



# Islamabad POST

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**Azerbaijan keen to further cement ties with Pakistan**

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## Briefs

**Trump: Iran "collapsing financially"**

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has stated that Iran is in a severe state of financial collapse and urgently wants the Strait of Hormuz reopened to resume oil exports and generate revenue. In recent remarks and social media posts, Trump claimed Iran is "starving for cash" and losing approximately \$500 million a day due to the ongoing restrictions and blockade on the vital waterway. He suggested Tehran is pressing for the strait to be opened immediately because of its dire economic situation. Trump has repeatedly linked any potential deal to broader demands, including curbing Iran's nuclear program, while expressing skepticism about Iranian offers that would postpone those discussions. Doha Backs Pakistani Mediation, Says No Need to Expand Negotiations Circle Qatar (Doha) has publicly thrown its support behind Pakistan's mediation efforts in the U.S.-Iran crisis. Qatari officials, including Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed bin Mohammed Al Ansari, have reaffirmed full backing for Islamabad's role in facilitating talks to end the conflict and reopen the strait. Qatar has stressed ongoing coordination with Pakistan and expressed a preference for keeping the current mediation framework without expanding the circle of negotiators at this stage.

**UAE leaves Opec and OPEC+**

DNA

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday it quit Opec and Opec+, dealing a heavy blow to the oil exporting groups, at a time when the Iran war has caused a historic energy shock and unsettled the global economy. The stunning loss of the UAE, a longstanding Opec member, could create disarray and weaken the group, which has usually sought to show a united front despite internal disagreements over a range of issues from geopolitics to production quotas. Opec Gulf producers have already been struggling to ship exports through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow chokepoint between Iran and Oman through which a fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes, because of Iranian threats and attacks against vessels. But the UAE exit from Opec represents a big win for US President Donald Trump, who has accused the organisation of "ripping off the rest of the world" by inflating oil prices.

**Nepra abolishes fee licence rule**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has abolished the licence requirement and application fee for solar consumers with systems of up to 25 kilowatts. The move comes two days after the Power Division, amid intense public backlash, instructed Nepra to remove the licence requirement and associated fee for solar prosumers of up to 25 kilowatts. The request follows directions from Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, who pushed for a rollback of recent regulatory changes that centralised approvals with Nepra and imposed fees even on small-scale systems.

## Ties with Europe

# Pakistan keen to reinforce engagement with EU: PM

EU business delegation calls on the Prime Minister; assure the EU delegation of the Government of Pakistan's firm resolve to continue working towards the stabilization of the economy, despite regional challenges, including the recent spike in oil prices due to the situation in the Middle East

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of senior officials of the European Union and business representatives from prominent European companies, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House this morning. The delegation was led by Mr. Peteris Ustubs, Director (Asia Pacific) of the European Commission's Directorate General of International Partnerships, and comprised Ms. Thourya Triki of the EU Investment Bank and senior executives of top European companies including Manuel Pauser Vice President, Adidas, Vice President of Andritz, Karl Shloeglbauer and Regional Director of IKEA, Dieter Mettke. The delegation is visiting Pakistan to attend the EU-Pakistan Business Forum. The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan H.E. Raimundas Karoblis was also present in the meeting. The Prime Minister welcomed the EU delegation to Pakistan and thanked them for their participation in the EU-Pakistan Business Forum. He said the EU was Pakistan's largest trading partner and the destination for the highest volume of exports from Pakistan.

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**PM, New Zealand PM Luxon discuss Middle East**

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday received a telephone call from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon Christopher Luxon during which the two leaders exchanged views on the evolving situation in the Middle East. During the 'warm and cordial conversation', the prime minister briefed PM Luxon on Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic outreach and efforts, to promote peace and de-escalation in the region, a press release issued by the PM House said. Prime Minister Luxon expressed deep appreciation for Pakistan's constructive diplomatic initiatives, including its outreach to both Washington and Tehran, and conveyed his best wishes for the success of the mediation efforts.

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## Against Judges will

# IHC's Kayani, Sattar among three judges transferred from IHC

Judicial commission approves transfer of judges under Article 200 of the Constitution with majority vote

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), in a meeting chaired by the Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, approved the transfer of three Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges to other high courts. According to a statement released by the top court on Tuesday, the commission approved the transfer of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani from IHC to the Lahore High Court (LHC), Justice Babar Sattar to the Peshawar High Court (PHC), and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz to the Sindh High Court (SHC), all through majority vote. "The meetings were convened by the secretary of the JCP in exercise of powers conferred by clause (22) of Article 175A of the Con-



stitution, as the chairman of the Commission, while giving reason therefor, declined to convene the meeting on the requisition by one-third of the total members," it said. The proposal originated from IHC Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar, who sought a JCP meeting to deliberate on the matter.

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ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of the European Union meets Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

## Pakistan launches Fateh-II missile

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Army Rocket Force Command conducted a successful training launch of indigenously developed Fateh-II Missile System, equipped with advanced avionics and state of the art navigational aids. The training launch was aimed at training of troops, validating various technical parameters and performance evaluation of different sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability. The launch was witnessed by

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**Forces destroy several Afghan posts**

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Security forces destroyed multiple Afghan Taliban posts in Balochistan's Chaman sector on Tuesday, said security sources. The sources said that the operation was carried out in response to "unprovoked aggression" by Afghan Taliban forces and terrorists on the border, under the ongoing Operation Ghazab il-Haq. Security sources said the Pakistan Army effectively targeted and destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts in Chaman. The Sarshan, Al-Marjan and Edhi posts, as well as vehicles and

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## Ceasefire in limbo

# Trump not happy with latest Iran proposal to end war: US official

Latest Iranian plan would set aside nuclear issue until after war ends, say Iranian sources

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is unhappy with the latest Iranian proposal on resolving the two-month war, a US official said, dampening hopes for a resolution to the conflict that has disrupted energy supplies, fuelled inflation, and killed thousands. Iran's latest proposal would set aside discussion of Iran's nuclear programme until the war is ended and disputes over shipping from the Gulf are resolved. That is unlikely to satisfy the US, which says nuclear issues must be dealt with from the outset, and Trump was unhappy with Iran's proposal for that reason, a US official briefed on the president's Monday meeting with his advisers said, speaking on condition of anonymity. White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said the US "will not negotiate through the press" and has "been clear about our red lines" as the Trump administration looks to end the war against

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## US not in a position to dictate us: Iran

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's Deputy Defence Minister Reza Talei-Nik has stated that the United States is no longer in a position to dictate its policy to other independent nations. Speaking amid stalled talks between Tehran and Washington, he said the US would have to accept abandoning its illegal and irrational demands. The comments were made as Iran presented a new proposal related to unblocking the Strait of Hormuz and efforts to end the recent conflict in West Asia. At the same time, addressing a meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation defence ministers in Bishkek,

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## Imran Khan administered fourth eye injection

Clinical assessment and optical scan show improvement before day-care procedure, says hospital

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Threke-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan was administered a fourth intravitreal eye injection at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on Tuesday as part of his ongoing follow-up treatment, with hospital authorities saying he remained clinically stable

throughout the procedure. According to a medical update issued by Pims, Khan, currently incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, was brought to the hospital for the fourth dose of intravitreal injection as part of his scheduled eye treatment. Before the procedure, ophthalmologists examined him and found him clinically stable, while an Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) scan showed signs of clinical improvement, the hospital said. Following informed consent and under standard monitoring,

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## Low awareness mars EU-Pakistan business forum

Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb underlined recent improvements in Pakistan's macroeconomic fundamentals and ongoing structural reforms. He projected confidence under the theme "Pakistan Means Business," emphasising the country's stability and readiness to welcome quality investments

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The first-ever High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum was inaugurated here on Tuesday, aiming to open new avenues for trade, investment, and technology cooperation between Pakistan and the European Union. The two-day event, organised in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan, has brought together senior policymakers, business leaders, investors, and financial institutions from both sides. However, despite its strategic importance, participation from several major European companies remained limited, with many staying away reportedly due to ongoing regional tensions and the broader impact of conflicts in the Gulf and Middle East. Officials noted that the forum suffered from relatively low visibility, with even mainstream European media showing limited awareness or coverage in the lead-up to the event. Observers suggest that the EU delegation in Pakistan may need to intensify outreach efforts, particularly to European business associations and media outlets, to fully realise the forum's potential as a pivotal platform for economic engagement. The EU is Pakistan's largest single export destination and a leading global investor. The Forum seeks to move beyond existing strong trade ties toward deeper investment flows, technology partnerships, "greening" of supply chains, and sustainable indus-



trial growth in a combined economic space of over 700 million people. EU Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Raimundas Karoblis, while inaugurating the Forum, highlighted the strength of current relations: "The European Union enjoys strong economic relations with Pakistan. It is a source of pride for me to say that the European Union is the top export destination for Pakistan. The purpose of the forum is not just to celebrate our trade relations,

but to deepen, diversify, 'green,' and transform them into long-lasting investments. Through this, our mutual prosperity will thrive." Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb underlined recent improvements in Pakistan's macroeconomic fundamentals and ongoing structural reforms. He projected confidence under the theme "Pakistan Means Business," emphasising the country's stability

and readiness to welcome quality investments. Mr. Haroon Akhtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production, delivered a keynote address during the inaugural session. A major highlight of the opening was the formal launch of the EU-Pakistan Business Network, which brings together over 300 EU companies already active in Pakistan.

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# Punjab CM stresses workplace safety laws

Terming workplace safety, health and labour welfare as a fundamental pillar of national development, the chief minister reaffirmed her government's commitment to the protection and rehabilitation of workers

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed authorities to ensure strict enforcement of workplace safety laws and the provision of protective equipment in factories, industrial units and offices across the province. In her message on World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the chief minister underscored the importance of safeguarding both the physical and mental health of workers. She directed the Labour Department and other relevant institutions to take firm action against violators of workplace safety regulations. Terming workplace safety, health and labour welfare as a fundamental pillar of national development, the chief minister reaffirmed her government's com-

mitment to the protection and rehabilitation of workers. She said ensuring the safety of labourers and public health remained a top priority of the Punjab government. She ordered strict compliance with safety protocols and the mandatory use of protective gear to shield workers from occupational hazards. "A healthy and safe worker can build a strong nation," she said, urging industrialists and business owners to prioritize worker welfare. Highlighting the need to promote a culture of safety in workplaces, she noted that amendments were being introduced in labour laws to further strengthen worker protection mechanisms. The chief minister said financial assistance was being provided to 1.4 mil-

lion workers through ration cards on a monthly basis, adding that another 50,000 labourers would be issued ration cards during the current fiscal year. Describing workers as a valuable national asset, she emphasized that their health and safety could not be compromised. "It is the government's responsibility to protect the life and property of labourers and ensure a safe working environment," she added. She further stressed that implementation of internationally recognized safety standards was essential to prevent workplace accidents and reiterated her resolve to create an environment where workers feel secure both physically and mentally. The chief minister also warned that factories neglecting workers' health and safety would face strict penalties.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Chairman Senate Ms. Misbah Khar meets with Harerimana Fatou, Ambassador of Rwanda, to discuss bilateral cooperation in health and education, and initiatives to strengthen Pakistan-Rwanda relations.

## S.M. Tanveer slams 100-basis-point increase in interest rates

KARACHI : S.M. Tanveer, the Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG)—the ruling faction in the FPCCI—and a prominent business leader, has strongly condemned the 100-basis-point increase in interest rates. He stated that despite the rising trend in international oil prices, such a drastic hike has not been seen anywhere else in the world. He warned that this monetary tightening will have a devastating impact on the national exchequer, noting that given the current volume of government borrowing, ranging around Rs60 trillion, a mere one percent rise in the rate necessitates an additional Rs600 billion in domestic debt servicing. Mr. Tanveer further lamented that the manufacturing sector is being forced to bear the brunt of these prohibitive markup rates, which, when coupled with a cost of doing business already ranked as the highest in the region, threatens the very survival of local enterprise. He emphasized that the dual pressure of exorbitant interest rates and surging energy costs is actively jeopardizing industrial growth, leading to a visible rise in closed industrial units across the country. Consequently, Mr. Tanveer has demanded an immediate reversal of this monetary policy to prevent further de-industrialization and to provide the private sector with the breathing room necessary to sustain economic activity.—DNA

## World Veterinary Day celebrated

PESHAWAR: Experts at the the University of Agriculture Peshawar (UAP) on Tuesday stressed the need for strengthening veterinary services, modern livestock management and research to ensure food security and public health during a ceremony held in connection with World Veterinary Day 2026. The event was organized by the College of Veterinary Sciences under the theme "Veterinarians: Guardians of Food and Health" to highlight the contribution of veterinary professionals in protecting animal health and supporting the livestock economy. Secretary Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zarful-Maani attended the ceremony as chief guest, while Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Sarzamin Khan presided over the event. Addressing the gathering, the speakers said veterinarians play a crucial role in preventing animal diseases, improving livestock productivity and ensuring the supply of safe and healthy food to the public. They noted that the livestock sector remained a major pillar of the national economy and required greater investment in modern technology, genetics, animal reproduction and extension services to meet future challenges. The chief guest assured support for veterinary graduates through paid internship opportunities and said that cooperation between the livestock department and the university would be further strengthened through provision of scientific equipment, medicines, training programs and expert services. Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Sarzamin Khan said the University is committed to promoting quality veterinary education and research, adding that steps were also being considered for the establishment of mobile veterinary clinics to improve outreach services.—APP

## KP police conducts 1,087 I-based operations

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police carried out 1,087 intelligence-based operations against terrorists of Fitna Al-Khawarij during the first three months of the current year, according to the department's performance report. The report stated that the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested 283 terrorists and killed 108 terrorists and proclaimed offenders during successful operations across the province. Among the arrested militants were three highly important commanders and one female suicide bomber, highlighting the department's intensified counterterrorism efforts. During the same period, police faced 194 terrorist attacks, of which 106 were successfully repelled through effective strategy, fortification and the use of modern gadgets. CTD also recovered a large cache of arms and explosives, including 24 SMGs, 55 hand

grenades, 21 pistols, one suicide jacket, over 1,700 kilograms of explosives and explosive material, along with hundreds of cartridges of various calibers. The report said 59 police officers embraced martyrdom in the line of duty during the last three months, while 88 personnel were injured. In anti-narcotics operations across the province, 7,771 FIRs were registered and 7,751 accused were arrested. Police recovered 5,695 kilograms of charas, 275 kilograms of opium, 210 kilograms of heroin, 847 kilograms of ice, and 22,124 liters of liquor stored in 762 bottles and drums. A total of 5,528 proclaimed offenders were arrested, while 66 were killed in police encounters during the same period. Police Facilitation Centers established across the province provided various public services, including 67,543 visa verifications,

