



Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Shehbaz Sharif greets new leader of Bulgaria Radev

Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan moves to one-window airport clearance

Detailed News On Page-08

Punjab CM vows to plug crime ratio

Detailed News On Page-02



2nd round may be on Friday

Iran seizes two ships as ceasefire holds

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei has said that the Islamic republic appreciates Pakistan's efforts to end the Middle East war, without commenting on a ceasefire extension announced by the United States

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards Navy has seized two vessels attempting to cross the Strait of Hormuz, citing maritime violations, as uncertainty continues over the US-Iran ceasefire extension. The US President said on Wednesday that the second round of talks may take place in Islamabad on Friday. According to semi-official Tasnim news agency, the Guards detained the ships, identified as the MSC Francesca and the Epaminodes, and transferred them to Iranian shores on Wednesday. In a statement, the Revolutionary Guards said the vessels were operating without the required authorisation and had manipulated their navigation systems, actions that "endangered maritime safety" in the vital waterway. The incident comes at a sensitive time, with the fragile ceasefire between the US and Iran still in effect but facing growing tensions. The United Kingdom has welcomed the extension of the US-Iran ceasefire, describing it as a positive step toward de-escalation in the region. Meanwhile, China warned on Wednesday that the situation in the Middle East was at a "critical juncture" after US President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire to allow Iran more time to negotiate. Trump indefinitely pushed back the end of the two-week truce on Tuesday with Tehran yet to respond but he said a US blockade of Iran's ports would continue. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei has said that the Islamic republic appreciates Pakistan's efforts to end the Middle East war, without commenting on a ceasefire extension announced by the United States.

Continued on Page 06

Iran casts doubt on ceasefire extension

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has stressed the need for continued vigilance and monitoring of enemy actions during what it called a "so-called ceasefire," with the country's military headquarters remaining on high alert and "fingers on the trigger." In a fresh statement, Iran's military HQ underlined that forces are closely watching developments on the "silent battlefield" and stand ready to respond decisively to any hostile moves, reflecting deep distrust despite the temporary truce with the United States and Israel. Meanwhile, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that American forces are actively using the ceasefire period to rearm, retool, and adjust tactics, techniques, and procedures, with troops described as highly motivated and prepared to resume operations if needed. In parallel diplomatic developments, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar has urged the Lebanese government to cooperate with Israel against Hezbollah ahead of the resumption of direct talks between the two countries in Washington.

Continued on Page 06

Iran's envoy calls on PM Shehbaz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday to discuss the evolving regional situation and ongoing peace efforts. The meeting came after US President Donald Trump announced an extension of the ceasefire on Pakistan's request, raising hopes for stability in the region. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a post on X, expressed optimism that all sides would continue to uphold the ceasefire and work toward a comprehensive peace agreement. He also expressed the hope that the second round of talks, scheduled to be held in Islamabad, would lead to a permanent resolution of the conflict.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the ongoing regional situation and peace efforts. - DNA

PM announces electric bikes for govt employees on easy instalments

Premier directs authorities to expedite ongoing EV promotion initiatives nationwide

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday announced that the government employees up to BPS-16 would be provided electric bikes on easy instalments. The premier made the announcement while chairing a high-level meeting on the promotion of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country. The meeting was informed that the government aimed to shift 30% of vehicles to electric power within the next five years, a move expected to save approximately \$4.5 billion in fuel imports. The prime minister directed relevant authorities to accelerate ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting EV adoption across the country. He emphasised that, given the evolving regional situation and future energy demands, the transition to electric vehicles would not only reduce the import bill but also contribute significantly to environmental protection and energy security. The prime minister also stressed the need for transparency in the provision of

Continued on Page 06

Iran lauds Pakistan role

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Wednesday that the Islamic republic appreciated Pakistan's efforts to end the Middle East war, without commenting on a ceasefire extension announced by the United States. He expressed these views while answering reporters' questions, a statement by Iran's foreign ministry said, adding that Baqaei was asked about Pakistan's request to extend a ceasefire agreed between Tehran and Washington on April 8. Iranian foreign ministry's statement said that while "expressing gratitude for Pakistan's gracious efforts and mediation attempts to end the imposed war and establish peace in the region", Baqaei stressed that Tehran "is taking the

Continued on Page 06

2 Pakistani Astronauts picked for China mission

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China has selected two Pakistani astronauts as candidates for its manned space programme, state broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday. Both will travel to China for training, and one will participate in a flight mission as a payload specialist and become the first foreign astronaut in China's space station, CCTV said. Meanwhile, China Daily reported on Wednesday that the astronauts were identified as Muhammad Zeeshan Ali and Khurram Daud. The report said the two had passed multiple rounds of selection procedures and will soon come to China to take part in spaceflight training.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

NHA, ADB sign accord

FAIZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority (NHA) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a landmark agreement for the construction of two sections of the M6 Motorway. In a post on X, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan welcomed the signing of a strategic agreement between the ADB and NHA for the construction of the M6 Motorway, connecting Karachi to Sukkur. In February, Communications Minister Abdul Aleem Khan announced that construction of the M6 Motorway would officially begin in May under a Public-Private Partnership model. The minister termed the project a vital gateway to Pakistan's future development and a decisive step toward economic prosperity.

Govt unearths expensive power purchase

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Amid public outcry over expensive power and excessive loadshedding, the government on Wednesday announced that it had unearthed expensive power purchases by distribution companies (Discos) outside the national grid at exorbitant rates in violation of the economic merit order. According to an official statement, the Discos were purchasing electricity from small power producers (SPPs) and captive power plants (CPPs) through bilateral contracts at higher rates than the national tariff, bypassing the national grid and the Independent System and Market Operator (ISMO). It added that the names of the Discos and the quantum of power purchasing were not disclosed to allow an independent inquiry to take its course.

On Pahalgam attack anniversary, Pakistan slams Indian gimmicks

India's approach to Pahalgam incident aligns with its known "false flag" patterns, says Tarar



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: On the first anniversary of the Pahalgam attack, Islamabad on Wednesday criticised New Delhi for failing to provide "credible evidence" for its allegations against Pakistan. In a special televised statement, Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar said India had also sidestepped calls for an independent investigation into a "false flag operation". The longtime neighbouring adversaries went to war in May last year after India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan

following the attack on tourists in Pahalgam, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which claimed the lives of 26 people. Without offering any evidence, New Delhi had accused Islamabad of orchestrating the deadly attack in Pahalgam - a charge that Islamabad denied and also asked it to hold neutral investigation. India followed the baseless accusations with unlawful missile strikes inside Pakistan, which resulted in the martyrdom of several civilians and security personnel. Pakistan responded by downing seven Indian fighter jets, including three Rafale, dozens of drones, and destroying an S-400 defence system. The war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States. In his statement today, Tarar said the Pahalgam incident reflects a mindset driven by "hollowness, illogical thinking, false pride, arrogance, and greed", adding that India has consistently been unable to address concerns raised over the episode

Continued on Page 06

British HC reiterates support for Pakistan's facilitative role

The deputy prime minister/foreign minister underscored Pakistan's ongoing efforts to facilitate engagement and emphasised the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in peaceful resolution of disputes

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday received British High Commissioner Jane Marriott and discussed the evolving regional situation. The deputy prime minister/foreign minister underscored Pakistan's ongoing efforts to facilitate engagement and emphasised the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in peaceful resolution of disputes. The British high commissioner appreciated and supported Pakistan's facilitative role in bringing the U.S. and Iran on the negotiating table, a press statement issued by the foreign office spokesperson said.

General Practice HOSPITAL

Your Health. Our Priority - Every Step of the Way!

General Practice Hospital (GPH) is a state-of-the-art healthcare facility in the heart of Islamabad, offering international-standard medical care for individuals and families. From urgent care and specialized consultations to advanced diagnostics, surgery, and executive health packages - all services are available under one roof. Our concierge consultations, personalized care plans, and comprehensive health programs ensure a smooth and stress-free experience.

We understand that seeking medical care can be overwhelming, but you are never alone. With empathy at the heart of everything we do, we listen, guide, and support you every step of the way. In our clean, premium environment, you'll feel safe, valued, and cared for. Book your appointment today and experience healthcare with compassion.

Our Departments

General Physician Services	General Surgery	Dental & Maxillofacial Surgery	Plastic Surgery	Ear, Nose & Throat	Nutrition, Dietetics & Lifestyle
Internal Medicine	Pediatrics & Child Health	Breast Surgery	Anaesthesiology	Pulmonology	Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation
Gynecology & Women's Health	Cardiology	Bariatric Surgery	Gastroenterology & Hepatology	Endocrinology	Psychology & Mental Health
Dermatology & Aesthetics	Urology	Pediatric Surgery	Neurosurgery	Orthopedics & Sports Medicine	Diagnostic Radiology

Our Services

Empathic & Caring for everyone

FOR APPOINTMENT +92 33 22 474 474

or Visit: Pakdian Tower 2, New Blue Area, Islamabad

www.generalpractice.com.pk | generalpracticeislamabad | +92 51 6160 474 | +92 51 6161 474

Kundi assures to resolve issues of tobacco growers, dealers

He said the purpose of the meeting was to bring together stakeholders to discuss legal and policy perspectives and find workable solutions to the issues facing the tobacco sector in the province

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday assured that issues faced by tobacco growers and dealers in the province would be resolved on priority basis. The Governor said this in a meeting here at Governor's House that was attended by representatives of tobacco growers and dealers, officials of the Pakistan Tobacco Board (PTB) and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). A 30-member delegation of growers and dealers, including President of the Tobacco Dealers Association Muhammad Iftikhar, along with other representatives, participated in the session. Chairman PTB Muhammad Shahid Hussain and Commissioner Inland Revenue Ayesha Dilshad were also present. During the meeting, growers and dealers highlighted concerns regarding tobacco production, exports, cancellation of

agreements, non-determination of appropriate prices, and imposition of additional taxes by the FBR. They expressed reservations over the cancellation of long-term agreements with multinational companies and non-payment of dues, stating that such issues were adversely affecting tobacco cultivation in the province. The participants also demanded that the tobacco crop be removed from the narcotics category, terming current policies detrimental to their interests. Chairman PTB Muhammad Shahid Hussain briefed the meeting on legal aspects of price fixation and contract cancellations, stating that multinational companies enter into agreements based on their requirements. He said surplus production and availability beyond demand had led companies to cancel contracts. However, he assured that growers would be paid fair

prices in accordance with the law and pending payments would be ensured by April 30. FBR officials informed the meeting that a defined legal mechanism exists for tax collection from both registered and unregistered tobacco dealers, adding that efforts were being made to facilitate stakeholders within the legal framework. Governor Kundi directed growers and dealers to present their concerns and proposals in writing in the next meeting. He emphasized that the government was committed to safeguarding the interests of tobacco growers and dealers and ensuring provision of all possible facilities. He said the purpose of the meeting was to bring together stakeholders to discuss legal and policy perspectives and find workable solutions to the issues facing the tobacco sector in the province.—DNA

KP gov't announces Rs 50b Mardan uplift package

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced a comprehensive development package worth Rs. 50 billion for District Mardan. According to official details, Rs. 25 billion has been allocated specifically for major projects in the Communication and Works sector, marking a significant step towards infrastructure development in the region. The package includes the introduction of modern traffic management systems, advanced engineering measures, and improved urban design within Mardan city. A key component of the plan is the construction and rehabilitation of a district-wide circular road aimed at easing traffic congestion and enhancing connectivity. Major road infrastructure projects include the dualization of the road from Jawad Chowk to Baghdad Chowk and the expansion of the Shahbaz Garhi to Taro Jabba Road into a dual carriageway. Additionally, the construction of the Katlang Bypass and Hothi Bridge has been planned to ensure safer and smoother traffic flow across the district. The government has also prioritized improving access to key locations, including the development of a route linking the Jamal Garhi archaeological site to the Swat Motorway Interchange. Other projects include the construction of the Sang-e-Kashmir to Fazal Abad Ghani Road and the expansion of road networks connecting Sang-e-Dhan with Parhoti, Pir Sado, Mian Isa, and Jalalah Bazaar. Furthermore, construction and rehabilitation work on Bani Pass and the Lund Khwar to Katlang Road are part of the package. Officials stated that these initiatives reflect the provincial government's commitment to modernizing the transport infrastructure, which is expected to boost economic activity and provide improved travel facilities for the residents of Mardan.—APP

Call for strict plan to eliminate cheating in exams

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Arshad Ayub Khan on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to formulate a comprehensive and effective strategy to eliminate cheating in examinations and ensure transparent conduct of exams across the province. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting in Peshawar regarding strategy-making for matriculation examinations. The meeting was attended by Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education Muhammad Khalid, Special Secretary Muhammad Saleh Khan, while chairmen of examination boards participated online. The meeting reviewed the performance of all boards in recent examinations and discussed measures to further improve transparency in upcoming matric and higher secondary examinations. It was decided to establish a coordination committee to devise a comprehensive strategy for future exams. The committee will determine the roles and responsibilities of resident inspec-

tors during examinations and take action against any examination staff found negligent or involved in malpractice, including those against whom complaints of cheating or irregularities are reported. The meeting also decided that students will undergo mandatory checking before entering examination halls, while examination staff will be provided with necessary training to ensure strict monitoring. The provincial minister said he had personally visited various matric examination centres and identified key issues, which have been brought to the notice of the authorities. He remarked that cheating has unfortunately been normalized in society, with many considering it a right rather than a wrongdoing. He stressed the need for firm and decisive measures to secure the future of students, adding that strict action would be ensured against those involved in cheating. He said cases of Unfair Means (UFM) would be registered against violators, with a minimum penalty of three years' disqualification from appearing in examinations.—DNA

Meeting held on strengthening institutional capacity held

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Syed Fakhar Jehan, along with Advisor on Finance Muzammil Aslam, jointly chaired a meeting regarding the matters of strengthening institutional capacity through strategic human resource and budgetary support of the Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department. The meeting was attended by Secretary Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Ilyas, Director General Excise Abdul Haleem Khan, and other officials from the Finance and Excise departments. During the meeting, the Advisor on Finance was briefed on the professional responsibilities and key mandate of the Excise Department. It was highlighted that in order to effectively carry out revenue collection and anti-narcotics operations across the province without interruption, the department requires adequate financial resources and manpower. It was emphasized the need to fulfill the operational requirements of offices, police stations, and excise squads to tackle these challenges efficiently. The Provincial Minister informed the Advisor on Finance that Excise taxation offices and narcotics control police stations and squads need to be further strengthened to enhance their performance. He stressed the urgent requirement of sufficient funds for fuel and other operational needs. Additionally, detailed data regarding staff shortages in offices and police stations was also presented. During the meeting, the Advisor to Finance directed that a comprehensive and effective mechanism should be developed to consolidate the collection of Excise and KPRA hotel sales tax under a single collection agency, ensuring that the revenue generated under this head remains within the Excise domain. He further instructed that a case be prepared, on the pattern of the police department, for the provision of fuel to Excise police stations and narcotics control squads. He assured that the Finance Department would extend maximum possible support to the Excise Department in meeting its financial and operational requirements.—APP

Seminar on PM's "Apna Ghar" housing scheme held

HYDERABAD: An awareness seminar highlighting the benefits of the Prime Minister of Pakistan's "Apna Ghar" housing program for government employees was held at Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, in collaboration with the House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC). The event was chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof. Engr. Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal, while HBFC Regional Representative Sarfaraz Ahmed Saraz addressed participants as the key resource person. Vice Chancellor Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal described the initiative as a significant welfare step for government employees, noting that access to secure housing directly contributes to improved quality of life and job satisfaction. He emphasized that such programs strengthen the financial stability of public servants and enhance their professional performance. He further stated that the university remains committed to facilitating its employees by providing timely information and guidance regarding beneficial government schemes. Speaking on the occasion, Sarfaraz Ahmed Saraz said the "Apna Ghar" program was a major relief-oriented initiative aimed at enabling government officers and employees, particularly those in low- and middle-income brackets, to own homes through affordable financing options.

