



Islamabad POST

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UN mediation only viable path to end Libyan gridlock

Detailed News On Page-08

Pope Leo warms Up for extended Africa sojourn

Detailed News On Page-07



ICCI chief for efforts to boost exports

Detailed News On Page-03



Trump orders to 'shoot and kill any boat'

World facing 'biggest' energy security threat

Iran refuses to reopen Strait of Hormuz While US blockade remains in place

DNA

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON: Iran has firmly stated it will not reopen the Strait of Hormuz as long as the United States maintains its naval blockade on Iranian ports and shipping, despite the ongoing ceasefire extension. Iranian officials described the US blockade as a "blatant violation" of ceasefire understandings, warning that reopening the critical waterway which handles nearly 20% of global oil trade is not possible under current conditions. The announcement comes after Iran seized two vessels in the strait earlier this week for alleged maritime violations.

In response, the White House accused Iran of acting like "maritime outlaws" after losing effective control of the strait, amid reports of continued naval tensions. US Navy Secretary John Phelan fired in a surprise move, US Secretary of the Navy John Phelan has been fired from his position, with the departure effective immediately. The ousting is part of broader Pentagon shakeups during the ongoing crisis, though specific reasons linked to the Iran situation have not been officially detailed.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) chief has warned that the prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz represents the "biggest" energy security threat in history. The crisis has triggered massive supply shortfalls, pushing oil prices higher and raising fears of long-term damage to global energy markets.

Meanwhile, Israel's military reported intercepting a drone launched from southern Lebanon, describing it as a violation of the ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah. No injuries were reported in the incident. In a separate development, a Trump envoy has suggested that Italy should replace Iran in the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup, citing Italy's strong football pedigree. The proposal has sparked discussion but has not yet received official backing from FIFA. The standoff in the Strait of Hormuz continues to dominate regional tensions, with diplomats urging restraint to prevent further escalation and renewed conflict. Oil markets remain volatile as the world watches for any breakthrough in US-Iran negotiations.

US Navy Secretary Phelan fired, say sources

DNA

WASHINGTON: Navy Secretary John Phelan has been fired, a US official and a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, in another wartime shakeup at the Pentagon coming just weeks after Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth ousted the Army's top general. The Pentagon announced his departure in a brief statement, saying he was leaving the administration "effective immediately." But it did not provide a reason or say whether it was his decision to go. His firing was first reported by Reuters. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Phelan was dismissed in part because he was moving too slow to implement reforms to speed shipbuilding and because he had fallen out with key Pentagon leadership. One source cited bad relationships with Hegseth, Hegseth's deputy, Steve Feinberg, as well as the Navy's number 2 civilian, Hung Cao, who the Pentagon said will now take over as acting Navy secretary. The source also cited an ethics investigation into Phelan's office. A billionaire seen as having close ties to President Donald Trump, Phelan is the first administration-picked service secretary to be fired since Trump came back into office last year.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan H.E. Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 23 April 2026. - DNA

Pakistan rejects India propaganda

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: At a time when Pakistan, along with its international partners, is undertaking concerted diplomatic efforts for regional and international peace and security, it is deplorable that India has once again resorted to a campaign of baseless allegations and propaganda to link Pakistan with the Pahalgam incident. It is unfortunate that, in the midst of an ongoing regional crisis, India remains focused on weaponising its false narrative against Pakistan for narrow domestic political gains. After receiving a befitting reply to its misplaced adventurism in the form of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos last year, such allegations constitute yet another chapter from India's playbook of creating a smokescreen for its continued sponsorship of terrorism across the region.

Continued on Page 06

Hackers steal \$2.5m from Sri Lanka Fin. ministry

Finance ministry secretary says money destined as debt repayment to Australia

DNA

COLOMBO: Cyber criminals hacked into the Sri Lankan finance ministry's computer system and siphoned off \$2.5 million, the government said on Thursday, the most amount of cash ever stolen by hackers from a state institution in the debt-saddled country. The cyberattack is a major blow to Sri Lanka, which is recovering from a crippling economic crisis in 2022 after Colombo defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt. The money was destined as debt repayment to Australia.

Continued on Page 06

All-weather friendship

PM Shehbaz proud of Pakistan-China space cooperation

PM meets Pakistani Astronauts selected for human space mission, calls it historic milestone for nation

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met Pakistani astronauts Zeeshan Ali, who has been selected for a human space mission, and described their participation in space research as a landmark achievement for the country and a matter of national pride. Astronaut Attaché Hasnain Itikhar from Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) was also present during the meeting held here at the Prime Minister's Office, a news release said. Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister expressed deep pleasure over meeting the young astronauts and termed their selection for space research a significant milestone for Pakistan. He said their journey represented a moment of pride not only for him but for the entire nation. "I am confident that you are going to write a new chapter in Pakistan's history," the prime minister told the astronauts, appreciating their dedication and hard work that enabled them to reach this important stage.

Continued on Page 06

PM Shehbaz meets Chinese Ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong, during a courtesy call paid on him, where the regional situation in the Middle East and Pakistan's peace efforts also came under discussion. The prime minister was assisted by Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Anna Baloch, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

Continued on Page 06

Naqvi, Natalie discusses diplomatic efforts for talks

PM Shehbaz, COAS Munir making "full efforts at every level" to resolve Iran war, Naqvi tells US envoy

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and US Charge d'Affaires Natalie Baker held a meeting during which both sides exchanged detailed views on ongoing diplomatic developments for the second round of US-Iran talks, the interior ministry said. According to the statement, the meeting also focused on the latest situation in the region. Naqvi and Baker discussed the importance of continued diplomatic engagement for regional stability.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Clearing Hormuz Strait mines could take six months

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: A Pentagon assessment said it could take six months to completely clear the Strait of Hormuz of Iranian-laid mines, which could keep oil prices high, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday. Iran has all but blocked the vital waterway since the start of a war with the United States and Israel, sharply driving up oil and gas prices and disrupting the global economy. The strait — through which one-fifth of the world's oil and gas passes in peacetime — has remained largely closed during a shaky ceasefire, with the US imposing its own blockade. Even if hostilities end and the blockade lifts, it could take months to clear the waterway of mines, according to a Pentagon assessment, the Washington Post reported citing officials close to the discussion. The assessment added that it was unlikely such an operation would begin before the end of the war. The six-month estimate was shared with members of the House Armed Services Committee during a classified briefing, the Post reported. Lawmakers were told that Iran may have placed 20 or more mines in and around the strait, some floated remotely using GPS technology which makes them harder to detect, according to the report. AFP has contacted the Department of Defense for comment. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell told the Washington Post that its information was "inaccurate." Iran's Revolutionary Guards have warned of a "danger zone" covering 1,400 square kilometers — 14 times the size of Paris — where mines may be present.

Terrorists strike again 9 killed in armed attack at mining site in Balochistan

In its statement, NRL said it remained "fully committed to the development and empowerment of local communities in Balochistan, with a strong focus on improving livelihoods and contributing to economic upliftment"

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: At least nine people working at a copper and gold project site in Balochistan's Chagai district were killed in an armed attack by unidentified assailants. In a statement, the mining company National Resources Limited (NRL) said the attack took place on Wednesday evening, adding that security forces, including the Frontier Corps, responded promptly, secured the area and launched a clearance operation. The company did not mention any casualties in its statement. However, local authorities have confirmed the incident and nine casualties. "At least nine employees, including two security guards, were killed," a senior official of the Chagai administration said on condition of anonymity. Police officials also confirmed the attack and the killing of nine people. All nine bodies were taken to

Prince Fahad Hospital in Dalbandin.

In its statement, NRL said it remained "fully committed to the development and empowerment of local communities in Balochistan, with a strong focus on improving livelihoods and contributing to economic upliftment".

"Over 90 per cent of the workforce at the Darigwan site comprises individuals from Balochistan," the firm noted. NRL said it was closely coordinating with the relevant authorities and affirmed that the safety and security of its employees and operations remained its highest priority. NRL is a Pakistani mining company formed as a joint venture between Lucky Cement, Fatima Fertiliser, and Liberty Mills. The company is actively exploring copper-gold and lead-zinc deposits in Chagai and has reported significant mineral discoveries. Lucky Cement holds a 33.33 per cent equity stake in the venture.

Masses' woes deepen as twin cities remain blocked

Even the residents and staff living in the diplomatic enclave have expressed their frustration. "It looks like we are living in a prison," said a foreign diplomat, requesting anonymity. "We understand security concerns, but there must be some balance

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Despite the fact that talks between the relevant authorities are not underway and all are aware that neither the Indian nor Iranian teams are visiting Pakistan, the blockade of the twin cities Islamabad and Rawalpindi continues unabated, pushing ordinary citizens into deep misery. For the fourth consecutive day, life in the twin cities remains crippled. All major roads are choked with traffic jams, public transport remains suspended, and markets and businesses are shutting early under strict restrictions. The worst-hit are the poor, daily wage earners, street vendors, and hundreds of thousands of commuters who depend on public transport to travel between the twin cities and beyond. Shazia Bibi, a domestic worker told this scribe through tears, "My husband suffered a heart attack on Tuesday

morning. We wanted to take him to the hospital immediately, but there was no transport available. We didn't have the money to afford a taxi either.

"We are poor people. For us, every minute matters, but these restrictions don't see our pain," she said, appealing to the authorities to show mercy. At G-11 Markaz, a street vendor Mumtaz Ahmed, who runs a popular dhai bhalla outlet, was seen literally weeping as he spoke to this reporter. "We are forced to close our outlet at 10 pm. If we stay open even a few minutes later, police impose heavy fines," he said. "In summer, people come out of their houses at night, families and youths enjoy snacks and street food. But now, at 10 pm, we have to down our shutters. We are suffering huge losses." He said his daily income has dropped by more than 70 per cent in just four days. "What will I feed my children? Who will pay my rent?" The worst sufferers, however, are the thousands

of passengers who rely on public transport for inter-city travel. All major bus stands Faizabad, Rawat, Pirwadhai, Gulistan-e-Sajjad, Saddar and others have been closed for the last four days. Buses to Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad and other cities are off the roads. Muhammad Tariq, who was to travel to Lahore for his sister's wedding, said, "I have been coming to the bus stand daily for four days. No buses, no trains, nothing. My entire programme is ruined.

Even the residents and staff living in the diplomatic enclave have expressed their frustration. "It looks like we are living in a prison," said a foreign diplomat, requesting anonymity. "We understand security concerns, but there must be some balance. Life cannot be brought to a standstill for days together." Many diplomats said that essential movements, deliveries and even staff commuting have become extremely difficult.

People across the twin cities are asking the same question: If everyone knows the visiting teams are not coming, then why is the blockade still in place? "Since the elite class is not affected by these measures, they do not have any idea of the ordeals of the common man," said a social activist. "The poor lose their daily wages, patients can't reach hospitals, students miss exams, businesses collapse, and yet our leaders remain unconcerned." Citizens, traders, transporters and civil society members have appealed to the authorities to review the situation and ease the restrictions. "Security is important, but so is the life and livelihood of millions," said the President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while addressing a press conference the other day. "We are Pakistanis first. We stand with our country in every situation, but punishing the entire nation like this is not the solution."

