyze, and inform. The failure to do so during the US-Iran talks reflects a broader decline in journalistic standards that cannot be ignored. At the same time, the role of the state cannot be entirely absolved. Unlike Iran and the United States, where officials actively engage with their media, Pakistan's communication mechanisms remain weak and inconsistent. There is little effort to build a constructive relationship between policymakers and journalists, which further limits the flow of information. However, even within these constraints, proactive journalism can and should find a way. Moving forward, Pakistan's media must invest in strengthening its professional capabilities. This includes building reliable networks of sources, enhancing research and analytical skills, and prioritizing factual reporting over speculation. Media organizations must also rethink their editorial priorities, shifting focus from ratings-driven content to substantive journalism that serves the public interest. The US-Iran talks in Islamabad may have ended in diplomatic failure, but they have provided an important lesson for Pakistan's media. The stark contrast between local and international reporting has laid bare the gaps that need urgent attention. If the media continues on its current trajectory, it risks further marginalization not just in global events but also in shaping national narratives. Ultimately, journalism is about more than just being present; it is about being relevant. The silence of Pakistan's media during such a critical moment speaks volumes and not in its favor. It is time for those who claim to be the "big guns" of the industry to pause, reflect, and reclaim the standards that define credible journalism.

The real question about the world's AI future

Andres Velasco

This is a striking reversal. The world will not merely be asked to recognize America's technological lead. It will be asked to pay for it – year after year and on a vast scale. Forget the broad-based industrial export surge President Donald Trump keeps promising; the world's payments will be to a relatively small group of firms that control the large language models, chips, cloud infrastructure, software ecosystems and complementary platforms on which the AI age depends. The world will not merely be asked to recognize America's technological lead. It will be asked to pay for it. Countries pay for imports with exports of goods and services, investment income, asset sales or borrowing. But the US is moving toward greater protectionism...

IS the artificial intelligence boom a bubble? No one can be sure. But one way to answer that question is to ask a more manageable (and more interesting) one: What kind of world economy would have to emerge for today's market valuations to make sense? Consider the core group of firms at the center of the AI story: Nvidia, Alphabet, Apple, Microsoft, Meta, Broadcom, Tesla, OpenAI, Anthropic, SpaceX+AI, and Amazon Web Services. Taken together, they embody a remarkable market wager. Under a conservative benchmark – that by 2036 these firms trade at price-earnings ratios of 20, earn net profit margins of 20 percent and obtain 65 percent of their incremental revenue from abroad – in a decade they would generate roughly \$2.4 trillion in additional annual foreign revenue. Such revenue is roughly equal to all US goods exports today and over twice the US current account deficit. Granted, the US will have to import some inputs (like semiconductors) to provide those AI services. And not all rents will accrue to Americans because foreigners also hold shares in US tech companies. But the offset is likely to be small: foreigners reportedly own just 15 percent to 20 percent of the S&P 500 stock index. These striking figures should prompt us to rethink much of today's global macroeconomic debate. For years, discussion of global imbalances has revolved around a familiar concern: how long can the US continue to run large external deficits? But if markets are even approximately right about AI, the more urgent question is how the rest of the world will pay for the growing claims of US-owned AI capital on global income. This is a striking reversal. The world will not merely be asked to recognize America's technological lead. It will be asked to pay for it – year after year and on a vast scale. Forget the broad-based industrial export surge President Donald Trump keeps promising; the world's payments will be to a relatively small group of firms that control the large language models, chips, cloud infrastructure, software ecosystems and complementary platforms on which the AI age depends. The world will not merely be asked to recognize America's technological lead. It will be asked to pay for it. Countries pay for imports with exports of goods and services, investment income, asset sales or borrowing. But the US is moving toward greater protectionism, making it harder for foreign econ-

omies to earn the dollars needed to buy American goods and services. That creates an obvious contradiction. The US cannot expect the world to transfer vast sums to its AI champions while also restricting the channels through which the rest acquire purchasing power. This tension has far-reaching political implications. Silicon Valley and Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement may be part of the same domestic political coalition, but their interests are fundamentally misaligned. If the valuation of America's leading AI firms depends heavily on future foreign revenue growth, then, for them, access to foreign markets is not incidental – it is central. And foreigners who are expected to buy American AI products and services at unprecedented scale must also be allowed to sell something in return. That is not the end of the story: a massive expansion in American export supply can be accommodated only if the relative price of those exports drops – that is, if the terms of trade of the rest of the world improve vis-a-vis the US. That makes the political trade-off faced by the MAGA coalition even less appetizing. Seen from this perspective, much of today's trade debate already looks outdated. The obsession with bilateral deficits and tariff schedules seems oddly parochial – and increasingly irrelevant – when set against the prospect of trillions of dollars in recurring payments to a handful of American technology firms. If current valuations are broadly right, the next phase of globalization will center not on the US trade deficit but on the world's need to pay for access to US-owned AI infrastructure. The rents implied by these valuations are enormous. And they accrue to firms that, taken together, today employ fewer than 1 million people. By this arithmetic, they hold \$23 million in market value per worker. This is not a story of broad-based job creation. It is a story of claims by a small group of people on the future income of the rest of humanity. If AI valuations are correct, we can expect not just an era of US corporate dominance but also of mounting resistance to it. That makes taxation not just possible but politically indispensable. The US government will want a share. State and local governments hosting data centers will want a share. And foreign governments will want a share. The current disputes over digital services taxes may

come to look like a mild prelude to a much larger struggle over who may tax AI rents. And taxation matters directly for valuation. If these rents remain lightly taxed, then current prices may be vindicated. But if governments do what governments usually do when confronted with large, visible and politically vulnerable rents, then one of two things must occur. Either these firms will have to generate even more pre-tax revenue and profit than we have assumed or shareholders will ultimately receive less than current valuations imply. In the second case, the bubble interpretation becomes harder to dismiss. There are also broader geopolitical implications. The rest of the world is unlikely to passively accept an arrangement implying very large recurring payments to a small number of US firms. Countries will try to reduce their dependence on America. They will subsidize domestic alternatives, impose local hosting requirements, favor national champions in procurement, tighten competition policy, and devise new taxes and regulations aimed at clawing back some of the rents. If AI valuations are correct, we can expect not just an era of US corporate dominance but also of mounting resistance to it. Far from signaling the end of American power, this scenario points to a new form of it. In the 20th century, US power rested heavily on manufacturing scale, military reach and dollar strength. In the 21st, it may rest increasingly on ownership of indispensable AI infrastructure. The challenge for the world will be how to pay for access to it. The challenge for the US will be to sell that infrastructure's services worldwide in the face of nationalist trade policies and the inevitable pressure to tax extraordinary rents. Perhaps today's valuations are a bubble. Perhaps markets are broadly right about the technology but wrong about the politics and the taxation. Or perhaps they are correctly anticipating an economic order in which a handful of US firms captures an unprecedented share of global income. But if the latter scenario is what the future holds, then our public debate is focused on the wrong questions. The defining issues of the next decade will not be tariffs, deficits or American decline. They will be how the world rewards US-based AI capital, how long protectionism can survive that reality and who gets to tax the rents.