Punjab CM orders swift action to stop crime

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday took strict notice of the rising crime rate in the province and summoned an emergency law and order meeting, expressing strong displeasure over recent incidents and police performance in several districts. During the meeting, the chief minister shared videos of criminal incidents and reviewed them with participants, directing a strict inquiry and accountability of relevant police officials. She particularly reprimanded officers over worsening crime situations in Sheikhupura and Faisalabad, instructing Regional Police Officers (RPOs) and District Police Officers (DPOs) to ensure close coordination with the Crime Control Department (CCD). Addressing RPOs, CPOs and DPOs via video link, CM Maryam Nawaz said the sudden increase in crime was "alarming and shameful," adding that no relaxation could be tolerated after efforts to make Punjab a safer province. She stressed that incidents of murder, robbery, kidnapping and disappearances must be prevented at all costs. The CM said police had been freed from interference and

now must deliver results under a fully merit-based system. She added that political influence in postings had been eliminated and all appointments were being finalized by her personally to ensure transparency. The CM also highlighted that record funding of Rs527 billion had been provided to the police over two years, along with vehicles, weapons and equipment. Despite this, she noted concern over incidents such as thefts, street crimes and drug-related cases, saying even minor crimes must be prevented to ensure public safety. CM Maryam Nawaz further directed the development of pre-emptive policing strategies and reiterated that maintaining law and order remains the government's top priority, warning that strict action would continue where necessary. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that making the earth greener is the most powerful weapon against climate change, urging citizens to abandon plastic use and actively adopt tree plantation. In her message on World Earth Day, the chief minister said the day highlights global environmental challenges and serves as a reminder that the

earth is not only for the present generation but a trust for the future. She emphasized the need for collective efforts to protect natural resources and trees. The CM paid tribute to individuals and organizations working for environmental protection and harmony with nature, and directed all provincial ministers to actively participate in plantation drives and public awareness campaigns for environmental conservation. The chief minister stressed forest protection, reduction in carbon emissions, and promotion of a green economy, stating that Punjab has adopted a zero-waste plastic policy. She also highlighted the establishment of the province's first "Smart Environment Force" for environmental protection. CM Maryam Nawaz said controlling pollution, conserving natural resources, and mitigating the effects of climate change are essential for improving environmental health. She added that the government is working on a 10-year climate change action plan along with several mega projects aimed at improving environmental conditions and ensuring a greener, healthier future for coming generations.—DNA



HYDERABAD: A large number of customers select and purchase cows and buffaloes at the weekly animal market near Hatri Bypass.

PRCS lauded for humanitarian services in merged districts

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah has appreciated the humanitarian services of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (Merged Districts), in expanding relief and development initiatives across the tribal districts. In an official letter of appreciation, the Chief Secretary commended Chairman Imran Wazir Wazir's outstanding services, particularly during the recent sectarian situation in Parachinar, as well as his support for affectees in Bajaur and facilitation of temporary displaced persons (TDPs) from Khyber. Under the leadership of Imran Wazir, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has emerged as a key humanitarian organization in the merged districts, setting a strong example of service delivery in areas long affected by insecurity, poverty, and lack of basic facilities. The Chief Secretary also appreciated PRCS contributions in delivering essential healthcare services to remote and underserved areas, terming them crucial in addressing humanitarian challenges. The letter concluded by placing on record the government's appreciation for his professionalism, commitment, and humanitarian services, while expressing best wishes for his continued success in future endeavors. Through effective planning and international collaboration, PRCS has implemented a wide range of projects in partnership with organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Norwegian Red Cross. These initiatives have focused on healthcare, food distribution, water and sanitation, and psychosocial support, benefiting hundreds of thousands of people in Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan, Landi Kotal, Tirah, and Bannu subdivision. Emergency health services for Afghan refugees are also being effectively provided. In addition, the establishment of permanent offices in various districts and enhanced coordination with government institutions have further strengthened the organization's operational capacity. Under Wazir's leadership, PRCS has not only provided immediate relief but has also promoted sustainable development, rehabilitation, and hope among affected communities.—APP

Bugti opens digital dashboard to promote info-based policy

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Wednesday inaugurated the digital dashboard and publications of the Bureau of Statistics under the Planning and Development Department here, with the aim of promoting information-based policy-making in the province and modernizing development planning. The inauguration ceremony was attended by provincial ministers, members of the provincial assembly, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Zahid Saleem and other senior officials. On this occasion, the Chief Minister was given a detailed briefing about the digital dashboard and related publications, in which he was informed that the said digital dashboard includes comprehensive and integrated data related to 17 different sectors of the province, which will also contain complete details of development projects. The briefing said that this system will make the policy-making and decision-making process more effective and transparent. The briefing stated that two new data-related reports would be added every year in the future to further strengthen the information system. The meeting also highlighted the overall development and growth trends in various sectors since

2010. Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti termed this initiative as an important milestone and said that on the basis of available data, the government could formulate more effective and better policies in the public interest. He said that development depends on timely and correct planning and the Balochistan government believes in the equal development of all sectors, data related to government vacancies and the people who applied for them were also presented during the meeting. On this occasion, Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti contacted a person mentioned in the database who had applied for 45 different vacancies and announced that he would be given a job. The Chief Minister Balochistan congratulated Provincial Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Additional Chief Secretary P&D and his team on this important development and decided to give appreciation certificates and cash awards to the concerned team for their outstanding performance in collecting data and preparing the dashboard. He also announced that the Balochistan government would further accelerate the development process by promoting transparency, merit and effective use of modern technology so as to ensure the provision of better facilities to the people.—DNA

Peshawar literary festival concludes

PESHAWAR: The third edition of the Peshawar Literary Festival concluded here on Wednesday at Nishtar Hall after two days filled with literary, intellectual and cultural activities, attracting a large number of students, young professionals, writers and artists. Organised by the Culture, Literature and Development Organisation (CLADO) in collaboration with the Department of Youth Affairs, the festival served as a vibrant platform for dialogue, creativity and skill development. The event featured panel discussions, open mic sessions, children's activities, and specialized training workshops

on content creation, photography and animation. Key discussions focused on themes such as "Youth, Women and the Future of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" as well as important fiscal issues including the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award and the province's financial challenges. Speakers emphasized the need for greater youth participation in shaping the socio-economic future of the province. The evenings of the festival were marked by rich cultural performances, including musical presentations by Nasaz Band, Ejaz Sarhadi and folk singer Fayaz Khan Khesghi, along

side a grand mushaira that celebrated the region's poetic heritage. The second day of the festival highlighted issues related to education, employment, and the future of young people. Discussions covered the education system, demographic changes, and the growing importance of literature in intellectual development. Participants were also provided training in modern skills such as digital marketing, freelancing, e-commerce, content creation and data management. The festival concluded with a colourful cultural ceremony titled "Youth, Skills and Tradition.—APP

The Smooth Moving Connection

freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING







Our Services

- Packing
- Shipping
- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage



Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2822427.
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Branch Offices

<p>Karachi Floor No. 14 B/15, 3rd Floor, Kalkhahat Mall, Main Tariq Road, 17/2 Block-2, P.E.C.H.S. Branch: Tel: (+92 21) 3430003, 3430179 Fax: (+92 21) 3430178 E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p>Lahore 2-4 Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Branch: Tel: (+92 42) 3579181, 3579185 Fax: (+92 42) 3579182 E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p>Peshawar Office No. C/6, 2nd Floor, Zohrab Plaza, Lafiq Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Branch: Tel: (+92 91) 2502778 Fax: (+92 91) 2502888 E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p>Kabul House #4, Street #4, Chahar Anzar Road, Shahr-e-Naw, Kabul - Afghanistan Tel: (+92 9001) 778, 81 779398, 828, 83 779488 E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com</p>
---	---	--	--

National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

Emergency



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

Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
- CAA.....9221022



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A labourer pushing his wheelbarrow in front of closed bus terminal in I-11 sector in the Federal Capital. Transport terminals temporarily shut down as authorities enforce security measures ahead of a proposed second round of talks between Iran and the United States.

Call for Zero-Waste pathways to cut methane, plastic emissions

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a consultation called for practical measures to reduce waste-sector emissions, tackle plastic pollution, and strengthen Pakistan's climate commitments under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The consultation, titled: Earth Day 2026: Waste Sector Emissions, Plastics, and NDC Pathways in Pakistan, was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Working Group here on Wednesday. The experts said Pakistan's waste sector offers significant opportunities for climate mitigation through methane reduction targets, improved monitoring systems, circular plastic economy initiatives, and stronger integration of SMEs and informal waste workers. The consultation aimed to generate actionable policy recommendations to address methane emissions, promote zero-waste pathways, and integrate circular economy solutions into Pakistan's climate planning framework. Ambily Adityan, Programme Officer for Zero Waste Cities, GAIA said that the waste sector, particularly landfills, is the third-largest source of methane emissions globally, and methane is more than 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the short-term. She said reducing methane emissions from organic waste represents one of the fastest and most cost-effective climate mitigation strategies. More than 45 countries have already endorsed the COP29 declaration on reducing methane emissions from organic

waste, she said, adding that significant new financial resources are now being directed towards methane action in the waste sector as countries prepare enhanced climate plans ahead of COP30. Highlighting that plastic contributes to greenhouse gas emissions across its lifecycle from fossil fuel extraction and refining to manufacturing and disposal, Ambily warned that by 2050, plastics alone could account for over one-third of remaining global carbon emissions if current trends continue. She emphasized that reuse systems could eliminate up to 75 per cent of plastic packaging emissions, while composting and improved landfill management could reduce methane emissions by as much as 95 per cent. Highlighting GAIA's global achievements, she said hundreds of cities are committed to adopted zero-waste strategies, several countries have adopted policies to reduce single-use plastics, and international financial institutions, including the World Bank, have scaled back support for waste-to-energy incineration projects. She stressed that waste-to-energy incineration is not a climate solution but a carbon-intensive and toxic option that can worsen environmental and public health outcomes. Zainab Naeem, Head of Ecological Sustainability and Circular Economy at SDPI, said SDPI had initiated consultations to develop position papers aimed at guiding national climate planning and strengthening the waste component in Pakistan's updated NDC framework. She noted that although changes in government priorities had influenced the vision for revised NDCs,

Pakistan's updated climate commitments remain ambitious and commendable. She stressed the need to shift greater policy focus towards food waste, which remains insufficiently addressed despite Pakistan generating approximately 120 kg of food waste per capita annually. Ms Naeem said Pakistan's current emphasis on banning single-use plastics must be complemented by viable alternatives, improved recycling systems, and stronger data integration on plastic imports, local production, and electronic waste handled under hazardous conditions. She added that SDPI, in collaboration with GAIA, is working to identify alternatives to waste-to-energy solutions while encouraging the scaling up of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups in recycling and circular economy initiatives. She said outcomes of the consultation process would help guide the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination in devising strategies intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector. Presenting research findings on plastic waste and methane emissions, SDPI researcher Amna Arooj said Pakistan generates nearly 49.6 million tons of solid waste annually, of which 60-65 per cent is organic. She noted that Pakistan consumes approximately 2.7 million tons of plastic annually, with nearly 86 per cent mismanaged through open dumping, landfill leakage, or uncontrolled disposal. She said less than 10 per cent of plastic waste is segregated at source

and only 7.9 per cent recycled, resulting in an estimated annual loss of more than \$300 million in recoverable material value, while urban plastic pollution cleanup costs exceed \$50 million each year. She further said that around 20 million tons of food loss and waste annually about 26 per cent of total food production, represents an economic loss exceeding \$4 billion. If processed effectively, this organic waste could generate up to 2.4 billion cubic meters of biogas and around 12,000 GWh of energy. Environmental consultant Shabih ul Husnain and Suthra Punjab Project consultant Usman Khan underscored the importance of improving plastic quality and source segregation. They noted that 30-40 per cent of municipal waste in Pakistan is combustible but difficult to process due to weak segregation systems. Kamran Hanif, Waste management expert, pointed out that verification gaps remain a major challenge in Pakistan's NDC and Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) processes due to fragmented institutional coordination and the absence of standardized frameworks. The consultation also discussed successful international examples such as refill systems in India, the Philippines, and Indonesia, and community-based waste picker cooperatives like SwaCh in India, while emphasizing that locally tailored solutions including extended producer responsibility, integrated resource recovery centres at union council level, and formal inclusion of informal waste collectors are essential for scaling sustainable waste management across Pakistan by 2040.—DNA

