



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan launch initiative in the field of science: Jane

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Fin Minister takes up fiscal issues in the US

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Briefs

Pak receives \$2bn from Saudi Arabia

DNA

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) confirmed on Thursday that Pakistan has received \$2 billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The central bank said the funds were received "in the value date of 15 April 2026". The development comes amid Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Saudi Arabia to push diplomatic efforts to promote peace in the Middle East. A day earlier, the kingdom pledged an additional \$3bn in deposits for Pakistan and extended its existing \$5bn facility for a further three years. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the existing \$5bn Saudi deposit would no longer be subject to the previous annual rollover arrangement and would instead be extended for a longer term. Pakistan will reportedly return a \$3.5bn loan to the UAE this month, putting pressure on its reserves and risking breaches of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme targets. The development comes at a sensitive time for the country's external account position, which is already under strain from rising global oil prices and economic spillovers linked to tensions in the Middle East. According to official figures, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$16.4bn as of March 27, sufficient to cover close to three months of imports.

Increased hydropower generation

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Awais Leghari on Thursday said that increased hydropower generation in the coming days would help resolve the issue of excessive loadshedding in the country. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad, the minister attributed the increase in loadshedding to fuel shortages and reduced hydropower generation, saying the issue was temporary. Leghari apologised to the public for the inconvenience caused by hours-long loadshedding, including during peak hours. He said that a significant drop in hydropower generation has created a shortfall of nearly 1,600 megawatts, while the suspension of liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies has further widened the gap by more than 3,000 megawatts.

Trump hints at possible visit to Pak

DNA

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD: In a fresh sign of warming US-Pakistan ties amid ongoing Middle East diplomacy, President Donald Trump has indicated he might visit Pakistan if a significant agreement is reached, while lauding the country's leadership for its role in regional peace efforts. Speaking in recent interviews and statements, Trump highlighted Pakistan's contributions as host for US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad. He described Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir as "very extraordinary men" who provided "kind and very competent leadership" during the negotiations. Trump specifically praised the duo for facilitating high-level discussions aimed at ending the recent US-Iran tensions and related conflicts in the Middle East.

Regional alignments

Pak indebted to Qatar for full support

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, who arrived in Doha earlier, held a warm and cordial meeting with His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar

CENTRELINE REPORT

DOHA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, who arrived in Doha earlier today, held a warm and cordial meeting with His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar. During their meeting held at the Amiri Diwan that lasted over an hour, both leaders discussed the latest regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East. At the outset, His Highness the Amir welcomed the Prime Minister of Pakistan and his delegation, and expressed his deep appreciation for Pakistan's pivotal role in supporting efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region and promote diplomatic dialogue in a manner that serves regional security and stability. For his part, the Prime Minister of Pakistan renewed his condemnation of the attacks against Qatar and other Gulf countries, while reaffirming Pakistan's full solidarity and support the leadership and the people of Qatar. Both leaders underscored the importance of supporting de-escalation efforts and enhancing international coordination to ensure the security and stability of the region, particularly ensuring the maintenance of smooth flow of energy supply chains. The two leaders also reviewed bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to further develop them, especially in the fields of security, defense, and energy, in a manner

PM Shehbaz reaches Turkiye

DNA

ANKARA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Turkiye's Antalya on the third leg of his tri-nation tour after concluding visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Thursday. The prime minister was received at the airport by Antalya Governor Hulusi Sahin. Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkiye Yousuf Junaid, and other senior officials were also present on the occasion. During his visit, PM Shehbaz is scheduled to attend the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum, where he is expected to engage with global leaders.

that strengthens the partnership and opens new avenues for bilateral cooperation. The meeting was also attended by His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Prime Minister and

Continued on Page 06

Abu Dhabi reaction

UAE issues strong statement slamming Iranian missiles attacks

According to the document, Iran has launched more than 2,819 missile and drone attacks on UAE territory alone – far exceeding strikes on other affected nations. These include 2,256 drones, 26 cruise missiles, and 537 ballistic missiles

DNA

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates has released a detailed position paper outlining its firm stance against Iran's ongoing missile and drone campaign, which has targeted multiple countries in the region since late February, causing significant casualties, infrastructure damage, and threats to global energy security. According to the document, Iran has launched more than 2,819 missile and drone attacks on UAE territory alone – far exceeding strikes on other affected nations. These include 2,256 drones, 26 cruise missiles, and 537 ballistic missiles. The assaults have hit civilian sites, airports, ports, oil facilities, tourism infrastructure, water desalination plants, and residential buildings. The attacks have resulted in the deaths of two UAE Armed Forces members,

Continued on Page 06

US to target vessels helping Iran

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Dan Caine has warned that the United States would target or pursue any vessels providing support to Iran, particularly in the context of the ongoing naval blockade of Iranian ports and the Strait of Hormuz. This aligns with President Trump's statements that Iranian warships or ships attempting to breach the blockade "anywhere close" would be destroyed or eliminated. The blockade aims to restrict ships entering or leaving Iranian ports while maintaining freedom of navigation for others.

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Japan contributes US\$2 mn to support communities

Japan is one of the World Food Programme's most valued global partners. Since the 2022 floods, the Government of Japan has contributed more than US\$10 million to support WFP's humanitarian operations in Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a contribution of US\$2 million from the Government of Japan to support vulnerable communities affected by disasters across Pakistan. This contribution will enable WFP to provide food assistance to more than 45,000 people, impacted by monsoon floods and other shocks. It will also help communities restore assets and stabilise livelihoods for a stronger future. "Japan values its long-standing partnership with Pakistan and the World Food Programme in supporting vulnerable communities," said H.E. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan. "Through this contribution, Japan aims to ensure that families facing hardship have access to essential food while supporting efforts that help communities recover." "We appreciate Japan's ongoing support

for the people of Pakistan," said Coco Ushiyama, WFP Country Director and Representative in Pakistan. "This contribution not only addresses immediate food needs, but also assists families to protect what they have, recover from losses, and strengthen their ability to withstand future shocks. As climate risks intensify, such investments are critical to breaking the cycle of vulnerability and supporting more resilient communities across Pakistan." Pakistan faces major climate risks including heatwaves, dry spells and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). Communities are still recovering from the 2025 monsoon floods that affected 6.9 million people. The National Disaster Management Authority warns that the 2026 monsoon season could see 22-26 percent higher than normal rainfall, raising the risk of severe flooding and highlighting the urgent need for timely support and preparedness.

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DOHA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Amir of Qatar, H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha. 16 April, 2026. – DNA

RAW agent arrested in AJK

BUREAU REPORT

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) police claimed on Thursday that they had arrested a suspected agent of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in Rawalakot, who had been blackmailed into working for the foreign intelligence agency. According to AJK Inspector General of Police (IGP) Liaqat Ali Malik, one suspect had been arrested who had allegedly been blackmailed into working for RAW. His handler, whom Malik said used a Facebook account with an address in Lahore, blackmailed him by initially assigning "small tasks" – beginning with commonplace activities and later involving geotagging, sharing coordinates, and recording videos of "sensitive" sites, including military installations, schools, bridges and other government buildings in AJK and elsewhere in Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

Middle East crisis

Pakistan urges against speculation over US-Iran peace talks date

Lebanon ceasefire part of negotiations and being viewed within broader context of regional peace process, says FO

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi on Thursday said Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to help de-escalate tensions between the United States and Iran, culminating in a ceasefire, have been widely acknowledged by world leaders. He reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to promoting regional peace. At the weekly briefing, Andrabi said Pakistan's constructive role in easing tensions between Washington and Tehran had received international recognition, reflecting its consistent focus on dialogue and stability. He noted that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan maintained open channels with both sides as part of its mediation efforts. He said these efforts contributed to the

ceasefire and facilitated peace talks in Islamabad, where delegations led by US Vice President JD Vance and Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf held more than 21 hours of intensive negotiations. The talks, he added, were supported by active engagement from the prime minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and the army chief. Andrabi said the army chief had arrived in Iran a day earlier as part of ongoing diplomatic outreach, while the prime minister was undertaking a three-country regional visit from April 15 to 18 to strengthen bilateral ties and support peace initiatives. He further said several global leaders, including Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, British Prime Minister Keir

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BISP expand livelihood opportunities through banking partnership

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a key meeting with President Bank Alfalah, Atif Bajwa, to advance efforts aimed at modernising payment systems for beneficiaries and unlocking new livelihood opportunities through strategic collaboration. The meeting, held in Karachi, focused on enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the payment mechanism for BISP beneficiaries, while also exploring avenues to generate sustainable income opportunities through the Benazir Hunarmand Programme and Bank Alfalah's Alfa Mall platform. During the discussion, both sides deliberated on introducing interoperability in the payment system, enabling beneficiary women to choose a bank of their preference. The initiative is expected to improve convenience, ensure greater financial inclusion, and strengthen service delivery standards. The participants also reviewed measures to enhance transparency, security, and accessibility of the payment system, reaffirming their commitment to improving the overall beneficiary experience. A detailed discussion was held on scaling up the Benazir Hunarmand Programme. It was agreed to leverage the Alfa Mall platform to expand outreach and create skill-based earning opportunities for BISP beneficiaries, helping them achieve greater financial independence, said a news release. The other key matters related to facilitating beneficiaries were also reviewed, with consensus on making the system more robust and user-friendly. Director General Cash Transfers BISP Muhammad Idrees Mian, DG Sindh Sanaullah Rind, and Consultant Naveed Khan were also present during the meeting.—APP

Essential commodity prices revised in Gujrat

GUJRAT: The District Price Control Committee revised prices of essential food items to ensure their availability at controlled rates across the district. The meeting was held under the chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Noor-Ain Qureshi, where EDO Industry Muhammad Imran briefed participants on the prevailing prices of essential commodities. Vice Chairman Price Control Committee Arqam Cheema, President Anjuman Tajran Javed Butt, representatives of the Kiryana Association and other stakeholders attended the meeting. The committee fixed new prices, including basmati rice (Super Banna) at Rs300 per kg, gram pulse (coarse) at Rs210 per kg, gram pulse (fine) at Rs190 per kg, masoor at Rs215 per kg, mash (with husk) at Rs360 per kg, mash (washed) at Rs425 per kg, moong (washed) at Rs345 per kg, black chickpeas at Rs205 per kg, white chickpeas at Rs215 per kg and gram flour at Rs215 per kg. Milk was fixed at Rs170 per litre, yogurt at Rs180 per kg, mutton at Rs1,700 per kg, beef at Rs900 per kg, while 100gram tandoori roti was set at Rs14. The meeting was informed that prices of flour and sugar would be maintained as per government policy, while rates of ghee and red chili powder would be implemented according to printed prices. Rates of fruits, vegetables.—APP

Pakistan, UK launch initiative to strengthen geoscientific capacity

British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said, "Pakistan has extraordinary geological potential, but realising it depends on trustworthy data collated through modern methods. Through this partnership, the UK is supporting Pakistan to build the skills, systems and credibility needed to attract responsible investment and unlock long term economic potential across the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A new UK programme will strengthen Pakistan's ability to generate credible geological data and unlock growth in the mining and minerals sector across the country. The initiative is delivered through the UK funded REMIT programme, in partnership with International Geoscience Services (IGS), a UK based geoscience consultancy with extensive experience supporting geological survey organisations worldwide. Running from April to July 2026, the programme focuses on strengthening the Geological Survey of Pakistan's (GSP) technical capability through hands on training aligned to international standards. The programme will support GSP through training in digital geological surveying, geochemical sampling, airborne geophysics and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). It establishes a complete end to end digital survey process, from fieldwork and laboratory analysis through to GIS interpretation and final geological mapping. British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "Pakistan has extraordinary geological potential, but realising it depends on trustworthy data collated through modern methods. Through this partnership, the UK is supporting Pakistan to build the skills, systems and credibility needed to attract responsible investment and unlock long term economic potential across the country." Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, said: "I thank the British High Commission for their support. At a time of global uncertainty, strengthening the Geological Survey of Pakistan is vital to reducing reliance on hydrocarbons and attracting mineral investment."

This partnership will help equip GSP with the tools and skills needed to independently design and deliver future national surveys to investor facing global standards. Sus-



tainable investment and growth are underpinned by strong institutions and inclusion from local communities. The launch event took place at the Geoscience Advanced Research Laboratories in Islamabad and was attended by

senior representatives from the Government of Pakistan, including the Federal Minister for Energy, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Director General of the Geological Survey of Pakistan, Adnan Alam Awam, and other senior officials.

