



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Pope Leo calls for promoting peace; tolerance

Detailed News On Page-08

Govt should go for development of merged areas

Detailed News On Page-02

Pakistan doing its best to peace in region

Detailed News On Page-01

After Iranian refusal

JD Vance Pak visit delayed

The first round of talks in Islamabad earlier this month lasted up to 21 hours but ended without a deal, with Vance stating that Iran refused to accept key US demands, particularly regarding its nuclear enrichment activities and forgoing any path to a nuclear weapon

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: US Vice President JD Vance's planned trip to Islamabad for a second round of peace talks with Iran has been delayed amid uncertainty over Iran's participation and as a fragile two-week ceasefire between the two countries nears its expiration.

The truce, which began around April 8, 2026, is set to expire on Wednesday evening, with President Donald Trump warning of resumed military action—including potential strikes on Iranian infrastructure—if no agreement is reached. Vance was expected to depart Washington early Tuesday to lead the U.S. delegation, which may include special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, for negotiations hosted by Pakistan in its capital. However, the departure has been put on hold for additional policy meetings at the White House after Iran failed to fully commit to sending a delegation or responding to the latest U.S. positions. The first round of talks in Islamabad earlier this month lasted up to 21 hours but ended without a deal, with Vance stating that Iran refused to accept key US demands, particularly

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Briefs

ECP halts Senate election on Murad seat

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday halted the by-election for the vacant Senate seat of PTI leader Murad Saeed and issued a stay order after a petition challenged the legality of the de-notification process, adjourning further proceedings. A three-member bench of the ECP heard the petition regarding the matter and issued notices to all concerned parties. During the hearing, the lawyer for petitioner MPA Jalal Khan appeared before the commission and stated that Saeed had not been elected senator but did not take the oath of office. He argued, "Saeed did not take the oath, questions arise over how he was de-notified as a member," adding that a person is considered a member of the house only after taking the oath.

Apex court to function with minimal staff

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court will be working with the minimal staff at its principal seat in Islamabad on Wednesday, while no judicial work will be conducted at the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) in the capital for a second consecutive day. The developments come as extraordinary security measures have been put in place for the anticipated second round of US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad, expected to be held this week. The measures also include restricted entry to the high-security Red Zone, where both the courts are located. The SC issued a notification on Tuesday, stating that the chief justice of Pakistan "shall function with minimal specified officers/officials on April 22".

Pak says formal response from Iran 'still awaited'

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attallah Tarar said on Tuesday that a formal response from the Iranian side regarding its participation in the second round of peace talks with the United States was "still awaited". Pakistan remains in constant touch with the Iranian side, but a formal response from Tehran regarding participation in the Islamabad Peace Talks had not been received as of 7.30pm PST, the minister said on the social media platform X.

"The ceasefire ends at 4:50am PST, April 22. A decision from Iran to attend the talks before the end of the two-week ceasefire is critical," he said. "Pakistan has made sincere efforts to convince the Iranian leadership to participate in the second round of talks, and these efforts continue," the information minister said.

Hours earlier, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had urged the US and Iran to "consider extending the ceasefire and give dialogue and diplomacy a chance", according to the Foreign Office (FO). He expressed these views in a meeting with US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker, where the two discussed recent regional developments. "DPM/FM underscored Pakistan's consistent emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy as the only viable means to address challenges and achieve lasting regional peace and stability," the FO said. "He stressed the need for engagement between the United States and Iran, urged both sides to consider extending the ceasefire, and to give dialogue and diplomacy a chance," it said. Meanwhile, Baker conveyed the US's appreciation for Pakistan's constructive and positive role in promoting regional peace and facilitating dialogue, it added.

Fasten your seat belts

IMF sets 11 new conditions for Pakistan ahead of \$1.2bn tranche

Govt agrees to notify semi-annual gas tariff adjustment from July 2026 and annual power tariff adjustment from Jan 2027

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has set 11 fresh conditions for Pakistan to secure the next \$1.2 billion tranche, including reforms to procurement rules to end preferential treatment for state-owned enterprises in multi-billion-rupee contracts. The government also agreed with the IMF to notify semi-annual gas tariff adjustment from July 2026 and annual power tariff adjustment from January 2027, indicating that the government will have to adjust both electricity and gas in the Fiscal Year 2026-27. Under the new structural benchmark, the government has accepted the IMF condition to enact amendments to the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Special Technology Zones (STZs) for legislation to phase out fiscal incentives consistent with the

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SBP receives final \$1bn from Saudi Arabia

The first tranche of \$2 billion had already been received on April 15

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has received \$1 billion from the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marking the second tranche of a \$3 billion deposit agreed recently, the central bank said on Tuesday. According to the statement issued by the central bank, the second tranche was received with a value date of

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Azerbaijan ready to supply LNG to Pakistan

State energy company Socar says ready to provide LNG to Pakistan as soon as PLL submits request

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan's state energy company Socar is ready to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Pakistan as soon as it receives a request from Islamabad, the company told media on Tuesday, as Islamabad seeks spot cargoes to ease a growing energy shortfall. Socar said a framework agreement signed in 2025 between Socar Trading and Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) allows the Pakistani buyer to purchase LNG cargoes directly under an accelerated procedure. "Socar is ready to provide LNG to Pakistan as soon as PLL submits a corresponding request," the company said in response to Reuters questions. SOCAR did not say whether such a request had already been made, when a first delivery could take place, or whose LNG would be supplied under the agreement. Pakistan, which relies heavily on gas for its energy needs, remains vulnerable to declining domestic production and swings in global LNG prices amid the supply disruptions related to the US-Israeli war on Iran. Pakistan State Oil (PSO), which was arranging the import of four LNG cargoes stranded in the strait under two agreements with QatarEnergy, has

communicated via email to the Petroleum Division that the imports have been suspended until the situation caused by the closure of Strait of Hormuz stabilises. Earlier, Pakistan had requested Qatar to provide four cargoes out of the 8-10 that were loaded and stranded due to the ongoing conflict, to be delivered once Iran reopened the Strait of Hormuz. However, Tehran closed the strait again after determining that the US naval blockade had not ended and was instead continuing what it described as acts of piracy. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, speaking to The News two days ago, stated that QatarEnergy currently has 8-10 loaded LNG vessels available and Pakistan is seeking to secure as much volume as possible from these cargoes in the short term. He added that once QatarEnergy lifts its force majeure conditions, Pakistan is expected to resume a more regular schedule of LNG imports. Following an attack on a Qatar LNG facility, QatarEnergy declared force majeure on March 4. Since then, Pakistan has been deprived of imported gas supplies. The Power Division currently requires 400mmcfcd (million cubic feet per day) of gas for electricity generation to bridge the gap and eliminate loadshedding.

Around 7,900 people died on migration routes

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Around 7,900 people died or disappeared on migration routes in 2025, taking the total dead and missing since 2014 beyond 80,000, the United Nations' migration agency said on Tuesday. The UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said people were being forced into dangerous, irregular journeys when safe pathways were out of reach, and urged countries to find the political will to save more lives on migration routes. "The deaths or disappearance of nearly 7,900 people were documented on global migration routes worldwide in 2025," the IOM said. The IOM's Missing Migrants Project "has documented more than 80,000 deaths

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Pakistan, US discuss upcoming talks

FARRUKH SHEHZAD

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has underscored Pakistan's consistent emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy as the only viable means to address challenges and achieve lasting regional peace and stability. He was talking to US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker, who called on him in Islamabad today to discuss matters related to recent regional developments. Ishaq Dar stressed the need for engagement between the United States and Iran. He also urged both sides to consider extending the

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with H.E. Mr. Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, who called on the finance minister. - DNA

GSP+ also mulled

Finance Minister, EU Ambassador discuss economic cooperation

EU Ambassador extended an invitation to the Finance Minister to participate in the High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum scheduled to be held on April 28, 2026, in Islamabad, which the Minister accepted

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Tuesday underscored Pakistan's steady return to macroeconomic stability and renewed engagement with international capital markets, highlighting growing investor confidence and the government's commitment to a structured and forward-looking economic reform agenda. The minister was talking to Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Raimundas Karoblis, who called on him here, according to press release issued by finance ministry. He noted that Pakistan had recently re-entered international capital markets after a four-year hiatus through a privately placed Eurobond transaction, which witnessed strong investor interest and was successfully upsized.

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Nawaz hails, Shehbaz, field marshal

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Three-time former prime minister and PML-N President Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday praised the federal government and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir for their role in the US-Iran mediation efforts. Addressing a meeting of the PML-N's parliamentary board for Gilgit-Baltistan, flanked by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar,

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WATER JUST GOT BETTER!!

MURREE SPARKLETS

Bottled Drinking Water

Carbonated Water Also Available in Glass Bottle.

Mureesparklets /official@mureesparklets

Kundi for enhanced global aid for merged districts

It is also implementing programs related to first aid and emergency care, restoration of family links, disaster response, national society development, and risk awareness and safer behavior promotion in collaboration with the PRCS in Peshawar, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Kurram, and Bajaur

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday emphasized the need for increased support from international humanitarian organizations for the province, particularly the merged districts, which still require greater global attention. He expressed these views while talking to a two-member delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), led by its Peshawar head Bruno Radicchi, at the Governor House. ICRC Deputy Head Zartasha was also present on the occasion. The Governor appreciated the ongoing cooperation of the ICRC with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and highlighted its role in humanitarian assistance. He said that Afghan refugees crossing through the Torkham border face multiple challenges due to a lack of facilities, adding that

directions have been issued to the PRCS to extend maximum support. However, he stressed that further assistance from international organizations would be essential. Kundi said that residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially those in the merged districts, require improved access to basic facilities, which cannot be ensured without the support of global partners. Earlier, the delegation briefed the Governor on ICRC's ongoing activities in the province. They informed that the organization is working in close coordination with the PRCS, health department, police, and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The ICRC is currently providing emergency medical services to 17 health facilities across the merged districts, including Bajaur, Kurram, Upper Kurram, North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Khyber, and Dera Ismail Khan. Rehabilitation work at the emergency department of District Headquarters Hospital Bannu and Tehsil Head-

quarters Hospital Sadda has also been completed. The delegation further informed that the ICRC had recently provided emergency assistance to displaced populations in Bajaur and Kurram, while contingency planning is underway in Chitral in view of possible emergencies. The ICRC operates in Pakistan under a headquarters agreement and derives its mandate from the Geneva Conventions, functioning as a neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian organization. It is also implementing programs related to first aid and emergency care, restoration of family links, disaster response, national society development, and risk awareness and safer behavior promotion in collaboration with the PRCS in Peshawar, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Kurram, and Bajaur. The delegation reaffirmed its commitment to continue cooperation with the PRCS and appreciated the Governor's interest and people-friendly approach.

Pak advocate for regional stability: Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Vice President Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Senator Sherry Rehman, on Tuesday reaffirmed Pakistan's position as a credible and trusted mediator in ongoing regional tensions during an interview with Bloomberg.—APP

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naeem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum
Application Guardian
Case title: Safia Mumtaz vs Public at Large etc.
Against: 1- Public at Large 2- Sadaqat Ali son of Shaikat Ali (currently residing in Saudi Arabia) 3- Shaheen Akhtar widow of Muhammad Mumtaz residing in Biral Tehsil Dina District Jhelum . As there is not possible to call the Public at Large / respondents through Summons in the instant Application so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 27.04.2026 at 09:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naeem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum
suit for dissolution of marriage etc
Case title: Hina Arshad vs Muhammad Sohail son of Muhammad Azam, resident of Khoi Ratta, District Kotli, Azad Kashmir (currently residing in Dubai). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 30.04.2026 at 09:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

Zong launches Pakistan's first 5G facilitation Kiosk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology services enterprise, has set a new industry benchmark by launching the country's first dedicated 5G Customer Facilitation and Sales Kiosk at Islamabad International Airport. This milestone has been achieved through the collaborative efforts of Zong and the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) and forms part of a broader initiative to modernize indoor airport facilities and introduce 5G-ready solutions for passengers, according to a news release. As mobility and digital reliance converge, airports have become high-intensity connectivity zones where instant access to digital services is no longer optional but essential. This initiative underscores Zong's leadership in next-generation connectivity and marks a strategic step toward integrating 5G into Pakistan's key transit ecosystems. Zong is addressing a critical phase in the travel journey—the transition from arrival to real-world connectivity. By enabling immediate access to high-speed services upon arrival, the company ensures that passengers can seamlessly connect to essential digital tools. These include real-time communication, navigation and logistics through ride-hailing and digital maps, digital payments integrated into Pakistan's digital ecosystem, and operational support for smooth passenger movement through the terminal. Through its on-ground facilitation

model, Zong aims to deliver speed, reliability, and convenience at a crucial point in the travel experience. Commenting on the initiative, Faheem Durrani, Head of Sales and Distribution at Zong, said, "Airports are critical digital touchpoints where immediate and reliable connectivity is essential. This initiative enables travelers to seamlessly integrate into Pakistan's digital ecosystem from the moment they arrive. By strengthening our presence at key transit hubs, we are delivering connectivity where demand is most immediate and impactful." The Director General of the Pakistan Airports Authority (DGPA) stated, "This development reflects our broader strategy to modernize airport infrastructure across Pakistan and integrate advanced digital capabilities into the aviation ecosystem. Initiatives like this 5G deployment at Islamabad International Airport are an important step toward building smarter, more connected airports that align with global aviation standards and future demand." The realization of this 5G-ready ecosystem reflects close collaboration between Zong and the Pakistan Airports Authority, including the Director General PAA, Deputy Director General PAA (Airports) HQPAA, and Director Commercial and Estate HQPAA, along with the Airport Manager (COO) and Senior Joint Director Commercial of Islamabad International Airport for their operational support.—DNA

