



Islamabad POST

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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President Zardari invites Chinese firms to Pakistan

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KP CM says ties with EU on the move

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Pakistan warns against hate speech, at UN

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PM Shehbaz says

Middle East war hit Pak two years of economic gains

Pakistan weekly oil bill reached \$800m amid US-Iran war; the prime minister also apprised the cabinet of Pakistan's diplomatic outreach in the US-Iran war and recalled the first round of Islamabad talks held on April 11

PM briefed on special measures to prevent diseases

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Health Syed Mustafa Kamal and Special Assistant to PM on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, the health minister briefed the prime minister on the ministry's ongoing projects and special measures being undertaken to prevent diseases. On the occasion, Haroon Akhtar Khan apprised the prime minister of issues related to his portfolio. Other matters of mutual interests were also discussed during the meeting, according to a statement issued by the PM House. Secretary Health Aslam Ghauri was also present in the meeting. — APP

SAIFULLAH ANSAR
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the country's weekly oil bill has reached \$800 million amid the war in the Middle East. Global fuel prices have skyrocketed over the past two months in the wake of the US and Israel launching joint strikes on Iran. Addressing a meeting of the federal cabinet today, the premier commended the efforts of Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik for tackling the fuel crisis resulting from the Iran war, stating that the situation now appeared "satisfactory". On that note, the prime minister remarked that fuel prices in the global markets had skyrocketed, "our weekly pre-war oil bill was around \$300m, and today it is up to \$800m". He further shared that the country's fuel consumption "had lessened compared to previous weeks," stressing that the situation was being monitored regularly. PM Shehbaz further stated that before the war broke out, Pakistan was doing well on the macroeconomic front; however, "with the war, our efforts of two years witnessed a setback". On the matter of economic growth, the premier further stated that Pakistan

has "paid its loans and federal reserves retain their levels," and expressed gratitude to Saudi Arabia's leadership. "Consultations are also being held with provinces to extend fuel subsidies," he told the cabinet. In his address, the prime minister also apprised the cabinet of Pakistan's diplomatic outreach in the US-Iran war and recalled the first round of Islamabad talks held on April 11. "Many diplomatic efforts were made," he added, lauding the roles of Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, saying the two "tried their best to restore peace in the region". "Following this, a ceasefire extension was announced," the premier said, recalling the April 21 ceasefire announcement by US President Donald Trump. He then also recalled Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent trips to Pakistan, stating that before Araghchi went back to Iran, "he assured me (on phone) that I would give you an answer after holding consultations with the Iranian leadership". The premier also appreciated Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi for his participation in the meetings.

Trump urges Iran to sign agreement

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday urged Iran to 'get smart soon' and sign a deal, following days of deadlock in efforts to end the conflict and a media report that the US would extend its blockade of Iran's ports. In a post on Truth Social, Trump, who has said Iran can call if it wants to talk and has stressed repeatedly Tehran cannot have a nuclear weapon, said the country 'couldn't get its act together'. The Wall Street Journal cited US officials as saying the president had instructed aides to prepare for an extended blockade of Iran's ports in a bid to force Tehran to capitulate. Officials said that Trump had opted to continue squeezing Iran's economy and oil exports with the blockade as his other options — resuming bombing or walking away from the conflict — carried more risk, according to the WSJ.

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US has spent \$25 bn on Iran war so far

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States has incurred costs estimated between \$25 billion and \$35 billion in its military operations against Iran, according to analyses by the American Enterprise Institute and other trackers. Some reports put direct Pentagon spending closer to \$28 billion, driven heavily by munitions expenditure (including Tomahawks, Patriots, and THAAD systems) in the conflict's early phases. Initial intense fighting saw rapid spending: the first six days alone reportedly

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Real Estate: file system to be abolished

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Lt Gen (ret) Nazir Ahmed on Wednesday said that new real estate reforms will be introduced within two months, aiming to overhaul regulatory practices. "The reforms will be presented before the federal cabinet for approval," he said during an informal media briefing, adding that the existing file system would be abolished after implementation. The NAB chairman said that full responsibility would rest with real estate developers under the proposed changes.

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al Maliki called on Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, on Wednesday. — DNA

Israel, Lebanon ceasefire must be preserved: EU

Meanwhile, in Washington, US lawmakers are set to grill Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth over the conduct and costs of the Iran war

DNA

BRUSSELS/WASHINGTON/BEIRUT: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has stressed that the fragile ceasefire in Iran and Lebanon must be preserved through sustained diplomatic engagement, warning that continued instability risks deepening the regional crisis and its global economic fallout. She underlined that the ongoing conflict—linked to the broader Iran war and hostilities involving Israel and Hezbollah—has already caused severe humanitarian and energy shocks, urging all stakeholders to prioritize dialogue over escalation. Meanwhile, in Washington, US lawmakers are set to grill Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth over the conduct and costs of the Iran war. He is scheduled to testify before Congress amid growing criticism of the conflict, including concerns over military spending, civilian casualties, and the lack of congressional authorization for the war. Despite a nominal ceasefire, tensions remain high on the ground. Israeli forces have continued military operations in southern Lebanon, including strikes on