KP gov't releases good governance roadmap report

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released a comprehensive report on its Good Governance Roadmap, highlighting significant progress toward a modern, data-driven governance system. According to the report, the roadmap marks a transition from traditional administrative practices to an integrated public service delivery model, with 26 departments now operating under a unified framework. Government priorities have been translated into key performance indicators (KPIs) and timelines, while a centralized digital dashboard is being used to monitor departmental performance in real time through a traffic light system. The initiative

focuses on 21 key public service sectors, with more than 450 reforms and over 3,800 action steps currently under implementation. Improvements have been reported in over 1,100 public facilities across the province. The report states that weekly review meetings chaired by the Chief Secretary, along with direct oversight by the Chief Minister, have strengthened accountability. More than 6,000 field visits by Deputy Commissioners have been conducted to assess ground realities. At the district level, 17 service delivery areas are being monitored to ensure alignment with provincial priorities. Under Good Governance Roadmap 2.0, the scope of the initiative has

been expanded to extend development benefits to every district and union council. The reforms have introduced digital attendance verification for teachers and doctors, upgrades in school infrastructure, and improved availability of medicines in hospitals. Additionally, support programs for widows, orphans, and other vulnerable groups have been expanded, while efforts are ongoing to modernize clean drinking water, sanitation, and municipal service systems. The report further highlights reforms in agriculture, energy, and industrial sectors aimed at boosting economic activity and generating employment opportunities.—APP

CDA okays land for JMC, extends RWMC agreements

In addition, the board approved the extension of an agreement for the collection of solid waste from Islamabad's Waste Transfer Station and its transportation to the RWMC-managed dumping site at Losar

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday approved the allotment of additional land in sector H-11/1 for the proposed Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Centre, while also extending agreements with the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) for waste disposal operations. The decisions were taken during the fourth CDA Board meeting of 2026, chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Sohail Ashraf, at the author-

ity's headquarters. The meeting was attended by senior officials, including Member Administration Esfandiyar Baloch, Member Estate Zaman Watoo, Member Finance and Planning and Design Muhammad Umair, Member Engineering Syed Nafasat Raza, and Punjab University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Ali. According to officials, the board approved additional land allocation for the medical complex project aimed at strengthening healthcare infrastructure in the federal capital. The board

also decided to extend its agreement with RWMC for the continued use of the Losar landfill site. During the meeting, the CDA chairman directed authorities to initiate work on developing a scientific landfill site for Islamabad, emphasising that environmental safeguards should be ensured. In addition, the board approved the extension of an agreement for the collection of solid waste from Islamabad's Waste Transfer Station and its transportation to the RWMC-managed dumping site at Losar.—DNA

Sindh releases Rs 800m for assistive devices to empower PWDs

KARACH: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday distributed Rs 800 million among 105 partner organisations and NGOs for the provision of assistive devices to persons with disabilities, describing the initiative as a significant step towards inclusion, dignity, and equal opportunity. Addressing a ceremony organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) at the CM House, the chief minister said that the true measure of a society lies in how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. He added that the initiative reflects the Sindh government's commitment to building an inclusive and compassionate society where every individual can live with dignity, independence, and confidence. Murad Shah said that, in collaboration with credible partner organisations, the government is ensuring the provision of wheelchairs, hearing aids, prosthetics, and other assistive devices that can significantly improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. He highlighted that the government is pursuing a broader inclusion agenda, including expanding DEP services to the taluka level, strengthening implementation of the five percent job quota in the public sector, and encouraging its adoption in the private sector. The chief minister also underlined initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive education, teacher capacity-building in collaboration with international partners, and enhanced coordination for autism rehabilitation centres at both federal and provincial levels. He appreciated the role of NGOs and partner organisations, noting that their grassroots outreach ensures that support reaches those who need it most. He emphasised that transparency, accountability, and effective implementation remain central to the success of the initiative, while also commending DEP for advancing disability inclusion policies across Sindh. Highlighting the importance of evidence-based policymaking, Murad Shah announced plans for a comprehensive disability census to ensure accurate data for improved planning and service delivery.—APP

Bugti vows to ensure principles of transparency in province

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Thursday chaired a meeting of provincial cabinet at the Chief Minister Secretariat in which several important decisions related to the development of the province, good governance and public welfare were approved. Addressing the provincial cabinet meeting, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the government is committed to ensuring the principles of transparency, merit and good governance at all levels in the province. He said that climate change, food security, employment opportunities and institutional reforms are among the top priorities of the government. The Chief Minister reiterated the commitment that through the use of modern technology, effective policy making and integrated strategy, Balochistan would be put on the path of development and better facilities would be provided to the people. He also appreciated the performance of Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan in implementing reform measures and good governance goals and expressed the expectation that he would continue to play his role for the betterment of the province with the same passion and professional skills in the future. Informing the details of the cabinet meeting, Assistant to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for Political

and Media Affairs Shahid Rind said that the meeting approved a comprehensive policy related to the effective use of the Balochistan Climate Change Fund. He said that Balochistan is the first province in the country to establish a Climate Change Fund, although the province's share in environmental pollution is negligible. Balochistan is at the top of the areas most affected by climate change, floods and natural disasters. Under this policy, a coordinated and effective strategy will be adopted to deal with climate risks. He said that the provincial cabinet also approved the province's first Advertisement Policy 2026, under this policy, the elimination of dummy newspapers, encouragement of authentic and active media institutions and Social media would be included under regular procedures. It was clarified that this policy will not affect the interests of any genuine media house or journalist, but will promote transparency and merit, he said. He highlighted that the meeting also approved the Balochistan Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Bill, under which sustainable development, resource conservation and promotion of modern methods in the fishing sector would be ensured, while it was decided to merge the Balochistan Crystal Development Authority and Panni Fish Harbor into the Fisheries Department

to improve institutional coordination and efficiency. He said that the cabinet, in an important decision, approved the recruitment process for posts from Grade 4 to Grade 16 through artificial intelligence, this measure would be implemented after June of the next financial year. Along with this, all departments have been directed to dispose of pending recruitment cases as soon as possible so that employment opportunities can be provided in a timely manner. These steps are being taken to ensure transparency, merit and use of modern technology in recruitment, he noted. He said that in an important decision regarding wheat, the cabinet agreed to the federal government's policy under which wheat would be purchased from the private sector for strategic reserves. "If private investors do not come forward at the local level, the federal government will be requested to purchase one hundred thousand metric tons of wheat to ensure food security in the province", he said and added the meeting also approved providing Rs 3 billion as seed money and Rs 1 billion as arrears for the Balochistan Public Endowment Fund. He said that through this fund, welfare projects in education, health and other social sectors would be further strengthened.—DNA


Gov't to address issues faced by AJK newspapers: Muqam




ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Ameer Muqam on Thursday said the government would take practical steps to address the financial and administrative challenges faced by newspapers in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). He was speaking during a meeting with a delegation of the All Kashmir Newspapers Society (AKNS), which called on him to discuss issues confronting the newspaper industry in the region. The delegation, led by AKNS Secretary General Zulfiqar Hussain Butt, included senior journalists Naseer Anwar, Sardar Javed Iqbal, Sarfraz Mir and Hamraz Chaudhry. They highlighted key concerns, including limited resources, cuts in advertisement quotas and non-payment of outstanding dues, saying these challenges were threatening the sustainability of newspapers in AJK. Minister Muqam said newspapers in AJK were playing an important role in highlighting the Kashmir issue at the international level and assured the delegation that their concerns would be addressed. The meeting also discussed measures to strengthen cooperation between the government and the newspaper industry.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

MNA Isphanyar Bhandara hosts annual minority lunch

The annual lunch has become a regular feature aimed at fostering dialogue, strengthening mutual respect, and celebrating Pakistan's religious diversity. Participants appreciated the initiative as a meaningful platform for engagement among different faith communities and policymakers



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Isphanyar Bhandara, Member of the National Assembly from the Pakistan Muslim League (N), hosted his annual minority lunch at his residence in Rawalpindi, bringing together representatives from a wide spectrum of religious communities in a show of unity and inter-faith harmony. The gathering was attended by members of the Sikh, Parsi, Baha'i, Kalasha, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian

communities, along with Muslims, as well as prominent religious figures and public personalities. Among the notable attendees were former Bishop Samuel Azariah, Dr. Majid Abel, Administrative Senior Pastor of the Naulakha Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, and Guru Sukhdev, a leading figure among the Nath Panthi Yogis. The event also saw the participation of sitting and former parliamentarians, including Naveed Amir Jeeva, Neelum Kumari, Asiya Nasir, Zammurd Khan, and Kamran Michael. Former members of provincial

assemblies, including Gursaran Lal, Joel Amir Sahotra, and Wilson Wazir, were also in attendance. Speaking on the occasion, Isphanyar Bhandara expressed gratitude to the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League (N) for its continued commitment to an inclusive and representative Pakistan. He said such efforts reflect the ideals of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who envisioned a Pakistan where all citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities regardless of faith. He also acknowledged the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif, highlighting Pakistan's emer-

gence as a credible interlocutor for peace and regional cooperation under his stewardship. He further appreciated the role of Field Marshal Asim Munir in reinforcing these efforts and contributing to the country's growing diplomatic stature. The annual lunch has become a regular feature aimed at fostering dialogue, strengthening mutual respect, and celebrating Pakistan's religious diversity. Participants appreciated the initiative as a meaningful platform for engagement among different faith communities and policymakers.

Meeting to boost SME exports, global outreach

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting with SME clusters and Trade and Investment Officers (TIOs) from key countries to explore avenues for enhancing exports and expanding the global footprint of Pakistan's small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The meeting was attended by TIOs from China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, and Hong Kong, along with Additional Secretary Industries and Production Asad Islam Mahni, CEO SMEDA Ms. Nadia J. Seth, and representatives of SME clusters from across the country, said a news release. Addressing the participants, the special assistant emphasized that prime minister's vision is to provide Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with opportunities to access international markets and boost exports. He highlighted that SMEDA is actively working towards the growth and eco-

nomical sustainability of MSMEs in Pakistan. "Pakistan's SMEs possess immense potential to export 'Made in Pakistan' products globally. Sectors such as organic salt, honey, and plastic products can significantly expand their exports if facilitated effectively by Trade and Investment Officers", he noted. Haroon said that household care and floor cleaner products manufactured by Pakistani SMEs have strong potential to compete at the international level. He underscored the critical role of TIOs in creating B2B opportunities and linking Pakistani SMEs with global markets. He stressed that organizing international expos and symposiums would provide SMEs with greater access to foreign markets and enable them to compete globally. Highlighting a success story, the SAPM mentioned that honey from Karak is already being exported to Malaysia, reflecting the strong potential of Pakistani SMEs. He directed SMEDA and TIOs to actively create opportunities and facilitate SMEs in

accessing international markets. He suggested that the Australian TIO, in coordination with SMEDA, could connect Pakistan's auto parts and honey sectors with Australian importers. He also pointed out that the SME sector can tap into the electric vehicle parts manufacturing market through joint ventures, particularly with the support of Chinese TIOs. Haroon emphasized that the prime minister has placed special focus on uplifting SMEs in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Balochistan by providing them with international export opportunities. He further directed SMEDA to provide training to SMEs in branding, product development, and export techniques to enhance their competitiveness in global markets. The meeting concluded with a commitment to strengthen collaboration between SMEDA, TIOs, and SME stakeholders to unlock Pakistan's export potential and drive sustainable economic growth.—APP

Big industry grows by 5.89% during Jul-Feb 2026

ISLAMABAD: The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed an increase of 5.89 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the corresponding months of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Thursday. The Quantum Index Numbers of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (QIM) for July-February (2025-26) was recorded at 122.77 points as compared to 115.94 points during July-February 2024-25. On year-on-year basis, the industry grew by 6.45 percent in February 2026 as compared to February 2025 whereas on month-on-month basis, it decreased by 8.97 percent when compared to January 2026. The provisional quantum indices of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for February, 2026 with base year 2015-16 have been developed on the basis of latest data supplied by the source agencies. The main contributors towards overall growth of 5.89% are Food (0.98), Tobacco (0.13), Textile (0.27) Garments (1.18), Petroleum Products (0.85), Chemicals (-0.09), Pharmaceuticals (-0.30), Cement (0.61), Iron & Steel Products (-0.24), Electrical Equipment (0.25), Machinery and Equipment (-0.06), Automobiles (1.50), Other transport Equipment (0.23), and Furniture (0.20). The production in July-February 2025-26 has posted growth in Food, Beverages, Tobacco, Textile, wearing apparel, Paper & Board, Coke & Petroleum Products, Rubber Products, Non Metallic Mineral Products, Fabricated Metal, Computer, electronics and Optical Products, Electrical Equipment, Automobiles and Other Transport Equipment while it indicated decline in Leather Products, Paper & Board, Chemical Products, Pharmaceuticals, Iron & Steel Products and Machinery and Equipments.—APP