CM okays Punjab-wide disease prevention programme

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has granted in-principle approval for the launch of the "Chief Minister Punjab Disease Prevention Programme" aimed at preventing and controlling the spread of major diseases across the province. The programme will focus on the prevention of diabetes, tuberculosis (TB), AIDS and hepatitis, alongside a province-wide public awareness campaign to educate citizens about life-threatening and infectious diseases. The decision was taken during a special meeting chaired by the chief minister, where Secretary Health and Population Nadia Saqib gave a detailed briefing on the proposed initiative. It was decided that a comprehensive awareness drive will be launched across Punjab, which will be personally led by the chief minister. Officials informed the meeting that the campaign will highlight preventive measures and treatment options for major diseases, with special emphasis on public awareness and early detection. The chief minister directed authorities to ensure strict implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) in public hospitals, particularly to prevent the spread of epidemic and rapidly spreading diseases. She also instructed the Healthcare Commission to closely monitor compliance with health SOPs in private hospitals and clinics, and ordered strict legal action against quack clinics operating across the province. CM Maryam Nawaz emphasized that public awareness regarding prevention of fatal and infectious diseases is essential for improving health outcomes, adding that early diagnosis plays a key role in saving lives. She said patients must be provided not only treatment but also hope and support for recovery.—DNA

Murad pushes fast-track execution of road projects

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting to review the progress of major federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) schemes for 2025-26 and to finalise a forward strategy for the upcoming PSDP 2026-27, with a strong focus on road infrastructure, regional connectivity, and economic growth here at CM House on Tuesday. The Minister for Planning & Development Jam Khan Shoro, Minister for Works Haji Ali Hassan Zardari, Chief Secretary, Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoti, Secretary Works, Nawaz Soho, Secretary to CM, Asif Jameel, Secretary Irrigation, Zarif Khero and other senior officials were present in the meeting. The Chief Minister was informed that five major road infrastructure projects, with a cumulative cost of over Rs140.9 billion, are current-

ly under implementation with a cost-sharing arrangement between the federal and provincial governments. These include the extension of the 36-km Sindh Coastal Highway, the 150-km Rohri - Guddu Barrage road improvement, the 31.4-km Dualisation of Tando Allahyar - Tando Adam road, the 135-km Dualisation of Mehran Highway (Nawabshah - Ranipur), and the 221-km Sanghar-Rohri (N-5) road improvement. The CM was told that significant physical progress has been achieved on several schemes, while others are at tendering or early execution stages. So far, Rs17.94 billion has been released in the current financial year, with overall expenditure steadily increasing. Murad Ali Shah emphasised expediting work and directed all departments to immediately resolve bottlenecks, including relocation of utility lines, shifting of electric poles, and removal of

encroachments. He instructed authorities to fast-track relocation of Sui gas pipelines, power infrastructure, and watercourses that are affecting project execution. The Chief Minister stressed that the quality of construction must not be compromised. "These road projects are lifelines for our economy. They must be built to last and completed on time to provide maximum benefit to the people," he said. He added that improved road infrastructure would enhance trade, reduce travel time, and support agriculture, industry, and regional connectivity across Sindh. The CM meeting also reviewed and endorsed key proposals for the upcoming PSDP 2026 - 27, including additional carriageway from Jacobabad Bypass to Kandhkot (100 km), Dualisation of the Thatta-Sujawal - Badin road (112 km), and a Dual carriageway from Dadu to Dokri via key stations (84 km). - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ranger personnel stand guard on Faizabad Bridge in the Federal Capital.

Sadequain Foundation pays tribute to Iqbal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sadequain Foundation paid tribute to Allama Muhammad Iqbal on his death anniversary, highlighting the enduring connection between Iqbal's philosophical thought and the artistic legacy of Sadequain Iqbal, the visionary poet-philosopher who laid the intellectual foundation for Pakistan, is revered as Mufakkire-Pakistan and Shair-e-Mashriq. His poetry continues to inspire generations with its message of selfhood (khudi), unity, and spiritual awakening. Talking to APP, a representative of the foundation, Zohaib Ch. said that on this solemn occasion, Iqbal's legacy found a profound artistic expression in Sadequain's work. He noted that Sadequain's iconic "Mo'jza-e-Fun" series serves as a remarkable visual interpretation of Iqbal's poetry, where verses transcend words and take shape through bold lines, expressive figures, and dynamic calligraphy. He said that through this series, Sadequain transformed Iqbal's philosophical depth into a visual language, effectively bridging literature and fine art. Each illustration reflects themes of struggle, self-realization, and the eternal quest for truth, core elements of Iqbal's poetic vision. Zohaib Ch added that the fusion of text and imagery in "Mo'jza-e-Fun" not only preserves Iqbal's message but also reintroduces it to modern audiences in a compelling and accessible manner.

OGDC accelerates Zin Gas field production

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), Pakistan's largest exploration and production company, has continued to accelerate efforts to unlock value from its stranded and low BTU gas resources, with a renewed focus on fast-tracking production from challenging assets such as the Zin Gas Field. As part of this strategy, OGDC is actively engaging with the Government of Balochistan to explore the utilization of Zin's low BTU gas for industrial clusters and fertilizer projects. The initiative aims to support regional economic development while optimizing the use of indigenous energy resources that have remained underutilized. Further strengthening this initiative, OGDC has

signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Uch Power Limited to jointly assess the technical and commercial potential of using Zin gas for power generation. The collaboration will pave the way for innovative and sustainable energy solutions, particularly in areas with limited access to conventional fuel supplies. These strategic collaborations underscore OGDC's commitment to maximizing the potential of indigenous hydrocarbon resources through targeted investments and strategic partnerships. Through these initiatives, the company continues to strengthen its role in enhancing energy security, promoting economic growth, and delivering long-term value for Pakistan's energy sector.—DNA

Students asked to utilize tech for research, e-commerce

HYDERABAD: Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Islamabad Professor Dr Niaz Ahmed Akhtar visited the University of Sindh, where he distributed laptops among meritorious students and addressed the senior faculty and staff upon his arrival. Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Fateh Muhammad Mari warmly received the HEC chairman. Accompanied by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Akhtar proceeded to the auditorium of Benazir Bhutto Chair & Convention Centre and handed over laptops to male and female students under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed satisfaction that the Prime Minister's initiative to provide laptops for educational purposes was being implemented on merit. He noted that students could utilize these devices not only for research but also for developing projects and engaging in e-commerce to generate income. Dr Akhtar revealed that during his recent meeting with the prime minister, he was directed to expedite the distribution of laptops in the first phase to enable the launch of the second phase at the earliest. Referring to prevailing national challenges, he said that despite difficult circumstances, the federal government had continued the laptop scheme, urging students to take full advantage of the opportunity. The ceremony was attended by former Vice-Chancellor of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Prof Dr Muhammad Aslam Uqaili,

Vice-Chancellor of Sindh Madressatul Islam University Karachi, Prof Dr Mujeeb Sahrai, Vice-Chancellor of University of Mirpurkhas Prof Dr Rafiq Memon, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the SU Thatta Campus Prof Dr Misbah Bibi Qureshi, Registrar Sajid Qayoom Memon, focal person for the laptop scheme at Sindh Varsity Dr Kamran Taj Pathan, Deans and heads of departments. Earlier, addressing deans, directors and senior faculty members at the VC Secretariat's Senate Hall, the HEC chairman acknowledged being fully aware of the challenges faced by the University of Sindh. He assured that these issues would be resolved in coordination with the Vice-Chancellor. Dr Akhtar appreciated the Sindh government for increasing annual grants to universities compared to other provinces, calling it a commendable step. He observed that challenges faced by the University of Sindh were broadly similar to those at University of the Punjab. He underscored the historic role of the University of Sindh in educating the province's youth and producing distinguished individuals who have served in key positions within Pakistan's bureaucracy and across the globe. He stated that his perception of the University of Sindh remained highly positive and that, despite his relatively recent appointment as HEC chairman, he was well aware of the institution's issues and the socioeconomic backgrounds of its students.—APP

کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ راولپنڈی

نیلام عام برائے بل بورڈ اہورڈنگ بورڈ

فائلنگس رجسٹرڈ عوام الناس/ایڈورٹائزنگ فرمز کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ کنٹونمنٹ ایریا راولپنڈی کیسٹ میں درج ذیل مقام پر بل بورڈ اہورڈنگ بورڈ کی ذریعہ ایڈورٹائزنگ بورڈ نیلام مورخہ 12-05-2026 12:00 بجے عرصہ تین سال کے لیے جاری ہے، جس کی تجدید دوسرے سال اور تیسرے سال 10 فیصد کیا ونڈ اڈانٹ کے ساتھ ہوگی۔ اگر کسی وہب سے بولی نہ ہوگی تو دوبارہ بولی 13-05-2026 کو اور سہارہ مورخہ 14-05-2026 کو منظور ہوگی۔

S.No	Location of Site	Size	Qty	Remarks
1.	Wall of Mall Plaza	40x30	1	Wall Panel/ Top roof of building facing Kashmir Road

شرائط و ضوابط:

- کنٹونمنٹ ایریا کی حق منطوقی کی تاریخ سے برائے عرصہ 03 سال (مشروڈ کیا ونڈ 10 فیصد اضافہ فرمالا نہ بمطابق فیصلہ کیسٹ بورڈ راولپنڈی) ہوگا اور بورڈ منطوقی کے بعد لگایا جائے گا اور باقاعدہ (Handing Taking) اور مورڈنگ سٹپس کنٹریکٹ، ایگریمنٹ کے بعد دیا جائے گا
- بولی شروع ہونے سے پیشتر برہوئی دہندہ کو 10 لاکھ روپے کا پے آرڈر کنٹونمنٹ ایگریمنٹ آفیسر راولپنڈی (فی سائٹ) بطور ضمانت ہمراہ جاتی کارڈ کی کاپی بولی سے قس جمع کروانا ہوگا۔
- کامیاب بولی دہندہ کوکل بولی 1/4 حصہ بولی ختم ہونے کے فوراً بعد موقع پر ہی جمع کروانا ہوگا اور بولی کی منطوقی کے بعد قبضہ لینے سے پہلے بولی کی رقم کے برابر ماہوار 11 ماہ کے پیشگی چیک بنام ایگریمنٹ آفیسر راولپنڈی کیسٹ جمع کروانا ہوگا۔
- 1/4th رقم بلورڈ منطوقی کنٹونمنٹ کے پاس رہے گی جو مدت معاہدہ کی تکمیل کے بعد حسابات Clear ہونے کے بعد واپس کر دی جائے گی البتہ یہ ایگریمنٹ آخری قسط کے وقت کی جائے گی۔
- کیسٹ بورڈ کے ناہندگان بولی میں حصہ لینے سے اہل نہ ہوں گے۔
- کامیاب بولی دہندہ پر انٹرنل اور ریگولیشنز کا اطلاق کنٹونمنٹ کے مورچہ قوانین کے تحت ہوگا جو کہ پہلے بولی کی مدت کے لیے انٹرنل کیسٹ چیکلی جمع کروانا ہوگا بصورت دیگر کیسٹ بورڈ کو قس حاصل ہوگا کہ بولی کی قس شدہ رقم قبضہ کر کے مذکورہ مورڈنگ بورڈ دوبارہ نیلام کر دیا جائے۔
- کامیاب بولی دہندہ کو بولی کی حق منطوقی کے بعد کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ کے ساتھ اپنے خرچہ پر باقاعدہ تحریری معاہدہ کرنا ہوگا اور اس کو سب رجسٹر سے رجسٹرڈ کروانا ہوگا۔
- کامیاب بولی دہندہ سٹریکچرل سرٹیفکیٹ دینے کا پابند ہوگا۔
- زیرو ٹیکس کو بیچنے اور ریز کے تحت کسی ایک یا تمام بولیوں کو (فمن منطوقی) مسترد کرنے کا اختیار حاصل ہوگا۔
- دیگر شرائط منطوقی کے وقت کارڈ میں سے معلوم کی جاسکتی ہیں۔
- کسی بھی قسم کے تنازع کی صورت میں پریزیڈنٹ کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ راولپنڈی ثالث ہوگا اور اس کا فیصلہ دونوں پارٹیوں پر من و عن لا ہوگا۔
- یہ اسٹیٹیا MLC& APP اور RCB ویب سائٹ پر اپلوڈ ہوگا۔

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**

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

PIDE calls on Pakistan to seize maritime moment amid Gulf war

Despite these encouraging trends, PIDE cautions that the current gains reflect a temporary window rather than a structural transformation. Karachi's urban congestion and limited expansion capacity, Port Qasim's upstream constraints, and Gwadar's underdeveloped ecosystem all pose serious challenges to sustaining this momentum. Without timely policy action, Pakistan risks losing this opportunity as quickly as it emerged

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has released a new policy brief highlighting a rare and time-sensitive opportunity for Pakistan to reposition its ports as competitive regional and global trade hubs amid ongoing disruptions in Gulf shipping routes. Authored by Dr. Nadia Hassan, Assistant Professor at PIDE, the brief titled Capitalizing on Conflict: Reimagining the Ports of Pakistan Amid Gulf War argues that while Pakistan is already benefiting from diverted cargo flows, the real challenge lies in converting these temporary gains into sustained economic

advantage through urgent and coordinated reforms. With nearly one-fifth of global trade passing through the Strait of Hormuz, recent tensions and its closure in March 2026 triggered a major rerouting of international shipping away from traditional hubs such as Dubai's Jebel Ali and Oman's Salalah. Pakistan's ports—Karachi Port, Port Qasim, and Gwadar—located outside the direct conflict zone yet in close proximity to key shipping lanes, have emerged as viable alternatives, placing the country at the center of a rapidly shifting maritime landscape. The scale of this shift has been significant. Karachi Port alone handled approximately 11,000 transshipment containers and recorded 133 vessel calls in March, surpass-

ing its total transshipment activity for the previous year. Port Qasim absorbed nearly 25 percent of redirected cargo and processed over 4,000 TEUs in a single day, registering an extraordinary 2,302 percent increase in transshipment activity. Gwadar Port, though still developing, marked its entry into the regional transshipment network by berthing its first vessel, signaling strong long-term potential as a deep-sea hub at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Despite these encouraging trends, PIDE cautions that the current gains reflect a temporary window rather than a structural transformation. Karachi's urban congestion and limited expansion capacity, Port Qasim's upstream constraints, and Gwadar's underdeveloped ecosystem all pose serious challenges

to sustaining this momentum. Without timely policy action, Pakistan risks losing this opportunity as quickly as it emerged. A comparative analysis with leading regional ports underscores the gap. Jebel Ali handles approximately 15.5 million TEUs annually compared to Karachi's 2.65 million, while its Port Liner Shipping Connectivity Index stands at 775 against Karachi's 310 and Port Qasim's 131. Vessel turnaround times at Salalah range between 10 to 20 hours, whereas Pakistan's ports report inconsistent performance. Similarly, Pakistan's ports operate with only 5 to 6 ship-to-shore cranes compared to 27 to 29 in leading hubs, and berth occupancy ratios remain below the global optimal range of 50 to 70 percent.