23,009 local verifications, 3,046 foreign country verifications, 4,627 tenant verifications, and assistance in 8,724 missing item cases. Work is also underway to expand these centers to tehsil level. The report further stated that the Safe City Project in Peshawar, launched at a cost of Rs2.23 billion, has been formally inaugurated and will ensure automatic surveillance and prompt arrest of criminals through 711 modern cameras. Under the National Action Plan, more than 6,684 search and strike operations were conducted, resulting in the arrest of 21,531 suspects, while 43,221 suspects were detained during 22,028 snap checking operations. Through Police Welfare, 2,037 cases were resolved and cheques worth Rs132 million were distributed under different heads this year.—DNA

## Over 3.3m requests received via 'Maryam ke Dastak'

LAHORE: 'Maryam ke Dastak' platform, developed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) on the direction of Punjab government has received over 3.3 million service requests from citizens since its launch in June 2024. Out of these, more than 2.7 million requests have already been successfully processed, while over 489,000 remaining applications are in the pipeline and will be resolved soon. In a high-level meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf at Arfa Software Technology Park, it was highlighted that the platform has a growing impact in delivering essential government services directly to citizens at their doorstep. The participants of the meeting were apprised that thousands of young individuals have registered as 'Dastak Facilitators,' playing an active role in ensuring efficient service delivery to the public. Currently, more than 76 government services are being offered across Punjab under the 'Maryam ke Dastak' initiative. These include Domicile Certificates, Birth Certificates, Copies of FIRs, Land Record Documents (Fard/Registry), Learner Driving Licenses, Regular Driving Licenses, and License Renewals, among other essential services. Citizens can now conveniently access these services without visiting government offices by simply calling the helpline 1202 or using the 'Dastak Doorstep Delivery' mobile application.—APP

## KP govt urged to resolve gas crisis

PESHAWAR: The All Pakistan CNG Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zone, has urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to immediately issue an executive order to resolve the ongoing CNG crisis in the province, which has led to the closure of around 600 CNG stations. Addressing a press conference at the Peshawar Press Club, Chairman of the association Alhaj Pervaz Khattak said the prolonged suspension of CNG supply had severely affected station owners, workers and the general public, while many families associated with the sector were facing serious financial difficulties. He said CNG should have been restored after the

repair of Spain Warm, Shewa One and other gas pipelines, but the continued suspension had created uncertainty in the sector. Pervaz Khattak said nearly 400,000 vehicles in the province rely on CNG daily as it remains one of the cheapest fuel sources for the public. He stressed that depriving people of this affordable fuel option was increasing their financial burden. He said the CNG sector was helping save nearly 1.5 million liters of petroleum products daily, which also contributed to saving valuable foreign exchange for the country. He added that KP produces more than 500 MMCFD gas daily, while the total provincial requirement, in-

cluding the CNG sector, is around 120 MMCFD. He said the closure of CNG stations was affecting millions of people across Pakistan on a daily basis and creating economic difficulties for transporters and investors linked with the industry. Pervaz Khattak said the association expected immediate steps for the restoration of CNG supply and protection of the province's gas rights under Article 158 of the Constitution. He warned that if CNG supply was not restored within two days, the association would launch a strong protest movement in Peshawar with the support of transporters, investors and the public from across the province.—DNA

## Govt accelerates reforms to improve governance

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, said while chairing a meeting that the provincial government, on the directives of the Chief Minister, is implementing an effective reform agenda to improve governance. He said that ahead of the monsoon season, the process of removing encroachments along riverbanks has been accelerated, adding that after clearing obstacles and illegal structures from rivers and streams, the relevant departments would submit verified data. The Chief Secretary said work was underway on an early warning system

to address any potential flood situation, while a comprehensive contingency plan was also being prepared in consultation with all concerned departments. He added that cleaning of garbage and debris accumulated in waterways after previous floods was continuing. He said that during anti-encroachment operations, 33 kanals of state land were retrieved between April 20 and 27. Departments would identify encroached land through a digital dashboard, which would also provide access to records and progress of land cases under litigation. He added that categorization of encroachment

data would help improve decision-making. Highlighting steps in the health sector, he said around 2,500 medical personnel were being recruited on a contract basis, including 1,425 doctors, 250 dental surgeons and 764 nurses. He said interviews across all divisions had been completed and the recruitment process would be finalized soon to overcome staff shortages in healthcare facilities. Regarding tourism, he said a new model was being introduced to promote public participation, ensuring that local landowners and the regional economy directly benefit from tourism projects.—DNA

## Policy seek stability to shield Pakistan from energy shocks


ISLAMABAD: Energy experts and policymakers at a consultation called for an urgent coordinated policy action to electrify Pakistan's transport sector, warning that geopolitical tensions along with oil market volatility has exposed the country's fragile energy security framework. The consultative on "Transport energy Security Amid Geopolitical Shocks" was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Tuesday. Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director (Research), SDPI, said that the ongoing global crisis is "a reminder not only of oil market instability but also of a fragile global supply chain." He noted that Pakistan's energy challenge is primarily a macroeconomic issue, as oil imports remain the largest component of the import bill. He stressed that transport being the largest oil-consuming sector must be the starting point for reform. He urged policymakers to treat the crisis as an opportunity to push government sensitization and integrate transport electrification into upcoming federal and provincial budgets. He suggested that a replacement strategy for existing vehicles, particularly motorbikes that account for nearly 40% of petrol consumption, alongside budgetary mechanisms and incentives such as trade-in schemes and pooled financing with banks and industry. Engineer Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Senior Research Associate and Head of Energy Unit at SDPI, emphasized that electrification is critical in the context of Middle East conflict and their spillover effects. He cautioned that Pakistan's vulnerability lies in disrupted supply chains, not just oil price fluctuations, making energy diversification imperative. Dr Naveed Arshad, Director, LUMS Energy Institute, pointed out that Pakistan has witnessed a rapid solar boom driven largely by private investment. He maintained that nearly all solar installations in Pakistan are downstream (consumer-driven), unlike other countries where grid-based generation dominates. He suggested leveraging this momentum for EV adoption through grid upgrades, charging infrastructure expansion, and regulatory reforms. He also stressed that highly regulated transport policies are stifling innovation, calling for simplified frameworks and incentives to enable EV ecosystem growth. Prof Dr Aazir Anwar Khan, Integrated Engineering Centre of Excellence (IECE) at the University of Lahore, urged Pakistan to learn from China by integrating energy, EVs, and battery industries into a unified strategy. He recommended local manufacturing of EVs and batteries, noting that Pakistan has strong engineering talent. He further argued that EVs should be treated as a separate industrial category rather than conventional automobiles. Highlighting retrofitting of 30 million existing bikes as a key entry point, he also proposed battery swapping systems and spare parts market development.—APP

## Awareness camps to commemorate Immunization Week

PESHAWAR: Awareness camps were established in the suburban union councils of Peshawar, including Maryamzai and Mattani here Tuesday with special focus on sensitizing communities about importance of vaccination in ensuring better health of mothers and children. These camps are jointly organized by Integrated Community Development Initiatives (ICDI), Civil Society Human and Institutional Development Programme (CHIP) and Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI). This initiative has been taken in connection with observance of World Immunization Week starting from April 24 to 30, 2026 with focus on community healthcare and immunization awareness, says Durre Sharwar, Chief Executive CHIP. Two separate camps are set up one in Maryamzai and other in Mattani where staff of ICDI, CHIP and EPI are arranging community sessions for men and women. During these camps, baby shows are also arranged for enjoyment of minor besides vaccinating children below the age of five. Hygiene

kits were distributed among 110 mothers who had their children vaccinated, while kits were also provided to those women who had completed the full vaccination course of their children. ICDI District Coordinator, Subhanullah said that in collaboration with the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), CHIP and other medical organizations are regularly arranging various activities including vaccination, health camps, puppet shows, awareness sessions and media campaigns. He said that special attention is being paid to vaccination in difficult and remote areas and due to the awareness campaign, people are moving towards vaccinating their children. For this purpose, announcements through mobile microphones and door to door visits are also being taken to address community concerns. According to health experts, the vaccination campaign is facing several challenges, including lack of awareness, misunderstandings in some areas, cultural barriers, difficulties in women's movement, access to remote areas,






and distrust in health workers in the past. However, the ICDI and CHIP expert team is implementing a comprehensive strategy to address these issues, which includes effective awareness campaigns by engaging local elders and religious leaders, provision of door-to-door vaccination services, increasing the number of female health workers, establishment of mobile health units, and continuous community engagement. Sports Gala are also organized in different parts of the country to improve the physical and mental health for the local communities. Medical experts further suggested that measures such as providing accurate information through media and social platforms, school-level awareness programs, and incentives for those who complete vaccination can also yield positive results. According to experts, such integrated measures will not only increase the vaccination rate but also play an important role in promoting a healthy lifestyle in the society.—DNA



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### APRIL

- April 04/Senegal National Day
- April 07/W. H. O. World Health Day
- April 12/Somalia Armed Forces Day
- April 15/DPR Korea The Day of the Sun
- April 16/Denmark National Day
- April 17/Iran Army Day
- April 17/Syria Independence Day
- April 18/Zimbabwe Independence Day
- April 24/Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
- April 25/DPR Korea Armed Forces Day
- April 26/Tanzania National Day
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### Water Tank

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# Christian study centre convenes landmark policy dialogue

Pakistan's most distinguished voices on governance, minority rights, and democratic reform to critically assess the country's electoral framework and propose pathways toward meaningful and inclusive political participation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Christian Study Centre (CSC), Rawalpindi, convened a high-level policy dialogue on April 27, 2026, titled "Inclusive Democracy in Pakistan: Challenges and Strategic Approaches for Strengthening Minority Political Participation." The event brought together some of Pakistan's most distinguished voices on governance, minority rights, and democratic reform to critically assess the country's electoral framework and propose pathways toward meaningful and inclusive political participation. The dialogue featured an eminent panel comprising Bishop Samuel Azariah, Mr. Manzoor Masih, Senator Farhatullah Babar, Prof. Dr. Charles Amjad Ali, and Dr. Shoaib Suddle. The panel brought together expertise spanning parliamentary practice, constitutional discourse, academic scholarship, law enforcement, and institutional oversight, enabling a comprehensive and multidimensional examination of the issue. The dialogue was convened within the broader context of Pakistan's continuing efforts to deepen democratic governance, reinforce constitutional principles, and ensure equitable political participation for all citizens. While the transition from separate electorates to a joint electoral system marked a significant step toward integration, the discussions highlighted that structural limitations continue to undermine the effectiveness of minority representation. Opening the session, Bishop Samuel Azariah emphasized that inclusive democracy is central to Pakistan's constitutional vision and democratic credibility. He noted that the dialogue represented one of the most



comprehensive assessments of minority electoral participation undertaken in recent years, bringing together voices with both institutional experience and critical insight. Strengthening the political participation of minorities is not merely a matter of justice, it is essential for the unity, stability and progress of Pakistan. A central finding of the dialogue was the persistence of an accountability deficit within the current system. Participants highlighted that minority representatives occupying reserved seats are selected through political party lists rather than direct elections, thereby limiting their accountability to minority constituencies. Senator Farhatullah Babar under-

scored the implications of this structure, observing that it risks reducing minority citizens to passive recipients within the political system rather than active rights-bearing participants. Similarly, Mr. Manzoor Masih, drawing on extensive parliamentary experience, noted that both separate and joint electoral arrangements, in their current forms, have not adequately addressed the political marginalization of minority communities. The discussions further identified diluted political influence, persistent vulnerabilities, and the prevalence of symbolic rather than substantive representation as key challenges. Despite constitutional guarantees, minority communities continue to face barriers

in accessing meaningful political space and influencing policy outcomes. Prof. Dr. Charles Amjad Ali highlighted international models that combine guaranteed representation with direct electoral accountability. He argued that Pakistan's reform discourse must move beyond binary frameworks and consider hybrid models tailored to its socio-political context. Dr. Shoaib Suddle emphasized that electoral reform must be accompanied by broader institutional strengthening. Drawing on his experience in governance and his role in the Supreme Court's Commission on Minorities, he stressed that effective political participation is contingent upon security, rule of law, and institutional integrity.