Vaccination camps planned in Upper Kohistan

PESHAWAR: To mark World Immunization Week, starting from April 23 to 30, a series of activities including Vaccination Health Camps have been planned for communities dwelling in Upper Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The initiative aims to improve access to essential health services for underserved populations besides strengthening routine immunization services in remote and mountainous areas. The camps will cover mostly those children who are missed in immunization campaigns and pregnant women for administering their essential vaccines. According to a press release issued here on Wednesday, these activities are planned by Hujra Village Support Organization under the patronage of Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) KP and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. The organization held a camp at BHU Kuz Jalkot wherein around 151 patients were examined particularly women and children, says Bahadar Sher, Coordinator Hujra. Health Department also send its staff to the camp including EPI Coordinator, Dr. Bakhtak, Medical Specialist, Dr. Rafiq, Children Specialist, Dr. Zahir, General Surgeon, Dr. Nizamuddin and Dr. Majeed.—APP

Kohat admin, traders agree on smooth warehouse law enforcement

PESHAWAR: Officials and traders in Kohat have agreed to enhance mutual cooperation for the effective and business-friendly implementation of the Warehouse Act, following a consultative meeting aimed at addressing concerns of the business community. In this regard a meeting, held here on Thursday in line with directives of the Peshawar High Court and senior authorities, was attended by Assistant Director Industries and Consumer Protection Malik Safdar Awan, President of Kohat Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rasheed Paracha, and representatives of the trader community. Participants discussed challenges faced by traders and emphasized the need for a consultative approach to ensure that enforcement of the law did not disrupt commercial activities. Malik Safdar Awan termed the meeting a confidence-building step to strengthen coordination between authorities and traders, adding that implementation of the law remained the responsibility of the department. He said unregistered warehouse owners in other districts were increasingly completing registration, which benefited both businesses and the public. He further informed that a reasonable annual fee has been fixed and facilitation measures, including on-site registration services at the chamber office, would be provided to ease the process and reduce unnecessary visits to government offices. Traders' representatives welcomed the initiative and assured full cooperation, reaffirming their commitment to safeguarding business interests while complying with legal requirements. The meeting was also attended by former chamber presidents Syed Faiq Shah and Arshad Hayat, Chairman Mohsin Atiq, Coordinator Col (Retd) Jawad Paracha and other members.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Army personnel stand guard D Chowk in the Federal Capital.

Balochistan's research center to counter violent extremism

QUETTA: In a landmark initiative aimed at curbing trends of violence and extremist narratives, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here on Thursday inaugurated the province's first-ever dedicated research facility, the Balochistan Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Provincial Home Minister Mir Zia Langau, members of the provincial assembly, senior government officials and representatives of relevant institutions. Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Hamza Shafiq delivered a detailed briefing on the center's objectives, research scope, and future plans. Speaking at the event, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the center would highlight the challenges faced by youth and provide concrete foundations for solutions through research. He stressed that engaging young people in positive activities remained the government's top priority, while discouraging violent

ideologies and extremist rhetoric required practical measures. Sarfraz Bugti praised the efforts of the provincial home minister, the additional chief secretary and the administration for bringing the project to fruition. Following the inauguration, the chief minister visited the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Quetta campus, where he planted a tree and chaired a meeting. Later, he addressed students during a youth dialogue session, underscoring the importance of critical inquiry and research in distinguishing between perception and reality. Sarfraz Bugti warned that Pakistan, like many societies, faced challenges from propaganda narratives, noting that organized negative campaigns against the state were often driven by elements that never accepted Pakistan's existence. He highlighted that perceptions spread faster than facts, creating distortions about Balochistan's reality. "Balochistan has a

beautiful and positive story in Pakistan's history, but certain elements have deliberately misrepresented these facts," he said. The chief minister reaffirmed his commitment to dialogue at all levels on Balochistan's realities and the state's narrative. Sharing his personal experiences, he revealed that he had survived 17 deadly attacks but remained prepared to face "seventeen hundred more" in defense of the state. During the youth dialogue, Bugti encouraged the students to ask questions freely, assuring them that every query would be answered with patience, logic, and evidence. The students posed questions on historical, social, political, and administrative issues, which the Chief Minister addressed in detail. CM Sarfraz Bugti concluded by stressing that meritocracy and continuous dialogue were essential to bridging the gap between the youth and the state, pledging to continue engaging with young people to build trust and resilience against extremist narratives.—DNA

Workshop tackles ROW challenges in power transmission infrastructure

LAHORE: National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC) hosted its first-ever workshop on Right-of-Way (ROW) Issues in Transmission Infrastructure in LUMS Lahore. The event brought together legal experts, development partners and power sector stakeholders to chart a path toward a modern legal and operational framework for resolving land access challenges that continue to affect the reliable and timely delivery of Pakistan's power transmission network. ROW constraints, particularly the legal and practical challenges of securing land access for transmission lines and related infrastructure remain one of the most persistent barriers to grid expansion in Pakistan. Delays in land acquisition directly lead to cost overruns, reduced grid reliability, and slower delivery of affordable power to communities nationwide. This workshop represents a concrete step toward addressing these challenges.—APP

WT violations add to flood risks in Pakistan

KOHAT: Under the shade of a Shisham tree at Khushal Garh, 55-year-old farmer Salahuddin Khan watches the slow rise of water in River Indus with a familiar sense of trepidation amid Indus Water Treaty's repeated violations by India since its signing in 1960. While watching River Indus at Khushal Garh bridge in Kohat, Salahuddin's scars of the devastating 2022 floods have not yet faded due to possible surge of water owing to fast melting of glaciers, and release of floodwater by India following IWT violations. His guava and watermelon orchards that were once a reliable source of income were battered by surging waters in 2022 floods, inflicting heavy financial and economic losses to growers. Now, as temperatures climb in summer and glaciers melt faster in the north, he fears history may repeat itself. The progressive farmer recalls a different past while removing the precipitation of face with white handkerchief. "When I was a child and came here along with my father, the river flowed normally," he says. "Now the water level is higher and more erratic." For Salahuddin and his community, the stakes are immediate and personal. "This year, my worries have doubled," Salahuddin, carrying a hove on right shoulder, says, pausing between irrigating his watermelon crop. "We grow guava, melons, barley, peaches, and apricots," he says. "The mighty river is rising earlier. The floods come without warning. One sudden flood can destroy everything." For farmers like him, climate change is no longer an abstract concept. It is visible in the shifting rhythm of rivers, especially of IWT violations, the shortening winters, and unpredictability of water flows. Across Pakistan's northern areas from Gilgit-Baltistan to Chitral and Azad Kashmir to Swat, thousands of glaciers are melting at accelerating rates due to global warming. Experts warn that this is increasing both the frequency and intensity of summer floods,

particularly in the Indus Basin. Gulzar Rehman, a former Conservator of Forests, says the impact of climate change is already visible in Pakistan. "Mountain streams now flow even in winter in northern KP and Gilgit Baltistan, something we never saw before," he explains. "Temperatures in valleys such as Kalam and Chitral that once stayed below 30°C are now crossing 40°C." He said the negative consequences of IWT violations extend far beyond rising rivers. Rapid glacier melt is also forming unstable glacial lakes, which can burst without warning, sending destructive floods downstream. Agriculture remains the backbone of livelihoods across much of Pakistan, and any disruption in water flow whether excess or shortage can trigger cascading losses such as ruined crops, dead livestock, and mounting debt. Experts estimate that water disruptions could affect up to 40% of key crops like wheat and rice, threatening food security for millions if IWT violations continued. Compounding climate risks are growing concerns over water management in the region, particularly related to the Indus Waters Treaty. Signed in 1960 with the World Bank as guarantor, the treaty governs the sharing of the Indus River system between Pakistan and India and remained intact despite four wars between the two countries. Pakistani experts argue that non-sharing of data about water level in western rivers by India, and changes in upstream water flows are increasing uncertainty of floods in downstream districts of Pakistan. Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik, former chairman economic department at university of Peshawar, points to unusually low flows in the Chenab River in late 2025 after IWT was held in abeyance by India in April last year. "Water levels dropped far below normal at River Chenab last year amid IWT violations by the Hinduvata Modi regime," he says. "Such fluctuations can severely impact agriculture, fisheries, fruits orchards and livestock in Pakistan.—DNA

KP IGP awards cops for professional excellence

PESHAWAR: An awards distribution ceremony was held at the central police office here under the chairmanship of Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed. According to a spokesperson for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, the IGP presented cash rewards and commendation certificates to police officers and personnel from Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar, Lower Chitral, Special Branch, and the FRP Elite Force for their successful operations against terrorists, murder suspects, attempted murder cases, target killers, and kidnappers. Investigation staff from districts including Hangu, Charsadda, Karak, Haripur, Mardan, Shangla, Nowshera, Buner, Bajaur, and Lower Chitral were also honored for outstanding investigative performance. In addition, ministerial and executive staff of the accounts, logistics, and establishment branches at the central police office were recognized for professionalism in administrative duties. The ceremony also acknowledged the contributions of former RPO Dera Ismail Khan Ashfaq Anwar for his effective efforts against crime and terrorism, which helped restore public confidence and strengthen law and order. His coordination with other law enforcement agencies improved intelligence sharing, while measures taken under his supervision enhanced police infrastructure and logistics DIG Headquarters Abbas Majeed Marwat was praised for implementing effective welfare strategies, significantly increasing the welfare fund and ensuring its transparent use to provide timely relief to deserving police personnel. Several acts of bravery were highlighted during the ceremony. Bannu police successfully rescued a hostage officer from terrorists and repelled a midnight attack by Fitna al-Khawarij militants. Lakki Marwat police thwarted both light and heavy weapon attacks, killing one terrorist, while Dera Ismail Khan police foiled a terror assault. In another operation, DI Khan police intercepted an attempt to smuggle a large cache of weapons and ammunition to Balochistan, arresting the suspect on the spot. Peshawar police were commended for solving a blind murder and attempted murder case using scientific investigation methods, and for arresting a suspicious individual near the American Consulate compound over suspected terrorist intent. Lower Chitral police were also recognized for successfully tracing a missing Australian national through professional efforts. Personnel of the Special Branch and staff at the Elite Police Training Centre Nowshera were appreciated for their dedication and role in improving training and operational standards. KP Police athletes were also honored for their performance at the 35th National Games held in Karachi, where the badminton team secured a bronze medal, while martial arts (kickboxing) competitors won gold and bronze medals, bringing recognition to the province. Addressing the ceremony, IGP Zulfiqar Hameed said such events are commendable as they recognize acts of bravery and dedication. He noted that policing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is highly challenging, but the force continues to perform its duties with courage, professionalism, and commitment. He added that due to the tireless efforts of the police over the past one and a half years, there has been a noticeable improvement in law and order across the province. He urged award recipients to maintain this momentum and continue striving for a peaceful society. The IGP emphasized the need for all units within the police department to work as a cohesive team to achieve set goals. He also stressed focusing on operational preparedness and preventing incidents before they occur to enhance public safety. Concluding the ceremony, he congratulated the award recipients and expressed hope that they would continue to serve with the same dedication and commitment in the future.—DNA

Pak emerges as stabilizing force after strategic response

Dr Al-Mashriqi highlights unity, restraint and rising global role

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Dr Hamid Khan Al-Mashriqi said Pakistan's measured and decisive response to recent regional tensions has strengthened its image as a responsible and stabilizing power. He noted that national unity bringing together the state, armed forces and public






sent a clear message that Pakistan cannot be underestimated. He said prevailing narratives portraying Pakistan as weak have been effectively countered, as the country demonstrated both operational capability and strategic maturity. Despite gaining an upper hand, Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire upon international request, reflecting restraint expected from a nuclear state. Dr Al-Mashriqi emphasized

that Pakistan's role now extends beyond military strength to active diplomacy, facilitating dialogue and de-escalation in a volatile environment. He added that Pakistan's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism have enhanced its credibility as a peace advocate. Analysts believe Pakistan's balanced approach combining deterrence with diplomacy has elevated its global standing, positioning it as a key player in regional stability and conflict resolution.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

Emergency

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

Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange.9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
- CAA.....9281002

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

ICCI chief for steps to tackle export challenges

Highlighting structural concerns, Sardar Tahir Mehmood pointed out persistent weaknesses such as unreliable energy supply, inefficiencies in logistics, limited technological adoption, and a narrow export base

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), emphasized the urgent need for strategic, coordinated, and forward-looking measures to address the mounting challenges confronting Pakistan's export sector. He stated that the evolving global and regional environment, particularly uncertainties surrounding the Strait of Hormuz and shifting economic dynamics, continues to exert significant pressure on Pakistan's trade, energy security, and supply chains. He noted that as an energy-import dependent country, Pakistan is facing rising input costs, inflationary pressures, and declining export competitiveness. He

expressed these views while talking to a delegation of exporters who visited the Chamber House here on Thursday.

He observed that exporters are currently grappling with multiple operational challenges, including high energy tariffs, increased freight charges, supply chain disruptions, and exchange rate volatility, all of which are eroding profit margins and creating uncertainty in international markets. He stressed that without timely policy intervention, these issues could further hamper export growth.