Iqbal's philosophy guide for Pakistan's future

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi on Tuesday called Allama Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy a lasting source of guidance for Pakistan, as the nation marked the 88th death anniversary of the poet-philosopher. In his message, the Minister said Iqbal's thought of selfhood, moral strength, intellectual freedom, and continuous striving offers a foundation for reforming the country's education system, empowering youth, and promoting cultural heritage. The Minister said Iqbal viewed education not merely as a means of livelihood but as a process of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development, adding that Pakistan must build an education system that nurtures character, responsibility, creativity, and national purpose. He emphasized that Iqbal regarded youth as the driving force of national progress and called for creating better opportunities for their training, skill development, and participation in nation-building. The Minister also stressed the need to preserve and promote Pakistan's cultural heritage in the light of Iqbal's thought, so that society remains rooted in its values while advancing toward progress.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Daily wage laborers waiting for work at roadside in Peshawar Mor area Federal Capital.

SC to ensure continuity during unforeseen holidays

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has notified separate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aimed at ensuring uninterrupted judicial functioning during unforeseen public holidays and introducing a transparent and priority-based system for fixation of cases. According to a press release issued on Tuesday, the court's administrative and judicial work will ordinarily continue even during emergently declared public holidays with minimal essential staff, unless otherwise directed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The newly introduced case fixation framework gives priority to urgent civil and criminal matters, including family cases, bail applications, criminal review petitions, cases involving prisoners above 80 years of age, restoration petitions, compromise matters, and cases involving short legal questions. In an effort to reduce case pendency, the SOPs mandate that at least 40 per cent of each Final Cause List will comprise the oldest pending cases up to the year 2018, with gradual inclusion of cases from subsequent years where necessary. The court has also introduced special facilitation measures for cases filed by lawyers from Sindh and Balochistan. The SOPs further provide for the issuance of weekly and proposed monthly cause lists, alongside the development of an automated case fixation system aimed at enhancing transparency, reducing delays, and improving overall case flow management. The measures, the statement said, reflect the court's commitment to an efficient, technology-driven and citizen-centric administration of justice. The SOPs have also been made available on the official website of the Supreme Court for public awareness and stakeholders' information.—APP

OIC-COMSTECH, IUT conclude int'l training on strategic communication

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), in collaboration with the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), successfully concluded a two-day international training workshop titled "Strategic Science Communication: Building Bridges Between Scientists and Journalists for Knowledge Advancement in Gazipur, Bangladesh. The workshop brought together participants from across OIC Member States, including Pakistan, to strengthen science communication capacity and foster collaboration between scientists, journalists, and policymakers. The closing ceremony marked the culmination of an impactful program, where 48 participants from 15 countries were awarded certificates and prizes in recognition of their successful completion. In his remarks, Vice Chancellor, IUT, Prof. Rafiqul Islam appreciated the diverse international participation and reaffirmed IUT's commitment to academic excellence, international cooperation, and capacity building in science and technology. Earlier, at the inaugural session, Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Iqbal Choudhary emphasized that in today's rapidly evolving world, science must extend

beyond laboratories and reach society in a clear, credible, and impactful manner. He highlighted that effective science communication is essential for improving public understanding, supporting evidence-based policymaking, and strengthening trust in science. He pointed out the growing gap between scientific communities and the public, often exacerbated by misinformation in the age of artificial intelligence. He stressed the need for science communication to act as a bridge connecting researchers, media, policymakers, and society. He further noted that empowering scientists with communication skills is critical to addressing global challenges such as climate change, public health crises, and sustainable development. The participants highly appreciated the training program, describing it as practically relevant and professionally enriching. Many expressed interest in replicating similar initiatives in their home institutions. The successful conclusion of the workshop reflects COMSTECH's continued commitment to strengthening science communication, promoting regional cooperation, and fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and innovation across OIC Member States, including Pakistan.—DNA

A.D.C No. 72/2026/NTC/DM

Government of Pakistan

National Tariff Commission

Notice of Initiation of Anti-Dumping Investigation against Alleged Dumped Imports of Dextrose Monohydrate into Pakistan Originating in and/or Exported from the People's Republic of China

The National Tariff Commission (the "Commission") has received an application under Section 20 of the Anti-Dumping Duties Act, 2015, (the "Act") on March 11, 2026, from M/s Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, Faisalabad and M/s Matco Foods Limited, Karachi (the "Applicants"), who are producers of Dextrose Monohydrate. The Applicants have alleged that Dextrose Monohydrate is being exported to Pakistan at dumped prices from the People's Republic of China ("China"). According to the Applicants, the alleged dumped imports of Dextrose Monohydrate from China have caused and are causing material injury to the Pakistan's domestic industry producing Dextrose Monohydrate.

Upon initial examination and scrutiny of the information and evidence provided in the application, in accordance with Section 23 of the Act, the Commission is satisfied that the information and evidence provided in the application is adequate and accurate as well as sufficient to justify the initiation of this investigation.

Initiation of Investigation: The Commission hereby initiates an anti-dumping investigation pursuant to Section 23 of the Act. The investigation will determine whether Dextrose Monohydrate originating in and/or exported from China is dumped into Pakistan and whether such dumping has caused and/or is causing injury to the domestic industry producing Dextrose Monohydrate within the meaning of provisions of the Act. The Commission, during the course of this investigation, will seek further information/data from the interested parties, deemed necessary, for the purposes of this investigation.

Product under Investigation: The product allegedly being dumped into Pakistan is Dextrose Monohydrate (hereinafter referred to as "Dextrose Monohydrate" or "the investigated product"). The investigated product is classified under Pakistan Customs Tariff ("PCT") Heading No. 1702.3000.

Period of Investigation (POI): For the determination of dumping and injury, the POI is as follows:

For determination of dumping: From January 01, 2025, to December 31, 2025
For determination of injury: From January 01, 2023, to December 31, 2025

Interested Parties: Interested parties, as defined in Section 2(j) of the Act, are requested to identify and register themselves with the Secretary, National Tariff Commission, State Life Building No. 5, Blue Area, Islamabad, Tel: +9251-9202839 Fax: +9251-9221205 not later than 10 days after publication of this notice. Any interested party applying for registration with the Commission in this investigation should submit, the name of the company, its line of business, name of authorized person, address, telephone number, email, fax number etc.

All interested parties are invited to submit their views/comments/ documents/evidence (if any), related to this investigation, not later than 45 days of the date of publication of this notice in the press in Pakistan. Written submissions provided by interested parties on a confidential basis must be marked "Confidential" and in accordance with Section 31 of the Act, shall be accompanied by a non-confidential version/summary, which will be placed in the public file. All data and the information in this regard should be submitted to the Director (Investigation-I/A), National Tariff Commission, State Life Building No.5, Blue Area, Islamabad. Tel: +92 51 9204118, Fax: +92 51 922 1205. Email: aamir.ntcpk@gmail.com

Investigation Schedule:

Date of initiation of investigation	The date of publication of this notice in the press in Pakistan.
Date of preliminary determination	Not earlier than 60 days and not later than 180 days from the date of initiation of the investigation.
Date of final determination	Within 180 days of the date of publication of notice of preliminary determination in the press in Pakistan

Public File: In accordance with Rule 7 of the Rules, the Commission has established and maintained a Public File at its office, which shall be available to the interested parties for reviewing and copying from Monday to Thursday between 1100 hours to 1300 hours (except public holidays) throughout the investigation period.

Further Information: General information may also be obtained by accessing the Commission's official website www.ntc.gov.pk

By order of the Commission.

(Khizar Hayat)
Secretary, NTC
April 22, 2026

Briefs

CEO Education reviews academic standards

RAWALPINDI: Chief Executive Officer District Education Authority (DEA) Rawalpindi on Tuesday visited Government Girls High School (GGHS) Dheri Hassan Abad to assess academic and administrative standards. During the visit, the CEO evaluated the quality of education by directly engaging with students through interactive questioning. He also reviewed administrative and management affairs of the institution. The CEO expressed satisfaction with the overall academic environment and management standards observed at the school. Drawing on his experience as an educationist, he shared practical suggestions with the teaching staff to further improve instructional methods and strengthen institutional performance.—APP

Allama Iqbal's philosophy guides Pakistan's future

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engr Amir Muqam, has paid tribute to Allama Muhammad Iqbal saying Iqbal's philosophy continues to provide effective and enduring guidance for a bright and stable future for Pakistan. On the occasion of the 88th death anniversary of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Muqam, noted that Iqbal gave the Muslim Ummah a new direction through revolutionary concepts such as selfhood, moral strength, intellectual freedom, and perseverance, said a press release Muqam added that, in Iqbal's view, education is not merely a means to secure employment but a comprehensive process that nurtures a person's mental, moral, and spiritual development. He emphasized that character building, responsibility, and purpose-driven education are the fundamental needs of today's educational and social system. He said that knowledge must be used as a tool for character formation, awareness must be translated into responsibility, and skills must be employed to ensure societal progress.—APP

ANF seizes 115 kg drugs in four operations

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country against drug traffickers recovered 115 kg drugs worth more than Rs 10 million and arrested five suspects including a woman. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, in an operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad, 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle and two accused were arrested. Near Burhan Motorway Toll Plaza, 1.2 kg hashish was seized from the possession of a woman traveling in public van. In third operation conducted near Sanjal District Ziarat, 4 kg opium was recovered from a vehicle and two accused were rounded up. In an other operation near District Nokundi, 105 kg opium was recovered from a vehicle. The spokesman informed that separate cases have been registered against the accused under the CNSA-1997.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust eye camps treat 665,000 patients

Pakistan has only 15 ophthalmologists, five optometrists, and nine allied ophthalmic personnel per million people, highlighting the scale of unmet need and the limits of charity-driven models without sustained public health investment

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust's community outreach programmes reached more than 665,000 patients in the financial year 2024-25, while the organisation also launched a mobile operation theatre developed in collaboration with Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) to provide free eye surgeries in remote communities where fixed hospitals remain inaccessible. While briefing media, President of Al-Shifa Trust Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said that the Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology (ACCO), set up over 1,400 eye camps, screened more than 420,000 patients and 244,000 schoolchildren for vision defects, and performed 13,777 surgeries, mostly cataract procedures in one year.

It also screened over 38,000 patients for hypertension and diabetes, reflecting a widening scope beyond ophthalmology, he added.

He informed that the newly commissioned mobile theatre comprises two specialised truck units. The first houses a generator, sterilisation equipment, and pre-operative facilities. The second expands into a full operating environment with two surgical tables, allowing surgeons to operate simultaneously and perform up to 100 surgeries per day. MD of OGDCL Ahmed Hayat Lak said the company has sponsored 160 surgical camps since 2017, enabling 28,000 surgeries, treating 260,000 patients, and screening 75,000 schoolchildren. General Manager ACCO Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Najam-ul-Hasnat said over the past 25



years, ACCO has conducted approximately 150,000 surgeries across all four provinces as well as AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. In FY 2024-25, the programme expanded internationally for the first time, serving 5,632 beneficiaries and performing more than 400 cataract operations in Somalia, with plans to extend services to Afghanistan and

East Africa. Following the 2025 monsoon floods, ACCO teams also reached more than 32,000 affected people in KPK and north and south Punjab, distributing medicines, glasses, and hygiene kits. About 26 million people in Pakistan live with vision impairment, including 1.5 million who are blind and more than 3 million children facing

preventable sight loss. Nearly 90 percent live in low-income areas with limited access to care. Pakistan has only 15 ophthalmologists, five optometrists, and nine allied ophthalmic personnel per million people, highlighting the scale of unmet need and the limits of charity-driven models without sustained public health investment.