A Test of Global Order and Pakistan's Resolve

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Yet the conduct of nations often strays from declared ideals. When power grows unchecked, it begins to see shadows as enemies. It creates fears and then seeks to remove them by force. Such actions shake the very foundations of international order. They weaken trust. They erode the faith of smaller nations in global institutions. In recent times, the world has witnessed...

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

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

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

Briefs

US blockade equivalent to piracy: Iran

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non-Iranian transits. Several analysts argue the step is premature. A deadline related to the situation reportedly extends to April 21, leaving several days for potential de-escalation or further diplomacy. "Trump's action appears rushed," said one Middle East security analyst. "With days still remaining before the April 21 deadline, this move risks complicating negotiations and could further destabilize energy markets and regional security." Oil prices have already surged in response to the developments, with concerns over disrupted shipping routes adding upward pressure on global energy costs. The Strait of Hormuz has been a flashpoint since Iran restricted traffic earlier in the conflict. The US has pushed for full reopening, while accusing Iran of extorting tolls from vessels. Iran's latest warnings come after US warships transited the area in recent days.

Israel seeks to declare Türkiye...

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the latter's war on Gaza erupted following Hamas's Oct 7, 2023 attacks. The dispute entered a new phase over the weekend after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned his US counterpart Donald Trump of "possible provocations and sabotage" that could jeopardise an initial ceasefire arrangement in the US-Israeli war on Iran. Subsequently, on Saturday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sharply criticised Erdogan in a post on X and vowed Tel Aviv would continue to confront Tehran and its regional allies. Later on Saturday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz also lashed out at Erdogan on X, calling him a "paper tiger".

China urges US and Iran to avoid...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan and involving senior US and Iranian officials, broke down late yesterday without any agreement on de-escalation or reopening of key maritime routes. In a strongly worded statement, Spain has described the US-imposed blockade of the Strait of Hormuz as "makes no sense" and potentially destabilizing for global energy security. Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said: "Blockading one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints does not contribute to peace or stability. It only raises the risk of miscalculation and severely impacts international trade. We urge all sides to step back from confrontation."

Trump says he is not...

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the violence, telling worshippers at St Peter's Basilica: "Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war!". "I'm not a big fan of Pope Leo. He's a very liberal person, and he's a man who doesn't believe in stopping crime," Trump told reporters at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. He accused the pontiff of "toying with a country that wants a nuclear weapon." Trump later doubled down on his comments to reporters with a post on Truth Social, saying: "I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon."

US-Iran ceasefire...

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around 47 years, noting that both delegations visited Pakistan at Islamabad's request. He said the talks marked the first time the two sides had engaged in direct, face-to-face dialogue at such a level, with discussions continuing for 21 hours. PM Shehbaz added that Pakistan's leadership worked tirelessly to make the negotiations possible.

DINNER FOR HOCKEY FRATERNITY



ISLAMABAD: President Rising Stars Hockey Club and assistant tournament director Under 18 hockey championship 2026, Mehmood Ahmed hosted sumptuous dinner at his residence for the officials of the Championship including tournament Director Olympian Khawaja Junaid, Shafiq Bhatti, Umpires Manager Sohail Akram Janjua and assistant umpire manager Malik Muhammad Asghar, technical officials and senior team management of the Rising Stars Hockey Club. – DNA

111 Huzaiifa, Huzaima lift first National Padel title

The sibling pair has been on an impressive winning streak, capturing multiple titles in recent months and consistently outperforming top-ranked competitors

ISLAMABAD: The emerging duo of Huzaiifa Abdul Rehman and Huzaima Abdul Rehman continued shining in Pakistan's fast-growing padel circuit, clinching the pro mix Men's Open title at the country's inaugural National Padel Championship and reinforcing their status as the nation's most dominant pair. Organised by the Pakistan Padel Federation in Lahore, the landmark event marked a major step in the formal recognition and development of padel in Pakistan, attracting more than 100 players from across the country. In a one-sided final, Huzaiifa and Huzaima outclassed Sami Zain Khan and Ahmed Kamil in straight sets, winning 6-1, 6-2 to lift the historic title. Their victory not only earned them the top prize of Rs500,000 but also further cemented their growing

dominance on the national circuit. The sibling pair has been on an impressive winning streak, capturing multiple titles in recent months and consistently outperforming top-ranked competitors. Their rapid progress has also translated onto the continental stage, where they currently hold a ranking of 32 in Asia Pacific's Padel Tour – a position that reflects their steady climb and potential to break into the elite tier of the sport. With their aggressive gameplay, strong coordination and tactical maturity beyond their years, Huzaiifa and Huzaima are widely regarded as future flag-bearers of Pakistan padel. The duo is well on course to secure a place among Asia's top-ranked players in the near future. The timing of their national title could not be more significant. Pakistan's National