Highlighting structural concerns, Sardar Tahir Mehmood pointed out persistent weaknesses such as unreliable energy supply, inefficiencies in logistics, limited technological adoption, and a narrow export base. He underscored the need for urgent reforms to ensure long-term

economic resilience and sustainable export growth. Despite these challenges, he expressed optimism that emerging global shifts offer new opportunities for Pakistan. He emphasized that the realignment of global supply chains provides a valuable chance for the country to reposition itself through diversification, innovation, and value addition.

Outlining the way forward, the ICCI President called for a structured and solution-oriented approach, focusing on both immediate and long-term priorities. He proposed key measures including promotion of alternative and renewable energy for affordable power supply, upgradation of logistics and port infrastructure, ensuring policy consistency, improving ease of doing business, and enhancing investment

in research, development, and value-added sectors. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub in his remarks, stressed the importance of close coordination between the public and private sectors to address exporters' concerns. He highlighted that consistent policies, facilitation in taxation, and reduction in the cost of doing business are essential to enable exporters to compete effectively in international markets. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry emphasized the need to strengthen institutional support for exporters, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). He noted that targeted incentives, improved access to finance, and capacity-building initiatives would play a critical role in enhancing export performance and broadening Pakistan's export base.

Police net 12 outlaws, recover drugs, weapons

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 12 outlaws during ongoing operations against criminal elements in different areas of the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that police teams of Aabpara, Sangani, Khanna and Bani Gala police stations arrested four accused involved in various criminal activities. He said police recovered 30 bottles of liquor and three pistols along with ammunition from their possession. The official said cases had been registered against the accused and further investigation was underway. He said during a special campaign against proclaimed offenders and absconders, police teams arrested eight more criminals, taking the total number of arrests to 12. Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, Islamabad Police continues its effective crackdown against criminal elements to ensure peace and tranquility in the federal capital. SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza said Islamabad Police was committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and no one would be allowed to disturb public peace. _APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday and Saturday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, on April 24, electricity supply will remain suspended in GSO Circle from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm in 132kV GSS South, East, West and North, while from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm outages will occur on 132kV Bhagwal. On April 25, in Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm in Qureshiabad, Old Rawat, New Rawat, AOWHS, Suparco, NPF-I, NPF-II, Doctor Town, PWD-I and PWD-II feeders. Similarly, in Attock Circle, electricity will remain suspended during the same hours in Attock Rural, Teen Mela and Bagh Nela feeders. In Jhelum Circle, the affected areas from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm include New Sanghoi, Chotala, Khai Khulia, Pakhwal, F-2 (Chip Board), Industrial, F-10 (Kala Base), Jakkar, F-9 (Chak Daulat), Nathwala, Sanghoi and Safdar Shaheed feeders. Meanwhile, in GSO Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm in 132kV GSS Palandri (Azad Pattan feeder) and adjoining areas. The IESCO management apologized to consumers for the inconvenience and said that power supply may be restored earlier than scheduled if the maintenance work is completed ahead of time. _APP



GENEVA: Minister of State Barrister Aqeel Malik and Secretary MoHR Abdul Khaliq Shaikh stand with the Pakistani delegation following a successful dialogue with the UN Committee Against Torture.

OGDC revives gas production from Jand-1 well

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), Pakistan's largest exploration and production company, on Thursday announced the successful revival of gas production from the Jand-1 well, located in Attock district of Punjab province, marking a significant operational achievement.

Following recompletion and targeted stimulation, the Jand-1 well is currently producing over 21 million standard cubic feet per day

(MMSCFD) of gas. The well is flowing through a 32/64" choke at a well-head flowing pressure (WHFP) of 3,585 psi. The current gas production is substantially higher than its previous production level of around 7 MMSCFD. The well was initially brought into production in 2019 through the Dakhni Gas Processing Plant. The well was producing gas with a high hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) concentration of around 8 percent (~80,000 ppm). However, production was halted due to mechanical failure caused by challenging down-hole conditions associated with the

sour gas environment. Based on detailed in-house technical assessments and risk analysis, OGDC successfully executed a comprehensive revival plan through its own technical team expertise and equipment deployment. The operation involved the safe retrieval of downhole materials and restoration of well integrity under challenging sour gas conditions. To ensure long-term operational safety and efficiency, the well has been recompleted using corrosion-resistant tubing designed specifically for sour service. All operations were conducted in line with stringent health, safety, and environmental standards.

Timely mediation opens path to peace: Masood

ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China, and the United Nations, Sardar Masood Khan said Thursday that the world has taken a collective sigh of relief as tensions between the United States and Iran eased following a crucial extension in the ceasefire, achieved through Pakistan's timely and proactive diplomacy. Both sides were on the brink of renewed conflict, with military escalation and economic coercion pushing the region towards another devastating phase of war, he said in a statement issued here. However, Pakistan's last-minute diplomatic intervention—particularly its advice to extend the ceasefire—played a decisive role in stabilizing the situation. He observed that despite initial hesitation, U.S. President Donald Trump agreed to expand the ceasefire, creating space for negotiations to proceed. Khan emphasized that Pakistan's role in mediating between major global and regional powers marks a historic development in diplomacy. "It is rare in classical diplomacy for a country like Pakistan to act as a bridge between powers of such magnitude in an active conflict," he said, adding that this effort has effectively written a "new chapter" in international relations. He highlighted that Pakistan earned this role through sustained engagement and by building trust across multiple capitals, including Washington, Tehran, Beijing, Moscow, and key European and Gulf partners. He noted that traditional mediators or institutions such as the United Nations were largely absent, making Pakistan's leadership even more significant. Addressing the evolving dynamics, Sardar Masood Khan pointed out that both sides had engaged in intense brinkmanship, employing military threats and economic pressure to gain leverage. _APP

Call for promoting reading culture

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Muhammad Humayun Khan on Thursday said that April 23, observed globally as World Book Day, is a day to pay tribute to the power of books, pens and knowledge. In his message on the occasion of World Book Day, he said developed societies are built on the foundations of education, reading habits and intellectual awareness. Humayun Khan said a book is not merely a collection of pages but a reflection of civilisation, consciousness, history and the future. He added that only an enlightened nation can guarantee strong democracy, a stable economy and sustainable development. He said the PPP has always considered the promotion of education, knowledge and awareness as a fundamental part of its politics. The PPP leader said Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Murtaza Benazir Bhutto played a historic role in promoting public awareness and education in the country. He said PPP Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is committed to connecting the younger generation with education, research and modern knowledge. Humayun Khan said that the importance of books has not diminished in the digital age, but has instead increased further. He said books teach depth of thought, tolerance, research and perseverance. Humayun Khan stressed that promoting reading habits among the youth is the need of the hour, adding that libraries should be revived and love for books should become part of the national culture. He said Pakistan must strengthen its bond with books in order to become a bright, enlightened and developed nation. "The real strength of nations lies not in weapons, but in knowledge, research and awareness," he said, adding that love for books was in fact love for the future. _APP

NDMA issues heatwave alert till May 5

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), through its National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC), on Thursday issued a comprehensive weather alert warning of an intense heatwave across multiple regions till May 5, alongside forecasts of rain, windstorms and thunderstorms in parts of the country between April 24 and 29. NDMA is urging authorities to activate emergency plans and citizens to adopt precautionary measures to mitigate health and environmental risks. According to the NDMA, the prevailing weather pattern aligns with its seasonal outlook issued three to four months earlier, indicating a period of climatic extremes. The authority has also released a detailed assessment of expected weather conditions from April to June. The alert highlights that Sindh, southern Punjab and parts of Balochistan are likely to experience severe heatwave conditions, with major urban centres including Karachi, Hyderabad, Suk-

kur, Larkana, Jacobabad, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan and Turbat expected to remain in the grip of extreme temperatures. Central Punjab and certain ?????? of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are also likely to witness a significant rise in temperature. Meanwhile, a separate weather system is expected to bring dust storms, gusty winds and rain to upper and central ?????? districts on April 24, 25 and 29. Areas including Murree, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mianwali, Sargodha, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Lahore, Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan may receive rainfall during this period. In Balochistan, northern districts such as Quetta, Ziarat, Kalat and Khuzdar are forecast to experience rain accompanied by strong winds between April 24–25 and April 27–29. Coastal regions, including Gwadar, are expected to remain hot and dry with a gradual increase in temperatures. Sindh is likely to continue experiencing hot and dry conditions, with a steady rise in

temperatures across the province. However, Hyderabad, Badin and Mithi may receive light rain and strong winds on April 24. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also expected to see intermittent rainfall and gusty winds in districts including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, Nowshera, Kohat and Kurram during April 24–25 and April 27–29. Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are likely to experience intermittent rain with thunderstorms from April 24 to 29. The NDMA warned that the ongoing heatwave could lead to an increased risk of heatstroke, dehydration and other health complications. Citizens have been advised to avoid unnecessary exposure to direct sunlight, increase water intake and take preventive precautions. The Authority has directed all relevant institutions to activate heatwave response plans, establish cooling centres and ensure hospitals remain on high alert. _DNA

Zong, Samsung partner to accelerate 5G adoption

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology service enterprise, has entered into a strategic partnership with Samsung to launch a specialized Shop-in-Shop initiative alongside a dedicated Trade-In program. This collaboration aims to accelerate the availability and adoption of 5G-enabled Samsung smartphones across Pakistan, starting with selected Customer Service Centers in Islamabad and Lahore. The Shop-in-Shop initiative establishes a centralized platform for customers to explore and acquire the latest 5G-compatible Samsung devices. By integrating dedicated experience zones within Zong Customer Service Centers, the partnership enables hands-on interaction with Samsung's 5G flagship portfolio. This physical retail model empowers customers to make informed upgrade decisions by experiencing next-generation devices in a live network environment. To further accelerate the transition to 5G, Zong has introduced a cost-effective trade-in program in collaboration with Samsung. This initiative enables customers to exchange older, non-5G devices for new 5G smartphones, significantly lowering the barrier to entry for legacy device users. The program serves as a key pillar of the company's strategy to bridge the gap between network readiness and device penetration in the local market. Speaking about the partnership, Sajid Munir, Head of Marketing at Zong, stated "Our partnership with Samsung marks a proactive step toward building a robust 5G ecosystem in Pakistan. By providing direct access to 5G handsets, along with a convenient trade-in solution at our centers, we are enabling customers to fully utilize the potential of next-generation connectivity. This initiative underscores our commitment to advancing digital inclusion and driving technological progress in the country." The collaboration with Samsung focuses on expanding access to both affordable and premium 5G-enabled smartphones under one roof. By integrating connectivity services with device accessibility at a single touchpoint, Zong is reinforcing its role in driving the national digital agenda and enabling a seamless migration of its subscriber base to 5G technology. The Shop-in-Shop and Trade-In offerings are currently operational at Customer Service Centers in Islamabad and Lahore, ensuring localized access to 5G technology in key urban centers. Zong remains committed to expanding these touchpoints nationwide to further strengthen the 5G ecosystem across the country. _DNA

Briefs

IRSA releases 111,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 111,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 106,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1467.11 feet which was 67.11 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 27,700 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1161.10 feet, which was 111.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 32,700 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 70,200, 51,600, 40,500, and 7,400 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 31,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 5,900 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

Impressive teaser of operation 'Bunyan-un-Marsoos' released

ISLAMABAD: An impressive teaser of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos has been released, commemorating the successful achievement of Marka-e-Haq. The country marks one year since this milestone, regarded as a defining chapter in Pakistan's defense. The historic episode recalls how the Pakistan Armed Forces subdued the enemy's arrogance and established a new chapter of victory. A year ago, the Ghazis of the Pakistan Armed Forces delivered a decisive and memorable defeat to the adversary. Despite the passage of time, the impact of that defeat continues to resonate with the enemy. The anniversary serves as a reminder to the world that Pakistan's defense remains strong and unconquerable. —APP

IGP Rizvi reviews security

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi held a meeting with AIG Special Branch Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider to review the overall security and intelligence situation in the federal capital. An official told APP on Thursday that the meeting focused on enhancing intelligence-based policing and improving coordination among relevant units. IGP Rizvi issued directions to further strengthen deployment and take effective measures to curb crime. Rizvi emphasized proactive monitoring and timely sharing of intelligence to prevent any untoward incidents. —APP

Deal signed to develop CPEC's M-6

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Pakistan's National Highway Authority (NHA) signed an agreement to develop two sections of the M-6 Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan and Member PPP NHA Ijaz Ahmed signed the agreement, witnessed by Member Planning NHA Dr. Shafeeq Ahmad, Syed Hussain Haider, ADB Deputy Country Director and Mohammed Azim Hashmi, Director, Advisory Division 1, OMDP ADB, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The project will connect the missing link in Pakistan's North-South high speed road connectivity, streamline logistics, reduce travel time, and strengthen trade flows across the country. "ADB will provide advisory support covering project feasibility studies, developing a bankable PPP structure facilitating transparent procurement processes to attract private sector expertise, achieving commercial and financial closure," read an official statement of ADB. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on preparedness for Monsoon season and strategy to counter Climate Threats.

