



# Islamabad POST

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**Zardari calls for stabilizing the Balochistan areas**

Detailed News On Page-03

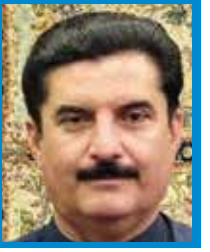
**Mohsin asks businessmen to bring back money**

Detailed News On Page-01



**Governor for resolution of public issues**

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## Middle East crisis

# US-Iran talks 2nd round likely soon

Iran talks could be happening over next two days in Pakistan, confirms Trump; the first round of high-level, face-to-face negotiations took place on April 11-12, 2026, at Islamabad's Serena Hotel. Although no agreement was reached after more than 20 hours of discussions

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: US and Iranian teams could return to Islamabad for the second round of peace talks this week, according to sources. The second round of US-Iran negotiations is expected within days as mediation efforts continue, sources said. Management of a five-star hotel in Islamabad, which hosted the first round, has already been asked to prepare for the delegations again. The hotel has not been given an exact date yet but has been told to stay ready. It is hoped that some breakthrough could be achieved during this second round of talks. The first round of high-level, face-to-face negotiations took place on April 11-12, 2026, at Islamabad's Serena Hotel. Although no agreement was reached after more than 20 hours of discussions, both sides and Pakistani mediators kept the door open for further talks before the current ceasefire expires.

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## UK minister frustrated at US war strategy

NEWS DESK

LONDON: UK minister 'frustrated and angry' at US war strategy, says it went in 'without clear exit plan' UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves has expressed strong frustration with the United States' approach to the conflict with Iran, stating she is "frustrated and angry" that Washington entered the war without a clear exit plan or defined objectives. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has urged all parties to push for renewed peace talks and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, describing it as vital for global energy supplies and trade. In Islamabad, Pakistani Senator Sherry Rehman said Pakistan wants

the US-Iran negotiations to resume, describing the recent talks as only the "first phase" of a longer diplomatic process. Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, along with EU High Representative Kaja Kallas, have stressed the need for "continued dialogue" to resolve the conflict, with both sides highlighting Pakistan's constructive mediation role. These international reactions come as efforts continue to revive high-level talks between Washington and Tehran following the inconclusive first round in Islamabad last weekend. The fragile ceasefire remains in place, but concerns over the Strait of Hormuz and long-term stability are growing.

## Regional confrontations

# Lavrov bashes efforts to 'contain' Russia, China on Beijing visit

Beijing and Moscow are close economic and political partners, and the relationship has deepened further since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov criticized efforts he said were aimed at "containing" Russia and China, Moscow's state media said on Tuesday during his visit to Beijing. Lavrov was given a red-carpet welcome after he arrived in the Chinese capital, photographs released by the Russian foreign ministry showed. He later met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, who he was seen shaking hands with in a picture posted on social media by Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova. Beijing and Moscow are close economic and political partners, and the relationship has deepened further since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Lavrov warned of "some very, very dangerous games going on" in East Asian geopolitical hotspots that included Taiwan, the disputed South China Sea and the nuclear-armed Korean peninsula, according to quotes from the meeting with Wang published by state-run RIA Novosti. Beijing claims Taiwan as part of its territory and

Continued on Page 06

## Italy suspends defence deal with Israel

NEWS DESK

ROME: Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on Tuesday her government had suspended a defence cooperation deal with Israel, reflecting frayed ties between previously close allies as the conflicts in the Middle East continue. Meloni's right-wing government has been one of Israel's closest friends in Europe, but in recent weeks it has criticised its attacks on Lebanon, which have killed hundreds and injured thousands. Israel also fired warning shots last week at Italian troops serving in Lebanon under a UN mandate, causing damage to a vehicle. "In light of the current situation, the government has

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on President Asif Ali Zardari. Both sides discussed the prevailing political and regional situations. - DNA

## Dar talks to Romanian FM Toiu

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar received a telephone call from Romanian Foreign Minister Oana-Silvia Toiu on Tuesday, with both leaders reaffirming their commitment to deepen bilateral cooperation. During the call, Foreign Minister Toiu appreciated Pakistan's role in facilitating the recent Islamabad talks. Both leaders welcomed the growing positive momentum in Pakistan-Romania relations and agreed to further enhance cooperation across multiple sectors. The two foreign ministers also exchanged views on regional and global issues, underscoring the importance of continued dialogue and diplomacy for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Continued on Page 06

## Govt resorts to two-hour loadshedding

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced loadshedding of more than two hours during "peak hours" and warned that the nation should be ready to brace for an increase in electricity prices. The major move comes as the world grapples with an energy crisis following Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US-Israel strikes, sending governments scrambling to conserve power. In a statement, the Power Division's spokesperson said that in light of the situation, the government has decided that from 5pm to 1am (peak hours), electricity supply will be suspended for nearly 2:30 hours daily. The rationale, the spokesperson explained,

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## Middle East

# President lauds Pak untiring efforts in facilitating dialogue

In meeting with PM Shehbaz, Zardari urges proactive engagement with Washington, Tehran and global powers

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari lauded Pakistan's untiring efforts in making the diplomatic initiative of hosting peace negotiations between Iran and the United States a great success. Islamabad emerged as a key mediator in the US-Iran conflict after PM Shehbaz helped secure a two-week ceasefire on April 8. Following the temporary truce, delegations from Washington and Tehran arrived in Islamabad at his invitation and held over 20 hours of negotiations over the weekend. However, despite the extended talks and intensive diplomatic engagement, the discussions concluded without reaching a final agreement. The conflict, which began on February 28 following coordinated

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## Macron says he urged US, Iran to resume talks

APP

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has revealed that he personally urged both US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to restart negotiations and ensure the fragile ceasefire fully extends to Lebanon. Macron described Lebanon's inclusion as a "necessary condition" for the truce to be credible and lasting, amid ongoing Israeli strikes in the region. During a phone call with

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## IMF cuts growth outlook due to US-Iran war

The World Economic Outlook's most optimistic "reference scenario" assumes a short-lived Iran war and forecasts 3.1% real GDP growth for 2026, down 0.2% point from its previous forecast in January

COMMERCE DESK

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its growth outlook on Tuesday due to Iran war-driven energy price spikes and supply disruptions and warned that the global economy would teeter on the brink of recession if the conflict worsens and oil stays above \$100 per barrel through 2027. With massive uncertainty over the Middle East conflict gripping finance officials gathering for IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, the IMF presented three growth scenarios: weaker, worse and severe, depending on how the war unfolds. The World Economic Outlook's most optimistic "reference scenario" as-

sumes a short-lived Iran war and forecasts 3.1% real GDP growth for 2026, down 0.2% point from its previous forecast in January. Under this scenario, oil prices average \$82 per barrel for all of 2026, a decline from recent levels of around \$100 for the Brent benchmark futures price LCOc1. Absent the Middle East conflict, the IMF said it would have upgraded its growth outlook by 0.1% to 3.4%, due to a continued technology investment boom, lower interest rates, less-severe US tariffs and fiscal support in some countries. But the war has created a far bigger risk to the global economy than President Donald Trump's initial wave of steep tariffs did a year ago,

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Imran sisters denied meeting with ex-PM

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: In a surprising turn of events, the sisters of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan on Tuesday managed to make their way to Adiala jail but were still denied a meeting with their brother. The sisters were not allowed to enter the jail by the authorities, following which they returned to the checkpoint where they are typically stopped by police. Speaking to the media, Aleema Khan said, "Usually, police do not allow us to proceed onward and the jail administration informs the court that we did not arrive because of which the meeting could not be arranged." "This time we reached outside the gate of Adiala jail and informed them that we are here," she added.

### Iran indebted to Muslim nations

DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Emaeil Baghaei says that the "unprecedented solidarity" shown by Muslim nations in support of Iran during the US-Israeli war is "deeply appreciated". In a statement posted on X, he says, "The unprecedented solidarity shown by Muslim nations and conscientious, justice-seeking people across the region and around the world in support of the heroic resistance of the Iranian nation against brutal US-Israeli aggression is deeply appreciated." He further says that Iranians will "forever remember" the millions of demonstrators who took to the streets and public squares in countries including Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Türkiye, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India.

# Naqvi urges businessmen to bring back at least 30% of their wealth to Pakistan

"If businessmen decide today, \$10 billion can come back before the federal budget," says interior minister

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has urged businessmen to bring back at least 30% of their wealth to Pakistan ahead of the federal budget 2026-27. "The business community are requested to bring back at least 30% of their money from abroad," Naqvi said while addressing an event at Federation House in Karachi on Tuesday. The minister's statement comes at a crucial juncture as Islamabad prepares to repay \$3.5bn to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) this month and faces pressure on its foreign exchange reserves. Pakistan failed to reach an agreement with the UAE to roll over the debt for the first time in seven years. Islamabad will now repay the amount by the end of this month, putting significant strain on its

foreign exchange reserves, which stand at about \$16 billion, enough to cover just three months of imports, The News reported. Pakistan is holding talks with Saudi Arabia and China to secure financial support, according to people familiar with the matter, The News reported while quoting a Bloomberg report. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also reached an initial agreement with Pakistan last month for the disbursement of a loan instalment of about \$1.2 billion from a \$7 billion funding programme. Pakistan has received about two dozen bailouts from the global lender since the 1960s. Addressing the business community earlier today, the interior minister disclosed that around \$100 billion went abroad over the past three to four years, stressing that even partial repatriation could provide significant economic relief. "If busi-

nessmen decide today, \$10 billion can come back before the budget," the security czar added. "We do not discuss how the money went abroad," said Naqvi and warned that authorities could trace such flows if required. "If someone thinks it cannot be traced, it would only take picking up one or two people in Karachi to find everything," he warned. Naqvi also assured the business community of improved conditions, saying Pakistan offers strong returns on investment. "The profit Pakistan offers cannot be found anywhere else in the world," he said and assured them of providing a conducive business environment." He further said that proposals regarding visas for traders would soon be presented to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The security czar said that efforts were underway to make the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) more business-friendly. "We will make

FIA affairs business-friendly," he said, adding that the entire business community should not be penalised for the actions of a few. "We cannot punish the whole business community because of one or 2% of people," he added. Naqvi also raised concerns about money changers, saying they were often used for managing private funds. "Money changers are only kept to manage one's own money. No tourist comes and exchanges money through them," he said. "We have also held a meeting with the finance minister to ask what these money changers are doing," he said. The interior minister further disclosed that large transactions by major groups in Karachi had been detected and warned that there would be no leniency. He also expressed hope of improving Pakistan's global standing, stating: "We are trying to bring the Pakistani passport ranking from 99 to 50."

## Gilani greets Hindu, Sikh communities on Baisakhi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, on Tuesday, extended his heartfelt felicitations to the Hindu and Sikh communities in Pakistan and around the world on the joyous occasion of Baisakhi. In his message, the Chairman of the Senate said that Baisakhi is a vibrant celebration symbolising happiness, hope, and brotherhood. He emphasised that such occasions inspire the values of mutual respect, tolerance, and harmony among diverse communities. He further remarked that Pakistan is a pluralistic and multicultural society where individuals belonging to all religions are guaranteed the freedom to practice their faiths in accordance with their beliefs. He highlighted that the Parliament of Pakistan has enacted effective legislation aimed at safeguarding the rights of minorities, promoting religious freedom, protecting places of worship, and eliminating all forms of discrimination against minority communities. The Chairman reiterated that both Parliament and state institutions remain fully committed to ensuring the protection, dignity, and equal rights of minorities across the country. He reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen interfaith harmony and foster unity and cohesion among all citizens. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani also prayed that the blessings of Baisakhi bring peace, stability, and prosperity to the country and serve as a source of joy and well-being for all minority communities.