Padel Championship also serves as a major qualifying opportunity for the Asian Games, offering Pakistani athletes a prestigious pathway to represent the nation on one of the world's biggest sporting stages. The 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 will be held from 19 September to 4 October 2026. The duo, who come from a strong tennis background, have made the transition to padel with extraordinary fluency. Both regularly train at Padel Deck in Islamabad, and Huzaima has spoken passionately about what drives him: "It's not just a sport. It's a mindset. Padel teaches you to think on your feet, adapt quickly, and stay mentally sharp." He has also credited his training environment: "The environment at Padel Deck has played a key role in my development. I've had the chance to train

with skilled players, improve my strategy, and stay consistent with my fitness." Meanwhile, the championship also witnessed impressive performances in other categories. In the Women's Open event, Asifa Shahbaz and Shiza Sajid emerged as national champions after defeating Ushna Sohail and Mehak Khokhar, while Muhammad Qasim and Faisal Anwar clinched the Veterans title. The tournament featured a total prize pool of Rs3 million, with cash rewards distributed among winners, runners-up, and even semi-finalists and quarter-finalists – an initiative aimed at encouraging emerging talent. The successful hosting of the championship, attended by dignitaries including Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, has been hailed as a milestone for the sport in Pakistan. – APP

James Vince joins Peshawar Zalmi

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi on Monday announced that England batter James Vince has joined the team for the ongoing season of the Pakistan Super League and is now officially part of the squad. It is worth noting that James Vince was picked by Peshawar Zalmi during the Pakistan Super League players' auction. At the start of the tournament, Bangladesh's Tazeed Hasan was included in the squad as a replacement for James Vince. Tazeed has now departed for national duties, while James Vince has linked up with the team. Therefore, he is available for selection starting from today's match. APP

PM Shehbaz to visit Saudi Arabia

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decade and the highest-level discussions since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The negotiations came days after a ceasefire began on Tuesday, aimed at ending six weeks of fighting that has killed thousands of people across the Gulf, throttled vital supplies of energy and sparked fears of a wider regional conflict. A formal agreement was not reached after the intense 21-hour discussions, and following that, the US military said it would begin a blockade of all maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports and coastal areas, jeopardising a fragile two-week ceasefire.

Cop guarding polio...

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four-year-old child from Bello Union Council, Sujawal district, Sindh, last month. The case was reported through the polio surveillance network and confirmed by the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad. In Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan – the only countries where polio remains endemic – militants have for decades targeted vaccination teams and their security escorts.

Pak-China reaffirm...

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Senator Dar emphasized that Pakistan will remain actively engaged with all stakeholders to promote de-escalation and peace. The Chinese Ambassador reiterated Beijing's support for Pakistan's diplomatic initiatives during this critical period. The meeting underscores the enduring strategic alliance between the two countries at a time when the Middle East faces heightened risks of conflict.

Japanese PM phones..

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Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed his desire to further strengthen Pakistan-Japan bilateral cooperation, which was reciprocated by the Japanese premier as well. Both leaders agreed to maintain close coordination.

National Kabaddi championship to start from April 14

FAISALABAD: The four-day Sarsabz National Kabaddi Championship will commence on April 14 (Tuesday) at Malikpur Kabaddi Stadium, bringing together top institutional teams from across the country. According to Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) General Secretary Muhammad Sarwar Rana, the opening ceremony will feature a colorful start to the tournament with Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, President of the federation, serving as the chief guest. Senior civil and law enforcement officials, including the Divisional Commissioner Faisalabad, Deputy Commissioner, Regional Police Officer (RPO), City Police Officer (CPO), and members of parliament were expected to attend the inaugural ceremony. The championship, scheduled from April 14 to 17 will feature eight institutional teams representing Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force (PAF), Airport Security Force (ASF), Higher Education Commission (HEC), WAPDA, and Pakistan Railways Police among others. – APP

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PCB U-17 Cup Schedule Overlaps with Exams

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is set to commence its National U-17 Cricket Cup from April 16, raising concerns among parents as the tournament coincides with the ongoing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and A-Level examinations across the country. According to details, parents of selected players have urged PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and General Manager Domestic Cricket Junaid Zia to reconsider the tournament schedule. They highlighted that the overlap with crucial academic exams could significantly affect young cricketers, many of whom are preparing for their matriculation and A-Level assessments. Parents fear that the scheduling conflict may deprive several talented players of the opportunity to showcase their skills at a key stage in their development. In response, PCB officials stated that the domestic cricket calendar is finalized nearly a year in advance. They added that the season follows a structured pathway starting from U-13 tournaments and progressing through U-17, U-19, one-day, and first-class competitions.

Sinner sinks Alcaraz to win Monte Carlo Masters, returns to No 1

"Getting back to No 1 means a lot for me, I am very happy to win a big title" says Sinner

DNA

LONDON: Jannik Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets to win the Monte Carlo Masters for the first time on Sunday and reclaim the world number one ranking from his Spanish rival. Sinner downed Alcaraz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to capture his third ATP 1000 title of the year after completing the "Sunshine Double" last month with victories in Indian Wells and Miami. The 24-year-old Sinner joins Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal as the only third player to win four successive ATP 1000 titles. He also triumphed in Paris at the end of last season. "We came here trying to get as many matches as possible, getting good feedback before other big tournaments coming up. Today was a high level from both of us," Sinner said. "It was a bit windy, a bit breezy. Different conditions from what the tournament has brought. The result is amazing. "Getting back to No 1 means a lot for me... I am very happy to win a big title on this surface, I haven't done it before." It was the first meeting between Sinner and Alcaraz since the Italian prevailed at the ATP Finals in November. Sinner, who is now 7-10 in his career against Alcaraz, will return

to the top of the rankings on Monday. He has won his last 17 matches and becomes the first man since Djokovic in 2015 to win the first three ATP 1000 titles of the season. "It is impressive what you are achieving right now," Alcaraz said to Sinner during the trophy ceremony. "Just one man had won the 'Sunshine Double' and Monte Carlo and you are the second." Alcaraz had won his past 17 matches on clay, dating back to last season when he lifted titles in Rome and at Roland Garros. He admitted Sinner performed better when it mattered most on Sunday. "I would say that the important moments, the important points, I didn't play well. I think I had so much opportunities in the match that I didn't take," said Alcaraz. Alcaraz jumped out to a 2-0 lead when Sinner pushed a forehand long in blustery conditions, but the Italian broke back in the following game as he gradually found his rhythm. The Spaniard fought off a break point in the fifth game and three more at 4-4, but Sinner's greater consistency paid off in the tie-break, which he secured when Alcaraz hit a double fault down set point. Alcaraz won a sensational rally to break Sinner's serve early in the second set, but the second seed continued to pile pressure on his opponent and rallied from 3-1 down, taking the last five games to clinch the biggest clay-court title of his career. "It was an incredible week," said Sinner, pleased with the smooth transition he made from hard courts. "I am surprised in a very good way. I guess I still need a little bit of time to realise what happened."

