



Islamabad POST

Saturday, April 25, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

French President Calls for durable Peace in the ME

Detailed News On Page-08

Afridi for action against illegal constructions

Detailed News On Page-02



Pakistan urges UN to take note of IWT breach

Detailed News On Page-08



Iranian FM in Pakistan

US, Iran return to negotiating table at last

US Delegation Including Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff to Arrive in Islamabad today ; Araghchi's trip is part of Iran's broader outreach to friendly states for consultations on the evolving situation. Pakistani officials have indicated a "high likelihood of a breakthrough" as efforts intensify to resume structured negotiations

DNA

TEHRAN/ISLAMABAD: A high-level US delegation featuring senior adviser Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff is expected to arrive in Pakistan today for the second round of direct negotiations with Iran, amid ongoing Pakistani mediation efforts to stabilize the region following recent conflict. The talks, facilitated by Pakistan, come as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi begins a regional diplomatic tour on Friday, with his first stop in Islamabad. Iranian state media (IRNA) reported that Araghchi will hold bilateral consultations in Islamabad, followed by visits to Muscat and Moscow. The focus includes current regional developments and the situation stemming from the US-Israeli military actions against Iran.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, recently received a phone call from Araghchi. Both sides discussed regional developments, the ceasefire, and Pakistan's role in facilitating US-Iran engagement. Dar emphasized the need for sustained dialogue to resolve issues and promote peace, while Araghchi appreciated Pakistan's constructive efforts. The two agreed to stay in close contact. This follows an earlier round of intense but inconclusive talks in Islamabad earlier this month, which involved high-level figures on both sides and prompted temporary security measures and

Continued on Page 06

Lebanon-Israel ceasefire extended by 3 weeks

DNA

WASHINGTON/BEIRUT/JERUSALEM: Lebanon and Israel extended their ceasefire for three weeks after a high-level meeting at the White House, US President Donald Trump said on Thursday. Trump hosted Israel's ambassador to Washington Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese ambassador to the US Nada Moawad in the Oval Office for a second round of US-facilitated talks, a day after Israeli strikes killed at least five people including a journalist. "The Meeting went very well! The United States is going to work with Lebanon in order to help it protect itself from Hezbollah," Trump wrote on Truth Social. Hezbollah, the Iran-aligned armed group that is fighting Israel, was not present at the talks. It says it has "the right to resist" occupying forces.

Continued on Page 06

Govt hikes petrol, diesel prices

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The federal government announced a Rs26.77 per litre hike in the price of petrol and high-speed diesel each on Friday, according to a notification issued by the Petroleum Division. The new prices will be effective from April 25, 2026 for a week, the notification stated.

Following the increase, the price of HSD has jumped from Rs353.42 to Rs380.19, while the petrol price now stands at Rs393.35. The government has been reviewing petroleum prices every Friday night following the now-paused US-Israel war on Iran, which began on February 28. In the previous weekly review, the prime minister announced a reduction of Rs32.12 per litre in the price of high-speed diesel, while the petrol price remained unchanged. The government jacked up petrol and diesel prices despite oil prices falling globally on Friday after it appeared a second round of Middle East talks was back on, bolstering prospects for an end to a war that has crippled energy shipments from the Gulf. Oil prices had been climbing earlier as investors worried about a lack of

Continued on Page 06

Citizen arrested for mocking railway crossing

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Police have arrested a citizen for allegedly mocking and likening the Tarnol Railway crossing to the Strait of Hormuz, according to a first information report (FIR). The Strait of Hormuz, a crucial shipping route, has been virtually paralysed by the Middle East war. The FIR has been registered on the complaint of Sub-inspector Shahid Asghar on the state's behalf.

The FIR was registered under Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant), Section 341 (punishment for wrongful restraints) and Section 511 (punishment for attempting to commit offenses punishable with imprisonment for life or for a shorter term) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). According to the complaint, a man named identified as Khurram was accused of sharing a post on social media, saying,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and others received the Iranian foreign minister. - DNA

Operation clean-up

22 India-backed terrorists killed in KP, says ISPR

A 10-year-old child also martyred after Fitna al-Khawarij resorted to indiscriminate firing, says military's media wing

BUREAU REPORT /DNA

PESHAWAR: Security forces and law enforcement agencies neutralised at least 22 India-sponsored terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Khyber district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on April 21, a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Friday. According to the military's media wing, the joint operation was conducted in response to the reported presence of India-backed militants, also known as Fitna al-Khawarij. It added that during the operation, the terrorists resorted to indiscriminate firing out of panic and in an attempt to avoid capture. As a result, a 10-year-old innocent child was martyred. The ISPR added that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed India-sponsored terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist

Continued on Page 06

President, PM pay tribute to security forces

APP

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid tribute to the security forces for killing 22 terrorists of Fitna Al-Khawarij during a joint intelligence-based operation in Khyber district. In separate statements, both leaders reaffirmed their resolve to continue the fight against terrorism until its complete elimination from the country. President Zardari stated that terrorists were attempting to undermine Pakistan's leadership efforts to ensure lasting peace in the region.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Minister seeks report of ship hijacking

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Maritime Affairs Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry sought on Friday a detailed report on the purported hijacking of an oil tanker by pirates near Somalia, with Pakistanis said to be among the hostages. A statement issued by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs referred to the reported incident, mentioning that the crew of the hijacked vessel was said to comprise 11 Pakistanis. It added that the ministry was monitoring the situation and was in contact with relevant departments, including the Foreign Office. The statement said efforts were also being made to contact the Somali authorities regarding the matter.

WWF concerned at degradation of foothills of the Capital

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWFP) on Friday highlighted "potentially irreversible risks" and "ecological degradation" from development work at the foothills of Islamabad's Margalla Hills, calling for the suspension of all such proposed and ongoing activities pending a "transparent environmental review". The conservation organisation's call came three days after the Ministry of Interior announced that a new park, spanning 1,000 kanals, would be developed at the foothills of the Margalla Hills. "WWF-Pakistan expresses its serious and escalating concern regarding ongoing and proposed development activities in areas adjoining the Margalla Hills National Park.

Pak clears \$3.45bn UAE deposits with final \$1bn repayment

Central bank confirms April 23 payment after \$2.45 billion settled last week

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said on Friday it had repaid \$1 billion to the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), completing the return of \$3.45 billion in UAE deposits after settling \$2.45 billion last week. In a post on X, the central bank said the latest payment was made on April 23, marking the full repayment of deposits placed by the UAE.

"This completes the repayment of total deposits of \$3.45 billion to UAE," the SBP said. Earlier, on April 18, the central bank had confirmed that the government had returned \$2 billion in debt to the UAE. An SBP spokesperson had said the amount was kept with the central bank as a safe deposit. The repayments come as Pakistan manages pressure on its external financing position, with the financing gap likely to expand af-

ter the return of UAE deposits, along with a 6% interest payment. Pakistan has also recently repaid \$1.43 billion in external debt, including a \$1.3 billion Eurobond.

The development follows an agreement with Saudi Arabia to extend the maturity of a \$3 billion deposit placed with the SBP. The central bank had also said earlier this month that it received \$2 billion from the kingdom with a value date of April 15, 2026. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had said earlier that Pakistan was considering Eurobonds, loans from other countries and commercial debt to replace the UAE loan facility and manage foreign reserves. "All options are on the table," Aurangzeb said when asked whether the government was in talks with Saudi Arabia for a loan that could replace the UAE facility. Speaking on the sidelines of the IMF and World Bank

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan secures 3 bids for spot LNG cargoes

All three cargoes will carry 140,000 cubic meters of LNG delivered ex-ship (DES). Each cargo to Pakistan of this size typically means around 100 million cubic feet per day

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: After a gap of 28 months, state-run Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) on Friday secured three bids at \$17.997 to \$18.88 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) for delivery between April 27 and May 8. A total of four bids were received and three were declared the lowest. For the first delivery window of April 27-30, TotalEnergies submitted the lowest bid of \$18.88 per mmBtu. Vitol Bahrain's bid of \$18.54 was declared the lowest for the May 1-7 window, while OQ Trading was declared the lowest bidder at \$17.997 per mmBtu for delivery between May 8 and 14. A day earlier, PLL had floated urgent tenders for the import of three LNG cargoes for delivery between April 27 and May 8 amid rising temperatures and power shortfall. The PLL had set April 24 (Friday) as the deadline for bids to be opened the same day, given the emergent needs to meet power demand, which was short of supply by more than 4,500MW in peak, resulting in six to seven hours of loadshedding. The tender came following Qatar's reluctance to send LNG-loaded cargoes stranded in the Gulf due to

Continued on Page 06

APRIL 2026

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Every child's school enrollment govt's priority

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohab Ali Shah, said on Friday that providing every child in the province with access to school enrollment and the completion of basic education was a top priority of the government. The Chief Secretary was chairing a meeting, which was attended by officials from the Education Department on Friday. He stated that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to launch a comprehensive province-wide campaign to ensure access to schools for out-of-school children. Under this initiative, multiple departments will work jointly on planning, gathering accurate data, and supporting deserving families to facilitate children's enrollment. The initiative has been developed under the provincial government's Good Governance Roadmap. A province-wide survey will be conducted to collect precise data at the village council level on children who are not attending school, he said and added that the survey would identify out-of-school children aged 5 to 16, while also assessing the future educational needs of children up to the age of 5. The Chief Secretary said data on enrolled children will be compiled from public, private, and federal educational institutions, as well as madrassas, non-formal education centers, and special education programs. Based on this comprehensive dataset, planning, budgeting, and resource allocation will be aligned more effectively with the specific needs of each area, he added.—APP

GIMS launches Rapid Response Emergency Center

SUKKUR: The Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) has launched a state-of-the-art Rapid Response Emergency Center (RRC) to strengthen critical care services in Sindh, officials said on Friday. The Center, established under the supervision of GIMS Director Dr Raheem Bux Bhatti, includes a 12-bed fully equipped Intensive Care Unit (ICU) with advanced ventilators to manage trauma, surgical and medical emergencies round the clock. According to GIMS Director, the RRC will provide multiple facilities under one roof, including 24-hour emergency and surgical services, ambulance service, CT scan, X-ray, ECG, FAST ultrasound, fully equipped operating rooms, a resuscitation room with crash trolleys, and a dedicated surgical short-stay ward.—APP

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Naem Shahbaz Senior Civil Judge (Family Division) Jhelum suit for dissolution of marriage etc
Case title: Saba Riaz vs Muhammad Qasim, son of Ghulam Haider, resident of Mohalla Alang Rohas, Tehsil Dina District Jhelum (currently residing in Cyprus). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 04.05.2026 at 08:00 AM. otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.



ISLAMABAD: Motorcyclists riding past the closed Faisal Avenue, closed for traffic due to possible second phase of peace talks between Iran and US in the Federal Capital.

Minister stresses public coop in anti-littering drive

LAHORE: Punjab Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafique on Friday directed to take steps for getting cooperation of citizen to achieve cleanliness targets. During a meeting chaired by Punjab Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafique at the Town Hall, it was decided to take feedback from citizens while discussing the awareness campaign for anti-littering in Lahore. Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Shoab Mirza, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lahore Captain R. Ali Ijaz, DG Suthra Punjab Authority Babar Sahib Din and Chief Minister's Focal Person for Suthra Punjab Asim Mehmood also attended the meeting. Assistant Commissioners of Lahore gave a briefing on cleanliness operations in their tehsils. Provincial Minister Zeeshan Rafique directed steps to bring gated communities of Lahore under the purview of Suthra Punjab saying that cleanliness targets can be achieved only with the cooperation of citizens. He stressed that the practice of throwing garbage unnecessarily on vacant plots must be discouraged.—APP

KP CM orders crackdown on illegal constructions

The CM directed that a mandatory 20-foot distance be maintained for buildings along Nasir Bagh Road and stressed that anti-encroachment operations should be carried out without causing unnecessary hardship to the public

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Friday chaired the 14th meeting of the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), where key decisions were taken regarding the 2025-26 budget, urban development, land management, and strict action against illegal constructions across the provincial capital. According to a spokesperson for the C. House, the meeting approved the PDA budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 along with several major development and administrative proposals aimed at improving urban discipline and public convenience. The meeting decided to intensify action against illegal constructions and unauthorized commercial

activities to ensure better civic management in Peshawar. A proposal to bring Nasir Bagh Road under the jurisdiction of PDA was agreed upon and directed to be presented before the cabinet for final approval. The CM directed that a mandatory 20-foot distance be maintained for buildings along Nasir Bagh Road and stressed that anti-encroachment operations should be carried out without causing unnecessary hardship to the public. It was also decided to implement a building control and regulatory system on the road. The meeting approved additional land allocation and re-planning for the Institute of Management Sciences, while recreational commercial projects in Bagh Naran and Shalman