## Kalash Marriage Bill termed as historic milestone

PESHAWAR: The move of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government of tabling Kalash Marriage Bill 2026 in provincial assembly has been welcomed and termed as a historic milestone. "The bill is a historic milestone", remarked Wazirzada, Focal Person to the Chief Minister on Minority Affairs and a member of the Kalash community. Welcoming the bill, Wazirzada said for the first time, our marriages and family systems are being formally recognized within the legal framework of the province, without compromising our centuries-old traditions. It is a step toward dignity, protection, and identity for our community," he went on to say. Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins and a key drafter of the bill, emphasized that the legislation is the result of an extensive and inclusive consultation process. Referring to some public interpretations suggesting that it introduces a prohibition on cousin marriages, Qamar said stakeholders involved in the drafting process have clarified that this characterization is inaccurate. "The bill has been developed through a comprehensive process of consultations involving the Kalash clergy, Qazis, local government representatives, and both men and women from the community.—APP

# President urges dialogue, uplift to stabilize Balochistan

Speaking during an interaction with participants of the National Workshop Balochistan-19 here at the Presidency, the president said creating an atmosphere of "workability" in the province was essential so that people would not feel compelled to migrate elsewhere in search of opportunities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday stressed the need for dialogue, improved governance, enhanced connectivity and water management to address challenges in Balochistan, and underlined that Pakistan could not progress without the province's stability and development. Speaking during an interaction with participants of the National Workshop Balochistan-19 here at the Presidency, the president said creating an atmosphere of "workability" in the province was essential so that people would not feel compelled to migrate elsewhere in search of opportunities. He noted that Balochistan was rich in mineral resources but required sustained long-term development initiatives rather than short-term measures, adding that connectivity had improved after the 18th Constitutional Amendment through the construction of several bridges over the Indus River linking Balochistan with other parts of the country. The president, amid highlighting water as a critical issue, said canal lining projects were being undertaken to minimize seepage losses, stressing that water conservation was vital for agri-

culture as well as mining activities in the province. He termed water security one of his top priorities and said efforts were under way to explore regional options, including water cooperation initiatives with Tajikistan, to support irrigation needs in Balochistan Referring to Gwadar Port, President Zardari said his vision was to ensure that dividends from the port's development were shared with local tribes and communities, particularly those living along road corridors leading to Gwadar. He added that the port had the potential to become a major economic hub if stakeholders worked together to create a conducive investment environment. The president underscored the importance of unity and internal reflection to address the province's challenges, emphasizing that dialogue and democratic engagement remained the only viable path forward. "War is no solution to crises," he said, urging all stakeholders to resolve dif-

ferences through consultation and cooperation. He said the people of Balochistan should benefit fully from the opportunities created under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), describing it as a future trade route connecting the province to regional and global markets. The president stressed that sustainable peace in Balochistan required improved resource utilization, investment-friendly conditions and greater focus on youth development, agriculture modernization and support for small landowners through targeted subsidies and specialized farming equipment.

## 2 burglars put behind bars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested two accused involved in nighttime burglary incidents and recovered stolen items during a successful operation in the jurisdiction of Phulgron Police Station. An official told APP on Tuesday that SHO Phulgron Muhammad Zubair Mazhar Iqbal, along with his team led by ASI Mukhtar Nawaz, conducted a targeted operation against burglary cases. He said the police arrested two accused, identified as Umar Hussain alias Honda and Yasir Hussain Shah, in case No. 93/26 dated April 8, 2026, under sections 380/457/411 of the Pakistan Penal Code.

## Call for expediting Karak, Hangu uplift drive

PESHAWAR :Development oversight meetings in Karak and Hangu have accelerated pressure on executing agencies to speed up water supply and infrastructure schemes, with lawmakers stressing strict timelines, quality control and immediate removal of bureaucratic delays. In Karak, a high-level review meeting chaired by the Parliamentary Leader Shahid Khattak MNA reviewed progress on multiple drinking water supply schemes, said a press release. The meeting was attended by MPAs Khurshid Khattak and Sajjad Barakawal, along with Public Health Engineering Department officials, XENs and consultancy teams. Officials briefed the participants on key projects including the Karak City Greater Water Supply Scheme and several union council-level schemes. Lawmakers directed the authorities to immediately finalize consultancy reports and ensure that no adminis-

trative delays hinder the start of physical work. They emphasized that provision of clean drinking water remains a top public priority and warned that any negligence or delay would not be tolerated. Meanwhile in Hangu, a separate high-level review meeting chaired by MNA Yousuf Khan was held at the Deputy Commissioner's office Gohar Zaman Wazir, with participation from relevant executive agencies. Officials were briefed on ongoing development schemes and their progress. The MNA issued strict instructions for ensuring high construction standards and timely completion of all projects, warning that compromise on quality or deadlines would not be accepted under any circumstances. Both meetings concluded with commitments from officials and representatives to ensure transparency, efficiency and accelerated delivery of public welfare projects across the two districts.—DNA



FAISALABAD: President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Ferooz Yousaf Sheikh presenting a memento to Czech Ambassador Ladislav Steinhübel at FCCI.

## KP body reviews key legal reforms to strengthen governance

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Legislative Committee, chaired by Provincial Minister for Law, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam on Tuesday reviewed a set of proposed legal reforms aimed at strengthening governance, regulatory frameworks, and public service delivery in the province. The meeting, held here, brought together senior officials including Provincial Finance Minister Muzamil Aslam, along with representatives from the Law, Health, Transport, Social Welfare, and Revenue departments, said an official release. Participants examined proposed amendments to several key laws, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women Act 2016, the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965 in relation to vehicles used by educational institutions, the KP River Protection framework, and the Medical Teaching Institutions Reforms Act 2025. Discussions on women's rights legislation focused on revisions to Section 15A, while environmental governance remained central to deliberations on river protection laws. Officials reviewed proposals to address encroachments along rivers and canals, with suggestions to distinguish between different categories of violations and expand the legal framework to cover additional notified rivers. Transport safety also featured prominently, with the committee considering regulatory changes to improve the safety standards of vehicles operated by private educational institutions. —APP

## Kundi for reliable data for policy-making


The Governor was also apprised of various surveys conducted by the bureau, including the Labour Force Survey, Pakistan Demographic Survey, and Manufacturing Sector Survey

APP

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday emphasized the critical role of accurate and reliable statistical data in effective policy-making, resource distribution, and sustainable development. He expressed these views while receiving a departmental briefing from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa office at Governor House. Chief Statistical Officer Muhammad Anwar briefed the Governor on the functions and ongoing activities of the institution. The Gov-

ernor was informed that Pakistan's first-ever digital population census was conducted in 2023, according to which the country's total population stands at 241.5 million, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population is recorded at 48.5 million. It was further shared that around 120,000 personnel were specially trained to carry out the digital census. The briefing also highlighted that the 7th Digital Agriculture Census was conducted in 2024 under the supervision of PBS, adding that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approximately 48 million livestock. The Governor was also apprised of various surveys conducted by the bureau, including

the Labour Force Survey, Pakistan Demographic Survey, and Manufacturing Sector Survey. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said that the Bureau of Statistics holds immense importance in providing data related to economic, social, demographic, agricultural, and trade sectors. He termed digitalization within the institution a significant achievement. He said that statistical data serves as a credible basis for resource allocation and development planning, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. He added that indicators such as inflation, unemployment, trade, and investment play a fundamental role in shaping economic policies.—DNA



**Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority**  
Government of Pakistan

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

**PETITION FILED BY SUI NORTHERN GAS PIPELINES LIMITED FOR DETERMINATION OF ITS ESTIMATED REVENUE REQUIREMENT / PRESCRIBED PRICES FOR F.Y. 2026-27**

Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (the petitioner) filed a petition before the Authority on December 10, 2025 & subsequently amended on January 12, 2026, under Section 8(1) of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 2002, read with Rule 4 (2) of the Natural Gas Tariff Rules, 2002, for Determination of its Estimated Revenue Requirement / prescribed price for FY 2026-27. The petitioner has projected average Prescribed Price at Rs. 1,784.50 per MMBTU for natural gas business for FY 2026-27.

Breakup of activity-wise projection in respect of Revenue Requirement of natural gas is tabulated below:

Description	Transmission	Distribution	Sales	Total
Indigenous Gas Sales Volume (BBTU)	-	-	251,813	251,813
RLNG Volume diverted to system gas (BBTU)	-	-	49,344	49,344
<b>Total Sales Volume (BBTU)</b>	-	-	<b>301,157</b>	<b>301,157</b>
<b>(Rs. in million)</b>				
Cost of indigenous gas			303,685	303,685
Cost of RLNG to be Diverted to domestic consumers			143,419	143,419
Operating Cost including HR cost & Others	13,215	17,571	15,460	46,246
Financing Cost for Working Capital			1,132	1,132
Depreciation	3,758	25,070	2,303	31,131
Return on Assets	3,194	27,929	521	31,644
Subsidy for LPG Air-Mix Projects	-	445	-	445
UFG Adjustment	-	-	(750)	(750)
Other Operating Income	(1,901)	(4,553)	(13,083)	(19,537)
<b>Total Revenue Requirement</b>	<b>18,266</b>	<b>66,462</b>	<b>452,687</b>	<b>537,415</b>
Sales Revenue at Current Price			528,684	528,684
Shortfall in Revenue Requirement for FY2026-27	18,266	66,462	(75,997)	8,730
Increase in Revenue Requirement w.e.f. July 01, 2026 (Rs./MMBTU)				28.99
<b>Average Prescribed Price for FY 2026-27 (Rs./MMBTU)</b>				<b>1,784.50</b>

The net Revenue Requirement of the petitioner will enable it to meet the local cost of gas and RLNG cost, operating cost and return on asset. The cost of gas is linked to the international price of crude oil/fuel oil in accordance with the agreement between the Federal Government and the gas producers. The petitioner has informed that prior year shortfall up to FY 2025-26 is Rs. 576,509 million which becomes Rs. 585,239 million after including current year shortfall.

Besides above, the petitioner has claimed RLNG cost of service at Rs. 67,671 million (i.e. Rs.376.33 per MMBTU) for FY 2026-27, that shall form part of its RLNG sale price for RLNG consumers.

The key issues are as follows:

- Whether projection in gas supplies volume from local gas field is fair and reasonable? Is there any emergency plan available to utilize suspended indigenous gas in the backdrop of geo-political strain in the Arab gulf region.?
- Whether huge projection under RLNG diversion volume of 49,344 BBTU to domestic sector under Revenue Requirement FY 2026-27 is fair and justified considering deferment of LNG cargoes under NPD for FY 2026-27? Is there any emergency plan due to declaration of force majeure by international supplier?
- Reasons and justification for projecting total operating cost amounting to Rs. 70,893 million including RLNG business segment for FY 2026-27. In particular, furnish detailed reasons and justification for the substantial allocation of Rs. 41,537 million under Human Resources (HR) costs, especially in light of the ongoing austerity drive and for cost-curtailed measures across operating cost components by Federal Government.
- Whether the claimed capital expenditure amounting to Rs.65,387 million, details of which are available on OGRA's website with the petition are prudent, cost effective, economically effective for inclusion in the rate base?
- Whether the capital expense amounting to Rs.26,714 million and revenue expense amounting to Rs. 5,803 million claimed for UFG control activities are justified in view of 8.85 % UFG projected by the company?
- What activities are being carried out to bring down UFG in high UFG region?
- Whether the projected cost of Rs. 853 million for establishment of northern metering laboratory at Kanra is prudent?
- Whether the projected target of installation of 600,000 new domestic connections is justified in the backdrop of geo-political strain in the Arab Gulf region?

Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority invites all interested/affected persons including gas consumers (Domestic, Special Domestic, Industrial and Commercial etc) and general public to furnish their comments, suggestions and intervention requests. All correspondence in this connection may be addressed to Senior Registrar, OGRA and should contain the names and addresses of applicant. The interveners must indicate the manner in which they are likely to be affected by the instant determination of the Authority. Intervention request can be filed along with a copy of receipt fee amounting to Rs.500/- (Submitted through OGRA Online payment system available on its official website) accompanied by an affidavit verifying the contents of the intervention before the date of Public Hearing. Copy of the petition can be obtained from Registrar Office on payment of prescribed charges of Rs.2/- per page or can be downloaded from OGRA's website.