Drap orders countrywide crackdown on unsafe syringes

Experts review shift to non-reusable auto-disable syringes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal health authorities have ordered nationwide enforcement of a ban on conventional disposable syringes and launched a review of safer alternatives amid growing concern over unsafe injections linked to HIV transmission. The decisions were taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Director General Health Dr Abdul Wali Khan at the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap), attended by DRAP CEO Dr Obaidullah, senior health ministry officials, WHO's deputy head in Pakistan, representatives of Unicef, executive directors of PIMS Dr Rana Imran Sikandar and Polyclinic Prof Shahzad Munir, officials from the National Institute of Health (NIH) Islamabad including its ED Dr Salman and Dr Mumtaz Ali Khan, IHRA,

and infectious disease experts. Officials said the meeting reviewed the rising number of HIV infections in both children and the general population, with particular concern over unsafe injection practices, reuse of syringes, and poor infection prevention and control measures. Health experts say a large proportion of HIV infections are linked to the reuse of syringes and unsafe blood transfusions. A key focus of the meeting was the widespread use of disposable syringes in clinical and informal healthcare settings, increasing the risk of transmission of HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. In view of this, the federal health ministry decided to constitute a sub-committee of experts to assess whether the continued use of conventional syringes should be restricted or replaced with auto-disable or auto-destruct syringes that cannot be reused. Alongside

the policy review, Drap has ordered strict enforcement of an existing ban on conventional disposable syringes through a nationwide market survey. In a directive issued on April 22, Drap's Division of Quality Assurance and Laboratory Testing directed the National Task Force for the eradication of spurious and substandard products to conduct a countrywide survey to ensure compliance with the ban and identify any illegal products still being sold in the market. The letter reiterated that Drap had imposed a complete ban on the import and manufacture of conventional disposable syringes with effect from July 31, 2021, and cancelled all registrations of such products. However, concerns remain that these syringes continue to circulate, particularly in unregulated segments. Provincial drug control authorities have been instructed to take strict regulatory action in cases of

non-compliance, while a comprehensive report on findings and enforcement actions has been sought by April 27. Officials said the crackdown aims to remove unsafe syringes from circulation and address one of the key drivers of blood-borne infections in the country. Health experts have long warned that Pakistan remains among the highest users of therapeutic injections globally, with millions administered daily, many of them unnecessary and often delivered using unsafe practices. Participants at the meeting stressed the need for stronger infection prevention and control systems, better monitoring of healthcare providers, and increased public awareness to discourage unnecessary injections. Officials also highlighted the importance of ensuring availability of safer alternatives, including auto-disable syringes, particularly in public sector programmes.

ANF seizes 220 kg drugs in 12 operations

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), while conducting 12 operations, managed to recover over 220 kg drugs worth more than Rs 20 million and arrested 13 suspects, including a woman. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF conducted major operations across the country against drug traffickers, resulting in significant drug seizures and arrests. In an operation at Lahore Airport, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle narcotics abroad and recovered 6.21 kg ice from the luggage of a passenger going to Riyadh. The drug was soaked in the clothes. The spokesman informed that another drug smuggling attempt was foiled at Multan Airport, and ANF recovered 4.6 kg ice soaked in the clothes from the luggage of a passenger traveling to Saudi Arabia. At Islamabad Airport, 1.22 kg ice was recovered from the bag of a passenger traveling to Dammam. In an operation near the Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad, 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle, and two accused were arrested. Near Burhan Motorway Toll Plaza, 1.2 kg hashish was seized from the possession of a woman traveling in a public Van. An operation was conducted near Sanjwal District Ziarat and 4 kg opium was recovered from a vehicle while two accused were rounded up. In a raid near District Nokundi, 105 kg opium was recovered from a vehicle. In an operation at a courier office in Rawalpindi, 106 grams ecstasy pills were seized from a parcel arrived from the Netherlands. The spokesman informed that near Ghazri Bridge, Karachi, 12 kg hashish was confiscated from a rickshaw and a suspect was arrested. Near Phandu Road, Peshawar, 79 kg hashish was recovered from an unattended truck. In an operation conducted near Kolachi Road, Karachi, 248 grams of ice, 10 grams cocaine and 190 grams ecstasy pills were recovered from the possession of 2 suspects going on a motorcycle and a car. —APP

Meat, meat products exports grew by 3.08 pc in 09 months

The food group imports into the country during the first 09 months of current financial year were recorded at \$7.090 billion as compared to the imports of \$6.158 billion of the same period of the last year

ISLAMABAD: Meat and meat preparations exports from the country during the first 09 months of the current financial year grew by 3.08 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-March 2025-26, over 92,080 metric tons meat and meat products valued at \$405.988 million were exported as compared to the exports of 90,464 metric tons worth of \$391.118 million of the same period of the last year. According to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the fish and fish preparations exports during the period under review also increased by 5.93 percent as compared to the exports of the same period of the last year. In last 09 months of the current financial year, about 151,855 metric tons of fish and fish products worth of \$342.238 million were exported as compared to the exports of 151,528 metric tons valued at \$322.906 million of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, over 3.235 million metric tons of rice worth \$1.894 million were exported during the period under review as rice exports from the country recorded negative growth of 38.55 percent as against

the exports of the same period of the last year. However, 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, the data revealed. During the period under review, about 2.677 million metric tons of rice other than Basmati valued at \$1.097 million were exported as compared to the exports of 4.019 million metric tons worth \$2.080 million of the same period of the last year, it added. It is worth mentioning here that 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. On year on year basis, the exports of food commodities during the month of March, 2026 were recorded at \$406.005 million as compared to the exports of \$576.177 million of the same period of the last year. The food group imports into the country during the first 09 months of current financial year were recorded at \$7.090 billion as compared to the imports of \$6.158 billion of the same period of the last year. —DNA

Construction's ceremony of school buildings

Authorities added that projects related to road infrastructure and healthcare have also been completed in the area, with several others currently under implementation

ISLAMABAD: The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) advanced community development efforts under the Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) with the launch of new school infrastructure in Upper Kohistan. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in Seo village for the construction of buildings for a government high school and a government primary school, with a combined estimated cost of 640 million rupees, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. The schools are being developed under the Local Area Development Program of the DHPP, a flagship hydropower initiative that also includes social investment aimed at improving conditions in surrounding communities. According to WAPDA, the new institutions will feature modern classrooms, science and computer laboratories, a multipurpose hall and staff rooms, designed to provide a contemporary learning envi-

ronment. The ceremony was attended by DHPP General Manager Ameer Shafiqur Rehman, Deputy Commissioner Upper Kohistan Azizullah Jan, senior WAPDA and district officials, along with local elders, political and social representatives, teachers and students. Officials said the project reflects WAPDA's commitment to promoting education alongside infrastructure development, particularly in remote areas impacted by large-scale energy projects. Under the DHPP, WAPDA has undertaken multiple initiatives for socio-economic uplift, including establishing computer laboratories, providing furniture and solar systems to schools, offering transportation services for students and awarding scholarships. Authorities added that projects related to road infrastructure and healthcare have also been completed in the area, with several others currently under implementation. —APP

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The Challenge before Rana Sikandar Hayat

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In the evolving landscape of Punjab's governance, the role of the education minister carries both symbolic and practical weight. It is a portfolio that not only shapes policy but also influences the intellectual future of millions. In this context, Rana Sikandar Hayat stands out as a prominent political figure, particularly rooted in the constituency of Pattoki, whose rise reflects a blend of local political grounding and provincial ambition. Rana Sikandar Hayat's political identity is closely tied to Pattoki, a region often described as politically vibrant yet developmentally uneven. His emergence from this locality is not merely incidental; rather, it reflects the enduring importance of constituency politics in Punjab. Leaders who maintain a strong connection with their electorate often carry that sensibility into provincial governance. In Hayat's case, his familiarity with grassroots issues—ranging from school infrastructure deficits to teacher shortages has shaped his public narrative as a minister who understands the system from the bottom up. The education sector in Punjab has historically been both a success story and a persistent challenge. While previous administrations have introduced reforms in enrollment, digitisation, and monitoring, systemic issues continue to linger. It is within this complex terrain that Rana Sikandar Hayat has assumed office. His tenure, therefore, is being closely watched not just for policy innovation but for continuity and consolidation of earlier gains. One of the defining features of Hayat's political persona is his emphasis on administrative efficiency. Observers note that his approach tends to favour measurable outcomes—attendance rates, examination performance, and school functionality—over rhetorical commitments. This aligns with a broader trend in Punjab's governance model, where data-driven oversight has increasingly replaced traditional bureaucratic inertia. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that such metrics translate into meaningful learning outcomes rather than merely statistical improvements. Critics, however, argue that the education ministry requires more than managerial competence. It demands a vision that addresses deeper structural inequalities—urban-rural divides, gender disparities, and the persistent gap between public and private schooling systems. In this regard, the expectations from Rana Sikandar Hayat remain high. His ability to move beyond administrative reforms and articulate a long-term educational philosophy will likely define his legacy. Another dimension of his role is political balancing. As a well-known figure in

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Pattoki, Hayat carries the weight of local expectations alongside provincial responsibilities. Constituents often expect tangible development: new schools, upgraded facilities, and employment opportunities. Balancing these demands with broader policy priorities is a delicate task, one that tests the political acumen of any minister. In Punjab's highly competitive political environment, maintaining this equilibrium is crucial for both governance and electoral viability. Furthermore, the education sector in Pakistan is increasingly influenced by global trends. From digital learning platforms to curriculum reforms aligned with international standards, the pressure to modernise is constant. Rana Sikandar Hayat's ministry must navigate these demands while remaining sensitive to local contexts. The introduction of technology in classrooms, for instance, cannot succeed without addressing basic infrastructural gaps such as electricity and internet access in rural areas. There is also the question of curriculum and ideological orientation. Education in Pakistan has long been a site of contestation, reflecting broader societal debates about identity, history, and modernity. Any attempt at reform inevitably invites scrutiny from various quarters—political, religious, and civil society. How Rana Sikandar Hayat approaches this sensitive domain will be indicative of his political skill and policy clarity. Supporters of the minister point to his accessibility and engagement with stakeholders as a positive sign. Teachers, administrators, and local representatives often emphasise the importance of a responsive leadership style in addressing day-to-day challenges. If sustained, this approach could help bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, a persistent weakness in the education sector. Yet, the scale of the challenge cannot be overstated. Punjab's education system serves millions of students across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Issues such as dropout rates, quality of instruction, and resource allocation require sustained attention and innovative solutions. Short-term interventions, while necessary, are insufficient without a coherent long-term strategy. In assessing Rana Sikandar Hayat's performance, it is important to recognise the broader institutional constraints within which he operates. The education ministry does not function in isolation; it is part of a larger governance ecosystem that includes finance, planning, and local government departments. Effective coordination among these entities is essential for meaningful reform. The minister's ability to navigate this administrative landscape will significantly influence outcomes. Ultimately, the significance of Rana Sikandar Hayat's role extends beyond his individual political trajectory. As Punjab's education minister, he occupies a position that directly impacts the province's human capital development. Education, after all, is not merely a sectoral concern; it is the foundation upon which economic growth, social cohesion, and democratic stability are built. For Pattoki, his leadership represents a source of local pride and political visibility. For Punjab, it is an opportunity to advance educational reform at a critical juncture. Whether this opportunity is fully realised will depend on a combination of vision, execution, and political will. Rana Sikandar Hayat's tenure offers a telling case study of contemporary governance in Punjab where local roots intersect with provincial responsibilities, and where the promise of reform must contend with the realities of implementation. The coming years will reveal whether his stewardship of the education ministry can translate ambition into lasting impact.