FIFA Series: Pakistan Edged 1-0 by Mauritania

Head coach Adeel Rizki admitted his side started slowly and were second best in the early stages. "We started slowly. We weren't strong in the beginning. We slowly tried to come into the game but the Mauritania players showed more desire and hunger to win the ball," he said

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan delivered a spirited performance but fell to a narrow 1-0 defeat against Mauritania in their FIFA Series clash at the Alassane Ouattara Stadium, Abidjan. Coming off a historic 8-0 win over Turks and Caicos Islands, Pakistan entered the match with confidence and created several scoring opportunities throughout the game. The decisive moment came in the 20th minute when Ramata Gengui struck a superb long-range volley to give Mauritania the lead, as they bounced back strongly from their heavy defeat against Côte d'Ivoire. Pakistan responded positively, with Nadia Khan – fresh from becoming the country's all-time top scorer – testing the goalkeeper early on. Mariam Mahmood and Kayla Siddiqi also came close before halftime but failed to convert. After the break, tactical substitutions injected fresh energy into Pakistan's attack. Aqsa Mushtaq led the charge with multiple attempts, forcing impressive saves from Mauritania goalkeeper Aissata Fall. At the other end, goalkeeper



er Zeeyana Jivraj made a crucial save to deny Mauritania a second goal, keeping Pakistan in contention. Pakistan pushed hard for an equaliser in the closing stages, with late chances falling to Mariam, Isra Khan, and Aqsa Mushtaq. Despite sustained pressure, including eight minutes of added time, the equaliser remained elusive. Head coach Adeel Rizki admitted his side started slowly and were second best in the early stages. "We started slowly. We weren't strong in the beginning. We slowly tried to come into the game but the Mauritania players showed more desire and hunger to win the ball," he said. He added that missed chances and overconfidence after the previous win played a role in the result. "We will try to work on that and also not miss out on easy chances. I think there was some element of being overconfident after our opening victory. We attacked many times but the ball didn't end up in the net. Football can be like that." Rizki further stressed the need for analysis and improvement ahead of their next match. "We need to analyse the game, revisit our mistakes, and avoid them against Côte d'Ivoire in our next match."

Briefs

Gold price declines by Rs 1,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Monday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 1,600 to settle at Rs 495,362 compared to Rs 496,962 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 1,371 to Rs 424,693 from Rs 426,064, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 1,256 to Rs 389,316 against Rs 390,572. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$16 to \$4,730 per ounce from \$4,746. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 130 to Rs 7,934 from Rs 8,064, while the price of 10 grams of silver also decreased by Rs 111 to Rs 6,802 from Rs 6,913. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$1.30 to \$74.50 per ounce from \$75.80.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.00 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.01. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.00 and Rs 280.05, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.37 to close at Rs 326.22 from the previous day's close of Rs 325.85, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.40 and closed at Rs 374.60 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.20. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs 75.96 and Rs 74.34, respectively.—APP

France open to engaging on slavery reparations: Ghana

PARIS: Ghana said France was open to having discussions with a coalition of countries that are calling for reparations for transatlantic slavery, following a meeting last week with President Emmanuel Macron. Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama, accompanied by foreign minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa and other officials, held talks with Macron in Paris on Wednesday last week. Ablakwa said on X after the meeting that Macron has indicated France was open to discussions on reparations, including the return of looted artefacts, addressing global economic inequities and dismantling structural racism. An official from Élysée Palace said on Sunday that both countries discussed France's efforts to return culturally significant objects and human remains, as well as the legal frameworks around these restitutions. The official did not mention the additional measures cited by Ablakwa. The meeting followed the United Nations' adoption last month of a Ghana-led resolution recognizing slavery as the "gravest crime against humanity" and calling for reparations. France, along with other European countries, abstained. France's representative at the UN said the abstention was due to concerns that the resolution appeared to "establish a hierarchy among crimes against humanity." Ablakwa said that despite that abstention, Macron had said France was willing to have an "open and honest dialogue" on the matter. In 2001, France recognized transatlantic slavery as a crime against humanity. But, like most European nations, it has not formally apologized for its involvement or committed to reparations.—APP

WB chief sounds alarm about looming jobs crisis

The World Bank's governing body, the Development Committee, outlined plans to work with developing countries to streamline policy and regulatory conditions that have hampered investment and job creation for years

WASHINGTON: The Middle East war will dominate global finance officials' talks this week in Washington, but World Bank President Ajay Banga is sounding the alarm about a bigger, looming crisis: a huge gap in jobs for the 1.2 billion people who will reach working age in developing countries in the next 10 to 15 years. At current trajectories, those economies will generate only about 400 million jobs, leaving a deficit of 800 million jobs, Banga told Reuters. The former Mastercard CEO admits that focusing people on the long-term is daunting, given a series of short-term shocks that have buffeted the global economy since the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent being the war in the Middle East. He says he's determined to ensure that finance officials stay focused on those longer-term challenges like creating jobs, connecting people to the electricity grid and ensuring access to clean water. "We have to walk and chew gum at the same time. Short-velocity cycle is what we're going through. Longer velocity is this jobs circumstance or water,"

Banga said in an interview taped on Friday. Thousands of finance officials from around the globe will gather in Washington this week for the spring meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund under the shadow of the US-Israel war with Iran that threatens to slow global growth and jack up inflation. The extent of the hit to the economy will depend on the durability of a two-week ceasefire announced by President Donald Trump last week, just hours before promised strikes that Trump said would destroy Iran's civilization. The ceasefire has halted most attacks. But it has not ended Iran's effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which has caused the biggest-ever disruption to global energy supplies, or calmed a parallel war between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon. The World Bank's governing body, the Development Committee, outlined plans to work with developing countries to streamline policy and regulatory conditions that have hampered investment and job creation for years. Discussions will touch on trans-

parency around permits, anti-corruption, labor law, land law, impediments to opening a business, logistics, better trade systems, and non-price barriers in trade, Banga said. He is upbeat that solutions can be found to help find employment — and dignity — for young people and create opportunities for private companies catering to their needs. "I don't know that you can ever get to a situation of utopia and everybody is taken care of in the coming 15 years. I would doubt that's going to happen, but if you don't do it, the implications are quite severe in terms of illegal migration and instability," Banga said. United Nations data showed more than 117 million people were displaced worldwide as of 2025. Banga said companies in developing countries themselves were starting to expand globally, including India's Reliance Industries and the Mahindra Group, and Dangote in Nigeria. Banga said his discussions with officials in developing countries showed their interest in creating more — and better jobs — for the next generation. In addition to jobs, water will be a big focus. The World