Park were cancelled with approval for refund of security deposits. The CM said public concerns and court directives required parks to be protected from commercial use. Special access road construction from Hayatabad for FC Teaching Hospital was also approved, along with land allocation for the CTD Regional Headquarters in Hayatabad. The PDA meeting further approved a six-year lease extension for 16 BTS towers of a private mobile network and granted a one-time relief for restoration of 171 cancelled plots affected by illegal commercial activities. The restoration will be conditional upon payment of outstanding dues and removal of violations. Applicants seeking restoration of plots have been

directed to submit dues, restoration requests, and applicable charges by June 30. The meeting also gave principle approval to committee recommendations for PDA employees' promotions and ordered the formation of a complaints redressal committee. — APP

Musadik calls for evidence-based reforms in civil service

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik on Friday urged civil servants to adopt evidence-based decision-making and focus on people-centric outcomes, stating that their role will be crucial in shaping Pakistan's future. He expressed these views while addressing the graduation ceremony of the 124th National Management Course at the Pakistan Administrative Staff College, part of the National School of Public Policy as the chief guest. Dr. Malik described the civil service as one of the most competitive and elite institutions in the country, highlighting the diversity, experience, and talent within its ranks. He said that the graduating

officers now have the opportunity to make impactful decisions that can significantly improve governance and public welfare. He praised Pakistan's resilience, particularly during natural disasters, and acknowledged the vital role played by civil servants in relief and rescue operations. He also appreciated the country's achievements in advanced technologies despite limited resources. However, the minister expressed concern over gaps in human development, including low education levels, lack of access to clean drinking water, and weak health indicators. He termed these challenges unacceptable and stressed the need for urgent action. Highlighting

issues within the administrative system, Dr. Malik pointed out inefficiencies caused by excessive focus on procedures, which often delay important projects. He urged officers to prioritize outcomes over processes and to rely on evidence rather than opinion in decision-making. He also emphasized the importance of emerging technologies, encouraging officers to equip themselves with modern tools such as artificial intelligence to improve governance and policy implementation. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Malik advised the officers to act with courage, integrity, and a strong sense of responsibility, adding that meaningful reforms and better service delivery depend on their leadership and commitment. — APP

COMSTECH, Green Academy sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: The OIC-COMSTECH and Scientific Research and Education Center Green Academy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Friday during the Regional Ecological Summit 2026, marking a meaningful step towards strengthening environmental cooperation across OIC member states. The agreement was formalized in Astana on April 24 by Coordinator General OIC COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Prof. Dr. Yesssekina Bakhyt Kamalbekovna, Director of Scientific Research and Education Center "Green Academy". The partnership establishes a collaborative framework aimed at accelerating the transition towards a green economy in OIC countries. Under the agreement, both institutions will work jointly to promote capacity-building initiatives in key areas including climate change, environmental protection, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy. The collaboration will feature specialised training programmes, workshops, policy dialogues, and the development of scientific reports. The officials noted that the initiative is designed to bridge the gap between scientific research and environmental policymaking, ensuring sustainable development across the region. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Choudhary termed the agreement a timely and strategic opportunity to enhance scientific cooperation among OIC member states. He emphasised that strengthening human capital and fostering innovation-driven solutions would play a crucial role in addressing pressing environmental challenges. While Yesssekina Bakhyt Kamalbekovna also underscored the importance of international collaboration in tackling ecological issues and expressed optimism that the partnership would contribute to long-term sustainability and knowledge exchange within the OIC region.


Chitral witnesses 15% increase in foreign tourist

ISLAMABAD: Chitral Valley attracted over 2,700 foreign tourists in 2025, marking a 15 percent increase from 2024. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the number of international visitors reached 2,728 in 2025, a 15 percent increase over 2024, when 2,373 foreign tourists


visited the valley. The steady growth highlights Chitral's rising appeal as an emerging destination for global travelers seeking nature, culture, and adventure tourism. The document indicates that foreign tourist inflows have gradually increased over the years, from 1,581 in 2022 to 1,632

in 2023, before a sharp 45 percent jump in 2024. Meanwhile, domestic tourism has recorded significant fluctuations but an overall strong surge. In 2025, the number of local tourists soared to 923,894, a massive 151 percent increase over 367,409 in 2024. In 2023, domestic arrivals totalled 586,159, underscoring that domestic tourism remains a major driver of the region's travel industry. The growth in tourist numbers is attributed to improved connectivity, better infrastructure, and increased promotion of northern areas as key travel destinations. The government is working on developing Madaklasht as a dedicated centre for eco-sports, adventure, and nature tourism under a comprehensive master plan. The initiative aims to attract both domestic and foreign tourists while preserving the natural environment. With proper infrastructure, environmental safeguards.—DNA





MILITARY LANDS & CANTONMENTS DEPT
RAWALPINDI CANTONMENT BOARD
The Mall, Rawalpindi Cantt
Tel: 051-9274420 Fax No.: 051-9274407



NOTICE INVITING E-BIDS SINGLE STAGE ONE ENVELOPE THROUGH E-PADS V2.0

Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB), being the Procuring Agency, invites electronic bids from reputed, registered contractors/firms/companies, who are on the Active Taxpayers List (ATL) of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), for procurement of Miscellaneous Items (goods) in accordance with Rule 36(a) of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 (as amended) under the Single Stage - One Envelope Procedure:

Sr#	Detail of Vehicles	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Million)	Earnest Money (2%)	EPADS v2.0
01	Procurement of Miscellaneous Items for RCB Office (Goods) (detail mentioned in bidding documents)	Rs.4.00 M	Rs.80000/-	P25175

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Availability of Documents:**
Bidding documents shall be available **only** on PPRA and EPADS V2.0 portals. No hard copies shall be issued. Only firms registered on EPADS as vendors shall be eligible to participate.
- Submission & Opening of Bids:**
E-bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in the bidding documents, must be submitted **electronically through EPADS V2.0** on or before:
Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 1:00 PM
The bids will be opened on the same day at:
Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 1:30 PM
- Manual submission of bids shall not be entertained. Vendors not registered on EPADS V2.0 may register at: <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/>**
Tutorial link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNW6T38v7tc>
- Grievance Redressal:**
In accordance with Rule 48 of PPRA Rules, 2004, a Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) has been constituted. The notification is available on the procuring agency's website and EPADS portal.
- Procurement Method:**
Procurement shall be carried out through **Open Competitive Bidding** under Single Stage - One Envelope Procedure, adopting the **Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS)** technique in line with PPRA Rules, 2004.
- Earnest Money:**
Bidders shall submit 2% of the estimated cost in the shape of **Call Deposit Receipt (CDR)** issued by any scheduled bank in favour of the **Cantonment Executive Officer, Rawalpindi Cantonment Board.**
 - A scanned copy shall be uploaded with the e-bid.
 - The original CDR must be submitted **at least three (03) days** prior to opening of bids.
- Award of Contract:**
Issuance of work order shall be subject to the approval of the **Competent Authority.**
- Eligibility:**
Firms/contractors **blacklisted by any Government/Semi-Government organization** shall not be eligible to participate.
- Additional Terms:**
Detailed terms and conditions may be seen in the office of the **Rawalpindi Cantonment Board** during working hours on any working day.
- Right of Rejection:**
The Procuring Agency reserves the right to **accept or reject any or all bids** prior to acceptance in accordance with Rule 33(1) of PPRA Rules, 2004, without assigning any reason.

PID(I)8649/25 Cantonment Executive Officer,
Rawalpindi Cantt

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.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQT.....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

Transport shutdown denies benefit of free ride facility

Transport closure has also forced many to rely on expensive private options, further burdening already strained household budgets. In several areas, people have been seen walking long distances due to the lack of affordable alternatives

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Citizens are facing severe hardship as the continued closure of public transport has effectively deprived them of the government's free travel facility introduced in response to the ongoing energy crisis. The authorities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi had announced free public transport services to provide relief to the masses struggling with rising fuel and electricity costs. However,

the initiative has largely failed to deliver its intended benefits, as most public transport has remained off the roads for a significant part of the past month. The suspension of transport services was initially linked to security arrangements during the recent diplomatic engagements related to US-Iran talks. Despite the conclusion—or at least the pause—of these talks, public transport services have yet to resume, leaving commuters stranded. Daily wage earners, students, and low-income workers

have been the worst affected. Many have reported difficulties in reaching workplaces, hospitals, and educational institutions. "The government announced free rides, but what is the use when there are no buses available?" said a frustrated commuter. Transport closure has also forced many to rely on expensive private options, further burdening already strained household budgets. In several areas, people have been seen walking long distances due to the lack of affordable alternatives.

Public frustration is mounting, with citizens calling on the authorities to immediately restore transport services. Many have also demanded that the free transport facility be extended for at least another month to compensate for the period during which services remained unavailable. Residents argue that the relief measure can only be meaningful if transport remains operational. They have urged the government to ensure continuity of services so that the intended benefits reach the common man.

KS Relief distributes food packages to 8,500 families



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully completed the distribution of food packages to 8,500 families in Punjab under the final phase of the Food Security Support Project in Pakistan. The initiative was aimed at ensuring the provision of essential food supplies to food-insecure and deserving populations. Under this intervention, food packages weighing 97 kilograms each were distributed among the vulnerable communities in Punjab,

most of whom were affected by recent floods. A total of 8,500 food packages were distributed across 10 districts, including Multan (Jalalpur Pirwala) 1,000, Bahawalpur 1,000, Muzaffargarh (Alipur) 900, Bahawalnagar 1,600, Rajanpur 500, Nankana Sahib 500, Khanewal (Kabirwala) 700, Rahim Yar Khan 700, Chinioi 800, and Toba Tek Singh 800. Each package included 80 kilograms of flour, 5 liters of cooking oil, 5 kilograms of sugar, 5 kilograms of Daal chana, and 2 kilograms of dates, ensuring essential nutritional support for beneficiary families. The distribution process was carried out

in a transparent and well-coordinated manner with the support of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), district administrations, and KSrelief's implementing partners, Hayat Foundation and the Peace and Development Organization. This initiative reflects KSrelief's continued commitment to strengthening food security across Pakistan by providing timely assistance to vulnerable communities. It further underscores KSrelief's broader humanitarian mission to alleviate suffering and promote sustainable development worldwide.

Commissioner orders faster clearing of pending cases

The meeting was attended by Additional Commissioner (Coordination) Zenia Humayun, Additional Commissioner (Revenue), the Chief Officer MCR, Chief Executive Officer RWMC, Director Health and other departmental heads. Deputy commissioners of Jhelum, Murree, Attock and Chakwal also participated

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak has directed departments to expedite service delivery, clear pending cases and strengthen coordination to improve public welfare. Chairing a meeting of the Divisional Coordination Committee at the Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR) on Friday, Khattak instructed all departments to clear pending cases on the E-Biz Portal within three days, adding that any delays must be supported by written explanations. He also called for the timely release of dues and funds

to the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) to avoid disruption to sanitation services. He asked deputy commissioners to identify development schemes in their respective districts that deliver maximum benefit to the public. Referring to the Punjab government's farmers' initiative, he directed them to promptly identify suitable state land to facilitate implementation. The commissioner further instructed the Health Department to upgrade facilities in public hospitals, ensure quality healthcare services, and strictly moni-

tor staff attendance. Taking notice of sewerage issues in the basement of the old building at Benazir Bhutto Hospital, he ordered immediate repairs to prevent structural damage and safeguard patient care. Khattak emphasised the need for stronger inter-departmental coordination, improved field monitoring and prompt redressal of public complaints. He warned that negligence in implementing government policies would not be tolerated and directed officials to improve performance.—APP

'Home-Based Sampling' solutions

Some citizens also admired the initiative, noting that it is not just limited to one provider, as many health platforms and diagnostic services are now offering home testing options, reflecting a broader shift in the industry toward more accessible and patient-friendly healthcare solutions

ISLAMABAD: As modern life becomes busier, the demand for smarter healthcare solutions continues to grow and 'Home sampling' reflects this shift by offering a convenient and reliable way to get tested without leaving home, making it a trend more people are choosing every day. Home sampling is leading this transformation as doorstep testing becomes increasingly popular, allowing individuals to avoid crowded spaces and manage their health with greater ease, comfort and flexibility. Country Head Operations at Chughtai Labs, Ambar Fida, while speaking to a media outlet, highlighted how this trend is rapidly gaining acceptance among people who value both time and convenience in their healthcare choices. She ex-

plained that home sampling not only reduces the burden on healthcare facilities but also improves patient experience by offering a more personalized and stress-free approach to diagnostic testing. With trained professionals visiting homes and ensuring proper procedures, the accuracy and reliability of results remain uncompromising while enhancing overall accessibility. Ambar Fida further emphasized that the rise of digital platforms and increased health awareness has played a significant role in the growth of this trend, as more individuals now prefer services that align with their busy routines. Home sampling, she noted, represents a shift toward patient-centered care, where healthcare adapts to the needs of

people, making testing safer, faster and more efficient than ever before. "With our free home sampling, advanced diagnostic care fits effortlessly into your day. You can book in seconds through our app or have our rider reach your doorstep at a time that works for you, bringing precision testing exactly where you are," she added, emphasizing how technology and convenience are shaping the future of healthcare delivery. Some citizens also admired the initiative, noting that it is not just limited to one provider, as many health platforms and diagnostic services are now offering home testing options, reflecting a broader shift in the industry toward more accessible and patient-friendly healthcare solutions.—APP

Chinese company installs auto-transformer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A world-first 765 kV auto-transformer featuring constant-flux voltage regulation has been installed at the Mansehra Substation Project by POWERCHINA, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's power transmission development, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday. A POWERCHINA's statement stated, the weighing 225 tonnes, the single-phase, auto-coupled transformer is equipped with an on-load tap-changing system and a three-stage cooling mechanism. It sets a new benchmark among AC transformers of its class, achieving both the highest step-voltage and the widest tap range. The installation fills a key technological gap in Pakistan's 765 kV extra-high voltage (EHV) transmission sector and signals that the country's first substation operating at this voltage level has entered the core equipment installation phase. Project officials said the development will strengthen grid stability and help address regional electricity shortages once the substation becomes operational. The Mansehra project is part of Pakistan's broader efforts to modernize its transmission infrastructure and improve energy efficiency. The next phase will involve installing six additional main transformers, which is expected to further accelerate progress and support optimization of the country's energy mix. Upon completion, the substation is expected to play a vital role in enhancing power reliability and supporting long-term economic growth.