Trump's shadow war against China

Qamar Bashir



Yet, beneath the surface of this widespread criticism lies an alternative interpretation: that what appears chaotic may, in fact, be a calculated and deeply strategic attempt to reorder global power dynamics, particularly through control of energy resources. At the heart of this perspective is the doctrine of "America First," a policy framework that prioritizes U.S. economic and strategic supremacy above all else. Rather

In a world increasingly defined by polarized narratives, few leaders evoke as intense a spectrum of reactions as Donald Trump. Critics across global media and political corridors have not hesitated to label his actions as reckless, impulsive, or even dangerous—particularly in the context of escalating tensions in the Middle East. Yet, beneath the surface of this widespread criticism lies an alternative interpretation: that what appears chaotic may, in fact, be a calculated and deeply strategic attempt to reorder global power dynamics, particularly through control of energy resources. At the heart of this perspective is the doctrine of "America First," a policy framework that prioritizes U.S. economic and strategic supremacy above all else. Rather than viewing recent geopolitical developments as isolated events, this lens interprets them as interconnected steps in a broader strategy aimed at securing long-term dominance—especially over emerging rivals like China. During his political rise, Trump repeatedly identified China as America's foremost strategic competitor. This assessment was not merely rhetorical. China's rapid economic expansion, its integration with over 140 countries through the Belt and Road Initiative, and its dominance in critical sectors such as rare earth minerals positioned it as a formidable challenger to U.S. global influence. Any serious attempt to counterbalance China, therefore, required not just military strength, but economic leverage of equal or greater magnitude. Energy, particularly oil and gas, emerged as the most potent instrument in this strategic contest. The United States, already endowed with significant natural resources, dramatically expanded its production capacity under the "drill, baby, drill" policy ethos. Advances in shale extraction and aggressive domestic production turned the U.S. into one of the world's leading energy producers, rivaling traditional giants like Saudi Arabia and Iran. This surge was not merely about self-sufficiency; it was about positioning the U.S. as a dominant global supplier. Simultaneously, attention turned toward other major energy reserves—most notably Venezuela, home to some of the largest proven oil reserves in the world. Through a combination of political pressure, sanctions, and strategic interventions, the U.S. effectively reduced Venezuela's ability to operate independently in global oil markets, thereby limiting alternative supply channels—particularly those accessible to China. The next phase of this strategy unfolded in the Middle East, a region that has long served as the backbone of global energy supply. Tensions surrounding Iran's nuclear program—whether viewed as legitimate concerns or strategic pretexts—provided the con-

text for heightened military engagement. In this interpretation, the objective was not solely to neutralize nuclear threats or enforce regime change, but to influence a far more critical variable: the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most vital chokepoints, through which nearly a fifth of global oil supply passes. Any disruption in this narrow passage sends shockwaves across international markets. By escalating tensions and contributing to instability in the region, the United States effectively created conditions under which oil flows could be restricted, redirected, or controlled. When regional production facilities were damaged and shipping routes became uncertain, global economies—especially those heavily dependent on imported energy—were forced into a state of urgency. In such a scenario, the United States positioned itself as the most reliable alternative supplier. Reports of large numbers of oil tankers heading toward U.S. ports underscore this shift, reflecting a reorientation of global supply chains. This redirection of energy flows carries profound implications. Countries that once relied on Middle Eastern oil—many of them key partners of China—are now increasingly dependent on American exports. In effect, energy dependency is being recalibrated, transferring leverage from traditional producers and transit routes to a new central hub: the United States. For China, this development poses a strategic dilemma. As one of the world's largest energy consumers, China's economic engine depends on stable and affordable access to oil. Historically, it has diversified its sources, importing from Iran, Venezuela, and Russia. However, sanctions, geopolitical tensions, and disruptions in shipping routes have significantly constrained these options. If access to these supplies is reduced or eliminated, China faces the prospect of turning—directly or indirectly—to the United States to meet its energy needs. This dynamic mirrors an existing asymmetry: the global dependence on China for rare earth minerals, which are essential for advanced technologies. By establishing a parallel dependency in energy, the United States potentially creates a counterbalance—an economic lever that can influence even the most powerful economies. The strategic vision does not end there. Additional proposals, such as pipeline networks connecting Middle Eastern oil fields to Israeli ports and onward to global markets, suggest efforts to create alternative routes that bypass traditional chokepoints while maintaining

U.S.-aligned control. Such infrastructure would further consolidate influence over energy distribution, extending beyond 40% toward potentially 60% of global oil flows.

Critics argue that such strategies come at an immense cost: regional instability, economic volatility, and human suffering. The disruption of global trade routes, spikes in energy prices, and the threat of prolonged conflict have placed enormous strain on economies worldwide. Journalists and analysts, often operating far from the realities of decision-making at the highest levels, highlight these consequences and question the rationale behind such policies. However, supporters of this strategic interpretation contend that leadership at this level requires decisions that transcend immediate perceptions. They argue that the complexities of global power competition demand unconventional approaches—moves that may appear disruptive in the short term but aim to secure long-term advantages. From this perspective, labeling Trump as irrational or incompetent oversimplifies a far more intricate picture. His background as a businessman—someone who built a vast enterprise and navigated complex negotiations—suggests a familiarity with leverage, risk, and long-term positioning. Whether one agrees with his methods or not, the outcomes of these strategies—particularly in energy markets—indicate a deliberate attempt to reshape global dependencies. Ultimately, the unfolding scenario represents a broader shift in how power is exercised in the modern world. Military actions, economic policies, and geopolitical maneuvers are increasingly intertwined, forming a cohesive strategy where energy becomes both a tool and a target. The intersection of war and economics, once considered distinct domains, is now central to the pursuit of global influence. As the world watches these developments, the debate is unlikely to settle into a single narrative. Some will continue to see chaos and recklessness; others will perceive calculated strategy and bold leadership. What remains clear is that the stakes are extraordinarily high—not just for the United States or China, but for the global system as a whole. In this evolving landscape, one question persists: is the current trajectory a path toward renewed dominance, or a gamble that could redefine the balance of power in unpredictable ways?

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

An unfulfilled charter: Rethinking justice in the UN

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



It was to restrain such tendencies that nations once envisioned a common platform—where humanity could be protected from destruction, and where disputes among states might be resolved under the umbrella of the United Nations, with justice visibly upheld. Yet from its very founding in 1945, certain decisions were made that now cry out for serious reconsideration and reform. The United Nations arose from the ashes of two world wars, above all the second, which had brought untold sorrow to mankind.

When agitation takes root in thought, it gives rise to chaos. And when chaos settles in both heart and mind, the ability to distinguish between justice and injustice begins to fade, until it no longer seems to matter whether fairness prevails or not. It was to restrain such tendencies that nations once envisioned a common platform—where humanity could be protected from destruction, and where disputes among states might be resolved under the umbrella of the United Nations, with justice visibly upheld. Yet from its very founding in 1945, certain decisions were made that now cry out for serious reconsideration and reform. The United Nations arose from the ashes of two world wars, above all the second, which had brought untold sorrow to mankind. Its Charter opens with a solemn pledge by the peoples of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." The purposes set forth in its first article are clear; to maintain international peace and security through collective action, to develop friendly relations among nations based on equal rights and self-determination, to achieve cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, and to promote respect for human rights without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. In short, the organisation was meant to prevent future catastrophes, foster harmony, and uphold the dignity of all peoples. The League of Nations, born after the Great War, had failed because it could not check aggression by the strong. The founders of the United Nations sought a stronger body, yet they built into it a compromise born of power realities. The Security Council, its most powerful organ, consists of fifteen members, five of whom—China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States—hold permanent seats and the right of veto over substantive decisions. Any one of these may block a resolution, even if the other fourteen members support it. This arrangement was a pragmatic concession to ensure the great powers of 1945 would join and remain engaged; without it, the organisation might never

have come into being. But it created a hierarchy among sovereign states that sits uneasily beside the Charter's own declaration of sovereign equality. Over the decades, this veto has repeatedly shielded actions that the broader community of nations wished to condemn or restrain. It has allowed powerful interests to prevail where justice and human rights demanded otherwise. The most persistent pattern has been the protection extended to one particular state in the Middle East, where resolutions critical of policies that have caused immense suffering have been blocked time and again by a single permanent member. Such use of the veto has not only frustrated the will of the majority but has also eroded confidence in the very principle of equal justice that the United Nations was established to uphold. The world has changed profoundly since 1945. New powers have risen, continents once marginalised now carry vast populations and growing influence, and the Global South rightly asks why structures frozen in the aftermath of one war should govern the realities of today. The veto has come to symbolise not strength in unity but privilege that undermines credibility. When the Council is paralysed, atrocities go unchecked, aggression faces no collective restraint, and smaller nations feel reduced to spectators in matters that threaten their very existence. Critics from many quarters—scholars, statesmen and ordinary citizens alike—have long argued that this structural inequality breeds impunity and alienates the majority of the 193 member states. The time has come to bring an end to this injustice. Reform of the Security Council, including a fresh look at the veto, is no longer a distant ideal but a pressing necessity if the United Nations is to retain relevance and moral authority. Proposals abound; expansion of permanent membership to reflect contemporary realities, voluntary restraint on veto use in cases involving mass atrocities, or mechanisms to ensure that a single voice cannot indefinitely thwart the conscience of the world. Whatever the precise path, the goal must remain

the same—to restore the organisation's capacity to act decisively for peace and justice, true to the Charter's noble spirit rather than the compromises of a bygone age. In this difficult hour, it is heartening to witness diplomacy that rises above narrow calculation and serves the wider cause of peace. Pakistan has played a pivotal and constructive role in recent efforts to settle tensions between the United States and Iran, helping to broker a fragile ceasefire and create space for dialogue at a moment when conflict threatened to engulf the region and beyond. By acting as a trusted intermediary—leveraging its relations with both sides and its understanding of regional complexities—Islamabad has demonstrated the value of bridge-building in the shadow of the United Nations. Such initiatives remind us that even when the formal machinery of global governance falters, determined nations can still work to prevent escalation and open paths to negotiation. Pakistan's contribution stands as a timely example of responsible statesmanship that seeks de-escalation rather than confrontation. Yet mediation alone cannot cure the deeper ailment. The United Nations must evolve if it is to fulfil its founding promise. The veto, once a safeguard against hasty action, has too often become a shield for injustice. Nations must now summon the wisdom and courage to reconsider the structures established in 1945, not in a spirit of recrimination but of renewal. Only by restoring balance and fairness can the organisation truly serve as the centre for harmonising the actions of nations and safeguarding future generations from the scourge of war.

The alternative is clear: continued drift toward irrelevance, where chaos in thought and deed prevails because the mechanisms of justice have grown too feeble to matter. Humanity deserves better. The peoples of the United Nations, whose name graces the Charter, must now demand that their common platform live up to its highest ideals—before agitation once more takes root and justice fades entirely from view.

Briefs

PM Shehbaz proud of Pakistan-China space cooperation

FROM PAGE 01
The prime minister amid highlighting Pakistan-China cooperation in the space sector, said the astronauts' mission through Chinese collaboration would further strengthen the longstanding brotherly ties between the two countries. He added that bilateral cooperation in space research reflected a shared commitment to exploring new frontiers and reaching greater scientific heights together. Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong welcomed the prime minister's remarks and described expanding cooperation between Pakistan and China in space research as encouraging and forward-looking. The astronauts expressed gratitude for the opportunity and termed their participation in space research a unique honour and a source of pride for Pakistan. They reaffirmed their resolve to meet the nation's expectations through dedication and hard work. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi, Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch, and Chairman SPARCO Muhammad Yousaf Khan. Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong also participated in the meeting.