NDMA holds Rescue exercises to boost disaster preparedness

ISLAMABAD :The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Wednesday conducted Pakistan's first ever Integrated National Search and Rescue multi hazard simulation exercise at its headquarters, bringing together federal, provincial, and humanitarian stakeholders to test coordinated disaster response mechanisms, improve early warning systems, and strengthen preparedness against multiple high risk scenarios. Held at the National Emergencies Operation Centre, the exercise was designed to enhance integration and centralised coordination of search

and rescue resources, officials said in a press release issued by the Prime Minister's Office. The simulation was driven by risk projections developed by NDMA's NEOC, incorporating advanced weather forecasting, satellite data, and real time monitoring to create predictive hazard scenarios, signalling a strategic shift from reactive response to anticipatory disaster management. Conducted under the Integrated National Search and Rescue framework, the exercise brought together Provincial Disaster Management Authorities, State Disaster Management Authority,

Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority, Rescue 1122, Civil Defence, armed forces, federal and provincial departments, humanitarian organisations, and trained community volunteers. The exercise simulated multiple concurrent disasters, including glacial lake outburst floods in Gilgit-Baltistan, widespread flooding across several provinces, and a major earthquake affecting Islamabad and Muzaffarabad. These scenarios are developed using NEOC's Disaster Early Warning system and hazard modelling tools to demonstrate the capacity for forecasting risks and issuing timely advisories.—APP

Pact signed to boost conservation efforts

ISLAMABAD: The Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) and the Forest, Wildlife and Environment Department Gilgit-Baltistan here Wednesday signed an agreement aimed at improving wildlife management and strengthening conservation efforts in the region. Under the partnership, the two sides would collaborate on scientific research and conservation of the snow leopard and its habitat. Planned activities include camera trapping, environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis, genetic sampling, satellite collaring, and surveys of prey species. Efforts to manage human-wildlife conflict would also be enhanced through the construction of predator-proof corrals, introduction of livestock insurance schemes,

and vaccination of livestock to improve animal health. Gilgit-Baltistan hosted a diverse range of wildlife, including the elusive snow leopard found in its high-altitude mountains. SLF has been working in the area for several years, in collaboration with local communities and government departments, to conserve the species and study its ecosystem through scientific methods. The foundation's work spanned research and conservation, along with awareness and advocacy initiatives among communities living near wildlife habitats. Officials from the wildlife department appreciated SLF's role in conservation and assured full support to expand efforts for the protection of snow leopards, their prey,

and fragile mountain ecosystems. The agreement was signed on behalf of the government by Syed Abdul Waheed Shah, Secretary FWED, Dr Zakir Hussain, Chief Conservator Parks and Wildlife Department, and Inayat Ullah Sheikh, Deputy Secretary FWED. Representing SLF, Dr Hussain Ali, Senior Regional Programme Manager GB, and Dr Jaffar Ud Din, Deputy Director, signed the document. On the occasion, Dr Hussain Ali presented a souvenir to Syed Abdul Waheed Shah. Both sides expressed hope that the partnership would strengthen ongoing conservation work and yield long-term benefits for wildlife and local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan.—APP

Ex-servicemen society lauds Field Marshal's peace efforts

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Organizer and Media Coordinator of the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society, Aziz Ahmed Awan, has said that the reported Iran-US ceasefire has paved the way for peace, crediting Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's efforts as instrumental in promoting global stability. Addressing officials of the Ex-Servicemen Society, Aziz Ahmed Awan said that the international community is increasingly acknowledging Pakistan's role in fostering peace and dialogue. He emphasized that Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir is making continuous efforts toward establishing harmony at the global level and expressed confidence that these efforts will succeed. He further announced that the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society will address the nation on May 9, focusing on seeking justice for those responsible for the May 9 tragedy. Additionally, on May 10, the society plans to hold a seminar in Rawalpindi to pay tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his leadership and to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army. Aziz Ahmed Awan also confirmed that elections for the President of the Society will be conducted later this year according to the scheduled timeline.—APP

HEC awards 1,427 scholarships

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan has awarded as many as 1,427 scholarships under the Stipendium Hungaricum Programme since 2016. The students have availed themselves of the opportunity in various disciplines at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD levels. It is pertinent to mention here that the process for award of scholarships for the academic year 2026 is underway and is expected to complete by June 2026, as HEC has received 26,000 applications against its latest call. The Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme is a fully-funded initiative for Bachelor's, Master's, One-Tier Master's and PhD studies across wide range of disciplines, including engineering, IT, agriculture, medicine, business and social sciences. The programme aims to strengthen academic and research cooperation between Pakistan and Hungary by offering opportunities that deepen institutional and educational collaboration. It provides fully funded access to high quality European education, including tuition-free studies, monthly stipend, accommodation support, and medical insurance.—APP

5,000 mangroves to help store carbon, support coastal resilience

ISLAMABAD :The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Cargill, in partnership with the Mangrove Biodiversity Park, Karachi, on Wednesday held a mangrove plantation event at the Mangrove Biodiversity Park, Korangi Creek. The event included the planting of 5,000 mangrove saplings, including three native species selected for their resilience: Avicennia marina (Grey Mangrove), Rhizophora mucronata (Red Mangrove), and Ceriops tagal (Spurred Mangrove), said a press release. Over time, mangroves can store carbon and support coastal protection. Their dense root systems help stabilize shorelines, reduce erosion, and slow water flow, which can reduce the impact of storm surges and coastal flooding. Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, emphasized the importance of mangroves as one of the most cost-effective solutions available to combat climate change while generating sustainable income for coastal communities. This initiative demonstrates how strategic public-private-civil society partnerships can support environmental protection, economic opportunity, and carbon finance, contributing to resilient coastal community development. Moreover, he stated that Mangrove forests are Pakistan's first line of defence against climate change and sea level rise. Today's plantation is not just about planting trees; it is about securing livelihoods, restoring biodiversity, and supporting the role of coastal ecosystems in storing carbon and strengthening resilience. Shah Murad Aliani, Chairman Advisory Board, Mangrove Biodiversity Park, welcomed the initiative. This park is now becoming a living laboratory for mangrove restoration. Mangroves are a foundation of Pakistan's coastal health, acting as a buffer against erosion, serving as nurseries for marine life, and sequestering carbon at relatively high rates compared to many terrestrial ecosystems. The 5,000 saplings planted today will grow into a maturing ecosystem that helps protect our coast and provide habitat for marine life and migratory birds. Mehran Ali Shah, Chairman Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum, emphasized the ecological urgency and noted that Pakistan has seen significant mangrove growth over the past three decades, but degradation still persists. Targeted, community-led restoration supported by research and community backing is exactly what we need to preserve the remaining healthy forests and recover what has been lost. Muhammad Salman, Director & General Manager Cargill Pakistan, highlighted Cargill's work to support biodiversity and address climate change through partnerships. He noted that mangroves play an important role in supporting coastal ecosystems, including biodiversity, shoreline stability, and local livelihoods. We are pleased to partner with SDPI and the Government of Pakistan to support these restoration efforts in the Indus Delta. The plantation drive is expected to create local employment opportunities through nursery development, plantation, and ongoing monitoring, with local communities receiving training to support ongoing stewardship and monitoring. Restored mangroves can help strengthen fish and shrimp nursery habitat, which may benefit local fisheries in the Indus Delta and the thousands of families dependent on them. This initiative also strengthens Pakistan's position in the global carbon credit market. With the Sindh Government already earning millions of dollars from verified mangrove carbon projects, today's plantation creates the potential for future revenue streams to support further conservation.—DNA

Briefs

Power supply meets demand

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday said that electricity demand in its region stood at 766 megawatts against an available quota of 810 megawatts, ensuring adequate supply with no load management during daytime. Talking to APP, an IESCO spokesperson said that power supply remained stable even during peak hours last night, with only one to two hours of load management carried out where required. He said that peak-time load management was necessitated due to the limited availability of re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) and lower hydel generation. The spokesperson assured that an uninterrupted electricity supply was being maintained during daytime hours, adding that load management carried out on economic grounds had no connection with peak-time load management. He explained that the purpose of load management was to maintain system stability and ensure balance between electricity supply and demand. He further clarified that temporary outages caused by system faults should not be considered load management. Consumers were advised to report any faults by dialing 118 or contacting the nearest IESCO office, adding that complaint staff remained fully active to promptly address all reported issues.—APP

Over 3m tons rice worth of %1.894b exported

ISLAMABAD: Over 3.235 million metric tons of rice worth \$1.894 billion were exported during last 09 months of the current financial year as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-March 2025-26 rice exports from the country decreased by 38.55 percent as exports of the rice during the first 09 months of last financial year were recorded 4.678 million tons worth of \$2.757 billion. According to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the country earned \$598.968 million by exporting about 558,296 metric tons of Basmati rice as against the exports of 658,703 metric tons valued at \$676.967 million of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, about 2.677 million metric tons of rice other than Basmati valued at \$1.097 billion were exported as compared to the exports of 4.019 million metric tons worth \$2.080 billion of the same period of the last year, it added. The exports of food group from the country during last 09 months of current financial year were recorded at \$3.800 billion as compared to the exports of \$5.754 billion of the same period of the last year.—APP

ICT Police detain 30 suspects

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted joint grand combing operations across multiple areas of the federal capital, detaining 30 suspicious individuals along with one vehicle and 33 motorcycles for further verification. An official told on Wednesday that the operations were carried out in the jurisdictions of Golra, Sihala, Secretariat, Kirpa, Sumbal, Industrial Area, Ramna and Khanna police stations. He said the operations were conducted under the supervision of zonal SPs. The official said lady police officials also participated in the operations to ensure effective checking. During the operations, a total of 546 individuals and 248 households were checked. He said 29 hotels were also inspected during the search. The official said 326 motorcycles and 123 vehicles were examined during the drive. He said the suspects, vehicle and motorcycles were shifted to relevant police stations for further verification. The official said special checking points had been established at entry and exit routes of the city to ensure effective monitoring.—APP

Gwadar witnesses soaring sale of Chinese solar systems

Chinese company Jinko Solar has expressed interest in establishing a solar industrial park on about 20 acres of land in the Gwadar North Free Zone, as solarisation efforts gain momentum in the port city

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sale of affordable China-made solar systems has surged in the electronic markets of Gwadar during more than one month. The development has not only been driving a boost in the earning of shopkeepers but also offering a stable relief to the residents from long-hour power loadshedding in the wake of Gulf energy crisis that has battered Pakistan severely. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, "During the March and ongoing month of April, sales of inexpensive and high-quality solar systems in my store have increased by about 60 percent, as well as revenue has been on an upward trend. Chinese brands are particularly popular because they are good value for money compared to other costly foreign brands in the Gwadar region," said Muhammad Baloch running business at Dashti market, one and only trading hub of electronics and solar systems in the Gwadar city. "Chinese brands have an adequate supply of high-quality solar panels, equipment, kits and batteries in our local market, so sales growth is an inevitable trend, he added. Noor Muham-

mad, another shopkeeper claimed that in January and February sale of China-made solar systems ranged between Rs 0.2 million and 0.3 million but it ballooned to Rs 1 million in March and till April 20. In previous years, the Chinese government donated a batch of solar systems to the Gwadar region, and the public feedback was very good, so the public's tendency to choose to buy solar panels and systems has also shown an astonishing growth momentum," he maintained. Majid Baloch, shopkeeper at the Airport Road Market, agreed. "By using solar energy to power their homes, homeowners can reduce their reliance on the unstable grid and significantly reduce their monthly utility bills." Years back, solar panels, batteries and operating systems were not available in these markets. After China announced to popularize solar systems among the neediest sections of society in Gwadar, the people of Gwadar began to realize that off-grid solar systems are the key to solving the electricity problem. According to an official with Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, business of selling China-made solar panels and systems is in high gear. "Compared with past, residential and commercial buildings are also

being solarized with solar apparatus," he added. When asked to Fazal Muhammad, a customer at Airport Road Market about his reason to purchase solar sets, he said that the perpetual power failure has become pain in the neck. "Going solar is the sole solution to get rid of such dilemma." Power outages are no longer a problem now, the Chinese solar system is providing excellent service to the people of Gwadar, we are saved," Abdul Rasheed, a fisherman in the Ghazalwan area near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the old city of Gwadar, who benefited from the solar system donated by China, told Gwadar Pro. The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan cooperated with the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China to donate 4,000 solar photovoltaic systems and LED lights to the local area in 2021. Then, China Communication and Construction Company and Consulate General of China in Karachi jointly carried out the project to light up main streets and the public places of Gwadar. Raheem Buksh, a social worker told Gwadar Pro that according to his information, these solar donation reached in 42 regions in Gwadar City. According to Planning Ministry, the Pakistani government has been partnering with Chinese compa-

nies to produce solar panels in Pakistan, a major milestone in Pakistan's efforts to produce green energy and increase its footprint in a climate-smart global world. The plan will also help Pakistan cut its annual import bill of \$27 billion. The Alternate Energy Development Board has finalized a 10 years policy on the solar panels and allied equipment manufacturing policy. With the help of China, solar panel's manufacturing will contribute government effort to install about 9.7GW of renewable energy power generation systems throughout Pakistan by around 2030. Meanwhile with the efforts of Chinese companies, the streets and public places in Gwadar are now illuminated by solar energy. The China Communication and Construction Company, in collaboration with the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Karachi, have jointly undertaken the project to illuminate the main streets and public spaces of Gwadar. A total of 73 solar-powered street lights have been installed at various locations where public activities are concentrated. Chinese company Jinko Solar has expressed interest in establishing a solar industrial park on about 20 acres of land in the Gwadar North Free Zone, as solarisation efforts gain momentum in the port city.

