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Araqchi meets Russian President

Iran wants nuclear talks to be deferred

Iran looking into Trump's request for negotiations, foreign minister says

DNA

ISLAMABAD/MOSCOW: Iran, through Pakistani mediators, has offered a new proposal on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and ending the war, with nuclear negotiations postponed for a later stage, US media outlet Axios reported, citing an American official and two sources with knowledge of the matter. Hopes of reviving peace efforts receded on Saturday when US President Donald Trump scrapped a visit to Islamabad by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi shuttled to and from mediators Pakistan and Oman on Sunday before flying to Russia, with the two sides still seemingly far apart on issues including Iran's nuclear ambitions and access through the crucial Strait of Hormuz. Trump said Iran could telephone if it wants to negotiate an end to their two-month war. "If they want to talk, they can come to us, or they can call us. You know, there is a telephone. We have nice, secure lines," Trump told "The Sunday Briefing" on Fox News. "They know what has to be in the agreement. It's very simple: They cannot have a nuclear weapon; otherwise, there's no reason to meet," Trump said. Iran has long demanded Washington acknowledge its right to enrich uranium, which Tehran says it only seeks for peaceful purposes, but which Western powers say is aimed at building nuclear weapons. Although a ceasefire has paused full scale fighting in the conflict, which began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, no agreement has been reached on terms to end a war that has killed thousands, driven up oil prices, fuelled inflation and darkened

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US forces turn back 38 ships

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that American naval forces have directed 38 ships — many of them oil tankers — to turn around or return to port rather than enter or exit Iranian waters. The ongoing maritime blockade, which began on April 13, 2026, targets all vessels attempting to reach or leave Iranian ports in the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, including approaches to the Strait of Hormuz. US warships, aircraft, and other assets from a carrier strike group are enforcing the restrictions. Latest Updates (as of April 27, 2026) CENTCOM stated on X that US forces continue to enforce the blockade, warning ships to change course. Most vessels have complied without incident. The blockade follows a fragile ceasefire and is part of a maximum-pressure campaign by the US. Iran has described the action as a violation of the ceasefire and has carried out limited retaliatory measures, including seizing ships in the Strait of Hormuz. No major combat incidents have been widely reported, though there have been isolated cases of warnings, disabling fire, or vessel seizures for non-compliance.

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PM allows spectators for PSL playoffs

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi announced on Monday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif granted approval for public attendance in all three playoff matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11. "Just had a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and I'm pleased to share that we have secured his approval for public attendance in all three PSL playoff matches as well," Naqvi wrote on his official X handle. The development comes two days after the premier had already approved spectator presence for the tournament final following a request from franchise owners.

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CHANGSHA: President Asif Ali Zardari confers Sitara-i-Pakistan upon Prof. Pan Xiangbin at a special investiture ceremony. — DNA

Pak-EU investment forum opens amid low European turnout

The forum comes at a crucial juncture as Pakistan seeks renewal of its GSP Plus status, which provides preferential access to European markets. Islamabad views the forum as an opportunity to strengthen economic ties and attract much-needed foreign investment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-EU Investment Forum is set to be held in Islamabad on Tuesday, April 28, at a time when economic diplomacy is becoming increasingly critical for Pakistan. However, the event is expected to witness a significantly reduced international presence due to recent developments in the country. Initially, around 800 European companies had registered to participate, reflecting strong interest in exploring Pakistan's market. Yet, less than half are now expected to attend. A combination of factors has contributed to this decline. The recent shutdown of Islamabad during the US-Iran talks created uncertainty and logistical challenges for foreign participants. Additionally, a sharp rise in international airfares has further discouraged travel, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises from Europe. The forum comes at a crucial juncture as Pakistan seeks renewal of its GSP Plus status, which provides preferential access to European markets. Islamabad views the

forum as an opportunity to strengthen economic ties and attract much-needed foreign investment. However, recent developments in global trade dynamics have added complexity to these efforts. The European Union's recent agreement with India has placed New Delhi in a more advantageous position, raising concerns in Islamabad. Pakistani officials have expressed dissatisfaction, arguing that they deserve similar trade facilitation. European policymakers, however, maintain that comparisons between Pakistan and India are not entirely appropriate, given India's significantly larger market size and economic capacity. Compounding these challenges, Pakistan's exports to European countries have declined in recent months. Analysts attribute this downturn largely to reduced purchasing power within EU economies, partly influenced by the ongoing Gulf crisis and broader global economic pressures. Despite these hurdles, Pakistani authorities remain hopeful that the forum will still serve as a platform to rebuild investor confidence and reaffirm long-term economic cooperation between Pakistan and the European Union.

Journalist gets bail

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A judicial magistrate on Monday granted post-arrest bail to senior journalist Fakharur Rehman, who was arrested over the weekend by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) in a case registered under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). According to an NCCIA first information report (FIR) dated April 20, the journalist was one of nine accused of spreading "false and misleading information against state institutions" through the social media platform X. The NCCIA had registered the FIR under Section 20 (offences against the dignity of a natural person) and Section 26-A (dissemination of false and fake information) of Peca. During the hearing on Monday, Barrister Ahad Khokhar appeared on behalf of the journalist and argued that, according to the NCCIA report, his client's mobile phone had already been recovered.

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Too early to drop curbs against Iran

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday that it was too early to drop sanctions imposed on Iran. "We think the dropping of sanctions would be too early," she said in Berlin at a meeting of the conservative CDU and its CSU Bavarian sister party, adding that the sanctions were in place due to Iran's suppression of its own population. "We first have to see a change, a fundamental change in Iran for the dropping of sanctions," von der Leyen added.

PTI leadership tries to iron out differences

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday met with the opposition alliance's leaders, Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Raja Nasir Abbas

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Amid reports of a rift between the PTI and the Tehreek Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday met with the opposition alliance's leaders, Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Raja Nasir Abbas. The meeting comes amid reports that the TTAP leaders, who are also the opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate, were not being involved in the decision-making process. It took place at Achakzai's residence in Islamabad. It was also attended by former NA speaker Asad Qaiser, TTAP leader Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, and other leaders. In a statement shared on X, the TTAP spokesperson Hussain Ahmed Yousafzai said, "Upon the directives of PTI founder Imran Khan, CM Afridi had an important meeting with Achakzai at his residence."

"During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the health and medical treatment of former prime minister Imran Khan, concerns regarding his access to justice, restrictions on signing legal documents, the upcoming federal budget, the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, provincial rights, the overall political situation in the country, and politically motivated cases," Yousafzai added. "The meeting agreed on adopting a joint strategy to address national issues and emphasised the need to further strengthen coordination among opposition parties," the spokesperson said. During a public rally in Mardan last week, Afridi had reiterated that the PTI founder had instructed him to consult Abbas and Achakzai in the decision-making process, saying that he would be mindful of it. Meanwhile, PTI Secretary General Salman Akram, while criticising Imran's sister Aleema Khan, had said

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Briefs

Pakistan and China ink MoU

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan and China on Monday signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of desalination, agricultural technology and the tea industry. President Asif Ali Zardari, who is on a five-day visit to China, witnessed the signing of the MoUs between Pakistani and Chinese entities. The first MoU was concluded between the local government, the Government of Sindh and Lucion Environmental Technology Group for collaboration on a seawater desalination project in Karachi aimed at increasing the city's supply of water. The MoU was signed from the Pakistani side by Sharjeel Inam Memon, Sindh Senior Minister and from the Chinese side by Yuhui, Secretary of the Party Branch and Chairman of Lucion Environmental Technology Group.

Info Ministry denies any attack on Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The information ministry on Monday rubbished reports by the Afghan media alleging Pakistan carried out attacks targeting a university and residential areas in the neighbouring country's Kunar province. In a post on X, the ministry shared a screenshot of a social media post by Afghan news outlet Tolo News, which claimed that Pakistan had carried out attacks on the Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University and residential areas. The information ministry said the Afghan media's claim was a "blatant lie and an attempt to gain sympathy to cover up support [provided] by Afghan Taliban to Fitna al Khawarij".

Fitna al Khwarij

Several Taliban posts destroyed; forces foil infiltration attempt

The hike is the first in almost three years, as rising oil prices from the US-Israel war on Iran threaten to push inflation higher in the import-dependent nation

DNA

WANA: Pak armed forces foiled an infiltration attempt by Fitna al-Khwarij and destroyed several posts in response to unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban in Angoor Adda along the Pak-Afghan border. Owing to the timely and vigilant action of the Pakistan Army, the infiltration attempt was thwarted. Following their failure, the Afghan Taliban targeted the civilian population. As a result of the firing, three civilians, including two women, were injured and rushed to Wana Hospital. In the South Waziristan area of Zalol Khel, Angoor Adda, unprovoked firing by the Afghan Taliban was met with a strong retaliatory response from the Pakistan Army, resulting in the destruction of several Afghan posts. Following the effective operations of Ghazab-Lil-Haq, the Afghan Taliban, frustrated by their setbacks, have begun

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Cop martyred in Pishin

APP

QUETTA: A police head constable was martyred in a terrorist attack on a checkpoint in the Huramzai area of Balochistan's Pishin district on Monday. According to police, armed militants on a motorcycle opened fire on a police checkpoint using automatic weapons, following which police personnel retaliated. "The exchange of fire, which continued for some time, resulted in the martyrdom of a head constable," a police official who wished to remain anonymous told, adding that the

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SBP increases policy rate by 100bps to 11.5pc

The hike is the first in almost three years, as rising oil prices from the US-Israel war on Iran threaten to push inflation higher in the import-dependent nation

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday raised its key policy rate to 11.5 per cent. In its meeting today, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) "decided to raise the policy rate by 100 basis points to 11.50pc" with effect from Tuesday, the SBP said in a statement. The hike is the first in almost three years, as rising oil prices from the US-Israel war on Iran threaten to push inflation higher in the import-dependent nation. In its detailed statement, the MPC noted that the "prolonging of the Middle East conflict has intensified risks to the macroeconomic outlook". "In particular, the global energy prices, freight charges and insurance premiums continue to remain significantly above pre-conflict levels," it added. The MPC highlighted that supply chain disruptions have contributed to the "prevailing uncertainty". "While the incoming data has been broadly

in line with the MPC's expectations so far, the impact of these global developments will be visible in key economic indicators going forward," it forecasted. Citing its assessment that inflation was "likely to increase and remain above the target range in the next few quarters", the MPC "deemed it necessary to maintain a tighter policy stance to keep inflation expectations anchored and contain second-round effects of the current supply shock to bring inflation within the target range". It stressed that the move would be important to preserve macroeconomic stability, which is necessary for achieving sustainable economic growth. A higher interest rate will yield more money for exporters and remitters but create serious problems for importers. It will also increase the debt burden of the government, which borrows heavily from banks and corporates to accumulate liquidity needed to run the government.

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History in Empathy Over 1.6m people in Punjab benefit from Rashan Card, Himmat Card & Minority Card

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired a special meeting of the Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Mal Department for a detailed briefing on progress of ongoing departmental programs like Rashan card, Himmat Card and Minority Card. Secretary Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Mal Department briefed her in detail that in a short span of time, over 1.6 million people have benefited from these social welfare programs of the Punjab government. He said that earlier financial assistance had been provided to over 100,000 special individuals through Punjab CM Himmat Card program; while in the current financial year, 200,000 individuals will be provided financial aid through this programme. He added that monthly financial assistance is being provided to over 1.4 million people in Punjab through Rashan Card programme. On the occasion, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif reviewed all ongoing programs of the Social Welfare &

Bait-ul-Mal Department, and directed the authorities concerned to include an additional 50,000 people in the Rashan Card programme through "Tell Maryam (Maryam Ko Bataein)" program. She was also apprised by the authorities responsible that 100,000 needy minority individuals are receiving quarterly payments of Rs. 10,500 through Minority Card. They highlighted that under a special program of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, over 16,000 people have also received wheelchairs and 16 types of assistive devices; whereas under Chief Minister's Dhee Rani program, 5,000 collective marriage ceremonies have been held. Chief Minister Punjab directed the completion of 9,000 target in Dhee Rani program by including more families in the program. She also directed the relevant stakeholders to provide facilities for cleaning and servicing of wheelchairs and other assistive devices, besides the establishment of a regular orphanage for abandoned minor children. She also directed to obtain assistance from reputable NGOs for the welfare

of women and children. Participants of the meeting were also briefed that Social Welfare Department's special helpline, 1737, would be established. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the related authorities to include private sector in revamping, and branding of industrial home, besides establishment of display centers in public-private partnership. She also directed them to digitize the system for providing medicines from Zakat funds. In the meeting, an in-principle decision was made for data collection and mapping of beggars across Punjab. She directed to devise a robust financial assistance package for those living below poverty line, and said that their goal is the welfare and assistance of common people, for which they will make Social Welfare Department in Punjab public-friendly like those in the European countries. She added that they want to take every possible step for the rehabilitation of economically disadvantaged individuals, as financial assistance is being provided to low-income people through Rashan Card.



ISLAMABAD: A view of traffic on Islamabad Highway in the Federal Capital.

Regional Ombudsman visits District Jail Shaheed Benazirabad

NAWABSHAH: Regional Director Ombudsman, Shaheed Benazirabad, Khan Muhammad Zardari, visited District Jail Shaheed Benazirabad on Monday. On this occasion, he inspected various sections of the jail and reviewed the facilities being provided to inmates. The Regional Director also met with prisoners and listened to their concerns. He directed jail administration to treat inmates with compassion and ensure the provision of all basic facilities in accordance with the Jail Manual.