Pak's exports to China climb nearly 45% in Q1

Pakistan's main exports to China included copper and related products, cotton yarn and fabrics, seafood, rice, sesame seeds, zinc and chromium ores, and iron ore

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports to China rose 44.79% in the first quarter of 2026 from a year earlier, with steady month-on-month growth and demand expanding across several Chinese provinces. This was reported by China Economic Net (CEN) on Tuesday quoting data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). Pakistan's exports to China totalled more than \$927 million in the January-March period, up from \$640.22 million a year earlier, the data showed. In January, Zhejiang was the top destination for Pakistani exports at \$86.7 million, followed by Beijing at \$45.3 million and Fujian at \$27.4 million. Other major destinations included Guangdong at \$16.4 million, Hebei at \$13.2 million and Shandong at \$13.1 million. In February, exports to Zhejiang rose to \$100.6 million, while Beijing recorded \$64.6 million and Guangdong jumped to \$40.0 million. Fujian took in \$35.7 million, followed by Guangxi at \$13.7 million and Shandong at \$12.1 million. The upward trend continued in March, with exports to Zhejiang climbing to \$109.2 million, keeping it in the lead. Fujian and Guangdong emerged as major destinations at \$52.5 million and \$51.6 million respectively, while exports to Beijing stood at \$35.4 million. Shipments to Shanghai, Shandong and Anhui also increased to \$20.7 million, \$20.2 million and \$20.1 million, respectively. Pakistani official sources told CEN that coastal and economically developed regions remained the main destinations for Pakistani goods, led by eastern provinces such as Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu and Shandong. Inland provinces including Henan, Hunan and Sichuan also posted steady inflows, indicating a broader spread of demand within China. Pakistan's main exports to China included copper and related products, cotton yarn and fabrics, seafood, rice, sesame seeds, zinc and chromium ores, and iron ore.—DNA

Centrum air launches direct Lahore - Tashkent flights

ISLAMABAD: Centrum Air, Uzbekistan's fastest-growing and largest private airline has announced the launch of its new direct service between Lahore and Tashkent, commencing on April 21st, 2026. The route will operate twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Fridays, utilizing modern Airbus A320 aircraft, offering passengers a reliable and efficient connection between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, as well as access to an expanding international network, said a release issued here on Tuesday. Centrum Air is focused on expanding international connectivity and offering competitive, customer-oriented travel solutions across a growing network of destinations. The introduction of this route reflects the airline's ongoing international expansion strategy. As part of this development, the airline has established its official representation in

Pakistan in partnership with Gerry's Group, a leading aviation services provider in the country. The Lahore-Tashkent route is expected to generate strong point-to-point demand, particularly from organized travel groups, as Uzbekistan continues to grow in popularity among Pakistani travelers. Renowned for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, Uzbekistan is home to iconic destinations such as Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara, which are increasingly attracting visitors from Pakistan. In addition to group tourism, the route is expected to serve a diverse passenger base, including independent (FIT) travelers, students pursuing medical education, and religious tourism flows, particularly to the historic and spiritual centers of Samarkand and Bukhara.—APP

PPSC shifts PMS 2025 exam centres

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) has shifted examination centres for the PMS 2025 competitive examinations from Rawalpindi to Lahore in view of the prevailing security situation in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The decision was taken at a committee meeting chaired by Member PPSC Mirza Sohail Amir, while Secretary PPSC Afzal Ahmed issued a formal notification in this regard. According to the notification, as many as 1,216 candidates from Rawalpindi Division will now appear in compulsory subject papers in Lahore. The candidates include 754 men and 462 women. The examinations, earlier scheduled to be held from April 24 to April 26, 2026, were to take place at Government Gordon Graduate College, Liaquat Road, Rawalpindi and Government Associate College for Women, Jhanda Chichi. However, due to the security situation, the centres have been relocated to Divisional Public School, Model Town, Lahore, to ensure a conducive environment for candidates, the PPSC said. Affected candidates have been advised to download their revised admission letters after 2:00 pm on April 21, 2026, and ensure their presence at the new examination centre as per the schedule. Meanwhile, the results of PMS/Combined Competitive Examination 2025 Phase-I have already been announced. More than 8,000 candidates were declared successful against 119 posts. Over 36,000 candidates had appeared in the Phase-I examination held on January 25, 2026, of whom 8,898 qualified.—APP

FDE posts Hols across 113 educational institutions

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards strengthening institutional leadership and ensuring seamless academic operations, the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), under the guidance of Secretary Education Mr. Nadeem Mahbub, has successfully completed the posting of Heads of Institutions (Hols) across 113 educational institutions in Islamabad and surrounding areas. This important initiative aligns with the commencement of the new academic session, marking a key milestone in ensuring continuity in academic planning and administration. The Director General approved the proposals submitted by all six Area Education Officers (AEOs) after thorough review. The postings reflect a balanced and inclusive approach, with 51 male and 62 female Heads of Institutions appointed across various institutions. Sector-wise distribution demonstrates broad and equitable coverage: Nilore leads with 45 institutions, followed by Bhara Kahu (26), Sihala (20), Tarnol (10), Urban-I (8), and Urban-II (4). A central consideration in the posting process was to assign Heads of Institutions within their respective sectors, preferably close to their residences. This approach is expected to enhance administrative efficiency, foster stronger institutional ownership, and improve overall performance outcomes.—APP

BISP chief pays tribute to Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khaliq Tuesday paid tribute to Allama Muhammad Iqbal on his death anniversary, saying his vision continues to guide the nation's collective struggle and direction. In her message, she said that the great thinker of Islam, Allama Muhammad Iqbal had envisioned a dignified and sovereign Pakistan. She noted that Iqbal's concept of Pakistan reflects a welfare state based on justice and equality. Senator Khaliq said that the philosophy of the Poet of the East still determines the course of national efforts, adding that Iqbal awakened the Muslims of the subcontinent to the idea of a separate homeland. She further highlighted that Iqbal's message revolves around selfhood (khudi), action, and unity, which remain essential for building a strong, prosperous, and self-reliant Pakistan. Emphasizing the relevance of Iqbal's teachings, she said the country must strive to transform into a true welfare state in light of his ideas.—APP

CPEC brings \$25.9b investment, 261,000 jobs

Social sector initiatives have also been rolled out, including the China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital, which has treated over 350,000 patients, and a seawater desalination plant producing about 3,000 tons of fresh water per day to address local shortages

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As China and Pakistan mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership has delivered billions in investment, major infrastructure development and job creation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. According to a factsheet released by the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, with Gwadar emerged as a central hub of regional connectivity. According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a central component of the Belt and Road Initiative, has attracted \$25.93 billion in investment and created more than 261,000 jobs, as per the factsheet. CPEC has added over 8,000 megawatts of power generation capacity and developed more than 510 kilometres of road

infrastructure, along with 886 kilometres of core transmission lines. Gwadar has seen a series of projects aimed at transforming the coastal city into a regional connectivity hub. These include the Gwadar Port's expansion under the flagship project, which features deep-water berths capable of handling large cargo vessels and oil tankers. The Gwadar International Airport, described as a state-of-the-art facility, is expected to accommodate some of the world's largest aircraft. Social sector initiatives have also been rolled out, including the China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital, which has treated over 350,000 patients, and a seawater desalination plant producing about 3,000 tons of fresh water per day to address local shortages. Over 10,000 households have been provided with solar panels. Education and skills development have also been part of the effort. The China-aided Technical and Vocational

Institute in Gwadar provides thousands of training opportunities annually, while schools in the region have been upgraded to expand access to education. Across Pakistan, CPEC projects span energy, transport and industry. In Punjab, projects such as the Sahiwal coal power plant (1,320 MW), Karot Hydropower Plant ((720MW), and Lahore's Orange Line Metro have improved energy supply and urban mobility. In Sindh, nuclear and wind power projects have boosted electricity generation, while major road networks like the Sukkur-Multan Motorway have reduced travel times. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Suki Kinari Hydropower Project has been generating 884 MW of clean energy, with estimated coal savings of 1.28 million tons per year and a reduction of 3.2 million tons of CO2 annually. Industrial cooperation is also expanding. The Haier-Ruba

Special Economic Zone and textile ventures in Punjab are expected to generate tens of thousands of jobs and increase exports. Bilateral trade remains strong, with China maintaining its position as Pakistan's top trading partner for 12 consecutive years. The volume of bilateral trade exceeded \$25 billion in 2025. In the first eight months of FY 2025-26, 53.2% of total foreign direct investment came from China. The factsheet also highlighted cooperation in agriculture, space technology and education. The two sides have established the CPEC Consortium of Universities with 130 member institutions. Pakistani satellites have been launched with Chinese support, while thousands of Pakistani students and professionals have received training in China. Cooperation has also expanded in culture and media organisations in both countries.

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ASHRAF

The strait, the patient and the Pakistani doctor

GHASSAN CHARBEL

BEATING the drums of war could summon its return. It could also lead the hawks to offer concessions and ripen the conditions for a settlement. We are in the midst of a major crisis that could be more dangerous than any of the ailing Middle East's wars. The parties constantly check their watches. Time is running out. The American-Iranian truce expires on Wednesday. Patience is not among Donald Trump's virtues and surrender is not something the generals of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps can stomach. Another party is watching on and anxiously counting down the clock: the global economy, which is now held hostage in the Strait of Hormuz and caught in a military and economic crisis with implications for countries near and far. It is no surprise that these fateful days are brimming with schemes, brinkmanship, leaks and threats. Trump demands that Iran explicitly abandon its nuclear ambitions and refrain from pursuing nuclear weapons in the future. That is why he rejects enrichment and insists on taking possession of the highly enriched uranium currently buried under the rubble of American airstrikes. He also demands constraints to Iran's missile program, which it has used more against the neighbors who avoided entering the war than its enemies. He further demands that Iran stop using its proxies — those "small armies" originally fostered, financed and armed by Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Should Iran comply, its position, boundaries and role would fundamentally change. Iran has learned to adapt to life under sanctions but its ability to withstand further suffocation is in doubt. In the days of Ali Khamenei and Soleimani, Iran expanded as it sought to seize the keys to the region. The Syrian-Israeli border effectively became an Iranian-Israeli border, as did the Lebanese-Israeli border and Israel's border with Gaza. Iraqi factions joined the "axis of resistance" and the Houthis arose. Iran encircled Israel with a network of tunnels and missiles, making progress on achieving its dream of cutting the "thread of American interests" in the Middle East. The picture has changed thanks to the wars that have broken out since Yahya Sinwar's Al-Aqsa Flood operation erased the Iranian-Israeli border in Gaza. They also cost Iran its frontier with Israel via the Syrian "bridge" and it is set to lose Lebanon as well. The recent statements of President Joseph Aoun are clear and unequivocal: the Lebanese state does not recognize any partner in its decisions of war and peace, and it does not allow any foreign party to speak or negotiate on its behalf. He is openly defying the Iranian tutelage that succeeded Syrian tutelage. This

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 164

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

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same stance has been expressed by the government of Nawaf Salam and the majority of Lebanese citizens. The Iranian regime has not collapsed under the weight of American and Israeli strikes, nor was it expected to. It now faces an extremely dangerous test, however. Resuming the conflict would compound its losses. The American military has built up an immense presence in the region. "Economic fury," the pursuit of floating storage tankers and the maritime blockades could be more lethal than bombardment from the skies. Iran has learned to adapt to life under sanctions but its ability to withstand further suffocation is in doubt. The world anxiously watches the clock. Hopes now rest on the efforts of Field Marshal Asim Munir, an experienced soldier. He was born in a country shaped by its geography. Between India, China, Afghanistan and Iran, Pakistan is at the heart of Asia's tensions, as seen in the latest flare-up with India, in which Munir played a role. Munir understands that his task will not be easy; he must clear the mines and cross the strait of negotiations. Munir holds several cards that allow him to move between Tehran and Washington: the trust of the American president and ties with IRGC leaders that date back to the days of Soleimani. He can also make use of the close ties his country enjoys with both China and the US, as well as Pakistan's deep strategic ties with Saudi Arabia — ties that include a defense agreement that was reflected in the deployment of Pakistani fighter jets to the Kingdom during the regional escalation. At heart, Munir is a man of the intelligence apparatus: he led his country's military intelligence and then the Inter-Services Intelligence before becoming chief of staff. The latest skirmish with India, during which Munir combined audacity and responsibility, reinforced his reputation as a guarantor of Pakistan's sovereignty and stability. Munir knows the cost of conflict. It is not in his country's interest for Iran to sink into chaos or fragment, opening the door to cross-border turmoil. Nor is it in Pakistan's interest for Iran to undermine the stability of the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, which has long supported Pakistan and helped the country overcome economic challenges. He also knows that 47 years of hostility and reciprocal strikes separate Tehran and Washington. He understands, therefore, that his task will not be easy; he must clear the mines and cross the strait of negotiations, silence the drums of war and establish a new framework for Iran's relationship with the US and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The region is in a position similar to that of the ships trapped in the narrow strait. The Pakistani doctor must deliver an accurate diagnosis, propose innovative treatment options and then distribute bandages and guarantees. Time is running out. The world is watching the clock. A man named Benjamin Netanyahu is uneasy; he fears that Pakistan's treatment might deliver the promises he had made to himself and his voters. Munir's medicine might be bitter, but the failure of his mediation could open the "gates of hell" that Trump has threatened to compel the IRGC to swallow the poison of compromise.

US–Iran Talks Near Collapse

Qamar Bashir



This dual hesitation has created what can only be described as a vacuum of commitment. The talks are planned, the venue is prepared, but the actors themselves appear unconvinced. It is this gap—between planning and participation—that has led many observers to a stark conclusion: the second round risks collapsing before it even formally begins. Compounding this uncertainty is a strategic narrative emerging from Washington. President Donald Trump has repeatedly framed the disruption in Middle Eastern energy flows not only as a threat but...