Bank, in conjunction with other development banks, is set to announce a push to ensure that one billion more people have secure access to clean water, adding to existing initiatives to connect 300 million households in Africa with electricity, and to improve health care. The World Bank focused on human and physical infrastructure required for the jobs creation push during last fall's meetings of the IMF and World Bank, and will continue the cycle with an emphasis on attracting private sector investment during this fall's meetings in Bangkok, Banga said. The bank identified five sectors that would benefit from investment and are not reliant on global trade or outsourcing from developed countries: infrastructure, agriculture for small farmers, primary health care, tourism and value-added manufacturing. Those sectors are less likely to be immediately affected by advancements in artificial intelligence, he said. "The problem is, we can't do this alone. We've got to get this snowball to roll downhill, gathering a lot of snow as it goes along, to reach that amazing number of 800 million," he said.

Iran executed at least 1,639 people in 2025, most since 1989

PARIS: Iranian authorities executed at least 1,639 people in 2025, the highest number since 1989, two NGOs said Monday, warning it risked using capital punishment even more extensively after protests in January and the war against Israel and the US. The number of executions represented an increase of 68 percent on the 975 people Iran put to death in 2024, and also included 48 women who were hanged, Norway-based Human Rights (IHR) and Paris-based Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) said in their joint annual report. If the Islamic republic "survives the current crisis, there is a serious risk that executions will be used even more extensively as a tool of oppression and repression," the report said. IHR — which requires two sources to confirm an execution, the majority of which are not reported in Iranian official media — said that the figure represented an "absolute minimum" for the number of hangings in 2025. The figure amounted to an average of more than four executions per day. The report said the number of executions was by far the highest since IHR began tracking it in 2008, and was the most reported since 1989, in the earlier years of the Islamic revolution. The NGOs also warned that "hundreds of detained protesters remain at risk of death sentences and execution" after being charged with capital crimes over January 2026 protests against the authorities — quashed by a crackdown that rights groups say left thousands dead and tens of thousands arrested. "By creating fear through an average of four to five executions per day in 2025, authorities tried to prevent new protests and prolong their crumbling rule," said IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam.—APP

24 arrested in Kuwait over 'financing of terror'

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has arrested 24 people as part of an investigation into the "financing of terrorist entities," authorities said, including five former lawmakers. Since Iran began attacking Kuwait and other Gulf states last month as part of the Middle East war, authorities across the region have moved against individuals and organizations suspected of links to or supporting Tehran. In a statement, Kuwait's Interior Ministry did not mention any particular country or organization, but said it had "thwarted a plot targeting the undermining of the homeland's security and the financing of terrorist entities and organizations." "The State Security Agency succeeded in apprehending 24 citizens, one of whom had his citizenship revoked, in possession of financial sums linked to illicit activities," the ministry added. It said the financing was "part of an organized activity involving the collection of funds under religious pretexts ... in preparation for their transfer in accordance with instructions from outside the country.—APP

NPO to organize webinar

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar on "Operation and Production Management" tomorrow (Tuesday) aimed at enhancing professional skills in the industrial and service sectors. The course will focus on how organizations design, plan, and control processes to deliver goods and services efficiently, said NPO document shared here on Monday. Participants will learn about productivity, quality, capacity planning, inventory management, and continuous improvement to support effective and competitive operations. The workshop will also cover the role of production and operations, operations strategy, product and process design, and capacity, layout, and scheduling.—APP



QUETTA: A vendor decorates traditional handwoven Patari baskets with colorful beads and ribbons, highlighting Balochistan's rich craft heritage and the enduring skill of local artisans.

SECP registers 2,993 new companies

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) registered 2,993 new companies in March 2026, showing an 11 percent increase compared to the same month last year. This growth reflects rising investor confidence in Pakistan's corporate sector. It also highlights SECP's continued focus on digital transformation and ease of doing business, in line with the government's broader economic reforms, said a news release issued here on Monday. Around 99.9 percent of company registrations were completed online through the SECP's eFile portal. With these additions, the total number of registered companies has reached 290,041. The total paid-up capital of newly registered companies stood at Rs. 2.80 billion, indicating sustained investment across key sectors. Private limited companies accounted for 57 percent of new registrations, followed by single-member companies at 39 percent. The remaining four percent included public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, and limited liability partnerships. Province-wise, Punjab led with 1,488 new companies, followed by Islamabad Capital Territory (522), Sindh (447), Gilgit-Baltistan (233), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (224), and Balochistan (49). Sector-wise, Information Technology and e-commerce remained the leading sectors with 606 new companies. These were followed by trading (542), services (366), and real estate development and construction (264). Other active sectors included tourism and transport (153), food and beverages (149), education (112), textile (65), mining and quarrying (60), corporate agricultural farming (58), marketing and advertisement (58), engineering (51), healthcare (49), cosmetics and toiletries (47), fuel and energy (43), pharmaceuticals (41), chemicals (38), communications (32), and auto and allied (25).—APP

Meat, meat preparations worth of \$370m exported

ISLAMABAD: Meat and meat preparations exports from the country during 08 months of current financial year grew by 9.03 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-February 2025-26, about 83,221 metric tons of meat and meat preparations worth of \$370.153 million were exported as compared to the exports of 78,883 metric tons valued at \$338.645 million of the same period of the last year. On year on year basis, the exports of meat and meat production increased by 22.11 percent in the month of February, 2026 as against the exports of the same month of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During the month of February, 2026 over 12,431 metric tons of meat and meat preparations \$53.910 million were exported as compared to the exports of 9,748 metric tons valued at \$44.148 million of the same month of the last year. Meanwhile, the fruits exports from the country during the period under review grew by 6.25 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year as 471,264 metric tons of fresh fruits of different kinds valued at \$251.947 million were exported in last eight months of current financial year as compared to the exports of 462,292 metric tons worth of \$237.130 million of the same period of the last year. However, the exports of vegetables from the country during the period under review decreased by 46.45 percent as compared to the exports of the same period of the last year. During last eight months, over 423,840 metric tons of vegetables worth of \$121.681 million were exported from the country as compared to the exports of 803,849 metric tons costing \$227.224 million of the same period of the last year.—DNA