PM Shehbaz meets Chinese Ambassador

FROM PAGE 01
The prime minister conveyed his warm regards and greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. While expressing his satisfaction at the positive trajectory of Pakistan-China bilateral relations, the prime minister reaffirmed that Pakistan took great pride in its All-Weather Cooperative Strategic Partnership with China. He also spoke of his resolve to continue working closely with the Chinese leadership, to ensure that the relationship grows from strength to strength. The Chinese Ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and expressed China's appreciation of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for lasting peace in the region. He reaffirmed China's commitment to strengthening its iron-clad ties with Pakistan and to take them to new heights, as envisioned by President Xi Jinping.

Naqvi, Natalie discusses...

FROM PAGE 01
ongoing diplomatic efforts to facilitate dialogue and reduce tensions between Washington and Tehran, with Islamabad acting as the only mediator. The second round of US-Iran talks may take place as early as Friday, the New York Post reported, citing President Donald Trump on Wednesday. "It's possible!" Trump reportedly told the Post by text message, when asked about sources in Pakistan, saying that a second round was "expected in Islamabad within the next 36 to 72 hours." Trump on Tuesday extended a two-week truce in the war just as it was about to expire. Trump had said he would maintain the truce to allow more time for Pakistani-brokered peace talks. Iran said it welcomed the efforts by Pakistan but made no other comment on Trump's announcement. However, the US president said that the US Navy would continue its blockade of Iranian maritime trade, a measure Tehran considers an act of war. Iran also vowed not to reopen the Strait of Hormuz as long as a US naval blockade remains in place. "A complete ceasefire only has meaning if it is not violated through a naval blockade," said Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led Tehran's delegation in the first round of talks in Islamabad.

Pakistan Launches First FIFA Arena Project

Gillani highlighted that youth development is at the core of PFF's strategy, aimed at building structured pathways from grassroots to elite levels

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Under-16 football team embarks on a historic journey as it departs for Kazakhstan to compete in the UEFA Development Tournament for the first time, scheduled from April 24 to 30. Pakistan Football Federation President Mohsin Gillani termed the participation a "major breakthrough" for youth football in the country, calling it a historic moment for Pakistan. He emphasized that exposure to elite international competitions is vital for the long-term growth of the sport. "Playing in a UEFA Development Tournament will provide our young players with invaluable experience, confidence, and a clearer understanding of international standards," he said. Gillani highlighted that youth development is at the core of PFF's strategy, aimed at building structured pathways from grassroots to elite levels. He added that such tournaments are not just about matches but serve as key learning platforms for players, coaches, and support staff, helping lay a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan football.

The landmark participation marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's youth football journey and reflects a growing focus on international exposure. The tournament will feature host Kazakhstan along with Russia and Azerbaijan, offering Pakistan's young footballers a rare opportunity to compete against technically



strong and tactically advanced teams in a high-level environment. Pakistan will begin their campaign against Kazakhstan on April 25, followed by matches against Russia on April 27 and Azerbaijan on April 30. The Pakistan U-16 squad includes goalkeepers Samar Razzaq and Naveed Ullah. Defenders are

Muhammad Alam, Hamza Amjad, Maqbool Ahmed, Nadeem Hussain, Abdul Raheem Elahi, and Syed Manzar Shah. Midfielders include Muhammad Mustafa, Muhammad Essa, Sagar Mehran, Haroon Rasheed, Shahraz Khan, Abdul Samad, Hamza Yasir, and Muhammad Hanzala, while the forwards are Danish Masih, Mu-

hammad Rafay, and Kaleem Ullah. Pakistan's inclusion in the tournament also highlights improving ties between PFF and international football bodies, particularly UEFA, and reflects renewed efforts to integrate the country into global youth football pathways while bridging the gap between domestic and international competition.

National karate player Arzoo Haider succumbs to injuries

Arzoo Haider Ali was injured last week after falling from a scooty

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National karate player Arzoo Haider Ali, who was injured after falling from a scooty last week, died at a private hospital in Quetta on Wednesday, confirmed the Balochistan sports secretary. Arzoo was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital with severe head injuries on Saturday. She was on her way to participate in a karate championship at Ayub Sports Complex when she met with a traffic accident. She had represented Balochistan in several competitions and won gold and silver medals at the National Games. Earlier this week, Balochistan Sports Secretary Durra Baloch, on the instructions of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, had visited the hospital to inquire about the national karate player. During the visit, the secretary met the player's family and assured them of full support for medical treatment. He had emphasised that the provincial government's Sports Department was extending all possible assistance and maintaining close contact with the family to ensure Arzoo received the best care.



Hyderabad Kingsmen defeat Multan Sultans in pulsating PSL 11 encounter

Usman leads Kingsmen batting with 47-ball 101; skipper Labuschagne scores 61 in 214-run chase

DNA

KARACHI: Hyderabad Kingsmen registered their fourth consecutive victory in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 as they beat Multan Sultans by four wickets at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Wednesday. Set to chase a daunting target, the Kingsmen knocked the winning runs for the loss of six wickets and three balls to spare, courtesy of Usman's record-setting fourth century in the tournament. The Kingsmen got off to a dismal start to their innings as they lost Maaz Sadaqat (seven) in the second over with just 13 runs on the board. Following the early stutter, Labuschagne then knitted a one-sid-

ed 34-run partnership for the second wicket with Saim Ayub, who could muster five off 10 before falling victim to Ismail, who struck again on his next delivery, dismissing Kusal Perera for a golden duck, to reduce the Kingsmen to 48/3. The back-to-back dismissals paved the way for Usman to walk out and bat at No.5 and although he would have been caught behind on the first delivery had Sultans appealed, he turned the game on its head with beligerent hitting. Usman shared a 123-run partnership for the fourth wicket with captain Marnus Labuschagne, during which both batters brought up their half-centuries. Experienced pacer Peter Siddle eventually broke the partnership in the 16th over by dismissing compatriot

Labuschagne, who made 61 off 41 deliveries with the help of nine fours. Meanwhile, Usman continued his onslaught and brought up his well-deserved century on the final delivery of the 17th over bowled by Mohammad Wasim Jr. Siddle, however, caused a major stir in Kingsmen's pursuit by dismissing Glenn Maxwell (two) and centurion Usman in the pulsating 18th over. Usman remained the top-scorer for the Kingsmen with a quickfire 101 off just 47 deliveries, studded with 10 sixes and five fours. Following Usman's dismissal, Kingsmen required a further 26 off 12 deliveries and Hassan Khan's blazing 24-run cameo steered them over the line with three balls to spare. For Sultans, Siddle and Ismail took three wickets each, while the rest went wicketless.

Pak to open campaign against China in U-18 Asia Cup Hockey 2026

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will begin their campaign in the Under-18 Asia Cup Hockey 2026 against China on May 30, according to the tournament schedule announced by the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) on Thursday. The event will be held from May 29 to June 6 in Kakamigahara, Japan, featuring top emerging teams from across Asia competing for the title. In the men's competition, nine teams have been divided into two pools. Pakistan are placed in Pool B alongside Malaysia, Bangladesh and China, while Pool A consists of India, Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan. After their opening match, Paki-

stan will face Malaysia on May 31, before taking on Bangladesh in their final group fixture on June 3. As per the schedule, group-stage matches will continue until June 1, with the tournament progressing to the knockout phase thereafter. The semi-finals and classification matches will be played on June 5, while the final and third-place match are set for June 6. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has undertaken comprehensive preparations, including nationwide trials and the holding of the Under-18 National Hockey Championship, which helped identify a strong pool of young talent. - DNA

Excellent initiative of Mohsin Naqvi for making Islamabad Tourist friendly

DNA

ENHANCING the beauty and sustainability of Islamabad's tourism industry is an essential step toward achieving its full potential and its future economic growth as a world class capital of the world. Blessed with the natural scenic beauty and its unique backdrop of the Margalla Hills, Islamabad capital city possesses a great diversity of natural charm and attraction for tourists that sets it apart from many other global capitals. By making Islamabad more accessible, greener, cleaner, and environment and tourist friendly, the Ministry of Interior under the dynamic leadership of Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi Federal Minister for Interior has unveiled an innovative and sustainable development initiative aimed at transforming Islamabad into a modern, environmentally sustainable, and globally competitive capital city with an innovative infrastructure and a vibrant economy. Central to this vision is the creation of a 1,000 acre world class park at the foothills of the Margalla Hills. This landmark and historic project, with its holistic approach has announced during a high level meeting chaired by Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi at CDA Headquarters, Islamabad which reflects a broader strategy to enhance urban infrastructure, attract international investment, and improve the quality of life for the residents of federal capital.

The new initiative of park on 1000 acres represents a major step toward expanding green spaces in the capital. Islamabad is already known for its natural beauty and planned layout, but this initiative seeks to elevate it further by providing a large, accessible recreational area designed to meet international standards. The park will likely include walking trails, botanical gardens, eco friendly facilities, and leisure zones, offering residents and tourists a space for witnessing the natural beauty and the environment that makes the Islamabad best of the best capital of the world to visit and enjoy the most amazing sights and atmosphere for the exercise, and connection

with nature. By situating the park near the Margalla Hills, the government aims to preserve and integrate the natural landscape into urban development. In addition to environmental improvements, the Ministry of Interior and CDA further intends to focusing on boosting tourism and economic growth. Plans to construct hotels for tourists through joint ventures with internationally reputed firms signal a strong commitment to attracting foreign investment. A new tax hotel policy is being formulated to create an investor-friendly environment, making Islamabad an appealing destination for global hospitality brands. This policy is expected to stimulate economic activity, generate employment opportunities, and position the city as a hub for international tourism and business.

The new initiative will also emphasize modernization and transparency in governance. A comprehensive land and property survey will be conducted by the Survey of Pakistan to ensure accurate records and better urban planning. Furthermore, the digitization of CDA systems and the introduction of a one window digital dashboard will further streamline administrative processes, reduce bureaucracy and enhance effective service delivery and customer service systems. The establishment of a dedicated marketing team of CDA for future auctions also reflects a strategic approach to maximizing investor participation and their investment in ensuring sustainable development. Public safety and emergency response teams are also being prioritized through the

planned establishment of a Capital Emergency Services control room within the Safe City framework. This will also further improve coordination among emergency services and enhance the overall safety and security infrastructure of the federal capital, Islamabad.

The benefits of this initiative are far reaching and will further help improve Environment, the development of a green park will help reduce pollution levels and improve the Air Quality Index (AQI), contributing to improved public health living conditions. Increased greenery will also mitigate urban heat and support biodiversity. From a social perspective, the availability of high quality recreational spaces will promote physical and mental well-being among residents of Islamabad. Economically, the influx of investment and tourism will considerably increase and boost local economy and businesses, besides providing jobs to professionals and increase revenue generation for continued development and sustainability with Improved infrastructure and digital governance which will enhance efficiency and transparency, making Islamabad a more attractive place to live and work. The new initiatives and innovative project of Ministry of Interior and CDA will also benefit citizens of Islamabad who have widely appreciated and supported this innovative and excellent initiative of Mohsin Naqvi in recognising its importance and potential to further elevate living standards and quality of life thus preserving the city's natural beauty and charm. By combining environmental sustainability, economic development, rural and modern urban planning, the vision and dynamic leadership of Mohsin Naqvi sets a foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity for transforming Islamabad into a vibrant, environmentally friendly and tourist oriented capital of Pakistan that can compete on a global level.



Pakistan rejects India propaganda

FROM PAGE 01
The fact remains that such propaganda campaigns cannot distract the international community's attention from India's continued occupation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) and its denial of the right to self-determination to the Kashmiris, in violation of relevant UN resolutions. Nor can such gimmicks conceal the fact that India continues to undermine regional peace and security by resorting to inflammatory rhetoric, repeated provocations, and aggressive military posturing, including its illegal unilateral action to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, in clear violation of international law. We hope that the international community will call on India to demonstrate responsible behaviour and to refrain from all rhetoric and actions that may serve as a spoiler to ongoing efforts aimed at regional and international peace and security.

Hackers steal \$2.5m from Sri Lanka...