THE global order is often described as rule-based, yet moments of crisis reveal how unevenly those rules are applied—and how fragile the system becomes when power, rather than consistency, defines legitimacy. The unfolding confrontation between the United States and Iran has brought that contradiction into sharp focus. What is justified as deterrence for some is condemned as provocation for others. That tension, long embedded in geopolitics, is now colliding with economic reality in ways that are shaking the foundations of the global system. What began as a regional war has evolved into a systemic shock. At the center of this disruption lies the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime corridor through which nearly 20 million barrels of oil pass each day—roughly a quarter of global seaborne supply—along with a critical share of liquefied natural gas. Even partial disruption to this artery has sent tremors across energy markets, tightened supply, and amplified uncertainty worldwide. The economic consequences are already visible. Oil prices have moved into the \$90–\$95 per barrel range, placing nearly \$2 billion in daily energy flows at risk. Even a temporary interruption translates into tens of billions of dollars in strain; if prolonged, the damage compounds into the hundreds of billions. Analysts warn that a sustained escalation could shave as much as one percentage point from global growth—equivalent to a loss of \$1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion annually. Yet energy is only the entry point. The deeper crisis lies in how rapidly disruption spreads through interconnected systems. Asia, the region most dependent on Middle Eastern energy imports, has become the first major zone of impact. Across the Asia-Pacific, economies are experiencing cascading breakdowns—faster and more unpredictable than the shocks seen in previous global crises. Air travel has been among the earliest casualties. Airlines across Asia are cutting routes as jet fuel prices rise sharply and supply becomes uncertain. Smaller carriers are reducing operations drastically to remain solvent, while larger airlines are recalibrating networks under mounting cost pressure. Passenger flows are weakening, tourism is contracting, and entire service economies—from hotels to transport—are under strain. The disruption extends into manufacturing, the backbone of Asia's growth. Energy-intensive industries are scaling back production as fuel and gas supplies tighten. Supply chains are under stress, and shortages of key inputs—from petrochemicals to industrial gases—are beginning to ripple across sectors, from textiles to electronics. What is emerging is a pattern of cascading scarcity. Petrochemical shortages disrupt plastics and packaging. Fertilizer constraints threaten agricultural output. Transport disruptions increase costs across supply chains. Each bottleneck reinforces the next, creating a

cycle that becomes progressively harder to contain. At the human level, the consequences are severe. The United Nations Development Programme estimates that the Asia-Pacific region could suffer losses between \$97 billion and \$299 billion, with as many as 8.8 million people at risk of falling into poverty. For millions already living on narrow margins, rising food prices combined with declining incomes are proving destabilizing. Farmers are leaving crops unharvested because transportation costs exceed returns. Workers are returning to rural areas as factories slow or shut down. Small businesses are struggling to survive as consumer demand weakens. What begins as an energy shock is rapidly transforming into a broader economic and social crisis. Against this backdrop, diplomacy—centered in Islamabad—remains deeply uncertain. Pakistan has positioned itself as a facilitator for a second round of talks, with preparations reportedly centered around high-security zones in the capital. Yet the diplomatic choreography is already faltering before it fully begins. On the American side, uncertainty surrounds even the basic question of participation. The expected delegation—linked to senior figures within the administration—has not yet definitively departed the United States. Reports suggest that key officials remain on standby rather than en route, reflecting hesitation and unresolved internal calculations. The absence of a confirmed airborne delegation at this critical moment signals a lack of urgency that is difficult to reconcile with the gravity of the crisis. On the Iranian side, the position is equally, if not more, guarded. Tehran has conveyed mixed signals—on one hand keeping the diplomatic channel nominally open, and on the other expressing strong reservations over what it views as coercive pressure, including maritime seizures and escalating rhetoric. Indications from Iranian officials suggest that participation in the second round is conditional, uncertain, and potentially subject to withdrawal if the current trajectory continues. This dual hesitation has created what can only be described as a vacuum of commitment. The talks are planned, the venue is prepared, but the actors themselves appear unconvinced. It is this gap—between planning and participation—that has led many observers to a stark conclusion: the second round risks collapsing before it even formally begins. Compounding this uncertainty is a strategic narrative emerging from Washington. President Donald Trump has repeatedly framed the disruption in Middle Eastern energy flows not only as a threat but also as an opportunity. He has stated that large numbers of empty oil tankers are moving toward the United States to be filled with American oil and gas, suggesting a redirection of global energy demand. In parallel, U.S. exports have surged,

reinforcing the perception that the United States could expand its role as a primary supplier to global markets. This introduces a complex and troubling dimension. If the crisis is simultaneously viewed as a strategic opening for economic gain, the incentives for rapid de-escalation may weaken. Even the perception of such an alignment between conflict and commercial advantage risks eroding trust and complicating already fragile negotiations. The risk, therefore, is no longer simply that talks may fail, but that they may never meaningfully commence. Without a credible diplomatic start, escalation becomes the default trajectory. Iran has already signaled that continued pressure could lead to broader retaliation, including potential targeting of regional energy infrastructure. Such actions would dramatically expand the scale of disruption and deepen the global crisis. Financial markets are already reflecting this uncertainty. Energy stocks have strengthened while broader markets show volatility, capturing the divergence between sectors that benefit from higher prices and those that suffer from instability. Investors are navigating conflicting signals, reinforcing an atmosphere of unpredictability. This is no longer a localized conflict. It is a multi-dimensional crisis—spanning energy, trade, finance, and geopolitics. It underscores how deeply the global economy depends on stable flows of energy and goods—and how quickly those flows can be disrupted. The assumption that major powers can manage conflict without triggering global consequences is being tested in real time. Asia's experience demonstrates that no region remains insulated. Disruptions propagate through supply chains, financial systems, and societies with remarkable speed. The coming days will be decisive. If the second round of talks materializes with genuine commitment, it may create a narrow window for de-escalation. But if current signals persist—hesitation, conditionality, and strategic divergence—the talks may collapse before they begin, leaving the world to confront the consequences of renewed escalation. The broader lesson is unmistakable. Global stability cannot rest on selective principles or assumptions of insulation. It depends on cooperation, consistency, and recognition of shared vulnerability. The forces now in motion—scarcity, uncertainty, and interdependence—are reshaping the global landscape. At this critical juncture, the world stands between two uncertain paths: a fragile and hesitant diplomacy that may yet falter, or a return to the flames of war with consequences that could reverberate far beyond the immediate conflict.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
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Pakistan as a Mediator in US–Iran Ceasefire

Fazeel Ahmad



This concept of energy cooperation between Pakistan and Iran is not new. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project was initially intended to export natural gas to Pakistan by Iran using a cross border infrastructure system. Nevertheless, the international sanctions against Iran and geopolitical pressure, especially that of the United States have left the project stalled. In spite of these difficulties...

POWER rivalry is not the only aspect of international politics but also the opportunities that come about during crises. Pakistan has become a possible diplomatic linkage between the United States and Iran in the changing geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. When Pakistan is able to mediate between the two states in creating long term stability, then it can be able to strategically translate this diplomacy into economic and energy gains. Energy cooperation with Iran is one of the most significant aspects of this opportunity. The energy crisis in Pakistan has been in place since time immemorial, it has been characterized by a situation of gas scarcity, high electricity prices and reliance on imported fuel which is very expensive. Here better relations between the United States and Iran would enable Pakistan to rekindle the energy projects like gas imports and pipeline cooperation which would greatly boost its economy. The Pakistani economy greatly relies on the imported energy sources. Increased demand of electricity, industrial output, and domestic use have constantly exceeded supply within the country. Consequently, the nation imports liquid natural gas (LNG) and crude oil at high global prices, thus adding fiscal strain and leading to inflation. Industrial output is also directly influenced by energy shortages. Higher production costs are experienced in the textile, manufacturing and agricultural processing sectors as a result of high-cost electricity and gas. This undermines the export competitiveness and diminishes foreign exchange earnings. Thus, energy security is not merely a technical problem but a structural economic challenge to Pakistan. The country of Iran in this case is a geographically and economically feasible partner in energy because of its closeness and vast natural gas reserves. This concept of energy cooperation between Pakistan and Iran is not new. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project was initially intended to export natural gas to Pakistan by Iran using a cross border infrastructure system. Nevertheless, the international sanctions against Iran and geopolitical pressure, especially that of the United States have left the project stalled. In spite of these difficulties, the project is still economically viable to Pakistan. Natural gas is relatively cheap in Iran compared to imports of LNG in the world market. With an improvement in diplomatic conditions, Pakistan

stands to gain by going back to pipeline imports, which will lower the cost of their energy and enhance the stability of supply. In addition, cheap gas would enable Pakistan to produce electricity at a cheaper rate, which would lessen the impact on households and industries. This would also enhance industrial productivity and promote export-led growth. The other significant sector of cooperation is the imports of crude oil. Pakistan is now dependent on costly oil imports to the Gulf markets that are subject to the price fluctuations and disruptions of supply chains around the world. By increasing economic ties with Iran, Pakistan may be able to bargain on discounted oil imports. A partial change to Iranian crude will help stabilize the domestic fuel prices. The reduced prices of oil would directly affect the transportation expense, agricultural output, and electricity generation. It would also assist in controlling inflation, which is one of the greatest macroeconomic problems in Pakistan since there would be a reduction in the prices of energy. Thus, energy cooperation with Iran goes beyond just supply to a wider economic stabilization. Greater accessibility of cheap energy would have a multiplier effect in the economy. First, it would lower the production of electricity that is a necessity in the growth of industries. This would make the manufacturing industries (particularly the textile and export oriented industries) more competitive in the international markets. Second, reduced energy prices would promote foreign direct investment. Investors will find it easier to invest in a market that has stable and affordable energy supply. This may assist Pakistan in attracting investment in areas of industries and special economic zones. Third, the welfare of the households would increase due to reduced electricity and fuel prices. This would boost the purchasing power and decrease social pressure due to inflation. Lastly, energy collaboration would enhance the trade balance of Pakistan as it would not rely on the expensive foreign energy supply by remote markets. In addition to economic gains, Pakistan as a mediator between the United States and Iran can enhance its geopolitical standing. Diplomatic bridging countries are also strategic in international relations. In the case, Pakistan manages to be helpful in de-escalation, the relations with Washington and Tehran can be enhanced at the same time.

Pakistan would be able to become relevant in the eyes of the United States, and possibly, negotiate economic or security concessions. Pakistan has the potential to enhance bilateral energy and trade with Iran. This moderating position would bolster the perception of Pakistan as a responsible regional player instead of a passive player in world politics. It also enhances its bargaining strength in subsequent international negotiations. Notwithstanding these opportunities, there are a number of structural limitations that limit the strategy of Pakistan. Sanctions imposed on Iran by international bodies are the greatest challenge as they limit transactions between nations, trade, and investment processes. The implementation can be slowed down by legal and financial obstacles even in the case of political goodwill. The other weakness is the economic vulnerability of Pakistan. The large level of external debt and dependence on international financial institutions diminish its freedom to maneuver in its foreign policies. Moreover, the strength of powerful states can also affect global energy markets, and it is hard to make unilateral decisions. Thus, the opportunities are available, but they are subject to geopolitical processes at the larger scale, particularly, the US-Iran relations. The possibility of Pakistan acting as a mediator between the United States and Iran is a geopolitical opportunity that is not very common. Provided that it is managed successfully, it can create energy cooperation avenues such as reviving gas pipelines and importing Iranian oil. The developments would save the Pakistani a lot on its energy expenses, stabilize its electricity prices and assist in industrial growth. Meanwhile the advantages are not entirely economic. Pakistan would be able to become more relevant in resolving international issues through diplomacy and become a central regional intermediary in global politics. The pace and magnitude of such opportunities are, however, curtailed by structural constraints like sanctions and world power politics. To sum up, the strategic challenge of Pakistan is not only to play the role of a mediator but also to transform diplomatic space into economic and energy benefits over the long term. When done well, this strategy would revolutionize the energy landscape in Pakistan, and become a stronghold in the changing world order.

– Student IR University of Okara

Briefs

JD Vance Pak visit delayed

FROM PAGE 01 regarding its nuclear enrichment activities and forgoing any path to a nuclear weapon. Sticking points now include the ongoing U.S. naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz and recent incidents such as the seizure of an Iranian-linked cargo ship, which Tehran has cited as contradictory signals and a potential ceasefire violation. Iran has indicated it will not negotiate under pressure or until certain conditions, like lifting aspects of the blockade, are met, while Pakistani mediators continue to urge both sides to engage. As of Tuesday evening, Vance remained in Washington, and no Iranian delegation has been confirmed to be heading to Islamabad, leaving the fate of the talks—and the ceasefire—uncertain just hours before the deadline. The situation remains fluid, with the possibility that the trip could resume quickly if diplomatic channels advance, though tensions in the region and market reactions to the uncertainty continue to mount. Official updates from the White House, Tehran, or Pakistani officials are expected to provide further clarity in the coming hours.

IMF sets 11 new conditions...

FROM PAGE 01 Finance Bill 26 and shift from profit-based to cost-based, discontinue the rights and responsibilities, and abolish all incentives by 2035. All fiscal incentives given to SEZs under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be abolished by 2035. The PPRA Rules will be amended by September 2026 after approval of the upcoming budget. The IMF's Executive Board is all set to consider approval of the completion of the third review and release of the fourth tranche under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program next month. For striking a staff-level agreement for completion of the third review under EFF and the first review under the Resilience Sustainability Facility (RSF), Pakistan agreed with the IMF that the parliamentary approval for the 2026-27 budget would be sought in line with the IMF staff. It is expected that the IMF mission will visit Islamabad next month in order to finalise the budgetary and fiscal framework with the Ministry of Finance for the upcoming budget. There is another structural benchmark (SB) agreed with the IMF that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Ordinance would be amended to adopt qualification criteria and establish a merit-based and competitive selection process by January 2027. In order to minimise the tax shortfall of the FBR, it is agreed with the IMF for the issuance of regulations for the selection of audit cases through a centralised mechanism at the FBR. The FBR has been facing a massive revenue shortfall in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, and the tax machinery is experiencing a challenging task to materialise the revised tax collection target of Rs13.97 trillion by June 30, 2026.

Pakistan, US discuss upcoming talks

FROM PAGE 01 ceasefire, and to give dialogue and diplomacy a chance. Natalie Baker conveyed US appreciation for Pakistan's constructive and positive role in promoting regional peace and facilitating dialogue. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday spoke with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty to discuss the latest regional developments. Both leaders emphasized the importance of dialogue and engagement for peace and stability. The two foreign ministers also agreed to remain in close contact.