Philippines accuses China of poisoning disputed waters

MANILA: The Philippines accused Chinese fishermen on Monday of pouring cyanide in waters in the Spratly Islands, a flashpoint in the disputed South China Sea that has been the site of violent confrontations with Chinese vessels. Beijing claims the strategic South China Sea in nearly its entirety, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. The Philippines' National Security Council (NSC) alleged the poisoning began last year around Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly chain, which sits near vital shipping lanes and is reputedly rich in minerals. "The use of cyanide on Ayungin Shoal is a term of sabotage that seeks to kill local fish populations, depriving Navy personnel of a vital food source," NSC assistant director-general Cornelio Valencia told a news conference, using the Philippines' term for the reef. These actions also "threaten our Navy personnel" through exposure to contaminated water, eating poisoned fish, as well as eroding corals, Valencia added. Manila and Beijing have a long history of maritime territorial disputes in the hotly contested waterway, including a violent clash in June 2024 in which Chinese coast guard personnel wielding knives, sticks and an axe boarded Philippine Navy boats. Valencia said Manila raised the alleged poisoning with Beijing at a recent meeting but has received no formal reply. The Chinese embassy did not immediately respond to AFP's requests for comment on Monday. Valencia said that reef damage from cyanide poisoning could also compromise the structural foundations of the BRP Sierra Madre, a World War II era warship on which the Filipino troops are stationed. Manila deliberately grounded the vessel on the shoal in 1999 to stake its claim to the territory. Philippine Navy spokesman Rear Admiral Roy Vincent Trinidad said Filipino troops had seized 10 bottles of cyanide from sampans boats launched from Chinese fishing ships in February, July and October 2025. He said that soldiers observed another Chinese sampan crew poisoning waters near the shoal last month, adding that the shoal's waters later tested positive for cyanide. None of the troops aboard the warship have tested positive for the poison, Trinidad added. Valencia and Trinidad both alleged the fishermen's mother ships worked for the Chinese Navy. Valencia said the NSC planned to submit a report next week to the Philippine foreign ministry which could become the basis for a diplomatic protest. Manila has also ordered the navy and coast guard to step up patrols "to prevent further environmental harm" in the area, he added.—Agencies

Bangladesh faces deadly measles outbreak

The EPI is a highly successful public health initiative, which Bangladesh launched in 1979 to target vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, tuberculosis and diphtheria. It provides free vaccines to children and women and has since increased coverage across the country from 2 percent in the 1980s to about 90 percent.

DHAKA: Bangladesh is battling its deadliest measles outbreak in recent history, following a disruption in a mass vaccination drive, doctors say, as authorities launched an emergency immunization drive for 20 million children. More than 15,600 suspected measles cases have been reported across the country and at least 179 children have died with measles-like symptoms since March 15, Directorate General of Health Services data showed on Monday. The number of confirmed infections is more than 2,600 — a sharp increase from 2025, when 125 cases were recorded throughout the whole year. "I haven't witnessed any measles outbreak in the country during the last 15 years. It's something unprecedented," said Prof. Nazma Begum from the pediatric department of the United Medical College in Dhaka. "Children are coming to the hospital with symptoms of measles — including fever, along with cold, cough, and red eyes. Some children are presenting with more severe complications such as pneumonia, difficulty breathing, reduced oxygen levels ... It can definitely be fatal for children if complications develop." Measles is a highly contagious

airborne disease, which is especially dangerous for children under five years old. Bangladesh, a nation of 170 million people, has been able to contain measles outbreaks with routine vaccination — usually two doses given in early childhood, with the first administered at the age of nine months. Even small gaps in coverage can lead to outbreaks. Supplementary mass immunization to prevent resurgence and boost population immunity is conducted every four to five years. "The last campaign took place in 2020. Vaccine shortages in recent months have contributed to the current measles outbreak. The campaign should have been conducted in 2024-25," Begum said. The period was marked by political turmoil in the country, including mass student-led protests, the ouster of the previous administration, and rule by a caretaker government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. A new, elected government only came to power in late February. Health authorities finally launched the delayed drive last week, focusing on 1.2 million children in the most affected regions, and next week it will be expanded nation-

wide. "It's being administered after five and a half years. It was supposed to be delivered under the interim government. It was not done for some unknown reasons," Prof. Dr. Halimur Rashid, director of disease control at the Directorate General of Health Services, told Arab News. "The nationwide measles vaccination will begin on 20th April, and altogether we have a target to reach 20 million children across the country." The campaign is scheduled to conclude by the time of the Eid Al-Adha holiday in late May. "We expect that the situation will improve significantly within one month, when most of the target population will be covered by the vaccination campaign," Rashid said. "We have a very strong infrastructure backbone for the vaccination campaign under the Expanded Program on Immunization." The EPI is a highly successful public health initiative, which Bangladesh launched in 1979 to target vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, tuberculosis and diphtheria. It provides free vaccines to children and women and has since increased coverage across the country from 2 percent in the 1980s to about 90 percent.—DNA

Briefs

'Pak-US ties not merely optional but a necessity'

DNA

CAMBRIDGE: Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States Rizwan Saeed Sheikh on Monday calling for promoting bilateral economic relations, said that the Pakistan-US bilateral relations were not merely optional but an important necessity of the present time and the future. The ambassador, in his address at the "Pakistan Conference" held at Harvard University, invited American businessmen and investors to exploit Pakistan's potential, reiterating the country's commitment to provide every possible facilitation to investors. The ambassador said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had envisioned Pakistan emerging as "the axis of the world" and that, owing to Pakistan's decades-long positive diplomatic role and consistent efforts, the country was selected as a facilitator for US-Iran negotiations.