First Kyrgyz Truck reaches Pakistan via China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's drive to enhance regional connectivity reached a milestone as the first truck from Kyrgyzstan carrying transit goods arrived at Sost Dry Port after entering the country via China under the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA). This was reported by Gwadar Pro on Friday quoting a statement issued by the National Logistics Corporation (NLC). The development marks the first instance of a Central Asian country transporting goods into Pakistan using its own vehicle, signaling a breakthrough in cross-border logistics cooperation under the QTTA framework, which links Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. According to the NLC, the movement was facilitated through its partner company in Kyrgyzstan and represents a tangible outcome of sustained efforts to operationalize regional transit corridors. The truck carried commercial cargo and successfully completed its journey through China before entering Pakistan at the Sost border crossing in Gilgit-Baltistan. Plans are currently being finalized to extend such operations from Sost to Karachi Port, which would provide landlocked Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian states with direct access to global maritime trade routes. "The participation of Kyrgyz operators under the QTTA framework is expected to further enhance direct connectivity between Bishkek and Karachi Port, offering the shortest and most efficient trade route," the statement said. Since 2024, NLC has been regularly transporting Kyrgyz-bound cargo from Karachi Port to destinations across Kyrgyzstan through a multimodal TIR system. The operationalization of the QTTA corridor has also provided Central Asian states with a viable alternative trade route enabling the seamless movement of both perishable and non-perishable Pakistani goods via China.—DNA

Gwadar women market inaugurated

ISLAMABAD: The Women Market in Gwadar has been formally inaugurated on April 23, marking an important step toward providing women with economic independence and respectable employment opportunities. The inauguration was carried out by Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch, who cut the ribbon in the presence of Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Governor of Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, MNA Gwadar Malik Shah Gorgij, along with senior civil and military officials, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister of Balochistan and MPA Gwadar Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch stated that the establishment of the Women Market will provide Gwadar's women with opportunities to engage in business activities in a safe environment and will play a significant role in strengthening their economic position. He described the initiative as a practical demonstration of the Government of Balochistan's commitment to women's welfare and development. He further added that such projects are vital in providing dignified employment to women and that more initiatives will continue to empower women in Gwadar economically. After the inauguration, the Chief Minister, Governor, MPA, and other senior officials toured different sections of the Women Market and termed the project a positive and welcome development for women.—APP

SPs Tahir, Iqbal review security

ISLAMABAD: Superintendent of Police (SP) Aiwan-e-Sadr/Parliament House Tahir Khan and SP Judicial Protection Unit Iqbal Khan visited various points in the Red Zone, including Margalla checkpoint, to review security arrangements. An official told APP on Friday that the officers inspected duty points and assessed deployment of personnel in the Sensitive area. Both officers briefed personnel about the nature of their duties and directed them to remain alert and vigilant. The official said strict instructions were issued to ensure professionalism and preparedness while performing security duties. The officers emphasized effective monitoring and coordination to handle any untoward situation.—APP

ICT Police detain 37 suspects

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted large-scale joint grand combing operations across various areas of the federal capital, detaining 37 suspects including one Afghan national, along with a vehicle and 25 motorcycles for further verification. An official told APP on Friday that the operations were carried out in the jurisdictions of Lohi Bher, Shalimar, Aabpara, Bhara Kahu, Humak, Golra, Shams Colony and Kirpa police stations under the supervision of zonal SPs. He said lady police officials also participated in the operations to ensure effective checking. During the operations, a total of 684 individuals and 226 households were checked. He said 40 hotels and 80 shops were also inspected during the search. The official said 266 motorcycles and 101 vehicles were examined during the drive. He said the suspects, vehicle and motorcycles were shifted to relevant police stations for further verification. The official said a suspect involved in illegal possession of weapons was also arrested and arms along with ammunition were recovered. He said special checking points had been established at entry and exit routes of the city to ensure effective monitoring. All patrolling units and special squads were actively performing duties across the city, he added. Senior officers remained present in the field, reviewing security arrangements and ensuring implementation of measures. The official urged the citizens to cooperate with police during checking and report any suspicious activity immediately.—APP

DC reviews sanitation, traffic, facilities in Murree

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shiraazi on Friday visited key tourist spots in Murree to review sanitation, traffic management and public facilities. The visit started at Kashmir Point where the Deputy Commissioner inspected cleanliness arrangements and facilities for tourists, directing the officials to further improve service delivery and maintain hygiene standards. He later visited GPO Chowk and Mall Road, reviewing traffic flow, parking issues and encroachments. He ordered immediate measures to streamline traffic management and remove illegal encroachments. During a visit to Lower Mall, he assessed cleanliness and beautification work, directing authorities to enhance the area's appearance and ensure a pleasant environment for visitors. Officials of relevant departments, including the municipal and water authorities, accompanied the deputy commissioner. He instructed them to ensure better facilities for tourists and residents and to strengthen administrative response for timely resolution of issues. MD WASA and Assistant Commissioner also accompanied the Deputy Commissioner.—APP

Briefs

Traders, lawyers support Gujar Khan underpass project

RAWALPINDI: The construction of two underpasses in Gujar Khan has gained momentum as traders and the layers community extended support to remove encroachments hindering the project. Assistant Commissioner Khizar Zahoor said the administration held negotiations with stakeholders, resulting in the voluntary removal of over 300 stalls (shops) that had been in place for nearly two decades along key roads. He said the lawyers' community also demonstrated cooperation by dismantling around 30 chambers falling in the project's alignment without resistance, terming it a positive development. The official appreciated the role of the traders' bodies and khoka (stall) union, adding that completion of the underpasses would help resolve long-standing traffic issues and improve urban infrastructure. President of the stalls union, Mirza Taimur said the decision to remove the stalls was taken in the larger public interest and cooperation with the administration would continue. Anjum-e-Tajran President Raja Jawad also backed the initiative, saying the business community stood with the administration for the city's development. Officials said the project, once completed, would significantly improve traffic flow and ease commuting for residents.—APP

Dengue surveillance training for Railway staff held

RAWALPINDI: The district health authorities on Friday organized a dengue prevention and surveillance training session for staff of Pakistan Railways at the office of Divisional Medical Superintendent (DMS) in Rawalpindi. The training was conducted on the directions of District Health Officer (Preventive Services) Dr. Hafiz Jawad Zahid to strengthen monitoring and response capacity within railway premises. Officials said the session focused on improving surveillance practices, accurate identification and tagging of dengue hotspots, and timely completion of Dengue Vector Reports (DVRs). Four staff members were also registered as surveillance users during the exercise, they added. Dr. Adnan, entomologist briefed participants on early larval detection and emphasized the need for effective housekeeping to eliminate mosquito breeding sites. The initiative was carried out under the Health & Population Department Punjab with coordination support from CDC & EPC Punjab and local administration.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A herd of deer rests and roams freely in its natural habitat at Margalla Hills National Park in the federal capital.

Pak committed to protect every child through vaccines

ISLAMABAD: Every year, the Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI), under the leadership of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, in collaboration with provincial/area EPIs and partners, commemorates World Immunization Week across Pakistan. Observed in the last week of April, the week highlights the significant role of vaccines in protecting lives from vaccine-preventable diseases. This year's theme, "For Every Generation, Vaccines Work," reinforces the enduring power of vaccines in saving lives and safeguarding communities across generations. With the call to action, "Your decision makes a difference. Get vaccinated," the campaign emphasizes the vital role of individual and collective responsibility in ensuring a healthier future for all. In view of the current situation and in line with austerity measures, activities will primarily be conducted through digital platforms and electronic media, ensuring continued outreach, awareness, and engagement with communities nationwide. "Routine immunization is the

foundation of a healthy nation," said Dr. Musa Khan, Director General, Federal Directorate of Immunization. Dr. Musa further added that "ensuring that every child receives all vaccines on time is critical not only for individual protection, but also for building resilient communities. As we commemorate World Immunization Week 2026, we are reminded that every vaccination is a step towards a healthier Pakistan. It is imperative that parents ensure their children receive all routine immunizations on time, protecting them against 13 life-threatening diseases". He further added, "Despite significant progress, there are still children who miss out on essential vaccines, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach areas. Reaching these zero-dose children remains a top priority. Through strengthened outreach, community engagement, and building trust, we can ensure that no child is left behind." Reinforcing these efforts, Pakistan also continues to accelerate progress towards polio eradication as part of its broader immunization agenda.

With only one polio case reported so far this year, the country stands at a critical juncture - closer than ever to interrupting transmission. The Federal Directorate of Immunization, all provincial/area EPIs along with its partners like Gavi, World Health Organization, UNICEF, Gates Foundation, Polio Eradication Initiative, JHPIEGO, Oxford Policy Management, Mannion Daniels and CSOs continue to work tirelessly to enhance immunization coverage, strengthen service delivery, and promote awareness about the benefits of vaccination. Special focus is being given to reaching zero-dose children, addressing misinformation, and fostering community confidence in vaccines. World Immunization Week 2026 serves as a renewed call for action for parents, caregivers, community leaders, health workers, media, and all stakeholders to play their role in ensuring that every child is fully immunized. By making informed decisions and prioritizing vaccination, we can protect our children, families, and future generations.—APP

Pakistan pushes dialogue as US-Iran mistrust stall breakthrough

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Masood Khan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations on Friday stated that Pakistan's sustained diplomatic engagement has kept the possibility of dialogue between the United States and Iran alive, even as tensions escalate and contradictions in global signalling persist. In series of TV interviews observed that recent statements by President Donald Trump may appear inconsistent, but they reflect a calculated strategy of pressure and persuasion. "There is method in this approach," he said, adding that Washington is simultaneously escalating military pressure while leaving the door open for negotiations, in order to compel Iran towards a favourable settlement. Sardar Masood Khan noted that Iran, too, has demonstrated strategic restraint while maintaining its defensive posture. However, he emphasized that meaningful negotiations cannot begin in an environment marked by coercion, particularly in light of the ongoing naval blockade and heightened military deployments in the Gulf region. "Con-

fidence-building measures are essential before formal talks can resume," he stressed. Highlighting Pakistan's unique role, he said that Islamabad has emerged as a credible intermediary at a time when traditional actors such as the United Nations and key regional states are constrained. Pakistan's diplomatic outreach, he noted, has earned the trust of major global stakeholders, enabling it to facilitate backchannel communications and explore avenues for de-escalation. He further underlined that Pakistan's efforts are ongoing and multifaceted, involving both overt diplomacy and discreet engagement. "Even now, behind the scenes, Pakistan is working tirelessly to bring both sides back to the negotiating table," he remarked, expressing cautious optimism about the prospects of a second phase of talks potentially being hosted in Islamabad. At the same time, he cautioned that the situation remains highly sensitive. Domestic political pressures in both the United States and Iran, coupled with regional dynamics and strategic calculations, continue to complicate the path to dialogue. He pointed out that while neither side desires a full-scale war, both are responding to internal constituencies and external pressures, particularly from regional actors. Sardar Masood Khan concluded by stating that Pakistan must continue to balance its diplomatic engagement carefully, maintaining the confidence of both parties while leveraging international support. "This is a defining moment for diplomacy," he said, adding that sustained efforts, patience, and political will are essential to transform the current fragile situation into a pathway for lasting peace.—DNA

Pakistani official applies Chinese expertise

ISLAMABAD: Syed Najeebullah Taran, an Assistant Director in Balochistan's Food Department responsible for food safety, quality control and monitoring food operations, completed a training program in Wuhan, China earlier this year. Now back at his post in Quetta, he is applying what he learned to transform food safety in his province, and he has just received approval for a PhD at Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU), Wuhan for further study. According to China Economic Net, the training course in seed production and processing technology is part of a capacity building initiative for 1,000 agricultural graduates of Pakistan, launched by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "I joined this training to gain advanced knowledge, learn modern technologies, and improve my professional skills, especially in agriculture and food systems,"