RD emphasized promoting reformative measures within prisons so that inmates can become productive members of society. During the visit, Jail Superintendent Ghulam Rasool Mashori briefed the Regional Director on ongoing administrative matters, security arrangements, and facilities being provided to prisoners. Regional Director Ombudsman assured that the Ombudsman institution would continue to play its role in resolving prisoners' issues and ensuring redressal of complaints. On this occasion, Additional Director of Social Welfare Murtaza Gohar, Information Officer Sher Muhammad Jamali, Assistant Jail Superintendent Sada Hussain Zardari, and other relevant officials were also present. _APP

Rawalpindi Ring Road 85 percent completed

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Ring Road project has reached 85 per cent completion, with authorities stepping up efforts to ensure its timely completion. Chairing a review meeting at the Commissioner's Office here on Monday, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Amir Khattak described the 38.3-kilometre project as a "game changer" for easing traffic congestion in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. He directed officials to utilise all available resources to meet deadlines, noting that chal-

lenges such as disruptions in material supply and rising water levels were causing delays. He called for a coordinated strategy to address these issues promptly. Khattak also ordered the construction of water storage tanks along the route, saying they would serve both project requirements and public use, including by the Horticulture Agency. During a briefing, officials said 99 per cent of work on the Railway Bridge and Maira Mohra Interchange had been completed, while the Nala Bridge stood at 97 per cent completion. The

commissioner directed that the remaining work be expedited to meet a target completion date by the end of May. The meeting also reviewed pending payments related to land acquisition. Khattak instructed the concerned deputy commissioners to ensure immediate clearance of dues to avoid any hindrance to progress. He added that a proposal to establish a dedicated policing system for the Ring Road was under consideration, with plans to deploy a separate traffic police force to maintain smooth traffic flow. _APP

4-day training camp concludes at Baragali

PESHAWAR: A four-day-long training camp on "Civic Engagement, Social Change and Development", concluded at the Baragali Summer Camp of University of Peshawar. The camp was organized by Vibrant Perspective (SMC-Private) Ltd., sponsored by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in collaboration with the Department of History, University of Peshawar. The training camp, held from April 23 to 26, 2026, brought together over 100 youth participants from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the Newly Merged Districts. The initiative aimed to equip young leaders with knowledge and skills to promote active citizenship, community development and constructive social change. The program

comprised by four days, featured a blend of interactive learning sessions, group work, role-playing exercises and exposure visits. Thematic sessions covered civic responsibility and democratic values, social change and leadership, sustainable development and dialogue as well as conflict resolution. Participants also engaged in structured debates and team-building activities designed to foster critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving. Representatives from the Directorate of Youth Affairs KP actively participated throughout the camp, including Zubair Khattak, Deputy Director; Muhammad Irfan Sardar, Deputy Director; Muhammad Usman, Assistant Director; and Muhammad Zabi, Assistant Director. In the

camp, academic experts and development practitioners facilitated sessions, sharing insights on youth engagement strategies and grassroots development models. Speaking at the closing ceremony, the Chairman, Department of History, University of Peshawar, emphasized the importance of such platforms. "Investing in youth capacity is investing in the future of KP. This camp has provided participants with the tools to become agents of positive change in their communities," he said. Deputy Director Youth Affairs, Zubair Khattak lauded the collaboration, noting that "civic education is essential for strengthening democratic culture. He added the youth have shown remarkable energy and commitment during these four days. _APP

Call for modern policing, rewards for outstanding performance

QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Muhammad Tahir has stressed the importance of strengthening the investigation system to ensure modern policing and effective public service. He said that self-accountability and individual responsibility are key to eliminating crime, while protecting citizens' lives and property remains the police's foremost duty. The IG made these remarks during a meeting with trainee Deputy Superintendents of Police from Sindh, led by Deputy Commandant Sarfraz Ahmed Falaki of the National Police Academy Islamabad, at the Central Police Office Balochistan. Senior officers including Additional IG Operations Agha Muhammad Yousuf, DIG Finance Sohail Ahmed Sheikh, AIG Operations Naveed Alam, Course Commander Muhammad Jawad Ishaq, and other officials were present. The IG urged young officers to adopt professionalism, modern policing practices, and a spirit of public service. He advised them to be good listeners and learners rather than merely authority figures, stressing that field experience is invaluable for future responsibilities. He highlighted the growing importance of IT-based policing, encouraging officers to focus on new trends and skills. Addressing female officers, he said they can serve as role models for women citizens, ensuring that women's issues are addressed without compromise. The IG noted that reforms are underway in Balochistan Police, including the training of former Levies personnel who were merged into the police force. Since January 1, 2026, a three-month training program has been in progress to enhance their professional capabilities. _APP

PM&DC accelerates probe into medical student death

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) has intensified its investigation into the recent medical student suicide case. According to PM&DC, the council is actively investigating recent cases of student suicides, including the tragic death of Ms Fahmeeda Laghari, a third-year student at Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas. In continuation of these proceedings, the President of PM&DC, Prof Dr Rizwan Taj, has constituted a fact-finding committee to conduct a parallel inquiry, to expedite the process, ensuring independent assessment, and gathering detailed information in the Fahmeeda Laghari case. In this regard, a senior female officer from PM&DC was deputed to visit the bereaved family. She conveyed condolences on behalf of the Council and collected first-hand information regarding the events leading to the incident. The officer also visited the affected student's home, where she met with family members to gain a

clearer understanding of the circumstances surrounding this deeply distressing event. Her report has been formally submitted and is currently under review as part of the ongoing proceedings. According to the family's version, the deceased had been experiencing significant stress in the days preceding the incident, allegedly due to continuous harassment by certain individuals, including fellow students. The family further stated that complaints had been brought to the attention of the college administration; however, they believe that no effective action was taken. Relevant material and preliminary evidence have been shared, while further clarity is awaited through forensic examination of mobile data. President PM&DC earlier conducted a preliminary hearing, which was convened on April 21, 2026, during which the college administration was summoned to present its position along with complete institutional

records. After which, the cases were referred to the Disciplinary Committee for proceedings. He has taken immediate and sustained cognizance of the Fahmeeda Laghari case since its reporting, ensuring that the matter is addressed with urgency, sensitivity, and in accordance with due process. He has strongly condemned the circumstances surrounding the incident, particularly the serious allegations of harassment, and described the loss of a young medical student under such conditions as deeply alarming. PM&DC emphasizes that these statements represent the family's perspective and are subject to verification through due process. Under the direct supervision of the President of PM&DC, the council has formally requisitioned complete records from the institution and relevant authorities, including details of the incident, outcomes of internal and governmental inquiries, and measures taken by the college administration. _APP

WSSP organizes workshop on Lessons Learned from CLC Model

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) in collaboration with UNICEF, organized a one-day workshop on "Lessons Learned from WSSP's Community Liaison Cell (CLC) Model" in which representatives from WSSCs across the province, departments of local government, public health engineering, universities, UNICEF, environment and other relevant sectors participated. Chief Executive Officer WSSP, Yasir Ali Khan, CEO WSSC Kohat Muhammad Saad, CEO WSSC Bannu Sikandar Hayat, General Manager Operations WSSP Muhammad Ijaz and GM Planning Syed Zameer-ul-Hasan, among other officials, were present on the occasion. The workshop participants were informed about the goals, responsibilities, targets achieved so far, community participation in services, awareness campaigns, measures to reduce the burden of waste, capacity building of staff, students, scholars and local government representatives, among other issues. The results obtained were shared with WSSCs and other institutions and it was emphasized that the CLC model should be adopted in all WSSCs to improve services. Addressing the inaugural session, CEO Yasir Ali Khan said that the WSSP CLC model has yielded positive results. It is an important project for cleanliness, public awareness, public participation in services, collection of bills, and interaction between staff and the public. He offered WSSCs to benefit from WSSP's CLC model. Addressing the concluding session, former provincial minister and member of the provincial assembly Syed Qasim Ali Shah appreciated the CLC project and said that the government is working to provide better services to the people, but public participation is indispensable in this process. The community must be mobilized for services in other sectors, including sanitation, hygiene and water. A proactive strategy will yield positive results. Making people aware of their responsibilities will benefit both the government and the public. He said that no matter what the sector, the complaint comes from the community. Complaints and problems can be controlled through community liaison, while the costs of diseases can be reduced through a clean environment. _DNA

Efforts afoot to improve railway tracks: Hanif

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said on Monday the incumbent government had started taking practical measures to improve railway tracks. He said this while addressing a press conference at Pakistan Railways Headquarters after inaugurating a modernized reservation office and digital central control office. The minister said that a new track would be laid from Rawalpindi to Lahore, aiming to reduce travel time to almost 2 hours and 20 minutes. He said: "Work on laying a new 480-km track from Rohri to Karachi will begin from first week of September." "Nokundi to Rohri is a 900-km-long track. Out of this, 400 km will be newly constructed and 500 km will be upgraded," he added. The Railway Minister said that work would also be carried out on the Nokundi-Taftan track. He said that by December 25, a new 105-km track connecting Thar coal would also be completed. Muhammad Hanif Abba-

si said that to strengthen coordination among provinces, track access legislation had been made so that people from all provinces could benefit from the rail network. Sindh would sign MoUs related to different routes within the next 20 to 25 days, while Balochistan had already signed one. On August 14, the Peoples Train would be inaugurated in Quetta, he maintained. He further said that meetings were also held between the Railways Chairman and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary on the same formula to facilitate people. He said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz wanted to complete the Rawalpindi-Lahore, new railway track project during her current tenure. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, had given the task of digitizing Pakistan Railways, he said and added that FWO had an important role in this effort. He said that Pakistan Railways had signed a contract with FWO, and a control room had been inaugurated. Before June 30,

seven more control centres would be established. He said GPS-based trackers would be installed to ensure real-time tracking, with cooperation from FWO. The Railways Minister said the first safe and smart station was established in Rawalpindi, and the second would be set up in Lahore. Similar stations would be established in all major cities. Wi-Fi facilities were available in all major railway stations, Hanif Abbasi added. The minister said that all efforts were being made to meet the target of generating Rs 100 billion in revenue. He said that railways marketing department would be digitized, and automobile transportation by rail would begin this year. He added that the railways would transport 700,000 tons of edible oil annually, generating Rs 2 billion per year. He stated that transporting automobiles would generate approximately Rs 150 to 200 million per day. _DNA

فائل شو کا نوٹس

چکالہ کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ کے مندرجہ ذیل ملازمین مجاز اتھارٹی کی اجازت کے بغیر ڈیوٹی سے غیر حاضر پائے گئے ہیں۔

1	مبشر گل، سروس نمبر۔ 46461، سروس مین گارڈن۔	26 جولائی 2023 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
2	محمد عمر، سروس نمبر۔ 27206، سروس مین واٹر پلانٹی۔	01 نومبر 2022 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
3	سید اللہ، سروس نمبر۔ 35372، سروس مین (B&R)	01 جون 2023 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
4	نصیر احمد، سروس نمبر۔ 1302، سروس مین گارڈن۔	01 جنوری 2023 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
5	زاہد محمود، سروس نمبر۔ 29537، سروس مین گارڈن۔	01 جون 2025 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
6	ناصر خان مروت، سروس نمبر۔ 1474، پمپ آپریٹر۔	31 مئی 2021 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
7	محمد اعجاز، سروس نمبر۔ 44260، سروس مین (B&R)	01 فروری 2025 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
8	عبید الرحمن، سروس نمبر۔ 224، سروس مین (V&E)	01 مارچ 2023 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
9	خرم بلال، سروس نمبر۔ 68، سروس مین (V&E)	01 اپریل 2024 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
10	راشد محمود، سروس نمبر۔ 26276، سروس مین (V&E)	01 نومبر 2025 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔
11	حسن زمان، سروس نمبر۔ 22920، سروس مین گارڈن۔	01 جنوری 2024 سے غیر حاضر ہے۔

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PID(I)8679/25

المشتر

کنٹونمنٹ ایگزیکٹو آفیسر

چکالہ کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ



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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
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- April 30/Sweden Birthday of His Majesty
- April 30/Netherlands Birthday of Queen

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Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in the Rawal Dam adjacent nallah as the mercury increases day by day in the Federal Capital.

Shift from curative to preventive healthcare imperative: Kamal

He highlighted that Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, making it a significant challenge to effectively address public health issues at scale

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, emphasized that the urgent need to prioritize health and nutrition challenges in the context of Pakistan's rapidly growing population he said these remarks while addressing the Pakistan-China International Academic Conference held here on Monday at the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology. Speaking at the conference, the Minister appreciated the participation of researchers, professors, and media representatives, noting that such academic forums play a vital role in promoting knowledge exchange and international collaboration. He highlighted that Pakistan is the fifth

most populous country in the world, making it a significant challenge to effectively address public health issues at scale.

The Minister stressed the need to shift focus from curative care to preventive healthcare, stating that the current burden on hospitals is largely due to a system that primarily responds to illness rather than preventing it. "Prevention is better than cure," he remarked, underscoring the importance of adopting proactive health strategies to reduce disease incidence.

He further noted that merely building new hospitals and hiring more doctors is not sufficient; instead, there is a need to strengthen the overall healthcare system so that people remain healthy and do not require hospitalization in the first place. Referring to lessons learned from the

COVID-19 pandemic, he stated that even the most advanced healthcare systems can come under immense pressure, and no country can sustain a sudden surge in patient load.

The Minister shared that the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination has developed a new health strategy in consultation with international experts. The strategy aims to reduce the burden on hospitals while promoting healthier lifestyles among the population. He emphasized that collaborative efforts with global scientists can help Pakistan move in the right direction.

Highlighting the importance of timely decision-making, he stated that there is no room for error, and the country must adopt the right strategies from the outset. "The time for experimentation has

passed, we must now compete with global advancements," he added.

The Minister also underscored the need to integrate traditional systems of medicine, including herbal, Chinese, and Unani practices, alongside modern healthcare approaches. He noted that emerging research supports lifestyle medicine as a sustainable solution for improving public health, encouraging individuals to align their daily lives with natural principles.

Concluding his address, the Minister emphasized that increasing distance from natural ways of living is contributing to rising health challenges. He called for harmonizing scientific progress with the laws of nature and human well-being to build a healthier and more resilient society.