FROM PAGE 01
finance ministry secretary Harshana Suriyapperuma told reporters in the capital. Four senior officers at the Public Debt Management Office (PDMO) were suspended after the breach, he said. Authorities were alerted to an attempt to break into the ministry's e-mail server, and investigations showed that a \$2.5 million payment owed to Australia had disappeared. "Criminal investigators are looking into this and we are not in a position to give further details," Suriyapperuma said, adding that Sri Lanka authorities were seeking help from foreign law enforcement agencies. Sri Lanka established the PDMO earlier this year in line with an IMF-backed \$2.9 billion bailout loan from early 2023, following the island's economic meltdown. Australia's High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, Matthew Duckworth, said Canberra was aware of "irregularities" in payments owed to it. "Sri Lankan authorities are investigating the matter and are coordinating with Australian officials, who are assisting the investigation," Duckworth said on X. "Australia remains committed to supporting Sri Lanka's return to debt sustainability." The attack came as Sri Lanka's central bank and finance ministry launched an advertising blitz in local newspapers earlier this year, warning Sri Lankans not to fall prey to cyber scams.

Microsoft to invest \$18 billion in Australia's AI sector

ISLAMABAD: Microsoft has announced a major \$18 billion investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure in Australia, marking the company's largest investment in the country. The initiative was unveiled by CEO Satya Nadella during his visit to Australia alongside Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. According to the company, the project will run through 2029 and will focus on several key areas, including expanding cloud and AI computing capacity, strengthening national cybersecurity, and developing AI-related skills among the population. As part of the program, Microsoft plans to significantly scale up its Azure AI infrastructure, deploy advanced computing technologies, and expand its network of data centers across the country. The company will also cooperate with the Australian AI Safety Institute to ensure the safe and responsible deployment of AI technologies. Particular attention will be given to protecting critical infrastructure. Cooperation with government agencies will be intensified, and the Cyber Shield program will be expanded to enhance the resilience of public systems against cyber threats. Microsoft also aims to train up to three million Australians in AI skills by 2028 to help accelerate workforce adaptation to the digital economy. - APP

Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.86 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.87. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.2 and Rs 279.85, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 2.01 to close at Rs 326.36 from the previous day's close of Rs 328.37, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SB). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 1.18 and closed at Rs 376.11 compared to the previous day's Rs 377.29. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham surged by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 75.93, while the Saudi Riyal declined by 01 paisa to close at Rs 74.34. _APP

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KPRA panel reviews KP Sales Tax on Services (Refund) Rules 2026

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) held the second meeting of the Committee to Review KP Sales Tax on Services (Refund) Rules, 2026. Director Finance, Baseer Ali Rahman, chaired the meeting, attended by Advisor Tax Enforcement, Fazal Amin Shah, and other KPRA officers, including Deputy Collector, Raheel Iqbal, Deputy Director, Mian Shahzad Fazal, and Deputy Director, Saud Khan Wazir. The officers deliberated on the proposals and solutions in response to the suggestions given during the committee's first meeting. A threadbare discussion was held, with each point examined in detail to address potential weaknesses in the rules and ensure they were simple, clear and consistent with the existing KP Sales Tax on Services law. The committee members agreed on the proposed measures and decided to finalise the rules in the next meeting after incorporating the suggested amendments. _APP



ISLAMABAD: A farmer busy in threshing the wheat crop in his field in the Golra area of Federal Capital.

BD measles crisis deepens as child deaths reach 194

DHAKA: Bangladesh has recorded 194 child deaths due to measles in an outbreak that began last month, while the number of suspected child cases has exceeded 28,000, government data showed on Thursday. Between three and five children have died from the disease every day for the past week. Five children died on Wednesday, including three in the capital Dhaka, and another five on Thursday. The government said it has launched a robust nationwide vaccination program since the outbreak began on March 15, the worst in the South Asian nation for decades. "Our tar-

get is to vaccinate 18 million children," health department spokesman Zahid Raihan told AFP. "So far, we have covered a little over one-fourth of our target, and it may take another two weeks to see the impact of this vaccination program." Md Sajib and Afsin Meem lost their three-year-old son, their only child, on Tuesday, and a photograph of a relative carrying his tiny body along a road has been shared extensively on news sites. "After noticing a rash on our son's skin, we rushed him to the hospital. Five days later, we brought him back dead," Sajib told. "He

had a high fever and breathing difficulties." Measles is one of the world's most contagious diseases, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and is spread through coughs and sneezes. It can affect people of any age but is most common among children, and can cause complications that include brain swelling and severe respiratory problems. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, speaking in parliament on Wednesday, blamed the previous government of Sheikh Hasina, who was toppled in a 2024 revolution, and a subsequent caretaker administra-

tion for failing to vaccinate the population. Bangladesh has made significant advancements in vaccinations to tackle infectious diseases, but a measles drive that was due in June 2024 was delayed by the deadly uprising that toppled Hasina. "The autocratic government that we ousted, together with political parties both inside and outside parliament, did not procure vaccines," said Rahman, who took power in February. Rahman said Bangladesh was receiving assistance from the UN children's agency, but there was a shortage of testing kits. _DNA

EU okays massive loan package to help Ukraine

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Thursday approved a massive loan package to help Ukraine meet its economic and military needs for the next two years, the bloc's Cypriot presidency said, after Hungary lifted its veto. The EU also approved a new raft of sanctions against Russia over its war on Ukraine. The measures were prepared early this year and set to be announced in February to mark the fourth anniversary of the conflict, but Hungary and Slovakia opposed the move. Hungary and Slovakia have been locked in a feud with Ukraine since Russian oil deliveries to the two EU countries were halted in January after a pipeline was damaged. Ukrainian officials blamed the damage on Russian drone attacks. Ukraine desperately needs the 90-billion-euro (\$106 billion) loan package to prop up its war-ravaged economy and help keep Russian forces at bay. Hungary angered its EU partners by reneging on a December deal to provide the funds. "Today the Council approved the final element needed to allow for the disbursement of the 90-billion-euro loan for Ukraine," Cypriot Finance Minister Makis Keravnos said. "Loan disbursements will start flowing as soon as possible, providing vital support for Ukraine's most pressing budgetary needs." THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below. BRATISLAVA, Slovakia: The flow of Russian oil to Slovakia through the Druzhba pipeline that crosses Ukraine has resumed, Slovak Economy Minister Denisa Saková said Thursday, a breakthrough in an issue that has caused a major diplomatic spat in Europe. The development is expected to unblock a large financial assistance package for war-ravaged Ukraine. Populist Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico welcomed the development, calling it "good news." _APP

Pope wraps up an Africa visit with Mass in Equatorial Guinea

MALABO, Equatorial Guinea: Pope Leo XIV wrapped up his African odyssey on Thursday with a final Mass in Equatorial Guinea, bringing to an end one of the newest papal trips in the history of popes on the road, thanks to his extraordinary back-and-forth with President Donald Trump. A powerful rainstorm drenched the Malabo sports stadium and the estimated 30,000 people who gathered before dawn for Leo's farewell liturgy. But the deluge let up before Leo arrived in his covered popemobile for a romp through the deafening crowd. Leo was leaving after an 11-day, four-nation voyage that took him from Algeria in the north of Africa to Angola in the south and Cameroon in between. Over that time, Leo covered more than 17,700 kilometers (about 11,000 miles) on 18 flights, including three on Wednesday alone that saw him crisscross Equatorial Guinea from the west coast to the far east border with Gabon and back again. Leo gets wild welcome nearly everywhere he goes. Nearly everywhere Leo went, history's first U.S. pope received a raucous welcome, especially in the farther away places that had never had a pope visit. Popes have been traveling the world since Pope Paul VI made the first modern foreign visit in 1964 to Jordan and Israel. But it was St. John Paul II who revolutionized the papacy with his globetrotting papacy that took him on 104 foreign trips over a quarter century, many with the multination itinerary on which Leo's trip seemed modeled. At Leo's final Mass on Thursday, Michaela Mecha and her sister, Encarnacion, arrived at the Malabo stadium in the downpour at 4 a.m. They were dressed from head to toe in pope-themed attire, complete with yellow umbrellas decorated with Leo's face. "We feel very special and blessed that the pope has chosen our country," said Michaela, who works as a nurse and brought her two young daughters with her. "This visit is bringing young people closer to God." In his homily, Leo referred to the April 17 death of the Rev. Fr. Fortunato Nsue Esono Ayimbeng, a member of the committee that organized the trip and the vicar general of Malabo. "May full light be shed on the circumstances of his death," Leo said, in apparent reference to rumors that foul play might have been involved. A feud with Trump that lasted days Few people could have expected that Leo's trip, his first to Africa as pope, would have played out against Trump's unprecedented attacks over the Iran war. But the timing was such that Leo was already in the media crosshairs when it began, and the exchange didn't let up for days. On Day 1, Leo insisted he was just preaching the Gospel of peace and wasn't afraid of the Trump administration after Trump accused him of being soft on crime and cozy with the left. As the attacks continued and Vice President JD Vance joined the fray, telling Leo he should "be careful" when speaking about theology, Leo tried to de-escalate by blaming the media for taking his words out of context. The initiative seem to have worked, as both Leo and the Trump administration moved on and the pope could concentrate on his Africa agenda. It was focused on rallying Catholics with a message of hope while also blasting what he called the "colonization" of the continent's natural resources by foreign interests. A kaleidoscope of moments across four countries The trip had its high-emotion moments, such as when Leo broke away from a choreographed visit to a psychiatric hospital in Sampaka, Equatorial Guinea, to greet the patients, one by one, and pose for selfies. _DNA

MCE hosts moot on emerging technologies, future warfare

DNA

KARACHI: A two-day international conference on "Emerging Technologies and the Future Warfare," hosted by Maritime Centre of Excellence (MCE), culminated in Karachi. Aim of the conference was to bring together maritime experts, academia and defence industry representatives on one platform to discuss changing geostrategic trends and im-

pact of technology on modern warfare. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest. While addressing the conference, Chief Guest highlighted the importance of close collaboration between industry, end-users and academia to drive innovation, adaptability and operational relevance. He said that such collaboration would promote indigenization and self-reliance, helping build a cost-effective and globally competitive defence ecosystem

for Pakistan with export potential. He further underlined the Indian Ocean as a key region where the future of warfare is being written due to its vast contribution in global trade flow and any disruption can significantly impact global supply chains, energy prices and economies connected to it. The conference brought attention to blurring lines between civil and military uses of advanced technologies, creating both opportunities and challenges for Pakistan's defence ecosystem. It

also emphasized on how rapid technological innovation is transforming warfare by redefining operational concepts, force structures and their outcomes. The event was attended by senior military leadership, policymakers, diplomats, academia, industry experts and students from various universities. It concluded with a reaffirmation of the need for sustained intellectual synergy to navigate technology-driven transformations to harness future trends in warfare.