# ETF reform roadmap to boost ETF market

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) unveiled a comprehensive Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) reform roadmap to boost the ETF market in Pakistan. To support the development of the Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) market in Pakistan through improved liquidity, enhanced investor access, and broader market outreach, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has granted in-principle approval for the implementation of a comprehensive ETF reform roadmap, based on the recommendations of the Working Committee on ETFs, said a release issued here on Tuesday. The roadmap will be implemented in phases, in line with a defined timeline. It has been finalized following extensive consultations with key industry stakeholders, including the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited (NCCPL), Central Depository Company (CDC), Mutual Funds Association of Pakistan (MUFAP), securities brokers, and asset management companies (AMCs). The proposed reforms aim to enhance accessibility, improve market efficiency, and reduce costs for investors. To broaden investor access, AMCs will

be permitted to directly offer ETFs as part of their product suite, expanding access beyond the existing exchange-based mechanism where investors primarily rely on securities brokers. Under the new framework, AMCs will also facilitate investors in opening brokerage accounts directly, enabling them to invest in ETFs through AMC platforms without placing orders via brokers. This initiative is expected to strengthen investor confidence in capital markets and contribute to improved market liquidity. To rationalize the cost structure, the framework introduces a revenue-sharing mechanism under which AMCs may share a portion of their ETF management fee with securities brokers for distribution services. This approach is intended to align incentives among stakeholders, expand ETF distribution, and attract a broader investor base to the capital market. Currently, ETFs are launched and managed by AMCs; however, the Committee has recommended allowing securities brokers to undertake these functions to reduce multi-layered management structures. An enabling framework is being introduced for greater participation of securities brokers in the ETF ecosystem, including the potential to launch and

manage ETFs, thereby enhancing market depth and product diversity. To support long-term investors, it is also proposed to include passive investment options such as Index Tracker Funds and ETFs within the Voluntary Pension System (VPS). This will provide investors with cost efficiency in terms of reduced management fees for gaining exposure to the capital market, as compared to traditional VPS equity fund structures. In addition, several complementary initiatives will support these reforms, including digital onboarding through multiple platforms, investor awareness campaigns, and operational enhancements aimed at strengthening the ETF ecosystem. Necessary instructions are being issued to stakeholders to initiate regulatory developments, system upgrades, and operational changes in line with the implementation plan. The SECP reiterated its commitment to strengthening Pakistan's capital markets by promoting transparent, innovative, and cost-efficient investment products for both retail and institutional investors. The development of the ETF market is expected to enhance market depth, improve liquidity, and broaden investor participation.—DNA

# Dar calls for development of Autism Centre

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday expressed satisfaction over the finalization of the Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)'s location and directed that the planning and development process should be expedited alongside quality service delivery, trained professionals, and specialized architecture. The DPM chaired a meeting of the Advisory Board for the Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), where he took stock of the progress made so far, a DPM's Office news release said. DPM Dar also emphasized upon the adoption of international best practices to ensure education, therapeutic services, and research in Autism Spectrum Disorder. The meeting was attended by SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Secretary Education, Secretary Health, Special Secretary Finance, senior officials from concerned ministries, and other experts in the field.—DNA

# Water expert urges Pakistan to raise IWT issue

ISLAMABAD: Senior Advisor on Water Governance at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and prominent water expert Naseer Memon has urged Pakistan to effectively raise the issue of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) at international forums to highlight alleged violations and seek broader global support. He described India's actions regarding the treaty as "completely unacceptable," terming them a violation of both the letter and spirit of the agreement. Talking to media on Tuesday, he stressed that Pakistan must ensure the protection of its water rights in accordance with internationally recognized principles of water sharing, particularly as a lower riparian state. Memon emphasized that safeguarding water rights was vital for the country's long-term water security and agricultural sustainability. He noted that the government had already taken up the matter at the highest diplomatic levels. However, he suggested that Pakistan should formally demand strict adherence to lower riparian rights under the treaty framework. The water expert also underscored the need to further strengthen diplomatic efforts, urging authorities to engage the international community more effectively and present Pakistan's position on the issue. At the same time, he advised the government to focus on internal reforms by adopting modern strategies and techniques to improve water productivity and resource management. "The Indus Waters Treaty remains a cornerstone of water-sharing arrangements between Pakistan and India, and any dispute surrounding it carries significant implications for regional stability and water security, Memon concluded.

# TikToker murder case hearing adjourned

ISLAMABAD: The district & sessions court of Islamabad on Tuesday continued proceedings in the murder case of TikToker Sana Yousaf, recording the statement of another prosecution witness before adjourning the hearing due to the illness of the defence counsel. The case was heard by the Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka. During the hearing,

Prosecutor Raja Naveed Hussain Kyani appeared before the court and presented the case. The prosecution produced another witness, whose statement was recorded as part of the ongoing trial. The defence counsel began cross-examining the witness, but the process could not continue as the lawyer's health condition worsened during the proceedings. Following this situation,

the court stopped further proceedings for the day. Taking note of the defence counsel's condition, the judge adjourned the hearing to April 30. The case relates to the killing of TikToker Sana Yousaf and is currently in the stage of recording evidence. The court is hearing statements from prosecution witnesses, which will be followed by further stages of the trial.—APP

# CPEC projects create over 7,300 jobs in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects in Balochistan have so far created or engaged 7,313 workers under completed and under-implementation schemes. In contrast, another 10,425 jobs are projected for future phases and pipeline projects. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the employment figures cover road infrastructure, energy, water, industrial, health, education and port-related projects. The documents also show that while many jobs have already been created or workers engaged during construction and execution, a separate set of jobs remains projected or expected under upcoming and pipeline initiatives. The Surab-Hoshab (N-85) project created a total of 101 jobs, all provided to locals. In the Gwadar-Hoshab-Awaran-Naal sections of M-8 and the Khuzdar-Basima project, 616 locals were engaged through project contractors. The Nokandi-Mashkail-Panjgur project created 82 temporary jobs during its execution. The HUBCO Coal Power Project created 627 jobs, of which 170 were provided to Balochistan domicile

holders. The New Gwadar International Airport generated 107 jobs, including 63 employees with Balochistan domicile, exceeding the federal government-prescribed 6% quota. At Gwadar Port and Free Zone, 216 jobs were created, including 214 for residents. The documents further show that during the construction of Eastbay Expressway (Phase I), about 1,400 workers were engaged, of whom 200 were locals. Phase II of the project is currently at the planning stage. During construction around the Technical and Vocational Institute, Gwadar, 1,500 workers were engaged, including 450 locals. At the 1.2 MGD Desalination Plant, Gwadar, about 330 workers were engaged during construction, including 165 locals. In the Bostan Special Economic Zone, existing industrial units have generated 426 jobs, all for residents. The 15,000 Solar Powered Lighting Equipment Project created around 1,100 contractual jobs, primarily for residents. Similarly, the necessary facilities of fresh water treatment and supply in Gwadar created 320 jobs, including 270 local jobs. The Pak-China Friendship Hospital, Gwadar, created 515 jobs, of which 441 were pro-

vided to Balochistan domicile holders. Westbay Expressway, Gwadar, created 100 jobs, including nine local jobs, while the school at Faqeer Colony, Gwadar, created 51 jobs, including 24 local jobs. Taken together, these completed or under-implementation projects account for 7,313 jobs already created or workers engaged in Balochistan. Separately, the documents list 10,425 more jobs as projected or expected under future phases and pipeline projects. In the Bostan Special Economic Zone, plots allotted to 24 enterprises are expected to generate around 8,030 additional jobs, predominantly for locals. The fresh water treatment and supply project in Gwadar is expected to create an additional 300 jobs. The Saindak Copper/Gold Mining Project is projected to create around 1,120 jobs, with approximately 950 jobs earmarked for residents, particularly from Chagai district and adjoining areas. Likewise, the 300MW Coal Power Plant, Gwadar, is expected to generate approximately 575 jobs during construction and operation phases, including 43 positions projected for local employment. —DNA

# Turkish delegation visits HSA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Turkish delegation visited the Health Services Academy (HSA) and toured its various departments, lauding the institution's pivotal role as a leading centre for education and research. According to the Academy on Tuesday, the delegation, comprising representatives from the health, business and education sectors, was briefed by Vice Chancellor Dr Shahzad Ali Khan. A detailed meeting was also held to explore areas of mutual interest in the health sector. Both sides emphasized the need to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries in improving health systems. The Vice Chancellor highlighted ongoing joint efforts, partnership and knowledge exchange initiatives, noting that Pakistan and Türkiye could significantly benefit from each other's experiences in health and education.—APP

# Two wanted suspects killed

WAH CANTT: Two wanted suspects on Tuesday were killed during a law enforcement operation in the Taxila area, the official sources said. The operation was carried out by the Crime Control Department (CCD) within the jurisdiction of Taxila police station as a police team attempted to arrest a proclaimed offender and his associates, the sources added. The suspects opened resistance during the raid, triggering a shootout. Both suspects were killed at the scene, and weapons were recovered from their possession, they said. A police constable, identified as Jameel, was struck in the chest during the exchange but was not injured, reportedly because he was wearing a bulletproof vest. The police said the suspects had prior criminal records across the Rawalpindi-Islamabad region, including alleged involvement in vehicle theft, robbery, and crimes against minors. The police also linked the suspects to the recent abduction of a 12-year-old student from the Railway Ground area in Dhoke Hassu. The child was later recovered, and officials said a ransom had been demanded.—APP

# Weather forecast

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly hot and dry weather across most parts of the country on Wednesday, with chances of rain-windstorm and thunderstorms at isolated places in upper regions. According to the forecast, partly cloudy weather with isolated rain-windstorm/thunderstorm is expected in Islamabad and its surroundings, with a 30 percent probability. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, partly cloudy conditions are likely in upper districts, while isolated rain-windstorm/thunderstorm is expected in areas including Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kalam, Shangla, Buner, Kohistan, Malakand, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Balakot, Kurram, Waziristan and Haripur. The rest of the province is expected to remain hot and dry. In Punjab, partly cloudy weather is expected in most districts, with chances of rain-windstorm/thunderstorm at isolated places including Murree, Galliat, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Sialkot, Narowal, Gujranwala, Hafizabad and Lahore. Other areas are likely to experience hot and dry conditions. Sindh will continue to experience hot and dry weather, with dust-raising and gusty winds expected in central and southern districts during the afternoon.—APP

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, it is hereby informed to the general public that Gold Earth SMC (Pvt.) Ltd. has proposed a "Lead Refinery Plant" located at Plot No. B-18, Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Risalpur, District Nowshera. A Public Hearing is being organized as per the directions of the Environmental Protection Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

All stakeholders, local residents and concerned individuals are invited to attend the hearing and submit their objections / suggestions in writing. The EIA report is available for public review at EPA Peshawar, the project proponent office and the concerned district office.

S. No.	Date	Time	Venue
1	14-04-2026	11:30 AM	Project Site, Plot No. B-18, Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Risalpur, District Nowshera

Contact:  
Gold Earth SMC (Pvt.) Ltd.  
House No. 33, Street 28, F-6/2, Islamabad  
Ph: 0011-8299889

Written objections / suggestions can be submitted at the District Office Nowshera, EPA Peshawar and Project Office.

## Briefs

## Govt introduces new transit trade framework

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce has introduced a new legal framework to regulate transit trade through Pakistan, a move aimed at improving cross-border logistics and strengthening regional connectivity, particularly with Iran. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the ministry issued the Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026, which came into force immediately. "This Order shall be called the 'Transit of Goods through Territory of Pakistan Order 2026' and shall come into force at once," the official notification stated. The order has been promulgated under a 2008 bilateral agreement between Pakistan and Iran governing the international road transport of passengers and goods. It establishes a regulatory structure for transit trade, defining key concepts such as cross-stuffing, customs security, shipper responsibilities and transit operations. According to the notification, transit refers to the movement of goods across Pakistan "when the passage across such territory is only a portion of a complete journey which begins and ends beyond the borders of Pakistan." All transit cargo will be regulated under the Customs Act, 1969, along with rules and procedures prescribed by the Federal Board of Revenue, ensuring standardised compliance for traders and transport operators. The government has also formally designated multiple transit transport corridors linking major ports and inland routes. These include Gwadar-Gabd, Karachi/Port Qasim-Gabd, and several routes passing through key locations such as Turbat, Panjgur, Khuzdar, Quetta and Taftan, facilitating trade flows towards Iran and onward markets. The policy highlights the growing strategic role of Gwadar Port in Pakistan's trade architecture. Located near the Iranian border and along key maritime routes, Gwadar offers a shorter and potentially more cost-efficient gateway for regional transit trade compared with traditional routes via Karachi. Industry observers said the new framework was expected to reduce procedural bottlenecks and provide greater clarity for international transporters, potentially increasing transit volumes through Pakistan amid shifting regional supply chains.—DNA

## Al-Shifa Eye hospital begins services in South Punjab

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust's new eye hospital in Haveli Lakha, Okara, has begun serving patients ahead of a formal inauguration scheduled for May 04, bringing specialist eye care within reach of five districts in South Punjab for the first time. The facility, built on two acres of donated land, will serve patients from Haveli Lakha, Depalpur, Pakpatan, Sahiwal, and Bahawalnagar, areas long deprived of specialised eye treatment. The total project cost is Rs162 million, including Rs122 million for construction and Rs40 million for medical equipment. The project was made possible through generous contributions from donors, whose support helped expand access to quality eye care in underserved communities. The hospital is designed to serve up to 250 outdoor and indoor patients daily. In Pakistan the scale of need is acute. More than 1.8 million people in South Punjab live with blindness, 85 percent of which is considered avoidable. Nearly half of all blindness cases stem from cataracts, a condition largely treatable through routine surgery, but rural populations continue to face severe shortages of trained staff and modern surgical facilities. Pakistan's blindness rate has declined from 1.78 percent in 1990 to about 0.5 percent, a



reduction partly attributed to expanded access to cataract surgery and earlier diagnosis, though rising costs and limited facilities remain an issue. For daily-wage families in the Okara and Sahiwal belt, the new hospital eliminates the need to travel to Lahore or Multan for basic procedures, cutting

both time and cost. With Haveli Lakha now operational, Al-Shifa Trust runs seven hospitals across Rawalpindi, Sukkur, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, Chakwal, Gilgit, and Haveli Lakha, and has set up over 15,000 screening and surgical camps in remote areas. Construction has also begun on an eighth

hospital in Lahore. The trust screened more than 175,000 schoolchildren through over 550 free eye camps last year and aims to reach over two million patients and perform 120,000 surgeries in the coming year, with approximately 80 to 90 percent of all patients treated free of charge.