For any information required from the petitioner, please contact:

**Mrs. Kanwal Wazir,**  
General Manager (RA),  
Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited,  
21-Kashmir Road, Lahore,  
Phone No: 042-99201306 Fax: 042-99204424

Keeping in view the Federal Government's austerity measures and fuel conservation policy due to critical Gulf crises, OGRA has decided to hold **Public Hearing** on the subject matter according to the date, time and venue mentioned below:

**Date : April 21, 2026 (Tuesday)**  
**Time : 10:30 a.m.**  
**Venue : OGRA Head Office, Sector G-10/4, Islamabad**

All parties to the proceedings, stakeholders, general public and interested / affected persons are hereby informed of the above proceedings. The interested parties may attend the Public Hearing in person or approach the Office of Registrar through E-mail (registrar@ogra.org.pk), in order to attend the proceeding through **Zoom Application** as well.



**Raheela Mustafa**  
Senior Registrar,  
Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority  
37-Mauve Area, Service Road South, G-10/4, Islamabad.  
Phone: 051-9108889, 0313-5065588, 051-9108890-98 (Ext-123) Fax: 051-9108810  
Website: www.ogra.org.pk

Public Service Message:  
گیس لے جانے اور حادثات کا سبب بن سکتی ہے احتیاطی تدابیر لیں بنائیں اور حادثات سے بچیں

PID(I)No.8307-25

## 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  
 PIA Flight Info.....114  
 PIA Cargo.....9280979  
 Railway Inquiry.....117  
 Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
 WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
 CAA.....9281092

### 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

- CDA.....9221334-43  
 CDA.....9208301-04  
 Met Office.....9250360-6  
 RDA.....5555864  
 TMA.....5770886  
 Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# 2 cops injured as CDA operation sparks violent protests in Noorpur Shahan

After removing Muslim Colony in the Bari Imam area, CDA also conducted an operation against Rimsha Colony at H-9 and Shapar Colony of G-7, where residents had staged a protest in March against the move

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two policemen were injured as the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) anti-encroachment operation in the capital's Noorpur Shahan area was met with strong protest from residents. As the anti-encroachment drive began, enraged individuals torched two of the CDA's vehicles in protest, with authorities resorting to tear-gas shelling to disperse the people. More police deployment was also sought to control the law and order situation. The development comes a day after a protest staged by the slum dwellers of Allama Iqbal Colony at G-7 forced the CDA to postpone its operation. When the enforcement wing started the operation, the residents resisted and created a law and order situation, forcing the team to leave after sealing two structures. The

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRC) has raised concerns over the CDA's encroachment drives. Last month, the HRC, along with several civil society organisations, called on authorities to immediately halt all planned and ongoing eviction operations in Islamabad's low-income areas and katchi abadis (informal settlements). Legal battles—The CDA is carrying out anti-encroachment operations with special focus on illegal slums in Islamabad. According to CDA's rules, 34 societies/schemes were supposed to transfer amenity land in the name of the civic agency for further utilisation. However, despite the passage of years, CDA has failed to get the land. There are reports that many societies have already eaten up the land after carving out plots. After removing Muslim Colony in the Bari Imam area, CDA also conducted an operation against Rimsha Colony at H-9 and

Shapar Colony of G-7, where residents had staged a protest in March against the move. In February, while hearing a petition filed by residents of Noorpur Shahan, Justice Minhas had issued a show-cause notice to the CDA and other respondents for wilful defiance of its earlier order regarding the long-pending development of Model Village Noorpur Shahan. On February 13, Justice Minhas grilled top city managers, CDA Chairman Mohammad Ali Randhawa, for wilful defiance of its earlier order regarding the model village, warning that contempt proceedings may be initiated if compliance is not ensured. On April 7, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended an earlier restraining order issued by a single bench, paving the way for the CDA to continue its anti-encroachment operations in model villages. A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Sardar Mohammad Sarfraz Dogar

and Justice Mohammad Asif, had passed the order while hearing intra-court appeals concerning land possession and enforcement actions in various model villages, including Noorpur Shahan. However, the division bench's order had effectively neutralised the earlier relief granted by the single bench, at least for the time being. The same day, IHC's Justice Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas restrained the CDA from demolishing houses and evicting local residents in Saidpur Model Village, located in the foothills of Daman-i-Koh, while hearing a petition filed by around 128 residents. This is a developing story that is being updated as the situation evolves. Initial reports in the media can sometimes be inaccurate. We will strive to ensure timeliness and accuracy by relying on credible sources, such as concerned, qualified authorities and our staff reporters.

## MoU inked to promote literary collaboration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) and Government Graduate College Asghar Mall, Rawalpindi, on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote literary, educational, and research collaboration between the two institutions. The agreement aims to establish a long-term partnership that will create enhanced opportunities for students and faculty in literary engagement, professional training, and the development of creative and academic skills. Under the MoU, both institutions will jointly organize literary events, seminars, workshops, reading festivals, and writing competitions. Training sessions focusing on creative writing, poetry, prose, literary criticism, and research methodologies will also be arranged to strengthen students' intellectual and creative capacities. As part of the collaboration, PAL will consider offering internships and study visits to eligible students of the college. Renowned writers and researchers will also provide mentorship and guidance to support students in their academic and literary pursuits. The agreement further allows faculty members and students to contribute their literary work to PAL publications, subject to editorial review. In addition, both sides will explore avenues for the exchange of academic resources, research materials, and literary collections to enhance teaching and research standards. The MoU, based on mutual goodwill, does not entail any legal or financial obligations for either party. It will remain effective for three years and may be extended with mutual consent. The agreement was signed by Principal Prof. Dr. Tanveer Ahmed Khichi on behalf of Government Graduate College Asghar Mall, Rawalpindi, and Chairperson Dr. Najeeba Arif on behalf of PAL. The signing ceremony was attended by prominent representatives from both sides.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah met Chairman WAPDA Lt Gen (R) Muhammad Saeed.

# Senate Sub-committee raises alarm over smuggling

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior & Narcotics was held at Parliament House under the convenship of Senator Saifullah Abro. During the meeting, officials of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) briefed the Committee on the agenda items. They informed that, in compliance with the directions of the Sub-Committee, an inquiry report regarding Chota Lahore has been prepared and submitted, containing all relevant details. The officials further stated that notices have been issued to all concerned authorities as per the Committee's instructions. Additionally, a letter has been sent to the Chief Secretary Balochistan regarding petroleum-related matters in line with the Committee's directives. Senator Saifullah Abro, Convener of the Sub-Committee, expressed concern that petroleum worth Rs. 222

million had been seized by customs authorities over the past five years and questioned where the fuel was being transported. He observed that convoys of dozens of vehicles are reportedly involved in smuggling petroleum products. He emphasized the need to enhance national revenue and called for a comprehensive report tracing the movement and destination of such fuel. The Convener directed that detailed information be obtained from the Chief Secretary Balochistan, and a formal notice be issued in this regard. He further instructed that the Chief Secretary be summoned for a personal hearing to provide a detailed briefing on measures taken to control smuggling and related issues, so that the Committee may be fully apprised. The Committee was also informed that a letter has been written to the Member Customs regarding tax exemptions applicable in FATA, PATA, and adjoining areas. The Convener remarked that these regions have increasingly become hubs of smuggling, which is detrimental to the national

economy. He noted that instead of development, these areas are witnessing tax evasion, and such activities are harming the country. The Sub-Committee decided to summon the CEO of TESCO in the next meeting. Furthermore, customs authorities were directed to compile comprehensive data on the total volume of goods transported to these regions, as well as details of items manufactured there and subsequently sold in other parts of the country without payment of customs duties. Senator Saifullah Abro also highlighted the disparity in the tax system, stating that those who pay taxes are burdened further, while others evade taxes. He remarked that he himself receives notices from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on the days Committee meetings are held. The Committee was informed that a notice has also been issued to the Member Operations. The Convener directed that the notice sent to Mr. Zubair, who has been assisting the Committee should be withdrawn.

# FIA, ICMPD to counter fake job ads

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), in collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has initiated coordinated national efforts to combat fraudulent job advertisements by developing a comprehensive awareness campaign, following a two-day consultative workshop held in the federal capital. An official told on Tuesday that the workshop on Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials brought together key stakeholders from major national institutions including Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD), Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), Ministry of Interior (MOI), National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB), Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), National Press Bureau (NPB), Islamabad Police, National CERT Pakistan, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Migrant Resource Centre Pakistan. He said the sessions were led by national awareness expert Qaiser Siddiqui, focusing on strengthening strategies to counter fake job advertisements and related cyber activities. During the workshop, participating agencies including PTA, National CERT, FIA, NCCIA and Migrant Resource Centres presented their ongoing awareness initiatives aimed at addressing fraudulent job advertisements within their respective domains. The official said these presentations provided valuable insights into existing communication approaches.—APP

# 10% free quota in Private Schools ordered

ISLAMABAD: The Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA) has submitted a detailed compliance report to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) regarding the implementation of the mandatory 10% free education quota in private schools across the federal capital. According to the report submitted during a hearing, a total of 1,571 private educational institutions are operating across five different zones of Islamabad. These institutions collectively cater to approximately 389,000 students. The report highlighted progress under the 'No Child Left Behind' campaign, which has set a target to enroll 25,000 out-of-school children. Furthermore, under the existing rules, orphans and children of martyrs are to be given priority within the 10% scholarship scheme. PEIRA informed the court that enforcement of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2012 has commenced. So far, 500 private schools have submitted their infrastructure and student enrollment data to the authority. A monitoring committee has also been formed to verify the implementation of the free education quota. In an effort to ensure transparency, PEIRA has directed all registered private schools to submit detailed lists of students benefiting from the 10% quota for the current academic session (2025-26). Schools have been instructed to provide this data both via a manual submission and through an online portal. The authority has warned that strict action under the PEIRA Act will be taken against schools that fail to submit the required data. Furthermore, the renewal of registration certificates for private schools has now been explicitly linked to compliance with the 10% need-based scholarship policy. The court has taken note of the report and directed PEIRA to expedite the verification process and ensure full compliance across all private educational institutions in the capital.—DNA

# PST organizes 'Meet the Writer' honouring ex-IGP Zulfiqar Cheema

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Zulfiqar Ahmed Cheema's books "Afkar-e-Taaza" and "Juhd-e-Musalsal" were widely appreciated at a literary event titled "Meet the Writer/Review of Books," organized by the Perveen Shakir Trust (PST) here on Monday. The ceremony, hosted by PST Chairperson Mrs Parveen Qadir Agha in the serene and flower-adorned lawn of her residence, brought together a distinguished gathering of civil servants, intellectuals, writers, and poets. Among the notable attendees were Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman, former Federal Ombudsman Dr Tahir Shehbaz, former Federal Secretary Seerat Asghar, former CCPO Lahore Pervaiz Rathore, poet Mehboob Zafar, Prof Dr Sher Ali, Dr Bibi Ameena, and several serving and retired officers from the Police Service, DMG, and IRS. Speakers at the event highlighted that through his writings, Zulfiqar Cheema offers not only an account of his life but also a deeper reflection on values, perseverance, governance, and ethical conduct. His works, they noted, go beyond mere narration and seek to inspire positive change in society. The themes of struggle, commitment, and integrity were described as particularly relevant in contemporary times. Prof Dr Farhat Jabeen Virk who reviewed the books, lauded Cheema for documenting contemporary bureaucratic history while offering guidance to young officers. She called him a role model for civil servants, emphasizing that he never compromised on principles nor bowed before authority. The discussion also highlighted the author's formative years. Speakers noted how Cheema's educational journey—from Cadet College Hasanabdal to

Government College Lahore and Punjab University Law College—played a crucial role in shaping his character. His early schooling in his native village in Wazirabad was also recalled as a significant influence. Fiction writer Mrs Razaqat Javed observed that Cheema's teachers greatly contributed to his personality and resilience, enabling him to face life's challenges with courage. Former FBR Member Salman Nabi highlighted the profound influence of Cheema's mother, calling her his first teacher, and read an emotional passage from the book that moved the audience. Sumaira Qazi of the IRS entertained participants by reading excerpts from "Juhd-e-Musalsal," showcasing the author's use of humour and satire in narrating personal and professional experiences. Retired civil servants and Cheema's batch mates Seerat Asghar and Dr Tahir Shehbaz described him as an ardent admirer of Quid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Iqbal, and Fatima Jinnah, calling these personalities his "red lines." Managing Director of the National Book Foundation (NBF), Dr Jahangir Kamran, termed the books "must-read" for students of Pakistan history and bureaucracy and offered to publish Cheema's future works. Colleagues from the Police Service, including Pervaiz Rathore, Zubair Hashmi, and Ehsan Sadiq, shared personal anecdotes, recalling instances where Cheema upheld his principles even in the face of pressure from top authorities, including chief ministers and prime ministers. Earlier, in her welcome address, Mrs Parveen Qadir Agha said the event aimed not only to celebrate books but to engage with the ideas and experiences behind them. She described Cheema as a seasoned civil servant and thoughtful writer whose work reflects a life of purpose, action, and continuous striving. She also highlighted the mission of the Perveen Shakir Trust, established three decades ago to preserve the literary legacy of the renowned poet Parveen Shakir. Over time, she said, the Trust has evolved into a vibrant platform promoting literary dialogue and intellectual engagement. The event was conducted by poet and IRS officer Rehman Faris who is also a recipient of the Perveen Shakir Ake-e-Khushboo Award, while PST Secretary General Raana Seerat presented the vote of thanks.