GGGI offers support for green growth strategy

ISLAMABAD: Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) has offered to support Pakistan in strengthening its climate financing mechanisms and aligning economic growth with sustainable development, during a meeting with Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik on Monday. According to an official statement, GGGI's country representative for Nepal and Pakistan, Laura Jalosjoki, briefed the minister on the organisation's global experience in helping countries develop institutional and financial frameworks to access

climate finance and pursue climate-resilient growth. The meeting reviewed the Pakistan Country Programme (2024-2028) and explored potential areas of collaboration, including boosting private sector participation in climate finance, strengthening agricultural value chains, and improving energy efficiency through AI-enabled monitoring, reporting and verification systems. Discussions also focused on promoting investment and market development in agriculture, as well as fostering innovation through startup ecosystems. The two sides also took up

the proposed Global Clean Hydrogen Programme, currently under consideration in Pakistan, which aims to support the country's transition towards net-zero emissions by building hydrogen-related capacity and institutional readiness. The programme is being implemented in several countries and is expected to significantly reduce carbon emissions globally. Musadik Malik appreciated GGGI's continued engagement and stressed that climate policies and strategies must be tailored to Pakistan's ground realities, with practical solutions aligned with national development priorities.—APP

Surge in online admission scams targeting students

ISLAMABAD: With the start of the admission season in higher educational institutions across the country authorities have warned of a rise in online fraud targeting students and parents through fake admission portals, here on Monday. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has taken notice of the situation, cautioning that scammers were collecting admission fees by impersonating representatives of educational institutions and operating fraudulent websites. According to HEC officials, several complaints have been received from students who were deceived into transferring money to fraudsters posing as official admission facilitators. The commission has issued a formal circular in this regard and shared links to suspected fake websites to help students identify and avoid them.

The HEC has directed students and parents to ensure that no admission-related fee was transferred without proper verification, including an OTP confirmation and emphasized that only official websites and verified channels of recognized institutions should be used. Officials further stated that awareness and precautionary measures were essential to prevent financial losses, urging applicants to remain vigilant during the ongoing admission season.—APP

Machinery imports rise 10.28% in nine months

ISLAMABAD: Imports of the overall machinery group increased by 10.28% during the first nine months of the current fiscal year (July-March) compared with the corresponding period last year. The higher inflow of machinery is seen as a positive signal for the national economy, supporting productivity gains, technology transfer, and infrastructure development across multiple sectors. Analysts say the upward trend is consistent with the government's policy focus on industrial expansion, export promotion, and faster economic growth, as authorities continue to incentivize capital investment and modernization. According to official data available with APP, total imports of the machinery group during July-March of fiscal year 2025-26 stood at \$7.866 billion, compared with \$7.133 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year. The data showed that imports of agricultural machinery and implements rose 18.69%, increasing from \$86.188 million to \$102.293 million, a trend expected to support farm mechanization and improve agricultural productivity. Similarly, textile machinery imports surged 20.94%, from \$371.773 million to \$449.609 million, aiding modernization in Pakistan's key export-oriented textile sector and enabling adoption of advanced production technologies.—APP

RCCI concerned over SBP policy rate hike

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President, Usman Shaukat, has expressed strong reservations over the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) decision to increase the policy rate by 100 basis points to 11.50%. Reacting to the Monetary Policy Committee's decision announced, the RCCI President termed the move as unfavorable for business and industrial growth, especially at a time when the economy is already navigating global uncertainties. He stated that given the ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly the Iran-US/Israel conflict, the business community had expected the central bank to maintain the policy rate. He noted that diplomatic efforts are underway and a ceasefire has raised hopes for stability, making the rate hike untimely. "The private sector is under immense strain, and the SBP's decision is further exacerbating the challenges faced by manufacturers and exporters," Usman Shaukat said. He emphasized that high interest rates increase the cost of doing business, discourage investment, and hamper export competitiveness, ultimately slowing down economic activity. RCCI urged the Government of Pakistan and the State Bank to review and reconsider the policy stance at the earliest opportunity. The Chamber reiterated its demand to bring down the policy rate to single digits, in line with earlier commitments made to the business community, once the regional situation stabilizes.—APP

SC issues compendium

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has released a comprehensive Compendium on International Judicial Cooperation, documenting its expanding engagement with foreign judiciaries and international legal institutions. According to an official press release issued on Monday, the compendium outlines a wide range of initiatives, including strategic partnerships, judicial exchanges, memoranda of understanding, training programs, and knowledge-sharing efforts. These initiatives are aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, promoting best practices, and advancing technology-driven reforms within the justice sector. The document underscores the Court's commitment to learning from comparative international experiences to reinforce the rule of law, improve access to justice, and develop a modern, efficient, and citizen-centric judicial system. The full text of the compendium is available on the official website of the Supreme Court of Pakistan: www.supremecourt.gov.pk.—APP

Goods worth 6.3t exported in 3 quarters: PBS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan exported goods worth Rs 6,392,995 million during the first three quarters (July-March) of the current fiscal year (2025-26), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports in rupee term witnessed declined by 7.14 percent compared to the same period of last year, when they stood at Rs 6,884,208 million, according to provisional figures released by the bureau. On year-on-year basis, the exports from Pakistan during March, 2026 amounted to Rs.635,497 million as against Rs. 636,585 million in February, 2026 and Rs. 740,800 million during March, 2025 showing a decrease of 0.17% over February, 2026 and of 14.21% over March, 2025. The main commodities of exports during March, 2026 were knitwear (Rs. 92,406 million), readymade garments (Rs.84,136 million), bed wear (Rs. 67,003 million), rice others (Rs.43,110 million), cotton cloth (Rs. 40,205 million), towels (Rs. 25,284 million), madeup Articles (Excl. towels & bedwears) (Rs. 17,649), cotton yarn (Rs.17,164 million), fish & fish preparations (Rs.14,823 million) and basmati rice (Rs. 13,374 million).—APP

Briefs

IRSA
releases
135,400
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 135,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 133,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1464.76 feet which was 64.76 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 39,900 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1161.30 feet, which was 111.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 38,500 cusecs and 35 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 93,300, 57,300, 41,400, and 6,500 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 36,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 11,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Diamer Bhasha
Dam project
announces
79 job
opportunities

ISLAMABAD: The Diamer Bhasha Dam Project (DBDP) has announced a total of 79 job and internship opportunities for local residents of District Diamer and Tehsil Harban Basha in Upper Kohistan, as the mega hydropower project continues to generate employment in surrounding areas. Gwadar Pro quoting official details stated, 69 vacant positions have been announced for District Diamer across technical, administrative and support categories. These include roles such as junior engineers, surveyors, overseers, clerical staff and office assistants, along with technical support positions including electricians, mechanics and drivers. Additional vacancies are also available under the Land Acquisition and Resettlement (LA&R) section, which handles compensation and community-related matters. In a separate initiative, 10 internship and placement positions have been allocated for residents of Tehsil Harban Basha in Upper Kohistan. These roles focus on entry-level technical and administrative work, including office assistance, site support and junior technical tasks, aimed at providing hands-on experience to local youth. The recruitment drive is part of ongoing efforts by Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to ensure local participation in the project while supporting skill development and economic activity in project-affected areas. The positions are spread across different Basic Pay Scale (BPS) grades, with eligibility criteria varying by role. Educational requirements range from matriculation to intermediate and relevant technical diplomas, depending on the position. For internship placements, candidates aged 18 to 30 years are eligible to apply.—APP

Dengue
team reviews
performance,
deployment

RAWALPINDI: Health authorities on Monday conducted a dengue meeting in Dhama Syedan to review staff attendance, team deployment and field performance as part of ongoing surveillance efforts. Deputy District Health Officer (DDHO), Dr Hanan Javed Goreja verified staff attendance and reviewed the microplan to ensure effective implementation of anti-dengue activities. The meeting also assessed the previous day's performance to evaluate operational efficiency and identify gaps in field operations. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to maintaining strict monitoring and coordinated response to prevent the spread of dengue in the area.—APP

New transit framework
with Iran good omen: ICCI

Tahir Ayub observed that the decision would significantly streamline cross-border trade, reduce logistical bottlenecks, and enhance the efficiency of supply chains. He noted that by formalizing transit corridors and introducing clear procedures such as customs security and cross-stuffing provisions, the government has created a structured and transparent system that will boost trader confidence and attract international cargo flows

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Tahir Ayub, along with Acting Senior Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, has warmly welcomed the federal government's recent decision to facilitate the transit of goods through Pakistan to Iran under the newly notified Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026.

In a statement issued here on Monday, they stated that this landmark initiative reflects the government's strate-

gic vision to position Pakistan as a key regional trade and transit hub. The new framework allows goods originating from third countries to pass through Pakistan en route to Iran via designated corridors, including Gwadar, Karachi, and Taftan, under a regulated customs mechanism. Tahir Ayub observed that the decision would significantly streamline cross-border trade, reduce logistical bottlenecks, and enhance the efficiency of supply chains. He noted that by formalizing transit corridors and introducing clear procedures such as customs security and cross-stuffing provisions, the government has created a structured and transparent

system that will boost trader confidence and attract international cargo flows. He further emphasized that the inclusion of multiple transit routes connecting ports like Gwadar and Karachi to Iran through Balochistan will not only improve connectivity but also stimulate economic activity in underdeveloped regions. He termed the initiative a "game changer" for Pakistan's logistics, transport, and warehousing sectors. Acting Senior Vice President Irfan Chaudhry highlighted that the move comes at a crucial time when regional trade dynamics are evolving rapidly. He said the new transit arrangement would

strengthen Pakistan's economic ties with Iran and other regional economies while offering an efficient alternative route for international trade. He added that smoother cargo movement would help ease congestion at ports and unlock new business opportunities for Pakistani traders and transporters. He further stressed that this development would enhance Pakistan's credibility as a reliable trade corridor linking South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. "With improved regulatory clarity and designated transit routes, Pakistan is well on its way to becoming a preferred transit destination," he remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters on their way at Jinnah Avenue after opening couple of weeks, in the Federal Capital

Indiscriminate anti-encroachment
drive continues in Islamabad

Reiterating the government's firm stance, he said there is a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments and land-grabbing mafias. "No public or private entity will be allowed to construct or occupy government land illegally," he asserted

ISLAMABAD: A large-scale anti-encroachment operation is ongoing in Islamabad, carried out without discrimination under the supervision of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. During the operation, an FC camp office established on a green belt near Merit and Ayub Chowk was also demolished, reflecting the government's across-the-board approach to clearing illegal structures. Speaking on the occasion, the interior minister reaffirmed that the crackdown against encroachments in Islamabad would continue without exception. He emphasized that illegal constructions and encroachments are being removed without yielding to any pressure. Naqvi further stated that an alternative lawful site would be provided for the Frontier Corps (FC) camp office, ensuring that operational requirements are met within legal frameworks. Reiterating the government's firm stance, he said there is a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments and land-grabbing mafias. "No public or private entity will be allowed to construct or occupy government land illegally," he asserted. The minister added that restoring Islamabad to its original state and completely eliminating encroachments remain top priorities. The Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was also present during the operation.—DNA

FGEHA de-
nies claims of
next-month
launch for
F-12, G-12

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), operating under the Ministry of Housing and Works, has dismissed reports circulating on social media and in sections of the press claiming that Sectors F-12 and G-12 will be launched next month. In an official statement issued by FGEHA, the authority stated that both sectors fall under its jurisdiction and are currently in the initial technical phases. It emphasized that all legal and administrative requirements will be fulfilled before any formal launch is announced. The statement

further noted that formal approval from the Executive Board will be obtained prior to the launch. It added that landowners, local residents, and other stakeholders will be taken into confidence, and all matters will be finalized in consultation with the community. Talking to APP, a spokesperson for FGEHA said that the authority has issued a clear statement that, as of now, no final date has been set for the launch of Sectors F-12 and G-12, reiterating that the projects remain in the technical stages. The spokesperson urged the public to rely only on official sources for updates and to refrain from spreading or believing unverified information circulating on social media and other platforms. He added that any formal announcement regarding the launch will be made through authorized channels at an appropriate time. FGEHA also assured that the rights and interests of local residents will be fully protected throughout the process. The spokesperson further stated that Sector F-12 may be launched separately, or both sectors could be introduced simultaneously; however, no final decision has been made so far.—APP

GDA finalizes 3
development projects

GWADAR: The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has formally finalized three development projects, including the expansion of the breakwater, carrying out dredging, and the construction of flooring for parking small boats, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The development took place as Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, and Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Moin-ur-Rehman Khan, visited Sarbandar Fishing Jetty, Pishukan Fishing Jetty, Pishukan Boys High School, and other key development projects. On this occasion, Chief Engineer GDA Haji Syed Muhammad, Project Director Sarbandar Jetty Muhammad Hanif Husain, Executive Engineer Qasim Baloch, Executive Engineer Akbar Baloch, contractor Haji Sharif Zema, and UC Chairman Sarbandar Naseeb Noshervani were also present. A GDA official said that the PCI of these three projects has already been prepared and will be included in the upcoming

financial program. He added that it was also finalized that GDA will have the authority to set appropriate charges for commercial activities at the jetty. "The aim is to make the jetties revenue-generating and financially self-sustainable, ensuring continuous maintenance and dredging through generated income," he said. Later, the delegation reviewed the under-construction 500-meter-long causeway at Marine Drive Palleri Kor Hor, where work is progressing rapidly. They expressed satisfaction with the quality and pace of work and indicated that the project would be completed within the next two months. According to Executive Engineer Qasim Baloch, the work had been affected by rains but has now been accelerated, with efforts underway to complete it before the potential impact of strong summer sea waves. DG GDA Moin-ur-Rehman Khan stated that GDA has constructed two modern fishing jetties in Sarbandar and Pishukan, which have significantly facilitated fishermen.—APP