## ITP holds road safety workshop for students

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) organized a road safety workshop at Model School for Girls G-8/2 under the directions of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, with over 300 students in attendance. An ITP official told APP on Tuesday that the session was conducted by the ITP Education Wing to create awareness among students about traffic rules and safe road practices. He said students were educated about traffic laws, safe driving, proper use of zebra crossings and overhead bridges. The importance of developing road safety awareness at an early stage was also highlighted. Question-and-answer session was held during which students actively participated, and those showing outstanding performance were awarded prizes, the official said. He said that souvenirs were also presented to the school administration. Teachers appreciated the initiative and termed it a useful and effective activity for promoting traffic awareness among students, he said.—APP

## Experts warn of risks, highlight economic opportunities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME), hosted a roundtable discussion on "The Middle East Crisis: Economic Implications and Emerging Opportunities for Pakistan," on April 28, 2026. The event brought together leading policymakers, economists, and experts to deliberate on the evolving geopolitical situation and its economic ramifications for Pakistan. Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director, Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at ISSI, stressed that Pakistan faces both heightened risks and emerging opportunities, and must strengthen its capacity to adapt to an increasingly complex global economic environment. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors, ISSI, in his welcome remarks, highlighted that the

evolving Middle East situation carries significant implications for Pakistan, particularly in the domains of energy security, trade flows, remittances, and overall economic stability. While Dr. Ali Salman, CEO, PRIME, in his stage-setting remarks, highlighted the growing convergence between geopolitics and economics, noting that the current crisis underscores the relevance of geo-economics in shaping policy discourse. He pointed to emerging regional developments, including new transit arrangements and shifting diplomatic engagements, as indicators of Pakistan's evolving strategic positioning. He emphasised that Pakistan must now move beyond traditional conflict-driven narratives and instead focus on deriving a peace dividend through proactive economic and diplomatic engagement. He outlined key thematic areas for discussion, including economy, energy, trade, China-Pakistan cooperation, and policy preparedness. Opening the discussion,

Dr. Hassan Dawood Butt (PRIME) noted that Pakistan is increasingly being perceived as a potential regional intermediary, while cautioning that without deep institutional reforms, the country may be unable to fully capitalize on this emerging role. Dr. Nasir Iqbal (PIDE) outlined macroeconomic risks including rising oil prices, inflationary pressures, declining remittances, and export disruptions, while also pointing to potential opportunities in Gulf reconstruction markets. Dr. Khaled Waleed (SDPI) highlighted structural weaknesses in Pakistan's energy sector, calling for modernization of the power grid, expansion of renewable energy, and improved energy storage capacity. Dr. Uzma Zia (PIDE) emphasized the need to transition from remittance dependence toward a diversified economic model anchored in trade, logistics, and regional connectivity, including modernization of ports and development of integrated economic corridors.

## Pakistan and China reinforce cooperation

He said Pakistan is now taking steps to benefit from this experience, adding that a dedicated desk has been established within DRAP to build expertise in herbal and traditional medicines

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-China International Conference on Food-Medicine Homology, Nutrition, and Health held here at the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST), with the participation of scientists, policymakers, regulators and industry experts from both countries, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal highlighted China's experience as a model for shifting toward preventive healthcare, saying Pakistan must move beyond a treatment-focused system. "This is where a global shift is happening. Today, the world is moving toward integrating medicine with nutrition, food, and plant-based therapies. This is where traditional systems like Chinese medicine and our own Unani and herbal medicine come in," he said. Referring to his recent visit, the minister noted: "A few months ago, I visited China and met with experts in traditional medicine. We had detailed discussions on how they have developed and regulated this sector." He said Pakistan is now taking steps to benefit from this experience, adding that a dedicated desk has been established within DRAP to build expertise in herbal and traditional medicines. Coordinator General of OIC-COMSTTECH, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, highlighted the concept of food-medicine homology, stating that food can play a key role in preventing diseases. "In most parts of the world, something is either considered food or medicine. However, the Chinese approach is different. They believe there is no strict boundary; instead, there is a spectrum," he said. "They have developed the concept of 'food that heals', food that can treat and prevent diseases — properly researched, correctly dosed, clinically validated, and strictly regulated." Prof. Dr. Liu Xinmin, Member of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Traditional Medicine, said the long-standing collaboration between the two countries has contributed to research, training and institutional linkages. The conference also featured technical sessions on medicinal plants, clinical research, food safety and nutrition-based healthcare solutions, aimed at strengthening joint research and practical collaboration between Pakistan and China.—DNA

## PAL all set to announce literary honours

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), under the National Heritage and Culture Division, is all set to formally announce the country's most prestigious literary honours, including the Kamal-e-Fun Award 2024 and the National Literary Awards 2024 (Qaumi Adabi Awards 2024), on April 29 (Wednesday). According to an official announcement, the award ceremony will be held at 12:30 pm at the main office of the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Islamabad. The event holds special significance in literary circles, where the names of eminent writers and poets will be unveiled in recognition of their outstanding contributions across various languages and literary genres. A spokesperson for the academy said that these awards aim to acknowledge and honour individuals who have rendered exceptional services for the promotion and development of literature in the country. He expressed gratitude to media organisations for their continued support in covering the academy's events and promoting literary and cultural activities at the national level. He also welcomed their participation and urged media houses to ensure the presence of their teams for comprehensive and effective coverage of the press conference and award announcement ceremony.—APP

## China-Pakistan academic synergy deepens

BEIJING: A three-day international training workshop on climate-smart development and carbon neutrality held at the University of Gujrat (UOG), underscoring the growing China-Pakistan academic cooperation under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The workshop, titled "Climate-Smart Development & Carbon Neutrality Strategies in the Context of CPEC: Tools, Policies and Innovation," is supported by the Higher Education Commission under the CPEC Consortium of Universities. Audil Rashid, Dean of the Faculty of Sciences at UOG, told Gwadar Pro that the workshop aims to strengthen research capacity and promote knowledge exchange on climate resilience and sustainable development. The ongoing training, scheduled to continue until April 29, is expected to pave the way for joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and collaborative publications between UOG and Chinese institutions. The training has drawn active participation from M.Phil and PhD scholars, along with faculty members, providing a platform for academic dialogue on emerging climate challenges. The sessions are being led by Wei Li, Associate Professor at the Department of Earth System Science, Tsinghua University. His lectures focus on China's Integrated Assessment Models and practical approaches to carbon neutrality, including carbon sequestration, global carbon inventories, and data-driven policy tools. Participants view such initiatives as a sign of CPEC's expanding scope, with increasing focus on education, innovation, and green development alongside infrastructure cooperation.—APP

## Pak-China researchers highlight pathways

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A joint study by Pakistani and Chinese scientists has found that coastal wetlands along Pakistan's shoreline are undergoing significant structural changes, with human activity emerging as the dominant driver. The research, titled "Spatiotemporal reorganization of coastal wetlands along the Pakistan coast under climatic variability and human modification (2019-2024)", was published in April 2026 in the international journal Estuarine, Coastal

and Shelf Science. The research provides one of the first high-resolution, nationwide assessments of Pakistan's coastal wetlands, offering insights for environmental planning and sustainable development, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. The study was conducted by Muhammad Asgher Ali, Yaseen Laghari, Zhenguo Niu, and Qingyu Li, affiliated with institutions including the Aerospace Information Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences, the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Aerospace Information Technology University, Jinan. Using Sentinel-2 satellite imagery and machine learning techniques, the researchers analyzed wetland changes along Pakistan's coastline from 2019 to 2024. The key findings of the study report that coastal wetlands did not simply decline or expand overall, but instead experienced internal restructuring. According to the authors, wetlands "underwent pronounced spatiotemporal reorganization" during the study period. Mangrove forests and lagoons showed resilience, with expansion observed, while coastal marshes faced instability and decline. The researchers note that "mangrove swamps and lagoons exhibited relative persistence and expansion, whereas coastal marshes showed high instability and net decline." The study shows that human impact outweighs climate factors, and one of the most significant conclusions of the study is the dominant role of human activity in shaping coastal ecosystems.

## Shifting from frozen conflicts to active power plays

On a more positive note, there's a growing trend towards economic interdependence and regional cooperation. Pakistan's shifting its focus to economic security, with initiatives like CPEC 2.0 aiming to integrate the region and promote shared prosperity

NOOR-UL-HUDA HASEEB

THE Middle East and South Asia are caught in a volatile "Great Game" where energy dominance and sectarian tensions fuel regional power struggles. Pakistan's stuck between a rock and a hard place, balancing its relationships with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the US while navigating its own internal security and economic challenges. The global shift towards a multipolar order has created a power vacuum, with regional players like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar filling the

gap. This chaos is reminiscent of Robert Gilpin's "hegemonic stability theory," where the decline of a dominant power invites instability. Pakistan's trying to adapt, leveraging its strategic location and nuclear status to maintain autonomy between China and the West. However, domestic volatility and regional proxy wars pose significant challenges. The Arab Spring's aftermath has created ungoverned spaces, forcing Pakistan into transactional alliances with Middle Eastern powers. This "strategic straitjacket" requires careful balancing to avoid getting consumed by regional conflicts.

The region's instability has a direct impact on Pakistan, with radicalization and terrorism threatening its internal security and economy. A unified governance structure is needed to avert total collapse.

On a more positive note, there's a growing trend towards economic interdependence and regional cooperation. Pakistan's shifting its focus to economic security, with initiatives like CPEC 2.0 aiming to integrate the region and promote shared prosperity. By becoming a geo-economic hub, Pakistan hopes to secure a "perpetual peace" through indigenous solidarity and cooperation. TIME WILL TELL IF THIS APPROACH PAYS OFF.

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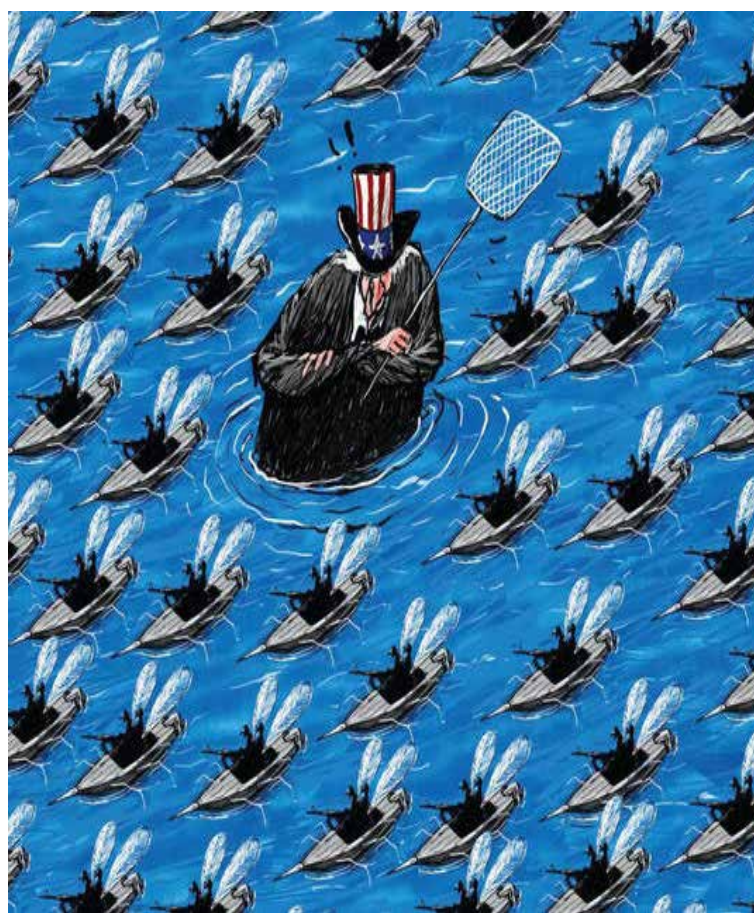
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## Why Pakistan needs a mandated framework

DR. JAM MUHAMMAD ZAFAR

FOR Pakistan's higher education sector, we stand at a precipice of paradox. Our universities produce a deluge of research scholars and project proposals, yet our national innovation quotient remains stagnant. Graduates leave campuses with degrees, but often without the practical know-how that industries desperately need. The critical bottleneck is the absence of a prescribed, legally-binding framework for academia-industry linkage. For faculty members and research supervisors, the mandate to secure "industrial support letters" for national and international funding is becoming a Sisyphean task, creating an eligibility paradox where brilliant ideas die on the vine simply because they lack an industrial co-signature. The current demand from funding forums for industrial linkage is intellectually sound—it ensures market relevance—but the implementation is deeply flawed. We are asking our scholars to build bridges without giving them a blueprint or raw materials. This well-intention requirement has reduced a vital knowledge transfer process into a mere exercise in paperwork, where faculty scramble for transactional letters of support rather than engaging in deep, symbiotic research collaboration. Consequently, promising research remains confined to library shelves instead of reaching factory floors where it can create impact and jobs. Globally, this chasm has been replaced by structured innovation ecosystems. In the United States, the "University Innovation Alliance" and specialized centers like Virginia's CCALS (Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems) function as neutral collaboration engines. They pool resources from multiple universities and industries to solve real-world logistics and technology problems. These centers operate on what experts call a quadruple-helix model—uniting academia, industry, government, and civil society. This ensures that research is not only academically rigorous but also commercially viable from its very inception. The industry does not wait for the finished product; it invests in the process from day one. Similarly, Germany's renowned "Bayreuth Model" rejects superficial industrial meet-and-greets in favor of co-innovation partnerships. In this system, companies don't just visit campuses for job fairs; they co-design curricula and co-fund laboratories to solve specific manufacturing challenges. A professor working on automotive engineering



doesn't just publish a paper; he or she works inside a factory to troubleshoot a production bottleneck. This represents a shift from superficial exchange to deep technology scouting and implementation science. In Sweden, the model goes even further by integrating research into undergraduate education from the very first year. Students work on real company problems as part of their coursework, ensuring that the workforce is industry-ready upon graduation, possessing not just theoretical book knowledge but practical procedural competencies. Contrast this with the ground reality in Pakistan. While isolated examples like NUST's Corporate Advisory Council (CAC) show genuine promise by engaging industrial giants, they remain the exception rather than the rule. Most of our public and private universities operate in an institutional silo, physically and intellectually disconnected from the industrial estates in their proximity. There is currently no legal framework mandating that an industrial zone in Faisalabad, Sialkot, or Karachi be tethered to a local university for research and development. This disconnect leads to a tragic resource underutilization on both sides. Industry struggles with problems that academia could solve, and academia produces research that nobody needs. Furthermore, this gap places an unfair burden on early-career researchers and PhD scholars. For them, securing an industrial support letter is often harder than conducting the actual research. Industrialists, already burdened with daily business challenges, see little incentive to engage with universities due to a lack of tax benefits or a clear legal structure for collaboration. The result is a trust deficit where both parties view each other with suspicion rather than as partners in national progress. Therefore, I call upon the Federal Ministry, the Chairman HEC, and our nation's Vice Chancellors to move beyond anecdotal encouragement and legislate for a structured interface. We do not need more seminars on collaboration; we need a prescribed framework—a "National Academia-Industry Nexus Policy"—that mandates the creation of Bridging Institutions or Corporate Advisory Councils at every public university. This policy must be supported by tangible tax incentives for industrial partners who invest in university research. It must also facilitate fluid personnel exchange; for example, allowing faculty to take sabbaticals in industry to work on real problems, while inviting industry experts to serve as adjunct faculty to teach practical skills. The ultimate goal is to transform our universities from degree-distribution centers into anchor institutions of the national economy. We need to move from an era of begging for support letters to an era of mandated synergy. Let us institutionalize the bridge so that our scholars can cross it with dignity, not desperation. The time for superficial linkages is over. The time for a structured, legal, and functional partnership is now.