## Briefs

## FM Dar directs to implement Austerity measures

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Steering Committee to oversee Fuel Subsidy and Austerity. The Petroleum Minister apprised the participants about the existing fuel supplies position viz a viz the consumption. He also shared the progress made so far to source fuels from other regions which are not affected by the War. DPM/FM stressed the need to implement the Prime Minister's Austerity measures in true spirit. The meeting was also apprised about progress on fuel subsidy program. DPM/FM directed that payments must be first tracked to ameliorate the burden for the common man. The meeting was attended by the Minister IT, Federal Secretaries of Petroleum, Information Technology and Telecom, all four Provincial Chief Secretaries and other relevant stakeholders. Chief Secretaries AJK and GB also participated.—APP

## Book donation ceremony held at FUUAST

ISLAMABAD: Providentia Books Foundation, a Non Profit Organization, donated a collection of books to Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST) during a brief yet dignified ceremony held on Tuesday. The Foundation's Program Coordinator, Rabia Iqbal, along with other officials visited the university. The books were formally received by Dr Faisal Javed, Deputy Director ORIC and Head of the Department of International Relations and Mass Communication of FUUAST. On the occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed. Both institutions expressed their commitment to collaboration in academic and research fields. Dr Faisal Javed stated that the university is keen to work with the Providentia Books Foundation and plans to arrange visits of students to think tank. He also appreciated the Foundation for donating books, noting that such contributions play a vital role in promoting a culture of reading and learning among students. He also said that the university is making a significant contribution in teaching and research, particularly in International Relations. He added that the university regularly organizes international conferences, seminars and academic sessions.—APP

## 13 held over illegal activities

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police carried out a major operation in Lohi Bher area and arrested 13 persons over illegal activities being run under the guise of spa centres. An official told APP on Tuesday that the action was taken on the special directions of SP Sawan and SDPO Sihala Circle. SHO Lohi Bher Muhammad Yousaf, along with his team, conducted a raid after receiving credible information about unlawful activities at a plaza. The official said the police team raided two spa centres, namely "Miss Me Spa" and "The River Spa," where illegal activities were allegedly being carried out. He said during the raid, 13 persons, including two men and 11 women, were taken into custody from the spot. The official said all accused were shifted to the police station and cases had been registered against them under relevant legal provisions. He said further investigation was underway to trace facilitators and other persons involved in the network. The official said the role of spa owners and management was also being examined.—APP

## Youth Panchayat under BELIEF project highlights barriers faced by minorities

The event concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to continue advocating for minority rights and to strengthen efforts toward an inclusive and equitable society where all citizens feel a sense of belonging

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Youth Panchayat was successfully convened under the BELIEF Project on April 13, 2026, at Ramada Islamabad, bringing together young leaders, experts, and practitioners to deliberate on the critical issue of minority rights in Pakistan. The event was held under the theme "Youth No Longer on the Margins: Minorities Reclaiming Citizenship and Belonging. The Panchayat featured three dynamic panels Majority, Minority, and Experts creating a platform for inclusive dialogue and diverse perspectives on fostering social cohesion and equitable citizenship. Minority Panel The Minority Panel comprised of Ms. Kiran Peter, Founder and Executive Director of Weaving People to Grow Foundation; Mr. Christopher Sharaf, National Coordinator/Consultant at Saiban-e-Pakistan; Mr. Harmeet Singh, Anchor; Mr. Sharmoon Javed Ms. Shahrish – minority rights activists. The discussion focused on barriers faced by minorities, including biases in curriculum, lack of grassroots awareness, and systemic inequalities, while also highlighting the need for allyship and increased social interaction between communities.

Ms. Peter stated: "Minorities do not seek special treatment only equal rights, dignity, and a genuine sense of belonging as citizens of this country." Majority Panel The Majority Panel included Ms. Saeeda Bano, Deputy Chief Manager at SBP-BSC – Financial Inclusion Unit; Zeeshan Naqvi, Focal Person of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme; Dr. Faisal Ab-



basi from, Professor at School of Social Sciences NUST; Mr. Izzat Kamal Pasha, General Secretary of the CDA Employees Union; and Arwa Mudassir, a minority rights activist. The panelists emphasized the importance of institutional responsibility, inclusive policymaking, and narrative change within the majority community, highlighting the need for equitable representation and proactive allyship.

Saeeda Bano remarked: "The responsibility of inclusion lies with the majority through institutional reforms and everyday actions, we must ensure minorities feel equal, respected, and represented in all spheres of society." Expert Panel The

Expert Panel featured Ms. Asiya Nasir, Former MNA; Ms. Rabia Razaque, Senior Program Manager at ILO; Mr. Dileep Joshi – expert analyst; Mr. Abdur Rehman Hur Bajwa, Member of the Islamabad Bar Council; and Mr. Fahad Barlas, Vice President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The panel provided insights into legal frameworks, policy gaps, and socio-economic dimensions of minority inclusion, emphasizing the need for stronger legal protections and cross-sector collaboration. Ms. Asiya Nasir observed: "Addressing minority rights requires a comprehensive approach strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring implementation, and

fostering collaboration across all sectors of society." In his remarks, Mr. Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, Country Head of ISCOS, appreciated the initiative and stated: "Platforms like the Youth Panchayat are vital for fostering dialogue and understanding. Building an inclusive Pakistan requires collective responsibility, where every citizen—regardless of background—feels valued, protected, and empowered." The event concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to continue advocating for minority rights and to strengthen efforts toward an inclusive and equitable society where all citizens feel a sense of belonging.

## Gwadar urged to unlock trade potentia

QUETTA: The Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) urged immediate policy measures to fully harness the growing strategic and commercial significance of Gwadar Port, amid increasing interest from regional and international markets, particularly those linked with China-connected trade routes, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. Speaking at a business consultation held via video link in Islamabad, QCCI President Haji Muhammad Ayub Miryani highlighted that Gwadar's importance has increased significantly due to recent regional developments and expanding trade prospects across the Gulf, Central Asia, and neighbouring markets. He stressed that Pakistan must move quickly to capitalize on emerging opportunities in Balochistan by improving logistics infrastructure, expanding trade facilitation mechanisms, and enhancing operational efficiency at key commercial corridors. Among key proposals, he called for the immediate launch of a ferry service from Gwadar to strengthen maritime connectivity and stimulate both domestic and international trade flows. He also recommended extending operational hours of the N-250 Ramdan-Gwadar business corridor from 18 to 24 hours to ensure uninterrupted commercial activity.

## Pakistan, Qatar deepen cooperation in skills uplift

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajaha Qamar, met with Ali Al Khater, Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan, at the Qatar Embassy here on Tuesday. During the meeting, both sides discussed avenues to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of education. The discussion focused on enhancing collaboration in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), promoting skill development initiatives, and expanding opportunities for students and academic exchange programs. Wajaha emphasized the importance of equipping youth with market-relevant skills to meet evolving global demands. She highlighted Pakistan's commitment to improving access to quality education and fostering international partnerships for human resource development. The Ambassador reaffirmed Qatar's interest in deepening cooperation with Pakistan in the education sector, particularly in areas of technical training, scholarships, and capacity building programs. Both sides agreed to explore opportunities for institutional linkages, joint initiatives, and enhanced collaboration between educational institutions of two countries.—APP

## Mehran varsity students separate for China for final-year studies

ISLAMABAD: A seven-member group of students from Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, departed for China to complete their final year of studies at the Yunnan Vocational Institute of Energy Technology. The students are enrolled in a dual Degree-plus-Diploma program in Mining Engineering under TANG International Education, Gwadar Pro reported. As part of the initiative, they will undertake their final year in China, where they will receive advanced technical training along with international academic exposure. According to Tang Pakistan Technical Education, the program represents a significant step in strengthening educational collaboration between Pakistan and China, particularly in developing skilled professionals for the mining and resources sector. The initiative combines academic coursework with industry-oriented vocational training aimed at improving employment

prospects for Pakistani students. At Karachi airport, the departing students were seen holding banners highlighting the details of the program and their journey. One banner read that the students were leaving for China for "a successful future and job at the Chinese university and on the CPEC project," noting that the departure took place on April 12, 2026. It also mentioned that the project was initiated by Tang Education Group Pakistan and sponsored by Yunnan Energy Group, China, offering fully sponsored, job-oriented training. Another banner identified the program as a collaboration between Mehran University and Chinese institutions, describing it as a "4-year Degree plus Diploma in Intelligent Mining Technology" under a China-Pakistan technical education initiative. It further marked the occasion as a "Ceremony of Departure to China for Final Year Studies," underscoring the academic and professional significance of the opportunity.—DNA

## Pakistani culture shines

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd Asian-African Cultural Festival, held on April 9 at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) in Guangzhou, transformed the campus into a vibrant celebration of traditions from across two continents, with Pakistani culture drawing warm reception from students and faculty. The festival brought together faculty and students from nine language departments – Korean, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Bengali, Turkish, Hebrew, and Swahili – to create an immersive cultural experience. Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. Performances like the Asian-African Cultural Show highlighted the rich diversity of Asian and African traditions. The Pakistan booth, organized by the university's Urdu Department, became one of the most popular attractions at the festival. The booth showcased traditional Pakistani cuisine includ-

ing chicken biryani and lassi yogurt-based drinks alongside handicrafts and traditional costumes. Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou Sardar Muhammad visited the Pakistan booth and interacted with Chinese students learning Urdu, many of whom were dressed in traditional Pakistani attire.

He encouraged them to be a source of strength in strengthening brotherly ties between Pakistan and China. GDUFS has long established itself as a key institution for Pakistan-China cultural and educational cooperation. The university is home to South China's only Urdu language undergraduate program, which operates under an "Urdu + English" dual-language training model. In 2023, a Pakistani "Generation Z" youth delegation visited the Urdu department at GDUFS, where they engaged in discussions on media, sports, cuisine, and traditional attire. Such exchanges have strengthened the enduring people-to-people bonds between the two nations. The Asian-African Cultural Festival has become an annual tradition at GDUFS, building on the success of previous editions. Beyond the Pakistani offerings, the festival featured Turkish coffee fortune-telling, East African drum performances and Persian Hafez divination. A Chinese booth with seasonal spring displays added a local touch to the global celebration. Students dressed in traditional costumes from various countries served as interactive guides, creating an atmosphere where cultural exchanges unfolded naturally and joyously.—APP

## Hormuz fertilizer shock threatens global food security

Shahid Rasheed Butt warned that sustained high input costs could reduce crop yields and push food prices higher if supply constraints persist

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz have triggered a sharp shock in global fertilizer markets, raising concerns over crop production and food prices across South Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The supply squeeze has created particular risks for Pakistan, which relies on both imported fertilizers and natural gas-linked feedstock for domestic production.