Khurram reports massive \$1.07b, Current Account Surplus

"Pakistan's external sector has entered a phase of strengthening and consolidation," Schehzad concluded. "This sustained performance reflects the government's commitment to prudent economic management and resilience amid global uncertainties

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad, announced that Pakistan has achieved a current account surplus of USD 1.07 billion in March 2026, marking a major milestone for the national economy. This represents the third consecutive monthly surplus of the year, underscoring a significant improvement in the country's external sector and balance of payments. Schehzad, sharing the development via his official X (formerly Twitter) account, hailed the achievement as a "triumph for the national economy." The March 2026 surplus of USD 1.07 billion ranks as the second-highest monthly surplus in Pakistan's history, following the record USD 1.2 billion surplus of March 2025. According to the adviser, the momentum has been steadily building since the start of the year with a USD 68

million surplus in January, USD 231 million in February, and now USD 1.07 billion in March. This surge has fully offset the cumulative deficit from the first eight months of the fiscal year, turning the FY26 (Jul-Mar) balance from a USD 700 million deficit to an USD 8 million surplus. Schehzad emphasized that strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals have enabled Pakistan to weather global energy price pressures and regional geopolitical uncertainties. "Pakistan's external sector is firming up, with sustained surpluses signaling improving balance of payments stability," he said. "The country is now better positioned to absorb future global shocks." Economic experts have dubbed this achievement the "March Miracle", crediting it to several key drivers that surging remittances, particularly

seasonal inflows from the Pakistani diaspora linked to Ramadan and Eid celebrations. Record IT exports, approaching USD 3 billion for the fiscal year and continued import discipline, with a focus on growth-driven rather than consumption-led spending. The Finance Ministry expressed cautious optimism, noting that while external debt challenges remain, the sustained current account surpluses mark a significant step toward long-term economic stability and investor confidence. "Pakistan's external sector has entered a phase of strengthening and consolidation," Schehzad concluded. "This sustained performance reflects the government's commitment to prudent economic management and resilience amid global uncertainties.—APP

Rain, thunderstorms likely in Murree, Galiyat

RAWALPINDI: The Met Office has forecast unstable weather conditions in Murree, Galiyat and adjoining areas over the next few days, with rain, strong winds and thunderstorms expected from April 16 to 19. According to the latest advisory, intermittent rain coupled with gusty winds and thunderstorm activity is likely, while hailstorms may also occur at isolated places. The probability of rain and thunderstorms is higher on April 17 (Friday) with around 70 percent chances, along with possible hailstorms in some areas. On April 18 (Saturday), moderate to heavy rainfall with hailstorms is expected with a 65 percent probability, while similar weather conditions with rain and gusty winds are likely to persist on April 19 (Sunday). The Met Office said the weather is expected to remain partly cloudy and dry from April 20 to 23, whereas chances of rain and thunderstorms have again been forecast for April 24 with 30 per cent probability. Meanwhile, Rescue 1122 Murree has placed all emergency resources on high alert in view of the expected weather conditions. Officials said that staff and machinery have been fully prepared to respond to any emergency as per directions of the district administration. Citizens and tourists have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel during adverse weather and exercise caution in areas prone to landsliding. In case of any emergency, they should immediately contact Rescue 1122.—APP

Sherry expresses grief over school shooting in Türkiye

ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday expressed deep sorrow over the tragic school shooting in Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye, which claimed the lives of innocent children. In a statement, Sherry Rehman said she was deeply saddened by the loss of young lives in the horrific incident and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Referring to initial reports, she said the student allegedly brought a weapon to the school after hiding it at home, highlighting the urgent need for greater parental responsibility regarding children's mental development and monitoring of online and media content. She stressed that countries around the world must strengthen security arrangements and counselling systems in educational institutions to help prevent such tragedies. The senator also expressed sincere sympathy with the parents of the deceased children and prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured in the incident.—APP

ICT Police bust bike theft gang

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police continued its coordinated crackdown against criminal elements, arresting two members of an organized motorcycle theft gang and recovering 14 stolen motorcycles worth millions of rupees. An official told APP on Thursday that the operation was carried out by Industrial Area Police against a gang involved in multiple bike theft incidents. He said the arrested accused confessed to their involvement in several theft cases during initial interrogation. The official said the accused were identified as Irfan Sajid and Ali Murad, as confirmed by DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq. He said all legal formalities would be fulfilled to ensure exemplary punishment to the accused. DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq said indiscriminate action would continue against those depriving citizens of their valuable assets. He said large-scale operations were being conducted against organized and active gangs across the capital.—APP

Ayaz lauds Youth Parliament for elevating youth voices nationally

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday appreciated Youth Parliament of Pakistan for its commendable efforts in amplifying the voices of youth at both national and international levels. He also acknowledged the leadership of Chairman Abrar ul Haq and President Ubaid ur Rehman Qureshi for organizing an important engagement alongside the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2026, said a news release. The Speaker said that Members of the National Assembly, along with members of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF), would participate in this significant initiative. He said that their participation reflected a collective commitment to youth inclusion and national development. Highlighting the importance of the forum, the speaker said that the session underscores critical priorities, including resilience and collaborative action toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He said discussions at the forum would focus on inclusive governance approaches to the climate, water, peace nexus, strengthening youth and women's participation in policy processes, promoting community resilience and sustainable water management, and advancing multi-stakeholder partnerships for climate adaptation and peace building. Ayaz Sadiq encouraged the youth of Pakistan to actively engage, contribute their ideas, and play a leading role in shaping a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable future.—APP

Briefs

ANF recovers over 17 kg drugs in 3 operations

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting operations in different areas against drug traffickers conducted three raids and apprehended three suspects on recovery of 17.2 kgs drugs worth more than Rs 1.4 million. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, in an operation near Indus Highway, Kohat, 8 kgs hashish and 1 kg ice were recovered from a vehicle and an accused was rounded up. In another operation near Service Road, Charsadda, 7.2 kgs hashish was seized from the possession of an accused riding a motorcycle. In third operation conducted near Sher Shah Toll Plaza, Multan, 1.2 kg hashish was confiscated from the possession of an accused. Separate cases have been registered against the accused under the CNSA-1997.—APP

IRSA releases 68,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD :Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 68,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 94,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1467.82 feet which was 67.82 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 21,400 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1159.30 feet, which was 109.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 27,600 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 44,000, 45,500, 79,600, and 40,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 31,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 3,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Pakistan gaining global recognition

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary said on Thursday that Pakistan's journey on the global stage reflects resilience, transformation, and renewed trust. In a post on his X account, he said that for decades the country was often portrayed through a narrow lens, but that narrative is now shifting, with Pakistan being increasingly recognized and appreciated worldwide for its constructive role in promoting peace and dialogue. He added that from facilitating diplomacy to encouraging de-escalation, Pakistan is demonstrating that responsible engagement and balanced leadership can make a meaningful difference in a tense global environment.—APP

Three family members killed

WAH CANTT: Three members of the same family had been killed over longstanding enmity in Taxila, the police said on Thursday. The incident took place in Mohalla Mashriq Abadi, where a man allegedly attacked his relatives with a sharp-edged weapon, killing three people, they added. The police said that an investigation had been launched. A complainant, identified as Azizullah, told officers that the suspect, named as Najeebullah, killed his wife, son and sister. The victims were reported to be a 40-year-old woman, a 26-year-old man and a 23-year-old woman. They said said forensic teams collected evidence from the scene, while the bodies were moved to a nearby hospital for legal formalities.—APP

Envoy Dr. Oumer calls on Commerce Minister Jam

Ambassador Dr. Oumer underlined the critical need for enhanced connectivity between Ethiopia and Pakistan, noting that improved logistics are crucial to promote trade, investment and tourism ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), called on H.E. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Commerce, on Thursday at the Ministry of Commerce in Islamabad. During the meeting, both sides had a comprehensive discussion regarding various initiatives for enhancing bilateral cooperation across trade, investment, connectivity, tourism, and culture to further strengthen their ties. They also agreed on establishing a Joint Trade Committee in line with the bilateral trade agreement signed in 2023 between the two sides. Ambassador Dr. Oumer underlined the critical need for enhanced connectivity between Ethiopia and Pakistan, noting that improved logistics are crucial to promote trade, investment and tourism ties. He highlighted the vast investment potential of Ethiopia especially in the agriculture, manufacturing, ICT, and mining sectors, inviting Pakistani business community to explore the opportunities. The Federal Minister acknowledged the immense potential for growth across these multiple sectors, recalling his recent visit to Ethiopia during Pakistan's Single Country Exhibition that held in Addis Ababa in 2025. He assured the Ambassador of his full support and commitment to fostering a more integrated and prosperous economic partnership between the two countries.



Ayaz greets Pak Navy on Missile test

In his congratulatory message, the Speaker lauded the professionalism, hard work and dedication of Pakistan Navy officers and engineers, saying that this successful test is an important step towards further strengthening the country's defence.

ISLAMABAD :Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended heartfelt congratulations to the engineers and officers of the Pakistan Navy on the successful test of an anti-ship Ballistic Missile. In his congratulatory message, the Speaker lauded the professionalism, hard work and dedication of Pakistan Navy officers and engineers, saying that this successful test is an important step towards further strengthening the country's defence. He paid tribute to the Pakistan Navy for this outstanding performance. Ayaz Sadiq said that the successful test of the anti-ship ballistic missile is not only a reflection of Pakistan's enhanced defence capabilities but also an important milestone towards self-reliance in defence. He said the entire nation is proud of its armed forces for this achievement. The Speaker said that the professional competence, preparedness and commitment of the Pakistan Navy are highly commendable and that this test will significantly enhance the naval force's military capability. He said that the protection of Pakistan's maritime borders is of critical importance, and the Pakistan Navy plays a key role in this regard. Ayaz Sadiq said that this successful missile test reflects efforts towards maintaining peace in the region and preserving the balance of power. He reiterated that Pakistan's armed forces remain fully prepared and committed to making the country's defence unassailable. Ayaz Sadiq said the nation has full confidence in the capabilities and professional excellence of its brave armed forces, and their achievements are a matter of national pride.—DNA

Allottees pin hopes on new CDA chief to revive stalled sectors

ISLAMABAD: Allottees of the long-delayed sectors E-12 and I-12 on Thursday expressed cautious optimism following the appointment of the new chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), urging swift steps to end decades of stalled development and hand over possession of plots. Launched nearly three decades ago to cater to Islamabad's growing housing needs, both sectors have seen slow progress, with allottees repeatedly voicing concerns over the lack of basic infrastructure despite assurances from successive administrations. Ateeq Sheikh, president of the E-12 Allottees Welfare Association, welcomed the new appointment and called for a shift in approach. He said the allottees expected a proactive and result-oriented strategy, adding that development work in E-12 should be accelerated to ensure visible progress on ground. In sector I-12, allottees pointed to the absence of essential services. Tahir Mahmood said there were no visible electricity or Sui gas connections, while roads remained incomplete and the land uneven. He also noted that the limited development carried out risked being damaged during the annual cattle market set up for Eidul Azha. He alleged that while the CDA generated substantial revenue through auctioning the market, spending on development remained inadequate. Another allottee, Fahad Hameed, highlighted the broader housing shortage in the capital, saying rapid population growth had widened the gap between demand and supply. He said the timely development of sectors such as E-12 and I-12 could help ease pressure on the housing sector. Allottees urged the CDA chairman to prioritise underdeveloped sectors and ensure provision of basic amenities, including electricity, gas, water supply and road infrastructure, followed by early possession of plots. They said the new leadership now had an opportunity to translate long-standing promises into tangible progress.—DNA

Creating pathways to inclusion

Aziz Boolani, CEO, Serena Hotels, said, "At Serena Hotels, we believe true progress is achieved when opportunities are accessible to all