CCP releases
study on
cement sector

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has released a report titled "Competition Assessment Study of the Cement Sector in Pakistan," addressing competition-related challenges in the Cement Sector. The report outlines recommendations to foster competition and improve efficiency Pakistan's manufacturing sector remains a cornerstone of the national economy, with Large-Scale Manufacturing (LSM) contributing approximately 67.5 percent of total manufacturing output and nearly 8 percent to national GDP. Within this framework, the cement industry plays a pivotal role, accounting for around 1 percent of GDP and serving as a fundamental input for infrastructure development and housing sectors that are vital for sustained economic expansion. Despite its strategic importance, the sector has recently experienced a slowdown. During FY2025, domestic consumption declined in both the Northern and Southern regions. This trend reflects broader macroeconomic pressures and subdued construction activity. Moreover, the report notes that Pakistan's per capita cement consumption remains significantly below the global average, indicating substantial untapped growth potential. The study identifies a combination of structural, regulatory, and strategic barriers that collectively constrain market contestability and distort competitive outcomes. Structural factors such as high capital intensity, water scarcity in mineral-rich regions, low shelf life of cement, high transportation costs, and pronounced seasonal demand fluctuations naturally limit entry and expansion. These challenges are compounded by regulatory and policy-induced distortions, including uneven enforcement of axle-load limits across provinces, significant disparities in provincial limestone royalty regimes, monopolistic dependence on a single coal-handling terminal at the port, and a heavy and multi-layered tax burden. In addition, recent levies on fuels used by captive power plants have sharply increased energy costs, undermining industrial efficiency. Weak border controls enabling smuggling and the prevalence of counterfeit cement further erode competitive neutrality, disadvantage compliant manufacturers, and raise concerns regarding quality, safety, and revenue leakage. To address these challenges, the report proposes a comprehensive and coordinated reform agenda aimed at restoring competitive neutrality and reducing barriers to entry and expansion in the cement sector. It emphasizes the need to promote the development of the mineral sector so that new cement capacity can be established and the industry's long-term growth potential can be fully realized. The report further calls for harmonization of axle-load enforcement across provinces, supported by modernization of logistics systems, in order to improve transportation efficiency and eliminate cost distortions. In addition, it highlights the importance of aligning provincial limestone royalty regimes through a uniform, transparent, and predictable framework so that all market players operate on a level playing field.—DNA

Public warned
against fake
internship ads

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) Secretariat has warned the public against unauthorized advertisements and online links circulating on job portals and social media platforms that falsely invite applications for internships with the National Assembly. In an official clarification, the Secretariat said that no public call for internship applications had been issued through online portals or third-party platforms. It said the Summer 2026 internship programme is being conducted through a structured institutional outreach mechanism under which selected universities are being contacted directly to nominate students in accordance with the approved framework of the National Assembly. The Secretariat advised members of the public, particularly students, to remain cautious and avoid sharing personal information or submitting applications through any unauthorized websites or links. It further said that appropriate action may be taken against those involved in spreading misleading or false information. The Secretariat emphasized that any official communication regarding National Assembly programmes would only be made through formal and verified channels.—APP

LoC bars
sister from
brother's bier

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of jailed Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, issued a heart-rending appeal on Monday, decrying the "heart-wrenching helplessness" of a Kashmiri sister barred from her brother's funeral just steps away across the Line of Control (LoC), unable to touch his bier or bid farewell. MS Malik urged the world to see Kashmir not as a mere border dispute but as humanity's test amid thousands of sundered families. In her emotional statement, Mushaal described the tragic scene involving Raja Liaquat Ali Khan's funeral, where his body lay "on that side" while his sister and family watched helplessly from "this side," their final glimpse lost to the divide. "What kind of helplessness is this?" she asked. "A sister stands just a few steps away, but cannot reach her brother's funeral, cannot touch him, the distances devour even that last meeting." She framed the incident as emblematic of broader suffering. "This is no single event but a living image of thousands of Kashmiri families torn apart. These distances aren't just of land; they are wounds on hearts that never heal." Mushaal, speaking against the backdrop of persistent LoC restrictions preventing family reunions even in mourning, called on the global community.—APP

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Iran, the Arab Gulf and nonstate actor dilemma

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB

LAST week, I spoke at a seminar organized by the Eurasia Policy Council at the House of Lords in London. The event was hosted by Lord Qurban Hussain and Prof. Shabnam Delfani. The seminar was titled "From ceasefire to lasting peace: What can the United Kingdom do to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East?" The attendees and speakers agreed that peace in our region does not start and end with an agreement between the US and Iran, but rather through an agreement between Iran and its neighbors, namely the Arab Gulf states. Nasim Far, the deputy head of the Iranian Embassy, stressed that Iran has no hegemonic ambitions in the neighborhood and that the threat perceived by the Gulf states has been fabricated by the Americans. He added that Iran seeks brotherly relations with them. I addressed the key hurdle facing a normal relationship between the two sides of the Gulf: Tehran's proxies. The Iranian diplomat said they do not call them proxies, as they consider them to be legitimate liberation movements. However, he did strike a conciliatory tone by saying that Iran does not want to undermine neighboring states' security and is open to discussing security concerns with them. The big question is how can Iran solve the issue of its proxies with its neighbors? It is important to examine the nature of the proxies in order to know how to handle them. Iran could use its influence over these groups to contribute to reconciliation instead of being the cause of division Iran has been under sanctions since 1979. It has not been able to make alliances with regional countries or renew its arsenal due to its animosity with the US. So, it resorted to unconventional methods to create deterrence. It built alliances with like-minded groups inside various countries. It mainly engaged with Shiite minorities. However, it did not restrict itself to them. It is also an ally of Hamas in Palestine, even though that group is Sunni. These proxies created a deterrence, as well as becoming tools for pressure and influence. Late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei used to say that Lebanon's Hezbollah was on the "front lines" of Iran's defense against Israel. Iran's influence in Iraq, which was projected through allied militias, was also used to pressure the US. However, its relationships with these proxies differ. Hezbollah is a child of the Iranian revolution, while Iran came



and engaged with existing movements like Hamas and the Houthis. While these are public movements, it is believed Iran has also been behind many sleeper cells in the region. The UAE last week announced the arrest of members of a group that was operating covertly in the country and plotting terrorist activities. How can the issue of Iran's proxies or allies be solved? As I have mentioned in a previous article, Iran does not have an on and off switch for its proxies. They have, at least partly, a domestic agenda. They have grievances against their governments and use Iran's support against their own states. Here, Iran's role could change from a spoiler to a facilitator. It could use its influence over these groups to play a positive role and contribute to reconciliation instead of being the cause of division. Saudi Arabia and Iran could reach an arrangement that brings stability and saves Lebanon from civil war. The two proxies that would need immediate attention are the one that is the most important to Saudi Arabia, the Houthis, and the one most important to Iran, Hezbollah. Iran can help Yemen and show goodwill to the Kingdom by encouraging the Houthis to engage in constructive talks with the legitimate Yemeni government that could result in them joining the state under a federal structure. The other issue, which is more complicated, is Hezbollah. On this, Iran needs Saudi Arabia's help. Hezbollah is currently fighting Israel. Today, Iran and Saudi Arabia have more in common on Lebanon than one might think. Neither country wants Lebanon to normalize relations with Israel for free. Saudi Arabia insists that it will not normalize with Israel unless the latter recognizes a Palestinian state. In the meantime, Israel and the US are bullying Lebanon into "peace." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly threatened Lebanese President Joseph Aoun that, if he does not meet with him in Washington, he will come on the back of a tank and shake Aoun's hand at the Baabda Palace, alluding to a possible invasion. Saudi Arabia is adamant on the integrity of Lebanese territory and will not accept it ceding an inch of its soil to Israel. Adviser to the Saudi foreign minister Prince Yazid bin Farhan last week visited Lebanon to make sure it was committed to the Taif Agreement that ended the civil war. However, once the war is over, what will happen to Hezbollah? For sure, disarmament will be put on the table again. If conducted by force, it could lead to civil unrest and even civil war. The group and Iran need a graceful exit, as part of which Hezbollah can become a political party and relinquish its military activities. On this, Saudi Arabia and Iran could reach an arrangement that brings stability and saves the country from the civil war that Israel has been scheming. Iran and the US might be negotiating in Islamabad, but on the issue of Tehran's proxies, the most beneficial move would be for Iran to negotiate with its neighbors.

Psychological warfare in the U.S.–Iran confrontation

Qamar Bashir



This divergence between narrative and reality is not accidental; it is a calculated instrument of psychological warfare. The claim that Iran's leadership is divided—torn between moderates, hardliners, and military elites—has become a recurring theme in American political and media discourse. Statements suggesting "confusion," "infighting," and "lack of clear leadership" are designed to create an image of instability. The strategic objective is clear: weaken Iran's negotiating position, sow doubt within its governance structure, and signal to the international community that Tehran is incapable of functioning as a coherent state actor

THE recent escalation surrounding Donald Trump and Iran has unfolded not only on battlefields and in diplomatic corridors, but also in the realm of narratives—carefully constructed, strategically deployed, and globally amplified. At the center of this evolving geopolitical drama lies a striking contradiction: while Washington projects Iran as fractured, leaderless, and internally conflicted, Tehran continues to demonstrate operational cohesion, strategic resilience, and an ability to withstand immense external pressure. This divergence between narrative and reality is not accidental; it is a calculated instrument of psychological warfare. The claim that Iran's leadership is divided—torn between moderates, hardliners, and military elites—has become a recurring theme in American political and media discourse. Statements suggesting "confusion," "infighting," and "lack of clear leadership" are designed to create an image of instability. The strategic objective is clear: weaken Iran's negotiating position, sow doubt within its governance structure, and signal to the international community that Tehran is incapable of functioning as a coherent state actor. However, a closer examination reveals a more complex reality. While differences in political approach undoubtedly exist within Iran—as they do in any political system—these divisions have not translated into strategic paralysis. On matters of national security, sovereignty, and external threats, Iran has historically demonstrated a unified posture. Its ability to respond swiftly to military challenges, reorganize leadership structures after targeted strikes, and maintain continuity in decision-making underscores a system that, while diverse in internal viewpoints, remains cohesive in its core objectives. This contrast becomes even more significant when placed alongside the internal dynamics of the United States itself. American political life is currently marked by deep partisan polarization, legislative gridlock, and public disagreement over foreign policy decisions. Debates in Congress regarding military engagement, economic sanctions, and executive authority reflect a nation grappling with its own internal divisions. Yet, despite this visible discord, the United States continues to function as a powerful, centralized actor on the global stage. The parallel is instructive. Internal disagreement does not equate to institutional weakness—neither in Washington nor in Tehran. In both systems, debates, rivalries, and competing perspectives coexist with mechanisms that ultimately produce unified external action. The difference lies

in perception: while U.S. internal divisions are often framed as democratic discourse, similar dynamics in Iran are portrayed as signs of systemic collapse. This asymmetry in narrative serves a broader strategic purpose. By projecting Iran as unstable, the United States seeks to justify its own actions—whether military, economic, or diplomatic—as necessary responses to a dysfunctional adversary. At the same time, it aims to influence international opinion, encouraging allies and neutral states to view Iran as an unreliable partner. Beyond rhetoric, the conflict has increasingly shifted toward economic warfare. Control over critical global chokepoints, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, has emerged as a central lever of influence. Any disruption in this vital waterway—through blockades, seizures, or military presence—has immediate and far-reaching consequences for global energy markets. The mere threat of instability can drive oil prices upward, disrupt supply chains, and place immense pressure on economies worldwide. In this context, actions targeting maritime routes are not merely tactical maneuvers; they are strategic signals. They demonstrate the capacity to influence global economic stability and underscore the interconnected nature of modern geopolitics. Both the United States and Iran understand that control over energy flows translates into leverage—not just over each other, but over the entire international system. At the same time, military posturing continues to play a critical role. The sustained deployment of forces, the reinforcement of regional bases, and the accumulation of advanced weaponry all contribute to an atmosphere of heightened tension. Yet, despite this buildup, both sides appear cautious about crossing the threshold into full-scale war. The costs—economic, human, and political—are simply too high. Instead, what has emerged is a prolonged contest of endurance. Economic sanctions, cyber operations, proxy engagements, and information campaigns have replaced direct confrontation as the primary tools of conflict. Each side is testing the other's resilience, seeking to determine who will yield first under sustained pressure. Within this framework, the narrative of Iranian "infighting" takes on additional significance. It is not merely a description; it is a tactic. By emphasizing division, the United

States attempts to accelerate internal stress within Iran, hoping that economic hardship and political uncertainty will lead to concessions at the negotiating table. Conversely, Iran counters this narrative by projecting unity, resilience, and defiance—reinforcing the message that external pressure will not fracture its core. The interplay between these competing narratives highlights a fundamental truth about modern conflict: perception is as important as reality. In an era of instantaneous communication and global media reach, shaping how events are understood can be as decisive as the events themselves. Looking ahead, the path toward de-escalation remains uncertain but not impossible. Both nations have strong incentives to avoid a prolonged, destructive conflict. Economic stability, regional security, and global market confidence all depend on a reduction in tensions. However, any meaningful progress will require a shift in approach—from coercion and confrontation to dialogue and mutual recognition. Crucially, such dialogue must be grounded in parity. Durable agreements are rarely achieved when one side seeks dominance over the other. Instead, they emerge when both parties recognize each other's core interests and negotiate as equals. This principle is particularly relevant in the current context, where attempts to impose unilateral terms have repeatedly led to stalemate. In the end, the narrative of division—whether in Iran or the United States—should be understood for what it is: a strategic tool, not an objective reality. Both nations possess complex political systems, internal debates, and competing factions. Yet both also retain the capacity to act decisively when national interests are at stake. The challenge, therefore, is not to eliminate internal differences, but to ensure that they do not escalate into external conflict. If managed wisely, these differences can coexist with stability. If exploited recklessly, they can become catalysts for deeper confrontation. As the world watches this high-stakes standoff, one conclusion becomes increasingly clear: the future of U.S.–Iran relations will be determined not by narratives of weakness, but by the ability of both sides to move beyond them—and engage in a process that recognizes strength, sovereignty, and the necessity of coexistence.