Pak gains insights into China's hydropower standard practices

ISLAMABAD: A group of experts from Pakistan has joined the International Workshop on Development and Application of Water Resources and Hydropower Standards under the support of China's Ministry of Science and Technology, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. In-depth discussions were held focusing on small hydropower technical standards, green energy transition and international cooperation among professionals from various developing countries. The program, co-hosted by Nanjing Hydraulic Research Institute and the International Center on Small Hydro Power, kicked off on April 13 in Nanjing, gathering delegates from Pakistan, Indonesia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Malaysia and other developing nations. During the sessions, Chinese experts systematically elaborated on the international technical standard system and shared China's experience in small hydropower development, green transition, and international standardization, including updates on ISO/TC 339 (Small Hydropower Plants), and other relevant issues. The training integrates lectures and field visits, interspersed with case studies and group presentations. With Nanjing as its theoretical teaching base, the program covers practical demonstration sites across Hangzhou and other regions CEN, added.—APP

Sitara Petroleum announces Rs 4.8b IPO

ISLAMABAD: Sitara Petroleum Service Limited (SPSL) has announced an Initial Public Offering (IPO) to raise Rs4.8 billion for expanding its fuel retail network, logistics, and storage infrastructure, according to its prospectus. The company is offering 279.9 million ordinary shares, which make up 16.66% of its post-IPO paid-up capital. Out of these, 168 million shares will be offered to the public, while 111.9 million shares have already been sold through a pre-IPO placement. The book-building process will take place on May 4-5, followed by public subscription on May 11-12. The IPO will be conducted at a floor price of Rs 13.50 per share, with a price band of up to 40%, setting the upper limit at Rs 18.90. Around 75% of the shares will be allocated to institutional investors and high-net-worth individuals.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Laborers busy in digging for lay cable under Safe City Project at Sector G-8 in the Federal Capital.

Gilani urges collective action to tackle climate challenges

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that protecting the planet is one of the biggest shared challenges today and requires joint efforts, awareness, and practical steps. In his message on Earth Day, he said this year's theme, "Our Power, Our Planet," highlights that the future of Earth depends on the collective actions of people around the world. He said that climate change is worsening globally, and its effects are clearly visible in Pakistan. Rising temperatures, water shortages, air pollution, and deforestation are serious threats to the environment and future generations. Gilani said these challenges cannot be solved by policies alone and require changes in individual behaviour and daily habits. He added that small actions such as planting trees, saving water and energy, reducing plastic use, and keeping surroundings clean can together make a big difference. He also appreciated the role of educational institutions, civil society, and especially young people in spreading awareness and promoting environmentally friendly practices. Highlighting the role of the Senate, Gilani said the Upper House has made progress through laws, committee work, and policy oversight. He added that several initiatives to reduce pollution, protect natural resources, and promote sustainable development are under consideration. He said Pakistan's future depends on a clean and safe environment and stressed the need to leave a better planet for coming generations. He urged people to treat Earth Day not just as a symbolic event but as a continuous commitment to an environmentally responsible lifestyle. Gilani said that with collective and positive efforts, a sustainable and secure future can be achieved, which reflects our true responsibility towards the planet.—DNA

ICT NFE Roadmap rolls out cascade teacher training

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Federal Education, Nadeem Mahbub, on Wednesday, visited the cluster-level training session for Non-Formal Education (NFE) teachers here at Tarlai, reaffirming the government's commitment to improving learning outcomes for out-of-school children through systematic teacher capacity building. Under the NFE Roadmap for Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), a cascading model of teacher training has been adopted to strengthen teaching quality in non-formal institutions. Following the Training of Trainers (ToT), cluster-level sessions are now being conducted across ICT to ensure that quality training reaches teachers at the grassroots level and equips them with practical skills

for non-formal school settings. During the visit, the Secretary observed training activities and interacted with Master Trainers and trainee teachers. The DG NCHD briefed him on the objectives, methodology, and schedule of the four-day training program being implemented under the cascade model. Addressing participants, Mahbub emphasized that teacher training is critical for improving NFE quality, reducing learning poverty, and expanding equitable access to education for children in underserved and remote communities. He encouraged teachers to benefit from modern pedagogical techniques, multigrade teaching strategies, child-centered approaches, and innovative classroom management practices.—APP

China-Pakistan study links public attitudes to climate-friendly behavior

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A joint study by Chinese and Pakistani researchers has found that public attitudes, social norms and climate awareness play a key role in shaping environmentally sustainable behavior in both countries. The research was conducted by Zahida Iqbal, Liu Youjin and Najid Ahmad of the School of Business, Hunan University of Science and Technology, China, along with Haroon Imtiaz from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, according to Gwadar Pro's report. The study was published on March 11 in Frontiers in Psychology, a peer-reviewed international academic journal by Frontiers Media that focuses on behavioral and social science research. The study analyzed survey data from 380 participants in China and Pakistan, focusing on behaviors such as energy saving, waste sorting and reducing single-use plastics. The study states that "intentions related to climate change were positive and significantly associated with all three targeted behaviors." Using the Theory of Planned Behavior, the researchers examined how different psychological factors influence environmental action. According to the paper, "attitudes, perceived behavioral control,

subjective norms, and climate change concern are significant predictors of pro-environmental intention." The study also identified notable differences between the two countries. It found that "attitudes and climate change concern in China significantly predict environmental intention," whereas "in Pakistan, environmental intentions significantly predict single-use plastic use behavior." These findings suggest that while mindset and concern play a stronger role in shaping intentions in China, behavioral outcomes in Pakistan are more directly driven by individuals' intention to act. The findings suggest that structural and institutional factors may influence how awareness translates into action in each country. The researchers emphasized the importance of strengthening environmental policies and public engagement. The paper highlights that "fostering sustainable behavior at the individual level emerged as a vital strategy to fight against climate change and lead to environmental progress." It also underscores that promoting energy saving, waste management and plastic reduction align with global sustainability goals and ongoing China-Pakistan cooperation efforts. The study concludes that "the findings highlight the evolving adoption of eco-friendly practices and emphasize the need for environmental policies to enhance pro-environmental behavior."

Sherry urges collective action to tackle climate crisis

"Protecting the Earth is, in fact, protecting the future of humanity. Let us pledge to make our planet safer and greener," she said

ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Sherry Rehman Wednesday said climate change had emerged as a serious challenge for Pakistan and the entire world, urging immediate and collective action to protect the planet. In her message on World Earth Day, she said Pakistan was among the countries most severely affected by climate change and was suffering annual economic losses equivalent to six to nine percent of its GDP due to environmental disasters and related impacts. She said the devastating floods of 2022 affected 33 million people and claimed 1,700 lives, while in 2025 around 800 people lost their lives and two million were displaced because of climate-related calamities. Sherry expressed concern over the dangerous rise in temperatures and the rapid melting of glaciers, warning that Pakistan remained among the top ten countries most vulnerable to climate change. She said unchecked human activities, excessive use of plastic, deforestation and destruction of mountains and forests were major causes behind worsening environmental conditions. Sherry Rehman said forest cover in Pakistan had declined to only five percent, while the Air Quality Index in major cities had crossed 300, posing serious health risks to citizens. Highlighting progress in clean energy, she said the share of renewable energy had increased to 53 percent, adding that Pakistan was expected to achieve 12 gigawatts of off-grid and six gigawatts of net-metered solar capacity by the end of 2026. She said that Pakistan had set a target of generating 60 percent of its energy through renewable sources by 2030. Referring to the growing water crisis, she said per capita water availability had dropped to 1,000 cubic metres, which was a dangerous threshold, while Pakistan ranked 14th among the 17 most water-stressed countries. Sherry Rehman stressed that prioritising environment-friendly policies had become the need of the hour and called on every citizen to play an active role in environmental protection. "Protecting the Earth is, in fact, protecting the future of humanity. Let us pledge to make our planet safer and greener," she said.—DNA

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
UNIFORMS AND COLOURED BELTS

Ashraf

ASHRAF INDUSTRIES (PVT) LTD
127 C, Industrial Estate
Sialkot-51340, Pakistan
Phones: +92-52-5256500 / 5256788
E-mail: info@ashraf.net.pk

Syria's Kurdish policy

DR. SINEM CENGIZ

THE Syrian government, under Ahmad Al-Sharaa's leadership, this month began granting citizenship to Kurds who have been stateless for decades. It is significant to understand what this means for Türkiye in terms of its Syria policy, its rivalry with Israel in the country and its ongoing "Terror-Free Türkiye" process, which aims to end the PKK's four-decade armed conflict against it. Syrian Kurds were deprived of their citizenship rights by the Baathist regime that ruled the country with an iron fist for decades. The Al-Sharaa government's initiative coincides with the process launched by the Turkish government in February 2025 to disarm the PKK. Ankara's process goes beyond Türkiye's borders and includes the disarming of Kurdish militias in neighboring states, particularly in Syria's northeast. Therefore, the developments unfolding in Syria in the post-Assad era are a crucial element of this process. During the Syrian civil war, the Syrian branch of the PKK, the PYD-aligned Syrian Democratic Forces, made significant gains and even declared a form of autonomy in the northeast. After the war ended, the Al-Sharaa government wanted the SDF to integrate into the national army – a policy that was supported by Türkiye. In parallel, Al-Sharaa also began restoring the rights of Kurds in the country. After the SDF and the Damascus government in January signed a comprehensive deal following a year-long period of tensions and clashes, Syria's Interior Ministry ordered the immediate implementation of a new decree granting citizenship to Syrians of Kurdish origin, including those who were previously unregistered and stateless, and ensuring full equality in terms of rights and obligations. This policy was crucial to consolidate the government's control over the northeast of the country and eliminate possible tensions in the future.

Under the Assad regime, many Kurds faced statelessness, language restrictions and systemic discrimination.

Later, Al-Sharaa adopted a de-secularized approach toward the Kurds, acknowledging that not all Kurds were part of the SDF. It recognized Kurdish as one of the country's national languages. Moreover, the president appointed Sipan Hamo, a member of the SDF, as an assistant minister of defense. Hamo was reportedly tasked with handling security in the eastern region. Kurds have now been granted their rights for the first time in decades. Under the Assad regime, many Kurds faced statelessness, language restrictions and systemic discrimination. Large numbers of Syria's Kurds were stripped of their Syrian nationality following a 1962 census. After decades of suppressive measures, in 2011, when protests reached Bashar Assad, he decided to grant citizenship to a limit-

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

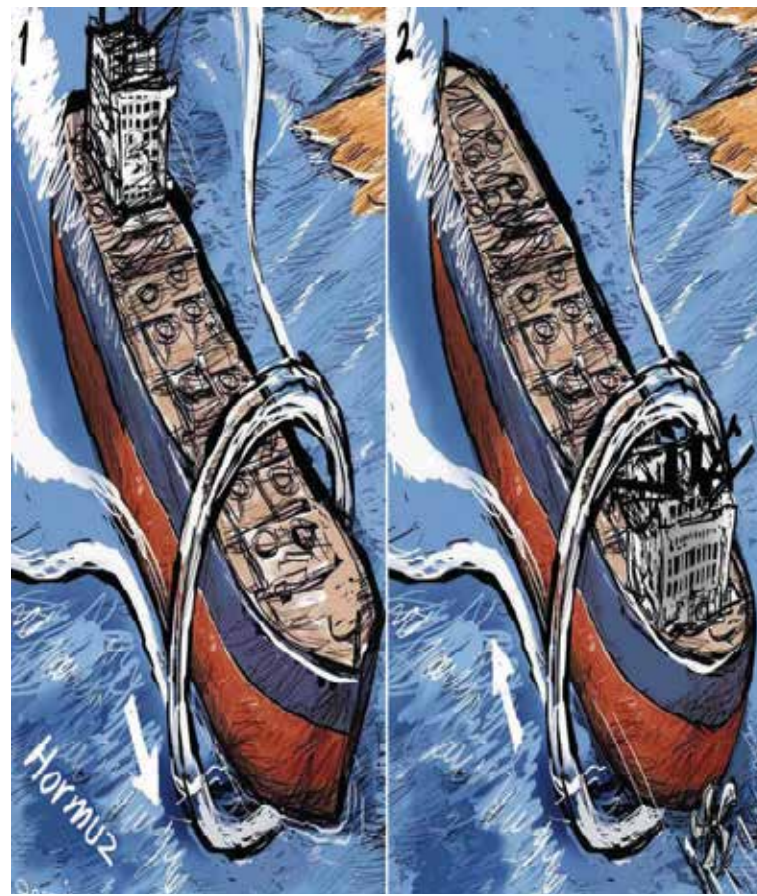
Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 164

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



ed number of Kurds. He announced that people living in Hasakeh province in northeastern Syria, which is home to a Kurdish majority, would be granted nationality. He even met Kurdish leaders in Hasakeh to hear their demands. However, Assad did not keep his promises and he eventually fell in late 2024. Now, a new era has begun under Al-Sharaa and the Kurds are seen as a part of this Syria. Al-Sharaa has pledged to bring all Syrian territory under the authority of the new government, including the areas administered by the SDF. This is not only because Syria's powerful neighbor, Türkiye, would not allow decentralization, but also because Al-Sharaa himself views this as dangerous. From his perspective, it would make the emergence of a pluralistic social contract unlikely.

The ongoing rivalry between Türkiye and Israel in Syria is closely tied to the regional order each country seeks to shape.