The 21-mile-wide maritime corridor is one of the world's most critical trade routes. Roughly 30 percent of global fertilizer trade and about 20 percent of liquefied natural gas shipments normally pass through the strait. LNG is a key input for nitrogen fertilizer production, meaning disruptions affect both direct fertilizer flows and the gas supply required for manufacturing, said business lead-

er and former Islamabad Chamber of Commerce president Shahid Rasheed Butt. He added that exposure is even higher for certain commodities. Around half of globally traded sulfur, about one-third of internationally traded urea, and nearly a quarter of ammonia exports originate from Gulf producers, which are widely used for wheat, rice, maize, and other staple crops.

Butt noted that prices have already reacted sharply. International urea prices have risen from about 482 dollars per tonne to nearly 720 dollars per tonne, while ammonia prices have increased by around 24 percent to close to 600 dollars per tonne. He warned that prolonged disruption could push prices further upward as buyers compete for limited cargoes. Fertilizer plants have also been shut in several countries, including Qatar, India, and Bangladesh. In Pakistan, ahead of the Kharif

sowing season, one major company has halted production while several others have initiated emergency planning.

The Gulf region typically accounts for about 20 percent of global seaborne fertilizer exports and nearly 46 percent of internationally traded urea. Unlike oil markets, the fertilizer sector has no strategic reserve system and operates largely on a just-in-time logistics model, leaving limited buffers against sudden shipping disruptions. Shahid Rasheed Butt warned that sustained high input costs could reduce crop yields and push food prices higher if supply constraints persist. He urged policymakers to accelerate procurement and consider targeted price stabilization measures. Policymakers now face the dual challenge of securing fertilizer supplies while managing fiscal pressures under the ongoing IMF stabilization program.

## KP plans 16 picnic spots

ISLAMABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has included the development of 16 picnic spots and tourist facilitation services at nine destinations under its tourism development schemes According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, these initiatives form part of broader interventions being undertaken across the province, with a focus on Chitral under various tourism development programmes. According to the documents, the schemes include the construction of jeepable tracks in tourist-bearing areas to improve access to different locations. The documents further state that camping pod sites and rest houses are also included in the list of interventions. In addition, community-based accommodation facilities are being promoted as part of the initiatives outlined in the documents. Tourist facilitation services are planned at nine destinations alongside the development of infrastructure, including picnic spots and access routes. Other measures mentioned in the documents include feasibility studies for tourism development projects and the arrangement of events in the tourism and culture sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The documents also refer to initiatives related to "Tirich Mir Year 2024-25" as part of the province's tourism activities. In addition, the promotion of cultural and community-based activities is included as part of tourism-related efforts in the province. The documents state that coordination is being carried out with provincial line departments and district administrations, as well as with relevant federal ministries and organisations.—DNA

ASHRAF INDUSTRIES (PVT) LTD  
127 C, Industrial Estate  
Sialkot-51340, Pakistan  
Phones: +92-52-3256000 / 3256788  
E-mail: info@ashraf.net.pk



## Briefs

US-Iran talks  
2nd round  
likely soon

FROM PAGE 01  
Pakistan is continuing its mediation role, and preparations in the capital are already picking up pace again. This remains a fast-moving story with major implications for regional stability. US Vice President JD Vance and Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf led their respective delegations in the last round of talks to work out a slew of issues, including the Strait of Hormuz, a major transit point for global energy supplies that Iran has effectively blocked but the US has vowed to reopen, as well as Iran's nuclear programme and international sanctions on Tehran. Vance told reporters after the talks ended that "We leave here with a very simple proposal, a method of understanding that is our final and best offer." The initial round of US-Iran talks, hosted by Pakistan in Islamabad, brought together senior delegations in what officials described as intensive, closed-door negotiations aimed at ending weeks of conflict. The trilateral 'Islamabad Talks' lasted nearly 21 hours after beginning on the afternoon of April 11, reflecting the complexity and high stakes involved.

Lavrov  
bashes  
efforts to...

FROM PAGE 01  
is sharply critical of US military assistance the self-ruled island receives. In comments apparently referring to the United States and its allies, Lavrov said "they are trying to dismantle (regional cooperation) by creating small-format, bloc-based structures aimed at containing both the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation." "Our vast continent as a whole demands constant attention," he said. Lavrov also said he and Wang would discuss plans for future "contacts" between leaders Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. China is hosting this week a string of leaders of countries that have been affected by the US-Israeli war on Iran and its economic fallout, including Vietnam's To Lam and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. China's foreign ministry said this week that Lavrov and Wang would "exchange views and coordinate positions on the development of bilateral relations, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of common concern."

Italy  
suspends  
defence...

FROM PAGE 01  
decided to suspend the automatic renewal of the defence agreement with Israel," Meloni said during a visit to Verona, northern Italy. A source close to the matter, who requested anonymity, said Meloni took the decision on Monday with her foreign and defence ministers, Antonio Tajani and Guido Crosetto, as well as Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini. A spokesperson for Israel's foreign ministry declined to comment. Meloni's announcement was a surprise in that it marked a shift from a previously cautious stance on Israel. The opposition had asked the government to suspend the agreement. "We had been calling for this for some time, along with other progressive forces," the leader of the centre-left Democratic Party, Elly Schlein, said, adding Italy should also support the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Dar talks to  
Romanian  
FM Toiu

FROM PAGE 01  
Senator Dar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to constructive engagement with Romania and other international partners to promote peace, stability, and mutual prosperity.

FIFA Hails PFF  
Progress, Backs  
Gilani Leadership

The remarks came during a productive meeting held at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich, where both sides discussed key matters related to football development in Pakistan. The FIFA Secretary General congratulated the PFF President on the national women's team's impressive victory in the FIFA Women's Series

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: In a strong endorsement for Pakistan football, FIFA Secretary General Matthias Grafström has expressed unwavering confidence in the leadership of Syed Mohsen Gilani, while commending the Pakistan Football Federation's steady progress and reaffirming full support for

the game's development in the country.

The remarks came during a productive meeting held at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich, where both sides discussed key matters related to football development in Pakistan. The FIFA Secretary General congratulated the PFF President on the national women's team's impressive victory in the FIFA Women's Series.

During the meeting, Gilani thanked the FIFA President and Secretary General for their continued and unwavering support towards Pakistan football. Discussions focused on strengthening football governance and prioritizing infrastructure development across the country. The PFF President also presented a comprehensive report on the federation's recent activities,

and progress made over the past few months. FIFA acknowledged these efforts and reiterated that improving football infrastructure remains a key priority. Reaffirming FIFA's commitment, Matthias Grafström expressed optimism about the future of football in Pakistan and assured continued cooperation to further promote and develop the sport in the country.

Kazakhstan's telecom sector  
grows to 379 billion in Q1 2026

Ultimately, data from the National Statistics Bureau shows that Kazakhstan's communications market is growing due to internet and mobile dominance, while the postal segment recedes

APP

ASTANA: The volume of Kazakhstan's telecommunications services exceeded 379 billion tenge in the first quarter of 2026, marking steady growth, while postal and courier services saw a decline, Qazinform News Agency reports. According to the National Statistics Bureau, in January-March 2026, telecom services reached KZT 379.1 billion, increasing 3.9% year over year. Services provided to the public accounted for KZT 224.4 billion, up 3%. The industry's structure

was primarily driven by the internet and mobile services. Fixed-line internet services attained KZT 143.8 billion. Mobile communications showed the strongest growth, rising over 140% to KZT 135.5 billion. This sharp rise is partly attributed to a methodological shift: starting in 2026, mobile internet access services are reclassified under the mobile communications category. Significant volumes were also recorded in other telecommunications services (KZT 61.5 billion) and data transmission (KZT 15.2 billion). In contrast, the postal and courier segment demon-

strated a downturn, with a total volume of KZT 21.3 billion, representing 97.8% of last year's levels. Services to the public in this segment dropped to KZT 4.9 billion. In rural areas, telecom services reached KZT 19.5 billion, including KZT 13.6 billion in services provided to the public. Rural postal and courier services to the public totaled KZT 417.5 million. As of April 1, 2026, the country has 27.3 million mobile subscribers, with a density of 133 subscribers per 100 people. The number of mobile internet users reached 17.8 million, nearly all of whom utilize

high-speed access. Fixed-line internet subscribers totaled 3.3 million. Meanwhile, the decline of fixed telephone lines continues, dropping to 2.1 million units, 89.1% of the previous year's figure. The highest volumes of telecom and postal activity remain in Almaty and Astana. Ultimately, data from the National Statistics Bureau shows that Kazakhstan's communications market is growing due to internet and mobile dominance, while the postal segment recedes. As previously reported, Kazakhstan launched a high-speed internet project for rural communities.

Women's T20  
World Cup to have  
\$8.8m prize pool  
Winners will earn \$2.3 million,  
while runners-up will receive  
\$1.17 million, says ICC

DNA

LONDON: This year's Women's Twenty20 World Cup will have a tournament-record prize pool of \$8.8 million with the winners set to earn \$2.3 million, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Monday. The 12-team competition will be held in England and Wales from June 12, with New Zealand set to defend the maiden title they won in 2024. "The runners-up will receive \$1.17 million. Both losing semi-finalists will earn \$675,000 each," the ICC said in a statement, adding that every participating team was guaranteed a minimum prize of \$248,000. The prize pool will be smaller than those at the men's and women's World Cups held in the Indian subcontinent in the last three years. Last year's 50-over Women's World Cup in India and Sri Lanka had a prize pool of \$13.9 million, the highest pot at an ICC event, and a 297% increase from its previous edition in 2022. Champions India took home \$4.5 million. The 2023 edition of the men's 50-over World Cup, held in India, had a prize pot of \$10 million, while this year's men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka offered \$11.25 million in prize money.

President  
lauds Pak  
untiring  
efforts...

FROM PAGE 01

US-Israeli strikes targeting Iran's leadership and infrastructure, has resulted in more than 2,000 deaths and widespread regional instability. Tehran responded with retaliatory operations, including the disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and attacks on Israeli and US targets in the region. The international community has broadly welcomed Pakistan's diplomatic role, backing its efforts to de-escalate Middle East tensions and facilitate negotiations aimed at achieving lasting peace. In today's meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Zardari and PM Shehbaz reviewed the prevailing security and diplomatic situation in the region, noting its far-reaching implications for global security, economic stability, and geopolitical dynamics. The prime minister briefed the president in detail on the stages of the US-Iran dialogue, progress achieved through Pakistan's mediation, and his upcoming visits to Saudi Arabia and Türkiye aimed at further advancing peace efforts.

Macron says  
he urged  
US, Iran...

FROM PAGE 01

Pezhskian, the Iranian president told Macron that Europe can play a key role in pushing the United States to adhere to international law. Pezhskian stressed that diplomacy remains the preferred path but criticised what he called "maximalist positions" and lack of goodwill from the US side during the recent Islamabad talks. In a separate development, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced that her government is suspending the automatic renewal of its defence cooperation agreement with Israel, citing the current situation in the Middle East. These diplomatic moves come as international efforts intensify to revive US-Iran talks in Islamabad and stabilise the region following the inconclusive first round of negotiations last weekend.

IMF cuts  
growth...

FROM PAGE 01

IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told Reuters in an interview. "What's happening in the Gulf is potentially much, much larger, and that's what our scenarios are kind of documenting," he said. Under an "adverse scenario" of a longer conflict that keeps oil prices around \$100 per barrel this year and \$75 in 2027, the IMF predicts global GDP growth would fall to 2.5% this year. The IMF in January had forecast that oil would decline to about \$62 in 2026. And the IMF's worst-case "severe scenario" assumes an extended and deepening conflict and much higher oil prices that prompt major financial market dislocations and tighter financial conditions, slashing global growth to 2.0%.

Govt resorts  
to two...