Iran war pushing more than 30m back into poverty

BANGKOK: More than 30 million people will be pushed back into poverty by the impacts of the Iran war including disruptions to fuel and fertilizer supplies just as farmers are planting crops, UN development chief Alexander De Croo said on Thursday. Fertilizer shortages – worsened by the blocking of cargo vessels through the Strait of Hormuz – have already lowered agricultural productivity, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) told Reuters. That would likely hit crop yields later this year, the former Rwandan prime minister added. "Food insecurity will be at its peak level in a few months – and there is not much that you can do about it," he said, also listing other fallout of the crisis including energy shortages and falling remittances. "Even if the war would stop tomorrow, those effects, you already have them, and they will be pushing back more than 30 million people into poverty," he said. Much of the world's fertilizer is produced in the Middle East, and one-third of global supplies passes through the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran and the United States are jostling for control. _APP

Rwanda offers vast investment opportunities in textiles, agri

FAISALABAD : Rwanda's High Commissioner Hareimana Fatou has urged the business community to capitalise on vast investment opportunities in Rwanda particularly in textiles and agriculture to expand production and enhance bilateral trade. Addressing a special session at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), she highlighted Rwanda as one of the safest countries in Africa and an emerging gateway for exports to the broader African market and beyond. She encouraged Pakistani entrepreneurs especially from Faisalabad to establish manufacturing units in Rwanda, citing the city's renowned expertise in the textile sector. She said that Rwanda offers significant potential in food processing and the wood industry, along with attractive incentives and facilitation from its government for foreign investors. She described Rwanda as one of the world's greenest cities with minimal pollution, making it an ideal destination for sustainable industrial growth. She also stressed the importance of value addition and logistics, noting that Pakistan could exploit its capabilities in these sectors to strengthen trade ties. She assured that the Rwandan government would extend full support and incentives to Pakistani investors in addition to encouraging Business-to-Business (B2B) engagements to initiate joint ventures. _APP

British diplomat assures traders of multi-pronged support

HYDERABAD: The Senior Economic Advisor of British High Commission Islamabad, Louie Dane, on Thursday said the United Kingdom is supporting Pakistan's economic growth and success by extending cooperation in various sectors. Addressing traders and industrialists at Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI) here, the diplomat assured that his two day visit to the city is also under the same initiative. He satated that he aimed to get direct feedback from the local business community to determine which sectors required further investment, training, technology and policy support. The Pakistan-UK Trade Dialogue was established last year with the objective to reduce barriers to trade and encourage bilateral business opportunities, he added. _APP

Briefs

Nuclear energy is having a global revival 40 years after Chernobyl

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The 1986 Chernobyl disaster fueled global fears about nuclear power and slowed its development in Europe and elsewhere. Four decades later, however, there's a revival around the world, a trend that has been given a big boost by war in the Middle East. Over 400 nuclear reactors are operational in 31 countries, while about 70 more are under construction. Nuclear power accounts for producing about 10 percent of the world's electricity, equivalent to about a quarter of all sources of low-carbon power. Nuclear reactors have seen steady improvements, adding more safety features and making them cheaper to build and operate. While Chernobyl and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan diminished the appetite for such power sources, it was clear years ago that there probably would be a revival, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency. With the war in the Middle East, "I am 100 percent sure nuclear is coming back," he added. "It's seen as a secure electricity generation system, and we will see that the comeback of nuclear will be very strong, both in (the) Americas, in Europe and in Asia," Birol told The Associated Press.

Iran hangs another man

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran hanged a man on Thursday after he was convicted of membership in a banned opposition group and alleged collaboration with Israel, the judiciary said. "Sultan-Ali Shirzadi-Fakhr was hanged early this morning for membership in the terrorist group" of the People's Mujahedin Organisation (MEK) and "collaboration with the Israeli regime's spy service," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. He was also convicted of a capital offence that in Persian means waging war against God, accused of taking part in operations hostile to the Islamic Republic, Mizan said. It was not clear when he was arrested. Mizan said he had lived in Spain for a period, but it was not clear whether he held another passport. The execution is the latest in recent weeks during the war with Israel and the United States, in which authorities have carried out multiple executions of people linked to pre-war protests or affiliated with the MEK. On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump said Iran had halted alleged plans to execute eight women arrested over pre-war anti-government protests after he urged Tehran to release them. Iran's judiciary dismissed the claim as "false news" and said the women were never at risk of execution.

UN mediation only viable path to end Libyan gridlock: Pakistan

About Libya's economic track, Ambassador Asim Ahmad commended the Libyan leadership for reaching a milestone agreement on a unified spending framework, which he hoped would contribute to long-term economic stability

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has underscored that a Libyan-led-and-owned process supported by UN mediation remains the only viable path to lasting peace and stability in that troubled country. "We support the efforts of United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), including the structured dialogue and the two-step approach, to bridge differences and advance the political process" towards reconciliation, Ambassador Asim Ifkhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, said during a UN Security Council briefing on the peace-keeping mission. Since the 2011 uprising that ended Muammar Gadhafi's rule, efforts to establish unified governance in Libya have been hindered by institutional frag-

mentation and rival authorities. While the 2020 ceasefire reduced large-scale fighting, political divisions persist. Mediation through the UNSMIL continues to pursue a constitutional basis and electoral framework under the Political Road Map. At the outset of his remarks, the Pakistani envoy said, "Libya is a brotherly country, and we remain steadfast in our support for its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and national unity." Discussing Libya's security track, he encouraged continued UNSMIL-supported engagement



from all stakeholders to ensure full implementation of agreed security arrangements, and advance the security sector reform. About Libya's economic track, Ambassador Asim Ahmad commended the Libyan leadership for reaching a milestone agreement on a unified spending framework, which he hoped would contribute to long-term economic stability.

Most speaker in the 15-member Council agreed on the steps towards Libya's peace and stability — including elections, institutional reunification, security sector reform and economic

transparency — but emphasized that the real test will be effective implementation, sustained political will and a decisive break from the status quo.

"We are not where we would like to be in terms of progress on the road map," said Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of UNSMIL, noting that some Libyan actors continue to sidestep public expectations for democratic participation, while parallel structures outside existing agreements undermine institutional reunification. "Conducting business as usual under the current circumstances inadvertently legitimizes the status quo rather than incentivizing serious negotiations and encouraging the necessary compromises to reunify the country," she said, warning against the national and regional risks of continued inaction.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets Pakistani Astronauts in Islamabad. — DNA

Oil surges past 4% as Iran keeps Hormuz locked

Wall Street rises after ceasefire extension, with major indexes advancing, S&P 500, Nasdaq hit record highs

DNA

TEHRAN: Oil prices jumped 4% Thursday after Iran vowed not to reopen the Strait of Hormuz so long as a US naval blockade remained in place despite a ceasefire extension. At around 8.25 am, the benchmark US oil contract, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) climbed 4.06% to US\$96.73 per barrel. International oil benchmark Brent North Sea crude rose 3.62% to US\$105.63. Both eased back in the following minutes. Oil prices have soared since Israel and the US attacked Iran on Feb 28, and they have kept inching up due to the uncertainty over whether war will resume. As the clock ticked for a return to the war that has engulfed the region, US President Donald Trump had said Tuesday he would maintain the truce to allow more time for Pakistani-brokered peace talks. Iran said it welcomed the efforts by Pakistan but made no other comment on Trump's announcement. Wall Street stocks gained ground following President Trump's unilateral ceasefire extension in the Iran war. All three major US stock indexes advanced, with tech shares helping to put the Nasdaq out front, while gold advanced and the dollar edged higher. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq reached record closing highs.

"Despite the energy shock and headlines that have inundated investors, the macroeconomy, corporate fundamentals, and consumer spending remain strong," said Bill Merz, head of capital markets research at US Bank Wealth Management in Minneapolis. "Investors are taking the stance that the Strait of Hormuz will open before too much damage is inflicted on the global economy." Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized two vessels for maritime violations just hours after Trump agreed to extend the ceasefire until negotiations are concluded. About a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies normally pass through the strait. US stocks, initially battered by the war, have since made a full recovery, with the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq having reached all-time closing highs in recent sessions. But geopolitical uncertainty lingers, and a prolonged period of elevated oil prices remains a threat. About two-thirds of the S&P 500 companies that have reported quarterly earnings since the beginning of April have voiced concerns about energy prices in their analyst conference calls, according to a Reuters review of transcripts. "Anytime there's a global event like the conflict in the Middle East, and it grabs so many headlines and captures attention, it will crop up in earnings commentary," Merz added. "But we're not seeing it significantly impact behaviour yet."

Hydel generation below capacity amid low water demand

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division on Thursday said that electricity generation from hydel sources remained significantly below capacity due to low water demand from provinces, resulting in continued load management during peak hours. According to a spokesperson, around 4,950 megawatts of electricity was generated from dams during last night's peak hours following water releases in line with provincial demand. He said the total hydel generation capacity stood at about 11,500 megawatts, but current production remained nearly 6,000 megawatts below its poten-

tial, primarily due to reduced water demand. The spokesperson added that around 400 megawatts of electricity from the southern region was successfully transmitted to the central grid, contributing to system stability. Despite increased demand, power distribution companies carried out load management ranging from two to two-and-a-half hours during peak hours last night. He clarified the economic load management on high-loss feeders would continue as per policy and had no connection with peak-time load management. The spokesperson further said that power plants with a cumulative capacity of 5,500 megawatts operating on liquefied natural gas (LNG) were currently not generating electricity due to fuel shortages. He added that availability of LNG would help eliminate peak-time load management. The spokesperson urged consumers to adopt energy conservation practices, particularly during night hours, to better manage rising demand. — APP

ADB deepens Pakistan engagement

NEWS DESK

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) made fresh commitments worth \$3.672bn to Pakistan in 2025, up 22pc from \$2.995bn the previous year, as it ventured into new areas such as the mineral sector. In its Annual Report 2025, released on Thursday, the Manila-based lending agency also reported new financial support commitments of \$1.485bn to the public sector for the year, a one-third increase from \$1.113bn in 2024. Most of these loan commitments were made on ordinary commercial terms. "In Pakistan, a policy-based guarantee is helping to mitigate credit risk for commercial bank lending to smaller enterprises and to mobilise commercial financing of \$1bn," the bank said, adding that under ADB's approach to supporting critical minerals-to-manufacturing value chains, it approved an innovative financing package for a copper-gold mine in Pakistan to strengthen the global copper supply chain. The bank will also provide advisory support to Pakistan to prepare road maps for digital skills development, in addition to investing in girls' education and participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Iran accuses US, Israel of 'scaring' world

DNA

TEHRAN: Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, has accused Israel and the United States of spending more than 20 years "scaring" the world with claims about Iran's nuclear programme, Al Jazeera reports. In comments carried by the IRNA news agency, Baghaei says while Tehran is preparing "for negotiations, the country must be fully prepared for any scenario". He rejects concerns about Iran's nuclear activities, saying they lack a real basis. Despite the 12-day war in June last year, the "decision was made to enter into the negotiation process, and in the last round, an agreement was reached on some main parameters for an initial understanding, from their perspective to address concerns and from our perspective to guarantee Iran's nuclear rights", Baghaei says.

Pakistan seeks three spot LNG cargoes in first tender

Minister says LNG tender aimed at meeting rising power demand and to cut reliance on costlier diesel and furnace oil

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan LNG Limited has issued its first spot tender for liquefied natural gas (LNG) since December 2023 amid supply shortfalls triggered by the US-Israeli war on Iran. The company is seeking bids from international suppliers for three LNG cargoes of around 140,000 cubic metres each for delivery on April 27-30, and on May 1-7 and 8-14 at Port Qasim in Karachi, according to an advertisement on Thursday for the tender that closes on April 24. Federal Minister of Energy Awaiz Leghari told Reuters the LNG tender was aimed at meeting rising power demand and to cut reliance on costlier diesel and furnace oil. Government is not sure when it will get more cargoes from Qatar, Leghari said. The tender also follows power shortages that triggered widespread outages last week, as a drop in hydropower and disruptions to LNG supplies exposed gaps in fuel availability amid rising demand. Pakistan has not received any LNG cargoes loaded after the Middle East war began on February 28 and Iran shut off almost all shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Gulf to the Indian Ocean. Qatar depends on access through the strait to move its energy output. It supplied the bulk of the 6.64 million metric tons of LNG Pakistan imported last year, according to Kpler data. Azerbaijan's state energy company SOCAR said on Tuesday it is ready to supply LNG to Pakistan as soon as it receives a request from Islamabad. A framework agreement signed in 2025 between SOCAR Trading and Pakistan LNG allows the South Asian buyer to buy cargoes under an accelerated procedure. Islamabad cancelled 21 LNG cargoes for 2026-27 under a long-term deal with Eni, expecting slower demand growth and increased power supply from solar energy.

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The Pakistan Initiative

AI startup Cursor for \$60bn deal with SpaceX

DUBAI: Cursor, an AI code-generation startup co-founded by Pakistani-born Sualeh Asif, has secured a \$60 billion acquisition deal with Elon Musk's SpaceX, according to multiple reports on Thursday. Along with OpenAI and Anthropic, Cursor is one of several Silicon Valley startups that have drawn waves of developers by using artificial intelligence to automate coding, a business where AI companies have found early commercial traction, according to Reuters. SpaceX announced in a post on X that Cursor gave SpaceX the right to acquire the company later this year for \$60 billion. — APP