—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

Hangor-class submarine: underwater catalyst in Indian Ocean region

Basit Ali

The preceding PNS Hangor sank the Indian Kukri in 1971, a sign of perseverance, which is why Hangor got its name. The historic Hangor class submarines project is important because it seeks to balance the growing amount of maritime competition from the Horn of Africa to the Indian Ocean Region. Driven by India's ambitious and assertive naval posture of acquiring Kalvari-class conventional submarines, the Air Independent Propulsion System (AIP) is installed on the diesel-electric Hangor-class which makes it advance than Indian aged old ones. The tactical durability of Hangor-Class submarines, strategic calculations

PAKISTAN is on the cusp of yet further breakthroughs in its naval advancement as it ushered in a new era to induct the first batch of its Hangor-class submarines in 2026. Long-term strategic alliances between China and Pakistan are erected on Hangor-class submarines, and technology transfer has given Pakistan's subsurface Navy a level of opacity that its surface fleet and airplanes will never match. The preceding PNS Hangor sank the Indian Kukri in 1971, a sign of perseverance, which is why Hangor got its name. The historic Hangor class submarines project is important because it seeks to balance the growing amount of maritime competition from the Horn of Africa to the Indian Ocean Region. Driven by India's ambitious and assertive naval posture of acquiring Kalvari-class conventional submarines, the Air Independent Propulsion System (AIP) is installed on the diesel-electric Hangor-class which makes it advance than Indian aged old ones. The tactical durability of Hangor-Class submarines, strategic calculations, and the prospects for Pakistan Navy's expanded role are all assessed in this opinion. The development of Hangor depicts Pakistan's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy from the viewpoint of India's enormous naval buildup. The conflict in May 2025 revealed the Pakistan Navy's expanding role in averting any mishap by deterring the adversary. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh's statement that the "road to Karachi is through Sir Creek" is one example of how India's military and naval leadership has threatened to attack Pakistan's land area through waters in the future. The next India-Pakistan flashpoint, as reported by a number of Indian naval commanders, would be the sea, where both navies would aggressively engage if hostilities escalated. India poses a serious threat because its Navy has aircraft carriers (INS Vikrant, Vikramaditya, and Vishaal will be the third), a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines (Arihant is currently in service, and INS Aridhaman and S4 are anticipated to be operational in 2026), and conventional submarines that will be equipped with cutting-edge

AIP technology under Project-75I. India's Project 75I, which aims to introduce AIP-equipped conventional submarines using an aging mix of 16 conventional submarines, is beset by multiple delays. To retaliate, India would likely review its anti-submarine warfare stance, enhance its sonar networks, and deploy helicopter ASW assets. The inclusion of Hangor into Pakistan Navy's fleet carries a profound strategic consequence in the strategic calculus of South Asia. For Pakistan, the Hangor class added to the country's ability to project a sea-denial strategy that can disrupt or prevent an adversary's combat operations in any conflict. The new submarines, especially Hangor-class, contribute to securing Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), protect critical shipping routes, and deter a possible blockade near its SLOCs. In this context, Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf observed that the Hangor would project Pakistan's power across the Indian Ocean and enhance its operational role in securing nations' maritime interests. However, the induction of Hangor submarines added to Pakistan's operational reach towards the Western Indian Ocean, which can monitor critical chokepoints. Pakistan Navy's enduring role amid increasing hostilities as the war looms over the Strait of Hormuz and to counter the assertive Indian posture with its extended surveillance capability. In such an environment, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the adjacent maritime responses by Pakistan, such as the initiation of Operation Muhafiz-ul-Bahr, cannot be looked at as merely a localized measure but a wider arrangement for securing the country's sea lanes. Another crucial aspect is the China-Pakistan defense partnership, which not only strengthens its strategic foothold but also undermines India's self-proclaimed dominance with Hangor stealth and strike capabilities. Gwadar hosted the bilateral China-Pakistan exercise "Sea Guardian IV" from 25 March to 1 April 2026, sea drills including air defense, submarine operations, and joint patrol.

This close Naval cooperation underscores the importance of Pakistan's maritime interests. Admiral Naveed Ashraf hinted at a future outlook into unmanned (UUVs, USVs) and AI-assisted underwater combat systems. With the inclusion of new Chinese Type 054 frigates and Turkish MILGEM corvettes, the Pakistan Navy is heading towards a long-term "Submarine Vision 2030". The Hangor-Class project, therefore, is not merely a single procurement but a foundation for Pakistan's broader maritime transformation towards technological autonomy, deterrence, and credible sea control. Chaos in International relations is a permanent feature; the war in Ukraine, the Iran-US-Israel conflict, and the closure of Hormuz are all attributed to the changing regional security calculus. Pakistan finds itself at the crossroads amid the conflict in the Middle East, in such a fragile environment, "Operation Muhafiz-ul-Bahr" presents a beacon of hope for the country's economy. Pakistan Navy's role is becoming wider in its contribution to the economy, securing maritime interests, protecting critical shipping routes, and the Sea Lines of Communication. Hangor submarines' stealth and strike capabilities would provide impetus to operate far from home, adding to their extended conventional deterrence to operate in war scenarios. While countering India and deterring its Naval buildup in the Indo-Pacific construct, Hangor would pose challenges to India's aging conventional submarines. In the near term, Pakistan's submarine fleet would go stronger by the day under "Submarine Vision 2030", with the addition of emerging technologies into its fleet. Hangor provided Pakistan an edge to strengthen its sea-denial strategy and deterrence at the conventional level. In the long run, Pakistan's successful launch of Submarine Launch Cruise Missiles (SLCMs), as well as the pursuit of acquiring nuclear-powered ballistic submarines (SSBNs), is critical for assured second strike capability and countering India's expanding undersea and maritime ambitions.

Briefs

US forces
turn back
38 ships

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The Strait of Hormuz remains a critical global oil chokepoint, and the restrictions are contributing to uncertainty in energy markets. Traffic through the area has been significantly disrupted, with some analysts noting reduced Iranian port calls. Diplomatic efforts continue in parallel, but Iran has ruled out further talks unless the blockade is lifted. The situation remains tense but contained for now, with the US maintaining that the enforcement is impartial and focused on preventing Iranian maritime activity. This is a developing story. For the most current details, refer to official CENTCOM statements or major international news outlets.

SBP
increases
policy...

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Key developments since last MPC meeting. The MPC also pointed out several "key developments" aside from the Middle East situation, including inflation rising to 7.3pc in March and core inflation inching up to 7.8pc. The statement added that inflation expectations and confidence of consumers and businesses deteriorated in the latest surveys. Moreover, it noted, real GDP grew by 3.8pc in first half of FY26 as compared to 1.9pc in the same period last year. The MPC also noted that the current account posted a "small surplus" during July-March FY26, and despite "significant debt repayments", the SBP's foreign exchange reserves were around \$15.8 billion as of April 24. Lastly, the MPC mentioned that a staff-level agreement was reached with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on March 27, 2026. "In light of the above developments and evolving risks, the MPC viewed today's decision as important to achieve the objective of price stability over the medium term," the committee statement read. It reiterated the "important role of the continued build-up of external buffers and fiscal discipline", asserting that these efforts have contributed to stronger initial economic conditions at the start of the ongoing geopolitical conflict as compared to similar shocks in the recent past. The MPC also emphasised the importance of undertaking structural reforms to make the external account more resilient to the evolving global landscape and to ensure sustainable economic growth. "Supply shock may push inflation to double digits in coming months" On the rise in the headline and core inflation, the MPC said inflation was projected to increase up to the upper bound of the target range before the start of the Middle East conflict, mainly due to the adverse base effect. "Subsequently, the energy price shock has led to a surge in fuel prices, which have already begun to seep into core inflation via transport fares, though contained food inflation amidst ample supplies is likely to offset some of the impact on headline inflation," the MPC explained. It added: "Nonetheless, going forward, the MPC assessed that the current supply shock may push inflation to double digits in the coming months before it starts to ease subsequently. "However, inflation is expected to stay above the upper bound of the target range of 5-7pc for most of FY27." The MPC noted that this outlook was subject to multiple risks, particularly the duration and intensity of the ongoing conflict, the extent of pass-through of changes in global energy prices to the domestic economy, and potential fiscal slippages.

Several
Taliban
posts...

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targeting civilians. Local residents strongly condemned the firing incident by the Afghan Taliban and called for a firm response from the Pakistan Army.

Pakistan's Mukaty Two Races
Away From Global Glory

"The goal is to finish all six majors sub-three," Mukaty said, outlining an ambition rooted in discipline and consistency. "More importantly, I want to raise Pakistan's flag at every finish line"

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In the demanding world of endurance running, where discipline meets obsession, Pakistan's Amin Mukaty is steadily carving out a historic path – one that could soon make him the country's first athlete to complete all six World Marathon Majors. At the London Marathon 2026, Mukaty delivered a performance defined less by spectacle and more by precision – the hallmark of a runner chasing something greater than a single finish line. Clocking 2:45:02 on one of the world's most challenging courses, the Karachi-based marathoner displayed tactical maturity, controlled pacing, and mental resilience – qualities that define elite long-distance runners. But for Mukaty, London was never just another race. It was another step toward history. Mukaty has already completed some of the most prestigious races in global distance running, including the Berlin, Chicago, Boston, and London Marathons, along with the Istanbul Marathon. With only two races remaining – the New York City Marathon and the Tokyo Marathon – Mukaty now stands on the brink of achieving the coveted six-star distinction awarded to runners who complete all World Marathon Majors. "The goal is to finish all



six majors sub-three," Mukaty said, outlining an ambition rooted in discipline and consistency. "More importantly, I want to raise Pakistan's flag at every finish line." Unlike many marathoners who fade in the closing stages, Mukaty executed a carefully measured race plan. He started conservatively, reaching 5km in 19:08 and the half-way mark in 1:21:43 – a pace that kept him competitive without risking burnout. His splits remained impressively steady, hovering between 3:50 and 3:59 per kilometre. Then came the 30km mark – where many runners hit the wall. Mukaty did not. While Mukaty's pursuit of all six majors remains the headline story, the London Marathon 2026 also highlighted the growing depth of Pakistani endurance running. UK-based Abdullah Muhammad Athar emerged as the fastest Pakistani, finishing in an impressive 2:39:53 after a composed and intelligent race. In the women's category, Sara Tahoor Lodhi led the Pakistani field with a time of 3:25:02, showing resilience and control through the demanding latter stages. Mukaty credits his consistency not only to training, but also to a strong support system. Backed by ACTIVIT and guided by Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, he has maintained peak physical condition while managing the demands of international competition through targeted nutrition, recovery, and sustained financial support.

Hyderabad Kingsmen qualify for
playoffs with victory over Rawalpindiz

HYDERABAD Kingsmen qualified for the playoffs after beating Rawalpindiz by 108 runs in the second last group match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Sunday. Chasing a challenging target of 245, the Pindiz were bowled out for 136 in 17.1 overs as the Kingsmen delivered a disciplined and clinical bowling display under pressure. The result meant the Kingsmen successfully completed their qualification scenario, which required them not only to win but also to restrict their opponents to 158 or fewer to progress to the next stage of the tournament. Kingsmen's massive victory over Pindiz bolstered

their points tally to 10 points in 10 matches and helped them qualify for the playoffs by clinching the sought-after fourth position, pipping Lahore Qalandars, who finished with as many points but an inferior net run rate. Pindiz suffered an early setback when Akif Javed struck in the opening overs, dismissing Shahzaib Khan for just 1 off 5 balls. Mohammad Rizwan and Usman Khawaja attempted to stabilise the innings, taking the score past the 50-run mark with a composed partnership. However, their 43-run stand was broken when Hunain Shah removed Rizwan for 26 off 16 deliveries, an innings featuring four boundaries. Khawaja continued to an-

chor the innings, reaching his second PSL half-century, and briefly revived hopes alongside Sam Billings. But wickets continued to fall at regular intervals. Kamran Ghulam was dismissed for a duck by Hunain Shah, who claimed his second wicket of the innings. Billings fell shortly after for 23 off 12 balls, striking one four and two sixes, while Dian Forrester managed just 6 before Akif Javed struck again, reducing Rawalpindiz to 102.5 in 11.4 overs. The lower order offered little resistance. Mohammad Ali added further pressure as Saad Masood departed for five, before Hunain Shah picked up his third wicket by dismissing Amad Butt for three. Asif Afridi became the

ninth wicket, run out by Saim Ayub after scoring three, before Ben Sears was the final batter dismissed for a duck as Rawalpindiz were bundled out well short of the target. Usman Khawaja remained unbeaten but was unable to guide his side to victory, scoring 66 off 43 deliveries, including nine fours. Hunain Shah led the bowling attack, registering figures of 4/22 in 3.1 overs. Akif Javed picked up three wickets, while Mohammad Ali and Glenn Maxwell chipped in with one wicket each. Asked to bat first, the Kingsmen were powered by blistering contributions from Usman Khan, Kusal Perera, Glenn Maxwell and Maaz Sadaqat, as they tore into the Pindiz bowling attack throughout the innings. – APP

PM for boosting
gemstones exports
using local resources

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Monday said that Pakistan had been blessed with abundant natural resources, including precious stones, and stressed that the sector offered strong potential to increase exports using local resources. The prime minister chaired a high-level review meeting focused on aligning Pakistan's gemstone mining and processing sector with international standards and enhancing exports, including the establishment of three Centers of Excellence across the country. The prime minister stressed that transparency must remain a key element in the establishment of the centers of excellence. The prime minister assigned the Ministry of Planning the task of formulating a comprehensive strategy to boost exports of processed gemstones. The ministry was expected to present the plan soon, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He also appreciated the efforts of his Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar and his team for promoting the development of the sector, terming their initiatives commendable. The meeting was attended by Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Dr. Musadik Malik, Jam Kamal Khan, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad, chief secretaries of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir and other senior officials. – APP

Iran wants
nuclear talks
to be deferred

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the outlook for global growth. Axios, while citing two sources with knowledge, reported that the Iranian foreign minister raised the plan to bypass the nuclear issue during his meetings in Islamabad. According to one of the sources, Araghchi made it clear to the Pakistani, Egyptian, Turkish and Qatari mediators over the weekend that there's no consensus inside the Iranian leadership about how to address the US demands. Under the proposal, Axios reported, the immediate focus would be on reopening the strait and lifting the blockade before moving to broader negotiations. As part of this framework, the existing ceasefire would either be extended for a prolonged period or converted into a permanent end to the war, the sources said. The proposal envisages that negotiations on the nuclear issue would begin only at a later stage, after maritime access is restored and blockade-related concerns are addressed. The White House has received the proposal, though it remains unclear whether Washington is prepared to consider or pursue the framework. "These are sensitive diplomatic discussions and the US will not negotiate through the press. As the president has said, the United States holds the cards and will only make a deal that puts the American people first, never allowing Iran to have a nuclear weapon," White House spokesperson Olivia Wales told Axios.