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Trump approval rating falls to lowest

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's approval rating sank to the lowest level of his current term, as Americans increasingly soured on his handling of the cost of living and an unpopular war with Iran, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll. The four-day poll, completed on Monday, showed 34% of Americans approve of Trump's performance in the White House, down from 36% in a prior Reuters/Ipsos survey conducted from April 15 to 20. The majority of responses were gathered before the Saturday night shooting at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, where Trump was due to speak. It remains to be seen

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Trump rejects Iran's offer to reopen Hormuz

Trump dismissed the phased approach, viewing it as an attempt to relieve economic pressure on Iran without making meaningful concessions on its uranium enrichment and potential weaponization

DNA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has rejected Iran's latest proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and lift the U.S. naval blockade, insisting that any agreement must first address Tehran's nuclear program. According to multiple sources, Iran — via Pakistani mediators — offered to reopen the strategically vital waterway and end the current standoff if the United States lifted its blockade and paused military operations, while postponing negotiations on Iran's nuclear ambitions to a later stage. Trump dismissed the phased ap-

proach, viewing it as an attempt to relieve economic pressure on Iran without making meaningful concessions on its uranium enrichment and potential weaponization. In a direct interview, Trump told Axios he intends to keep the blockade in place until a comprehensive deal is secured that prevents Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. "The blockade is somewhat more effective than the bombing," Trump said. "They are choking like a stuffed pig. And it is going to be worse for them. They can't have a nuclear weapon." The U.S. naval blockade, imposed in mid-April, has severely restricted

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Briefs

IHC fixes Imran Khan plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday fixed the hearing of former prime minister Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi's appeals against conviction in the £190 million corruption reference for April 30 (tomorrow). A division bench comprising Chief Justice Sardar Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif will hear pleas tomorrow (Thursday). The PTI founder and his wife had approached the IHC after they were handed 14-year and seven-year sentences, respectively, by Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana in January 2025. Earlier in March, the court imposed a fine of Rs100,000 on the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) special prosecutor for using delaying tactics in proceedings in the £190 million corruption case involving Imran Khan and Bushra.

Taliban secret meeting at Qandhar

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Supreme leader Mullah Haibat Ullah has instructed stern action against banned TTP militants but it was yet to be ascertained that whether they (Afghan Taliban) will do it or not. According to credible Pakistani circles, the same Afghan Taliban—who for years faced allegations of sheltering militants—have now adopted a strict stance against their former allies, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Following a high-level and secret meeting in Kandahar, the Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada issued a firm directive, which is in fact in accordance to Pakistan demands.

Armed forces destroy Afghan Taliban posts

Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

NEWS DESK

QUETTA: Forces have destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts and vehicles in Balochistan's Chaman sector, security sources said on Wednesday. The operations, part of the ongoing 'Operation Ghazab il-Haq', were a response to the "unprovoked aggression" by Afghan Taliban forces and terrorists on the Pak-Afghan border, according to the sources. Security sources said that the army destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts and vehicles in Chaman "with precision". "The Pakistan Army's effective operations have forced the Afghan Taliban and the Fitna al Khawarij to retreat". Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "Security forces' unwavering resolve to defend the homeland is ensuring the country's territorial integrity," sources added. The sources also stated that the operations will continue until "all set targets are achieved". Security forces also destroyed multiple Afghan Taliban posts in the

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Attack on Bannu police post thwarted

DNA

BANNU: A terrorist was killed early Wednesday when Bannu police repelled an attack on the Mazanga police post, officials said. Police officials said heavily armed terrorists attacked the post in the early hours of Wednesday, but personnel responded promptly and foiled the assault. An intense exchange of fire between police and the attackers continued for some time, leaving one terrorist dead and several others injured. The wounded attackers were taken away by their accomplices under the cover of darkness. Following the incident, Bannu District Police Officer (DPO) Yasir Afridi, along with Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Arshad Khan and teams

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'Not a punishment': Govt defends JCP move to transfer IHC judges

State minister says judicial rotation longstanding demand and does not undermine independence

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has defended the Judicial Commission of Pakistan's (JCP) decision to transfer three Islamabad High Court judges, with Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik saying the move was "not a punishment" but part of an administrative rotation process long sought by bar councils. Speaking on Geo News programme Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Malik said that the JCP's decisions were in accordance with the Constitution and law, and that no member of the commission is subordinate to another. He said judges are part of the service structure of Pakistan and argued that if officers can be transferred through commission processes, judges can also be moved. He said Justice Babar Sattar's written position had been placed before the commission, noting that the Constitution allows the commission to hear a judge if it deems it appropriate, but such a hearing is not mandatory. Malik said that if the Chief Justice of Pakistan had not been in

Continued on Page 06

Govt notifies transfer of IHC judges

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: In line with the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) decision, the Ministry of Law and Justice notified on Wednesday the transfer of three judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to different high courts under Article 200 of the Constitution. According to a notification issued by law ministry, the President of Pakistan approved the transfers on the recommendation of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP). The notification read that Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani has been transferred 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).