Alpine Club of Pakistan launches training initiative

"It's a matter of a few years, everyone working in our mountains will be trained and will carry the certification of appropriate institutions," the ACP President added

ISLAMABAD: In a major push to professionalize adventure tourism and mountaineering, the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) has rolled out a comprehensive national training initiative, that aims to create a skilled workforce capable of meeting international standards. Talking to APP, the ACP President Major General (Retd) Irfan Arshad said the country is finally addressing a decades-old gap in formal mountaineering education that has long limited the sector's potential. He said that a small mountaineering school has already been established in Sadpara, a village in Gilgit-Baltistan with a historically significant climbing

community. The facility was set up with backing from the Commander of the Force Command Northern Areas, alongside contributions from Pakistan Army and the ACP President himself. The centerpiece of the initiative, however, is the National Mountaineering School at Shigar, a government-backed project for which land has been allocated, funds earmarked, and the tendering process is now underway. "The project carries an estimated cost of 946 million rupees," Irfan said. In addition, an Alpine Climbing Academy in Islamabad is being developed, with its infrastructure and scope currently being

finalized. "The courses for the academy are being approved by NAVTTC (National Vocational and Technical Training Commission), under a structured programme designed to produce certified professionals at scale. "Under a five-year plan, the ACP aims to train up to 5000 professionals across the mountaineering and climbing sector," he added. Irfan emphasized that mountaineering and climbing represent a complete ecosystem, deeply interlinked with tourism and employment in Gilgit-Baltistan. "Mountaineering and climbing is a complete ecosystem; it is not like other sports." "Employment in GB is connected to tourism, and tourism is connected to climbing,

and hiking. All of these are intertwined." He noted that while advanced certification takes time, shorter training modules will be introduced for support roles, ensuring inclusivity across the workforce. "Shorter training programmes of few weeks to six months would cater to lower-altitude workers kitchen crews and other support personnel. "After three years, no tour operator will be able to use untrained staff. The compliance will be mandatory for everyone," he said. "It's a matter of a few years, everyone working in our mountains will be trained and will carry the certification of appropriate institutions," the ACP President added. - APP

India 'extremely high' doping risk: Athletics Integrity Unit

DNA

NEW DELHI: India has been elevated to a list of nations including Russia where there is an "extremely high" risk of doping, the Athletics Integrity Unit said on Monday. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) joins the likes of Russia, Belarus, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Ukraine in the AIU's highest rating of Category A after being moved up from Category B. Category A means India's athletes must now comply with more stringent anti-doping requirements. The world's most populous country ranked in the top two for the most anti-doping violations in athletics between 2022 and 2025, the AIU said. "The doping situation in India has been high-risk for a long time and, unfortunately, the quality of the domestic anti-doping programme is simply not proportionate to doping risk," AIU chair David Howman said.

UAE Jiu-Jitsu National Team set for 6th Asian Beach Games in China



ABU DHABI: The UAE Jiu-Jitsu National Team have departed for China to compete in the sixth Asian Beach Games, taking place in Sanya from April 22 to 30. The games, organized by the Olympic Council of Asia, will have 3,800 male and female athletes representing 45 countries, competing across 14 sports. This participation

offers the UAE team an opportunity to reinforce its regional dominance and further consolidate the country's leadership on the Asian stage. The UAE delegation to China is headed by Mubarak Saleh Al-Menhali, technical director at the UAE Jiu-Jitsu Federation, who emphasized the value of competing in a multi-sport

environment. He said the contest "provides an important technical benchmark, allowing our athletes to test themselves against diverse styles and assess their progress in a dynamic competitive environment."

"It is part of a wider plan by the federation to enhance athletes' capabilities and maintain technical and tactical excellence under varying conditions, while strengthening the team's presence in continental and international competitions." Al-Menhali added: "Since the event is returning after the last edition held in 2016 in Vietnam, we expect a higher level of competition, especially given the presence of strong teams from across Asia. "We are confident our athletes can deliver performances that reflect the work done since the last edition." National team athlete Asma Al-Hosani said: "Our training focused on enhancing technical readiness, improving our ability to read opponents, and adapting to different match scenarios - especially against elite athletes from across Asia. "Precision and quick decision-making are crucial in determining outcomes at this level. We enter the competition with confidence and ambition to perform well, win medals, and represent the UAE in the best way."

The men's team includes Omar Alsuwaidi, Khaled Al-Shehhi, Sultan Hassan, Sultan Jabr, Mahdi Al-Awlaqi and Sultan Al-Hosani. The women's team includes Hosani, Hessa Al-Shamsi, Zamzam Al-Hammadi, Shamsa Al-Ameri, Shama Al-Kalbani and Muhrah Mahfoudh. - APP

Rublev, Fils fightbacks set up Barcelona Open final

"I was just trying to not let the emotions overtake me," said Rublev. "I was down, but then I said 'I have a chance'. In the end, I was able to get my chance. The third set was 50-50. It was super dangerous until I was able to break him and finish the match"

BARCELONA: Frenchman Arthur Fils overcame in-form teenager Rafael Nadal 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 on Saturday to set up a Barcelona Open final with resurgent Russian Andrey Rublev. Rublev also came from a set down to beat Serbia's Hamad Medjedovic 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 in their semifinal earlier on Saturday. Fils returned from an eight-month injury absence in February and has been in strong form, finishing as runner-up to Carlos Alcaraz in Doha, and will be hoping to lift a fourth trophy of his career on Sunday.

Jodar had won all three of his matches this week in straight sets, including against world number 24 Cameron Norrie, and he started brightly in front of an encouraging home crowd. But the 19-year-old faded physically as the contest continued. "On the TV, I don't think you can see how hard he (Jodar) is hitting," Fils said. "The ball is flying and coming very fast. It took me one set to get used to his quality, and then after I felt better and I finished very strong.

But he is going to be a pain in the ass to play." Looking ahead to the decider, Fils said he was expected another tough challenge against the 15th-ranked Rublev. "You can win a lot of matches but then miss in the final, and I'm sure this will be tough. Andrey is a great player and a great guy," said Fils. For the 28-year-old Rublev, this will be the 29th final of his career. Rublev ended a run of four straight semifinal losses, having fallen in the last four in Hong Kong, Doha and Dubai this season. "I was just trying to not let the emotions overtake me," said Rublev. "I was down, but then I said 'I have a chance'. In the end, I was able to get my chance. The third set was 50-50. It was super dangerous until I was able to break him and finish the match." World number two Alcaraz, the Barcelona champion in 2022 and 2023, withdrew from the tournament with a wrist injury on Wednesday and then also pulled out of next week's Madrid Masters. - APP

Regional inter-district senior cricket tournament begins

KARACHI: The Regional Inter-District Senior Cricket Tournament (Karachi Region) commenced on Monday at various venues across the city, with batsmen dominating proceedings on the opening day of the three-day matches. Notable performances with the bat included Muhammad Taha's 86, Umar Farooq's 60, Huzafa Muneer's 59, an unbeaten 59 by Samiullah, and Abdul Basit's 55. At the UBL Sports Complex, Zone-I were bowled out for 219 in 61.3 overs, with Muhammad Taha leading the scoring with 86, supported by Malik Zain-ul-Abideen's 59 and M. Fahad's 34. Abdul Rafay, Israr Ahmed Awan and Aliyan Mehmood claimed two wickets each. In reply, Zone-III reached 115 for two in 33 overs at close of play, with Abdul Basit unbeaten on 55 and Syed Adil Hussain on 32. At the KCCA Stadium, Zone-V were dismissed for 134 in 40.5 overs in their first innings. Wata Dost scored 41, while Muhammad Hassan added 32 and Muhammad Shoaib Khan made 22. Aftab Khan took three wickets, while Khafid-ul-Nabi, Najeeb Rehman and M. Usman Bin Rashid picked up two each. In response, Zone-VII posted 237 for six in 52 overs, with Huzafa Muneer scoring 59. Samiullah remained unbeaten on 59, while Aftab Khan was not out on 17. Saifullah and Syed Shah Raza took three wickets apiece. In another match at the Baqai Ground, Zone-II were all out for 220 in 59.4 overs. - APP

Finance Minister, EU Amb. discuss...

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This milestone reflects improving economic fundamentals and signals a positive trajectory for Pakistan's global financial integration, he said. Aurangzeb further shared that the government was actively pursuing a diversified capital markets strategy, including future international issuances and innovative financing instruments, aimed at strengthening external buffers and ensuring sustainable financing. During the meeting, the EU Ambassador extended an invitation to the Finance Minister to participate in the High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum scheduled to be held on April 28, 2026, in Islamabad, which the Minister accepted. Senator Aurangzeb is also expected to deliver the keynote address at the opening plenary session on the theme "Pakistan Rising: Incentives, Reforms, and the Next Investment Frontier." The Finance Minister appreciated the European Union's efforts in bringing together a large number of international and domestic business representatives, noting that such initiatives provide a valuable platform to showcase Pakistan's improving business climate and investment potential, while fostering meaningful business-to-business engagement.

Nawaz hails, Shehbaz, field...

FROM PAGE 01

the PML-N president said that the role of DPM Dar and the field marshal is commendable. "Pakistan's name has been elevated at the diplomatic level," said Nawaz. Pakistan made headlines worldwide after Islamabad brokered a US-Iran ceasefire just hours before US President Donald Trump's "hell" warning was set to expire on April 8. The international community breathed a sigh of relief earlier this month after President Trump announced that he had agreed to a two-week ceasefire with Iran after discussions with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Munir. During the last-ditch effort, PM Shehbaz had urged Trump to extend his deadline for two weeks to give diplomacy a chance, which was ultimately accepted by the US president.

Around 7,900 people...

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and disappearances during migration since 2014", the agency said. "While these figures represent only the lowest boundary of the true number of affected people, they nonetheless underscore the need for urgent action to end migrant deaths and address the complex needs of families left behind," said the IOM. The IOM said the 7,904 deaths and disappearances documented in 2025 "mark a continuation and escalation of a global failure to end these preventable deaths." "2025 was marked by an unprecedented level of aid cuts and restriction of information on dangerous irregular routes, rendering more and more missing migrants invisible," it said.

SBP receives final...

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April 20, 2026. The first tranche of \$2 billion had already been received on April 15, 2026, bringing the total inflows under the arrangement to \$3 billion. The development comes days after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Saudi Arabia, where he engaged in diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting regional peace. During his visit, the premier met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah and expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's continued support for Pakistan's economic stability. He also conveyed solidarity with Saudi Arabia in light of recent regional developments. Earlier on April 16, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had announced that Saudi Arabia would provide \$3 billion in additional financial support, with disbursement expected shortly.

From Taklimakan to Thar: lessons in combating desertification

Pakistan is not starting from nothing. Federal and provincial governments have, over the past decade, launched afforestation campaigns, tree-planting initiatives, and programs to improve water management and agricultural resilience in degraded lands

KASHI: Pakistan's desert regions may appear more challenging for desertification than those in northwest China. But in some respects, the opposite may be true. For a visiting Pakistani delegation, however, the key question was not simply how this transformation was achieved, but whether it could be replicated back home, according to a report carried by China Economic Net on Tuesday. Pakistan is not starting from nothing. Federal and provincial governments have, over the past decade, launched afforestation campaigns, tree-planting initiatives, and programs to improve water management and agricultural resilience in degraded lands. Progress has been uneven, constrained by funding gaps and the difficulty of coordinating across diverse ecological and administrative contexts. But the knowledge and the institutions, however imperfect, exist. Unlike the Taklimakan Desert, often described as a "Sea of Death" due to its extreme aridity and highly mobile dunes, the Thar Desert benefits from relatively higher rainfall and seasonal monsoon patterns, and the region has long supported human settlement, agriculture, and livestock grazing. Yet these advantages have not translated into large-scale ecological restoration. The challenge in Thar is less about stopping an advancing desert, and more about managing a fragile, inhabited ecosystem under stress. Erratic rainfall, water storage, and

pressure from human activity have contributed to land degradation, even where natural conditions might support vegetation. For Pakistani observers, this raises a deeper question: if afforestation can succeed under harsher natural conditions in China, why has progress been slower in a comparatively less extreme environment? "Pakistan's desert regions, including the Thar Desert, face more extreme temperature fluctuations and persistent water constraints," Shaheer Ahmad said, noting that groundwater is often deep and difficult to access. He also pointed to structural barriers: limited infrastructure, weak connectivity, and bureaucratic obstacles. "These are systemic issues, not limited to deserts," he said. Another delegate, Adnan Iftikhar, emphasized the importance of political commitment. "First, we need the vision," he said. "Financial and technical issues come later." While awareness of climate change is growing in Pakistan, he suggested that practical implementation is urgent now. What can and cannot be transplanted: The Pakistani delegates returned home without a one-size-fits-all blueprint. What the visit provided, delegates said, was a clearer picture of what the components of a serious desert management program look like, and a more precise understanding of which of those parts remain absent at home. On the south-

western edge of the Taklimakan Desert, where shifting sands once threatened farmland and homes, a vast green belt now stretches across the landscape. In Maigaiti County, located in the southwest of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, local authorities have spent more than a decade building a "windbreak and sand-fixation forest" - an ecological barrier designed to halt desert encroachment. From encroaching sands to a green barrier: A decade ago, desertification posed an existential threat to Maigaiti County. Surrounded by desert on three sides, the area experienced more than 150 days of sandstorms annually, with dunes advancing to within five kilometers of the county seat. In 2012, local authorities launched a large-scale afforestation project. Since then, more than one million mu (around 66,700 hectares) of land has been treated through a combination of engineering, ecological restoration, and industrial approaches. The effort has produced a green belt approximately 55 kilometers long and up to 4 kilometers wide, shielding the oasis from further desert expansion. The transformation did not happen overnight, with several pivotal phases throughout the process. "In peak years such as 2017 and 2022, 70,000 mu of land was afforested annually, with 10,000 volunteers nationwide joining tree-planting efforts. They received financial support,

including meal and transportation allowances," said Yin Honghai, director of the local desert prevention and control center. During other periods, 10,000 to 30,000 mu of trees are planted each year based on local conditions. "It was impossible to achieve an 80 percent survival rate in the early stages," Yin noted. "We had to learn from our failures, consult experts, and gradually gain an understanding of the needs of each plant species." Today, the survival rate has surpassed 85 percent, thanks to land leveling, suitable species selection and optimized water management. The main adaptive tree species selected for local afforestation include poplars, oleasters and saxauls. Drip irrigation is adopted as a core technical measure, guaranteeing adequate water supply for each tree amid extremely scarce annual precipitation, which has historically stood at around 50 millimeters. The project also generates economic returns. Local authorities have developed an under-forest economy, featuring the cultivation of medicinal herbs and drought-resistant crops. In some areas, land has been leased to enterprises, while ecological compensation and government subsidies help sustain operations. Besides, the initiative has created jobs. Around 340 local residents are employed in the daily shelterbelt maintenance team, receiving regular income alongside additional seasonal job opportunities. - APP