DNA

ISLAMABAD: South Asia's Leading Disability Inclusion Enterprise, ConnectHear in collaboration with Serena Hotels, successfully brings Access.Ability.Careers to Islamabad for the first time, expanding its mission to create inclusive employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) across Pakistan. Held on 15th April 2026 at Islamabad Serena Hotel, the event brings together 600+ Persons with Disabilities from Islamabad and surrounding areas, along with 15+ companies from the financial, telecommunications, and textile sectors. Supported by public and private institutions, including the Directorate General for Special Education, the event provided a platform for PWDs to connect with employers, explore career opportunities, and showcase their skills in a professional environment. This collaboration is part of Serena Hotels' wider Public Diplomacy efforts, through which the organisation supports initiatives that promote inclusion, empowerment, and constructive community engagement. Building on the success of previous editions, Access.Ability.Careers has already engaged 50+ corporates nationwide and facilitated 500+ job placements, creating meaningful pathways to employment for Persons with Disabilities. The event

connects a diverse group of candidates including experienced professionals, recent graduates, and first-time job seekers with organizations committed to inclusive hiring. Through employer booths, networking sessions, and direct engagement opportunities, participants are able to interact with recruiters, apply for roles, and build connections that lead to interviews and employment. Previous editions have demonstrated strong outcomes, with many participants securing interviews and job opportunities, highlighting the importance of creating consistent and accessible hiring platforms. Aziz Boolani, CEO, Serena Hotels, said, "At Serena Hotels, we believe true progress is achieved when opportunities are accessible to all. We are pleased to support Access.Ability.Careers in Islamabad and to partner in creating a platform that connects talented Differently abled individuals with meaningful employment opportunities. Initiatives such as these are essential in building a more inclusive, empowered, and equitable future". The event commenced with a heartfelt welcome address by Arhum Ishtiaq and Azima Dhanjee, co-founders of ConnectHear. Highlighting the importance of inclusive workplaces, the founders stated, "Nine years ago, we started ConnectHear with a goal: to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to feel empowered and enhance their qual-

ity of life. Supported by the public and private sector and powered by technology, we've extended our reach and deepened our impact, especially through our Access.Ability. initiatives. Like today, together, we've enabled over 5000+ talented individuals with disabilities to showcase their skills to some of the top companies across the country. This now needs to happen more often for sustainable and scalable results. We're thankful for the support from all our partners. The success we've seen today drives us to make these initiatives more regular, shaping a more inclusive professional world." A student with hearing impairment from the Directorate General for Special Education shared: "Opportunities like this give us confidence that we can work, support ourselves, and be a respected and independent part of society. Employment is not just about earning – it is about dignity." Since its inception in 2017, ConnectHear has focused on accessible information and communication for Persons with Disabilities through technology. The company launched the ConnectHear Application, which is the first-ever virtual sign language interpretation solution in Pakistan that helps Deaf individuals to have access to remote and instant sign language interpreters on their smartphones and help businesses provide accessible communication to Deaf customers and employees.

German Ambassador calls on Fahad Haroon

ISLAMABAD: Ina Lepel, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Pakistan, called on Fahad Haroon, Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, at his office Thursday. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the evolving global landscape of digital platforms, with particular focus on emerging opportunities and challenges in the digital media domain. Discussions included countering fake news and disinformation, promoting online safety, and addressing the misuse of digital platforms for illegal activities, as well as other matters of mutual interest.—APP

China-Pakistan vocational training on intelligent manufacturing launched

ISLAMABAD: China and Pakistan launched a vocational training programme in industrial automation on Tuesday, aimed at equipping Pakistani youth with technical and Chinese language skills. The initiative, organised by China's Jilin Communications Polytechnic and TANG International Education Group, involves Pakistan's National Logistics Cell and energy firms Energyco PK and Byco Petroleum. According to Gwadar Pro, during the session, keynote speakers focused on intelligent manufacturing and the integration of technical education with Chinese language learning. The project forms part of a wider bilateral framework to develop skills in emerging technologies and strengthen links between Chinese enterprises and Pakistani professionals.—APP

RCCI, EPA discuss environmental compliance

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) to discuss promotion of sustainable practices and environmental compliance in the pharmaceutical sector. The visit focused on encouraging eco-friendly production methods and ensuring adherence to environmental regulations within the industry. RCCI President Usman Shaukat highlighted the importance of sustainable growth, stressing the need for environmentally responsible manufacturing practices and compliance with regulatory frameworks.—APP

DHPP distributes health kits to promote hygiene in Dasu schools

The project has a total planned capacity of 4,320 megawatts (MW). Stage I, currently under construction, is expected to generate 2,160 MW and produce approximately 12,222 gigawatt-hours (GWh) annually

ISLAMABAD: Officials from the Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) distributed health and hygiene kits to hundreds of students at two girls' primary schools on Wednesday, part of a broader community wellness initiative managed by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). According to a Gwadar Pro's report, a total of 307 students at Government Girls Primary School DC Colony and 123 students at Government Girls Primary School Chiraghbad received the kits. The program aims to improve personal hygiene standards and promote healthy habits among youth in the Upper Kohistan region. Local educators welcomed the distribution, citing its potential to improve student health and confidence. The initiative is part of a larger campaign launched on March 15 that has already reached the Seo area, where 433 kits were distributed earlier this month. DHPP officials said they plan to extend the program to 11 government high schools across Upper Kohistan to bolster preventive healthcare awareness among both students and teachers. The Dasu Hydropower Project, a major run-of-river scheme on the Indus River, is being developed by the China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC). The project has a total planned capacity of 4,320 megawatts (MW). Stage I, currently under construction, is expected to generate 2,160 MW and produce approximately 12,222 gigawatt-hours (GWh) annually.—APP

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Hezbollah will never choose Lebanon over Iran

MOHAMED CHEBARO

LEBANON this week remembered the outbreak of its civil war 51 years ago. If anything, April 13, 2026, ironically looked no different to the days of civil tension in the prelude to the breakdown of law and order among the Lebanese in 1975, between those who wanted to peel Lebanon away from regional discord and foreign agendas and those who wanted to see the country and its people used as cannon fodder. Half a century has passed but the similarities are striking. Lebanon is again facing its demons and the curse of division, as the majority of its people want Hezbollah disarmed, while those who support the militia insist on fighting Israel in the name of protecting Gaza and, since Feb. 28, defending Iran. They want to help Tehran in its war of resistance against Israel and help protect Iran's revolutionary doctrine and regime, which is being battered by the US and Israel. It is feared the storm of civil strife is gathering again, as the government has taken the daring and historic step of negotiating directly with Israel. It seeks to end the conflict through a peace deal that preserves the country's unity and territorial integrity, preventing Israel creating a security buffer zone in the south. But the Lebanese who support Hezbollah oppose these talks. Lebanon's fragile democracy has been struggling for more than three decades to find the means to disarm Hezbollah – a militia that has outgrown the state and its institutions with direct help from Iran and formerly from Syria. It is not an exaggeration to say that the country and its people often find themselves at the mercy of a game involving bigger powers. For Hezbollah, an Iranian-created, funded, armed and led militia, choosing Lebanon over Iran is a tall order. The party and its supporters remain true to its original manifesto, which established the group's presence in the country in the early 1980s and calls for the spread of Iran's religious doctrine and revolution in the Arab and Muslim worlds, even if the group has repeatedly denied it. Lebanon's fragile democracy has been struggling for more than three decades to find the means to disarm Hezbollah. The French president's special envoy to Lebanon, Jean-Yves Le Drian, a veteran statesman and diplomat, ought to know better than to say – as he did in an interview with Arab News last week – "Hezbollah must choose: either Lebanon or Iran. There is no alternative." He is not the first and will not be the last to do so. But Hezbollah cannot change, as leopards never change their spots. Hezbollah's mission, like its various leaders have often reminded those wanting to disarm them, is that the militia is part of the Wilayat Al-Faqih regime. Since 1969, Lebanon has been a secondary theater in a regional confrontation that is beyond its control. Previously, it was used by the Arabs as a staging point for Palestinian resistance against



Israel. And, under the tutelage of the Assad regime in Syria, it was for years a pawn in Damascus' protracted confrontation with Israel and the West. Now, it is an extension of Iran's revolution and a bridgehead for its confrontation with Arab countries and with Israel. Le Drian explained in his interview that the continued fighting risks trapping the country in an external confrontation that could jeopardize fundamental aspects of the Lebanese state. "What is at stake today is Lebanon's integrity and sovereignty," he said. And that is the story of modern Lebanon: always in the eye of the storm in a turbulent Middle East, often by choice by the choice of one segment of its society or another. Denouncing the Israeli attacks against Hezbollah, Le Drian clearly identified the role of the Iran-allied militia in stoking the crisis. He also agreed that the "disproportionate strikes" by Israel create a potential paradox, warning that rather than weakening Hezbollah, they might actually strengthen the group's influence. Like Le Drian, many in Lebanon believe that, despite the intensity of the current hostilities, the country today has a unique opportunity to forge a path to peace. They hope that the historic direct talks with Israeli authorities could bear fruit, as the many years of conflict have failed to bring peace to Israel or stability and prosperity to the region, including Lebanon. The challenge is how to encourage the splintered Lebanese loyalties to favor the welfare of their country. The challenge is how to encourage the splintered Lebanese loyalties to favor the welfare of their country and its current government, which is, for once, free from Syrian, Iranian or any other foreign patronage. People have for years been calling on the Lebanese who support Hezbollah to choose the state over the militia and Lebanon over Iran, but to no avail. Though weakened by Israel's 60-day war on it in 2024, the militia has, with the help of Iran, rearmed and reorganized after the decapitation of its leadership. The recent fighting in the south demonstrates that Hezbollah is still a potent force, despite suffering the loss of its supply lines through Iraq and Syria, which could undermine its ability to put up a long and protracted fight. The Israeli ground incursion and creation of a security buffer zone could cost Lebanon 10 percent or more of its territory. But above all, it will cause the community that supports Hezbollah to harden its stance and call for further resistance, even if that means driving the country's civil peace to the brink. The costs imposed by Hezbollah's war are too large for this small country and its sovereign government to stomach. Time and again, history has demonstrated that Hezbollah cannot metamorphose into a Lebanese political force only. It is far too integrated into Iran's regional extensions, religious doctrine and proxy designs. Those who call on the Lebanese militia group to choose Lebanon over Iran are in for a long wait. And those who ask the Lebanese government to disarm the militia by force clearly fail to grasp the precarious fabric of communities in the country and the constant threat a decision like this would have on its unity. It is still possible the US-Israeli strikes will persuade Tehran to abandon its perpetual revolution. It is also possible Lebanon and Israel could strike a deal that can be called "peace." Only then can Hezbollah's raison d'être maybe cease to exist and the nation can broker a deal to dismantle the militant group for good.

Pakistan and the Trillion-Dollar Peace Dividend

Qamar Bashir



The facts matter. The first 21-hour round of talks in Islamabad ended without a deal, with Vice President JD Vance saying Iran had not accepted core U.S. demands, especially on the nuclear issue. Yet Pakistan did not walk away after that setback. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif publicly said Pakistan's "full effort" remained focused on ending the conflict, while Field Marshal Asim Munir traveled to Tehran in an attempt to narrow differences before the ceasefire expires. That is the real significance of Pakistan's role: not that it solved the war in one stroke

At a moment when the world stood dangerously close to a wider regional inferno, Pakistan has emerged not merely as a bystander, but as one of the few states able to talk to all sides and keep diplomacy alive. As of April 15, 2026, there is still no final U.S.-Iran agreement, and no official ceasefire extension has been publicly confirmed. But Washington says fresh talks may happen in Pakistan within days, President Trump is signaling optimism, Pakistan's military chief has been in Tehran, and regional diplomacy is now visibly revolving around Pakistani mediation. That alone marks a dramatic shift in Pakistan's standing in the current geopolitical crisis.

The facts matter. The first 21-hour round of talks in Islamabad ended without a deal, with Vice President JD Vance saying Iran had not accepted core U.S. demands, especially on the nuclear issue. Yet Pakistan did not walk away after that setback. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif publicly said Pakistan's "full effort" remained focused on ending the conflict, while Field Marshal Asim Munir traveled to Tehran in an attempt to narrow differences before the ceasefire expires. That is the real significance of Pakistan's role: not that it solved the war in one stroke, but that it kept open the only serious diplomatic corridor after formal negotiations collapsed.