## America's Ethical crisis unfolds

Qamar Bashir



The scene itself was deeply unsettling. A lone gunman managed to breach one of the most secure environments in the world—an event attended by the President and top leadership. The response was chaotic and urgent, with security personnel forcibly removing senior officials in a manner that appeared abrupt and unceremonious. The image of authority being physically overpowered by circumstance sent a powerful message: even the strongest systems can appear fragile when confronted with unexpected internal

A nation does not collapse because of external attacks; it begins to erode when its people lose faith in those who lead them. The recent shooting incident in the United States, and the events that followed, go far beyond a simple security lapse. It exposed a deep fracture between power and public trust. Even the most powerful nation cannot remain stable if its moral authority is questioned from within. What we witnessed was not just a moment of crisis, but a reflection of a growing internal decay that is slowly weakening the foundations of American society.

The scene itself was deeply unsettling. A lone gunman managed to breach one of the most secure environments in the world—an event attended by the President and top leadership. The response was chaotic and urgent, with security personnel forcibly removing senior officials in a manner that appeared abrupt and unceremonious. The image of authority being physically overpowered by circumstance sent a powerful message: even the strongest systems can appear fragile when confronted with unexpected internal threats. But the real shock did not lie in the breach itself—it emerged in what followed. During a televised interview, the journalist read from the suspect's alleged manifesto, which contained severe and disturbing accusations, and asked the President for a reaction. The President responded sharply, rejecting the claims and criticizing the journalist for even raising them. This exchange, now widely circulated, became more than a moment of tension—it became a mirror reflecting the current state of American political discourse. It showed how quickly allegations, perception, and defensiveness can collide at the highest levels of power. The real issue is not whether the accusation itself is true. The greater danger lies in the fact that such beliefs now exist and are spreading among the public. A segment of society has come to view those in power as morally compromised, legally protected, and disconnected from accountability. This perception—whether grounded in fact or fueled by suspicion—is shaping public thinking in profound ways. When people begin to believe that justice is not equal, the foundation of society starts to weaken, and trust becomes the first casualty. At the center of this growing distrust is the unresolved shadow of the Epstein case. Over time, fragments of documents, testimonies, and associations have entered the public domain. Some names have been referenced, some records partially disclosed, yet a significant portion of the

material remains sealed or undisclosed. This incomplete transparency has created more suspicion than clarity. Many now believe that individuals within the highest circles of power were linked, directly or indirectly, to a network of exploitation, and yet have not faced full legal scrutiny. Whether every such belief is accurate is secondary—the perception itself is damaging enough. This situation represents more than a legal gap; it reflects a deeper moral crisis. A functioning society depends on a simple but powerful principle: the law applies equally to all. When that belief begins to collapse, laws lose their authority and institutions lose their legitimacy. Citizens begin to question not only their leaders, but the entire system that governs them. Over time, this erosion of trust reshapes the social fabric, creating a mindset in which fairness is doubted and justice is seen as selective. The lone attacker must be understood in this broader context. He was not born with violent intent; he was shaped by the environment around him—by narratives, perceptions, and the belief that the system had failed. His alleged manifesto reflects a mindset that sees leadership as corrupt and accountability as nonexistent. While his actions cannot be justified under any circumstance, they highlight a dangerous psychological shift. When individuals lose faith in lawful processes, they may begin to act outside them, believing that justice must be enforced by their own hands. The Epstein case has thus evolved into a symbol of something far larger than a criminal investigation. It represents, in the public imagination, a system where wealth and influence can shield individuals from consequences. The continued existence of sealed files, undisclosed evidence, and unresolved questions reinforces this belief. Each delay, each unanswered query, deepens suspicion. And over time, suspicion hardens into conviction, regardless of what the legal truth may ultimately reveal.

This crisis of trust is not confined to domestic issues alone. It is further intensified by the perception of how the United States conducts itself internationally. Critics argue that American foreign policy has increasingly been driven by strategic and economic interests, often at the expense of global stability. Actions in the Middle East, tensions with other nations, and the use of economic and military leverage are seen by many as evidence of a system prioritizing control over cooperation. Whether one agrees with this as-

essment or not, the perception contributes to the broader narrative of moral inconsistency. Such perceptions create a dangerous contradiction. A nation that presents itself as a defender of democratic values and human rights cannot afford to appear selective in its application of those principles. When domestic allegations remain unresolved and international actions are viewed as self-serving, the gap between declared values and perceived reality widens. This gap weakens not only global standing but also internal confidence. The consequences of this growing distrust are already visible. Social cohesion is weakening, political discourse is becoming increasingly hostile, and public confidence in institutions is declining. The longer uncertainty persists, the deeper the damage becomes. A nation cannot rely solely on economic or military strength; it must also maintain the trust of its people. Without that trust, even the most powerful systems begin to lose stability. The solution lies not in denial, deflection, or confrontation, but in clarity and accountability. Every credible allegation must be investigated thoroughly. Every individual, regardless of position, must be subject to the same legal standards. Those who are innocent must be publicly and decisively cleared. Those found guilty must face consequences without exception. Justice must not only exist—it must be visible and unquestionable. The United States still possesses the institutional strength and legal framework to correct this course. Its history demonstrates resilience and the ability to reform in times of crisis. However, correction requires courage—the courage to confront uncomfortable truths, to open sealed records, and to restore transparency. Without these steps, the perception of moral decline will continue to grow, further eroding the nation's foundation. In the end, the greatest threat facing the United States is not external aggression, but internal erosion. It is the gradual loss of trust, the weakening of belief in fairness, and the perception that power operates beyond accountability. A society that no longer believes in justice cannot remain stable. The path forward lies in restoring that belief—through truth, through transparency, and through equal application of the law. Only then can the nation reclaim its moral authority and secure its future.

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## The Islamabad ceasefire

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



It belongs to a man who, having moved with his family from Delhi Gate in 1976, found his childhood shaped by the rhythms and rituals of a neighbourhood deeply rooted in tradition. Among the most vivid of these recollections is the annual Urs of Baba Shah Kamal, which in the early 1980s would transform Ichhra from a modest locality into a scene of extraordinary vitality

In the quiet recesses of memory, there are places that time never quite succeeds in erasing. In the heart of Lahore's old Ichhra, where narrow lanes wind through a living tapestry of history, one such memory continues to breathe with remarkable freshness. It belongs to a man who, having moved with his family from Delhi Gate in 1976, found his childhood shaped by the rhythms and rituals of a neighbourhood deeply rooted in tradition. Among the most vivid of these recollections is the annual Urs of Baba Shah Kamal, which in the early 1980s would transform Ichhra from a modest locality into a scene of extraordinary vitality. Preparations for the Urs would begin days in advance in the open ground adjoining the shrine. There was, in those days, a sense of anticipation that seemed to ripple through the entire community. Pilgrims arrived in waves from distant towns and villages, drawn not merely by devotion but by an unspoken promise of shared experience. Ten to fifteen days, Ichhra would assume a festive character, its streets alive with colour, sound, and the mingled fragrances of countless food stalls. Vendors displayed everyday wares at modest prices, yet it was the special delicacies, reserved almost exclusively for the occasion, that captured the imagination. The famed Qat'Ima, prepared in vast iron cauldrons over open flames, possessed a richness that lingered long after the fair had faded. Entertainment, too, played its part in this annual transformation. The arrival of the Lucky Irani Circus was awaited with particular excitement, its performances lending an air of wonder to the proceedings. Equally compelling was the spectacle known as the Maut ka Khon'wa (Well of Death), where daring motor cycle rider defied gravity within a wooden cylinder, eliciting gasps and applause from enthralled spectators. For a young boy, these scenes were nothing short of magical. The Urs was not merely

an event; it was a world unto itself, where faith, festivity, and fellowship merged into a singular experience of communal joy. Nearly forty-five years have passed since those days, and the boy now sits in Islamabad, his life shaped by responsibilities far removed from the carefree wonder of childhood. Yet memory, in its quiet persistence, bridges the distance between past and present. It was only recently that these recollections returned to him with unusual clarity, prompted by events of a vastly different magnitude unfolding on the global stage. The world, for a fleeting yet perilous moment, had drawn close to the brink of a far-reaching conflict. Hostilities involving Israel and Iran, with the unmistakable involvement of the United States, threatened to ignite a chain reaction whose consequences would have extended far beyond the immediate region. The mere disruption of oil supplies sent tremors through the global economy, raising fears of widespread instability and hardship. In that tense hour, Pakistan emerged with a sense of purpose that surprised many observers. Guided by a tradition of diplomacy and a deep awareness of regional sensitivities, it undertook efforts to mediate between opposing sides. Through patience and quiet determination, channels of communication were opened, and what seemed an intractable impasse began, gradually, to yield. The eventual securing of a ceasefire marked not only a moment of relief but also a testament to the possibilities of dialogue in an increasingly fractured world. More remarkable still was the decision by both American and Iranian leadership to bring their delegations to Islamabad for direct engagement. The capital, accustomed to its measured calm, assumed an unusual stillness under heightened security arrangements. Traffic was restricted, and daily routines were momentarily disrupted. Yet the citizens of Islamabad and Rawalpindi bore these inconveniences with a quiet understanding

that they were participants, however indirectly, in a moment of significance that transcended national boundaries. Around carefully arranged tables, positions once rigid began to soften. The process was neither swift nor without its challenges. There were, as always, forces inclined to disrupt such efforts. Yet beneath the visible proceedings lay layers of negotiation too delicate for public view, where understanding is built not in declarations but in careful, often unseen exchanges. Such efforts rarely yield immediate transformation, but they plant the seeds from which future stability may grow. In undertaking this role, Pakistan reaffirmed its place within the community of nations. It demonstrated, once again, a capacity for responsible engagement and a willingness to act as a bridge where divisions threaten to widen. While the full measure of what has been achieved will only become evident with time, the moment itself stands as an indication of the country's enduring relevance in global affairs. There is, perhaps, a gentle symmetry in the way memory and history intersect. Decades ago, the young boy in Ichhra watched with delight as the Lucky Irani Circus unfolded its wonders, Iran then being a distant name associated with spectacle and fascination. Today, that same name returns in a vastly different context, one imbued not with entertainment but with the weight of diplomacy and consequence. Thus, in the span of a lifetime, the scenes have changed, yet the underlying thread remains. From the vibrant Urs of Ichhra to the sober deliberations of Islamabad, there persists a shared human longing—for peace, for connection, and for a future unburdened by conflict. In the laughter of a child and the measured resolve of a nation, one finds, ultimately, the same enduring hope: that even in uncertain times, the world may yet step back from the brink and move, however gradually, towards harmony.

## Briefs

Pakistan  
keen to  
reinforce...

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While appreciating the convening of the EU-Pakistan Business Forum, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that the event would encourage further enhancement of trade and investment ties between Pakistan and the EU. He assured the EU delegation that the Government would continue making serious efforts to facilitate the growth of trade and investment relations with EU. He assured the EU delegation of the Government of Pakistan's firm resolve to continue working towards the stabilization of the economy, despite regional challenges, including the recent spike in oil prices due to the situation in the Middle East. In this regard, the Prime Minister particularly recalled his two recent telephone conversations with EU Council President H.E. Antonio Costa, where they discussed in detail, the regional security situation as well as ways to further strengthen Pakistan-EU relations. While appreciating the Prime Minister's leading role in peace efforts in the region, the EU delegation expressed deep appreciation to the Government for extending full cooperation in hosting the EU-Pakistan Business Forum.

PM, New  
Zealand  
PM Luxon..

FROM PAGE 01  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Prime Minister Luxon for his support and reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to advancing peace, dialogue, and stability in the region and beyond. The two leaders also agreed to work together to strengthen Pakistan-New Zealand bilateral relations, while expressing their satisfaction at the cordial and friendly ties between the two countries. In this regard, the two prime ministers lauded the role of the Pakistani diaspora in New Zealand. At the end of the conversation, the prime minister extended a warm and cordial invitation to the prime minister of New Zealand to undertake an official visit to Pakistan, at his earliest convenience. Both leaders also agreed to remain in close contact in the days ahead.

IHC's  
Kayani,  
Sattar...

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The proposal also triggered debate within judicial circles as CJP Afridi last week rejected a request by the IHC chief justice to convene a meeting on the transfer of judges, citing constitutional and institutional concerns. In a written response to the IHC chief justice, CJP Afridi said that calling a commission meeting for a specific purpose was not possible. The top judge observed that transferring judges without clear justification would be "tantamount to punishment" and warned that such moves could undermine judicial independence and autonomy. He stressed that the Constitution provided a clear mechanism under Article 209 for action against judges, and any administrative transfers would be inconsistent with constitutional provisions.

Trump not  
happy with...

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Iran it began in February alongside Israel. A previous agreement in 2015 between Iran and multiple other countries including the US sharply curtailed Iran's nuclear programme, which it has long maintained is for peaceful, civilian purposes. But that deal fell apart when Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in his first term in office. Hopes of reviving peace efforts have receded since the US president scrapped a visit planned for last weekend by his special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner to Islamabad, where Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi shuttled in and out twice during the weekend.

Pakistan Ready to Shine  
at Street Child World Cup

*The Street Child World Cup is not only a football tournament but also a powerful global movement promoting the rights, protection, and identity of street-connected children worldwide*

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Street Child Under-17 Football Team has entered the final phase of preparations as its training camp continues ahead of the prestigious Street Child Football World Cup in Mexico. The international event, scheduled from May 5 to May 15, will feature 30 teams from 20 countries, bringing together talented young street child players from across the globe. Pakistan will be represented by the Muslim Hands team, which has been preparing rigorously for the competition. To review the team's progress and boost morale, Muslim Hands International Chairman Pir Syed Lakht-e-Hasanain Shah visited the training camp along with Country Head Syed Ziaul-Noor and coaching staff. He met the players, praised their dedication, and en-



couraged them to deliver their best performance. Addressing the youngsters, Pir Lakht-e-Hasanain Shah said the players have a golden opportunity to raise Pakistan's flag high through hard

work, discipline, and outstanding football. He emphasized that the Muslim Hands initiative is more than just sport—it is a mission to empower talented children by providing them with oppor-

ties to overcome hardship and showcase their abilities on the world stage. He further stated that Muslim Hands International is committed to securing a brighter future for children not only

through education but also through sports, supporting disciplines such as football, cricket, squash, basketball, and others. The Street Child World Cup is not only a football tournament but

also a powerful global movement promoting the rights, protection, and identity of street-connected children worldwide. Pakistan's Street Child team is scheduled to depart for Mexico on May 2.