Xi exchanges congratulations
with top Lao leader Thongloun

BEIJING: Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, exchanged congratulations on weekend with Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao president, on the 65th anniversary of China-Laos diplomatic relations. Xi said that as socialist neighbors in a community with a shared future, China and Laos are united by shared ideals and beliefs, identical social systems and similar development paths and that their "comradely and brotherly" bond, personally forged by the older generation of leaders of both parties and countries, has grown ever stronger over time. At present, the two sides are accelerating efforts to build a high-standard, high-quality, and high-level China-Laos community with a shared future. Exchanges at all levels have become closer, and cooperation across various fields continues to deepen. On issues concerning each other's core interests and major concerns, the two sides firmly support one another, injecting valuable stability and certainty into the region and the world, he said. The CPC and the Chinese government have always viewed China-Laos ties from a strategic and long-term perspective and regard Laos as a priority in China's neighborhood diplomacy, he said. Xi voiced willingness to work with Thongloun to take the 65th anniversary of China-Laos diplomatic relations and the Year of China-Laos Friendship as an opportunity to enhance strategic mutual trust, carry forward the tradi-

tional friendship, and push for more outcomes in practical cooperation across various fields, so as to deliver more benefits to the two peoples. For his part, Thongloun said that over the 65 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the friendly ties between the two parties, the two countries and the two peoples – marked by solidarity in times of difficulty – have been lifted to higher levels, with fruitful outcomes in building the Laos-China community with a shared future. He expressed gratitude for the long-standing valuable support and assistance provided by the CPC, the Chinese government and people. Thongloun said that Laos will remain committed to the one-China principle, support China in safeguarding its core interests, and work with China to follow through on the new five-year action plan for the Laos-China community with a shared future, so as to yield new achievements in the traditional friendship and comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries. Also on Saturday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone exchanged congratulations. Li said that both sides should follow the strategic consensus reached by the top leaders of the two parties and countries, guide ministries and localities to strengthen coordination and cooperation, expand areas of collaboration, foster new drivers of growth, and deliver more tangible outcomes in the China-Laos comprehensive strategic cooperation. – APP

PSL 11: United thump Sultans to set
up Qualifiers clash with Zalmi

Victory secures top-two finish for United and sets up Qualifier clash with the table-toppers Zalmi on Tuesday

DNA

KARACHI: Mark Chapman's quick half-century, backed by a disciplined bowling performance, guided Islamabad United to a comfortable four-wicket win over Multan Sultans in the high-stakes 40th match of PSL 11 at the National Bank Stadium on Sunday. The victory helped the three-time champions to finish second in the PSL 11 standings and book their meeting with leaders Peshawar Zalmi for the Qualifiers, scheduled to be played at the same venue on Tuesday. Set to chase a daunting 193-run target, the three-time champions comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of six wickets and eight balls to spare. The United, however, had a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost young opener Sameer Minhas (one) in the second over with just 10 runs on the board. His opening partner Devon Conway (18) followed suit on the first delivery of the

sixth over after sharing a 31-run partnership for the second wicket with Mohsin Riaz, who made a 17-ball 25 until falling victim to Faisal Akram 13 balls later. With the scoreboard reading 72/3 in 7.2 overs, Chapman and skipper Shadab Khan launched a recovery by knitting a crucial 63-run partnership for the fourth wicket, which culminated with the latter's dismissal in the 15th over. Shadab made a handy contribution with a brisk 36 off 28 deliveries with the help of five fours. Following his dismissal, United lost two more wickets in quick succession, but Chapman stood his ground firmly and ultimately steered them to a highly-rewarding victory in the penultimate over with an unbeaten half-century. The New Zealand international top-scored for the three-time champions with an unbeaten 69 off 33 deliveries, studded with six sixes and four fours. For Sultans, Faisal bagged two wickets but was expensive as he conceded 41 runs in his four overs, while Peter Siddle, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Muham-

mad Ismail and Mohammad Imran could claim one apiece. Put into bat first by United captain Shadab Khan, the 2021 champions racked up 192/7 in their 20 overs. The Sultans got off to a spirited start to their innings as their in-form opening pair of Steve Smith and skipper Shadab Khan yielded 60 runs before Salman Mirza gave the United a much-needed breakthrough on the final delivery of the powerplay by getting the former caught behind. Farhan followed suit on the next delivery, falling victim to Shadab, resulting in the Sultans slipping to 60/2 in 6.1 overs. Both Sultans openers contributed with 30 each and hit four fours and a six, but Farhan conceded one delivery less, 18, than Smith. Following the back-to-back setbacks, vice-captain Shan Masood took the reins of the Sultans' batting charge and put together a one-sided 42-run partnership for the third wicket with Josh Philippe, who made a cautious 11 off 13 deliveries before being dismissed by Imad Wasim in the 12th over.

Masood then shared brief partnerships with captain Ashton Turner (nine) and Arafat Minhas until eventually being cleaned up by Salman Irshad in the 16th over. The left-handed batter remained the top-scorer for the Sultans with a brisk 44 off 33 deliveries, laced with three fours and two sixes. All-rounder Faheem Ashraf inflicted another blow on the Sultans' batting expedition in the next over by getting Mohammad Imran caught at short third-man. With the scoreboard reading 136/6 in 16.3 overs, Arafat switched gears and bolstered the Sultans' total with a blistering 31-run cameo at the backend, coming off just 19 deliveries and peppered with four boundaries, including three sixes. He was supported by No.8 batter Mohammad Wasim Jr, who made a handy 26 not out from just nine deliveries as the duo added 55 runs to the total off the remaining 21 deliveries. For United, Chris Green, Mirza, Irshad, Imad, Faheem and captain Shadab picked up one wicket apiece.

PTI
leadership
tries to
iron out
differences

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that the party had to "bring back" Abbas and Achakzai as they had become "disheartened". It is worth mentioning that both – Abbas and Achakzai – were nominated by Imran as the opposition leaders in the Senate and National Assembly. PTI's founder had also instructed his party leadership to consult with both of them, and also mandated them to hold talks with the government.

PM allows
spectators
for PSL
playoffs

FROM PAGE 01
The federal government had earlier restricted crowd attendance for the ongoing eight-team tournament under austerity measures, aiming to conserve resources amid the regional fuel crisis linked to the US-Israel conflict. Under this arrangement, 40 matches were held without spectators, with the tournament now set to conclude with just four remaining fixtures, including a qualifier, two eliminators, and the final. However, Naqvi cautioned that the permission "comes with an important condition from his side that fans are strongly encouraged to use public transport or minimise fuel consumption while attending the matches, in line with the ongoing national austerity efforts". "He [PM Shehbaz] also conveyed his best wishes to all four teams competing in the PSL playoffs. Looking forward to some exciting and entertaining cricket ahead," Naqvi added. The decision to allow spectators came after several franchise owners publicly urged the government to reconsider the no-crowd policy, arguing the league felt incomplete without fans and that spectator presence was central to the tournament's atmosphere and identity.

Journalist
gets bail

FROM PAGE 01
He contended that Rehman was a senior citizen who took regular medication. He said that his client had not expressed any personal opinion and had merely shared a statement attributed to a religious figure. The defence further pointed out that even the first information report (FIR) did not clearly specify the role of the accused, terming the case "baseless" and requesting the court to grant the journalist bail. On the other hand, the prosecution opposed the bail plea, arguing that journalism was a sacred profession that came with great responsibility. After hearing arguments from both sides, the court reserved its verdict and later approved the post-arrest bail application, directing Rehman to submit surety bonds worth Rs50,000. The FIR registered by the NCCIA stated that Rehman, journalist Sabir Shakir, anchorperson Moeed Pirzada, PTI's Jibran Ilyas, Rizwan Ahmed Khan, Syed Haider Raza Mehdi, Adil Farooq Raja and Aqil Husain had allegedly "with mala fide intention and ulterior motives knowingly disseminated/propagated fake, false, misleading and misinterpreted information leading to hatred against government functionaries".

Cop
martyred
in Pishin

FROM PAGE 01
assailants then fled from the scene. The official said that security forces rushed to the site of the incident and shifted the body to the district hospital, where the deceased was identified as Naimatullah. He termed the incident a terrorist attack, saying a search operation had been launched in the area to trace those involved in the attack. No one group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. Last week, a policeman was martyred and four others were injured in attacks on two police stations by unidentified men in the Dhadar and Mal area of Balochistan's Kachhi and Noshki districts.

Briefs

Digital system for Mina stay finalized: DG Hajj

MAKKAH MUKARRAMAH-Director General Hajj, Abdul Wahab Soomro on Monday said that Hajj arrangements for the current year have been significantly upgraded both in terms of tangible infrastructure and administrative efficiency compared to the previous year. Briefing the media here, the DG Hajj stated that the completion of arrangements has been fast-tracked, with tasks traditionally finalized in the early days of Zil-Hajj being completed two months in advance this year. He highlighted that despite the arrival of 30,000 additional pilgrims, the residential inventory in Makkah has improved by 90 percent over the last year. To accommodate this increase, high-quality buildings have been acquired in four new sectors, including Jarwal, Nuzha, and Raia Bakhsh. Regarding the most critical phase of Hajj, the 'Mashair Movement,' Abdul Wahab Soomro informed that all tents in Mina were fully prepared a month before Hajj. These tents are equipped with sofa-cum-beds and fully functional air conditioning systems. "Integrating digital solutions into the system, we have introduced a 'Bed Number' facility on the Hajj Application. Pilgrims are being trained via maps in their residential buildings so they can locate and settle into their allotted beds within minutes upon reaching the tent city," the DG added.—APP

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses over 1,174 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 1,174.68 points, a negative change of 0.69 percent, closing at 169,497.36 points against 170,672.04 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 780.227 million shares with a traded value of Rs 33,420 billion, compared to 1,192.170 million shares valuing Rs 39,677 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.747 trillion from Rs 18.877 trillion a day earlier. Out of 483 active companies in the ready market, 217 advanced, 229 declined, and 37 remained unchanged. Bank of Punjab topped the volume chart with 126.624 million shares, followed by Yousuf Weaving with 53.100 million shares and F. Nat. Equities with 38.850 million shares. The top gainers included The Thal Industries Corporation Limited, which increased by Rs 81.20 to close at Rs 893.24, and Indus Motor Company Limited, which gained Rs 57.67 to settle at Rs 2,067.01. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 141.50 to close at Rs 26,256.50, while PIA Holding Company Limited fell by Rs 134.88 to close at Rs 17,764.00. In the futures market, turnover stood at 179,224 million shares with a traded value of Rs 9.215 billion, compared to 675.625 million shares worth Rs 28.140 billion in the previous session.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.82 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.85. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.25 and Rs 279.90, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 1.55 to close at Rs 327.39 from the previous day's close of Rs 325.84, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.75, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of 03 paise and closed at Rs 375.65 compared to the previous day's Rs 375.68.—APP

ECC notes emerging price stability, okays grants

Weekly monitoring data reflects that, after a temporary uptick, the pace of increase in prices of essential items has slowed, with recent weeks showing a declining trend in the Sensitive Price Index (SPI)

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) here on Monday noted improving price stability and easing inflationary pressures on essential commodities, highlighting declining trends in key indices, better supply-side coordination, and targeted policy actions. The committee, which met under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb also approved a series of fiscal measures and reforms to support economic stability and governance. The committee was informed that following a period of volatility, recent data indicates gradual stabilization in prices supported by coordinated efforts at the federal, provincial, and district levels. Institutional mechanisms, particularly through the National Price Monitoring Committee, have strengthened market oversight and enabled timely interventions. It was informed that inflationary pressures, while present, were showing signs of moderation, with emerging trends pointing toward improved price stability. Weekly monitoring data reflects that, after a temporary uptick, the pace of increase in prices of essential items has slowed, with recent weeks showing a declining trend in the Sensitive Price Index (SPI). A number of essential commodities have witnessed price reductions while some have shown only marginal increases, indicating a broader easing in price pressures. The ECC was further apprised that prices of key food and household items are gradually converging toward more stable levels, with some commodities returning close to pre-volatility benchmarks. This trend has been attributed to effective ad-



ministrative measures, improved supply chain monitoring, and enhanced coordination between federal and provincial authorities. The committee noted with satisfaction that the combination of timely policy responses, strengthened monitoring mechanisms, and coordinated implementation has begun to yield positive outcomes, with clear indications of stabilization in the prices of essential items and improved market sentiment. Later, the ECC took up regular agenda items and approved a number of proposals, including Technical Supplementary Grants (TSGs) across ministries and divisions. These grants included Rs.100 million in favour of the Cannabis Control & Regulatory Authority (CCRA) under the Cabinet Division for renovation and operationalization of its facilities; Rs. 311 million

in favour of the government of Balochistan under the Finance Division to support the Prime Minister-approved incentive package for PAS/PSP officers posted in the province; Rs. 372 million in favour of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) under the Ministry of Law and Justice to support digital transformation and implementation of AI-based systems; and Rs. 30.00 million in favour of the Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination for grant of financial rewards to the Pakistan National Hockey Team for qualifying for the FIH Hockey World Cup after eight years, as approved by the Prime Minister. The ECC also discussed a summary submitted by the Ministry of Defence regarding allocation of Rs. 5,985 billion in favour of PIA Holding Company Limited (PIAHCL) for settlement

of liabilities of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL). Out of the total amount, the Committee approved funding for reimbursement of medical and pension payments as well as for salary disbursements and asked for taking up the matter regarding payment to the National Insurance Company Limited (NICL) with the relevant revenue authority for adjustment, in line with the recommendations of auditors. The ECC further approved a summary submitted by the Commerce Division for amendments to the Import Policy Order (IPO), 2022 in line with Pakistan's commitments under International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions to introduce a prohibitory clause on import of goods produced through forced labour.