Briefs

PSX turns bullish, gains over 959 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 959.09 points, a positive change of 0.56 percent, closing at 173,155.79 points against 172,196.70 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,165,254 million shares with a traded value of Rs 54.942 billion, compared to 1,296,211 million shares valuing Rs 65.274 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization increased to Rs 19.161 trillion from Rs 19.060 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 489 active companies in the ready market, 279 advanced, 165 declined, and 45 remained unchanged. Energycio PK topped the volume chart with 83.675 million shares, followed by Bank of Punjab with 82.480 million shares and Pak Refinery with 67.570 million shares.—APP

Gold price decreases by Rs 1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold declined in the local market on Tuesday, with 24 karat gold per tola decreasing by Rs 1,000 to settle at Rs 500,162 compared to Rs 501,162 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 857 to Rs 428,808 from Rs 429,665, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 785 to Rs 393,088 against Rs 393,873. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$10 to \$4,778 per ounce from \$4,788. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 59 to Rs 8,358 from Rs 8,417, while the price of 10 grams of silver also declined by Rs 51 to Rs 7,165 from Rs 7,216. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$0.59 to \$78.74 per ounce from \$79.33.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.90 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.91. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.05 and Rs 280.00, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by 08 paisa to close at Rs 328.07 from the previous day's close of Rs 327.99.—APP

SECP enforces UBO disclosure

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has directed all companies to ensure timely submission of Ultimate Beneficial Ownership (UBO) information through Form-19 on its eFile portal Section 123A of the Companies Act, 2017, requires all companies to file Form-19 declaring Ultimate Beneficial Ownership along with their annual return, says a press release issued by the SECP on Tuesday. Disclosure of UBO information is essential to ensure corporate transparency, prevent misuse of corporate structures, and strengthen Pakistan's framework for combating money laundering and illicit financial flows. UBO refers to the natural person(s) who ultimately own or control a company, whether directly or indirectly. This includes individuals who exercise significant influence or control over the company, even if they are not formally listed as shareholders or directors. The SECP has observed that a number of companies have yet to comply with this mandatory requirement and has advised them to complete the filing without delay.—APP

SAARC CCI President calls for regional unity

Highlighting broader regional dynamics, Mr. Dhakal appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting dialogue and easing tensions in the evolving situation between the United States and Iran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chandhi Raj Dhakal, has emphasized that South Asia's economic and geopolitical challenges must be transformed into opportunities through collective action and stronger regional cooperation. Speaking during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he underscored that unity among member states—beyond political differences—is essential for achieving sustainable growth and shared prosperity. He noted that despite a population of nearly 1.94 billion, intra-regional trade remains below 6 percent, calling for enhanced connectivity, stronger political will, and a business-friendly environment to unlock the region's vast economic potential. Highlighting broader regional dynamics, Mr. Dhakal appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting dialogue and easing tensions in the evolving situation between the United States and Iran. He expressed hope that the fruits of such mediation would lead to lasting peace, reduced regional uncertainty, stabilization of energy markets, and relief from inflationary pressures affecting economies across South Asia and beyond. He further stressed the importance of empowering youth and women, strengthening SMEs, and promoting borderless trade while unlocking key sectors such as tourism, hydropower, agriculture, and services. He reiterated his vision to transform SAARC CCI into an action-oriented institution focused on delivering tan-



gible economic outcomes, while ensuring that regional economic cooperation continues irrespective of political challenges. The Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, Ms. Rita Dhital, urged deeper trade and investment cooperation, noting that existing commercial ties remain underdeveloped compared to strong diplomatic relations. She emphasized that the resumption of direct flights between Nepal and major Pakistani cities such as Islamabad and Karachi would significantly enhance bilateral trade, tourism, and people-to-people linkages. She reaffirmed that the Embassy remains fully committed to facilitating stronger business and investment cooperation between the two countries. President ICCI, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, in his remarks, warmly welcomed the SAARC CCI President and reaffirmed ICCI's com-

mitment to strengthening regional collaboration. He emphasized the need to boost intra-regional trade and connectivity, and appreciated Mr. Dhakal's forward-looking leadership. Highlighting Pakistan's strategic location and market potential, he stressed the importance of expanding trade ties with Nepal and other SAARC countries in sectors including tourism, hydropower, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and information technology, expressing optimism for a more integrated, competitive, and prosperous South Asia. Chairman ICCI Founder Group Tariq Sadiq called for overcoming regional differences and making a new beginning for economic collaboration. Former President ICCI Zubair Ahmed Malik stressed the need for broader cooperation to address poverty challenges in the region, while former President ICCI Zafar Bakhtawari expressed confidence that under

the leadership of Chandhi Raj Dhakal, SAARC CCI will make meaningful progress and assured full support of the business community. Senior Vice President ICCI Tahir Ayub, who conducted the proceedings, highlighted the significance of Pakistan-Nepal relations and the role of SAARC CCI in promoting regional economic prosperity. Among the prominent attendees were Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, former Presidents Khalid Javed, Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Mian Shaukat Masood, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Executive Members Raja Naveed Satti, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, Waseem Chaudhry, Sanaulah Khan, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Mirza Mohammad Ali, Umair Aziz Malik, Ms. Fatima Azim, Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, and Hina Zulfiqar of RWCC, along with a large number of business leaders and women entrepreneurs.

Israel will face resistance if troops stay in Lebanon: Berri

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM: Lebanon's parliament speaker warned on Tuesday that Israeli forces occupying parts of the country's south would face resistance if they fail to withdraw, signalling a risk of renewed confrontation ahead of US-mediated talks this week. A 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah mediated by Washington has largely held since last Thursday, but Israeli forces remain deployed in a belt of Lebanese land 5-10 km deep along the entire border. Israel has said it aims to create a buffer zone to shield northern Israel from attacks by Hezbollah, an Iran-backed Shiite Muslim group. On Thursday the US will host ambassador-level talks between Israel and Lebanon, which was dragged into war on March 2 when Hezbollah opened fire in support of Tehran in the regional conflict. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Lebanon's most senior Shiite statesman and a Hezbollah ally, told Lebanese newspaper Al-Joumhouria that Lebanon could not tolerate losing a meter of land. If Israel "maintains its occupation, whether of areas, positions, or by drawing yellow lines, it will smell the scent of resistance every day," said Berri, leader of the Shiite Amal Movement. The Israeli military and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu both referred to Israel's deployment line in Lebanon as the "Yellow Line" last week — the same term used by Israel for its deployment line in Gaza. Israeli officials have since refrained from describing it in those terms, instead calling it a "forward defense line" that was marked in red in a military map published on Sunday that included a "naval forward defense area" extending from Lebanon's coast into the sea. "If they insist on remaining, they will face resistance, and our history bears witness to that," Berri said. Israel withdrew troops from southern Lebanon in 2000 after a 22-year occupation, during which both Hezbollah, Amal and other groups carried out attacks against Israeli forces. A French presidency source said a lasting solution must be reached and that this could not include the establishment of a permanent buffer zone in southern Lebanon. The zone would no longer be necessary for Israel's security in the event of a lasting peace between Lebanon and Israel, the source said. Israel responded to Hezbollah's attack with an offensive that Lebanese authorities say has killed nearly 2,300 people. The Lebanon conflict has complicated Pakistan's efforts to mediate between the US and Iran, with Tehran having demanded that Israel's campaign against Hezbollah be included in any deal on the wider war. President Donald Trump announced the Lebanon ceasefire on April 16 after holding separate phone calls with Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun. Israel said at the time the ceasefire was part of an understanding reached with the US and mediated by Pakistan.—APP

How long can Iran's war-devastated economy defy the Hormuz blockade?

LONDON: Even before the outbreak of the latest war, Iran was in deep economic trouble. In the immediate aftermath of the 12-Day War in June and July last year, during which the US and Israel struck Iranian nuclear facilities, an analysis by independent nonprofit Iran Focus laid bare the reality of what it called "the crippled economy of Iran." Over recent years, it reported, Iran's economy has faced a series of "complex crises, any one of which could destabilize an entire economic system." From energy imbalances and international sanctions to unstable domestic policies and stagflation, all these challenges have severely disrupted (Iran's) supply chain, production, and foreign trade." The knock-on effects have been considerable. Shortages of gas and electricity, for example, have impacted energy-intensive industries such as steel, cement, and petrochemicals. Even before the 2025 war, the economy had been dealt a series of blows by the years-long international sanctions regime. Analysis of customs reports showed that in the spring of 2025 alone, the value of non-oil exports had fallen by 14.4 percent, while the volume of petrochemical exports fell by almost 30 percent. Imports were also down, while Iran's forced focus on Asian trade partners "and a \$1.374 billion non-oil trade deficit have increased pressure on foreign currency reserves and fuelled inflation." Under the current regime, Iran Focus concluded: "Iran's economy is trapped in a vortex of domestic and international crises. Energy imbalances, sanctions, unstable policies, and stagflation have paralyzed supply chains and trade. "The decline in exports, reduced competitiveness, and trade deficits are clear signs of a bleak future, unless the regime is replaced with a government that serves the people's interests." The latest outbreak of war, which began on Feb. 28 when the US and Israel mounted fresh strikes on Iran, has made matters far worse. Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which some 20 percent of the world's energy passes, hoping to leverage the resulting global economic pain to force a halt to US-Israeli attacks. After ceasefire talks in Pakistan collapsed, President Donald Trump announced that the US Navy would blockade vessels entering or leaving the strait, saying the move was meant to force Tehran to reopen the waterway. The economic viability of Iran's resistance is facing an unprecedented existential threat due to the US naval blockade of the strait, which accounts for over 90 percent of Iran's \$109.7 billion in annual trade. In an April 12 thread posted on X, Miad Maleki, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said he expected the blockade to inflict \$435 million in combined daily economic damage, totaling roughly \$13 billion per month. A shopkeeper works in his shop in Tehran Bazaar. (WANA/Reuters) With oil and gas representing 80 percent of government export earnings, the neutralization of key hubs like Kharg Island — which handles 92 percent of crude exports — effectively zeroes out \$139 million in daily revenue overnight. This is compounded by the loss of nearly \$54 million a day in petrochemical exports and \$79 million in non-oil goods, for which no viable overland alternatives exist. Beyond immediate revenue loss, the blockade creates a catastrophic "storage clock" for Iran's energy infrastructure. With only about 20 million barrels of spare onshore storage capacity and a surplus production of 1.5 million barrels per day, the nation's tanks would fill in just 13 days. Once storage tanks fill up, Iran would have no choice but to stop pumping oil from some of its older fields. That might sound temporary, but it can cause lasting damage underground. When production stops, water that naturally sits below the oil can push upward into the well — a problem known as "water coning.—APP

E-Commerce, skills training to unlock export potential: Jam

During the discussion, participants highlighted successful grassroots initiatives, including stitching and vocational training centers in Balochistan where young women are being trained on modern equipment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said that Pakistan can significantly boost its exports by combining skills development, e-commerce integration, and gradual formalization of the economy, while ensuring a level playing field for compliant businesses. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of business leaders and development practitioners led by Taimur Siddique, Director Shahi Group, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. The meeting was also attended by Nawabzada Mir Muhammad Zarain Khan Magsi, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Culture, Balochistan, along with representatives from textile, leather, and trade sectors. The Minister emphasized that Pakistan has a strong foundation for export-led growth, particularly in sectors such as textiles, leather, and value-added recycled products. He noted that hubs like Karachi offer natural advantages due to port connectivity, skilled labor, and an established industrial ecosystem. "Pakistan has the talent,

infrastructure, and entrepreneurial capacity. Our focus is to connect this potential with global markets through policy support and digital platforms," he said.

During the discussion, participants highlighted successful grassroots initiatives, including stitching and vocational training centers in Balochistan where young women are being trained on modern equipment. These centers are enabling local communities to produce export-quality goods, creating income opportunities at the grassroots level. Jam Kamal Khan stressed that training alone is not sufficient without market access. He underscored the importance of linking such initiatives with e-commerce platforms, allowing locally produced goods to reach international buyers. He noted that digital trade has opened new avenues, particularly for remote and underserved areas. The meeting also explored innovative marketing approaches, including storytelling-based branding, where products are linked with social impact narratives such as community development and women's empowerment. This model, participants noted, has proven successful globally and can enhance the value and visibility of Pakistani products. The Minister said that Pakistan's traditional industries such as

carpet weaving and handicrafts can be revitalized by integrating them with modern digital platforms. He noted that while such sectors faced a decline in the past due to limited market access, e-commerce now offers an opportunity to scale them sustainably. On the policy side, Jam Kamal Khan reiterated the government's commitment to improving the ease of doing business. He shared that steps are being taken to rationalize export-related charges, streamline regulatory frameworks, and address key concerns such as tax refunds and claims to improve liquidity for exporters. He also emphasized the need to address challenges posed by the informal sector, stating that undocumented businesses create unfair competition for tax-compliant enterprises. Strengthening enforcement and promoting documentation, he noted, would enhance competitiveness and attract investment. The Minister appreciated these proposals, noting that building self-sustaining local institutions can accelerate development and reduce dependency on external funding. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to promote public-private collaboration, strengthen digital trade ecosystems, and create an enabling environment for businesses and entrepreneurs.