The ambassador thanked the United States and Iran for their strong expression of confidence and reaffirmed that his country would continue its sincere efforts for regional peace. Ambassador Sheikh said that Pakistan had been blessed by nature with immense resources, including natural and human resources, particularly a large youth population. He said that right after its creation, Pakistan faced multiple challenges; however, it had not only overcome these difficulties but was also progressing on the path of development.

France, UK to hold moot on Hormuz

DNA

PARIS: France will soon organize with Britain a conference aimed at restoring freedom of navigation on the Strait of Hormuz, President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday, adding that any such naval mission would be done on a strictly defensive basis only. "With regards to the Strait of Hormuz, we will be organizing in the coming days a conference with the United Kingdom and those countries willing to join us in a peaceful multinational mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation in the strait," Macron said on X. "This strictly defensive mission, which will be separate from the warring parties, is intended to be deployed as soon as the situation allows," he added. Kremlin says US blockade of Strait of Hormuz will be bad for markets. The Kremlin on Monday criticized an announcement by US President Donald Trump that US would blockade the Strait of Hormuz, saying this would hurt global markets.

NATO should resent ties with Trump

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye said on Monday that NATO allies should use their July summit in Ankara to reset ties with US President Donald Trump and prepare for a potential reduction of US involvement in the alliance. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said that Türkiye believed Trump would attend the NATO leaders' summit on July 7-8 due to his "personal respect" for President Tayyip Erdogan, but added he understood Trump was otherwise reluctant to come to the meeting. Trump has criticized NATO for years and last week threatened to pull the United States out of the alliance over European members' refusal to send ships to unblock the Strait of Hormuz near Iran. That compounded friction within the bloc over his earlier plans to acquire Greenland. Fidan told the state-owned Anadolu news agency that allies had long considered Trump's criticisms to be rhetoric, but were now planning around the possibility of reduced US involvement and ramping up their own defensive capacities.

Australia appoints woman to lead its army

Lieutenant General Susan Coyle, the current chief of joint capabilities, will become chief of army in July, the government said in a statement. She will replace Lieutenant General Simon Stuart



CANBERRA: Australian new military leadership posing for a group photo with the Australian prime minister. — DNA

DNA

CANBERRA: Australia on Monday said a woman would lead its army for the first

time in history, as part of a reshuffle of the country's defence force leadership. Lieutenant General Susan Coyle, the current chief of joint capabilities, will become chief of army in July, the govern-

ment said in a statement. She will replace Lieutenant General Simon Stuart. Coyle's appointment comes as Australia's military seeks to boost the number of female officers in its ranks. It faces a

wave of allegations of systematic sexual harassment and discrimination.

"From July, we will have the first ever female chief of army in the Australian Army's 125-year history," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in a statement. Defence Minister Richard Marles called Coyle's appointment a "deeply historic moment." "As Susan said to me, you cannot be what you cannot see," he said. "Susan's achievement will be deeply significant to women who are serving in the Australian Defence Force today and women who are thinking about serving in the Australian Defence Force in the future." Coyle, 55, enlisted in the military in 1987 and has held a number of senior command roles. She will be the first woman to lead any service branch of the military, Marles said. Women currently make up around 21% of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and 18.5% of senior leadership roles. The ADF has set a target of 25% of overall participation for women by 2030. Last October, a class action lawsuit was filed against the ADF alleging it failed to protect thousands of female officers from systematic sexual assault, harassment and discrimination. The government on Monday also appointed Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, the current chief of the navy, as the head of the ADF, succeeding Admiral David Johnston. The current deputy chief of navy, Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley, will replace Hammond as head of the branch.

Aurangzeb highlights reform priorities at Harvard Discussion

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday highlighted Pakistan's key reform priorities while participating in a high-level panel discussion at Harvard University on "Pakistan's Economic Agenda: Stability, Reform and What Comes Next," held as part of the Pakistan Conference 2026. The session was moderated by Dr. Reza Baqir, former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, and featured distinguished panelists including Professor Atif Mian of Princeton University and Nobel Laureate Professor Daron Acemoglu of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), according to press release issued by finance ministry here. The discussion brought together leading economists, policymakers, and members of the Pakistani diaspora to deliberate on Pakistan's economic outlook, reform priorities, and long-term growth trajectory. The minister described the ongoing Middle East conflict as one of the most significant supply shocks the global economy has witnessed in recent years, requiring careful and calibrated policy management. He highlighted that Pakistan's immediate priority over the past several weeks had been to ensure uninterrupted energy supplies across critical sectors, despite limited strategic reserves, through coordinated efforts across key ministries and institutions.

He noted that the government initially introduced a blanket subsidy to cushion the public from rising energy costs, which has since transitioned into full price transmission supported by targeted subsidies, in line with available fiscal space. The Finance Minister emphasized that Pakistan has managed the situation relatively well compared to many countries, avoiding severe supply disruptions or law and order challenges. On the external front, Senator Aurangzeb underscored the government's strong debt management, noting that the recent Eurobond repayment was a "non-event," and expressed confidence in Pakistan's ability to meet upcoming external obligations in a timely manner. Highlighting emerging opportunities amid the crisis, he pointed to a significant surge in transit flows through Karachi Port, which in just a few weeks exceeded the entire volume recorded in 2025, as well as progress toward operationalizing Gwadar Port. He also noted a record monthly inflow in March under the Roshan Digital Account initiative, indicating renewed confidence among overseas Pakistanis. At the same time, the minister emphasized that remittances, while important, cannot serve as a sustainable long-term growth model, underscoring the need to focus on export-led growth and expansion in trade in services as more durable drivers of economic resilience. — DNA

PSX falls as failed US-Iran talks jolt sentiment

KSE-100 Index retreats 5,553.3 points, or 3.32%, crashing to intraday low of 161,638.07