Dealing with the dead in the ruins of Sudan's war

KHARTOUM: At a makeshift morgue in Khartoum, engineer turned mortician Ali Gebbai clicked through a spreadsheet of the dead. Thousands of entries, each with a photo and burial site, keep a harrowing record of Sudan's war. Every time the team of volunteers finds a body, they post to social media and wait 72 hours in the hopes that the victim's loved ones will come across the picture and claim the person. "We photograph every body. We check if there's anything in their pockets to help us identify them, and we mark the spot where we buried them," Gebbai told AFP. It was a blazing April day and a dead woman lay on the ground of the small, air-conditioned room in the Sudanese capital, her brown-speckled robe pulled over her face and body. If no one came to identify her, the team would prepare a clean white shroud, wash her according to Muslim custom and bury her nearby. It is all anyone in Khartoum can hope for by way of a morgue. And it is far more than what most victims of Sudan's war receive: a shallow grave, hastily dug into the dirt where they fell. The conflict, now in its fourth year, between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has no confirmed toll, though it has killed at least tens of thousands, and aid workers give estimates of more than 200,000. "It's disheartening, all these estimations. When you have a population not knowing what has happened, that trauma and the impact cannot be overlooked," Jose Luis Pozo Gil, the International Committee of the Red Cross's deputy Sudan chief, told AFP. In the year since the army recaptured Khartoum, authorities have exhumed and reburied "around 28,000 people," Hisham Zein Al-Abdeen, head of forensic medicine at Sudan's health ministry, told AFP. And they have only cleared a little over half the capital. Gebbai said he and his teams have buried 7,000 dead since the war began. Ethnic massacres in Darfur, meanwhile, have killed thousands of people at a time, and this year alone at least 700 died in drone strikes on Kordofan. Across the country, there is nowhere to store the dead, and no way to count them. During the worst massacres, when firebombs tear through mosques and markets, rescuers routinely run out of shrouds. The dead are buried where they lay, wrapped in their own clothes or plastic bags, often in villages with no clinic to speak of, much less a morgue that can send information to a central authority. Zein Al-Abdeen, one of only two forensic doctors in Khartoum, said the capital's morgues "were already full before the war." According to the ICRC, Khartoum's four morgues were all forced out of service by the war, but the dead remained inside. "When we went inside the Omdurman morgue, there were still many bodies. And there hadn't been any electricity for a long time — you can imagine the state," Pozo Gil said. The Omdurman morgue was "completely destroyed" in a strike, Zein Al-Abdeen said, its compressors looted while bodies lay rotting everywhere they looked.—Agencies

N Korea opens memorial museum for troops killed in Russia-Ukraine war

SEOUL: North Korea has opened a memorial museum for its soldiers killed while fighting for Russia against Ukraine, with top leaders of North Korea and Russia pledging a push for greater cooperation. In April 2025, North Korea and Russia announced that their soldiers fought together to repel a Ukraine incursion into Russia's Kursk border region. The two countries haven't disclosed exactly how many North Koreans soldiers were deployed, but South Korea's intelligence service estimated last year that North Korea sent about 15,000 troops and 2,000 of them were killed. The North's Korean Central News Agency reported Monday the museum's inaugural ceremony was held in Pyongyang on Sunday to mark the one-year anniversary of the end of an operation to liberate the Kursk region. KCNA said leader Kim Jong Un attended the ceremony along with top visiting Russian officials including Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the State Duma, and Defense Minister Andrei Belousov. During the ceremony, Kim threw dirt over the remains of one dead soldier and laid flowers before others whose bodies were already placed in a mortuary, before he and Volodin and Belousov left messages on the guest book, according to KCNA. In a speech, Kim said the spirits of dead North Korean soldiers will remain as "a symbol of the Korean people's heroism" and support "a victorious march by the Korean and Russian people." He praised the North Korean and Russian forces for thwarting what he called a US-led Western "hegemonic plot and military adventurism" on the Russian-Ukraine front.—APP

India, New Zealand sign 'once-in-a-generation' free trade deal

NEW DELHI: India and New Zealand signed on Monday a free trade agreement that will remove tariffs on India's exports, attract to the country \$20 billion in foreign direct investment, and facilitate the migration of thousands of Indian professionals. Negotiations for the deal started in March last year and was finalized in December. It was signed in New Delhi by India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Investment Minister Todd McClay during a gathering of business leaders from both countries. Under the pact, all Indian goods will get duty-free access to the New Zealand market, while India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95 percent of New Zealand's exports. The deal also opens employment pathways for Indian professionals, with a quota of 5,000 visas at any given time and a stay of up to three years. "It also has an investment commitment which will encourage businesses to leverage the strengths and scale that India offers. It will also encourage Indian businesses to look at the New Zealand market both for access in goods and services, and potential investment," Goyal said during the signing ceremony. The \$20 billion New Zealand investment in India — negotiated as a part of the FTA — is intended to support manufacturing, infrastructure, services, innovation, and job creation. Goyal and McClay did not specify a timeline, but the Ministry of Commerce has previously said it would be over 15 years. McClay said he hopes the trade agreement will be implemented by the end of 2026. It has yet to be approved by New Zealand's parliament, where it faced criticism from the ruling coalition's partner. — New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said in an X post ahead of the signing that the deal is a "once-in-a-generation agreement that gives NZ exporters unprecedented access to 1.4 billion people and an economy set to become the third-largest in the world." While New Zealand First, a far-right populist party, has vowed to vote against the deal, saying it "gives too much away, especially on immigration, and does not get enough in return for New Zealanders," the opposition Labour party said last week it would support the FTA, paving the way for it to clear parliament. The pact is India's third FTA since last year, when it accelerated its market diversification to weather the 50 percent US tariffs slapped on its exports by Donald Trump's administration. "This was one of the fastest concluded FTAs in Indian trade history. It is important to have fast-paced negotiations at a time when the cost of slow negotiations is rising, in an environment where tariff regimes can shift on a single political announcement," Anisree Suresh, researcher at the Takshashila Institution, told Arab News. "Although this is a small FTA, it can serve as a symbolic framework for India to expand its export market options and engage in fast-paced trade deals at a time when the rules-based trading system is eroding." In 2025, India signed another two major free trade deals — a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the UK and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Oman, which are expected to enter into force in the first half of 2026. India also announced it was finalizing an FTA with the EU in January, which is one of the nation's most significant given the European bloc's size, but it has not yet been signed.—APP

How China effectively aligns industrial upgrade with consumption boost

BEIJING: Benign interaction between demand and supply is the key driver of economic development. To promote this positive interplay, China has written into the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) the need to foster virtuous interaction between consumption and investment, as well as between supply and demand, so as to achieve a higher-standard dynamic balance and strengthen the endogenous momentum and reliability of the domestic economy. With a population of over 1.4 billion and a middle-income group of more than 400 million, China has become the world's second-largest consumer market. While striving to expand domestic demand, the country has also attached great importance to effective investment. At present, numerous major projects are progressing at an accelerated pace. "China's pursuit of self-reliance, especially in high-end manufacturing, is essentially a way to support consumption expansion, not replace it," said Professor Su Jian of Peking University. China's manufacturing value-added output is expected to have contributed over 30 percent of global manufacturing growth during the 2021-2025 period, and the country has maintained its position as the world's largest manufacturer for 15 straight years. This extensive industrial system employs hundreds of millions of workers. Without this pillar, rising household incomes would lack a solid foundation. For example, in Guangxi's Guigang Economic and

Technological Development Zone in south China, Guigang Lee & Man Paper Manufacturing Limited is building a 27.5 billion yuan (about 4 billion U.S. dollars) integrated pulp-and-paper complex. The project, which will produce high-end tissue products and biodegradable materials in two phases, is expected to generate roughly 10 billion yuan in annual output and create more than 3,000 jobs when its first phase is completed in the first half of next year, said Zhou Yongli, the company's general manager. Moreover, industrial self-reliance is steadily reducing living costs for consumers. A striking example is new energy vehicles (NEVs). In 2025, China's passenger NEVs accounted for 68.4 percent of the global market. Such large-scale production and industrial chain self-reliance have significantly lowered NEV purchase costs, driving the popularization of green travel. Furthermore, new infrastructure driven by industrial upgrading is expanding consumption scope. For instance, the spread of 5G and the industrial internet enables farmers in remote mountainous areas to sell their specialties to cities via live-streaming, while the roll-out of low-altitude infrastructure has turned drone food delivery from science fiction into daily life. Also, the construction of a unified national computing network allows an AI agent to book meals, call taxis and register for hospital appointments in seconds. This is the picture of high-quality de-

velopment: accelerating the transformation of growth drivers and optimizing structure. On the one hand, it opens up blue ocean markets and nurtures new growth points; on the other, it boosts employment, incomes and spending. From "having it" to "having it better," and "buying goods" to "buying experiences," new consumer demands are guiding thousands of industries in China to innovate and improve the quality of supply. Driven by strong demand for outdoor recreation, Zhejiang Feima Outdoor Products Co., Ltd. in Qingtong County, east China's Zhejiang Province, is running its leisure chair production lines at full capacity. "Domestic sales now account for about 65 percent of our total, and we expect summer domestic sales to grow three to fivefold," said Wang Lei, the company's chairman. At the recently held 2026 Zhongguancun Forum Annual Conference in Beijing, smart home products catering to people's needs, including AI glasses that can instantly list recipes and guide cooking step by step, smart robot nannies, and sweeping and window cleaning robots, drew large crowds. Many visitors asked: "When will these be on the market?" In the first 10 months of 2025, online retail sales of smart wearables like AI glasses and smart watches rose by 23.1 percent year on year. Behind this figure lay the in-depth integration of China's super-large market advantage and its industrial upgrading.—DNA

Israeli strikes hit east Lebanon, expanding scope despite ceasefire

BEIRUT: The Israeli military began carrying out strikes in eastern Lebanon on Monday, expanding the scope of its bombing campaign during a ceasefire that has failed to fully halt hostilities with Lebanese armed group Hezbollah. The strikes on Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley marked the first time the area has been hit since a US-brokered ceasefire came into force on April 16, significantly reducing the pace of attacks without entirely stopping the exchanges of fire. Israel has continued to carry out strikes across southern Lebanon, and its troops are occupying a strip of the country's south, destroying homes they describe as infrastructure being used by Hezbollah. The Iran-backed group, meanwhile, has kept up its drone and rocket attacks against Israeli troops in Lebanon and on northern Israel. A spokesperson for the Israeli military said it was beginning to strike Hezbollah infrastructure in the Bekaa as well as areas in southern Lebanon. Security sources told Reuters strikes had hit near the town of Nabi Chit, near Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, with no immediate reports of casualties. Lebanon's state media agency reported several strikes across the south that left at least three people wounded.—APP

Palestinians use Gaza rubble to restore streets as US rebuilding plan stalls

GAZA: Palestinians are using war rubble to repave streets destroyed during Israel's two-year assault on Gaza, crushing concrete and metal into pavement under a UN-run project they hope will mark a first step toward rehabilitating their damaged cities. The project run by the United Nations Development Programme comes as progress stalls in US President Donald Trump's Gaza plan, meant to build on an October Israel-Hamas ceasefire by surgically aid and rebuilding the enclave from scratch. It marks a bid by the UN and Palestinians to use locally available machinery to clear mountains of rubble that officials say is blocking access to water wells and hospitals and making it difficult to get the economy going again. Alessandro Mrakic, head of UNDP's Gaza office, said the territory faces one of the largest post-war clearance challenges in memory with an estimated 61 million tons of rubble. "Beyond the collection (of rubble), we have started sorting, we have started crushing, and, as such, reusing it," Mrakic said. "We have used almost the same amount that we have collected." Mrakic said UNDP teams, staffed by Palestinian workers, were using the rubble "to rehabilitate roads and pave areas for shelter and community kitchens.—APP

Cut off from the West, Muscovites rediscover Russian 'roots'

MOSCOW: At a cooking school in Moscow, Yulia Fedishova was preparing a "smetannik": a traditional Slavic layer cake with a sour cream topping. The "Lunch a la Russe" master class she was attending on the secrets of classic Russian dishes is just one example of how many Muscovites are trying to reconnect with their ancestral "roots" amid the war in Ukraine. The push is encouraged by the Kremlin as Russia faces deepening isolation from the West. "In such troubling times, you want to return to something familiar, to become closer to your roots in order to find calmness and balance," said Fedishova, a 27-year-old corporate trainer. Whereas before the war, fondness for traditional pastimes and cuisine may have been dismissed as parochial in big-city Western-inspired Russia, now it is all the rage. Facing difficulty traveling to Europe and steeped in an ultra-patriotic drive from the Kremlin, many Russians have turned to the tastes and style of their Tsarist and Cold War-era ancestors.—APP

Briefs

Two former Israeli PMs unite to unseat Netanyahu

JERUSALEM: In a move aimed at unseating incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett and opposition leader Yair Lapid announced they would run on a joint list in this year's elections. "I am pleased to announce that tonight, together with my friend Yair Lapid, I am taking the most Zionist and patriotic step we have ever taken for our country," Bennett said in a joint televised statement with Lapid. "Tonight, we are uniting and founding the Beyahad (Together) party under my leadership, a party that will lead to a great victory and open a new era for our beautiful country." During the televised statement, Lapid said: "Bennett is a right-wing politician, but an honest one, and there is trust between us." Bennett also calls on ex-minister Gadi Eisenkot to join alliance Earlier on Sunday, Lapid, himself a former premier, had said he would join forces with Bennett. "The move brings about the unification of the Repair Bloc, enabling all efforts to be focused on leading Israel toward the necessary repair," he wrote on X. Bennett said that if elected, he would establish a national commission of inquiry into the failures leading up to the October 7, 2023 attack, something the current Netanyahu government has rejected. - APP

Seafarers stranded in Gulf for weeks now

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: For about eight weeks, Indian Capt. Rahul Dhar and his crew have been stranded on their tanker in the Arabian Gulf, sometimes watching drones and missiles explode as the Strait of Hormuz remained effectively shut while the Iran war dragged on. The crew's morale, he said, is holding as they carry on with their routines, but the strain is beginning to show. A shaky ceasefire between the US and Iran has brought "a careful sense of hope" for the crew, but there is still no clear end to the war. "Day to day, we try to keep things normal with open conversations and small team activities that help lift everyone's spirits." The crew sighted drones and missile interceptions several times, both near the ship and along the horizon during their watches. "Those moments were difficult and created real tension for the crew," Dhar told The Associated Press. "None of us expected the warlike situation," he said, noting that reliable Internet has helped them stay in touch with families. "Those calls and messages really keep us grounded and give us strength."