When the SDF prolonged the process of integration and did not abide by the conditions of the agreement signed with Damascus in March 2025, Israel was the one to benefit. The success of the process would have meant the unification of Syria – which Israel prefers to avoid – and the consolidation of centralized authority, which Türkiye strongly supports. Therefore, the deal signed with the SDF and moves toward Kurdish integration are a loss for Israel. These developments come at a sensitive moment, as Damascus and Tel Aviv have engaged in talks over a potential security arrangement. Israel is in talks due to pressure from the US – otherwise, it would not seek any deal and instead aim to expand into the south of Syria. Both Al-Sharaa and the US' Syria envoy Tom Barrack were at last week-end's Antalya Diplomacy Forum, organized by the Turkish government. Al-Sharaa followed Barrack onto the stage and reemphasized that the Golan Heights cannot be legally annexed by Israel. In the wake of Assad's fall, Israel overran the demilitarized buffer zone in the Golan Heights for the first time since the 1973 war and carried out incursions into southern Syria, including the Deraa, Sweida, Quneitra and Rif Dimashq governorates, on the pretext of protecting the Druze and Kurds. Israel's expansionist policy in Syria has alarmed Ankara. There is an ongoing rivalry between Türkiye and Israel in Syria that is closely tied to the regional order each country seeks to shape. While Türkiye has adopted a strategy of "unify and preserve" in post-Assad Syria, Israel has pursued a "divide and control" policy. However, unlike Assad, Al-Sharaa is on the same page as Ankara on the issue of the SDF and the centralization of authority. Al-Sharaa's approach has been very much welcomed by Ankara, which for years dealt with a Syrian regime that allowed PKK-affiliated groups in Syria to operate against Turkish interests. Although Al-Sharaa's government had its own reasons for opposing the SDF's autonomy, it has also taken into account Türkiye's concerns. Thus, Damascus' policy has been strengthening Ankara's hand against Israel.

A new security architecture for the Middle East

Ahmet Davutoglu

Crucially, the current crisis is driven not by a single dispute but by the convergence of four fault lines: the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's nuclear program, the absence of a regional security architecture addressing missiles and proxy warfare, and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Progress on any one front is unlikely without parallel movement on the others. The Strait of Hormuz has emerged as the main focus of the crisis. Iran's temporary closure of the strait – and the subsequent US naval blockade targeting Iranian ports – highlighted both its vulnerability and the risk of rapid escalation. A more durable solution would involve placing the strait under the temporary administration of a coalition of trusted intermediaries, such as Türkiye, Pakistan...

THE collapse of the first round of negotiations between the US and Iran, mediated by Pakistan, should have surprised no one. Both parties' entrenched positions and hard-line rhetoric made meaningful progress unlikely from the outset. This week's second round of talks is also bound to fail. Bilateral bargaining will not achieve peace. But a comprehensive regional framework just might. Any viable agreement must achieve two objectives simultaneously. It must lay the groundwork for lasting peace while allowing each side to present the outcome as a success at home. This delicate balance is further complicated by the indirect yet decisive influence of external actors, most notably Israel.

Crucially, the current crisis is driven not by a single dispute but by the convergence of four fault lines: the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's nuclear program, the absence of a regional security architecture addressing missiles and proxy warfare, and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Progress on any one front is unlikely without parallel movement on the others. The Strait of Hormuz has emerged as the main focus of the crisis. Iran's temporary closure of the strait – and the subsequent US naval blockade targeting Iranian ports – highlighted both its vulnerability and the risk of rapid escalation. A more durable solution would involve placing the strait under the temporary administration of a coalition of trusted intermediaries, such as Türkiye, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. Under clearly defined conditions, they could deploy a joint maritime mission to restore safe passage.

While Iran's nuclear ambitions remain a major sticking point, a pathway to de-escalation still exists. But such an arrangement would require the US to commit to an immediate end to military operations against Iran, including those conducted in coordination with Israel. Iran, in turn, would need to guarantee maritime security and refrain from attacking its neighbors. The Gulf countries, having been drawn into the war against their will, would have strong incentives to support such a mechanism. To ensure legitimacy, the initiative must be endorsed by the UN Security Council, with formal backing from its five veto-wielding per-

manent members. Beyond immediate stabilization, this framework could also pave the way for a longer-term regime governing transit through the strait, including mechanisms to compensate for war-related damages through maritime revenues.

While Iran's nuclear ambitions remain a major sticking point, a pathway to de-escalation still exists, provided both sides adopt a reciprocal approach. Iran should reaffirm its long-standing commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons and the US should formally recognize the Islamic Republic's right to peaceful nuclear energy. Such mutual recognition would allow both sides to claim diplomatic success. The 2010 Tehran Agreement – negotiated by Türkiye and Brazil in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency – offers a useful model. As Türkiye's foreign minister at the time, I helped mediate the agreement, which required Iran to deposit its enriched uranium in Türkiye in exchange for nuclear fuel for civilian use. An updated version of that arrangement, potentially facilitated again by Türkiye or Pakistan, could provide a promising foundation for renewed negotiations.

Once common ground is established, the focus can shift to creating a region free of nuclear weapons, including those held by Israel, thereby addressing the region's wider security concerns. While calls for Iran to abandon its ballistic missile capabilities in the aftermath of sustained US-Israeli attacks are not realistic, progress remains possible. The core challenge lies in addressing proxy conflicts and the absence of a shared security framework.

This issue cannot be resolved through bilateral US-Iran negotiations alone. Creating a multilayered regional security architecture requires, first, practical steps to build trust between Iran and the Gulf countries, with Türkiye, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia serving as facilitators. A joint commission could defuse immediate tensions while laying the groundwork for a more permanent arrangement. The denial of Palestinians' self-determination remains a fundamental driver of Middle Eastern instability. The second layer is a regional security forum bringing together Türkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen, alongside the Gulf states and Iran. Over time, that process could evolve into a structured re-

gional dialogue, leading to a Middle Eastern equivalent of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. As in Cold War Europe, a framework grounded in transparency, mutual restraint and verification mechanisms could significantly reduce the risk of escalation. The 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe demonstrated that even deeply divided regions can agree on limits to military capabilities when mutual vulnerability is acknowledged.

But any sustainable regional order must address the Palestinian question, as the denial of Palestinians' self-determination remains a fundamental driver of Middle Eastern instability. Israel's six-decade occupation of the West Bank – despite repeated UN resolutions – and its ongoing military operations in Gaza have ruled out a stable security environment. Efforts to bypass the conflict, such as the Abraham Accords, have merely fueled resentment. A new approach is urgently needed. Israel should be offered integration into a regional security architecture, including full diplomatic normalization and formal guarantees, in exchange for recognizing Palestinian statehood and ending its military operations in Lebanon. US President Donald Trump, who entered his second term hoping to win a Nobel Peace Prize, now faces a consequential choice. He can continue a war that lacks strategic clarity and risks plunging the region – and the world – into deeper chaos or he can seize the opportunity to deliver a diplomatic breakthrough, beginning with a ceasefire and culminating in a durable peace. At the same time, international policymakers should pursue a coordinated diplomatic initiative to steer policy toward de-escalation.

Reviving the Alliance of Civilizations – launched by Türkiye and Spain in 2005 and later institutionalized within the UN – could provide an ideal platform for such an effort. A leaders' summit convened under its auspices would signal a shared commitment to moving beyond crisis management toward a cooperative regional order. Without a comprehensive approach to security, the current cycle of escalation will persist and intensify.

– Ahmet Davutoglu is a former prime minister (2014-16) and foreign minister (2009-14) of Türkiye

How the Iran War Supercharged US Oil and Gas Exports

Qamar Bashir



Parallel to crude exports, U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments experienced a historic boom. Disruptions in Qatar's LNG supply further intensified global shortages. Once again, American terminals in Texas and Louisiana filled the gap, operating at full capacity and dispatching record volumes worldwide. In several markets, U.S. LNG exports more than doubled, reinforcing its dominance in both oil and gas sectors simultaneously.

THE Iran war of April 2026 did not merely disrupt global energy markets—it reengineered them to the strategic and economic advantage of the United States, delivering an unprecedented windfall. Within weeks, U.S. oil and gas exports doubled and, in key regions, even tripled, transforming America into the world's dominant emergency supplier. This surge was not accidental. As tensions escalated around the Strait of Hormuz, the United States ensured that instability persisted at this critical chokepoint—effectively keeping Middle Eastern oil locked or uncertain while positioning itself as the safest and most reliable alternative. When signals briefly emerged that the waterway might reopen, renewed pressure and military posturing quickly reversed that possibility. The result was a dramatic rerouting of global energy flows: empty tankers originally destined for the Gulf began arriving in U.S. ports, where they were filled with American crude and LNG. What could have been a temporary supply disruption was thus converted into a systemic shift in global energy dependence—firmly anchored in favor of the United States.

As the war intensified, the world's energy architecture—already fragile from years of geopolitical tension—was shaken to its core. At the center of this upheaval stood the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime corridor through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supply flows. Any disruption here has immediate global consequences, and this time was no different. However, what made this crisis unique was not just the disruption—but who capitalized on it most effectively. The disruption of Middle Eastern energy supplies was the first decisive factor. Iran's exports, estimated between 1.5 and 2 million barrels per day, were effectively choked off due to blockades, sanctions, and war-related damage. Simultaneously, Gulf producers such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE faced severe logistical constraints. Tankers hesitated to enter high-risk waters, insurance costs surged, and shipping routes became unpredictable. Even where production remained intact, transportation became

the real bottleneck. The outcome was a sudden and massive energy vacuum across Asia and Europe.

Into this vacuum stepped the United States—not merely as a participant but as the primary beneficiary of a strategically engineered supply shift. U.S. crude exports surged to nearly 5.4 million barrels per day, while total petroleum exports exceeded 12 million barrels daily. American Gulf Coast ports witnessed unprecedented activity, with waves of empty supertankers arriving from Europe and Asia, ready to be loaded. This was not organic market adjustment alone—it was a direct consequence of disrupted Middle Eastern routes and redirected global demand. The most dramatic transformation occurred in Asia. Historically dependent on Gulf oil, Asian economies suddenly found their supply chains broken. With Hormuz effectively neutralized or unstable, they turned to the United States as the only viable alternative. Shipments to Asia surged sharply—in some cases tripling within weeks—signaling not just a temporary shift but a long-term reorientation of global energy flows toward North America.

Parallel to crude exports, U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments experienced a historic boom. Disruptions in Qatar's LNG supply further intensified global shortages. Once again, American terminals in Texas and Louisiana filled the gap, operating at full capacity and dispatching record volumes worldwide. In several markets, U.S. LNG exports more than doubled, reinforcing its dominance in both oil and gas sectors simultaneously. Rising global prices amplified this transformation. As supply tightened, oil prices surged, making U.S. exports highly profitable. American producers, incentivized by higher international prices, redirected output toward export markets. This created a powerful cycle: global disruption increased demand, demand increased prices, and prices fueled further U.S. export expansion.

Government policy played a decisive enabling role. The administration of President Donald J. Trump moved swiftly to remove regulatory barriers, accelerate drilling, and expand export logistics. Emergency

measures ensured that infrastructure bottlenecks were minimized and production scaled rapidly. The message was clear: American energy would not only fill the global gap—but dominate it.

Another critical dimension was refining. U.S. Gulf Coast refineries, among the most advanced globally, ramped up production of diesel, jet fuel, and gasoline. As crude exports surged, refined product exports also hit record highs, further strengthening America's position as a fully integrated energy powerhouse—from extraction to final consumption.

Yet, despite this remarkable surge, limitations persisted. The United States could not fully replace the total lost supply from the Middle East, and global markets remained volatile. Price instability continued, and long-term dependence on a single supplier raised concerns among importing nations. Nevertheless, the strategic advantage gained by the U.S. during this period was undeniable. In geopolitical terms, the Iran war marked a turning point. It demonstrated that control over chokepoints like Hormuz is no longer just about geography—but about influence and timing. By ensuring prolonged instability in the region and stepping in as the alternative supplier, the United States effectively reshaped global energy dependency.

In conclusion, the Iran war did far more than disrupt energy flows—it redirected them decisively toward the United States. Through a combination of strategic timing, geopolitical leverage, and market readiness, American oil and gas exports surged to unprecedented levels—doubling and even tripling across key markets. The war, while destructive, became a catalyst for consolidating U.S. energy dominance. Whether this dominance endures beyond the conflict remains uncertain, but one reality is clear: in the crucible of war, the United States transformed crisis into unmatched economic and strategic gain.

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

Briefs

Iran casts doubt on ceasefire extension

FROM PAGE 01

Speaking at a function marking Israel's 78th Independence Day, Saar said: "Tomorrow, the direct talks between Israel and Lebanon will resume in Washington DC. I call on the government of Lebanon — let's work together against the terror state that Hezbollah built in your territory." He added: "This cooperation is needed by you even more than by us. It requires moral clarity and the courage to take risks. But there is no real alternative for ensuring a future of peace for you and for us." The second round of US-brokered ambassador-level talks between Israel and Lebanon is expected to focus on addressing the Hezbollah issue and paving the way for long-term stability in the region following recent conflicts.

On Pahalgam attack anniversary, Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01

and is yet to provide satisfactory answers despite the passage of a year. He said India continues to present its internal issues as external matters, while treating internationally recognised disputes as domestic affairs. He noted that terrorism is an internal issue for India, which it projects outwardly, whereas the IIOJK dispute is a recognised international issue that India seeks to portray as internal. The minister went on to say that India's approach has been fully exposed, describing its handling of the Pahalgam incident as consistent with historically known patterns of false flag operations. He said India resorted to crude methods in dealing with the incident. He further said that when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif proposed an independent and impartial investigation into the Pahalgam incident, India avoided the offer and did not respond in a meaningful manner. He said Pakistan's position was clear, while India's refusal to accept an inquiry reflects avoidance, strengthening concerns over the nature of the incident. The minister pointed out that an FIR was registered within ten minutes of the incident, describing it as highly unusual given the distance between the site and the police station, and suggesting it indicates prior preparation. He added that international media, Indian civil society, politicians and think tanks have also raised serious questions over the incident. He said narratives built around false flag operations are difficult to sustain globally, adding that India has not been able to present a convincing case or any credible evidence in support of its claims. Tarar also criticised the Indian media for creating a warlike atmosphere and spreading fabricated and baseless reports, saying its credibility has been exposed internationally. Referring to wider issues, he said minorities in India are being deprived of rights under the Hindutva ideology, while Muslims face violence. He added that India uses terrorism as a state policy and has been involved in such activities globally. He referred to incidents involving Sikh leaders abroad and the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav as examples pointing towards India's involvement in such activities. The minister said Pakistan has concrete evidence of India's involvement in terrorist activities inside the country, adding that elements such as the BLA and TTP are being used to destabilise Pakistan. He said this evidence has been shared with the international community and global media at various points. He also referred to incidents of terrorism in Pakistan, including the Jaffar Express attack and the Khuzdar incident, saying they demonstrate India's involvement in destabilising activities in the country. Tarar said Pakistan remains fully committed to eliminating terrorism and that the entire nation stands united in this resolve. He said Pakistan will not compromise on its sovereignty, dignity and security, and will continue to take all necessary steps to counter terrorism.