Man United set for  
Champions League return

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Casemiro and Benjamin Sesko struck first-half goals to secure a 2-1 Premier League home win over Brentford on Monday, taking their side to the brink of Champions League football for the first time since the 2023-24 season. Third-placed United moved to 61 points, 11 ahead of sixth-placed Brighton & Hove Albion with four games left. The top five qualify for next season's Champions League. With the prize of European football almost within their grasp, the home side came flying out of the traps as Kobbie Mainoo danced through the Brentford penalty area before slipping the ball to Amad in the second

minute, but his shot deflected off a defender and went behind for a corner. Brentford goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher was called into action in the eighth minute when he had to claw away a header from Harry Maguire to prevent it crossing the line. The visitors didn't heed the warning and three minutes later United went ahead, Maguire winning another header from a corner and sending the ball back across goal for Casemiro, who had stolen in behind the defense, to nod into the net from a tight angle. Brentford striker Igor Thiago had an off night, stumbling as he prepared to pull the trigger with the goal at his mercy in the 35th minute,

and he let a number of other first-half chances go begging. United managed to double their lead two minutes later as Bruno Fernandes led a three-on-two counter-attack, and the Portuguese playmaker slipped the ball for Sesko to steer past Collins and lash into the net. With United seeking to defend their lead, the second half was a tight affair until Mathias Jensen ensured a nerve-jangling finish for the home side with a goal out of nowhere for Brentford in the 87th minute, but they couldn't conjure an equalizer as the home side held on to win. The victory means United are now 12 points behind Arsenal and nine

adrift of second-placed Manchester City. Liverpool are three points behind Michael Carrick's side in fourth place, with the two rivals meeting at Old Trafford on Sunday. Brentford are ninth on 48 points among several clubs still in with a chance of making the Europa League. "We have to push until the last minute. It's important to bring the energy we brought today and we believe we can manage it," goal-scorer Sesko said of his side being on the cusp of qualifying for the Champions League. "It was tough, because we knew we faced a difficult task but we managed to hold the score until the end and we deserved the victory." — APP

## Low awareness...

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The Network is expected to act as a unified voice for European businesses, facilitate policy dialogue, and support new entrants exploring opportunities in the country. A dedicated plenary session focused on the EU's Global Gateway initiative — the bloc's flagship €400 billion investment programme (2021–2027) aimed at mobilising sustainable infrastructure and connectivity projects worldwide. Speakers included Mr. Peteris Ustubs, Director for Asia and the Pacific at the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships; Ms. Thouraya Triki from the European Investment Bank; and Mr. Hans Bogaard from FMO, the Dutch entrepreneurial development bank. Discussions throughout the day centred on priority sectors including agribusiness, digital innovation and fintech, green logistics, sustainable textiles, and responsible mining, addressing both opportunities and existing challenges. Organisers have scheduled more than 600 B2B meetings over the two days, reflecting solid interest from participating European and Pakistani companies in forming joint ventures and partnerships. Several new financial programmes and collaboration agreements are also expected to be signed during the Forum. Despite the challenges of visibility and broader regional uncertainties that kept some European players away, the event provides a structured high-level platform for dialogue and deal-making. Stakeholders hope the Forum will serve as a strong foundation for converting Pakistan-EU trade strength into enhanced investment and long-term industrial cooperation.

LHC dismisses  
Honda appeal

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has dismissed an intra court appeal (ICA) filed by Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Ltd., reaffirming the statutory appellate framework under the Competition Act, 2010 and upholding the Competition Commission of Pakistan's (CCP) authority to conduct enquiries. Honda had filed the intra court appeal against the judgement passed by a learned Single Judge of the LHC on October 20, 2025, whereby its writ petition challenging the CCP's enquiry proceedings was dismissed. In that judgement, the Court held that the CCP is fully empowered under Sections 36 and 37 of the Competition Act, 2010 to collect information, examine market conduct, and enquire into potential anti-competitive behaviour. It further observed that furnishing information to the Commission is a statutory obligation and rejected attempts to challenge jurisdiction at an advanced stage of proceedings. While hearing the ICA, a two-member LHC bench comprising Justice Ch. Muhammad Iqbal and Justice Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi held that the intra court appeal was not maintainable.

Chinese firms to inject \$2.4bn  
investments into Egypt

RIYADH: Chinese companies are set to invest around \$2.4 billion in Egypt, including the development of a logistics and commercial zone as well as a container terminal at Ain Sokhna Port. Backed by an estimated \$2 billion, the logistics and commercial zone will span 3 million sq. meters, comparable in scale to China's city of Yiwu. The container terminal at Ain Sokhna Port will be developed with an initial \$400 million investment and a designed capacity of 2 million containers. The project will be undertaken by Jianguo Provincial Port Group Co., Ltd. and Shanghai Huanshi Logistics Co., Ltd., according to a statement published on the Egyptian Cabinet Presidency's Facebook account. This momentum aligns with broader investment activity in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, which announced in December plans to host three new industrial projects with a combined investment of \$1.15 billion. This brings total investments in the zone to \$5.1 billion in the first half of the 2025/26 fiscal year, underscoring its growing role as a regional industrial and logistics hub. The newly released statement said: "At the beginning of the

meeting, the deputy prime minister for economic affairs emphasized the Egyptian government's commitment to strengthening cooperation with China in various economic fields, noting that China is a strategic partner for Egypt." Walid Gamal El-Din, chairman of the General Authority for the SCZONE, underlined that Chinese companies are among the most prominent investors in the SCZONE, affirming his readiness to provide all possible support to companies wishing to establish new investments in the economic zone. Counselor Mohamed El-Homsani, the official spokesman for the Cabinet, stated that the meeting reviewed a number of new projects that Chinese companies intend to implement in the Egyptian market, specifically within the SCZONE, the New Administrative Capital, and various industrial zones. El-Homsani added that the meeting also reviewed the Chinese Hurricane Group's plan to establish a 100,000 sq. meter industrial zone, which would include production lines for chemical products, fast-moving consumer goods, and household appliances, as well as regional storage centers and smart logistics systems. — DNA

Dubai is right place and time for PFL  
MENA 'Pride of Arabia'

## DNA

DUBAI: On May 24, the Professional Fighters League brings its first Middle East North Africa regional event of the year to Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena, and the story behind that choice says a lot about where Arab MMA is heading. The card is called "Pride of Arabia," and the name was deliberate. The original plan was to hold the season opener in Alkhorbar on May 8, under the name "Rise of the Gulf," with a card built around Eastern Province talent. When the conflict in the region forced a postponement in April, the promotion moved the event and rebuilt the story around Dubai. The result is a card that represents 11 nationalities, all of whom either live in or have strong ties to the UAE. "Dubai is a key market for PFL MENA and a global hub for sport and entertainment, making it the ideal stage for our 2026 season opener," PFL MENA General Manager Jerome Mazet said. "Dubai has consistently shown its passion for MMA, and we are excited to bring local stars like Mohammad Yahya and Zamzam Al-Hammadi to perform in front of a home crowd." Dubai and the wider UAE did not become a combat sports hub by accident. It traces back to Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who encountered Brazilian jiu-jitsu while studying in the US after watching the inau-

gural UFC event in 1993. He returned to Abu Dhabi, established the Abu Dhabi Combat Club, and in 1998 launched the ADCC Submission Fighting World Championship, now considered one of the most prestigious grappling competitions on the planet. From that foundation, jiu-jitsu became woven into the fabric of UAE society. In 2008, the Abu Dhabi Education Council made the sport part of the curriculum in 14 public schools. By 2016, the program had expanded to over 130 schools, with more than 76,000 students participating. It is taught from grades six to 12, and the program runs internal school competitions all the way up to world championship finals. That groundwork shapes the fanbase PFL MENA will encounter in the UAE. Mazet said in a recent interview: "It comes from the sport of jiu-jitsu. Jiu-jitsu is taught in school. You start at 6 or 8 years old, so there's a real culture of it. In France, after class, you go play football. Here, it's fighting or combat sports." The demographics reinforce this further. The Gulf countries are among the youngest populations in the world by median age. Saudi Arabia and the UAE both have a significant majority of their resident population under 35. MMA consistently ranks as one of the top sports globally for that age bracket, and the combination of the young population and deep martial arts culture means MMA was not going to stay niche here for long.

The main event at "Pride of Arabia" features Yahya, the 31-year-old Emirati featherweight known as "The UAE Warrior," against Tunisia's Mehdi Saadi. Yahya carries a history that is worth understanding. He built his name at UAE Warriors and became the first Emirati to sign with the UFC. The story Mazet tells about Yahya speaks to something PFL MENA is trying to solve structurally. "When you look at his fights and his results and the opponents he had in the UFC, it feels like there was a missing step," Mazet said. "And that missing step is us. Let's assemble the best of the region, the ones who have fought, the ones who have earned titles, the ones who maybe went to France or the UK to fight under a different flag because they didn't have that middle step." The co-main event pitches Morocco's Salah Eddine Hamli, who came through the 2025 PFL MENA season unbeaten and won the lightweight title in December, against Algeria's Ylies Djiroun. Hamli's 2025 run is exactly the kind of regional narrative the promotion has been building toward. One of the most significant indicators of what PFL MENA represents in the region can be seen in the trajectories of two female fighters. Hattan Alsaiif from Saudi Arabia became the first woman from the Kingdom to sign with a major global MMA promotion when PFL announced her contract in January 2024. She came from Muay

Thai, having won gold at the 2023 IFMA World Championships and at the World Combat Games. She made her amateur debut at PFL MENA 1 in Riyadh in May 2024, knocking out Nada Faheem in the second round, the first-ever women's amateur atomweight bout on a MENA card. When Alsaiif steps into the cage, something shifts in the crowd. "When she's in the cage, she's a whole different animal," Mazet said. "That's where the fans go crazy, and not just the women. A lot of kids and a lot of men love Hattan because when she's in the cage, she makes them proud." Zamzam Al-Hammadi, 18, is the next figure in that line. She is an Emirati, and her record in combat sports before turning professional is exceptional. She won the IMMAF Youth World Championship in 2023, becoming the first Emirati woman to do so alongside her sister Ghala. Al-Hammadi added an Asian gold medal and a second IMMAF Youth World Championship in 2024. Her grappling resume includes titles from the Abu Dhabi World Pro Championship, Jiu-Jitsu World Championship, and Abu Dhabi Grand Slam. She signed with PFL MENA in April 2025 and will compete in an amateur showcase bout at "Pride of Arabia." "When we sign somebody like Zamzam, we don't sign her to tick a box," Mazet said. "She is a three-time world champion in the IMMAF youth category. She has earned her spot here. She is absolutely legitimate."

Pakistan  
launches  
Fateh-II  
missile

## FROM PAGE 01

senior officers from Strategic Plans Division, Army Rocket Force Command and Pakistan Army along with scientists and Engineers of Strategic Organizations. The forum commended successful training fire of indigenously developed Missile of Fateh Series. President, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chief of Defence Forces and Services Chiefs appreciated the technical prowess, dedication and commitment of all those who contributed towards the successful training fire of the missile.

US not in a  
position to  
dictate...

## FROM PAGE 01

Kyrgyzstan, Talaei-Nik announced that Iran is willing to share its defensive weapons capabilities and combat experiences with independent countries, especially SCO members. He added that Tehran is ready to share the experiences of "America's defeat" with its Asian partners. These remarks come as direct and indirect talks between Iran and the United States remain deadlocked, with both sides accusing each other of unrealistic positions. Iranian officials continue to project confidence following the recent military confrontations, while seeking closer security cooperation with non-Western nations including China, Russia, and other SCO countries. The situation in the region remains tense, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz and ongoing ceasefire negotiations.

Forces  
destroy  
several...

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other installations, were successfully hit, they added. They further added that security forces' determination to defend the homeland was unwavering and that the "intentions of terrorists and their patrons will be crushed". The operation "will continue until all the set targets are achieved", the sources elaborated. Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Afghan Taliban to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries on its soil, particularly those linked to the banned TTP. Officials say those appeals have gone unheeded. Pakistan, meanwhile, is carrying out Operation Ghazab il-Haq against the Afghan Taliban and terrorists operating from its soil. It was launched on the night of Feb 26, following unprovoked cross-border attacks by the Afghan Taliban. After a temporary pause on March 18 at the request of "brotherly Islamic countries," Pakistan had announced the operation's resumption on March 26, saying it would continue "until its objectives are achieved." On Sunday, security forces destroyed the gun positions of Afghan Taliban involved in unprovoked firing at civilians in South Waziristan.

Imran Khan  
admin...

## FROM PAGE 01

surgeons administered the injection under microscopic guidance in the operation theatre while adopting all standard precautionary measures and protocols, according to the statement. Pims said the procedure was performed as a day-care surgery, and Khan remained vitally stable before, during and after the treatment. He was later discharged with instructions for further care, follow-up advice and related medical documentation, the statement added. Tuesday's procedure marks the latest phase in his eye care. He was earlier shifted to the hospital from Adiala jail on March 23, when he received the third dose following a comprehensive examination. On March 18, his medical check-up was completed by a newly formed board comprising five doctors and staffers at Adiala jail following instructions from IHC. The jailed PTI founder was diagnosed with central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO), a serious eye condition, according to a report submitted to the Supreme Court by his lawyer and the court's amicus curiae, Salman Safdar.