This matters because the war's costs are no longer theoretical. The conflict that began on February 28 has already killed more than 5,000 people across the region. The repair costs to damaged energy infrastructure alone may reach as high as \$58 billion. The Strait of Hormuz, through which about one-fifth of global oil and LNG normally passes, remains the central choke point in the conflict. Even after the April 8 ceasefire, traffic through Hormuz had at one stage fallen to less than 10% of normal, while ships and crews remained trapped and insurers, traders and governments braced for a prolonged shock. That is why Pakistan's diplomatic intervention should be understood not only in moral or political terms, but in financial ones. No government or international institution has yet issued an official dollar figure for what Pakistan has "saved." Still, scenario-based calculations grounded in World Bank, IMF and Reuters reporting suggest that if Pakistan's mediation helps convert the fragile ceasefire into a durable settlement, the avoided losses could plausibly run from the high

hundreds of billions into the low trillions. This is not propaganda; it is what the macroeconomic numbers imply.

Start with global growth. The IMF cut its 2026 global growth forecast to 3.1% because of the war and warned that, in a severe scenario, growth could fall to 2.0%. The World Bank separately warned that even in a best case the war could shave 0.3 to 0.4 percentage points off global growth, and as much as 1 point in a prolonged conflict. WTC data showing global travel and tourism alone contributed \$11.7 trillion in 2025, equal to 10.3% of global GDP, implying a world economy of roughly \$113.6 trillion. On that basis, preventing a 0.3-0.4 point hit means protecting roughly \$341 billion to \$454 billion of global output. Preventing a 1-point hit protects about \$1.14 trillion. Preventing the IMF's 1.1-point slide from 3.1% to 2.0% implies roughly \$1.25 trillion in avoided output loss.

And that is only the macro layer. Add the already-estimated \$58 billion energy repair bill, the IMF's warning that more than a dozen countries may need \$20 billion to \$50 billion in support, the World Bank's preparedness to mobilize \$80 billion to \$100 billion for war-hit economies, and the UNDP estimate that just \$6 billion in emergency support could keep 32 million people from falling into poverty due to the war-driven energy shock. Even before counting military fuel, munitions, deployment costs, higher insurance, rerouted shipping, lost industrial output and inflation spillovers, the visible tally of avoided or containable damage quickly rises into the hundreds of billions.

Markets themselves are already pricing the value of diplomacy. Gulf stock markets rising on renewed hopes of U.S.-Iran talks, while Wall Street pushed to record highs as investors bet the worst might be avoided. Brent crude, though still elevated, has pulled back from the panic zone above \$100 and hovered around \$95 on April 15 as traders responded to the possibility of renewed negotiations. Eleven finance ministers meeting around the IMF-World Bank spring meetings called for full implementation of the ceasefire, warning that even if the shooting stops, the economic aftershocks on inflation, growth and debt will linger. That is the clearest evidence that diplomacy is not a symbolic exercise; it is already functioning as a stabilizing economic asset. Pakistan's importance in this crisis is therefore

not accidental. It has managed to present itself as credible to Washington, acceptable to Tehran, relevant to Gulf capitals and increasingly necessary to wider regional diplomacy that now also involves Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. President Erdogan has openly referenced Pakistan's mediator role, while the White House has acknowledged Pakistan as the likely venue for the next round. In a fractured region where many actors are aligned too heavily with one bloc or another, Pakistan's value lies in being politically connected, militarily serious, diplomatically flexible and geographically impossible to ignore.

Still, the argument must remain grounded. Pakistan has not yet "saved the world" in any final sense, because the war is not formally over, the Hormuz issue is unresolved, Lebanon remains volatile, and the hardest questions – nuclear verification, sanctions, shipping access and war damages – are still on the table. The IAEA chief has warned that any real settlement will require detailed inspections, and Reuters says U.S. economic pressure on Iran is still intensifying even while diplomacy continues. So the credit Pakistan deserves today is not for a completed peace, but for preventing diplomatic collapse and preserving the one path that could still save the region from a second explosion.

If the second round succeeds, Pakistan's diplomatic dividend will be immense. It will not simply have hosted talks; it will have helped prevent a wider energy shock, a deeper inflation spiral, further destruction across Iran and the region, and perhaps a global recession. In scenario terms, that would place Pakistan's peace dividend somewhere between roughly \$341 billion and \$1.25 trillion in avoided world output loss, before adding infrastructure, humanitarian and fiscal savings. For a country long described as fragile, indebted and peripheral, that would be a stunning reversal. Pakistan may still be economically constrained, but in this crisis it has demonstrated something rarer than wealth: strategic usefulness. And in the modern world order, the country that can stop a war may matter more than the country that can afford one.

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

Beyond Bullets and Borders: Pakistan's Rise in the Cyber Domain

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



It has penetrated every field of human activity—from the most sophisticated military strategies to the subtle streams of human thought that shape societies and nations. The pace of this transformation has been so rapid that many of its achievements appear almost miraculous to those who witnessed the earlier, simpler age of technology. Modern

The march of information technology has reached a stage where it is performing tasks that a few decades ago belonged only to the realm of imagination. In the early days, the influence of digital technology was confined largely to computers placed on office desks and to mobile phones carried in the pockets of ordinary people. Today, however, this technological force has expanded far beyond those humble beginnings. It has penetrated every field of human activity—from the most sophisticated military strategies to the subtle streams of human thought that shape societies and nations. The pace of this transformation has been so rapid that many of its achievements appear almost miraculous to those who witnessed the earlier, simpler age of technology. Modern warfare itself has undergone a profound transformation under the influence of information technology. In the past, battles were decided by the number of soldiers, the strength of weapons, and the geographical advantages of the battlefield. Today, the unseen world of data, cyber capabilities, satellite intelligence, and digital coordination plays an equally decisive role. Nations that master the art of cyber strategy and technological integration often gain an advantage even before a single shot is fired. In May last year, the world witnessed an event that many observers considered beyond imagination. Pakistan demonstrated that a nation equipped with determination, professional discipline, and technological expertise can defend itself with remarkable effectiveness. The Pakistan Army, combining its traditional military capability with modern information technology, responded to hostile designs with precision and resolve. The episode became a striking example of how digital capabilities can strengthen national defense and elevate a country's strategic standing. International observers and analysts noted that Pakistan's response was not limited to conventional military readiness. The role of cyber specialists and technology experts proved crucial. Skilled Pakistani professionals operating in the cyber domain demonstrated remarkable competence, surprising many who had underestimated the country's technological potential. Their work showed that the modern battlefield is not confined to land, sea, or air; it also exists within networks, codes, and digital infrastructures where silent battles determine the outcome of visible conflicts. As a result of these developments, Pakistan's global image experienced a noticeable shift. The country began to be viewed not merely as a state navi-

gating complex regional challenges, but also as a nation capable of harnessing modern technology for strategic purposes. It reminded the world that intellectual capital and technological skill are as important as physical strength in shaping the destiny of nations. Yet military success alone cannot be the final objective of technological advancement. The true power of information technology lies in its ability to transform everyday life, strengthen institutions, and empower citizens. Pakistan now stands at a moment where the lessons learned from the technological dimension of national defense can be applied to broader spheres of national development. One of the most urgent areas demanding attention is cyber security. As societies become increasingly dependent on digital communication and online services, vulnerabilities also multiply. Mobile phones, which once symbolized convenience and connectivity, have in many cases become targets for cyber intrusion. Personal data is stolen, accounts are compromised, and unsuspecting citizens fall victim to sophisticated digital fraud. Mobile banking and online financial services, while offering convenience, have also opened new avenues for criminal activity. Fraudulent transactions, identity theft, and financial manipulation have emerged as serious concerns that cannot be ignored. Protecting digital assets therefore becomes a matter of national importance. Cyber security must not remain a specialized subject known only to a small group of experts. It should evolve into a comprehensive national priority involving institutions, educational systems, and public awareness. Governments across the world are investing heavily in cyber defense mechanisms, recognizing that economic stability, national security, and public confidence are closely linked with digital safety. Pakistan possesses a valuable resource in this regard—its talented youth. Across the country there are thousands of bright minds capable of mastering complex technological skills if given proper guidance and opportunity. Among them are many individuals who live with physical disabilities or other challenges, yet possess extraordinary intellectual potential and an unshakable desire to contribute to society. These individuals often remain overlooked despite their abilities. Information technology offers them a path toward dignity and meaningful participation. Unlike many traditional professions that require physical mobility, cyber security and digital work depend primarily on intellectual capacity and technical training. By providing specialized education and training in

cyber security, programming, and digital protection systems, Pakistan can transform these individuals into valuable contributors to national progress. Their success would not only strengthen the country's cyber defenses but also create inspiring examples of resilience and determination. For this vision to become reality, the public sector must assume a proactive role. Educational institutions, training centers, and government programs should collaborate to establish structured learning opportunities in information technology and cyber security. Colleges and universities must introduce cyber security as a formal academic subject, ensuring that students acquire both theoretical understanding and practical skills. In doing so, the country would gradually build a generation equipped to safeguard its digital future. Another group deserving special attention consists of the soldiers and officers who have sacrificed their physical well-being while defending the nation. Many of these brave individuals carry injuries that limit their participation in conventional duties, yet their dedication to the country remains undiminished. Providing them with education and training in cyber security would not only utilize their disciplined mindset and strategic thinking but would also restore a renewed sense of purpose to their lives. Their transition into the cyber domain would symbolize a powerful continuity of service—defending the nation not with rifles on the battlefield but with knowledge and vigilance in the digital arena. The story of information technology is ultimately the story of human adaptability. Each generation faces new challenges and discovers new tools with which to overcome them. Pakistan's recent experience has demonstrated that technological competence can strengthen national confidence and international respect. The next step is to ensure that this competence spreads across the entire fabric of society. If the nation succeeds in nurturing its technological talent, protecting its digital infrastructure, and empowering all segments of society—including the physically challenged and the wounded defenders of the homeland—it will transform information technology from a mere instrument into a pillar of national strength. In the silent yet decisive arena of cyberspace, the future security and prosperity of nations will increasingly be determined, and Pakistan has every reason to claim its rightful place in that evolving world.

Briefs

Pak indebted to Qatar for full support

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Minister of Foreign Affairs; His Excellency Mr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Khulaifi, Chief of the Amiri Diwan; and a number of senior officials. On the Pakistani side, it was attended by His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; His Excellency Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Minister of Information; His Excellency Ambassador Syed Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Minister of State; and other senior officials. His Highness the Amir and the Prime Minister of Pakistan also held a one on one meeting, during which they exchanged views on current developments of mutual interest and emphasized the importance of continued coordination and consultation between the two countries, particularly in light of ongoing events and their implications for regional security and stability. Following the meeting, His Highness the Amir hosted a luncheon in honor of the Prime Minister and the accompanying delegation.

Pakistan urges against...

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Starmer, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, held telephone conversations with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and appreciated Pakistan's role in promoting regional stability. Reiterating Pakistan's commitment, Andrabi said the country would continue facilitating dialogue to advance peace and cooperation. He also condemned Israeli forces' storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque and aggression against Lebanon, calling such actions violations of international law and detrimental to regional stability. On multi-lateral engagement, he said Pakistan participated in the 45th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO-RATS), where member states discussed evolving security challenges and emphasized enhanced counterterrorism cooperation. Pakistan, he added, will host the next SCO-RATS meeting later this year. He also noted that senior officials from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt met in Islamabad to review cooperation under their four-country consultative framework and prepare recommendations for an upcoming foreign ministers' meeting in Türkiye. Responding to media queries, Andrabi expressed concern over reports of the promotion of Indian Army officer Prasad Shrikant Purohit, previously linked to the Samjhauta Express attack case. He said the move raised serious questions about India's record on accountability and alleged state-sponsored terrorism, reiterating Pakistan's demand that those responsible for the attack be brought to justice.

RAW agent...

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"This time, the AJK police worked with sensitive institutions to take pre-emptive action and exposed this whole network," Malik said, adding that the enemy forces had "trapped" innocent young people while causing damage to life and property. According to the police, the method of blackmail involves the use of a fake account on social media to lure in targets, followed by the installation of malicious applications to record chats, intimate videos and pictures which are then used for blackmail purposes. While the tasks start out at a small scale, they build up to more sensitive operations culminating in information gathering on sensitive military sites as well as civilian institutions that may be targeted, the IGP added. He commended all police personnel and forces and paid tribute to them, saying that the police would go to "any length" for "this holy land" and would end the "enemy's impure intentions".