Shooting suspect appears in court

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: A California man accused of storming a gala dinner attended by President Donald Trump appeared in court Monday over a shooting that marks the latest spasm of political violence in deeply divided America. Administration officials said the suspect in Saturday night's shocking attack apparently aimed to kill Trump and senior officials at the press dinner in a Washington hotel, in what would be the third attempt on the president's life in two years. Trump, who was rushed out of the ballroom in Washington by Secret Service agents, posted surveillance footage of the gunman attempting to sprint past a checkpoint one floor above the room where the dinner was held. After a brief exchange of gunfire with agents, the suspect was detained at the scene. Trump shared photos of the suspect handcuffed on the carpeted hotel floor, lying shirtless and face down.

Speakers call for stronger Pakistan-Zimbabwe relations
SSI-PAIDAR Commemorate Zimbabwe's National Day

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Zimbabwe's National Day. The proceedings, which began with the national anthems of Pakistan and Zimbabwe were moderated by Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BoG, ISSI; H.E. T.M.J Abu-Basutu, (RTD) Air Marshal, Ambassador of Zimbabwe to Pakistan; Mr. Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi, Ambassador of Pakistan to Zimbabwe. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted the significance of Zimbabwe's National Day, marking its independence on April 18, 1980, and paid tribute to its resilience and struggle for sovereignty. He underscored the strong Pakistan-Zimbabwe relationship, rooted in mutual respect and South-South cooperation, and recalled Pakistan's consistent support for Zimbabwe's independence. He noted ongoing collaboration in defence, education, agriculture, health, and capacity building. He emphasized the potential to expand trade and economic cooperation, particularly in agriculture, textiles, and light engineering, under Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy. He also reaffirmed the importance of stronger institutional linkages and highlighted ISSI's role, through CAMEA, in promoting dialogue, research, and engagement with Africa. In her remarks, Dr. Amina Khan highlighted the significance of the National Day of the Republic of Zimbabwe, paying tribute to the courage and resilience of its people. She underscored that Af-



rica remains a key pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy and noted CAMEA's efforts under the 'Engage Africa' policy to promote meaningful engagement through initiatives such as National Day and Africa Day commemorations. She emphasized the importance of building practical partnerships and strengthening people-to-people and institutional linkages. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted that Pakistan's relationship with Zimbabwe dates back to its nationalist struggle, when Pakistan was among the first countries to extend political, diplomatic, financial, and material support against British colonial rule. He noted that the partnership, strengthened through leadership-level engagement, continued after independence, with Pakistan among the first to recognize Zimbabwe in 1980, reflecting deep mutual trust and solidarity

He highlighted cooperation in defence, trade, and people-to-people contacts, as well as the role of the Pakistani diaspora and early cultural and sporting exchanges, including cricket ties in the 1990s. He stressed the importance of amplifying the voices of developing countries and the potential for deeper cooperation in a changing global order. He further pointed to the shifting global balance from West to East, linking it to Afro-Asian solidarity rooted in the Bandung spirit, and expressed confidence that relations can grow further through expanded people-to-people and business-to-business linkages, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to Africa solidarity. Ambassador T.M.J Abu-Basutu, in his remarks, appreciated the ISSI for organising the celebration of Zimbabwe's 46th National Day and highlighted the longstanding, brotherly ties between

Zimbabwe and Pakistan. He acknowledged Pakistan's consistent support since Zimbabwe's independence, particularly in defence cooperation and the training of Zimbabwe's Air Force. Emphasising the need to expand bilateral ties, he pointed to the untapped potential in sectors such as trade, mining, tourism, and infrastructure, and called for greater collaboration between the governments and private sectors of both countries to foster economic growth and deepen the partnership. He highlighted Pakistan's longstanding role in training the Zimbabwe Air Force and ongoing cooperation through institutions such as the National Defence University and Foreign Service Academy, underscoring strong bilateral ties across defence, education, and sports. Emphasizing "Unity and Development towards Vision 2030," he called for col-

lective efforts to build a prosperous and modern Zimbabwe, expressed optimism about its economic prospects, and reaffirmed Pakistan's continued support, including for its UN engagements and bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (2027-2028). Ambassador Amjad Qazi said that Pakistan and Zimbabwe enjoy cordial relations and support each other at multilateral forums, including the United Nations. He noted that an MoU on bilateral cooperation will be signed, with defence cooperation as an important aspect of ties. He also highlighted education linkages, with Zimbabwean students studying in Pakistan and efforts underway to enhance university-to-university collaboration. He further stressed the need to strengthen business-to-business connections. In particular, he underscored greater engagement between the chambers of commerce.

Global military spending continues to rise

DNA

ISLAMABAD: World military expenditure reached \$2,887 billion in 2025, an increase of 2.9 per cent in real terms over 2024, according to new data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on Monday. Military spending declined in the United States but rose by 14pc in Europe and by 8.1pc in Asia and Oceania. The top three military spenders – the USA, China and Russia – spent a combined total of \$1,480bn, or 51pc of the global total. Military expenditure in the Middle East reached an estimated \$218bn in 2025, just 0.1pc higher than in 2024. Besides Israel, most other major spenders in the region for which data is available increased their spending. Israel's military expenditure decreased by 4.9pc to \$48.3bn, reflecting a reduction in the intensity of the Gaza conflict during 2025 following the ceasefire agreement with Hamas. Israel's spending remained 97pc higher than in 2022. Military spending by Türkiye grew by 7.2pc in 2025 to \$30.0bn, partly driven by its ongoing military operations in Iraq, Somalia, and Syria. Spending by Iran declined for the second consecutive year, falling by 5.6pc to \$7.4 bn in 2025. The real-terms decrease was due to high annual inflation of 42pc; however, spending increased in nominal terms. "Despite the recent conflicts, Iran's military spending decreased in real terms due to economic difficulties," said Zubaida Karim, a researcher with the SIPRI Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme. "However, official figures almost certainly understate the true level of Iran's spending. Iran also uses off-budget oil revenues to finance its military, including the production of missiles and drones," she said. Global military expenditure increased to \$2,887bn in 2025, the 11th consecutive year of increases, bringing the global military burden—military expenditure as a share of GDP—to 2.5pc, its highest level since 2009. At 2.9pc, the annual spending increase was significantly smaller than the 9.7pc increase recorded in 2024. However, this slowdown is largely accounted for by a decline in US military spending.

Govt okays prices of 35 critical drugs

"The prime minister was informed that delays in price approvals were not only disrupting supply chains but also putting lives at risk, particularly in cases requiring uninterrupted treatment," he added

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has approved long-pending price setting for 35 new essential and life-saving medicines, with pricing for another 45 molecules likely to follow soon, in a bid to resolve acute shortages that have disrupted patient care nationwide, a senior official at the Ministry of National Health Services said. Around 35 life-saving drugs, including novel cancer therapies, vaccines and biological products, remained unavailable in the country since 2024 despite their registration by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), as the government had delayed their price fixation for nearly two years. The official said the decision, approved by the federal cabinet, would immediately improve the availability of several high-priority therapies that had remained inaccessible due to prolonged delays, forcing patients to either go without treatment or rely on costly and often unregulated smuggled medicines. According to the official, Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal personally took up the matter at the highest level, presenting the case before the cabinet and briefing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the urgency of ensuring access to critical medicines. "The prime minister was informed that delays in price approvals were not only disrupting supply chains but also putting lives at risk, particularly in cases requiring uninterrupted treatment," he added. Officials at Drap confirmed that the medicines affected by the delay included a wide range of critical therapies such as oncology drugs, transplant medicines, cardiovascular treatments and vaccines, including Typhoid Vi, polio and pneumococcal vaccines. Other essential products impacted included recombinant human coagulation factor VIII, human rabies immunoglobulin and semaglutide.

King Charles jets to US

LONDON/WASHINGTON: Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla arrived in the United States on Monday for a four-day trip, a tour which has taken on even greater prominence after the White House Correspondents' dinner shooting and amid acrimony between the close allies. The state visit, by far the most high-profile and consequential of Charles's reign, marks the 250th anniversary of the US declaration of independence from British rule, and is the first to the country by a British monarch for two decades. It begins with a private meeting with self-proclaimed royal fan President Donald Trump, and includes an address to Congress and a lavish dinner at the White House. But the long-planned trip has become enmeshed in the political spat between the two countries over the US-Israeli war on Iran, which led Trump to voice deep displeasure with the British government for failing to support the offensive. The shooting on Saturday at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington, with the president and officials in his administration the likely targets according to the US acting attorney general, has cast a further pall over the visit. Buckingham Palace said the trip would still go ahead as planned following discussions between British and US authorities to determine if the incident would impact on the royals' plans. "The king and queen are most grateful to all those who have worked at pace to ensure this remains the case and are looking forward to the visit getting underway tomorrow," a palace spokesperson said on Sunday. On arriving in Washington, the king and queen have a private tea with the president, an unabashed lover of the British royal family who regularly describes Charles as a "great man," and his wife, first lady Melania Trump. The 77-year-old king, who is still undergoing treatment for cancer, will address Congress the next day – just the second time a British monarch has done so. - APP

Crude oil tops \$107, stocks dip

Energy shocks stoking inflation worries that have prompted traders to all but price out rate cuts this year: analysts

DNA

LONDON: Oil climbed on Monday while US stock futures slipped as stalled US-Iran peace talks prolonged the disruption of Middle East energy exports, unsettling markets and policymakers ahead of a packed week of central bank meetings. Benchmark Brent crude futures rose more than 2% to touch a three-week high of \$107.97 a barrel in early Asia trade, stoking inflation worries that have prompted traders to all but price out rate cuts this year. S&P 500 futures eased 0.3%, in a modest move after the cash market notched a record closing high on Friday with investors snapping up AI winners. The dollar was higher, although not by much, leaving the euro down 0.15% at \$1.1706 and the yen marginally weaker at 159.53 per dollar. While a ceasefire has frozen most fighting in the war triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran two months ago, markets are focused on the shuttered Strait of Hormuz, the key chokepoint behind surging energy prices. The average LNG price for June delivery into north-east Asia LNG-AS was \$16.70 per million British thermal units last week, nearly 61% above pre-war levels. Goldman Sachs analysts lifted year-end oil price forecasts sharply from \$80 to \$90 a barrel for Brent, and even that rests on normalisation of Gulf exports by the end of June. "Non-linear price increases are likely if inventories drop to critically low levels, which we have not seen in the last few decades," they warned in a note. US President Donald Trump cancelled a trip to Islamabad by US envoys for talks over the weekend, even as Iran's

foreign minister has continued to shuttle between mediating countries. Early moves in Asia were higher with South Korea's KOSPI and Japan's Nikkei rising to record highs, though Australian shares slipped in holiday-thinned trade. Traders see the supply shock keeping most central banks on hold this week, though aggressive bets on future rate hikes in Britain and Europe could be tested if policymakers strike a cautious tone. The Bank of Japan is the first off the rank and is expected to keep its short-term policy rate steady at 0.75% on Tuesday. Markets are wagering on eventual hikes but worry inflation is taking hold, with long-end yields on the rise and the yen under pressure. The Federal Reserve is expected to leave rates where they are at what's likely to be Chair Jerome Powell's final meeting in the chair. The European Central Bank and Bank of England are likewise expected to hold, but their tone and outlook could challenge market pricing for both banks to make two 25-basis-point hikes later in the year. "In short, no central bank should be tightening right now simply to prove it isn't behind the curve or treating current pressures as transitory," said Bob Savage, head of markets macro strategy at BNY. "If that message lands, rate markets – which remain extremely aggressive ... face significant front-end repricing." US tech earnings also headline the week ahead, with 44% of the S&P 500 by market cap due to report. Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta Platforms are due on Wednesday, with Apple on Thursday. "AI is something that people are very optimistic about and very much considered a winner," said Mike Seidenberg, senior portfolio manager for Allianz Technology Trust. "It's the top of the portfolio."