Najeebullah Taran says. Among the many techniques he learned in Wuhan, one stands out: seed viability testing. "Now I can assess in advance whether a seed is suitable for germination or select a better variety, which helps prevent losses and improve productivity." During his training in Wuhan, Najeebullah Taran experienced firsthand the growth of different vegetable varieties and rice, and conducted experiments on seed breeding. He witnessed a wide range of food types that are both high-yield and safe. "I was impressed by the advanced research techniques and modern seed development systems," he recalls. "Technologies like improved seed production, quality testing, and modern storage systems can easily be implemented in Pakistan to increase productivity." Back in Balochistan, Najeebullah Taran's

current role focuses primarily on increasing wheat seed production per acre by selecting high-quality varieties and applying advanced techniques. "I have learned modern methods in China for evaluating seed quality and selecting suitable varieties, which helps improve wheat production and reduce losses during germination," he explains. His second responsibility involves the procurement of wheat from farmers, along with its proper storage, preservation, etc. For preservation, Najeebullah Taran previously used chemical methods such as fumigation. However, his training in China introduced him to modern and innovative biological control techniques, including the application of phages and lysins. "These are effective, environmentally friendly and cost-efficient," he says. Najeebullah Taran speaks

highly of his interactions in China. "These theoretical modules helped me understand the complete seed industry system, from production to distribution, in a structured way." Beyond specific technologies, he finds inspiration in China's broader development model. "The Chinese model inspired me to focus on innovation, planning and support for agricultural development in Pakistan," he says. He now encourages other professionals to seek similar opportunities. Since his return to Balochistan, Najeebullah Taran has begun to apply and adapt the advanced techniques he has learned in his current work. And in a recent development, he applied for a PhD at HZAU and was accepted, marking the next step in his journey to bring modern agricultural science to Balochistan.—DNA

Kitchen items' prices decline by 0.33pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation decreased by 0.33 percent during the week ended on April 23, 2026 for the combined consumption group, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. According to PBS data, SPI for the week under review for the combined group fell to 352.04 points as compared to 353.21 points recorded in the previous week. On year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 13.98 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) decreased by 0.41 percent to 331.60 points from 332.97 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 decreased by 0.36 percent, 0.31 percent, 0.30 percent and 0.34 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 19 items (37.25 percent) increased, 9 items (17.65 percent) decreased, while 23 items (45.10 percent) remained stable. Major decrease was observed in the prices of tomatoes which declined by 27.65 percent, followed by onions 9.35 percent, diesel 8.35 percent, LPG 7.08 percent, garlic 4.27 percent, bananas 0.47 percent, wheat flour 0.37 percent, sugar 0.36 percent and mustard oil 0.22 percent. On the other hand, prices of potatoes increased by 3.13 percent, bread 0.91 percent, washing soap 0.85 percent, cooking oil (5 litre) 0.69 percent, long cloth 0.65 percent, eggs 0.61 percent, mutton 0.45 percent, chicken 0.44 percent, vegetable ghee (1 kg) 0.30 percent and pulse masoor 0.27 percent. On year-on-year basis, the SPI for the week under review increased by 13.98 percent compared to the corresponding week of last year. During the period, major increase was recorded in the prices of electricity charges for Q1 by 54.02 percent, LPG 50.68 percent, petrol 44.10 percent, diesel 36.76 percent, wheat flour 36.06 percent, onions 31.89 percent and tomatoes 23.46 percent. Prices of chilies powder, mutton, beef, powdered milk and garlic also increased. Meanwhile, prices of potatoes declined by 47.38 percent, pulse gram by 19.92 percent, salt powder by 13.22 percent, sugar by 11.74 percent, pulse masoor by 11.47 percent, pulse moong by 1.63 percent, packet tea by 1.14 percent and masoor pulse by 11.47 percent over the same period of last year, PBS reported.—APP

Gradual price stability observed despite global pressures: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal has said that a gradual trend of price stability was being observed across the country despite evolving regional and global challenges. Chairing the weekly meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPC), he noted that stability in fertilizer prices, despite international pressures was an encouraging sign reflecting effective policy measures, a news release said on Friday. He added that coordinated efforts by federal and provincial authorities were helping improve price trends of essential commodities. The committee was briefed that transport fares had remained unchanged, while poultry prices had reverted to pre-Gulf conflict levels, offering relief to consumers. Highlighting the need for sustainable stability in the poultry sector, the minister stressed the importance of establishing a robust cold chain infrastructure to reduce price volatility and ensure uninterrupted supply. He directed the authorities concerned to submit comprehensive proposals on cold chain development within five days. Expressing concern over the presence and sale of substandard ghee and other food items in rural areas, he called for strict enforcement measures to ensure quality standards. The minister urged all provincial and federal institutions to remain vigilant to sustain price stability and prevent artificial shortages, emphasizing the need to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities. He also appreciated the performance of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and provincial governments for effective weekly price monitoring and data management, terming it vital for informed decision-making. The meeting reviewed the overall supply and price situation of essential commodities and reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining relief measures and strengthening market oversight to protect public interest.—DNA

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Lebanon needs humanitarian not philosophical support

KHALED ABOU ZAHR

Can you name the one country in the world in which a news magazine would put a philosopher on its cover? The answer is France. This helps us understand how the media and political thought leaders might address complicated issues. Lebanon is a complicated problem that has a simple solution. Yet, as Emmanuel Macron received Nawaf Salam at the Elysee Palace this week to show support, the message is too fragmented and has too many layers, while trying to advocate a balanced approach. The statement of supporting, in principle, the disarmament of Hezbollah but favoring a gradual and negotiated approach, while pushing the narrative of separation between the group's military – I would say terrorist – and political wings is in fact bringing more confusion. Paris is looking to act primarily as an indirect supporter of Lebanon rather than a central player, positioning itself as a discreet architect seeking to stabilize the country without provoking internal divisions or directly opposing Israel. This will go nowhere for Lebanon. To start, I have trouble accepting the way France is looking to push Hezbollah into the political life of Lebanon, especially when making a quick comparison with French political life. In French elections, for example, Renaissance and the center-left and far-left parties tend to treat the conservative parties as outcasts. They will push for television and other media outlets to boycott the right-wing parties and will also label them as fascists. Yet, when it comes to Lebanon, despite Hezbollah being a terrorist organization embedded within the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, French pundits – and other Western ones too – will claim with all confidence that Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese DNA, as well as part of its political life, and hence should not be excluded. I have trouble accepting the way France is looking to push Hezbollah into the political life of Lebanon. They will add that Hezbollah is the true representative of the Shiite community and, with this statement, consider that they are capable of understanding the nuances of Lebanese society, unlike those who hold the superficial view that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. More importantly, not once will they stop to think that, just as this organization is totalitarian toward the Lebanese state, its basis is dictatorship over the Shiite population. Obviously, just like every communist dictatorship, they



can wrap it up in social and medical support and financial aid to help the pill go down. Still, ultimately, the Shiite population is robbed of its free will. These French analysts are correct that Hezbollah uses a narrative of oppression within its own community and that, as a result, they are now respected. But is this true? What respect is there when you are forced off your land? There are also, just like in communist regimes, perks and help given to the locals. Hezbollah's financial networks are a cornerstone of this system, just like its weapons. These are the two sides of the same coin. Moreover, this is not an implicit recognition – it has been declared by the French presidency, even though Hezbollah last week killed a French soldier participating in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon. Hence, this recognition of Hezbollah, which opposes negotiations with Israel, is a direct hit on the efforts by the Lebanese presidency and government to show unity. It offers the perfect argument that the strongest recognized party opposes negotiations, so how will you respect any agreement? We are in a mirror situation of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The PA can negotiate as much as it wants, but as long as Hamas refuses the principle of negotiations and rejects peace, it is a waste of time. There can be no real peace if we let an organization that is part of the Iranian regime attain moral supremacy. It is also dangerous for Lebanon to believe that the increasingly aggressive approach of the Europeans toward Israel will help it. I wrote at the beginning of the war in Ukraine on the lessons Kyiv should learn from the Lebanese. I think today the Lebanese should look to see if the Europeans have been able to help the Ukrainians really achieve something. This is not about the conferences, loans and other financial and military support, but in terms of the negotiations. The answer is no. Simply because the European agenda is different from the Ukrainian one and this is normal and fair. The same is true for Lebanon. Sometimes, things are as they look and France needs to stop philosophizing and shift its narrative. It needs to stop pushing the military and political wing theory. We all know that this is done within the balance France seeks with Iran and not for the future of Lebanon. Moreover, suggesting that Hezbollah is the true representative of the Shiite community is a grave mistake that accepts a totalitarian state within the state. Ultimately, these two main concepts render everything else that Macron can do for Lebanon useless, as he is legitimizing the two main justifications for Hezbollah's raison d'être and indirectly accepting it as a true resistance movement. There can be no real peace if we let an organization that is part of the Iranian regime attain moral supremacy. The current Lebanese crisis was caused by Hezbollah supporting Iran in its war with Israel and the US. While we remember that Israel unilaterally withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, it is now back in the south at the invitation of Hezbollah, which has proven its inability to defend the Shiite community or Lebanon. The support Lebanon needs today is not philosophical but humanitarian and the implementation of Hezbollah's disarmament: a full disarmament of its military arsenal, financial architecture and social organizations. Nothing less.

How Iran war is grounding the world economy

Qamar Bashir



At the center of this unfolding crisis lies the global jet fuel market—a sector often overlooked in geopolitical analysis, yet one that sustains the arteries of globalization.

Prior to the conflict, global jet fuel demand had recovered strongly, reaching approximately 107 billion gallons annually in 2024, with projections climbing to nearly 7.2 million barrels per day by early 2026. This demand was supported by a finely balanced supply network spanning North America, Asia, and the Middle East.

Today, that balance has been violently disrupted
The Middle East

The war in the Middle East has now moved far beyond the battlefield. What initially appeared as a regional military confrontation has evolved into a systemic global crisis—one that is tightening its grip not only on governments and markets, but on ordinary people struggling to sustain daily life. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, combined with targeted disruption of oil infrastructure, has triggered a cascading breakdown across energy supply chains, aviation networks, and tourism-dependent economies. The world is no longer merely watching a war; it is experiencing its economic consequences in real time.

At the center of this unfolding crisis lies the global jet fuel market—a sector often overlooked in geopolitical analysis, yet one that sustains the arteries of globalization. Prior to the conflict, global jet fuel demand had recovered strongly, reaching approximately 107 billion gallons annually in 2024, with projections climbing to nearly 7.2 million barrels per day by early 2026. This demand was supported by a finely balanced supply network spanning North America, Asia, and the Middle East. Today, that balance has been violently disrupted. The Middle East, which typically contributes around 20% of global jet fuel supply, has seen a dramatic collapse in its effective output. War-related damage to refineries, combined with the strategic closure of the Strait of Hormuz, has removed an estimated 320,000 tons of jet fuel per day from global circulation. At the same time, approximately 3 million barrels per day of refining capacity across the region has either been shut down or rendered inoperable. This is not a marginal disruption—it is a structural shock to the global energy system. Jet fuel prices have responded accordingly. Within weeks, prices surged from approximately \$85–90 per barrel to well above \$200, representing one of the sharpest increases in modern energy market history. For the aviation industry, where fuel accounts for up to one-third of operating costs, this is nothing short of catastrophic. Airlines are no longer operating in a demand-driven environment; they are navigating a survival crisis defined by cost pressures and supply scarcity. The impact is most visible in Europe, where the aviation sector—and by extension, the tourism economy—is deeply exposed. Europe imports roughly 25–30% of its jet fuel from the Persian Gulf. With supply lines disrupted, airlines have begun aggressive capacity cuts. Major carriers have canceled thousands of flights ahead of the critical summer season. Lufthansa alone has reportedly removed tens of thousands of flights from its schedule, while other carriers

are grounding aircraft, optimizing routes, and operating only essential services. This contraction strikes at the heart of Europe's economic model. Tourism is not a peripheral sector; it is a foundational pillar. The continent generates between \$600 and \$700 billion annually from tourism, supporting millions of jobs and contributing significantly to GDP in countries such as Spain, Italy, France, and Greece. This entire ecosystem depends on affordable, reliable air travel. Without it, hotels remain empty, restaurants lose customers, and entire regional economies begin to contract. The crisis is not confined to Europe. In Asia-Pacific, where airlines depend heavily on Middle Eastern fuel flows, the situation is even more acute. Carriers have entered emergency operational modes, securing limited fuel supplies and preparing for prolonged disruption. Even in the United States—buffered by its status as a major producer—airlines face massive financial strain. Leading carriers have warned of billions of dollars in additional fuel costs, threatening profitability and forcing difficult operational decisions. What makes this crisis particularly dangerous is its compounding nature. Aviation is not only about passenger mobility; it is a critical component of global trade. High-value goods, pharmaceuticals, and time-sensitive cargo depend on air freight. As flight capacity shrinks, supply chains tighten, prices rise, and inflationary pressures intensify. Indeed, energy analysts have already warned that this crisis could add nearly 0.8% to global inflation—an alarming figure in an already fragile economic environment. Meanwhile, the maritime dimension of the conflict is adding further instability. The Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of the world's oil supply normally passes, has become a contested zone. Tankers are being intercepted, diverted, and in some cases seized. Insurance costs have soared, discouraging shipping companies from entering the region. Even where fuel is available, the ability to transport it safely has become uncertain. China's position offers a temporary buffer but not immunity. With substantial strategic reserves and a diversified energy portfolio, including large-scale investments in renewable energy, China can withstand short-term shocks. However, as the world's manufacturing hub, any prolonged disruption will inevitably impact its output. A slowdown in Chinese production would have global consequences, affecting supply chains and economic growth worldwide. This brings into focus a critical strategic ques-

tion: what is the underlying objective of this disruption? One interpretation—gaining increasing traction—is that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is not merely a byproduct of conflict, but a strategic lever. By constraining Middle Eastern supply, global demand is redirected toward alternative producers, most notably the United States. Over the past decade, the U.S. has transformed into a leading exporter of oil and liquefied natural gas. In a constrained market, its leverage increases significantly.