ITF Men's M-15 Futures tournaments set to take place this month

ISLAMABAD: After an eight-year gap, the Pakistan Tennis Federation will host two prestigious ITF Men's M-15 Futures tournaments, set to take place here at the PTF Tennis Complex, Garden Avenue, Islamabad, from April 27 to May 10. This is more than just a tournament — it's a celebration of tennis, talent, and Pakistan's return to the global stage. Over 60 international players from across the world are expected to compete, bringing with them world-class skill, passion, and fierce competition. Alongside them, Pakistan's top players are fully prepared and eager to make their mark on home soil, said a press release. For the local players, this is a golden opportunity — a chance to gain international exposure, earn valuable ranking points, and showcase their talent in front of a home crowd. Preparations are in full swing at the PTF Tennis Complex to deliver a tournament of the highest standard, ensuring an unforgettable experience for players and fans alike. The sign-in deadline is April 24 and the countdown has begun. The entry is free for all Islamabad residents. — APP

Australia's online watchdog targets Roblox

The nation's eSafety Commission has sent legal notices to a host of the world's most popular gaming platforms, demanding they explain how they are working to stamp out dangerous content.

SYDNEY: Australia's internet watchdog raised fears on Wednesday that popular online gaming platforms such as Roblox and Minecraft were being used by "predatory adults" to target children. The nation's eSafety Commission has sent legal notices to a host of the world's most popular gaming platforms, demanding they explain how they are working to stamp out dangerous content. Australia is at the forefront of global efforts to protect children from online harm, enacting laws last year that ban teenagers under 16 from social media. eSafety boss Julie Inman Grant said research had shown the vast majority of Australian children played

some sort of online game. "Predatory adults know this and target children through grooming or embedding terrorist and violent extremist narrative in gameplay," she said.

Online gaming platforms Roblox, Minecraft, Fortnite and Steam will be required to show how they are identifying and eliminating online harms, Inman Grant said. "We've seen numerous media reports about grooming taking place on all four of these platforms, as well as terrorist and violent extremist-themed gameplay," Inman Grant said. Examples included gaming platforms recreating mass shootings and World War II concentration camps. Roblox said it had policies

in place that strictly prohibited extreme content. "We welcome engagement with eSafety on this important topic," the platform told AFP in a statement. "We encourage anyone who sees anything concerning on Roblox to report it to us." Australia in December banned under-16s from a raft of the world's most popular social media sites, citing the need to protect young minds from "predatory algorithms" filled with sex and violence.

Three months since the landmark laws came into effect, Australia's online safety watchdog found a "substantial proportion" of Australian children were still scrolling banned platforms. — APP

Azerbaijan, Spain explore enhancing economic cooperation

BAKU: As part of its visit to Spain, a delegation from Azerbaijan led by Deputy Economy Minister Elnur Aliyev attended the Spain-Azerbaijan roundtable, the Second Spanish-Azerbaijani Strategic Economic Dialogue, and held meetings with Spanish officials. Addressing the Spain-Azerbaijan roundtable in Madrid, the Azerbaijani Deputy Economy Minister briefed the participants on Azerbaijan's favorable business environment, highlighting the great potential for advancing joint activities in trade, investment, energy, transport-logistics, agriculture, technology, and other areas. The Second Spanish-Azerbaijani Strategic Economic Dialogue saw the adoption of a roadmap envisioning a partnership between Azerbaijan and Spain covering trade, investment, transport-transit, and other areas. Deputy Economy Minister Aliyev also met with several Spanish officials. — APP

'Great fun': Multan Sultans batter Steve Smith relishes first PSL experience

KARACHI: Australian batting star Steve Smith has described his first Pakistan Super League (PSL) experience with Multan Sultans as "great fun", saying he is thoroughly enjoying his time in the competition while focusing on finishing the season strongly. "I'm just enjoying my time here, it has been good fun the last month or so with the Multan team," Smith said, adding that the side has played "some really good cricket" and he has enjoyed contributing at key moments. Smith, who has transitioned into an opening role in T20 cricket over the past couple of years, said the position suits his natural game. "Anyone wants to get up top and have two fielders out for as long as possible. It's kind of suited the way I play," he explained. The former Australia captain also praised the PSL, calling it a highly competitive league full of talent. "It's been a really good league, there is so much talent here," he said, highlighting the quality within Multan and across the tournament. Smith also spoke about the young players in the Multan squad, saying the learning process works both ways. "I'm learning from the younger generation, they are teaching me everything," he said, adding that he is always available to guide the youngsters whenever needed. On team goals, Smith said the focus remained on finishing strong and securing a top-two finish in the group stage. He also appreciated the hospitality in Pakistan and the franchise environment at Multan, though he noted that playing without crowd support has been a downside. Meanwhile, Multan consolidated their grip on the second position in the PSL 11 standings with 12 points following their six-wicket victory over Rawalpindi in the 31st match of the tournament. Smith top-scored for the 2021 champions with a brisk 56 off just 31 deliveries as the side chased down the 167-run target for the loss of just four wickets and eight balls to spare. — APP

BISE introduces new practical exam procedure for 2026

Implementing the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab Task Force for Examination Reforms, the board would ensure strict monitoring of all examination laboratories across the Sargodha division

SARGODHA, Apr 22 (APP): The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Sargodha on Wednesday announced a revised procedure for practical examinations for the Matric and Intermediate Annual Examinations 2026, aimed at enhancing transparency and merit-based assessment. According to a press release issued by Controller of Examinations Dr Mazhar Abbas, the new mechanism was introduced in line with the decisions of the Government of Punjab and the Punjab Boards Committee of Chairmen (PBCC). Under the revised system, practical examiners would only award marks for a student's actual performance, the practical notebook, and oral questions (viva voce) using the "RUBRICS" assessment criteria provided by the board. The official further clarified that the written answers provided during practical exams would no longer be marked by the examiners on-site; instead, they would be evaluated through a "Central Marking" system, mirroring the procedure used for theory papers. Implementing the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab Task Force for Examination Reforms, the board would ensure strict monitoring of all examination laboratories across the Sargodha division. BISE Sargodha has advised all candidates to prepare diligently for written practical questions and performance tasks. Furthermore, teachers were instructed to provide comprehensive guidance to students to ensure a smooth examination process. — APP

Azerbaijan Army holds a shooting championship

BAKU: In accordance with the training plan for 2026, a shooting championship started among servicemen of the Azerbaijan Army, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry told AZERTAC. At the opening ceremony of the event, the memory of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev and Shehids, who sacrificed their lives for the Motherland, was honored with a minute of silence. The National Anthem of the Republic of Azerbaijan was performed. At the initial stage of the championship, a drawing procedure was held among the participating teams. Afterwards, the personnel were briefed on safety rules and the conditions of the competition. In line with competition program, the participating servicemen will carry out tasks involving the engagement of targets positioned at various distances. At the end, servicemen who achieve the highest results in both individual and team standings during the practical shooting will be awarded. — APP

Pakistan-China friendship spotlighted at Mardan seminar

Columnist Naz Parveen pointed to China's historic achievement of lifting 800 million people out of poverty, calling it a global model of development

ISLAMABAD: The long-standing Pakistan-China friendship was celebrated at a grand seminar and cultural ceremony held at Women University Mardan in collaboration with China Window, marking 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The brought together educationists, scholars, and students in a vibrant celebration featuring speeches, cultural performances, and a cake-cutting ceremony symbolising decades of bilateral goodwill, Gwadar Pro reported. Addressing the gathering, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Razia Sultana described Pakistan-China relations as a model of enduring trust, calling them "higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, and sweeter than honey." She highlighted that education remains a key pillar in strengthening bilateral ties, with increasing academic collaboration fostering deeper people-to-people connections. She noted that thousands of Pakistani students are currently studying in China, gaining exposure to advanced research, innovation, and modern technology. She also emphasised

the growing role of Chinese language and cultural programmes in Pakistan, which are helping bridge understanding between the two societies.

The Vice Chancellor praised China Window for promoting cultural diplomacy and connecting youth with Chinese educational and cultural platforms.

She reaffirmed Women University Mardan's commitment to expanding academic cooperation with Chinese institutions through scholarships, research partnerships, and faculty exchange programmes. Speakers including Dr Khalid Khan highlighted China's economic rise and its support for Pakistan's development through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), noting that its next phase is expected to deliver more tangible benefits.

Columnist Naz Parveen pointed to China's historic achievement of lifting 800 million people out of poverty, calling it a global model of development. Professor Dr Nilofar Ikram emphasised that youth exchanges between Pakistan and China offer vast opportunities for future growth. — APP

Shehbaz Sharif greets new leader of Bulgaria Radev

FROM PAGE 01

Iranian state broadcaster IRIB reported that Baqaei was asked by journalists to comment on the truce extension, which US President Donald Trump said he approved following a request by Pakistani mediators. "While appreciating Pakistan's efforts to end the imposed war and establish peace", Baqaei stressed that Tehran "is taking the necessary measures to safeguard Iran's national interests and security"

2 Pakistani Astronauts picked for China mission

FROM PAGE 01

It quoted the China Manned Space Agency as saying that the selection and training of Pakistani astronauts was a "landmark event in the history of China's space industry". In February 2025, Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) and China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) had signed a cooperation agreement. Under the pact, two Pakistanis were to train in China, with one joining a mission on the Tiangong space station operated by Beijing. In February this year, two astronauts were shortlisted for Pakistan's Human Spaceflight Programme by the Astronauts Centre of China. China has been barred from participating in the International Space Station since 2011, when the US prohibited Nasa from collaborating with Chinese space agencies. Since then, Beijing has sought to build partnerships with other countries — including Pakistan — in its expanding space programme.

PM announces electric...

FROM PAGE 01

subsidies for electric motorcycles under the National EV Policy. He instructed officials to further expedite the implementation of the scheme. During the briefing, officials informed the prime minister that 72 manufacturing certificates have so far been issued for electric motorcycles and rickshaws, along with four certificates for electric cars. Additionally, 123 applications have been received for the installation of EV charging stations nationwide.

Iran lauds Pakistan role

FROM PAGE 01

necessary measures to safeguard Iran's national interests and security". He added that Iranian armed forces stood "ready to comprehensively and decisively defend the nation's integrity against any threat or hostility". When asked about the possibility of a second round of talks with the US, the statement said, Baqaei replied: "Diplomacy is a tool to secure national interests and security, and whenever we conclude that the necessary and logical groundwork is in place to use this tool for realising national interests and consolidating the Iranian nation's achievements in frustrating enemies from achieving their sinister goals, we will take action." He emphasised that Iran had not initiated the war and that all of Tehran's actions "have been carried out in line with its inherent right to legitimate self-defence against military aggression by the United States and the Israeli regime". Baqaei was further quoted as saying that "Iran will use every opportunity and capacity to hold aggressors accountable, secure Iran's rights — including delivering justice for perpetrators and instigators of war crimes — and demand compensation". The statement comes after an extension in the ceasefire was announced by US President Donald Trump early on Wednesday.

Liu Shiwen seeks re-election to ITTF Athletes' Commission

Liu, who serves as co-chair of the International Table Tennis Federation Athletes' Commission, is seeking re-election. Voting will take place during the 2026 ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London

BEIJING: China's Olympic and world champion Liu Shiwen said she still feels the urge to keep fighting despite four years away from international competition. Liu, who serves as co-chair of the International Table Tennis Federation Athletes' Commission, is seeking re-election. Voting will take place during the 2026 ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London. Her prolonged absence from international play has drawn some skepticism. "Some people will say, 'Liu Shiwen is no longer playing international events; we see her less often. Can she still understand the struggles of active players?'" said Liu, who won the women's singles title at the 2019 World Championships. A decade after her world championships debut, and following two defeats in the final, Liu claimed her long-awaited title in Budapest. Since losing to teammate Sun Yingsha in the round of 16 at the 2022

World Table Tennis Singapore Smash, Liu has rarely appeared in international competition. However, her competitive edge remains undimmed. At last year's 15th National Games, the 34-year-old partnered Lin Gaoyuan to win mixed doubles gold. Off the court, Liu and India's Sarath Kamal Achanta, the other co-chair of the Athletes' Commission, have represented players' interests at ITTF Executive Board meetings, conveying their concerns directly to decision-makers. "My focus is no longer on scores, but on whether the competition schedule had been too tight and leads to excessive fatigue, whether prize money distribution can be fairer, whether racket control procedures can be clearer, and whether TTR results are accurate enough," she said. "I no longer fight for gold medals for myself, I fight for a better environment for other players." To overcome language bar-

riers, Liu has spent recent years studying English while maintaining her training. "If I cannot clearly voice players' demands, no amount of determination will help," she said. Liu described the Athletes' Commission as a "silent shadow," citing two main challenges: limited direct communication between international bodies and individual players, and insufficient time and resources to reach all athletes. "Actually this is a practical problem faced by every Athletes' Commission. It is also the main issue we raised and tried to improve after the ITTF Executive Board election in 2025," she said. If re-elected, Liu said she will work to clarify responsibilities among commission members, increase in-person engagement with players, and secure dedicated staff support. "Some people ask me, 'You have already won dozens of world titles, why spend time on such a thankless task?' My an-

swer is simple: table tennis has given me everything, and I'd like to give back to it a better future if I can," Liu said. Liu is currently pursuing a PhD at Zhejiang University and serves as president of the Guangzhou Table Tennis Association. She began playing table tennis at the age of five and said she has never left the sport. The Chinese Table Tennis Association expressed full support for her candidacy. "As a representative of elite table tennis players, Liu has always upheld the philosophy of 'serving athletes and promoting the development of the sport,'" the association said in a statement. "She will continue to serve as a bridge for athletes in international sports affairs, enhancing understanding and communication between international organizations and the athlete community, and contributing to the development of table tennis worldwide," it added. In response, Liu said, "The fire to keep fighting is back in my heart." — APP