DNA

KARACHI: Stocks at the bourse fell on Monday after US-Iran talks failed to secure a lasting breakthrough, while renewed Strait of Hormuz tensions drove oil back above \$100 and kept investors on edge. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index traded between a high of 163,560.94, down 3,630.43 points or 2.17%, and a low of 161,638.07, down 5,553.3 points or 3.32%, against the previous close of 167,191.37. "Investors are naturally disappointed by the talks' in-

ability to secure a long-term ceasefire. US statements on blocking the Strait of Hormuz have further increased upside risk in oil, with international prices rising by \$6 to \$7 a barrel back into the \$100-plus range," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. "Volatility is expected to continue this week until further progress is seen," he added. Oil rose back above \$100 a barrel after peace talks between the United States and Iran failed to produce a breakthrough and Washington moved to tighten pressure on Iran's maritime trade. President Donald Trump said on Sunday the US Navy would begin blockading maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports, raising fresh concern over the Strait of Hormuz and the durability of the Pakistan-mediated ceasefire. The US Central Command said US forces would begin implementing the blockade of all maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports from 10am ET (7pm, Pakistan standard time) on Monday. Elsewhere in Asia, sentiment was mixed, with South Korea's Kospi down 2% before trimming losses, while Japan's Nikkei slipped 0.3%. In the previous session, the KSE-100 rose 1,673.87 points, or 1.01%, to close at 167,191.37 from 165,517.51, trading between 168,290.29 and 166,221.33. The KSE-30 advanced 420.31 points, or 0.84%, to 50,589.37.

PM to visit Russia in June: Amb Tirmizi

DNA

MOSCOW: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to visit Moscow in June to meet the country's leadership and further strengthen the longstanding and cordial relations between Pakistan and Russia, Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia Faisal Niaz Tirmizi said. "We are working on the dates, and hopefully by June, the prime minister will be here, because he is "Really looking forward to this historic visit," he said in an interview with a Russian television channel. He said that the prime minister's visit was postponed after the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as all texts and agreements had already been prepared. The ambassador said the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had held several meetings with President Putin in China and Ashgabat and described him as "a voice of wisdom and a great statesman of global affairs." "Hopefully, this conflict will be over soon, and the prime minister will be able to visit Moscow and St. Petersburg," Tirmizi added. Asked about President Putin's visit to Islamabad, he said, "Hopefully, after the visit of the prime minister, President Putin will pay a return visit." Highlighting the deep coordination between Pakistan and Russia during the Iran-US conflict, he said that Pakistan played the role of a mediator, maintaining close contact with both sides and with Russia at all levels. He said that he held three high-level meetings with Russian deputy foreign ministers in the last two weeks alone. Tirmizi noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's direct en-

agement with President Trump helped de-escalate the situation, leading to the decision to hold negotiations in Pakistan. On energy cooperation, Ambassador Tirmizi confirmed that Pakistan was negotiating long-term oil supplies from Russia. "We are getting oil from the Gulf now, and we are in talks with the Russians as well, because we received one consignment in 2023, and we are still in negotiations with the Russians regularly. And that would be something very important for Pakistan and the Russian Federation." Asked whether Western sanctions could obstacle such trade, the ambassador said that some Russian companies had issues with the sanctions, "but we are trying to deal with those issues which don't fall within the sanctions." On military-to-military ties, he said that the two countries would hold the "Druzhiba" joint counter-terrorism exercises in Pakistan in September this year. He said that both nations would also cooperate closely within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) against terrorism, extremism and the activities of groups such as ISIS-K (Wilayat-e-Khorasan), Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Tehrik-i-Taliban Afghanistan. Ambassador Tirmizi expressed confidence that Pakistan belonged in BRICS and hoped Russia would support Islamabad's candidature. He noted that only India had opposed Pakistan's candidature, while China, Brazil and South Africa backed Pakistan's inclusion. On people-to-people contacts, the ambassador said the embassy was planning to send the first organised group of Russian tourists to Pakistan soon.



Fitch affirms Pak rating

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Fitch Ratings on Monday affirmed Pakistan's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating at 'B' with a "stable outlook". "Pakistan's rating affirmation reflects progress on fiscal consolidation and macro stability measures, broadly in line with its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and supporting its funding capacity. Foreign exchange buffers rebuilt over the past year provide a cushion against the economic impact of the war in the Middle East, while Pakistan's role as a ceasefire broker may provide tangible benefits and partly offset external pressures," the agency said in a statement. The US-based agency highlighted that the country's high exposure to the global energy price shock remained a key risk, particularly if it led to a sharp drop in foreign exchange reserves. Highlighting key rating drivers, Fitch said the authorities reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF on its loan programmes in March, unlocking a combined \$1.2 billion. The programme will continue to provide a key policy anchor, particularly for the fiscal framework, and will help mobilise additional multilateral and bilateral support, it added.

Iran war weighs on global economy

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Alarm over the impact of the Iran war on the global economy grew on Monday with more countries announcing emergency support measures to combat rising energy costs, while others appealed for international support. The conflict - the third major shock to hit the world's economy after the Covid pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine - will dominate this week's gathering of finance officials at the International Monetary Fund in Washington. Any lingering hopes of an early restart to oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint were dashed after the failure of US-Iran talks at the weekend that left a fragile ceasefire in yet greater jeopardy. The IMF and World Bank have already signalled they will downgrade their forecasts for global growth and raise their inflation predictions as a result of the war.

Crude oil shoots up 8% above \$100

Dollar also strengthens to highest level in week in broad rally against most of its peers in early Asian trade

DNA

LONDON: The US oil benchmark rebounded above \$100 a barrel on Monday after peace talks between the United States and Iran failed to make a breakthrough, and with US President Donald Trump ordering a blockade of Iranian ports. Shortly after trading began, a barrel of West Texas Intermediate for May delivery rose around 8% to \$104.50, while June delivery of international benchmark Brent rose 7% to \$102. In early trade in Asia, South Korea's benchmark Kospi index fell 2%, before recovering slightly, while Japan's Nikkei was down 0.3%. Oil prices had sunk, and stocks soared last week after Trump agreed to a two-week ceasefire mediated by Pakistan, despite its tenuousness becoming quickly apparent as Israel continued to strike Lebanon and the Strait of Hormuz remained effectively closed. The dollar also strengthened to the highest level in a week in a broad rally against most of its peers in early Asian trade on Monday. The US dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was up as much as 0.5% at \$99.187, its highest level since Apr 7. The euro was down 0.5% at \$1.1667 as the British pound fell 0.6% to \$1.3383, while the Australian dollar was 0.8% lower at \$0.7014 and the New Zealand dollar was off 0.7% at \$0.5798.

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