Rats, fleas plague Gaza's displaced as temperatures rise

KHAN YUNIS: As spring-time temperatures rise in Gaza, a surge in rats, fleas and other pests has compounded the misery of hundreds of thousands of displaced people still living in tents after more than two years of war. With meagre shelter and almost no sanitation, Palestinians told AFP the vermin are invading their makeshift homes, biting children and contaminating food, in what aid agencies warned was a growing public health threat. "My children have been bitten. One of my sons was even bitten on the nose," said Muhammad Al-Raqab, a displaced Palestinian man living in a tent near the southern city of Khan Yunis. "I am unable to sleep through the night because I must constantly watch over the children," the 32-year-old construction worker, originally from Bani Shueila, told AFP. With shelters erected directly on soft sand by the Mediterranean Sea, rodents can easily burrow under tent walls and wreck havoc inside, where people have established makeshift pantries and kitchens. "The rodents have eaten through my tent," Raqab said. Nearly all of Gaza's population was displaced by Israeli evacuation orders and airstrikes during the war with Hamas that began after the group's attack on Israel in October 2023. According to the UN, 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.2 million inhabitants still live in displacement camps, unable to return home or to areas that remain under Israeli military control despite a ceasefire that began in October 2025.—APP

Hezbollah to bury fighters killed in war with Israel

BEIRUT: Hezbollah announced it will hold mass funerals in south Lebanon on Tuesday for 44 fighters killed during more than six weeks of war with Israel. The burials come after Israel and Lebanon entered into a 10-day ceasefire on Friday announced by US President Donald Trump. Iran-backed Hezbollah has not given the total number of its fighters killed since Israel last month launched a massive wave of airstrikes and a ground invasion in Lebanon. But on Tuesday it said it will bury 29 fighters in the town of Kfar Sir, returning "a group of blessed souls to the soil of the south." It will also bury 15 fighters and one civilian in the village of Qlaileh, some of whom had been temporarily buried elsewhere until the ceasefire made a return south possible. Shia Muslim rites provide for such temporary burials when circumstances prevent a proper funeral or the dead cannot be buried where they wished. On Monday, AFP footage showed Hezbollah holding a funeral for another four fighters in the southern suburbs of the capital Beirut, with chants and gunfire heard from the crowd.—APP

EU divided on suspension of Israel pact as Spain pushes for action

BRUSSELS: European countries including Spain and Ireland pushed on Tuesday for suspending a European Union pact governing its relationship with Israel, but the bloc remained divided on whether to take action. Arriving at an EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg, a number of ministers called for suspending or partially suspending the pact over concerns about settlements in the West Bank, the humanitarian situation in Gaza and a new death penalty law. "Today, Europe's credibility is at stake," Spain's Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told reporters, calling for a discussion on suspending the association agreement, which came into force in 2000. Diplomats nevertheless do not expect a decision at the meeting, as countries retain diverging positions as to whether — and how — to shift the bloc's policies on Israel.—APP

Briefs

PAA extends airspace ban for Indian aircraft until May 24

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) on Tuesday extended its airspace ban for Indian aircraft for another month until May 24, marking a year of flight restrictions on India's airlines. "Pakistani airspace will remain closed to Indian-registered aircraft, or Indian airlines/operators (including military flights)," a PAA Notice to Airmen (Notam) said. "This ban will now be effective till May 24, 2026 at 4:59am."

Pakistan's airspace is divided into two flight information regions (FIRs) - Karachi and Lahore, according to a Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) document from 2022. The Notam applies to both the Karachi (OPKR) and Lahore (OPLR) FIRs. The Notam issued by Pakistan for barring Indian flights in its airspace till May 24, 2026. - PAA website The previous extension was set to expire on April 24. India and Pakistan have closed their airspaces to each other's airlines since late April 2025, when tensions between them escalated in the wake of a deadly attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam. On April 24, Pakistan's top brass had announced a series of measures, including the closure of its airspace to all India-owned or Indian-operated airlines with immediate effect, as it retaliated against New Delhi's slew of aggressive measures against the country.

Macron urges de-escalation

NEWS DESK

GDANSK, Poland: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday called for the United States and Iran to de-escalate amid increased tensions over the weekend over the Strait of Hormuz. "Our position remains the same. We need to settle things through diplomacy. Everyone must calm down," Macron said during a joint press conference with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. "It is likely that, following the American decision to maintain a targeted blockade on Hormuz ... the Iranian authorities changed their initial position ... this is a mistake on both sides," Macron told journalists. The United States has maintained its blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran lifted and then reimposed its own blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied gas supply usually passes. Macron also said that France was not specifically targeted in the Strait after Iran fired shots on ships on Saturday, including a container ship belonging to the CMA CGM. CMA CGM had described them as "warning shots" and said at the time the crew was safe.

China extends full support to Pakistan



DPM/FM reaffirmed the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, underscored the strength of bilateral ties, and emphasized the importance of sustained high-level exchanges between the two countries

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar. Discussions focused on latest regional developments. Ambassador Zaidong conveyed China's full support for and appreciation of Pakistan's continued efforts to facilitate engagement between U.S. and Iran for sustained peace and stability in the region and beyond. DPM/FM reaffirmed the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, underscored the strength of bilateral ties, and emphasized the importance of sustained high-level exchanges between the two countries.

Japan lifts ban on lethal weapons exports

NEWS DESK

TOKYO: Japan on Tuesday scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy as the country seeks to build up its arms industry amid worries over Chinese and North Korean aggression. The approval by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet of the new guideline clears a final set of hurdles for many arms sales, including of a next-generation fighter jet and combat drones. China criticized the change in policy, but it has been largely welcomed by Japanese defense partners like Australia and attracted interest from Southeast Asia and Europe. Opponents say the change violates Japan's pacifist constitution and will increase global tensions and threaten the safety of the Japanese people. The new policy will "ensure safety for Japan and further contribute to the peace and stability in the region and the international society as the security environment around our country rapidly changes," Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters. "The government will strategically promote defense equipment transfers to create a security environment that is desirable for Japan and to build up the industrial base that can support fighting resilience."

Oil prices dip, most stocks rise on lingering Iran peace hopes

Investors remain largely upbeat that US and Iran will eventually come to deal that will reopen strategic strait

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Tuesday while most stocks rose on lingering hopes for a deal to end the US-Iran war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, even as Tehran said it had not decided whether to attend peace talks. With the end of a two-week ceasefire approaching, the White House said Vice President JD Vance was ready to return to Pakistan for fresh negotiations to end a conflict that has sent crude soaring and revived inflation fears. However, the Islamic Republic's position remained uncertain as it accused Washington of violating its fragile truce through its blockade of the country's ports and seizure of a ship. Crude plunged on Friday after Tehran said it would allow ships to transit the Strait of Hormuz, which had been effectively closed since the war began on February 28. But the

commodity rebounded on Monday as Iran closed the waterway again, citing the blockade and seizure. Donald Trump has similarly accused Tehran of violating the ceasefire by harassing vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the transit passage for about one-fifth of global oil. The US president said the blockade would not be lifted until an agreement had been reached. "THE BLOCKADE, which we will not take off until there is a 'DEAL,' is absolutely destroying Iran," Trump said on social media. "They are losing \$500 Million Dollars a day, an unsustainable number, even in the short run." He told PBS News that Iran was "supposed to be there" at the talks in Pakistan. "We agreed to be there," he said, warning that if the ceasefire expired "then lots of bombs start going off". He separately told Bloomberg

News it was "highly unlikely" he would extend the truce. Based on its start time, the truce theoretically expires overnight on Tuesday, Iran time, although in his comments to Bloomberg Trump said the end was Wednesday evening Washington time. The Middle Eastern country's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said "Trump wants to turn this negotiating table into a surrender table or justify renewed hostilities, as he sees fit." "We do not accept negotiations under the shadow of threats, and in the last two weeks we have been preparing to show new cards on the battlefield," he wrote on X. Still, investors remained largely upbeat that the two sides will eventually come to a deal that will reopen the strategic strait. US benchmark crude West Texas Intermediate rose more than 1%, while Brent was also higher.

Gilgit-Baltistan Elections 2026

GILGIT: A total of 693 candidates have submitted their final nomination papers for the upcoming Gilgit-Baltistan General Elections scheduled to be held on June 7, 2026, according to the Election Commission's media wing. The details shared by Media Coordinator we Elections Commission show significant participation across all 24 constituencies of Gilgit-Baltistan, reflecting a competitive political environment ahead of the polls. Among the constituencies, Gilgit-2 recorded the highest number of candidates with 65 nominations, followed by Astor-2 with 57 candidates and Ghizer-2 with 42 candidates. In contrast, Diamer-4 saw the lowest number of candidates, with only 12 individuals submitting nomination papers. Other constituencies also witnessed notable participation, including Nagar-1 (38), Hunza (38), Skardu-1 (38), and Karmang (39), indicating strong electoral interest across the region. The Election Commission has termed the overall response encouraging, highlighting active political engagement ahead of the elections. - APP

India near record high

MOSCOW/LONDON: Russian oil sales to India are set to remain near record highs in April and May following a new US sanctions waiver, and refiners have already secured much of their supply needs via non-sanctioned entities and vessels, traders said and data showed on Tuesday. The robust exports to India - the second-largest buyer of Russian crude after China and largest importer of its flagship Urals grade - will likely help Moscow replenish state coffers under pressure due to military spending for the war in Ukraine. India shipped in a record 2.25 million barrels per day of oil from Russia in March, nearly double February's volumes, making Russian oil 50 percent of its imports. Russian crude arrivals at Indian ports are set to reach 2.1 million bpd for the week of April 20 to 27, up from 1.67 million bpd the previous week, data from shipping analytics firm Kpler showed. The mid-April dip in Russian oil supplies was likely caused by export disruptions resulting from Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian ports at the end of March, two sources said. However, Russian supplies are expected to average more than 2 million bpd for the full month and will likely remain around that level, or possibly increase, in May, three sources involved in the trade said. - APP

PM approves streamlining of P3A system

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday gave in-principle approval to further streamline the Public-Private Partnership Authority (P3A) and its related system to accelerate development projects through PPP in the country. Chairing a high-level meeting to expedite pace of development projects through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the country, the prime minister directed that the capacity of relevant ministries and departments should be improved for initiating development projects through Public-Private Partnerships. It was decided in the meeting that, in order to align the performance of P3A with modern requirements and to speed up development projects under PPP, the authority will function under the Privatization Division. The prime minister further instructed that development projects under PPP should be included in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of ministries and departments. He stated that the PPP system was being made more transparent and efficient through P3A. The meeting was briefed on comparative PPP models being implemented in various countries at regional and global levels. The participants were also briefed on the structure of the proposed new system. Under the new system, the Cabinet Committee on Privatization and the Privatization Division will oversee P3A. - DNA

Pope Leo XIV pays tribute to Pope Francis

NEWS DESK

ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE: Pope Leo XIV paid tribute to Pope Francis on Tuesday on the first anniversary of his death, recalling his preaching about God's mercy and his gestures of solidarity with poor people. "We thank the Lord for the great gift of the life of Francis, to the church and the world," Leo said. The American pope delivered the tribute in Italian while speaking with reporters aboard the papal plane heading from Angola to Equatorial Guinea, the final leg of his four-nation African trip. Francis died on Easter Monday last year after suffering a stroke. He had been at the Vatican recovering from a five-week hospital stay for double pneumonia, and had managed to deliver a final Easter salute to the crowd with a popemobile romp through St. Peter's Square. His death, at 88, set the stage for the conclave that elected Leo a few weeks later. It was an outcome for which Francis had laid the groundwork by promoting the former missionary priest, Robert Prevost, whom he considered "a saint." In his tribute, Leo recalled with precision some of Francis' most memorable homilies and messages, saying he "gave so much to the church with his life, with his witness, with his word and with his gestures." "So many times what he did was live truly being close to the poorest, the smallest, the sick, children, the elderly," he said.



He cited Francis' preaching promoting human fraternity and "authentic respect" among all people, as well as a special Holy Year he called in 2015 to emphasize God's mercy and forgiveness. Francis famously opened the year in the Central African Republic, and Leo delivered his tribute just as his plane was flying over that part of Africa. Leo recalled Francis' first Sunday noon prayer as pope, and a Mass he celebrated two days before his pontificate was officially inaugurated, when he preached about an adulterous woman "and how he spoke from the heart of the mercy of God."

Pakistan Navy conducts live weapon firing



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Navy has conducted successful live weapon firing of Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile - an indigenously developed Anti-Ship Weapon System - in a powerful demonstration of precision strike capability and operational readiness. The Air-Launched Cruise Missile executed its mission with exceptional precision, validating Pakistan Navy's combat capability to detect, target and decisively neutralize en-

emy sea-based threats at extended ranges. This demonstration by Pakistan Navy marks a pivotal elevation of national defence capability, further strengthening Pakistan Armed Forces' multi-dimensional coordinated strike posture and capabilities in the conventional domain. Pakistan Navy stands resolute in its commitment to safeguard the nation's maritime interests and sovereign waters. The President, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chief of Defence Forces and Services Chiefs have congratulated the scientists and engineers on achieving this significant milestone.

APRIL 2026

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

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