Briefs

PSX turns bearish, loses over 1,576 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 1,576.48 points, a negative change of 0.91 percent, closing at 171,579.31 points against 173,155.79 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,054.061 million shares with a traded value of Rs 37.293 billion, compared to 1,165.254 million shares valuing Rs 54.942 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.971 trillion from Rs 19.161 trillion a day earlier. Out of 486 active companies in the ready market, 141 advanced, 303 declined, and 42 remained unchanged. Unity Foods Limited topped the volume chart with 133.360 million shares, followed by Energycio PK with 77.182 million shares and World-Call Telecom with 56.318 million shares. The top gainers included Khairpur Sugar Mills Limited, which increased by Rs 90.49 to close at Rs 1,015.17, and Khyber Textile Mills Limited, which gained Rs 34.76 to settle at Rs 1,666.61. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 599.49 to close at Rs 17,421.80, while Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited fell by Rs 93.93 to close at Rs 9,410.13. In the futures market, turnover stood at 357.891 million shares with a traded value of Rs 18.036 billion, compared to 464.114 million shares worth Rs 28.995 billion in the previous session. Out of 323 futures-market companies, 57 recorded gains while 264 declined, according to PSX data. —APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.87 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.90. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.25 and Rs 279.90, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by 30 paise to close at Rs 328.37 from the previous day's close of Rs 328.07, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of 90 paise and closed at Rs 377.29 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.39. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham declined by 01 paise and closed at Rs 75.92, while the Saudi Riyal stood stagnant to close at Rs 74.35. —APP

Gold prices decline by Rs 1,200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Wednesday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 1,200 to settle at Rs 498,962 compared to Rs 500,162 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 1,029 to Rs 427,779 from Rs 428,808, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 943 to Rs 392,145 against Rs 393,088. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$12 to \$4,766 per ounce from \$4,778. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 34 to Rs 8,324 from Rs 8,358, while the price of 10 grams of silver also declined by Rs 29 to Rs 7,136 from Rs 7,165. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$0.34 to \$78.40 per ounce from \$78.74. —APP

ICCI President urges PM to revisit early market closure policy

Sardar Tahir Mehmood stressed that a rational and balanced adjustment in the early closure policy would provide immediate relief to businesses, restore confidence, and contribute positively to economic stability. He reiterated ICCI's commitment to working closely with the government to ensure that economic policies are practical, inclusive, and growth-oriented.

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to rationalize the policy of early market closures, stressing the need for a balanced and consultative approach to safeguard economic activity. In a detailed letter addressed to the Prime Minister, Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted the adverse economic impact of the enforced early closure of retail and commercial markets across Pakistan, particularly in Islamabad. He pointed out that the decision, taken without adequate consultation with key stakeholders, has disrupted business operations and negatively affected multiple sectors of the economy. The ICCI President noted that the policy's impact extends beyond retail markets to include restaurants, shopping malls, small and medium enterprises, and various service providers, leading to a slowdown in overall commercial activity. He emphasized that the business community is already grappling with economic challenges, and such measures further compound their difficulties. He further stated in the letter that in view of Pakistan's important diplomatic role in facilitating the ongoing US-Iran negotiations, the business community is fully prepared to extend its unwavering support during the anticipated second round of



these talks in Islamabad, recognizing their significance for regional peace, stability, and economic confidence. Sardar Tahir Mehmood stressed that a rational and balanced adjustment in the early closure policy would provide immediate relief to businesses, restore confidence, and contribute positively to economic stability. He reiterated ICCI's commitment to working closely with the govern-

ment to ensure that economic policies are practical, inclusive, and growth-oriented. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Islamabad Restaurants Association, led by its Chairman Habibullah Zahid, also visited the Chamber House on Wednesday to discuss the same issue. The delegation apprised the ICCI leadership of the challenges faced by the restaurant sector

due to early closure timings and expressed support for ICCI's stance on the need for policy rationalization. On the occasion, ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub Executive Members Zulqurnain Abbasi, Imran Minhas were also present. The Islamabad Restaurant Association delegation included its President Khurram Khan, General Secretary Sikandar Bakhtiar along with other members.—DNA

Oman unveils food security investment opportunities

JEDDAH: Oman has launched a package of food security investment opportunities worth at least 93.8 million Omani rials (\$243 million), spanning agriculture, fisheries, and related industries. Represented by Invest Oman, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, has announced the "qualitative" opportunities in the sector, with the aim of boosting self-sufficiency and strengthening supply chain-linked productive sectors, according to Oman News Agency, or ONA. These goals are also being supported through international cooperation, including a newly signed 2026-2030 Country Programming Framework with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, aimed at developing more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems across the sultanate. The initiative focuses on climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable management of land and water resources, empowerment of rural and coastal communities, and strengthening institutional and policy frameworks to support the sector's long-term development. "This comes as part of Oman's efforts to enhance food self-sufficiency, support resource sustainability, and increase the contribution of productive sectors to the national economy," ONA reported. The agency added that the investment opportunities reflect the diversity of Oman's natural and productive resources and its ability to attract quality investments in food supply chains. In the agricultural sector, the opportunities include five investment projects in Al-Najd Agricultural Zone, covering onion cultivation and processing worth around 4.8 million Omani rials, garlic cultivation worth around 2.3 million rials, and melon cultivation worth around 2.1 million rials. The project aims to harness the area's agricultural potential, boost local production, and expand high-value farming activities, including leafy vegetable cultivation in greenhouses valued at around 1.6 million rials, as well as potato farming and processing projects worth approximately 5.5 million rials. In the fisheries sector, the opportunities include five projects, most notably algae farming in Suwaiq worth around 2 million rials, Omani abalone farming in Sharbithat in Dhofar Governorate worth around 10 million rials, and giant shrimp farming in Ras Madrakah worth around 32 million rials. They also include white-leg shrimp farming in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, worth around 25 million rials, and tuna fattening using floating cages in Qurayyat, worth around 4.7 million rials. The opportunities aim to enhance the production of high-value marine species and expand aquaculture in Oman. "The list also includes supporting food industry projects, such as a sustainable fish feed manufacturing project in Samail Industrial City worth around 3.8 million rials, strengthening value chain integration and supporting industries linked to the fisheries sector," ONA stated. Investment values range from medium-scale projects starting at around 1.6 million rials to major strategic initiatives exceeding 32 million rials, offering a variety of options for investors and enhancing opportunities for partnerships and long-term investments. ONA said the opportunities build on Oman's competitive advantages, including fertile agricultural land, rich marine resources, and a strategic location, as well as advanced infrastructure and a supportive regulatory framework for investment in agriculture and fisheries.—APP

Sharifzoda unveils dates for 4th Water Development moot

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Yusuf Sharifzoda Toir, on Wednesday announced that the Fourth High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028" will be held from May 25 to 28, 2026, in Dushanbe under the framework of the Dushanbe Water Process Addressing a media briefing, the ambassador said the Dushanbe Water Process is an initiative of the Government of Tajikistan aimed at supporting the implementation of the goals of the International Decade for Action through biennial conferences organized in close collaboration with the United Nations. He noted that the conference series is co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Qohir Rasulzoda and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, adding that three such conferences have already been successfully held in Dushanbe in 2018, 2022, and 2024. The envoy said the upcoming conference would continue Tajikistan's longstanding efforts to provide an inclusive platform for policy dialogue, exchange of views, partnership-building, and promotion of global water-related actions. Highlighting the objectives, he said the conference aims to mobilize collective efforts to support the implementation of voluntary commitments under the Water Action Agenda of the UN Water Conference, while also fostering new partnerships and accelerating progress towards achieving the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He added that the event would facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions, strengthen cooperation among stakeholders, and enhance awareness and political commitment to sustainable water management. The ambassador further said the conference would serve as a key preparatory meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference, co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, and would also contribute to discussions leading up to the 2028 UN Water Conference, which will review the outcomes of the Water Action Decade. According to the schedule, forums and side events will take place on May 25, followed by the official high-level sessions on May 26 and 27 at the Kohi Somon Complex in Dushanbe. Field visits and study tours for participants will be organized on May 28 to showcase Tajikistan's experience in water resource management. The conference will be multi-stakeholder in nature, bringing together high-level representatives from UN member states, international and regional organizations, financial institutions, private sector entities, civil society, and local communities. The ambassador emphasized that the conference would be held as an in-person event to ensure meaningful engagement and interaction among participants.—DNA

Lebanon hopes for extension of ceasefire

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM: Lebanese and Israeli envoys will meet for the second time in two weeks in Washington on Thursday, building on nascent contacts between the states, with Lebanon hoping for the extension of a shaky ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel. The 10-day, U.S.-mediated ceasefire is set to expire on Sunday. Underlining its fragility, Iran-backed Hezbollah said on Tuesday it had fired rockets at northern Israel in response to Israeli violations, while Israel also accused the group of breaches. Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel reignited on March 2, when the group opened fire in support of Tehran in the regional war. Washington's mediation over Lebanon emerged in parallel to Pakistan's bid to end the U.S. war with Iran, which had demanded Lebanon be part of a ceasefire. Washington has denied any link between the tracks. More than 2,400 people have been killed in Lebanon since Israel launched an offensive in response to Hezbollah's March 2 attack, according to Lebanese authorities. Israel has seized a belt of territory at the border where its troops remain, saying it aims to create a buffer zone to shield northern Israel from attacks by Hezbollah, which fired hundreds of rockets at Israel during the conflict. A Lebanese official said Thursday's meeting would be focused on two agenda items: extending the ceasefire and exploring a date for expanded negotiations beyond the ambassadorial level, in which Lebanon would push for an Israeli withdrawal, the return of Lebanese detained in Israel and a delineation of the land border. Lebanon's position is that a ceasefire extension is a prerequisite for talks to move to the expanded negotiations, the official said. Hezbollah, which says the Lebanon ceasefire was the fruit of Iranian pressure, has condemned Beirut for seeking talks with Israel, reflecting wider splits with the government that has sought Hezbollah's peaceful disarmament for a year. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, in a speech, said Israel had taken a "historic decision to negotiate directly with Lebanon after more than 40 years" whilst also calling it a "failed state". "I call on the Government of Lebanon: Let's work together against the terror state that Hezbollah built in your territory. This cooperation is needed by you even more than by us," he said. The Israeli military said it had killed two militants who had crossed its "Forward Defense Line" in south Lebanon on Tuesday and approached Israeli soldiers, saying they had violated U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to attend Thursday's meeting, with Lebanon represented by its ambassador to Washington, Nada Moawad, and Israel represented by its ambassador, Yechiel Leiter. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has cited goals including halting Israeli attacks on Lebanon and securing the withdrawal of Israeli troops. In a speech on Friday, he said a ceasefire should be transformed into "permanent agreements that preserve the rights of our people, the unity of our land, and the sovereignty of our nation". Announcing the ceasefire on April 16, U.S. President Donald Trump said he had instructed Rubio, Vice President JD Vance and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine to work with the two countries to achieve lasting peace.—APP

Russia promises coop to Pakistani businessmen

FAISALABAD: Denis Nevzorov, Trade Representative of the Russian Federation (RF), has said that his country will fully cooperate with Pakistani businessmen to give quantum jump to bilateral trade by exploiting huge untapped potential. Addressing the business community during a meeting at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the trade turnover and situation in the world economy and trade remains very difficult and uncertain yet the Russia-Pakistan economic and trade relations have a great chance to develop steadily. He quoted the 10th Session of Russia-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (IGC). He said that on the sidelines of IGC, the Russian-Pakistan Business Forum was also arranged in which more than 40 Russian and Pakistani companies working in the fields of energy, IT and agriculture participated. He said that these events were really productive and we are moving forward in many areas especially in the sphere of industrial and agricultural cooperation. He said that we are working hard to increase trade, reduce non-tariff barriers and simplify customs procedures. The Russian Trade Rep-

resentative said that we have achievements in particular in expanding cooperation in the field of pharmaceuticals and medical industry including the increase of mutual supplies of medicines and medical devices, localizing of their production in Pakistan and establishing joint ventures. He said that Russia is ready to extend to Pakistan its assistance in mechanization of Pakistan's agro-industrial complex. He said that Russian producers expressed their readiness to supply modern agricultural machinery and equipment, as well as any other machinery including that one for use in construction and food industries. He said that Russia and Pakistan also have considerable potential of cooperation in the sphere of supplies of metals, fertilizers and other chemicals. He said that in order to tap the existing potential, we facilitate the concerned companies to establish direct contacts and strike concrete deals for the benefit of our countries. He said that the 17th International Economic Forum "Russia-Islamic World: Kazan Forum" will be held in May followed by Russia's trade and industrial fair INNOPROM-2026 in July this year. He invited Pakistani businessmen to participate in it to deepen our bilateral relations.