Iran participating in World Cup, confirms Fifa president

"Iran is coming for sure... we hope by then situation will be peaceful," says Infantino

DNA

TEHRAN: Fifa president Gianni Infantino said that Iran will "for sure" participate in the 2026 World Cup despite the Middle East war. "Iran is coming for sure. We hope that by then the situation will be a peaceful situation, that would definitely help," Infantino told an economic conference organised by broadcaster CNBC. "But Iran has to come, they represent their people, they have qualified, the players want to play," he said of the team's upcoming matches scheduled in the United States in June. Infantino had made similar comments in March, when he attended an Iran-Costa Rica friendly in Antalya, Türkiye, even though US President Donald Trump had previously suggested that Iranian players might not be "safe" in the United States. Iran is scheduled to play its three Group G matches in the United States – two in Los Angeles, one in Seattle – with their base for the tournament in Tucson, Arizona. Iran's participation in the global tournament being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico had been thrown into doubt by the conflict launched by the United States and Israel on February 28. Iran raised the prospect of a "boycott" of the



competition before asking Fifa to move its matches from the United States to Mexico, a request the world governing body rejected. After several weeks of air strikes on Iran and Iranian reprisals against Israel and other countries in the region, a fragile

truce came into effect on April 8. But Tehran has sealed off the strategic Strait of Hormuz and since Monday Washington has imposed a blockade on ships coming from or heading to Iranian ports. "Sports should be outside of politics," In-

fantino said on Wednesday. "If there's nobody else that believes in building bridges and keeping them intact and together, we are doing the job," he said. The World Cup, the first to feature 48 teams, starts on June 11.

Southwestern Japan's Kumamoto marks decade since deadly quakes

The twin quakes, both measuring the highest reading of 7 on Japan's seismic intensity scale, inflicted serious damage to infrastructure as well, with Aso Ohashi Bridge in the village of Minamiaso collapsing and a JR Kyushu railway line severed

KUMAMOTO: The southwestern Japanese prefecture of Kumamoto on Thursday marked the 10th anniversary of a deadly earthquake, the more intensive of a pair of back-to-back quakes that hit the region and claimed the lives of over 270 people. Families and others observed a moment of silence in remembrance of the deceased at 1:25 a.m., the time when a magnitude 7.3 quake struck a decade ago following a M6.5 temblor two days prior. A commemoration ceremony aimed at passing on lessons learned from the disaster to next generation and striving for the recovery of local communities was held in the city of Kumamoto, hosted jointly for the first time by the prefectural government and all the prefecture's local municipalities. "We must never forget the

precious lives lost and the many sacrifices made," Kumamoto Gov. Takashi Kimura said at the ceremony. "We shall pass these memories on to the next generation, ensuring that they never fade." Meanwhile, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara pledged at the ceremony efforts to turn the disaster-prone Japan into "the world's most disaster-resilient country" by leveraging the experiences and lessons learned from past disasters. A total of 278 deaths have been attributed to the quakes in Kumamoto and Oita prefectures, with 223 of them – about 80 percent of the total – attributed to indirect causes such as illness and stress stemming from disrupted lives. More than 43,000 buildings were damaged, and at the peak of the crisis, around 196,000 people were forced

to evacuate. The disaster also shed light on issues like sleeping in cars during prolonged evacuation and its impact on health. The twin quakes, both measuring the highest reading of 7 on Japan's seismic intensity scale, inflicted serious damage to infrastructure as well, with Aso Ohashi Bridge in the village of Minamiaso collapsing and a JR Kyushu railway line severed. Shinobu Yamato, 58, visited a site near the bridge where her 22-year-old son Hikaru was killed in a landslide. "It fills me with such agony and regret to think that he might have made it without passing through here had the timing been slightly different," she said in tears. Kumamoto Castle, a popular tourist destination, sustained significant damage including to its famous stone walls.

Baku hosts presentation of book "Iraivan: Echoes of History and Lost Heritage"

BAKU: The presentation of the book "Iraivan: Echoes of History and Lost Heritage" by Doctor of Philology, Professor Farida Safiyeva, published in Azerbaijani, Russian, English and French with the support of Leyla Aliyeva, was held at the Magsud Ibrahimbekov Creativity Center. Leyla Aliyeva and Alena Aliyeva attended the presentation ceremony. Prior to the event, a minute of silence was observed in memory of Azerbaijan's prominent ophthalmologist, scientist, academician and public figure Zariifa Aliyeva. Then, Anna Ibrahimbeкова, Director of the Magsud Ibrahimbekov Creativity Center, highlighted the importance of the book, expressing her satisfaction with its presentation in this particular venue. Rufat Mahmud, Chairman of the Board of the "Icherisheher" State Historical-Architectural Reserve Administration, said that Icherisheher is not only important tourism site, but also serves as an art, creative and intellectual center. Speaking at the event, Head of the Western Azerbaijan History Department of the Abbasgulu Agha Bakikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology of ANAS, editor of the book Jabi Bahramov mentioned that the project is of great importance from both a historical and legal perspective, underlining that Iraivan has an ancient history and that the origin of toponyms in the region dates back to very ancient times. Aygun Aliyeva, Executive Director of the Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations, stressed the importance of preparing such publications and presenting them to the public. Emphasizing that she hails from Iraivan, the author of the book, Farida Safiyeva, described this book as not just a scientific activity for her, but also as a moral responsibility and duty. – APP

Webinar held in Brussels

BRUSSELS: The Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels, in collaboration with COLEAD, organized a webinar, wherein the experts apprised the participants of current EU agri-food safety regulations and offered strategies to ensure compliance for Pakistani exporters. Titled "EU Agri-Food Safety Regulations: Key Updates & Compliance Strategies for Pakistani Exporters," the session was held under INTPA's Agrinfo Initiative to disseminate information on the EU's regulations and policies. Building on the shared vision to launch collaborative initiatives as agreed last year in a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi and General Delegate of COLEAD Jeremy Knops, renowned experts from COLEAD, together with the Trade and Investment Attache of the embassy, briefed the participants about important information on current EU agri-food safety regulations. The webinar garnered a highly positive response, attracting over 100 participants. This strong turnout reflects the keen interest and commitment within Pakistan's agri-export community to enhance their presence and competitiveness in the EU market. The embassy brought this important initiative directly to Pakistani exporters, industry stakeholders, and government representatives to improve awareness and capacity. The AGRINFO Programme supports Pakistani stakeholders in meeting international standards and accessing new opportunities. – APP

Peshawar Zalmi outclass Quetta Gladiators

Babar Azam's unbeaten fifty, disciplined bowling display power Zalmi to 8-wicket win over Gladiators

KARACHI: A disciplined bowling display combined with captain Babar Azam's unbeaten eight-century powered Peshawar Zalmi to a convincing eight-wicket victory over Quetta Gladiators in the 23rd Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 match at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Wednesday. The victory marked Zalmi's sixth in seven matches and fifth consecutive after their washout against three-time champions Islamabad United in Lahore. Set to chase a modest 155-run target, the leaders comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just two wickets and nine balls to spare. The leaders got off to a flamboyant start to the pursuit as their opening pair of Mohammad Harris and Babar put together 75 runs inside nine overs until the former was dismissed by Gladiators captain Saud Shakeel. Harris remained a notable run-getter for Zalmi in the pursuit with a brisk 35 off 28 deliveries, featuring five fours and a six. Following his dismissal, Babar joined forces with in-form Kusal Mendis (21), and the duo ensured retaining Zalmi's momentum by knitting a 49-run partnership for the second wicket, which culminated with the latter's dismissal off Alzarri Joseph in the 16th over. Meanwhile, Babar held his ground firmly and eventually steered Zalmi over the line in the penultimate over, courtesy of an unbeaten 32-run partnership for the third wicket with Aaron Hardie, who made 18 not out from 14 deliveries. The captain top-scored for Zalmi with an unbeaten 71 off

51 deliveries, studded with 10 fours. For Gladiators, Joseph and skipper Saud could pick up a wicket apiece. Mueqem was named Player of the Match after taking three wickets for 25 runs in his four-over spell. Zalmi captain Babar Azam's decision to field first paid dividends as the previous edition's runners-up could accumulate 154 all out in their 20 overs. The Gladiators got off to a dismal start in their innings as their new opening pair of Ahsan Ali (four) and captain Saud Shakeel could yield only four runs as the former fell victim to Ifukhar Ahmed on the third delivery of the first over. Shakeel then attempted to launch the Gladiators' recovery alongside experienced Rilee Rossouw by putting together 35 runs for the second wicket until getting run out in the fifth over and walking back after scoring a 13-ball 16. Rossouw was then involved in another crucial partnership for the Gladiators – a 29-run stand for the third wicket with Hassan Nawaz until eventually falling victim to Mueqem. He made 28 off 16 deliveries with the help of four fours. Mueqem inflicted another setback to the Gladiators' batting expedition in the 12th over as he got rid of Sharyl Hussain, who could score 12 off 10 deliveries. With the scoreboard reading 86/4 in 11.4 overs, Nawaz raised a cautious 26-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Khawaja Nafay before both perished in successive overs and brought the third further down to 120/6 in 15.4 overs. – Agencies

Comeback bout against Carano is the biggest MMA fight of all time, says Rousey

"This is not just the biggest women's fight of all time... This is something that's going to happen once in a lifetime," says Rousey

DNA

NEW YORK: Ronda Rousey described next month's comeback bout against Gina Carano as the biggest mixed martial arts fight of all time and said it would be a pivotal moment for the sport. Rousey, the first US woman to win an Olympic medal in judo after claiming bronze at the 2008 Beijing Games, was the first female fighter inducted into the UFC's Hall of Fame. She successfully defended her bantamweight title six times before being stunned by Holly Holm in 2015. "This is not just the biggest women's fight of all time... This is something that's going to happen once in a lifetime in MMA, is the beginning of something huge," Rousey told a press conference on Wednesday. The 39-year-old said the fight was not "nostalgia bait or a cash grab" but pointed to the commercial success of Mike Tyson's fight against Jake Paul as evidence that fight fans are still interested

in watching big names return to the ring. The bout between Tyson and former YouTube Paul in November 2024 drew a worldwide audience of 108 million viewers, making it the most-watched sporting

event ever on a streaming platform. Rousey's fight with Carano marks boxing promotion company MVP's debut in MMA and will stream live on Netflix on May 16. Rousey also fired back at current UFC

women's bantamweight champion Kayla Harrison, who called her irrelevant on a podcast. "Gina is so relevant that she's the whole reason the 145lb division even exists. I am so relevant that the only reason Kayla has a job at the UFC is because of me," Rousey said. "She has the charisma of a wet towel and will always be in someone else's shadow. The next time she wants to talk, she should look down at her feet and consider who paved the road she's walking on." On fighter pay, Rousey confirmed the minimum purse for any fighter on the MVP card is \$40,000 and that was "something the UFC cannot say". For 43-year-old Carano, who has not fought since a 2009 loss to Cris Cyborg, the experience felt different this time. "I feel real peace and excitement about it. It's not anxiety, it's excitement – and that's new for me." In the co-main event, former UFC heavyweight champion Francis Ngannou faces Philippe Lins, while Nate Diaz meets BKFC's Mike Perry at welterweight.



Japan contributes US\$2 mn...

FROM PAGE 01
Japan is one of the World Food Programme's most valued global partners. Since the 2022 floods, the Government of Japan has contributed more than US\$10 million to support WFP's humanitarian operations in Pakistan.

UAE issues strong statement...

FROM PAGE 01
one civilian contractor, and 10 civilians, with 224 injuries reported across multiple nationalities. Debris from intercepted projectiles has also caused additional property damage. The UAE Consulate General in Kurdistan, Iraq, was separately struck by two drones, injuring two security personnel. The UAE described the strikes as "unprovoked terrorist attacks" that constitute a flagrant violation of international law, particularly through the targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure, as well as threats to international navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. "The targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and threats to international maritime passages represent a flagrant violation of international law, which cannot be justified or condoned," the statement reads. The UAE affirmed its right to self-defense under international law and its commitment to taking all necessary measures – individually or collectively – to protect its sovereignty and people. Iran will be held fully liable for damages, injuries, and reparations, it added. Despite this consensus, the UAE expressed disappointment over the UN Security Council's inability to adopt a stronger resolution on freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. The document stresses that Iran's actions in the Strait of Hormuz – a chokepoint carrying roughly one-fifth of global oil, significant shares of natural gas, petrochemicals, and fertilizers – amount to "economic warfare and piracy." Oil prices have surged more than 35% during the crisis, threatening global supply chains. Disruptions risk food shortages for up to 300 million people and affect critical materials for semiconductors and aviation fuel. The UAE is seeking clarification on the recent two-week ceasefire announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, insisting on Iran's full, immediate, and unconditional commitment to ending hostilities and reopening the Strait. A "simple ceasefire" is insufficient; a comprehensive solution must address Iran's nuclear program, ballistic missiles, drones, proxies, and maritime threats.