For Iran, the situation presents a profound strategic dilemma. Maintaining the closure of the Strait exerts pressure on adversaries but simultaneously inflicts economic pain on the wider world. Reopening the waterway, on the other hand, could reposition Iran as a stabilizing force while exposing the broader dynamics at play. It would restore global supply flows, ease economic pressures, and potentially shift international opinion. From a strategic standpoint, reopening Hormuz could neutralize the leverage derived from disruption. It would deny the United States to exploit scarcity and would reestablish a degree of economic normalcy. More importantly, it would demonstrate that stability—not disruption—is the stronger strategic position in an interconnected global system. The world today is facing more than an energy crisis. It is confronting the fragility of a system built on uninterrupted flows—of fuel, goods, people, and capital. When one critical node collapses, the effects ripple outward, disrupting industries and livelihoods across continents. If the current trajectory continues, the consequences will be severe. Aviation networks may contract further, tourism economies could enter recession, and global trade may slow significantly. Inflationary pressures will rise, and economic uncertainty will deepen. What began as a regional conflict risks becoming a global economic turning point. The solution lies not in escalation, but in recalibration. Restoring the free flow of energy through critical waterways, stabilizing supply chains, and reengaging in meaningful diplomacy are essential steps. The alternative is a prolonged period of economic disruption with far-reaching consequences.

The Strait of Hormuz is no longer just a geographic chokepoint. It has become the pivot on which the global economy now turns.

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

How solar cells are producing more than they receive

Dr. Muhammad Bilal Tahir

A recent study by researchers at Kyushu University in collaboration with Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz has reported a notable advancement in solar energy conversion, achieving an effective efficiency of around 130 percent. Published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society, the work introduces a mechanism in which solar cells generate more usable energy carriers than the number of photons they absorb

In the evolving narrative of global energy, solar power has long stood as a symbol of promise constrained by physics. For decades, scientists and engineers have worked within a well-defined theoretical boundary that limited how efficiently sunlight could be converted into electricity. That boundary—known as the Shockley-Queisser limit—has shaped the design and expectations of photovoltaic technologies worldwide. Today, however, new research suggests that this long-accepted ceiling may no longer be as rigid as once believed. A recent study by researchers at Kyushu University in collaboration with Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz has reported a notable advancement in solar energy conversion, achieving an effective efficiency of around 130 percent. Published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society, the work introduces a mechanism in which solar cells generate more usable energy carriers than the number of photons they absorb. While this may seem to challenge established scientific understanding, it does not violate physical laws; instead, it reflects a new way of utilizing solar energy at the microscopic level. Conventional solar cells rely on the photoelectric effect, where photons excite electrons to produce electric current. However, inefficiencies arise because low-energy infrared photons cannot excite electrons, while high-energy photons lose excess energy as heat. These losses are a key reason solar performance remains constrained by the Shockley-Queisser limit. The new approach shifts focus from capturing more sunlight to maximizing the output of each photon. It relies on Singlet fission, a process that enables one photon to generate multiple energy carriers, offering a potential pathway beyond traditional efficiency limits. Under normal conditions, one photon absorbed by a solar cell produces a single exciton, which is essentially a packet of energy that can be converted into electrical current. Singlet fission changes this equation. It allows a single high-energy exciton to split into two lower-energy excitons, effectively doubling the number of energy carriers generated from

a single photon. While the principle is elegant, its practical application has been hindered by a persistent challenge: energy loss during transfer. Competing processes, particularly Förster resonance energy transfer, often divert energy before it can be captured and used. This has historically limited the efficiency gains achievable through singlet fission. The breakthrough reported by the Japanese-German research team lies in overcoming this obstacle through the use of a specially engineered "spin-flip" metal complex. Based on molybdenum, this molecular system is capable of selectively capturing the lower-energy excitons produced by singlet fission. By carefully aligning energy levels and exploiting changes in electron spin states, the researchers were able to minimize energy losses and maximize the extraction of usable energy. When integrated with tetracene-based materials—long known for their ability to support singlet fission—the system demonstrated quantum yields of around 130 percent. In practical terms, this means that for every photon absorbed, more than one exciton was successfully generated and harnessed. The result is not an excess of energy in the conventional sense, but a more efficient conversion of photon energy into multiple charge carriers. Despite its promise, the technology remains at an early stage of development. The current experiments have been conducted in controlled laboratory environments, primarily in solution-based systems. Translating these findings into commercially viable solar panels will require significant advances in materials science, device engineering, and large-scale manufacturing. Nevertheless, the implications are profound. If successfully implemented, this approach could dramatically enhance the efficiency of solar panels without requiring additional sunlight or expanded infrastructure. For countries like Pakistan, where energy shortages and climate vulnerability remain pressing challenges, such advancements could offer a pathway toward greater energy security and sustainability. Pakistan receives abundant

sunlight throughout the year, yet its solar potential remains underutilized. Improvements in efficiency—particularly those that can be integrated into existing photovoltaic systems—could help bridge the gap between energy demand and supply. Moreover, higher-efficiency solar technologies could reduce the cost per unit of electricity, making renewable energy more accessible across both urban and rural communities. Beyond immediate applications, the research also points to broader technological possibilities. The ability to control and manipulate excitons at this level has implications for fields such as optoelectronics, light-emitting devices, and even quantum information science. The intersection of spin dynamics and energy transfer mechanisms opens new avenues for innovation that extend well beyond solar power. What makes this development particularly noteworthy is not merely the numerical milestone it represents, but the conceptual shift it embodies. For years, progress in solar technology has been incremental, driven by efforts to optimize existing materials and designs. This breakthrough, by contrast, suggests that entirely new paradigms may be within reach—paradigms that challenge long-standing assumptions about the limits of efficiency. In the broader context of the global energy transition, such innovations are both timely and necessary. As the world grapples with the twin challenges of rising energy demand and climate change, the need for more efficient, scalable, and sustainable energy solutions has never been more urgent. Solar power, with its vast and virtually inexhaustible resource base, remains central to this effort. The emergence of technologies capable of surpassing traditional efficiency limits offers a glimpse into what the future of energy might look like: smarter, more adaptive, and less constrained by the boundaries that once seemed immovable. While practical deployment may still be years away, the direction is clear. The 130 percent paradox is not a contradiction—it is a redefinition. And in that redefinition lies the promise of a new era in solar energy, one where the question is no longer how much sunlight we receive, but how effectively we can use it.

Briefs

US, Iran
return to
negotiating
table at last

FROM PAGE 01
transport disruptions in the Pakistani capital and Rawalpindi. Local residents have expressed hope that progress in diplomacy will ease security concerns and allow normal public transport operations to resume, including any extensions of energy relief initiatives. Araghchi's trip is part of Iran's broader outreach to friendly states for consultations on the evolving situation. Pakistani officials have indicated a "high likelihood of a breakthrough" as efforts intensify to resume structured negotiations.

Lebanon-
Israel
ceasefire
extended...

FROM PAGE 01
Trump added that he looked forward to hosting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in the near future. Trump also spoke to reporters in the Oval Office alongside the participants in the meeting, saying he hoped the leaders would meet during the three-week cessation of hostilities. He said there was "a great chance" the two countries would reach a peace agreement this year. Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee and US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa also attended the meeting.

Pak clears
\$3.45bn
UAE...

FROM PAGE 01
spring meetings, he said Pakistan could manage all debt repayments and that reserves remained at around 2.8 months of import cover. Maintaining at least that level, the finance czar said, would be "an important aspect of our overall macro stability as we go forward." "We are looking at Eurobond, we are looking at Islamic sukuk, we are looking at dollar-settled rupee-linked bonds," Aurangzeb said, adding that Pakistan expected to issue Eurobonds this year and was also exploring commercial loans. He also said the shock from the ongoing Middle East war meant Pakistan must consider a strategic petroleum reserve and a faster switch to renewable energy. Aurangzeb said Pakistan had not yet requested any additions or changes to its \$7 billion IMF lending programme due to the economic shocks of the war in the Middle East, but added that it remained a possible option depending on developments in the coming weeks. The IMF board is likely to approve the latest lending tranche by the end of this month or early next month, which would unlock just under \$1.3 billion through the Extended Fund Facility and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility.

22 India-
backed
terrorists...

FROM PAGE 01
activities in the area. "Sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored kharij found in the area," the ISPR said, adding that the relentless counter-terrorism campaign under vision "Azme-Istehkam" will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country. "Such sacrifices of our innocent civilians further strengthen our resolve." Pakistan has witnessed a spike in cross-border militant activity, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, both of which share a border with Afghanistan, since Afghan Taliban took control in 2021. In response to the escalating attacks, Pakistan launched "Operation Ghazab il-Haq," during which approximately 796 Afghan Taliban fighters and allied militants were killed, according to Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

Italy dismisses replacing
Iran at the World Cup

Luciano Buonfiglio, the president of the Italian Olympic Committee, which oversees all sports in Italy, also dismissed the idea

SPORTS DESK

ROME: Italian sports officials say four-time champion Italy is not interested in replacing Iran at the upcoming World Cup following a suggestion to that effect by a Trump administration official. Iran has not withdrawn from the World Cup, and the team is preparing to play in the US despite the war in the Middle East. FIFA has insisted its group stage games near Los Angeles and in Seattle will go ahead as planned in June. The Financial Times reported that Paolo Zampolli, the US special envoy for global partnerships, had suggested the swap to President Donald Trump and FIFA president Gianni Infantino. In a phone interview with the Associated Press on Thursday, Zampolli emphasized that "my request is not a political request." The ask, which was made to Trump and Infantino on Wednesday, was meant as a contingency plan in case Iran could not participate in the soccer tournament at the last minute. "I had a dream," Zampolli told the AP. "My request was for the Italian people and the American-Italian people." He said in the FT interview that, with four titles, the Italian national team's appearance in the World Cup would be justified. Italian officials pushed back hard at the suggestion, with Sports Minister Andrea Ab-

di saying Thursday that "first of all, it's not possible. Secondly, it's not a good idea." Luciano Buonfiglio, the president of the Italian Olympic Committee, which oversees all sports in Italy, also dismissed the idea. "I would feel offended," Buonfiglio said. "You need to deserve to go to the World Cup." Italy's Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti called the suggested swap "shameful." Hours later, Trump was asked at the White House about Iranian soccer players potentially not being allowed into the US for the World Cup. He initially joked, "I don't think about it too much" before adding, "That's an interesting question."

"Let me give that some thought," Trump added. He then deferred to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said, "Nothing from the US has told them they can't come." "The problem with Iran would be, not their athletes. It would be some of the other people that they want to bring with them," Rubio said, suggesting that Iran's soccer team could bring in people loyal to militant groups disguised as journalists and trainers. "We may not be able to let them in," Rubio said of people around the team. "But not the athletes themselves." He added that there had been "speculation that Iran may decide not to come, but then Italy could fill their spot," without adding details. "If they decide not to come on their

own, it's 'cause they decided not to come," the secretary of state said of Iranian athletes. While Iran was among the first teams to qualify for the World Cup, Italy missed out for the third consecutive tournament, resulting in the resignations of its national team coach and soccer federation president. Zampolli has long been a part of the Trump family orbit, having introduced then-Melania Knauss to Donald Trump at a New York Fashion Week party in 1998. He regularly posts on social media about his meetings with Infantino, calling him the "King of Soccer." Trump last year appointed him as special representative for global partnerships. In March, The New York Times reported that Zampolli had reached out to a top official at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, informing him that the mother of his child was in the country illegally as the two were locked in a custody dispute. She was ultimately deported. The White House did not return a request for comment. Its World Cup task force, housed under the Department of Homeland Security, said it had no comment. FIFA also would not comment. The Iranian embassy in Rome denounced Zampolli's remarks in a comment on X. "Football belongs to the people, not to politicians," the embassy said. "Italy earned its soccer prowess on the field, not thanks to political maneuvers. The attempt to

exclude Iran from the World Cup shows only the 'moral bankruptcy' of the United States, which fears even the presence of 11 young Iranians on the field of play." Iran's status at the World Cup, which starts in June, has been a source of debate and concern since the US and Israel launched military attacks on the country in February. Trump in March discouraged Iran from participating in the tournament, citing safety concerns. FIFA has consistently said Iran will stick to the World Cup schedule decided last December, and refused to negotiate any suggestion of moving the team's games to co-host Mexico. An Iranian government spokesperson said Wednesday that the men's national team is preparing for "proud and successful participation" in its World Cup games in the US. Iran earned one of eight guaranteed World Cup places allocated to the Asian Football Confederation. Should Iran pull out, in theory the replacement should be the United Arab Emirates, the highest-ranked Asian team that didn't qualify. One possible element of uncertainty is the language of the World Cup tournament rules. FIFA wrote that it can decide to replace a withdrawn team "with another association," though without specifying the replacement must come from the same continental confederation.