FROM PAGE 01

was that the government aims to minimise the use of expensive fuel and prevent the possible increase in electricity prices. The spokesperson added that at present, the "biggest challenge" the government faces is during peak hours, where there is a significant increase in electricity demand, particularly because these days, the production of hydel power plants has decreased substantially. "If expensive fuel is relied upon to meet these requirements, it can lead to a considerable increase in electricity prices," the spokesperson said, further explaining the reason behind the loadshedding. Explaining further, the spokesperson added that the situation is continuously being monitored and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has given Power Division the task that "There should not be a huge increase in electricity price" and "if due to furnace oil use some increase in price also happens, then measures must be taken to [minimise the possible increase]"

Beijing Cultural  
Gala marks 75 years  
of China-Pakistan  
diplomatic relations

BEIJING: A cultural gala held in Beijing on marked the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, bringing together participants from diplomatic circles, cultural sectors, the media, and business communities. The event was organized the other day in collaboration with the China International Cultural Communication Center (CICCC) & Pakistan Embassy in Beijing and featured a program focused on cultural exchange and artistic collaboration. Attendees highlighted the long-standing relationship between the two countries and the role of people-to-people connections in maintaining bilateral ties. Speakers at the event, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, highlighted that generations of leaders and diplomats from both Pakistan and China had established a model inter-state partnership rooted in mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual support. He emphasized that people-to-people connections remained central to this relationship, with cultural exchange playing a key role in sustaining it in all seasons and circumstances.

Long Yuxiang, Executive Chairman of the China International Cultural Communication Center, underscored the enduring strength of China-Pakistan friendship and highlighted the importance of cultural communication and exchange in fostering mutual understanding and civilizational dialogue, CEN reported. Zhai Meiqing, President of Xiangjiang Group, also addressed the event, emphasizing the role of cultural and creative industries in promoting cross-cultural and people-to-people connectivity. The gala included a variety of performances reflecting both Chinese and Pakistani cultural traditions. A notable segment of the evening featured musical performances in Urdu and Chinese by Pakistani artist Natasha Baig, illustrating cross-cultural artistic expression. The event formed part of a wider series of activities commemorating the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, focusing on cultural collaboration and public engagement alongside traditional areas of cooperation. - APP

ICT exports  
more than  
double in  
March on  
chip demand

SEOUL: South Korea's exports of information and communication technology (ICT) products more than doubled in March from a year earlier, driven by strong semiconductor demand amid the global artificial intelligence (AI) boom, government data showed Tuesday. Outbound ICT shipments reached US\$43.51 billion last month, up from \$20.52 billion a year earlier, according to the data from the Ministry of Science and ICT. This marks the first time that monthly ICT exports have exceeded \$40 billion for the month of March. Imports rose 32.2 percent on-year to \$16.15 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$27.36 billion in the sector. "ICT exports accounted for 50.5 percent of the country's total exports of \$86.13 billion last month, reaffirming the sector's status as a core growth engine of the South Korean economy," the ministry said in a release. By product, semiconductor exports surged 151 percent to \$32.84 billion from \$13.06 billion a year earlier, supported by robust demand from global AI data centers. - APP

Naqvi to consult PM Shehbaz  
on allowing fans at PSL 11  
PCB chief lauds law enforcement agencies  
for ensuring smooth conduct of PSL 11

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said he would speak to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif again to allow spectators during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11. "I will speak again to the prime minister regarding the crowd," Naqvi told the media in Karachi, saying the PCB would make every effort to bring spectators back to the stadium. However, the PCB chief stressed the need to consider ongoing global crisis stemming from the Middle East conflict. His comments came days after PCB announced that PSL matches would be held without spectators as part of the government's austerity measures amid the ongoing regional crisis. At the time, Naqvi announced limiting the tournament to two venues, Karachi and Lahore. He added that the decision aimed to reduce public movement. The decision followed the government's wide-ranging austerity and savings plans to deal with the prevailing global fuel crisis triggered by the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict. Later, several franchise owners called for the return of spectators, emphasising that fan presence was integral to the league's atmosphere and identity. They appealed to both the prime minister and the

chief ministers to permit crowds in stadiums during the ongoing edition. Meanwhile, the PCB chief lauded law enforcement agencies for ensuring the smooth conduct of the PSL despite prevailing challenges. While he announced his intention to ensure spectators' return to the stands, Naqvi ruled out any changes to the schedule. The PCB chairman further said that franchises would receive gate money, with the board covering related expenses. Naqvi also revealed that plans were under consideration to review and potentially rebuild the National Bank Cricket Arena to improve facilities. - APP

Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani  
banned for 2 PSL editions

"The PCB maintains that professional cricket operates on the bedrock of trust and the certainty of agreements. In this instance, despite a clear offer and an unequivocal acceptance of essential terms, the player chose to disregard these obligations in favour of a conflicting arrangement," the cricket board said

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday barred Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani from participating in the next two editions of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). In a statement, the cricket board said that after a thorough disciplinary review, Muzarabani was declared ineligible to participate in the next two editions of the tournament, effective immediately. "This decision stems from a fundamental failure to honour agreed-upon commitments, an action that undermines the pro-

fessional framework of the league," it said. Although the press release did not make specific mention of the agreement, ESPNcricinfo reported last month that Muzarabani, who was slated to play for Islamabad United, would not be doing so after securing a deal in the Indian Premier League with the Kolkata Knight Riders. "The PCB maintains that professional cricket operates on the bedrock of trust and the certainty of agreements. In this instance, despite a clear offer and an unequivocal acceptance of essential terms, the player chose to disregard these obligations in favour of a conflicting arrangement," the

cricket board said. It went on to say that "once essential terms — including remuneration and structure — are agreed upon through written correspondence, a binding obligation is formed". It maintained that an attempt to "move away from such commitments without valid cause is a violation of contractual obligations and principles of good faith that govern global professional sports". The PCB said that the PSL's integrity was dependent on the "consistent and ethical behaviour of all participants". The statement noted that the two-year ban was "a necessary measure to safeguard the

professional environment of the PSL". "The PSL remains dedicated to ensuring that the league remains a platform where contractual certainty is respected and where the actions of all players and agents reflect the prestige of the tournament," the statement read. The cricket board further stated that while it took into account the "complexities of modern cricket schedules, it will not compromise on the ethical framework that ensures fairness to the franchisees and the integrity of the league's recruitment processes". "The two-year ban reflects the gravity of the breach," it concluded.

## Briefs

## China's horse-face skirt gains popularity overseas

BEIJING: "At the start of this year, orders for mamianqun received by our factory were about 10 times higher than the previous year," said Hou Guodong, head of a clothing factory in Caoxian county, east China's Shandong Province. Mamianqun, also known as the horse-face skirt, is a traditional Chinese pleated skirt. "In the past, we simply produced what foreign clients requested. Recently, we've started blending international fashion elements into our Hanfu designs, which has sparked new demand from customers," said Hou, referring to the traditional Chinese clothing style. Over the past few years, the company has broadened its reach by participating in international Hanfu exhibitions, launching cross-border e-commerce platforms, and introducing mamianqun to an expanding global audience. In 2025, Caoxian's Hanfu sales surpassed 13 billion yuan (\$1.89 billion), with more than 2,800 Hanfu businesses and nearly 100,000 people engaged in the sector. "From original design and pattern making to embroidery, printing, material supply, online marketing and after-sales service, we cover the entire supply chain within a 5-kilometer radius," said Liu Xia, deputy director of the county's e-commerce service center.—DNA

## Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.97 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 279.00. 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 and Rs 280, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 2.29 to close at Rs 328.51 from the previous day's close of Rs 326.22, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 2.83 and closed at Rs 377.43 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.60. The exchange rates of the Emirati Dirham remained unchanged to close at Rs 75.96, while the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise and closed at Rs 74.33.—APP

## Nigerian police arrest 33-man gang over church kidnappings

LAGOS: Nigerian police on Tuesday said they had arrested a 33-man gang suspected of involvement in the November kidnapping of 38 people from a church. The attack on the Christ Apostolic Church in the town of Euruku, in the central state of Kwara, made headlines when it was captured during an online livestream of services, with video showing worshippers fleeing gunfire. The assault came as Nigeria saw a spate of mass kidnappings late last year, compounding fraught relations with the United States, which had accused Abuja of not doing enough to protect Christians. All the 38 worshippers were rescued days later. Nigerian police spokesman Anthony Okon Placid said on Tuesday that the arrested gang members were also "responsible for acts of terrorism, (and) cattle rustling." Kidnappings for ransom are common in Nigeria as a quick way to make cash in a country mired by inequality and awash with gang violence. Several rural parts of Kwara have seen an uptick in violent attacks in recent months, with some blamed on jihadist groups Gunmen kidnapped at least 10 villagers in neighboring Isapa about a week after the Euruku incident.—APP

## Indonesia expands energy coop with Russia as global uncertainty mounts

Both leaders also agreed to develop cooperation in technology research and agriculture, as well as possibilities of further investment in Indonesia's industrial development, he added

JAKARTA: Indonesia is expanding its energy security cooperation with Russia to keep domestic supplies stable, the government said on Tuesday, following President Prabowo Subianto's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Indonesia has been working to secure alternative supply sources amid disruptions to energy shipments from the Middle East since US and Israeli attacks on Iran caused the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which most of Asia's energy supply transits. Southeast Asia's biggest economy imports about 60 percent of its fuel needs, with about 20 percent of its imported oil and LPG coming from the Middle East. During their meeting in Moscow, Prabowo and Putin discussed ways to strengthen economic and energy ties amid uncertainties stemming from the war on Iran. "They agreed upon several points, including long-term cooperation in the energy and mineral resources sector, which covers oil and gas security," Cabinet Secretary Teddy Indra Wijaya said in a statement issued on Tuesday. Both leaders also agreed to develop cooperation in technology research and agriculture, as well as possibilities of further investment in Indonesia's industrial development, he added.

Although fuel prices have spiked in many Asian countries because of the war in the Middle East, Indonesia has so far kept prices stable for consumers. The government has designated Fridays as a remote workday for civil servants starting this month as part of a series of preventive measures to address the global supply crisis. Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Bahlil Lahadalia said Prabowo's meeting with Putin was part of Indonesia's "efforts to strengthen energy diplomacy to keep domestic supplies stable" amid the global disruption. The Indonesian government has said it has begun importing fuel from other countries since the beginning of the war on Iran,



including from Nigeria, Angola and Brazil. When it comes to Russia, Jakarta will have to balance its approach so that it does not interfere with US interests, said Nailul Huda, director of economy at the Center of Economic and Law Studies in Jakarta. "These energy negotiations must cleverly avoid being controlled by US interests. The US government would want Indonesia to import from them, but we have to keep communication going with Russia so that the prices won't be controlled by the US

side," he told Arab News. The US previously prohibited countries to buy sanctioned Russian oil and petroleum products as part of reciprocal trade deals. It imposed a temporary waiver, which expired last week, allowing countries to make such purchases to keep global oil prices down. "Importing from Russia is very important to secure domestic crude oil supply," Huda said. "We are already a net importer, so it's only natural that we secure our supplies by diversifying our crude oil import

sources." Prabowo also sought to consult Putin over the "global geopolitical situation" as part of his Moscow visit. "We see that Russia has played a very positive role in the face of this uncertain geopolitical situation," Prabowo said during the meeting. "This is why we feel that it is very much needed for us to hold a consultation to figure out how to face this situation in the future and especially to see if we can continue to strengthen our cooperation, particularly in economy and energy."