Earlier, Mr. Farooq Yousaf Sheikh, President FCCI in his welcome address said that Faisalabad is the third largest city of Pakistan which is also second in revenue generation. "Textile is the main strength of this city which alone contributes 60% towards total textile export of Pakistan in addition to catering to its domestic needs", he said and added that FCCI is the only representative trade body of the business community of Faisalabad. He said that Pakistan and Russia are enjoying excellent relations and your visit marks yet another important step in strengthening the growing economic and trade relations between the two countries. Quoting recent figures, he said that trade volume between Pakistan and Russia has exceeded 1 billion US dollars, reflecting a positive trajectory and immense untapped potential for further expansion. Mr. Farooq Yousaf Sheikh stressed the need to promote direct bilateral relations between the private sectors of the two countries by removing immediate irritants and handicaps. He pointed out that there is no synchronization of banking systems of the two countries which generally prompt business-related disputes.—DNA

Israeli strike on Lebanon's Bekaa kills one despite truce

BEIRUT: An Israeli strike on Lebanon's Bekaa region killed one person and wounded two others on Wednesday, Lebanese state media reported, despite an ongoing truce between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah. "One person was killed and two others were wounded as a result of an attack carried out by an enemy drone at dawn on the outskirts of AlJabur in West Bekaa," Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported. The Israeli military said it was unaware of the strike in Bekaa Valley on Wednesday. Hezbollah on Tuesday said it had launched rockets and attack drones at a site in northern Israel in response to "blatant" Israeli ceasefire violations, which it said included "attacks on civilians and the destruction of their homes and villages." The Israeli military said that day that Hezbollah "launched several rockets" toward soldiers stationed in south Lebanon and that the military struck the launcher in response. NNA on Wednesday reported Israeli artillery shelling and demolitions in southern towns Israel currently occupies. Israel's foreign minister on Wednesday urged Beirut to make joint efforts with Israel to counter the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, ahead of talks between the countries set to resume in Washington.—APP

China warns ME at 'critical juncture'

BEIJING: China warned on Wednesday that the situation in the Middle East was at a "critical juncture" after US President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire to allow Iran more time to negotiate. Trump indefinitely pushed back the end of the two-week truce on Tuesday with Tehran yet to respond but he said a US blockade of Iran's ports would continue. "The current regional situation stands at a critical juncture transitioning between war and peace; the paramount priority remains to make every effort to prevent a resumption of hostilities," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a news briefing. Guo did not comment directly on the ceasefire when asked about it, adding only that Beijing would continue to play a "constructive" role. Under-fire Nepal minister quits after weeks in office. Katmandu: Nepal's home minister stepped down Wednesday over growing criticism of his finances after less than a month in office he won on an anti-corruption platform. Sudan: Sudanese Gen-Z protests last September that toppled Nepal's previous government, said he was stepping down to ensure a "fair investigation.—APP

Makkah Route expands in Indonesia

JAKARTA: Indonesia started its Hajj flights on Wednesday with expanded access to the Makkah Route, as Saudi authorities added a new major Indonesian airport to the flagship initiative that streamlines immigration procedures for pilgrims Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim-majority country, will send 221,000 pilgrims this year to perform the spiritual journey that is one of the tenets of Islam. With Hajj expected to begin on May 25, special pilgrimage flights from Indonesia began on Wednesday and are scheduled to run until May 21. "Our hope is that the departures go smoothly, and that the pilgrims are healthy, and they can worship peacefully," Minister of Hajj and Umrah Mochamad Irfan Yusuf said as he saw off the first group departing from Jakarta. "This is not (merely) a physical journey, but a journey of the soul, a journey to the most solemn point in a Muslim's life." This year, the Makkah Route initiative is available for the first time for pilgrims departing from Makassar, South Sulawesi. It is the fourth and latest Indonesian city where the program has been launched, after Jakarta, Solo and Surabaya.—APP

Briefs

Pak moves towards one-window airport clearance

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A special meeting on a joint strategy between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior was held under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Secretary Interior Muhammad Khurram Agha, Secretary Defence Lieutenant General (R) Muhammad Ali, Additional Secretary Interior Major General Noor Wali Khan, Additional Secretary Defence Major General Qaiser Suleman, DG Anti-Narcotics Force Major General Abdul Mueed, and DG FIA Dr. Usman Anwar attended the meeting.

During the meeting, joint measures to facilitate the public at airports and decided to ensure effective coordination among all relevant institutions were discussed. It was decided that modern machinery would be installed at airports to improve the checking system. The meeting also decided to establish joint counters and introduce a unified checking system at a single point. Progress on the installation of e-gates was reviewed. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stressed the need to provide passengers with faster clearance and easier travel facilities. He stated that joint checking on a single scanner by all institutions would save time and facilitate passengers.

Rare earth deposit: Norway's govt takes over planning

DNA

OSLO: Norway will take over planning for the Fen rare earth deposit - Europe's largest - to speed up development after a resource upgrade nearly doubled its estimated size, the government said on Wednesday. Fen was estimated last month to hold 15.9 million metric tons of rare earth oxide in indicated and inferred resources, 81 percent more than a 2024 estimate, the project's developer said at the time. Europe has no operating rare earth mines, and development of the southern Norway project would support the region's push to reduce reliance on dominant producer China.

"The Fen field could be of major significance for Telemark, Norway and Europe's supply security and competitiveness," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said in a statement. Telemark is the region where Fen is located. "To ensure future access to critical minerals, it is important to increase production both in Norway and in other countries with which we cooperate in terms of security."

Pakistan plans tariff cuts under new auto policy

Weighted average tariff expected to be reduced from 10.6% to 9.5% in upcoming budget for 2026-27

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is set to roll out a new five-year auto sector policy in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), aimed at reducing import tariffs, restructuring duties and opening up the vehicle market by 2030. It has also been agreed with the Washington-based lender under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) that no Regulatory Duty (RD) will be introduced on imports. The weighted average tariff is expected to be reduced from 10.6% to 9.5% in the upcoming budget for 2026-27, which is tentatively expected to be unveiled on June 1, 2026. For liberalising auto sector imports, a new auto sector policy will be unveiled, which is currently at the stage of preparation. The policy

will be shared with the Washington-based lender by the end of the current month. "The new auto policy is going to envisage a roadmap to implement duty reduction under the National Tariff Policy (NTP) to reduce the weighted average from 10.6 per cent in FY25 to 7.4% by FY30. The duty reduction for the auto sector will bring the weighted average tariff to below 6% and exactly to the level of 5.99%," top officials sources confirmed while speaking to The News. Pakistan is set to unveil a new auto policy with effect from July 1, 2026, aimed at boosting local manufacturing, increasing localisation of parts and curbing vehicle prices. Over the next five years, customs duties on finished vehicles are expected to be capped at 15%. A new four-slab system (0%, 5%, 10%, 15%) is expected to replace the current tariff structure. A 40% regu-

latory duty is scheduled on used vehicle imports for FY2026, which is expected to taper off in the coming fiscal year and will be brought down to zero.

This scribe contacted Adviser to the Prime Minister on Industries, Haroon Akhtar Khan, for comments. Haroon said that the auto sector policy was at an advanced stage and would be presented to the prime minister and federal cabinet, after which it would be made public. "We have consulted all stakeholders to strike a consensus, and in case of disagreement, a balancing act will be applied," he added.

However, the government and the IMF have agreed that the new auto sector policy will be shared with the IMF by the end of the current month, ahead of its approval by the federal cabinet. Through its progressive elimination of all Additional Customs

Duty (ACD) and Regulatory Duty (RDs) and a substantial reduction in Customs Duty (CD) rates by FY30, it will be consistent with the agreed overall reduction in the weighted average tariff in line with the agreement with the IMF.

The Motor Vehicle Development Act, the sources said, gives the Engineering Development Board a statutory basis for the new regime of environmental and safety standards for vehicles. It has been submitted to parliament and is expected to be approved by the National Assembly before the end of June 2026. With commercial importation now legalised, the government has abolished the personal baggage scheme and tightened the criteria for the gift and transfer of residence schemes for used vehicle imports, in order to avoid misuse of these schemes, the sources concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz chairs a meeting on promotion of electric vehicles in the country (22 April, 2026). - DNA

Sindh govt cancels BRT Red Line construction contract

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh government has cancelled the construction contract for the long-delayed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Red Line project in Karachi and will re-award it on an "emergency basis", Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon confirmed on Wednesday. The government cancelled the contract for the Mosamiyat-Numaish section of the project. The stalled construction on the Red Line resumed in November after the removal of several bottlenecks following the chief minister's intervention, but there is still no clear timeline in sight for the project's completion as thousands of University Road commuters continue to face daily hardships. Speaking to Dawn, Memon confirmed that the contract had been terminated due to delays in the project's execution by the contractor. He said the contractor was issued several warnings to complete the work within the stipulated time, but failed to comply. The government, he added, tried its level best to accommodate the contractor by resolving issues related to rate escalation. Memon added that the Asian Development Bank, which funds the project, was unhappy with the pace of work, as were stakeholders concerned about environmental impact.

SC sets new benchmark in digital justice delivery

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has introduced a comprehensive digital transformation of its judicial processes, marking a significant step towards a more transparent, efficient and citizen-centric justice system. According to an official press release issued on Wednesday, the apex court has successfully integrated advanced technology to enable seamless multi-location hearings, allowing judges, lawyers and litigants to participate in proceedings from different parts of the country without geographical limitations. In a recent hearing, a bench at the principal seat in Islamabad conducted proceedings while counsel joined simultaneously from Quetta, Hyderabad and Karachi, ensuring uninterrupted participation. The court also demonstrated flexibility in adapting to changes in bench composition, with the Chief Justice presiding from Islamabad and Justice Ayesha A. Malik joining via video link from Lahore, maintaining continuity in judicial work. The press

release stated that the entire docket on Wednesday was heard through a technology-enabled system, with the bench sitting in Islamabad and parties appearing remotely from Quetta, reflecting the effectiveness of the digital infrastructure.

A key feature of this transformation is the shift from traditional paper-based records to fully digitized case files. This development has eliminated the need for physical retrieval of documents from branch registries, thereby improving efficiency, speed and transparency in court proceedings. The Supreme Court has also implemented a range of reforms, including digitization of case records, barcoding for tracking, e-filing of cases, electronic transmission of court orders, digital payment systems, institutionalized video-link hearings and the introduction of an e-office system. These measures, the statement noted, represent a paradigm shift in judicial functioning, aimed at enhancing accessibility, reducing delays and making the justice system more responsive to the needs of the public. - APP

NASA unveils new space telescope

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: NASA unveiled a new telescope on Wednesday to scan vast swaths of the universe for planets outside our solar system and probe the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy. The Roman space telescope is expected to discover tens of thousands of planets, possibly offering clarity about how many could be out there. "Roman will give the Earth a new atlas of the universe," NASA administrator Jared Isaacman told a news conference at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, where the telescope went on display. The 12-metre (39-foot) sil-

very contraction with massive solar panels will be transported to Florida ahead of a launch into space aboard a SpaceX rocket planned for September at the earliest. Roman, which took more than \$4 billion and over a decade to build, is named after astronomer Nancy Grace Roman, nicknamed the "Mother of Hubble" for her role in developing the landmark space telescope. Thirty-six years after Hubble launched into space, revolutionising astronomical observations, NASA hopes Roman will help to shed light on questions that remain unresolved. Boasting a field of view at least 100 times larger than Hubble's, the telescope will sweep across vast regions of space from its position 1.5 million kilometres (930,000 miles) from Earth. The telescope will send 11 terabytes of data a day down to Earth, said Mark Melton, a systems engineer at Goddard Space Flight Center. "In the first year, we'll have sent down more data than Hubble will have for its entire life," he told AFP. The telescope's wide-angle lens will allow NASA to conduct a census of the objects that make up our universe, said Nicky Fox, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

China denies US detained its ship in ME

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China on Wednesday denied again that a ship intercepted by the United States contained a "gift" from Beijing for Iran, a day after US President Donald Trump made the accusation. Trump had said that an Iranian-flagged ship seized by US forces in the Gulf of Oman on Sunday contained "a gift from China," which "wasn't very nice."

His comments came after former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley wrote on X that the ship was traveling from China to Iran and was linked to chemical shipments for missiles. Responding to Haley's accusations at a regular news briefing on Tuesday, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the ship was "a foreign container ship," and that China opposed "any malicious association and speculation." Asked about Trump's comments on Wednesday, Guo said China had already stated its position. "As a responsible major country, China has always set a good example in fulfilling its due international obligation," he added. Trump had said Tuesday that he was "a little surprised," given he thought he had an "understanding" with China's President Xi Jinping. A week ago, Trump announced that Xi had assured him there would be no Chinese weapons deliveries to Iran.

Red Zone remains sealed despite guests no-show

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's Red Zone remained sealed to the general public on Wednesday, but other routes in the twin cities, sealed earlier for the security of foreign delegations visiting the capital, were opened to the public, easing some hardship faced by the residents. US Vice President JD Vance and his team had been expected to arrive on Wednesday morning, but the White House abruptly changed plans, with Iran's negotiating delegation also delaying a decision on attending talks. Major roads have been closed in recent days to facilitate the arrival of foreign delegations and advance teams. Markets were quiet, government officials worked from home, children attended classes online and security forces enforced strict curbs on entering the vast Red Zone. The security in the Red Zone, where government buildings and offices are located, remained high. There was a heavy deployment of law enforcement personnel and the army was patrolling the area. Public entry to the Red Zone has remained sealed since Sunday, with access restricted to critical officials and some staff sticking to previous orders to work from home.

Ukraine has asked Turkiye to host a Zelensky-Putin meeting



NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine has asked Turkiye to host a meeting between President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin, its top diplomat said, as Kyiv seeks to reinvigorate stalling peace talks. "We asked the Turks about it, we asked some other capitals," Foreign Minister Andrii Sybaha said in comments to reporters on Tuesday that were cleared for

release on Wednesday. He added that Ukraine would be ready to consider any place other than Belarus or Russia for a meeting with Putin, which Zelensky has long sought to try to hasten a resolution of the more than four-year war. Belarus is a close ally of Russia and allowed Moscow to use Belarusian territory to launch its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Sybaha did not say how Ankara had responded to the proposal. "We addressed the Turks specifically," he said. "But if another capital, besides Moscow and Belarus, organizes such a meeting, we will go." The Kremlin previously said it is willing to host Zelensky in Moscow, where the Ukrainian leader has said he will not go. Separately, Sybaha said that he had already exchanged written messages with Anita Orban, who will become Hungary's new foreign minister when the new government, which won the election there earlier this month, takes power.

APRIL 2026

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:
www.centrelines.com.pk
www.dnanews.com.pl
www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@Postislamabad/ @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-8488394