## Briefs

Rupee gains  
01 paisa  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.81 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.82. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.2 and Rs 279.85, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 1.09 to close at Rs 326.30 from the previous day's close of Rs 327.39, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 1.02 and closed at Rs 376.63 compared to the previous day's Rs 377.65. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged and closed at Rs 75.90 and Rs 74.33, respectively. —APP

PSX stays  
bearish, loses  
over 1,085  
points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 1,085.12 points, a negative change of 0.64 percent, closing at 168,412.23 points against 169,497.36 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,190,338 million shares with a traded value of Rs 34,542 billion, compared to 780,227 million shares valuing Rs 33,420 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18,646 trillion from Rs 18,747 trillion a day earlier. Out of 482 active companies in the ready market, 168 advanced, 284 declined, and 30 remained unchanged.

Cnergico PK topped the volume chart with 265.575 million shares, followed by Yousuf Weaving with 92.442 million shares and Loads Limited with 60.112 million shares.

The top gainers included Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which increased by Rs 123.50 to close at Rs 26,380.00, and Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited, which gained Rs 114.23 to settle at Rs 1,454.79. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 161.33 to close at Rs 17,602.67, while Sazgar Engineering Works Limited fell by Rs 58.50 to close at Rs 2,030.45. In the futures market, turnover stood at 228.439 million shares with a traded value of Rs 8,083 billion, compared to 179,224 million shares worth Rs 9,215 billion in the previous session. Out of 328 futures-market companies, 94 recorded gains while 231 declined, and 3 remained unchanged, according to PSX data. —APP

Iraqi leaders  
to begin  
thorny talks  
on forming  
cabinet

BAGHDAD: Iraqi leaders are expected to begin complex talks on Tuesday over forming a government and allocating cabinet portfolios under new prime minister-designate Ali Al-Zaidi. Five months on from elections, Iraq remains deadlocked in negotiations over a new administration, after US pressure scuppered the choice for prime minister of the majority bloc in parliament. Two-time expremier Nouri Al-Maliki, who has close ties to Iran, had been endorsed by the bloc but was forced to step back after an ultimatum from US President Donald Trump. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq led by the United States, the country has walked a tightrope between the competing influences of Washington and Tehran. On Monday, Iraq's new President Nizar Amede nominated businessman Zaidi as prime minister-designate, giving him the daunting task of putting a cabinet together in the next 30 days amid fierce political wrangling. The Coordination Framework — the majority bloc in parliament and an alliance of Shia groups with varying ties to Iran, had backed Al-Maliki but appears to have yielded to the US pressure. —APP

Azerbaijan envoy for  
enhanced trade cooperation

During his visit, the Ambassador highly appreciated the efforts made for the establishment of APJCCI and acknowledged its growing role in strengthening bilateral trade and economic relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, visited the newly established office of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (APJCCI) in Islamabad. During his visit, the Ambassador highly appreciated the efforts made for the establishment of APJCCI and acknowledged its growing role in strengthening bilateral trade and economic relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. He remarked that the Chamber is playing an important role in facilitating business linkages and promoting cooperation between the private sectors of both countries. Highlighting

specific initiatives, H.E. Khazar Farhadov proposed organizing an exhibition of Azerbaijani products in Pakistan to introduce high-quality Azerbaijani goods to the local market. He also suggested the concept of establishing an "Azerbaijan Market" or dedicated promotional platforms in Pakistan to further enhance the visibility of Azerbaijani products. He informed that PASHA Real Estate, one of Azerbaijan's leading business groups, is doing events in Pakistan to introduce the premium real estate projects, inviting Pakistani investors and companies to explore opportunities in Azerbaijan's growing property sector. He also extended an invitation to the Patron-in-Chief of APJCCI, Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, to attend the World Urban Forum (WUF). The World

Urban Forum, organized by UN-Habitat, is a premier global platform focusing on sustainable urban development, housing, and investment opportunities in urban infrastructure, offering valuable insights for investors and policymakers alike. Emphasizing the importance of people-to-people contact and connectivity, the Ambassador noted that the frequency of direct flights between Pakistan and Azerbaijan is increasing, making travel more convenient for business communities. He added that further improvements in connectivity are expected in the coming months. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Patron-in-Chief of APJCCI, thanked His Excellency for visiting the newly established office and for his continuous support in

promoting bilateral relations. He informed that APJCCI is planning to take a business delegation to Azerbaijan in June, aimed at exploring opportunities across multiple sectors. He highlighted that Pakistani companies are keen to engage with Azerbaijani counterparts, and APJCCI is actively disseminating information to facilitate business connections and partnerships. On this occasion, Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman of APJCCI, also appreciated the Ambassador's dedicated efforts in promoting trade relations and supporting the establishment of the Joint Chamber. He expressed optimism that, with continued cooperation and engagement, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Azerbaijan will witness significant growth in the coming years.

Moot emphasis  
on strengthening  
regional coop

LAHORE: Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) Tuesday hosted the ASEAN Trade & Tourism Conference which stressed the need for further promoting trade and strengthening regional cooperation. LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol presided over the conference, bringing together prominent diplomats and business leaders to promote regional economic cooperation. Distinguished participants included Ambassador of Indonesia Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, Ambassador of Thailand Rongyudhi Virabutr, High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam Colonel (R) Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah, Ambassador of the Philippines Dr. Emmanuel Fernandez, Ambassador of Myanmar Wunna Han, LCCI Senior Vice President Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh, Vice President Khuram Lodhi, Executive Committee members, Convener Raja Hassan Akhtar, Honorary Consul General of Portugal Itikhar Feroz, and others. Addressing the conference, LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol highlighted that ASEAN is a highly significant regional bloc with a combined GDP of around USD 04 trillion. He noted that ASEAN countries' exports exceed USD 1.6 trillion, whereas Pakistan's exports to the region stand at only USD 1.37 billion, which is extremely low. He pointed out that major barriers include complex quality certifications, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and import permit requirements, which must be eased or eliminated. Removing these hurdles, he said, could significantly boost Pakistan's exports of halal meat, agricultural products, and pharmaceuticals. He further stated that high import tariffs in several ASEAN countries were hindering Pakistan's textile and leather exports, limiting market access. He stressed the need for Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN countries, improved direct flights and shipping connectivity, easier visa policies, and joint tourism promotion campaigns and travel packages. He also emphasized that Pakistan was performing well in the IT sector and should focus on increasing digital services exports to ASEAN markets. Indonesian Ambassador Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo described ASEAN as an emerging consumer market of 680 million people with rising purchasing power. He said Pakistan, as a key South Asian country, could play an effective role in ASEAN supply chains. He noted that Indonesia, with a USD 1.4 trillion economy, was part of the G20 and had maintained a growth rate of around 5 percent in recent years, focusing on food security, energy security, renewable energy, and digital transformation. Malaysian High Commissioner Dato Mohammad Azhar Mazlan stated that tensions involving the United States, Iran, and Israel had impacted businesses across the region, including ASEAN. He said Pakistan could play an important role in easing these tensions and added that Malaysia supports Pakistan's foreign and economic policies. He further shared that Malaysia had declared the current year as "Visit Malaysia Year" and invited Pakistanis to visit. —DNA

Pak-EU ties entering new  
phase of growth: Haroon

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday said Pakistan and the European Union were entering a renewed phase of partnership focused on investment, innovation, and sustainable growth, as the country strengthens reforms and enhances its global economic standing. Addressing the inaugural session of EU-Pakistan Business Forum, he said "This is not just another conference, but a moment to shape the future of Pakistan-EU cooperation." He noted that the strong participation reflects growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic direction. The SAPM paid tribute to the leadership of the prime minister, adding that his government has successfully stabilized the economy, restored investor confidence, and enhanced Pakistan's credibility on the global stage through consistent and decisive policies. Highlighting Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability, he emphasized that the country continues to promote dialogue and cooperation, reinforcing its role as a responsible and forward-looking nation. Haroon underscored that the European Union remains Pakistan's largest export destination, with the GSP Plus framework playing a pivotal role in expanding market access and improving standards. However, he stressed that the future of this partnership lies beyond trade, focusing on investment, technological collaboration, and integration into global value chains. "From textiles to technology, and from manufacturing to digital services, Pakistan is ready to move up the value chain and become a trusted partner in global supply systems," he stated. He highlighted Pakistan's economic potential, noting its population of over 240 million, expanding middle class, and strategic location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, providing access to a market of over 3 billion people. Emphasizing industrial revival as a cornerstone of economic policy, the SAPM said that the government is implementing structural reforms aimed at enhancing productivity, competitiveness, and long-term growth. These include improved access to finance, SME empowerment, and policy measures to reduce the cost of doing business. He informed that initiatives such as the National Tariff Policy and the Regulatory Guillotine are simplifying regulations, reducing red tape, and creating a more predictable business environment. "Pakistan is committed to providing ease, certainty, and scale to investors," he added. The SAPM also highlighted the government's focus on sustainability through the New Energy Vehicle Policy and broader environmental reforms, aligning economic growth with climate responsibility. He pointed to vast opportunities across sectors including mining, tourism, renewable energy, agriculture modernization, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and infrastructure. He also emphasized the untapped potential of regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, rich in natural resources and investment prospects. Inviting European partners to explore Pakistan's tourism sector, he noted the country's unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, offering high-value investment opportunities. Haroon said that Pakistan has undertaken significant reforms to stabilize and rebuild its economy, demonstrating progress through tangible results. He emphasized that sustainable growth will be driven through strong international partnerships. "Our doors are open, our direction is clear, and our commitment is firm. The opportunity is real, and the moment is now," he concluded, inviting global investors to partner with Pakistan in building a prosperous future. —DNA

ICCI President explores avenues for  
Pak-China business collaboration

ISLAMABAD: PPresident Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood on Tuesday reaffirmed the commitment for strengthening economic ties between Pakistan and China and facilitating enhanced business-to-business (B2B) engagements. He visited the Guangzhou International Cooperation Center (GICC). ICCI Executive Member and Chairman Foreign Delegation Committee Imran Minhas also accompanying the President, said a press release. The GICC, a non-profit platform dedicated to connecting global markets and promoting win-win cooperation, has emerged as a dynamic hub for international business collaboration. With the involvement of over 27 companies, the Centre plays a pivotal role in facilitating B2B matchmaking between Pakistan, China, and other countries, offering a comprehensive one-window solution for businesses seeking partnerships, resources, and market access. During the visit, Sardar Tahir

Mehmood held productive meetings with GICC organizers and prominent Chinese business leaders. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral connectivity, exploring joint venture opportunities, and identifying new areas of cooperation across key sectors including medical, construction, and trade services. Speaking on the occasion, the ICCI President appreciated the GICC's proactive role in bridging international markets and noted that such platforms are instrumental in addressing the evolving needs of the global business community. He highlighted that whether businesses require access to specific industry segments, logistical support, or networking opportunities, the GICC provides an efficient and centralized solution. It is pertinent to mention that ICCI has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GICC, laying the foundation for structured cooperation. —DNA

Viral video sparks worry over Indian  
workers training their own replacements

NEW DELHI: When a video showing factory workers sewing clothes with small cameras on their heads went viral this month, it sent chills across social media. It also reignited a familiar fear among Indian labor activists: that people are already training their own replacements in real time. The footage that in early April made the rounds on social networks and headlines in the local Indian press shows a garment production hall, where a few dozen people are sitting in rows, working on sewing machines. At least 10 of them are wearing head-mounted camera gear, as a person recording the video walks by them, saying in Hindi: "Everybody has put on the camera. Even the timer is on. Everyone is wearing the camera." One of the workers responds: "Alright, sir." Both of them speak with a Hindi accent that is common in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, from where most workers in India's textile hubs in Noida and Gurugram come. While the owners of local factories that Arab News reached out to denied using cameras to capture workflow data or having knowledge of such practices at their facilities, those working in the artificial intelligence industry say it is not new. Senthil Nayagam, founder of Muonium AI, told Arab News that IT companies and some specialized machine learning firms that create datasets have been hiring employees on a temporary ba-

sis to do so with small sports or DJI cameras. But what is seen in the footage is not such a gig. "It's not an IT company," Nayagam said. "This hardware seems to be custom hardware. It's not standard, market available ... The company which is getting it done is evaluating it (with) robots, and they want to see if the training data can help them reduce costs." Whatever it means to "reduce costs," to labor activists it is already worrying in the Indian context. According to data from the All India Trade Union Congress, out of the country's 670 million workforce, only 80 million people enjoy work protections. For Amarjeet Kaur, AITUC secretary-general, using workers to build automation tools or gather data they do not benefit from only adds to how companies are already exploiting them and "bypassing" labor laws. "Our workforce is already in a very, very dangerous zone ... With the entry of AI, naturally, many will be losing jobs," Kaur said. "We are not saying the new technology should not come, but you have to protect the livelihood of everybody and the dignity of everybody ... We have failed because nobody will be able to stop technology or stop AI, and especially when it is in the control of corporates." What may be lost is also the hope that AI would only relieve people

from unsafe jobs. Sucheta De, social and political activist, worries that in India it will make livelihoods even more insecure instead of offering workers more free time for leisure and doing what they want. "Rather than getting some free time off from labor, they will be devoid of any kind of employment," she said. "The reality is — in a country like India — that until and unless the government provides some kind of job security to the huge majority of informal workers, AI is only here to displace people from their livelihoods." And those earning from the process may ultimately not even be contributing to the Indian economy. Subimal Bhattacharjee, policy adviser specializing in digital technology, equals training AI models on factory workers with "extracting human skill" at "bargain prices" from India's most vulnerable and economically desperate people. "The technology gains flow to wealthy US or China tech firms, while the human cost lands on the most vulnerable workers," he said. "The irony is brutal — workers are being paid poverty wages to train their own replacements. For India, where millions depend on manufacturing and garment jobs, this could trigger massive displacement with zero safety net." —Agencies

Children at  
'breaking  
point' in  
Darfur as  
facing hunger,  
violence

GENEVA: Five million children across Sudan's Darfur region are facing extreme deprivation, the United Nations children's agency said on Tuesday, issuing an emergency warning over the situation as the civil war in the country enters its fourth year. The warning, known as a "Child Alert," is used sparingly by UNICEF and is designed to signal that a situation has reached a critical threshold. It is the first time the agency has issued one in 20 years for Darfur. "Children are at a breaking point across the region, childhood is again defined by fear, by loss. Homes have been burned, schools and health facilities have been damaged or destroyed," Sheldon Yett, UNICEF's representative in Sudan, told reporters in Geneva via video link from Port Sudan. "Children are bearing the heaviest weight of the war in Darfur, children are being killed and maimed, uprooted from their homes and pushed into extreme hunger, disease and trauma," he said. Darfur, a vast region in western Sudan, has been a focal point of violence, including ethnically charged killings, in the civil war that erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The region was also the scene of atrocities and mass displacement in a conflict that escalated in 2003, after rebels took up arms against Sudan's government, which used Arab militias to suppress the revolt. —APP