US to target vessels helping Iran

FROM PAGE 01
Iran has responded with threats to disrupt traffic in the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, and Red Sea if the measures continue, calling the blockade illegal and a potential violation of the fragile ceasefire. Tensions remain high in these waters following the broader US-Israeli military actions against Iran that began earlier in 2026. Israel and Lebanon: Military Preparations Amid Ceasefire Talks: Israeli media and officials report that the military (under Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir) has approved continued operational plans and offensive actions against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, even as discussions of a potential short-term ceasefire or truce emerge. Direct talks between Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors (mediated in Washington) have taken place recently, with Lebanon pushing for a ceasefire as a precondition and Israel focusing on disarming Hezbollah and securing its northern border. Israel has conducted recent strikes in Lebanon despite the separate US-Iran ceasefire, asserting that the Iran truce does not automatically extend to the Lebanon front. Preparations for possible ground operations or further offensives continue alongside diplomatic efforts.

Briefs

PSX stays bullish, gains over 1,392 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,392.01 points, a positive change of 0.83 percent, closing at 169,911.95 points against 168,519.94 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 972.713 million shares with a traded value of Rs 43.933 billion, compared to 1,205.844 million shares valuing Rs 59.416 billion in the previous session.

The market capitalization increased to Rs 18.801 trillion from Rs 18.610 trillion a day earlier. Out of 489 active companies in the ready market, 307 advanced, 139 declined, and 43 remained unchanged.

Unity Foods Limited topped the volume chart with 70.580 million shares, followed by K-Electric Limited with 53.102 million shares and Hascol Petroleum with 46.288 million shares. The top gainers included Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which increased by Rs 270.25 to close at Rs 26,498.90, and Blessed Textiles Limited, which gained Rs 123.49 to settle at Rs 1,433.27. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited B declined by Rs 244.33 to close at Rs 18,243.00, while Service Industries Limited fell by Rs 23.32 to close at Rs 1,644.45. In the futures market, turnover stood at 203,797 million shares with a traded value of Rs 10,212 billion, compared to 289,288 million shares worth Rs 14.836 billion in the previous session. Out of 311 futures-market companies, 211 recorded gains while 99 declined and 1 remained unchanged, according to PSX data.—APP

Gold prices increase by Rs 1,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold increased in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 1,400 to settle at Rs 504,862 compared to Rs 503,462 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,200 to Rs 432,837 from Rs 431,637, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 1,100 to Rs 396,781 against Rs 395,681. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$14 to \$4,825 per ounce from \$4,811. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 110 to Rs 8,514 from Rs 8,404, while the price of 10 grams of silver also increased by Rs 94 to Rs 7,299 from Rs 7,205. The price of silver in the international market increased by \$1.10 to \$80.30 per ounce from \$79.20.—APP

SCCI raises tax refund issues with FBR Official

SIALKOT: President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Syed Ahtesham Mazhar held a meeting with Zubair Bilal to address key taxation and refund-related concerns faced by the business community. According to SCCI, the discussion focused on challenges associated with the FIF-based refund processing system, persistent delays in income tax and sales tax refunds, and the increasing backlog of pending cases. Participants also pointed out procedural complications in the refund verification process, excessive documentation requirements, and delays in the approval of revised returns, all of which are contributing to liquidity constraints for exporters.—APP

Aurangzeb discusses capital market re-entry strategy with Rothschild & Co

Both sides agreed on the importance of developing a robust pipeline of blended finance transactions in collaboration with multilateral development institutions to reduce overall borrowing costs

DNA

WASHINGTON, D.C : Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a productive meeting with senior representatives of Rothschild & Co. on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026. During the meeting, the Finance Minister briefed the Rothschild team on Pakistan's active plans to re-access international capital markets after a gap of four years. He outlined that the instruments under consideration include Eurobonds, a Panda bond, and dollar-settled rupee-linked transactions, as part of a diversified financing strategy. Senator Aurangzeb informed participants that the proposed Panda bond issuance is at an advanced stage, with formal regulatory approval expected imminently. The Finance Minister appreciated Rothschild & Co.'s advice on pursuing a Liability Management Operation (LMO) as a strategic tool to help compress Pakistan's yield curve and strengthen market confidence. Both sides agreed on the importance of developing a robust pipeline of blended finance transactions in collaboration with multilateral development institutions to reduce overall borrowing costs. The Finance Minister also highlighted the climate finance support committed by the World Bank Group under the 10-



year Country Partnership Framework (CPF). Concluding the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb appreciated Rothschild & Co.'s offer of advisory support across the full spectrum of Pakistan's capital market re-engagement, including sovereign bond issuance, liability management operations, blended finance structuring, and sovereign rating advisory.

Europe has 'maybe 6 weeks of jet fuel left'

PARIS: Europe has "maybe six weeks or so (of) jet fuel left," the head of the International Energy Agency said Thursday in a wide-ranging Associated Press interview, warning of possible flight cancellations "soon" if oil supplies remain blocked by the Iran war. IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol painted a sobering picture of the global repercussions of what he called "the largest energy crisis we have ever faced," stemming from the pinch-off of oil, gas and other vital supplies through the Strait of Hormuz. "In the past there was a group called 'Dire Straits.' It's a dire strait now, and it is going to have major implications for the global economy. And the longer it goes, the worse it will be for the economic growth and inflation around the world," he said. The impact will be "higher petrol (gasoline) prices, higher gas prices, high electricity prices," Birol told the AP, speaking in his Paris office looking out over the Eiffel Tower. Economic pain will be felt unevenly and "the countries who will suffer the most will not be those whose voice are heard a lot. It will be mainly the developing countries. Poorer countries in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America," said the Turkish economist and energy expert who has led the IEA since 2015. But without a settlement of the Iran war that permanently reopens the Strait of Hormuz, "Everybody is going to suffer," he added. "Some countries may be richer than the others. Some countries may have more energy than the others, but no country, no country is immune to this crisis," he said. Without a reopening of the waterway, some oil products may dry up, he warned. In Europe, "I can tell you soon we will hear the news that some of the flights from city A to city B might be canceled as a result of lack of jet fuel," he said. Birol spoke out against the so-called "toll booth" system that Iran has applied to some ships, letting them travel through the strait for a fee. He said allowing that to become more permanent would run the risk of setting a precedent that could then be applied to other waterways, including the vital Malacca Strait in Asia. "If we change it once, it may be difficult to get it back," he said. "It will be difficult to have a toll system here, applied here, but not there.—DNA

China tells travelers to use caution

BEIJING: China advised its citizens on Thursday to use caution when traveling to the United States and avoid entry at Seattle's main airport following "malicious" border checks. Around 20 Chinese scholars planning to attend academic conferences were "recently" denied entry by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, despite holding valid visas, according to a foreign ministry statement. CBP did not respond immediately to AFP's request, sent outside US business hours, for more information about the alleged entry denials. The Chinese foreign ministry said that, "in light of recurring instances of malicious interrogation and harassment targeting Chinese scholars" at the Seattle airport, authorities "advise individuals planning to travel to the United States in the near future to heighten their safety awareness." Chinese travelers should "avoid entry through this airport," it said. The statement advised travelers to respond in a "calm and rational manner" if they were questioned by US border authorities. The warning comes ahead of a planned mid-May visit to Beijing by US President Donald Trump, which was delayed for several weeks while Washington grapples with the war in the Middle East.—DNA



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with Alisher Tukhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pak pushes for peace in eastern DR Congo amid rising security fears

Tensions have been high between ethnically aligned armed groups in parts of the region for decades, punctuated by the horrific killing of nearly a million people during the 1994 Rwandan genocide

UNITED NATIONS: Despite diplomatic progress aimed at ending the brutal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Pakistan told the UN Security Council that continued violence, humanitarian pressures and internal displacement in the country's east underscored the urgency of restoring peace and stability on the ground. "The situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains fragile and deeply concerning," Ambassador Asim Fikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said during a debate in the 15-member Council on the situation in DRC and wider Great Lakes region. "We reiterate the need for full implementation of resolution 2773 and stress that progress toward a durable ceasefire remains essential for stabilizing the region and creating space for a political solution," he added. Tensions have been high between ethnically aligned armed groups in parts of the region for decades, punctuated by the horrific killing of nearly a million people during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. More recently, in 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo accused Rwanda of supporting the M23 armed group's intervention on Congolese soil. A peace agreement — known as the Washington Accords — was brokered in June 2025 and endorsed by the Council in resolution 2803 (2025), though fighting continues. In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy welcomed the sustained diplomatic engagement in support of de-escalation, including efforts

under the African Union-led mediation, the Washington process and the Doha Framework. "These initiatives, together with the good offices of the United Nations and regional organizations, represent important and mutually reinforcing pathways toward restoring trust between the parties and advancing a comprehensive settlement." Ambassador Asim Ahmad also takes note of progress toward the operationalizing ceasefire oversight and verification arrangements and supports MONUSCO, the UN peace-keeping force, playing a constructive role in ceasefire implementation, once conditions permit. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, a 2013 agreement signed in Addis Ababa to end the persistent violence in eastern DRC, continues to provide a comprehensive platform for addressing the root causes of instability in the Great Lakes region, with its commitments relating to dialogue, cooperation and confidence-building remaining essential for advancing regional stability. "The illicit exploitation and trafficking of critical natural resources also remains a structural driver of instability in eastern DRC," the Pakistani envoy said, adding it requires strengthened regional cooperation, transparency in supply chains and effective implementation of existing regional mechanisms to ensure that natural resources become a source of shared prosperity, and not conflict and chaos for the people. In conclusion, Ambassador Asim Ahmad reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity

of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Islamabad's commitment to advancing lasting peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. Earlier, Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women told the Security Council, "Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will only be secured when women are treated not as collateral victims and their bodies as spoils of war, but as empowered agents of stability, accountability and peace." Describing the opportunities for women's leadership in the Great Lakes region as "unique and transformative", she said countries of the region already have some of the highest percentages of women's representation in politics in the world. However, the region's security now hinges on ending violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. "Without safety, women cannot lead, and without their leadership, peace and recovery efforts fail," she stressed. Against that backdrop, Ms. Bahous asked the Council to redouble its support for women's equal representation in peacemaking and for the work of women-led civil society organizations. She also urged members to protect funding for MONUSCO, whose work supports local women and includes crucial protection for women human rights defenders. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, outlined the various diplomatic initiatives focused on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.—DNA

India's aviation, hospitality hit by \$10b losses amid war on Iran

NEW DELHI: The ongoing US-Israeli war on Iran has severely impacted India's aviation and hospitality sectors, an Indian trade body said on Thursday, estimating losses of at least \$10 billion. Tens of thousands of flights have been canceled since the beginning of attacks on Iran on Feb. 28 and its retaliatory strikes on countries in the Gulf region.

Air spaces in much of the Middle East were closed in the first weeks of the war, while operations in the region's main hubs such as Doha or Dubai — which connect many routes to and from Asia and Europe — are only beginning to stabilize after a ceasefire was announced last week.

In India, the aviation sector has emerged as the most impacted, recording an up to 20 percent decline in inbound tourist traffic and \$1.93 billion net losses, according to a report released by the Punjab, Haryana, Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Tourism is the first sector to feel the impact of global unrest. We saw this during the Russia-Ukraine war, but the recent West Asia conflict has completely altered travel dynamics," said Rajan Sehgal, co-chair of the organization's tourism and hospitality committee.

"Airlines are under severe pressure from cancellations, longer routes and rising fuel costs, while West Asia — once considered the most stable hub for global travel and business — is now the worst affected.—APP

Israeli settlers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque under police protection

LONDON: Dozens of Israeli settlers, accompanied by police, stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the walled city of occupied East Jerusalem on Thursday. The site was reopened to Muslim worshippers last week after being closed for 40 days due to the Iran war. Palestinians have resumed their prayers at the compound, while Israeli authorities have also allowed settlers to enter the site, an action long condemned by Palestinians, as well as by Muslim and Arab countries.