## Expo offers global companies gateway to China's market

HAIKOU: As a major event showcasing the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP) after it fully launched island-wide special customs operations in December last year, the sixth China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE) kicked off on Monday in Haikou, capital of south China's Hainan Province, attracting more than 3,400 brands from over 60 countries and regions. Themed "Opening Up Drives Global Consumption, Innovation Empowers A Better Life," this year's expo runs from April 13 to 18. Meanwhile, the 2026 "Shopping in China" International Consumption Season was launched simultaneously. The sixth CICPE has expanded in scale, with an exhibition area of 143,000 square meters, up 13,000 square meters from the previous edition. International exhibits account for 65 percent of the total, an increase of 20 percentage points from last year. Last week, China launched the China (Inner Mongolia) Pilot Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in north China, further refining the country's opening-up landscape. Days after the CICPE's launch, the 139th edition of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, is set to open, with its exhibition scale surpassing previous levels. These successive initiatives and grand events convey to the world China's unwavering resolve and commitment to expanding high-level opening up. Since its launch in 2021, the CICPE has become an important platform for multinationals to stay abreast of consumer trends in China's gigantic market, with over 3,800 enterprises and more than 12,000 brands from 92 countries and regions participating over the past five editions. At this year's expo, more than 200 new products are expected to make their debut, double last year's number and spanning fields including healthcare, jewelry and digital technology. The Taobao and Tmall Group, notably, is taking part in the event as both an exhibitor and a buyer. According to Yan Jia, the group's general manager of public affairs, the group will highlight its AI-driven innovations in smart consumption and industrial empowerment. "Through the CICPE platform, we aim to collaborate with global partners to drive the deep integration of technology, ecosystems and consumer scenarios, helping bring more smart products to market," Yan said. More products of intelligent manufacturing in China have entered the global spotlight at this year's edition. Among the exhibitors, Chinese motorcycle maker ZXMOTO stands alongside global giants like Aston Martin and Bombardier, demonstrating the rising technological prowess and overall competitiveness of made-in-China products.—DNA

## From student to tech innovator Pakistani scholar bridges academia and industry

BEIJING: For Dr. Sami Iqbal from Pakistan, the journey from a master's student at Southeast University in 2015 to a leading researcher and tech entrepreneur in 2026 is a testament to how academic excellence, when paired with entrepreneurial vision, can create tangible solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Dr. Sami is now an assistant professor at the university's School of Electronic Engineering and the founder of Enfniti Innovate. The technology startup focuses on smart devices, wearable technologies, AI-assisted preventive healthcare, renewable energy materials, and technology transfer from China to Pakistan and other Belt and Road countries. Through these roles, Dr. Sami is positioning himself as a bridge between academia and corporate innovation. Why would a young researcher devote himself to a field that has not yet been commercialized? The answer lies in a problem that affects billions of people: energy poverty. Specializing in third-generation solar cells and organic materials like perovskites and multi-walled carbon nanotubes, Dr. Sami has published nearly 30 papers and filed several patents. His work is backed by a global network of collaborations. Speaking about China's dominance in the solar industry, Dr. Sami noted that more than 80 percent of the world's solar cells and silicon are produced and processed in China. "Even during my recent four-month sabbatical research visit at McGill University in Montreal, most of the materials we used in those labs were imported from China as R&D raw resources," he said. He further expressed confidence that third-generation photovoltaic devices will be available for commercial production in less than a decade. "This would highly impact power shortages in Pakistan and every developing country," he added. "China already has a huge production of intermittent power sources from solar cells connecting to the national grid. The same model can benefit Pakistan." What inspired Dr. Sami to start his company is the speed with which China is turning research into real products. "In China, the distance between the lab and the market is very short," he said. He co-founded Enfniti Innovate in 2021 with a Chinese partner and is now working with young entrepreneurs from Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and other Belt and Road countries. He has already delivered results. For the Lagos State Police in Nigeria, it developed a biomedical device that tests urine for up to 18 drugs. "Commercialization is expected in the third quarter of this year," Dr. Sami said. In agriculture, Enfniti Innovate has been providing stevia - a natural sugar substitute - to the Punjab Agriculture Research Board since 2024. "Pakistan is one of the most diabetes-affected countries in the world," he noted. "This can help." He also hosted eight officials from the Punjab Soil Fertility Research Institute for an eight-day visit to Anhui province, where he briefed them on tissue culture, smart farming and portable soil analysers, CEN reported on Tuesday. In terms of technology transfer, the company has signed an agreement with a smart farming company in Luan, Anhui province, to send Pakistani technical staff for four to twelve months of training in Chinese labs. "The same model will apply to healthcare and smart manufacturing," he added. Dr. Sami's entrepreneurial efforts have been recognized through multiple awards. His team won second place at the Nanjing selection round of the 4th China Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, as well as second prize in the Belt and Road International Student Track at the 8th "Win in Nanjing" Youth University Student Entrepreneurship Competition. "These competitions provide platforms for international students to showcase their abilities and gain support," he shared. "This is one way I can contribute back to the international community in Nanjing and pay something back to China and the Chinese people.—DNA

## Crackdown on illicit cigarette trade to protect tax-compliant sector: Kayani

Stressing the urgency of the issue, he termed curbing the illegal cigarette trade "unavoidable," warning that the unchecked market was inflicting heavy losses on the national exchequer, discouraging honest taxpayers and weakening the formal economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani on Tuesday said the government had intensified enforcement measures to curb the illicit cigarette market, which is causing massive revenue losses and undermining tax-compliant businesses, as authorities move to restore fairness and strengthen the documented economy. Speaking at the launch of a research report titled "An Economic Assessment of the Illicit Cigarettes Market in Pakistan" prepared by Oxford Economics, the minister described the issue as critical, noting that the illegal trade was resulting in an estimated annual revenue loss of around Rs200 billion. He said the government was pursuing a dual strategy, facilitating compliant businesses while taking strict action against illegal operators. "The prime minister has consistently emphasized that businesses complying with tax laws should be facilitated and rewarded rather than penalized," he added. Bilal said a nationwide crackdown had been launched in coordination with provincial governments to eliminate the widespread availability of untaxed cigarette brands. He added that district admin-

istrations, including deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners, were actively engaged to ensure effective enforcement at the local level. He expressed confidence that sustained enforcement would enhance revenue collection, ensure fair competition and provide better-quality products to consumers. Stressing the urgency of the issue, he termed curbing the illegal cigarette trade "unavoidable," warning that the unchecked market was inflicting heavy losses on the national exchequer, discouraging honest taxpayers and weakening the formal economy. The minister said several illegal manufacturing units had already been shut down, while raids against retailers selling illicit products were continuing across the country. Highlighting reforms within the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), he said the government had introduced measures such as faceless customs systems, strengthened enforcement mechanisms and production monitoring across key sectors including tobacco, cement and sugar. These reforms, he added, were being closely monitored by the prime minister to ensure timely implementation. He noted that, for the first time, enforcement-driven revenue collection had been recognized as a credible component in discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Technology-driven solutions, including track-and-trace systems, were also

being implemented to monitor production while safeguarding trade secrets. "Any gaps in implementation will be addressed to ensure the system functions effectively," he added. According to the report, illicit cigarettes now account for more than half of Pakistan's tobacco market, highlighting the scale of the challenge. The volume of illicit cigarettes stands at 43.5 billion sticks, placing Pakistan among the largest illegal cigarette markets globally. While total consumption has remained stable at around 80 billion sticks annually over the past decade, legal sales have steadily declined due to the rise of untaxed products. The report identifies sharp increases in excise duties as a major driver of this shift. Between the first quarter of 2022 and the second quarter of 2023, real excise taxes rose by 107 percent, widening the price gap between legal and illegal cigarettes. Illicit products remain about 36 percent cheaper on average, encouraging consumers to switch. It further noted that nearly 64 percent of illicit cigarettes are produced domestically, particularly in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while the remaining 36 percent are smuggled, mainly through Afghanistan with links to brands from the UAE and South Korea. Weak enforcement, porous borders and organized networks continue to fuel the illegal trade.

## Alibaba enters Pakistan's Fintech Space

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), has granted a license to KOKO TECH PAKISTAN (PRIVATE) LIMITED (KTPL) to operate a Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) business in Pakistan. KTPL is ultimately owned by Alibaba.com Holdings. The entry of Alibaba-backed KTPL marks a significant milestone for Pakistan's digital financial ecosystem, said a press release issued by the SECP on Tuesday. One of world's leading e-commerce and technology companies, Alibaba's move into Pakistan reflects growing international confidence in the country's large consumer base, expanding digital economy, and untapped financial services market. With its advanced AI-driven credit assessment systems and globally tested digital infrastructure, KTPL is expected to introduce innovative, data-driven lending solutions in the BNPL space. This will enhance access to consumer financing, particularly for young users, freelancers, and small businesses that remain underserved by traditional banking channels. The development also represents a direct inflow of foreign investment into Pakistan's financial sector. Backed by Alibaba's global expertise and capital strength, KTPL is well-positioned to support SMEs, boost e-commerce activity, and accelerate the shift towards a more inclusive, technology-led financial system.—APP

## Nearly 700 reported killed in Sudan drone strikes this year: UN

GENEVA: Nearly 700 civilians have been reported killed in drone strikes in Sudan since January, the United Nations said Tuesday, detailing the devastation and humanitarian catastrophe wrought by the brutal civil war. Now entering a fourth year, the war between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has killed tens of thousands, displaced over 11 million, and thrust several areas into famine. "In the first three months of this year, nearly 700 civilians were reportedly killed in drone strikes," UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said in a statement, a day before the three-year anniversary of the start of the war. Near-daily drone strikes have disrupted life across Sudan, particularly in the southern Kordofan region, now the war's main battleground, and in RSF-controlled areas of the west, including Darfur. The UN children's agency said drones were "responsible for nearly 80 percent" of the at least 245 children reported killed or injured during the first three months of the year. APP

## As Gaza sanitation crisis worsens, rats spread throughout the strip

DUBAI: Gaza's worsening sanitation crisis is giving rise to a new and deeply alarming threat, the rapid spread of rats throughout displacement camps and urban areas. According to reporting by the New Arab and footage emerging from the enclave, as infrastructure collapses under the strain of Israel's ongoing assault, piles of uncollected waste, sewage leaks, and overcrowded living conditions have created an environment where rodents are thriving. The World Health Organization told Arab News recently that the failure to solve the Gaza crisis was leading to acute health risks and the spread of disease, which would result in long-term consequences. "The collapse of Gaza's water, sanitation and waste systems has created acute public health risks, primarily water-borne and mosquito-borne diseases," the WHO said in a statement. "Raw sewage, accumulated solid waste and overcrowded shelters are driving sharp increases in acute watery diarrhea, acute jaundice syndrome, skin diseases.—APP

## Briefs

### Two young sisters killed after falling off motorcycle

#### NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Two young girls were killed and a boy injured after they fell off a motorcycle and were run over by a passing oil tanker in Nazimabad No 1 late Monday night, rescue officials said. Police said the tanker did not collide with the motorcycle. Initial findings suggest the bike lost balance due to a broken stretch of road, causing the two sisters to fall. "As per initial information, both sisters fell from the motorcycle due to a damaged road and came under a tanker passing alongside," SSP Central said. The tanker driver, who initially fled, was later arrested, and the vehicle has been taken into custody, police added. The boy riding the motorcycle sustained minor injuries, while the bike itself was not significantly damaged. The News reported that the rescue teams took the injured to a nearby hospital, but both women succumbed to their injuries before they could be provided medical treatment. Police identified the deceased as Easter and Angel, while the tanker driver was identified as Maroof Shah. The incident highlights the ongoing issue of reckless driving by heavy vehicle drivers in Karachi, particularly in busy residential areas. Residents have repeatedly voiced concerns over the unchecked movement of heavy vehicles, which often leads to fatal accidents.