Israel spy  
chief hails  
'groundbreaking'  
ops in Iran,  
Lebanon

JERUSALEM: The head of Israel's Mossad has praised the spy agency's "groundbreaking" operations in the war against Iran and Hezbollah, saying it acquired intelligence "from the heart of the enemy's secrets." "In the campaigns against Iran and Hezbollah, we worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the IDF, on both defense and offense," David Barnea said, referring to the Israeli military. His remarks were delivered during a commendation ceremony at Mossad headquarters on Monday and published on Tuesday. "We acquired strategic and tactical intelligence from the heart of the enemy's secrets," Barnea said, adding that Mossad had "proved new, groundbreaking operational capabilities in target countries." A ceasefire in the war with Iran, which began with US-Israeli strikes on February 28, has so far held. In Lebanon, Hezbollah drew the country into the war on March 2 by firing rockets toward Israel to avenge the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei by the US and Israel. US President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire on the Lebanese front earlier this month, which has since been extended. Despite the truce, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that Hezbollah's rockets and drones remained a key threat demanding action by the Israeli military, adding that Israel was continuing to carry out strikes. —APP

Britain  
challenges  
court decision  
that Palestine  
action ban was  
unlawful

LONDON: Britain on Tuesday sought to uphold a ban on pro-Palestinian group Palestine Action, which it has designated a terrorist organization, after a court ruling that the move unlawfully interfered with freedom of expression. Palestine Action, which had increasingly targeted Israeli-linked defense companies in Britain with a particular focus on Israel's largest defense firm Elbit Systems, was proscribed under terrorism laws last year. London's High Court ruled in February that the ban was unlawful, although it remains in force pending the outcome of the government's appeal, which began on Tuesday. —APP

**Briefs**

**Under-18 marriage banned in Punjab**

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly has passed the Punjab Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2026 with a majority vote, making marriage below the age of 18 a cognisable offence. Under the new legislation, individuals above 18 years of age found involved in contracting marriage with a child will face rigorous imprisonment for up to three years, along with a fine which may extend to Rs500,000. "Whoever, being an adult above eighteen years of age, contracts a marriage with a child, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to three years but shall not be less than two years and shall be liable to a fine which may extend to five hundred thousand rupees," read the bill. The law also recommended strict penalties for parents or guardians who assist in underage marriages, including imprisonment of two to three years and a fine of up to Rs500,000. "Where a guardian or any other person in any capacity, lawful or unlawful, does any act to promote the child marriage, child abuse or permits child marriage to be solemnised, or intentionally or negligently fails to prevent it from being solemnised, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to three years but shall not be less than two years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to five hundred thousand rupees," a clause of the bill read.

**Israeli military warns Lebanon citizens**

NEWS DESK

JERUSALEM: Israel's military on Tuesday warned residents of more than a dozen villages and towns in southern Lebanon to immediately evacuate and head northwards, saying it would respond to Hezbollah's "violation of the ceasefire" there. The military "does not intend to harm you, and out of concern for your safety, you are required to evacuate your homes immediately and move away from the specified area toward the Sidon District," Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee posted on X. "Anyone present near Hezbollah elements, their facilities or their weapons is endangering their life," he added. All the areas listed in the post appear to be outside or on the border of the so-called "Yellow Line" — a strip of Lebanese territory around 10 kilometers (six miles) deep along the border within which Israeli troops are operating. Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah have traded blame over violations of the fragile ceasefire in Lebanon agreed earlier this month, and attacks by both sides have continued.

**Afghanistan could lose up to 25,000 female health workers**

*A new UNICEF analysis, The Cost of Inaction on Girls' Education and Women's Labour Force Participation in Afghanistan, found that female representation in the civil service fell from 21 per cent to 17.7 per cent between 2023 and 2025*

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Restrictions on girls' education and women's employment in Afghanistan could leave the country with a deficit of over 25,000 female teachers and health workers by 2030, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Tuesday. The agency said the crisis is already depriving children of learning and healthcare, while also weakening Afghanistan's economy and the essential services that depend on trained women professionals. A new UNICEF analysis, The Cost of In-

action on Girls' Education and Women's Labour Force Participation in Afghanistan, found that female representation in the civil service fell from 21 per cent to 17.7 per cent between 2023 and 2025. More than one million girls have been denied their right to learn since Taliban authorities banned girls from secondary education in September 2021. If that remains in place until 2030, more than two million girls will have been deprived of education beyond primary school in a country that already has one of the lowest female literacy rates in the world. "Afghanistan cannot afford to lose future

teachers, nurses, doctors, midwives and social workers, who sustain essential services. This will be the reality if girls continue to be excluded from education," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "We urge the de facto authorities to lift the ban on secondary education for girls and call on the international community to remain committed to supporting girls' rights to learn." The report says that Afghanistan faces a dual crisis: losing trained female professionals while preventing the next generation from replacing them. By 2030, the country could lose up to

20,000 women teachers and 5,400 health-care workers, according to the analysis. The education sector is already feeling the impact. The number of female teachers in basic education fell by more than nine per cent, from nearly 73,000 in 2022 to around 66,000 in 2024. UNICEF continues to support children's education across the country. In 2025, more than 3.7 million children in public schools received emergency support, while 442,000 children — 66 per cent of them girls — benefited from community-based learning initiatives. The agency has also built or rehabilitated 232 schools.

**Court grant bail to PM relatives**

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: A special court (central) on Tuesday granted interim pre-arrest bail to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's daughter, Rabia Imran and her husband Imran Yousaf in a money laundering case. The couple personally appeared before the court along with their counsel. Judge Ashfaq Ahmed heard and allowed the bail petitions of the couple, subject to submission of surety bonds, and restrained the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) from arresting them till May 7. Last week, an accountability court had suspended the perpetual arrest warrants issued against the prime minister's daughter and son-in-law in a case related to alleged irregularities in the Punjab Saaf Pani Company. The court had accepted their request to surrender before it and directed both of them to appear on May 5. An accountability court had issued perpetual warrants for their arrest in 2021 and 2022. Lahore's National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed a reference against PM Shehbaz and 20 others in connection with the Saaf Pani Company case. The accountability court had subsequently allowed the acquittal pleas of the prime minister and others.

**Uganda govt arrest dozens of foreigners**

NEWS DESK

KAMPALA: Ugandan authorities said Tuesday that they have detained dozens of foreigners in a crackdown on illegal migration that the internal affairs ministry suggested was linked to human traffickers and cyberscam operations. At least 231 people have been detained since Monday in operations that targeted a group of Nigerians living in the country's north, as well as another group of foreigners living together in a closed compound in Kampala, the capital. The second group included people from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Ghana, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Malaysia, all of whom were staying in "a highly restricted, self-contained apartment complex equipped with its own restaurant and internal facilities designed to restrict movement," according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thirty-six of the 169 people found in the compound were women. Authorities say they acted on intelligence showing large groups of foreigners living or working in Uganda without the necessary papers to do so. Many didn't have passports, the ministry said in a statement. "Some individuals have claimed they were trafficked into Uganda with promises of employment," the statement said. "Others were engaged in cyber-scaming activities. A few were found in possession of materials suggesting involvement in other criminal activities."



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump hosted King Charles and his wife at the White House. — DNA

**Google breaks ground on AI megahub in India**

DNA

NEW YORK: Tech giant Google on Tuesday marked the ceremonial start of work on its largest artificial intelligence hub outside of the United States with a groundbreaking ceremony in India. The firm promised in October 2025 to spend \$15 billion over five years to construct the vast centre in Visakhapatnam, a southeastern port in Andhra Pradesh state of around two million people, popularly known as "Vizag". "Today marks the first concrete milestone in Google's largest commitment to India's digital future," Bikash Koley, Google's Vice President for Global Infrastructure, told the ceremony. "This project represents a \$15bn blueprint to deliver a full stack AI ecosystem," he added. "At its core is our gigawatt scale data centre campus, purpose built for the

immense computational demand of the AI era, powering services like Gemini and Google Search." Nara Lokesh, information technology minister for Andhra Pradesh state, said he was "excited as we embark on this journey to build India's most coveted AI and deep-tech hub". Vizag is being pitched as a landing point for submarine internet cables linking India to Singapore. "By establishing Vizag as an international subsea gateway, we will add vital diversity from the existing landings, in Mumbai and Chennai, increasing the resilience of India's digital backbone and improving economic security," Koley added. "New strategic fibre optic routes will further connect India with the rest of the world." Globally, data centres are an area of phenomenal growth, fuelled by the need to store massive amounts of digital data, and to train and run energy-intensive AI tools. "This is a pivotal moment for India, Vizag, and for Google," Koley added.

**Greek police arrest man who opened fire**

*"He went in, went up to the fourth floor, raised his shotgun, told an employee to duck and hit another one," Varveris told ERT radio. He said the gunman didn't appear to specifically target the employee he hit*

NEWS DESK

ATHENS: Police in Greece's capital were searching for a gunman, reportedly aged 89, who opened fire Tuesday in a social security office and a courthouse in central Athens, wounding at least four people. Armed with a shotgun, the gunman initially opened fire at the social security office, wounding an employee, police said. Police officers who arrived at the scene treated the man, but the gunman fled the scene. Local media aired security camera footage that it said was from a local store near the social security office, which showed a man walking calmly across the street carrying what appears to be a short-barreled shotgun in his right hand. The same man was suspected of later opening fire on the ground floor of a court building in another part of central Athens, with several people wounded there, police said, adding that authorities had found the shotgun. Television footage showed ambulance crews transporting at least three people from the courthouse to waiting ambulances. The head of the Athens Judicial Employees Union, Stratis Dounias, said that initial information indicated that the man had shot at the floor inside one of the offices in the court building. At least three female court employees were slightly wounded by ricocheting shotgun pellets, while media reports said that a fourth female employee was transported to a hospital without physical injuries. The motive for the shooting was unclear. State broadcaster ERT said that the gunman had reportedly left envelopes with documents after the shooting at the courthouse, saying those were the reasons for his actions. Alexandros Varveris, head of the National Social Security Fund known by its Greek acronym EFKA, said the gunman had gone to the fourth floor of the social security fund's offices in the Kerameikos area of central Athens and opened fire after calling out to an employee to duck. His shot hit another employee, who was wounded in the leg, Varveris said, adding that the gunman had been wearing a trenchcoat under which he had hidden the shotgun.

**Russia wants Mali stability**

MOSCOW: Moscow urgently wants peace and stability in Mali, the Kremlin said Tuesday, after unprecedented attacks by jihadists and separatists killed the country's defense minister and seized a key town. Russian forces had been protecting Russia's Africa Corps paramilitary unit had to withdraw from the northern town of Kidal after coordinated rebel attacks on strategic positions that had been held by the Moscow-backed ruling junta. "We consider it important that the country return to a peaceful, stable course, as soon as possible," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about the situation in the country. — APP

NEWS DESK

JAKARTA: The death toll from a train collision near the Indonesian capital Jakarta has risen to 14 with another 84 injured, the train operator said on Tuesday, as rescuers worked to extract survivors still trapped in the wreckage. The collision between a commuter train and a long-distance train happened late on Monday in Bekasi, just outside Jakarta. Bobby Rasyidi, chief executive of Indonesia's state railway firm PT KAI, said the death toll had risen to 14 and that evacuation work was still ongoing. Mohammad Syafii, the head of Indonesia's search and rescue agency, told a press conference early on Tuesday that it was a delicate process to rescue survivors from the mangled carriages. "We needed to involve personnel with certain skills to perform a

**14 killed, 84 injured as two trains collided in Indonesia**

*Commuter train first collided with taxi on tracks and was then hit by the long-distance train, says official*

measured extrication," he said. "There are some victims who are alive to this minute and we're hoping to extricate them, but they're still pinned by the train material." -distance train, in Bekasi, on the outskirts of Jakarta, Indonesia, April 28, 2026. — Reuters Rescuers have disengaged the trains, a Reuters witness said. They were seen using angle grinders to cut through the metal of the train compartments and reach the survivors. Bobby told the press conference that the commuter train first

collided with a taxi on the tracks and was then hit by the long-distance train. A women-only carriage bore the brunt of the crash. Taxi operator Green SM Indonesia said on Instagram that the taxi involved in the accident was part of its fleet. It said it had sent information to authorities to assist in the investigation. Green SM Indonesia is the Indonesian branch of Vietnamese electric-vehicle taxi operator Green and Smart Mobility JSC, an affiliate of Vingroup VIC.HM.

**Cambodia agrees to repatriate 54 Pakistan nationals**

*"As a goodwill gesture from the Cambodian authorities, the detainees will be repatriated without any legal proceedings against them under the 'Law on Combating Online Scams'"*

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi on Tuesday confirmed that Cambodian authorities agreed to the early repatriation of 54 Pakistani nationals detained in Siem Reap Province. These individuals were arrested following a raid on a scamming compound, the spokesperson added. In a statement, Andrabi said that the Pakistan Embassy in Cambodia has actively pursued the matter with the Cambodian government. "This is in line with the instructions of the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister [Ishaq Dar] to take all possible actions aimed at facilitating the Pakistani community abroad," he added. As a result of the embassy's efforts, the FO spokesperson said that the embassy staff were taking steps to ensure the welfare of the detained Pakistanis. "These detainees would leave Cambodia as soon as flight arrangements

are finalised," he assured. "As a goodwill gesture from the Cambodian authorities, the detainees will be repatriated without any legal proceedings against them under the 'Law on Combating Online Scams', which came into effect on 7 April 2026, imposing significant prison sentences and hefty fines," he added. "We do not have money to bribe the Cambodian police," he claimed. He said conditions inside the prison are extremely harsh, adding that detainees were forced to eat from the same plates used to feed dogs. Responding to a question, he said there were several Pakistani nationals being held in Cambodian jails. The Pakistani national said he had reached Cambodia two years earlier through an agent. — DNA

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