President,
PM pay
tribute to
security...

FROM PAGE 01
"We will defeat terrorism and continue to play a leading role in maintaining peace in the region and across the world," the president said. He also expressed deep grief over the martyrdom of a 10-year-old child during the operation and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also expressed sorrow over the child's martyrdom, which occurred as a result of unprovoked firing by the terrorists. Strongly condemning the act, the prime minister prayed for strength and patience for the grieving family. "The cowardly terrorists' unprovoked firing, carried out in an attempt to save themselves, which resulted in the martyrdom of a child, is an irreparable crime against humanity," he added.

DPM Dar,
Russian FM
discuss...

FROM PAGE 01
fora in support of international peace and security. Russian FM Lavrov appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating dialogue between Iran and the United States, the statement added. During the telephonic conversation, DPM Dar, who also holds the portfolio of foreign minister, underscored Pakistan's resolve to continue contributing to efforts aimed at promoting dialogue and diplomacy to resolve all issues. In addition, the deputy prime minister extended an invitation to his Russian counterpart to visit Pakistan. The two foreign ministers also agreed to remain in close contact to advance cooperation, the FO statement concluded.

Govt hikes
petrol,
diesel prices

FROM PAGE 01
progress in ending the Middle East crisis, with Tehran keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed and the US maintaining a blockade of Iranian ports. But they dropped on reports that Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was to arrive in Islamabad on Friday night. Brent crude, the international benchmark contract, fell back below \$100 a barrel.

Citizen
arrested for
mocking
railway
crossing

FROM PAGE 01
"Tarnol Railway Crossing is no less than the Strait of Hormuz. If it is closed, all our problems will be resolved". The FIR stated that the post went viral on social media. Upon seeing the post, police reached Tarnol Chowk and investigated the matter, where it emerged that Khurram, a resident of Dhok Paracha, Islamabad, shared the post.

PSL 11: Warner, Khushdil
help Karachi Kings cruise
past Lahore Qalandars

Karachi Kings successfully chase 200 with Warner' unbeaten 63 and Khushdil's 44

LAHORE: A composed half-century from captain David Warner, supported by a late surge from Khushdil Shah, guided Karachi Kings to a five-wicket win over Lahore Qalandars in Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 encounter at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday. Set to chase a daunting 200-run target, the visitors knocked off the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and eight balls to spare to keep their playoff hopes alive. The Kings got off to a shaky start to the pursuit as Ubaid Shah dismissed right-handed opener Jason Roy (nine) in the second over with just 10 runs on the board. Warner then shared brief partnerships with Reeza Hendricks and Salman Ali

Agha, who could contribute 10 and 14, respectively. The skipper then received ample support from the other end in the form of Moeen Ali, and the experienced duo put together 58 runs at a brisk pace before Ubaid struck again, dismissing the latter, who made a 17-ball 39, laced with four sixes and a four. The Kings then suffered another setback nine deliveries later as wicketkeeper batter Azam Khan, who scored 14 off eight balls, was cleaned up by Daniel Sams. His dismissal paved the way for Khushdil Shah to walk out and bat at No.7, and the left-handed batter turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting, the highlight of which was the pulsating 18th over, bowled

by Shaheen Shah Afridi, which went for 23 runs. With just 11 runs required off 12 deliveries, Khushdil hit Haris Rauf for back-to-back sixes and steered the Kings over the line in the penultimate over. Khushdil remained unbeaten with a swashbuckling 14-ball 44, comprising five fours and two sixes, while Warner top-scored with 63 not out from 44 deliveries, laced with 10 boundaries, including a six. Ubaid was the pick of the bowlers for the Qalandars, taking three wickets for 41 runs in his four overs, while Daniel Sams and Haris Rauf made one scalp apiece. Khushdil was named Player of the Match for a match-winning 44 off just 14 balls. - Agencies

Pakistan
secures
3 bids...

FROM PAGE 01
the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar's three LNG cargoes meant for Pakistan had earlier returned from the vital waterway due to security reasons. All three cargoes will carry 140,000 cubic meters of LNG delivered ex-ship (DES). Each cargo to Pakistan of this size typically means around 100 million cubic feet per day (mcfcd). Last month, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) had notified a massive 19-22 per cent increase in the price of regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) to \$12.50-\$14 per mcf for sales at the distribution stage by the two Sui gas companies for the month of March. This was mainly because of an increase in terminal charges amid lower import molecules and a minor increase in import price, the dataset from the authority showed.

Rawalpindiz pacer
Naseem Shah suffers
major injury scare
during PSL fixture

Franchise confirms 23-year-old pacer sustained injury to his left knee

LAHORE: Pacer Naseem Shah faced an injury scare during a Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 match between Rawalpindiz and Islamabad United at National Bank Stadium on Thursday. The incident occurred on the fourth delivery of the 16th over of United's innings when Faheem Ashraf swept a length delivery by Saad Masood towards the deep backward square leg, where Naseem made a diving stop but injured himself in the process. Naseem looked in extreme discomfort, favouring his left leg, while receiving medical attention and was subsequently carried off the field. Meanwhile, as per the latest development, the Rawalpindiz have confirmed that the 23-year-old pacer has sustained an injury to his left knee, the severity of which was being assessed by the franchise's medical team. "Naseem Shah is out of the field because of a knee injury he suffered while fielding. The medical team is assessing his condition. Further update will be shared in due course," the franchise said in a brief statement. For the unversed, Naseem was playing his first match since recovering from a side-strain injury sustained during Rawalpindiz's third match of the eight-team tournament against Karachi Kings at the Gaddafi Stadium on April 2. The side injury had ruled Naseem out for the foreseeable future, and thus, the franchise had brought in all-rounder Mubasir Khan as his partial replacement. Naseem's fresh injury adds to Rawalpindiz's woes as the new entrants had also missed the services of Zaman Khan, who was ruled out of the ongoing tournament due to a shoulder injury, sustained during the National T20 Cup. - APP

Multan division
outplays Lahore in
railway kabaddi clash

MULTAN: Pakistan Railways Multan Division on Friday defeated Lahore Division 33-21 in a thrilling kabaddi match held at the Railway Sports Ground, displaying impressive teamwork and strategy. Despite Lahore Division's reputation as one of the strongest sides in the country, the hosts dominated proceedings with coordinated play and determined defending to secure a convincing win. Local players showcased remarkable synergy outclassing their opponents in both raids and tackles to clinch victory. The triumph comes shortly after another sporting success for Multan Division, whose wrestling team recently defeated Pakistan Army in a separate competition. Divisional Superintendent Railways Multan Division Mohammad Hanif attended the match as chief guest. Among those present were Divisional Sports Officer Osama Gujjar, APO Zeeshan Zaidi, Sports In-charge Lahore Division Nadeem Iqbal and other railway officials from both divisions. At the end of the match, prizes and shields were distributed among the winning players. Speaking on the occasion, Hanif urged the youth to spend more time in playgrounds rather than on social media, emphasizing that sports play a vital role in building a healthy and strong society. Officials also reiterated their commitment to promoting sports within the department. - APP

US says Iran can play at
2026 World Cup but bars
those with 'IRGC ties'

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio says the US has not told the Iranian national team that it cannot play

DNA

NEW YORK: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington has no objections to Iranian players participating in the 2026 FIFA World Cup, but he added the players will not be allowed to bring people with ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with them. Since the United States-Israeli war on Iran began on February 28, Iran's participation in this summer's edition of FIFA's global showpiece has been in doubt because all of the country's group-stage matches are scheduled to be played in the United States. "The problem with Iran would be not their athletes. It would be some of the other people they would want to bring with them, some of whom have ties to the IRGC. We may not be able to let them in, but not the athletes themselves," Rubio said. "They can't bring a bunch of IRGC terrorists into our

country and pretend that they are journalists and athletic trainers," Rubio added. Washington has designated the IRGC as a "foreign terrorist organisation". US President Donald Trump, speaking alongside Rubio, added that his administration "would not want to affect the athletes". In a statement on Wednesday, however, Iran's government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said all necessary arrangements for the team's participation in the tournament have been ensured by the Ministry of Sports and Youth. "I'm an Italian native, and it would be a dream to see the Azzurri at a US-hosted tournament. With four titles, they have the pedigree to justify inclusion," Zampolli, who has no official connection with the World Cup or Italian football, said earlier this week. Italian Sports Minister Andrea Abodi has rebuked the idea, saying "it is not appropriate... You qualify on the pitch," while Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti described the concept as "shameful". Iran qualified for a fourth successive World Cup last year but, after the start of the war, requested that FIFA move the team's three group matches from the US to Mexico - a suggestion that was rejected.

Amir, Faheem engage in heated exchange during PSL clash
Faheem reacts angrily, walking towards Amir and pointing his bat

DNA

LAHORE: A tense moment unfolded during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 clash as Rawalpindiz pacer Mohammad Amir and Islamabad United's all-rounder Faheem Ashraf were involved in a heated on-field exchange at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Thursday. The incident took place on the third delivery of the 17th over when Amir bowled a sharp, slow bouncer, which Faheem attempted to upper-cut but instead edged the ball straight into the hands of wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan. After the dismissal celebration, Amir and Faheem engaged in a heated exchange, with the left-arm pacer gesturing aggressively and signalling him to walk back towards the pavilion. Faheem responded angrily, walking towards Amir and pointing his bat in an aggressive manner, but was later restrained by Asif Afridi and Saad Masood, who stepped in to defuse the situation and separate both players. Meanwhile, Rawalpindiz decision to bowl first paid the price as they bundled out Islamabad for 137 in their allotted 20 overs. Islamabad United made a slow start, with openers Devon Conway and Sameer Minhas finding it difficult to accelerate, as



runs came at a sluggish pace early on. Mohammad Amir struck in the second ball of the fifth over, removing Minhas for six off 11 balls, ending a 20-run opening stand. Naseem Shah further dented United in the power-play, dismissing Mohammad Faiz for five off six balls, leaving them 29-2 after 5.5 overs. Saad Masood then struck in the seventh over, getting Shadab Khan for just one run, as Islamabad slipped to 30-3. Conway and Mark Chapman rebuilt with a vital stand that carried the score past 50, but Daryl Mitchell broke the 49-run partnership by dismissing Conway for 40 off 33 balls (three fours, two sixes), reducing them to 79-4 in 11.3 overs. Asif Afridi soon removed Chapman for 23 off 18 balls (one four, one six), and wickets kept tumbling as Haider Ali fell for six off 13 deliveries to Saad Masood. Amir returned to dismiss Faheem Ashraf for 11 off 12 balls, leaving Islamabad struggling at 99-7 in 16.3 overs. Chris Green provided a late push, helping take the total past 100, but was run out in the final over for 29 off 16 balls (two fours, two sixes). Dian Forrester then finished the innings, removing Mohammad Hasnain for a first-ball duck before dismissing Richard Gleeson to complete his second wicket.

Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.85 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.86.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.25 and Rs 279.90, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.52 to close at Rs 325.84 from the previous day's close of Rs 326.36, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs0.43 and closed at Rs 375.68 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.11. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham decreased by 02 paisa and closed at Rs 75.91, while the Saudi Riyal stood stagnant to close at Rs 74.34.—APP

Italy amends contested migrant repatriation bonus scheme

ROME: Italy's government on Friday rushed through a decree amending rules that offered financial rewards to lawyers helping to repatriate migrants, after the scheme drew criticism from opposition parties who said it could be unconstitutional. The measure was part of a broader security package that parliament had to approve by April 25 or it would lapse. President Sergio Mattarella — who can refuse to sign legislation on constitutional grounds — had also expressed reservations, putting the government in a difficult position. To address the issue, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni left the security package unchanged to prevent it from expiring and passed a separate decree with the amendments shortly after parliament gave final approval to the original text. "We would have preferred to make corrections during the process, but that would have caused the decree to lapse and created some problems," Meloni told reporters. Under the original plan, lawyers assisting migrants with voluntary repatriation would receive state funding only if the process was successfully completed. About 1.2 billion euros (\$1.4 billion) had been earmarked for the bonuses through 2028. The cabinet changes stipulate that payments worth around 615 euros will go not only to lawyers but also to other professionals assisting migrants, and bonuses will be paid even if repatriation is not completed, a statement said.—APP

Pakistan, Russia pledge cultural collaboration

During the visit, the ambassador was received by Syed Usman Tahir, Honorary Advisor to the Federal Minister for Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, who briefed him on the institute's academic programmes, creative work, and skill-based training initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Russia have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cultural and educational cooperation through art, education, and creative exchange during a visit by the ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan to the Niftysphere Institute of Arts and Design on Friday. The visit concluded on a positive note, with both sides expressing keen interest in future collaborations, including cultural exchange programmes, student opportunities, and joint artistic initiatives. During the visit, the ambassador was received by Syed Usman Tahir, Honorary Advisor to the Federal Minister for Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, who briefed him on the institute's academic programmes, creative work, and skill-based training initiatives. Speaking on the occasion, both sides highlighted the importance of cultural diplomacy, noting that Pakistan and Russia share rich cultural traditions that can be further strengthened through institutional linkages and collaboration. The ambassador appreciated the institute's role in promoting creative education and expressed interest in participating in upcoming cultural events and fostering partnerships with Russian institutions. The event was also attended by Misbah Khar, who commended the institute's contribution to arts and education. A highlight of the visit was a musical performance by renowned sitar player Wajih Nizami, who presented classical compositions, including a Russian melody alongside traditional Pakistani tunes, symbolising cultural harmony.



cal compositions, including a Russian melody alongside traditional Pakistani tunes, symbolising cultural harmony.