### Deportation of 318 held Afghans ordered

PESHAWAR: The government has accelerated the repatriation process of undocumented Afghan nationals across the country following the reopening of transit routes. According to official sources on Tuesday, authorities have resumed steps to send back Afghan migrants residing illegally in Pakistan. In a significant development, officials have decided to immediately deport 318 Afghan nationals currently imprisoned in Peshawar Central Jail under the Foreign Act. Preparations for their deportation have reportedly been completed and their journey to their homeland is expected shortly. Law enforcement agencies in Peshawar have intensified operations against undocumented foreign residents. Police are conducting door-to-door searches to identify individuals living without legal documentation. Those found in violation are being arrested and cases are being registered against them under Section 14 of the Foreign Act. The decision was finalized during a meeting chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud, where authorities reviewed the situation and agreed on immediate deportation of Afghan prisoners held under immigration violations. Officials emphasized that the crackdown is part of the federal government's broader policy to expel all undocumented foreigners from Pakistan. The process includes strict monitoring, arrests, and legal action against those without valid residency status. Meanwhile, several Afghan nationals have approached the Peshawar High Court seeking relief from deportation. Some petitioners argued that they are married to Pakistani citizens and requested exemption from expulsion on humanitarian grounds. The court has already addressed multiple such cases. The renewed deportation drive signals a firm stance by authorities to enforce immigration laws and regulate the presence of undocumented foreign nationals in the country. - APP

# Empowering artisans and preserving heritage at Nomad craft festival

The festival features an exquisite collection of handcrafted textiles, shawls, gifts, natural foods, ceramics, homeware, jewelry, apparel, and inspiring artworks. These creations represent the rich cultural tapestry of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir, making them ideal for both personal collections and meaningful gifts



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels in collaboration with Nomad Art Gallery under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative, proudly presents the Nomad Craft Festival, a vibrant celebration of Pakistan's diverse

cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and artistic excellence. The festival brings together master artisans, designers, and craft enthusiasts from across the country, offering a unique platform to showcase indigenous art and promote sustainable livelihoods. Rooted in a shared vision, the collaboration aims to highlight and empower women, honor the in-



igenous art and artisans of Pakistan, and support communities through skills and creativity in arts and crafts. The festival features an exquisite collection of handcrafted textiles, shawls, gifts, natural foods, ceramics, homeware, jewelry, apparel, and inspiring artworks. These creations represent the rich cultural tapestry of Sindh,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir, making them ideal for both personal collections and meaningful gifts. In this festival, special emphasis is placed on highlighting the traditions of the Saami tribe of Sindh, showcasing their unique cultural expressions and artisanal expertise, and reinforcing the importance of preserving indigenous heritage. Speaking about the initiative, Nageen Hayat, founder of Nomad Art Gallery, said that the festival celebrates Pakistan's cultural diversity while creating meaningful opportunities for artisans, particularly women, to connect their creativity with wider audiences and sustain their craft. As the Guest of Honour, Mary O'Neil the Ambassador Ireland to Pakistan praised the initiative for promoting indigenous crafts and empowering local communities. She emphasized the role of cultural platforms in building mutual understanding and appreciation. Serena Hotels remains committed to supporting cultural initiatives by creating meaningful platforms that promote local artisans, preserve heritage, and encourage community empowerment through creative expression. The Craft Festival promises an immersive cultural experience, developing appreciation for the country's rich traditions while supporting the talented artisans who keep these legacies alive.

## Aurangzeb leads strategic talks at IMF, WB



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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a series of high-level meetings at the IMF and the World Bank aimed at boosting trade, investment, and financial stability and highlighting Pakistan's reform progress, digital transformation and global partnerships. The finance minister, who commenced his engagements at the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings 2026, held a productive discussion with United States Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer and explored avenues to enhance bilateral trade and investment, including improving market access, said a news release. They expressed satisfaction with the steady progress in ongoing trade negotiations and reaffirmed their shared

commitment to achieving mutually beneficial outcomes and deepening economic cooperation. Subsequently, Senator Aurangzeb met with World Bank Managing Director (Operations) Anna Bjerde, where he appreciated the institution's longstanding support to Pakistan's reform and development agenda. The discussion focused on Pakistan's response to the economic implications of the ongoing Middle East conflict, particularly its first- and second-order effects. Both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening social protection mechanisms to safeguard vulnerable populations. Progress under the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) was also reviewed, with acknowledgment of key achievements alongside the need for sustained efforts. He underscored the importance of a coordinated federal-provincial strategy to address Pakistan's demographic challenges and requested the World Bank's support in developing a comprehensive Master Plan. In a separate meeting with Jonathan Greenstein, Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs, the minister highlighted Pakistan's successful Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) with the IMF, reiterating the government's firm commitment to its reform agenda. He noted the timely repayment of Pakistan's Eurobond obligation of USD 1.3 billion and reaffirmed the country's resolve to meet all external financial obligations. The two sides also discussed the broader economic implications of the Middle East conflict, including its impact on remittances and the external sector, while exchanging views on measures to strengthen foreign exchange reserves and ensure macroeconomic stability. The minister also met with IFC Managing Director Makhtar Diop and emphasized the importance of scaling up private sector investment, productivity, and job creation in Pakistan. While appreciating IFC's role in mobilizing local currency financing and supporting trade finance, he urged greater engagement in developing Pakistan's capital markets, drawing on global best practices.

## Pak slams Israeli 'aggression' in Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan Monday strongly condemned the deadly Israeli strikes across Lebanon, especially in the southern part of the country, that have left behind a catastrophic humanitarian situation. Speaking at an OIC Ambassadorial-level meeting held to discuss the current humanitarian situation in Lebanon, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, said the situation was deteriorating by the day for tens of thousands of uprooted civilians. According to the UN, intensified Israeli bombardment in Lebanon has killed more than 2,000 people AND over 6,500 others wounded, with over 1.2 million people reported displaced and the health system on the brink of collapse. In his remarks, Ambassador Jadoon reiterated Pakista's

full support for the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Lebanon, condemning "in the strongest terms" Israel's continued military aggression. "The large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure and the blatant disregard for international humanitarian law must cease immediately," he demanded. The Pakistani envoy also welcomed the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to restore stability and strengthen state authority, including its recent cabinet decision to reinforce national security structures, noting Beirut's de-escalation initiatives, including a four-point plan advanced by its leadership to restore calm and stability. Pakistan, he said, strongly condemns attacks on UN peacekeepers serving with UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, who have been injured in Israeli strikes. The Pakistani envoy called for humanitarian access across all affected area to provide relief to the suffering people. He said that at this critical juncture, de-escalation, restraint, and renewed diplomatic engagement were urgently required to prevent further deterioration of the regional security environment. "Only through sustained political dialogue and respect for international law can the region move toward stability and peace," he added. - DNA

## PSX regains ground after heavy sell-off

"PSX moved higher, tracking gains in Asian equities and decreasing oil prices," says expert

DNA

KARACHI: Stocks at the bourse closed higher on Tuesday, tracking gains across Asian equities as oil prices fell sharply and hopes of renewed US-Iran talks lifted sentiment. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 165,634.84 points, up 5,043.51 points, or 3.14%, from the previous close of 160,591.33. The index climbed to an intraday high of 165,763.81, gaining 5,172.48 points, or 3.22%, and registered a low of 163,416.54, up 2,825.21 points or 1.76%. "PSX moved higher, tracking gains in Asian equities and decreasing oil prices, as sentiment shifted to risk-on amid expectations of renewed US-Iran talks, with Pakistan playing a mediatory role," said Huzaiifa Riaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited. "Additional support came from reports of a potential Saudi deposit, further boosting investor confidence," he added. Oil prices fell sharply as markets bet on a diplomatic opening after signs that the United States and Iran could return to talks. Brent slipped 2.7% to \$96.66 a barrel, and US crude fell 3% to \$96.13 as traders weighed reports that both sides had kept the door open to dialogue after the weekend's failed negotiations. Sources told Reuters that both sides had kept the door open to dialogue, while a US official pointed to forward movement towards a potential agreement. The United States continued to engage Tehran even as its military enforced a blockade of Iranian ports, a move aimed at increasing pressure after the talks failed to produce a deal. Additional support came from reports that Pakistan is in discussions with over financial assistance to help manage a roughly \$3 billion repayment to the United Arab Emirates, according to Bloomberg.

## Sindh sees 894 new HIV cases

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KARACHI: Sindh has reported 894 new HIV cases in the first three months of 2026, a rise that has raised serious public health concerns and highlighted ongoing gaps in infection prevention and control across the province, as officials confirmed. According to data from the Sindh Health Department, the newly reported cases comprise 329 children under the age of 14, 332 men, 204 women, and 29 transgender individuals, The News reported. Health experts warn that the rising numbers reflect systemic weaknesses in healthcare safety and regulatory oversight, particularly in major urban centres such as Karachi. A month-wise breakdown of cases shows that 294 new HIV infections were recorded in January 2026, followed by 324 in February and 276 in March, underscoring the continued spread of the virus across the province. Seven years after the devastating HIV outbreak in Ratodero in April 2019, which infected hundreds of children and exposed unsafe medical practices.

## Pak in talks with Saudi Arabia, China for financial support

Support under discussion exceeds \$3.5 billion, with talks involving loans and investment, people tell Bloomberg

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is holding talks with Saudi Arabia and China to secure financial support as it prepares to repay a roughly \$3 billion loan to the United Arab Emirates, according to people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg reported. Pakistan failed to reach an agreement with the UAE to roll over the debt for the first time in seven years. Islamabad will now repay the amount by the end of this month, putting significant strain on its foreign exchange reserves, which stand at about \$16 billion, enough to cover just three months of imports. Pakistan's Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Media didn't immediately respond to requests for information. Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan was in Islamabad on April 10 to hold talks with officials just before Pakistan hosted high stakes peace talks between the US and Iran this weekend. In his meeting with the Saudi minister, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed "strong commitment to expanding its cooperation with the kingdom in all spheres, particularly in trade, investment, and economic development," according to an official readout from his office. The two countries have steadily increased their economic and security ties in recent months, at the same time that relations between Saudi Arabia and UAE have frayed. - APP

## Naval chief says Pakistan stands ready to deter any aggression

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ISLAMABAD: The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Tuesday said that Pakistan's armed forces stood ready to "deter any aggression" vowing to deliver a "befitting response" to any such act. He made the assertion while addressing the passing out ceremony of cadets of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in Risalpur. The naval chief, in his address congratulated the graduating cadets, expressing hope that they will "uphold PAF's vision" with "commitment and dedication". In his speech, he recalled the four-day conflict with India in May 2025 - Marka-i-Haq - and stressed that Pakistan stood "ever ready, vigilant, and capable to deter any aggression and give a befitting response". The Pakistan Army had named the period of conflict with India, from the Pahalgam attack to the conclusion of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, as Marka-i-Haq in May, 2025. He further stated that the armed forces, including the navy, stood ready to "enhance our capabilities and keep up with the evolving geopolitical developments". "Pakistan's outstanding performance in Marka-i-Haq, Bunya-

num Marsoos, was the outcome of exemplary professionalism, remarkable foresight, and relentless hard work on the part of the Pakistan Air Force leadership," the naval chief said. He added in the years preceding the conflict, the air force pursued a "comprehensive strategy of organisation". "PAF has embraced technological de-

velopments and harnessed cutting-edge technologies," he told the cadets, stressing that the PAF's previous successes placed "greater responsibility" on the cadets. The naval chief said that the Pakistan Navy was also "making significant headway". Detailing the advancement efforts, the navy chief said that Pakistan Navy was modernising

its fleet and "indigenously developing long-range weapons". He added that the navy's combat capabilities had "undergone a remarkable enhancement across all operational domains, including surface, subsurface, and aviation". Admiral Ashraf recalled that the navy, during the May 2025 conflict, "successfully deterred the Indian navy from any

hostilities at sea and it remained at bay throughout the conflict". The naval chief maintained that it was the Pakistan Navy's capacity to "strike vital Indian infrastructure along the coast and its essential sea lines of communication with precision and speed" that played a vital role in forcing the Indian navy to withdraw. He also noted the global impact due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the US-Israel war on Iran, which broke out on February 28. In this context, he expressed the navy's readiness to exercise "continuous vigilance" and enhance its ability to "proactively respond in any eventuality". "We stand ready to deter any aggression, enhance our capabilities and keep up with the evolving geopolitical developments," he stressed. He also appreciated Pakistan's political and military leadership's "untiring, selfless and sincere" role in brokering the US-Iran ceasefire and subsequent Islamabad Talks. "The trust and confidence in our armed forces and the Pakistani nation has grown exponentially," he remarked. He voiced optimism that with "concerted and collaborative efforts, we should be able to find a solution for achieving a safe secure and stable order in the region".