Dozens of settlers approached the Dome of the Rock and performed provocative Talmudic rituals, the Palestinian news agency, Wafa, cited the Jerusalem Governorate as saying. Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, has been the site of frequent conflicts — including raids by Israeli settler raids and restrictions on Muslim worshippers — since East Jerusalem was occupied in June 1967. The mosque is administered by Jordan's Ministry of Awqaf, which holds the legal authority to manage the compound and control access.—APP

Israeli army fire kills Palestinian teen in WB

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: Israeli forces killed a 17-year-old Palestinian in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, according to Palestinian officials, as the Israeli military said its troops had "neutralized a terrorist." Mohammed Murad Mahmud Rayan was "killed by the (Israeli) occupation forces on Thursday morning in Beit Duquq," a village just north of Jerusalem, the Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry said in a statement. Contacted by AFP, the Israeli army said a "violent disturbance of the peace" broke out during "operational activity" in the Beit Duquq area, and "a terrorist hurled stones at the soldiers, posing a threat to them." "Soldiers responded with fire toward the terrorist" who was "neutralized," the army added. According to the Palestinian news agency Wafa, the Israeli army was carrying out "a wide-scale search operation targeting several homes." Violence in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, has soared since the unprecedented attack by the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas against Israel on October 7, 2023, which triggered the war in the Gaza Strip.—APP

Briefs

Senate rejects effort to halt arms sales to Israel

DNA

WASHINGTON: More than three dozen Democrats supported an effort by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders on Wednesday to block arms sales to Israel, signaling a growing discontent in the party with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the wars in Gaza and Iran. The two resolutions to block US sales of bulldozers and bombs to Israel were opposed by all Republicans and rejected 40-59 and 36-63. But Sanders has repeatedly forced votes on the issue to put pressure on his colleagues — both Democrats and Republicans — to oppose Netanyahu's regime.

Similar resolutions forced by Sanders in 2024 and 2025 were also rejected, but the number of Democrats voting with the Vermont Independent has more than doubled in less than two years amid Israeli campaigns in Gaza, Iran and Lebanon and a stepped-up campaign by party activists who have increasingly seen support for Israel as a litmus test for support.

"It's clear that Democrats are beginning to listen to the average American who is sick and tired of spending billions of dollars to support Netanyahu's horrific wars when people in this country can't afford housing or health care," Sanders said after the vote.

Italian FM in China

DNA

ROME: Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani was headed Thursday to China, seeking to boost economic ties while also calling on Beijing to help efforts toward peace in Iran and Ukraine. Tajani, a senior member of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's hard-right government, was due to meet with China's commerce minister Wang Wentao and foreign minister Wang Yi later Thursday in Beijing, his office said.

"We're working to support our companies so they can operate more and more in such an interesting market as the Chinese one," Tajani said in a video posted online as he departed.

"And of course I will ask China and the Chinese government to lend a hand in building peace in the Middle East and also in Ukraine." China is a key market for Italian exports — its second largest outside the European Union, after the United States. Bilateral trade was worth nearly 75 billion euros in 2025, up 11.2 percent compared to 2024, it said. Tajani will seek to remove barriers for businesses, as well as rebalancing trade and investment flows, according to his ministry. His April 16-18 trip also has a cultural component.

Pakistan Navy demonstrates precision strike capability

The missile integrates a cutting-edge guidance system and advanced maneuverability, enabling it to evade threats, adapt to dynamic conditions, and deliver with precision and lethality. The successful launch of this indigenously developed missile underscores the fusion of technological excellence and operational expertise

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Congratulates Pakistan Navy

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed gratitude and congratulated Pakistan Navy on successful test of anti-ship missile. She paid tribute to the team working day and night for naval defense under the leadership of Field Marshal Asim Munir and Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf. She acknowledged that a significant achievement in naval defense has been made with the successful test of anti-ship missile, as it shows that we desire peace, but are not negligent of our defense.

KARACHI: In a resolute display of preparedness and precision-strike capability, Pakistan Navy successfully conducted a Live Weapon Firing of an indigenously de-

veloped Ship-Launched Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile, accurately engaging its target with high speed at extended range. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed

Ashraf, along with leading scientists and engineers, witnessed the missile firing. The missile integrates a cutting-edge guidance system and advanced maneuverability, enabling it to evade threats, adapt to dynamic conditions, and deliver with precision and lethality. The successful launch of this indigenously developed missile underscores the fusion of technological excellence and operational expertise. This missile firing is a manifestation of Pakistan Navy's commitment to maintaining credible sea-based deterrence in conventional domain and ensuring maritime security and stability in the region. The President, Prime Minister, Chief of Defence Forces, and Services Chiefs have commended the participating units and scientists on achieving this milestone. — DNA



PN Demonstrates Precision Strike Capability with Successful Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile Test

Three abducted polio workers recovered

NEWS DESK

BANNU: Three polio workers abducted by militants on Wednesday have been safely recovered through coordinated efforts by the police and local jirga elders, police said. Under the leadership of the Bannu district police officer (DPO), the police initiated immediate action following the incident. A comprehensive strategy was adopted by taking local jirga elders into confidence. Due to the successful mediation by the jirga and the professional competence of the police, the abducted workers were safely recovered. Bannu DPO Yasir Afridi, while confirming the development, told Dawn that "with a lot of efforts, they have been recovered". The three polio workers were abducted by unidentified militants in the Jhandu Khel area on Wednesday during the ongoing anti-polio campaign, sparking serious concern in the area. A police constable was martyred and four others were injured in an attack on a law enforcement party en route to provide security for polio teams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hangu district. The incident took place on the first day of a nationwide vaccination campaign taking place from April 13 to 19. It was this year's first attack on law enforcement personnel deployed for polio teams' security.

Senator Aurangzeb highlights Pakistan reform momentum

Aurangzeb participated in the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action (CFMCA), held under the theme "Climate Action as an Engine of Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, engaged in a series of high-level meetings and multilateral discussions on the third day of the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington DC, underscoring Pakistan's continued economic stabilization, reform trajectory, and proactive role in global economic and climate discourse.

According to a press release issued by finance ministry here Thursday, the minister, on the sidelines of the launch of the Borrowers' Platform, met António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations and appreciated his participation in the launch and acknowledged his support for the creation of the platform. The two leaders exchanged views on the global economic implications of the evolving situation in the Middle East, particularly its impact on food and energy security in developing countries. The Secretary-General commended Pakistan's constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond. Aurangzeb participated in the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the Co-

alition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action (CFMCA), held under the theme "Climate Action as an Engine of Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness." In his intervention, he highlighted Pakistan's enhanced fiscal resilience, noting that while the country required international assistance during the devastating floods of 2022, it was able to mobilize domestic resources to respond to a similar climate shock in 2025—reflecting strengthened fiscal buffers. He outlined key initiatives to green Pakistan's financial architecture, including the State Bank's Green Taxonomy Guidelines, and emphasized Pakistan's growing renewable energy capacity, with 8,000 MW of installed solar power and a target to achieve 90% renewable energy generation within the next decade.

He also expressed appreciation for international partners, particularly the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) and the World Bank's Country Partnership Framework. Addressing a policy forum at the Atlantic Council, the Finance Minister spoke on "Pakistan's Path to Reform and Resilience." He underscored Pakistan's emergence as a responsible and constructive global actor, including its role in facilitating a ceasefire between the United States and Iran. On the economic front, he highlighted significant macroeconomic stabilization achieved through disciplined fiscal management and the ongoing IMF-supported reform programme. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to meeting its sovereign obligations and outlined progress on structural reforms, including privatization, rightsizing of federal ministries, and strengthening public financial management. The Minister also emphasized Pakistan's digital transformation agenda aimed at improving governance, reducing leakages, and enhancing service delivery. He noted a strategic shift in Pakistan-US relations from an aid-based to a trade-based partnership, with growing engagement in critical minerals and infrastructure.

Revised timings of markets closure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The capital administration on Thursday issued an amended notification regarding the closing time for markets, extending the restriction to bakeries and sports facilities. In a notification issued via the office of Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, the previous April 6 order was slightly amended. Under "partial modification", bakeries were told to close at 10pm, and sports facilities, including clubs and gymnasiums, to close by 8pm.

According to the notification, effective April 16, "all shops, markets, and shopping malls shall be closed at 8pm throughout the week". However, it added that pharmacies, medical supply stores, medical laboratories, hospitals, petrol pumps, CNG stations, and milk/dairy shops were exempt from the restrictions. "There shall be no restrictions on takeaway and home delivery services," the notification read.

Hotels, restaurants, food outlets, tandoors, grocery stores, kiriyana stores, meat shops, vegetable vendors and bakeries will close by 10pm. Meanwhile, the notification also said that marriage halls, marquees and all other commercial places where festive events are held shall close at 10m throughout the week, which would also apply to events held at private premises.

Azerbaijan's natural gas exports increase

BAKU: In January-March 2026, Azerbaijan exported 6.257 billion cubic meters of natural gas, marking a 6.1 percent increase compared to the same period last year. According to the State Customs Committee, the value of exported natural gas decreased by 16.9 percent, reaching \$1.833 billion. In January-March 2025, Azerbaijan exported 5.889 billion cubic meters of natural gas, valued at \$2.206 billion. — APP

Iran offers proposal allowing ships to exit Oman side

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Iran could consider allowing ships to sail freely through the Omani side of the Strait of Hormuz without risk of attack as part of proposals it has offered in negotiations with the United States, providing a deal is clinched to prevent renewed conflict, a source briefed by Tehran said. The US-Israeli war with Iran has resulted in the largest-ever disruption of global oil and gas supplies due to Iran's interruption of traffic through the strait, which handles about 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flows. Hundreds of tankers and other ships and 20,000 seafarers have been stuck inside the Gulf since the war began on February 28. A two-week ceasefire came into effect on April 8 and US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the war was close to over, but control over the Strait of Hormuz

remains a key issue in negotiations. The source, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter, said Iran could be willing to let ships use the other side of the narrow strait in Omani waters without any hindrance from Tehran. The source did not say whether Iran would also agree to clear any mines it may have placed in that stretch of water or if all ships — even those linked to Israel — would be allowed to pass freely. But the source added that the proposal hinged on whether Washington was prepared to meet Tehran's demands, a condition that was central to any potential breakthrough with the Strait of Hormuz. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iran's Foreign Ministry was not immediately available to comment. A Western security source said the proposal to let ships pass through Omani waters unhindered had been in the works although it was not clear if there had been any response from Washington yet.



TEHRAN: Speaker of Iranian parliament Ghalibaf held a meeting with Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in Tehran. — DNA

Turkiye holds funerals for school shooting victims

Police said the teenager had referenced US mass killer Elliot Rodger in a photo on his WhatsApp profile

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Turkey held funerals for nine victims killed in a school shooting by a 14-year-old, an attack that has sent shockwaves across the country, with authorities saying the suspect had referenced a US mass killer in a WhatsApp profile image. The attack in the southern province of Kahramanmaraş was Turkey's second such incident this week in a country where such shootings have been rare. The 14-year-old armed entered two classrooms and opened fire randomly as officials said he carried five guns. The funerals took place in the city of Kahramanmaraş for eight children aged 10 and 11 and a 55-year-old teacher, the local authorities said. Police said the teenager had referenced US mass killer Elliot Rodger in a photo on his WhatsApp profile. "Initial findings from the investigation revealed that the perpetrator used an image on his WhatsApp profile referencing Elliot Rodger, who carried out an attack in the United States in 2014," the police said in a statement. Rodger, a 22-year-old American, killed six people on the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, before taking his own life.

PM grieved over deaths in Turkiye school shooting

JEDDAH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed his deep grief over the loss of lives in a tragic school shooting in Turkiye that claimed nine lives. "Deeply grieved by the tragic attack on a school in Kahramanmaraş. My heart goes out to my dear brother President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the brotherly people of Turkiye, especially the families and children affected," the prime minister said, who is currently in Saudi Arabia for an official visit, on the first leg of his tri-nation tour to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkiye. On his X timeline, he said that Pakistan mourns the loss of innocent young lives and prays for the departed souls. He also extended his heartfelt condolences to the victim families, and wished a swift recovery to the injured. "The people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with their Turkish brothers and sisters in this moment of grief." — APP

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