TVET Symposium cornerstone of China-Pak skills synergy

BEIJING: The Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) Symposium, convened by the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing on April 22, stands as a landmark initiative to deepen result-oriented pragmatic cooperation between China and Pakistan. Centered on high-potential sectors—including home appliances, electrical equipment, and battery and power storage manufacturing—the event, themed "Building Partnerships for Skills Development and Academia-Industry Collaboration", transcends conventional diplomatic dialogue. Against the backdrop of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it serves as a strategic catalyst for industrial advancement and sustained economic vitality. This was stated by Prof Cheng Xizhong, Senior Research Fellow at the Charhar Institute, a non-governmental Chinese think-tank on diplomacy and international studies based in Beijing. Building on the remarkable success of the 2025 Agricultural TVET Forum, this symposium acts as a critical preparatory platform for the upcoming B2B Investment Conference, which will focus on the aforementioned sectors and is scheduled to be held in Lahore on May 9-10, 2026. The event brought together senior officials from China's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 41 representatives from leading Chinese TVET institutions and enterprises, as well as senior Pakistani government officials and business delegates participating online. This convergence has forged a fully integrated channel for investment matching and skills-oriented collaboration, he said in a statement. For Pakistan, this cooperation directly addresses a longstanding bottleneck in its industrial growth. The country boasts a \$5.6 billion home appliances market and witnessed a 75% surge in electrical equipment imports, reaching nearly \$6 billion last year. However, a shortage of skilled technical personnel has left Pakistan heavily reliant on overseas products. As highlighted by Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, TVET is the bedrock of industrial development and economic resilience, and a skilled workforce is indispensable to unlocking the full potential of foreign investment. Pakistani officials further outlined ambitious plans: upgrading 250 TVET centers and rolling out a 60,000-person paid internship program, while seeking closer ties with Chinese partners to establish elite training bases and industry-driven apprenticeship schemes, he added. Prof Cheng said that this targeted TVET collaboration also injects new momentum into the Livelihood Corridor of CPEC 2.0 and the URAAN Pakistan framework, facilitating the transfer of China's advanced vocational education expertise and industrial technologies. By translating strategic consensus into tangible actions, this initiative not only empowers Pakistan's industrial upgrading, reduces its import dependency, and boosts youth employment, but also unlocks vast collaborative opportunities for Chinese educational institutions and enterprises. Rooted in the all-weather China-Pakistan friendship and the principle of win-win cooperation, this symposium has laid a solid foundation for deeper industrial and talent synergy.—DNA

Jailed Palestinian leader Barghouti could head 'democratic renewal'

LONDON: Jailed in Israel for the past 24 years, Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti remains a rallying figure for his people and could head a "democratic renewal," his son told AFP. Sometimes called the "Nelson Mandela of Palestine" by his supporters, Barghouti, 66, is Israel's most high-profile prisoner and has become a symbol of the Palestinian cause. Images of Barghouti have been painted across many walls in the occupied West Bank and were also seen in Gaza before most of the Strip was destroyed by Israeli strikes in the war. One of the leaders of the second intifada, the Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s, Marwan Barghouti is often cited as a possible successor to the 90-year-old Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas. Barghouti's son, Arab Barghouti, was only 11 when his father was jailed in 2002. An Israeli court sentenced him in June 2004 to life imprisonment after finding him guilty of involvement in four attacks that killed five people in Israel and the occupied West Bank. Arab Barghouti, 35, who lives in the West Bank city of Ramallah, has not seen his father for four years and dedicates his life to campaigning for his release. He has not managed to have direct contact with him since the deadly October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. Instead he receives updates via his father's lawyer, who last visited him on April 12 and reported that Marwan Barghouti had been violently assaulted three times in recent weeks. "We learned about ... his mistreatment and the abuse and torture," Arab Barghouti told AFP in an interview in London during a trip to campaign for his father's release. He said his father has "lost so much weight. Maybe ... 10 kilograms (22 pounds)." Israeli prison authorities told AFP in a statement described the allegations as "false, recycled, and entirely without foundation." "The Israel Prison Service has no record of events as described." Images from August already showed Barghouti's father looking frail and physically weak. But the lawyer described him "as always strong, very sharp mentally, focused," his son said. He knows exactly what's happening and what we need as Palestinians to move forward," Arab Barghouti said. Years of imprisonment have not diminished his father's popularity — quite the opposite, according to his son. "We're in desperate need for unified leadership. And I think he represents that. He represents a future democratic renewal in Palestine, unity.—APP

Borrowed Survival

Pakistan's debt dependency: Survival strategy or structural trap?

UMER SHEHZAD

The Pakistani economy has become increasingly dependent on foreign loans to meet its financial needs and maintain balance of payments equilibrium. What was intended as a temporary solution to cope with economic difficulties has gradually turned into a long-term pattern. Repeated negotiations with foreign creditors, especially the IMF, suggest that the problem is not temporary but deeply embedded in Pakistan's economic structure. This reliance extends beyond financial concerns. Rising debt servicing obligations limit government spending on development areas such as education, health, and infrastructure. At the same time, they reduce fiscal flexibility and weaken the government's ability to make independent economic decisions. These effects are felt most strongly by lower-income groups through inflation, higher taxes, and reduced access to public services. Therefore, the issue is important not only for policymakers but also for businesses and citizens. This article argues that Pakistan's reliance on external borrowing is no longer just a survival strategy, but a structural trap shaped by internal weaknesses, external pressures, and the limitations of creditor-driven policies. Pakistan's rising debt can be linked to persistent fiscal deficits, weak revenue generation, and external imbalances. Public debt now exceeds 70% of GDP, with a large portion owed to external creditors (World Bank, 2023). At the same time, more than half of government revenue is used for debt servicing, leaving limited resources for development (State Bank of Pakistan, 2024). Another key factor is Pakistan's repeated participation in IMF programs. Since 1958, the country has entered more than 20 such programs (IMF, 2023). These programs typically involve reducing subsidies, increasing taxes, currency devaluation, and tightening monetary policy. While intended to stabilize the

economy, such measures often slow growth and increase short-term economic pressure. Institutionally, economic decision-making is influenced by the Ministry of Finance, the State Bank of Pakistan, and international financial institutions. A major structural issue is the narrow tax base, with only around 1.2 to 1.5% of the population paying income tax (Federal Board of Revenue, 2025). This limits domestic revenue generation and increases reliance on borrowing. Access to external funding has also been shaped by geopolitical considerations. While this has helped Pakistan avoid immediate crises, it has reinforced long-term dependence rather than encouraging structural reform. This study uses secondary data from institutional sources, including reports from the World Bank (2023), IMF (2023), State Bank of Pakistan (2024), and Federal Board of Revenue, along with UNDP assessments. It combines economic indicators such as debt-to-GDP ratios, revenue data, and external accounts with concepts of debt sustainability and conditionality. Pakistan's debt dependency stems from structural deficiencies rather than isolated policy failures. A key issue is the limited ability of the government to generate domestic revenue. Weak tax systems, a large informal economy, and the influence of powerful groups reduce effective revenue collection. The role of international lenders adds further complexity. IMF policies aim to stabilize the macroeconomic environment, but their focus on fiscal deficits and inflation can place pressure on lower-income groups while limiting investment in growth-oriented sectors. External factors further worsen the situation. Dependence on imported energy and a narrow export base create persistent balance of payments pressures and increase demand for foreign exchange. Currency depreciation raises the cost of repaying external debt, adding strain to public finances. This situation can be understood as a debt dependency cycle, where new borrowing is used to repay existing debt, increasing future obligations and reinforcing reliance on external lenders. It is closely

linked to balance of payments pressures, where persistent trade deficits are financed through borrowing. Borrowing helps maintain short-term stability and prevents default, but it limits policy flexibility and creates long-term dependence. A large share of government revenue is directed toward debt repayment, leaving fewer resources for development and human capital investment. Current policy responses have not fully resolved the issue because they focus on short-term stabilization. While they may provide temporary relief, they do not address underlying problems such as inefficiency, weak exports, and governance challenges. As a result, Pakistan continues to rely on external support, repeating the same cycle. Breaking this cycle requires a shift toward long-term structural reform. First, improving the tax system is essential by expanding the tax base, reducing exemptions, and strengthening enforcement. Second, Pakistan must move toward export-led growth. Investment in value-added industries, improved productivity, and greater competitiveness can help generate foreign exchange and reduce trade imbalances. Third, better management of government spending is needed. Instead of broad cuts, the focus should be on reducing inefficiencies while protecting key sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. However, these reforms are difficult to implement. Political resistance, weak institutions, and economic uncertainty can slow progress. Rapid changes may also create short-term instability, so reforms must be gradual and supported by strong institutions. Pakistan's continued reliance on external borrowing reflects deeper structural challenges within its economy. While debt provides short-term relief, it creates long-term constraints on growth and policy independence. Pakistan now faces a clear choice: remain dependent on external support or pursue the structural changes needed for sustainable and independent economic growth.

—The author is a researcher in AXIS youth led think tank at TNS Beaconhouse

Myanmar urged to free more prisoners

MANILA: The Philippines, chair of the regional bloc ASEAN, on Friday encouraged more prisoner releases in Myanmar, including ousted former leader Aung San Suu Kyi and said a recent amnesty was a positive step toward inclusive national dialogue. "We reaffirm our commitment to assisting Myanmar, as an integral part of ASEAN, to achieve a peaceful and durable solution to the political crisis in the country," the Philippines said in statement as chair of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Aung San Suu Kyi has been in detention since her elected government was toppled in a 2021 coup and her welfare was discussed this week by Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow when he met Myanmar's new President Min Aung Hlaing. Sihasak said Min Aung Hlaing, who led the 2021 coup, told him Aung San Suu Kyi, 80, was being "well looked after" and "good things" for her were being considered, without elaborating. Sihasak said he had conveyed ASEAN's concerns about her welfare. Aung San Suu Kyi has been serving a 27-year sentence after being convicted of multiple offenses based on charges her allies said were politically motivated to keep her at bay, ranging from incitement and corruption to election fraud and violating a state secrets law. Her sentence was commuted by one-sixth as part of an amnesty last week for thousands of prisoners that included the release of her ally, Win Myint, the ousted former president and co-defendant in many of her trials.—APP

Thai court accepts ethics case against opposition leader, MPs

BANGKOK: A Thai court decided on Friday to hear a case against 10 MPs, including the leader of the largest opposition party, for trying to reform the royal insult law, but refrained from suspending them. The progressive People's Party, led by Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, came second in February's general election. An earlier iteration of the organization had put forward draft legislation to amend the strict lese-majeste law. The National Anti-Corruption Commission referred their actions to the Supreme Court, alleging a potential breach of ethics. The court said Friday it accepted the case, but decided not to exercise its power to immediately suspend the MPs from their parliamentary positions. The case "carries sufficient weight for the court to proceed with its consideration," one of the three-judge Supreme Court panel said. But the court "has not ordered the suspension of the MPs' duties," he added. At a news conference after Friday's ruling, Natthaphong said the legal reform effort was "never intended to undermine the democratic system under the monarchy." "Our objective goes beyond political careers — it is about ensuring equality for the people," he said.—APP

Child vaccine catch-up drive on course to hit target: UN

GENEVA: The United Nations on Friday said a three-year effort to immunize children who missed routine vaccinations due to the Covid-19 crisis was on course to reach the 21 million target. The pandemic, which swept around the world in 2020, severely strained health systems and disrupted vaccination campaigns, resulting in a resurgence of infectious diseases such as measles and polio. The UN's World Health Organization and the UN children's agency UNICEF, plus Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance said in a joint statement that the so-called Big Catch-Up campaign "is on track to meet its target of catching up 21 million children." The vaccine drive concluded in March. While final data is still being compiled, by the end of December 2025, the campaign had reached an estimated 18.3 million children aged one to five across 36 countries in Africa and Asia with more than 100 million doses of life-saving vaccines. Of those children reached, an estimated 12.3 million had never received a vaccine dose before, while 15 million had never previously received a measles vaccine. Besides reaching those children, the agencies said the drive had also improved immunization programs, making them better equipped to identify older children who were not on the system, having missed earlier doses. "By protecting children who missed out on vaccinations because of disruptions to health services caused by Covid-19, the Big Catch-Up has helped to undo one of the pandemic's major negative consequences," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Vaccines are facing a tide of misinformation and disinformation, the agencies said, while cuts in foreign aid spending were also taking their toll. The statement said chronic gaps in routine immunization were "plain to see," with measles outbreaks rising in every region with around 11 million cases in 2024. The surge is compounded by "declining vaccine confidence in some previously high-coverage communities." The WHO's vaccines director Kate O'Brien told reporters that while the person parents trusted most on vaccination remained the health worker they interact with, "what is really troubling and a very high concern to all of us is that there has been evermore a politicization of vaccines and of health." Gavi chief executive Sania Nishtar added that "we are up against a social media engine which has an incentive to promote disinformation, and I think that needs to be strategically tackled." "The social media algorithms promote hate, disinformation and lies. Put a good piece of information out there and you will have no traction," she said. Ephrem Lemanga, global chief of immunization at UNICEF, said social media algorithms "tend to reward outrage over accuracy, and there is so much anti-vaccine content" that it has its own "economy behind it.—DNA

Briefs

Asia shares mixed, oil advances on US-Iran deadlock

SINGAPORE: Asia shares struggled on Friday and oil prices resumed their rise, as a shaky ceasefire in the Middle East war and stalled US-Iran peace talks gave investors little to cheer. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.3% and was set to end the week with a 0.8% gain, while Japan's Nikkei added 0.45% and stocks in South Korea, China and Hong Kong fell. Nasdaq futures NQ1 and S&P 500 futures ES1 advanced 0.6% and 0.1%, respectively, after closing lower in the cash session overnight, while EUROSTOXX 50 futures STX1 were down 0.65% and FTSE futures FFI1 fell 0.9%. The mixed showing underscored the tense market mood as investors this week seesawed between hope for an imminent end to the war and fear that it might not come soon. "The thing is, a ceasefire is a funny term to use in conjunction with a blockade and rolling tensions and animosities," said Vishnu Varathan, Mizuho's head of macro strategy for APAC. Iran on Thursday flaunted its tightened grip over the key Strait of Hormuz with a video of commandos in a speedboat storming a huge cargo ship, while US President Donald Trump said he had ordered the Navy to "shoot and kill" Iranian boats laying mines in the strait, and step up demining activity. Trump's comments came just days after he said he would indefinitely extend what had been a two-week ceasefire with Iran to allow for further peace talks. - APP

KP police to get new uniforms

DNA
PESHAWAR: The police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have decided to introduce changes to the uniform design for field operational officers. As per details, the Central Police Office has prepared a draft of the "Uniform Field Operational 2026 Regulations" to change the dress of the cops. According to the proposed design, field personnel will wear a grey shirt, khaki six-pocket trousers, and black shoes. For female police officers, a black scarf has been introduced as part of the uniform. The draft also specifies that the shirts for operational female officers will be of a length reaching the trouser pocket level. The uniform colours, design, badges, and caps will be standardised across the province. Police personnel from the merged districts will also have uniforms consistent with those in other districts. All officers and personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will wear a standard black belt and black shoes. However, police officials clarified that there will be no changes to the uniforms of officers performing office-based duties.

Pak urges UNSC to push India to restore Indus Waters Treaty

DPM/FM Dar urged the Security Council to take cognizance of the alarming situation and call on India to restore the full implementation of IWT, resume all Treaty-mandated cooperation and data-sharing without delay, desist from any form of water coercion, and comply fully with its international obligations in good faith

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to address India's suspension of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), warning of "grave" security, environmental, and humanitarian risks for 240 million people. A letter from Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, addressed to Ambassador Jamal Fares Al-Rowaieci of Bahrain, which hold the 15-member Council's presidency for the month of April, draws attention to India's "illegal" decision to hold the IWT in abeyance one

year after its suspension amid heightened political tensions with Pakistan. The letter was handed over to the Security Council President by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, at UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday, according to a press release issued by the Pakistani Mission. DPM/FM Dar urged the Security Council to take cognizance of the alarming situation and call on India to restore the full implementation of IWT, resume all Treaty-mandated cooperation and data-sharing without delay, desist from any form of water coercion, and comply fully with its international obligations in good faith.

In this regard, Ambassador Asim Ahmad also briefed the Security Council president on the "regurgitation of baseless allegations and propaganda by India at a time when Pakistan is engaged in serious mediation efforts to promote regional and international peace and security." The Pakistani envoy also underscored that the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute - a longstanding item on the Security Council's agenda - was the root cause of instability in South Asia that necessitated a just and lasting settlement in accordance with relevant Council's resolutions and wishes of the Kashmiri people. The 66-year-old treaty governs the distribution of waters from the

Indus river system, allocating the western rivers, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, primarily to Pakistan, which depends on them for most of its agriculture. The agreement has long been seen as one of the most durable arrangements between the two countries, surviving wars and decades of hostility. However, India announced on Apr. 23, 2025 it was holding the treaty in abeyance. The move came as India, without producing any evidence, accused Pakistan of being behind a militant attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Pakistan categorically denied any involvement in the attack, which led to a brief but intense military conflict between the two countries in May 2025.



ISLAMABAD: Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ambassador Tarik Ali Khan called on DPM/FM, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. - DNA

US offers \$10 mln reward Iraqi armed group leader

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US State Department is offering up to \$10 million for information on the leader of the Tehran-backed Iraqi armed group Kataeb Sayyid Al-Shuhada (KSS), which Washington designates as a terrorist organization. US officials said in a social media post Thursday they were seeking information on KSS leader Hashim Finyan Rahim Al-Saraji, also known as Abu Alaa Al-Walal. The group has "killed Iraqi civilians and attacked US diplomatic facilities in Iraq, as well as attacking US military bases and personnel in Iraq and Syria," Washington said. The post notes "you could be eligible for relocation and a reward" for information on Al-Saraji's whereabouts. Al-Saraji has a seat within

the Coordination Framework, the ruling Shiite alliance that holds the parliamentary majority. Iran-backed groups have targeted the US embassy in Iraq's capital, its diplomatic and logistics facility at Baghdad's airport, and oil fields operated by foreign companies. Iraq, which had recently regained some stability after decades of conflict, was immediately dragged into the Middle East war triggered when the United States and Israel attacked Iran February 28. Earlier this month, a similar reward was offered for the leader of Kataeb Hezbollah, a powerful Iraqi armed group who kidnapped US journalist Shelly Kittleton last month and held her for a week before setting her free. Washington has piled pressure on Baghdad to fight the pro-Tehran groups by suspending cash shipments and freezing funding for security programs in Iraq, according to US media reports this week.

Load management continues: Power Division

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division on Friday said that electricity demand increased across the country, while hydropower generation improved during peak hours due to enhanced water releases from Tarbela Dam. According to a spokesperson, total hydel generation reached around 5,800 megawatts during last night's peak hours, compared to the installed capacity of about 11,500 megawatts. He said that increased water outflows from Tarbela Dam helped boost electricity generation, which also contributed to improved stability of the national grid. The spokesperson added that an additional 500 megawatts of electricity

from the southern region was transmitted to the central grid, including an increase of 100 megawatts compared to April 22. Despite improved generation, power distribution companies carried out up to two hours of load management during peak hours last night. He clarified that economic load management on high-loss feeders was being implemented as per policy and had no connection with peak-hour load management. The spokesperson further said that power plants with a combined capacity of 5,500 megawatts operating on LNG were not generating electricity due to global supply constraints. - APP

\$1.2 billion IMF tranche approval likely in May

14 out of 17 quantitative performance and indicative targets achieved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has achieved 14 of the 17 quantitative performance and indicative benchmarks set under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme for end-December 2025. The Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) tax collection target for the end of December 2025 could not be materialised, while for two other indicative targets, the relevant data was not available. The income tax revenues collected from the retailers could not be provided to the IMF, as the FBR had agreed with the IMF for the collection of a hefty amount from retailers in the current fiscal year. The IMF staff has apprised the Washington-based lender's Executive Board and shared a detailed report on the basis of which the Executive Board is likely to consider approval of the fourth tranche worth \$1.2 billion in May 2026. The total accumulated spending on health and education stood at Rs1,360 billion by the end of December 2025, in line with the envisaged target of the IMF. Top official sources confirmed to The News on Thursday that Pakistan and the IMF had struck a staff-level agree-

ment under \$7 billion EFF in which the Fund staff prepared its appraisal on seven quantitative performance criteria for end of December 2025 and found that the net international reserves of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) were adjusted from negative \$5.6 billion to negative \$6.99 billion for end of December 2025, which was successfully met. The ceiling on the general government primary budget deficit stood at Rs4.1 trillion for the end of December 2025, which was met. The cash transfers of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) stood at Rs326 billion, so this quantitative target was also materialised. The IMF envisaged a target of 500,000 new return filers, and the IMF apprised in its report that the data was not available for the end of December 2025. Total government guarantees stood at Rs4,542 billion, and this target was also achieved successfully. The ceiling of SBP's net domestic assets stood at Rs15,016 billion, which was also materialised. The ceiling of SBP stock on net foreign currency swap and forward position stood at negative \$1.86 billion for the end of December 2025, in line with the envisaged target agreed with the IMF. The primary balance of the provincial government was envisaged at Rs1,227 billion.

Macron for ME stability

NICOSIA: French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday it was in "everyone's interest" for stability to return to the Middle East, as the spillover of the Iran war rattles the global economy. "It is in everyone's interest for stability to return as soon as possible and for the world's economies to be reassured," Macron said as he arrived at an European Union summit in Nicosia, where talks with Middle East leaders are also scheduled. - APP

Karachi case fixed

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has fixed for hearing an important case concerning the removal of encroachments in Karachi, along with a contempt of court petition filed against Sindh Minister Saeed Ghani in the same matter. According to details, the contempt petition against Saeed Ghani was filed in 2019 over an alleged violation of court orders in the encroachments case. The petition has now been formally scheduled for a hearing. A two-member bench of the Federal Constitutional Court, headed by Justice Aamir Farooq, will hear the case on April 30. - APP

DeepSeek release new model

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese startup DeepSeek released a new artificial intelligence model with "drastically reduced" costs on Friday, more than a year after it stunned the world with a low-cost reasoning model that matched the capabilities of US rivals. The AI race has intensified the rivalry between China and the United States, and the White House on Thursday accused Chinese entities of a massive effort to steal artificial intelligence technology.

Pentagon email floats suspending Spain from Nato

DNA

WASHINGTON: An internal Pentagon email outlines options for the United States to punish Nato allies it believes failed to support US operations in the war with Iran, including suspending Spain from the alliance and reviewing the US position on Britain's claim to the Falkland Islands, a US official told Reuters. The policy options are detailed in a note expressing frustration at some allies' perceived reluctance or refusal to grant the United States access, basing and overflight rights - known as ABO - for the Iran war, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the email. The email stated that ABO is "just the absolute baseline for Nato," according to the official, who added that the options were circulating at high levels in the Pentagon. One option in the email envisions suspending "difficult" countries from important or prestigious positions at Nato, the official said. President Donald Trump has harshly criticised Nato allies for not sending their

navies to help open the Strait of Hormuz, which was closed to global shipping following the start of the air war on February 28. He has also declared he is considering withdrawing from the alliance. "Wouldn't you if you were me?" Trump asked Reuters in an April 1 interview, in response to a question about whether the US pulling out of Nato was a possibility. But the email does not suggest that the United States do so, the official said. It also does not propose closing bases in Europe. The official declined to say whether the options included a widely expected US drawdown of some forces from Europe, however. Asked for comment on the email, Pentagon Press Secretary Kingsley Wilson responded: "As President Trump has said, despite everything that the United States has done for our Nato allies, they were not there for us. The War Department will ensure that the President has credible options to ensure that our allies are no longer a paper tiger and instead do their part. We have no further comment on any internal deliberations to that effect," Wilson said.

Trump threatens UK PM of tariffs

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he would impose tariffs on Britain if Prime Minister Keir Starmer does not drop the digital service tax, The Telegraph reported on Friday, citing an interview with the president. Trump told The Telegraph he would "put a big tariff on the UK" if it did not drop its tax, which is viewed as unfairly targeting US tech companies. The Unit-

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ed Kingdom rolled out its two percent digital services tax in 2020, a move that has been criticized by Trump and his predecessor Democrat Joe Biden. The digital service tax targets companies

like Apple, Alphabet's Google, and Meta. "I don't like it when they target American companies, because basically, you're talking about our great American companies... and the top companies in the world," Trump said. "We've been looking at it, and we can meet that very easily by just putting a big tariff on the UK. So they better be careful. If they don't drop the tax, we'll probably put a big tariff on the UK," he added. Trump's comments come ahead of a visit by Britain's King Charles to the US, next week.



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