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KP CM, EU envoy discuss bilateral coop, edu reforms

The CM said the provincial government was introducing reforms in curriculum and courses in line with market demand and investing in youth in accordance with the vision of Imran Khan

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Wednesday held a meeting with European Union Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis to discuss bilateral cooperation, education reforms, youth development and future areas of mutual collaboration. According to the CM House spokesperson, the chief minister appreciated the European Union's support in the establishment of the Centre of Excellence. Both sides held detailed discussions on ongoing cooperation and future opportunities for partnership in key development sectors. The CM said the provincial government was introducing reforms in curriculum and courses in line with market

demand and investing in youth in accordance with the vision of Imran Khan. He said the education budget had been increased significantly and special focus was being given to the promotion of education across the province. He said an Education Card had been introduced to provide free education at the intermediate level for orphan students and female students. He added that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had suffered greatly from the effects of the Afghanistan war, and investment in youth had now become a top priority of the provincial government. During the meeting, discussions were also held on relations with Afghanistan and the situation of refugees. The CM said Pakistan and Afghanistan shared centuries-old historical and cultural ties and emphasized that dia-

logue remained the most effective way forward in dealing with bilateral issues. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had maintained an annual trade volume of over Rs10 billion with Afghanistan, which had been severely affected by the current regional situation. The EU ambassador said technology and vocational skills were among the priority sectors and described the Centre of Excellence as a modern model aligned with future needs. He also reaffirmed the European Union's interest in continuing cooperation with Pakistan and supporting development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development, and senior European Union officials also attended the meeting.



Islamabad: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, presents a traditional cultural shawl to the Ambassador of Nepal, Ms. Rita Dhital, as a gesture of goodwill.

Crackdown against businesses of illegal Afghan in Malakand

PESHAWAR: The district administration in Malakand has launched a crackdown against businesses operated by illegally residing Afghan nationals in Batkhela and adjoining areas following directives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. Acting on the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Malakand Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Assistant Commissioner Batkhela Shakil Ahmad carried out the operation to ensure implementation of government orders and legal regulations regarding illegal foreign residents. During the crackdown, several businesses were sealed, including shops and food outlets operating under the names of Muhammad Zeb, Samad, Akhtar Muhammad, Insaaf Bar B.Q Hotel at Zafar Park, Khitab Biryani and Chapli Kabab. The Assistant Commissioner said that strict compliance with government directives and legal procedures would be ensured at all costs, adding that action against violators would continue without discrimination. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to maintaining law and order and implementing provincial government policies regarding illegal residents across the district.—APP

AIOU starts cardiac screening drive

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has launched a free cardiac screening program for its employees in response to growing health concerns, particularly after the recent sudden deaths of several staff members due to heart-related illnesses. The initiative has been introduced under the directives of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood who took immediate notice of the situation and approved the program to ensure the well-being of university employees. The screening is being conducted at the university's Healthcare Center and aims to facilitate early diagnosis and prevention of heart diseases. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Vice Chancellor emphasized that timely diagnosis plays a vital role in preventing life-threatening conditions and saving precious lives. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to prioritizing employee health and stated that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard.—APP

No negligence in Kurram relief work, says Kundi

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday said that efforts to support the affected of Kurram were ongoing from day one and no stone would be left unturned in ensuring their relief and rehabilitation. He expressed these views while talking to a jirga of the Musazai tribe from Kurram. Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Farzand Wazir was also present on the occasion. A jirga comprising representatives of various political parties, led by former federal minister Sajid Hussain Turi and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Malik Zaman Chamkani,

apprised the Governor of issues, losses and difficulties faced by residents of Upper, Lower and Central Kurram in sectors including education, health, communications and other walks of life. The Governor said that efforts were still underway to ensure compensation for the affected people of Kurram. He added that Red Crescent was working under the governor's supervision and directives had been issued to ensure that any relief goods received from donors were distributed among the Kurram affectees. He reaffirmed that all possible measures were being taken to maximize relief assistance for

the victims, adding that he remained in direct contact with Sajid Hussain Turi during difficult times. Kundi said that the Pakistan Peoples Party, since the era of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had always focused on the development of tribal areas whenever given the opportunity, and even today the party was raising its voice for the rights of tribal people and redressal of their grievances. On the occasion, former federal minister Sajid Hussain Turi and jirga members appreciated the role and cooperation of Governor Kundi in provision of relief to Kurram affectees through Red Crescent.—AP

KP launches vocational training program

LOWER DIR: A vocational skills training programme has been launched for patients undergoing treatment at the Drug Rehabilitation Center to help them rebuild their lives, stay away from drugs after recovery and earn a lawful livelihood. The initiative was launched here Wednesday on the instructions of the provincial government under the supervision of Secretary Social Welfare Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sharif Hussain, Director Social Welfare Department Muhammad Khalid Zaman, Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Muhammad Arif and the District Officer Social Welfare As part of the programme, a one-week training course on car tire puncture repair was formally inaugurated at the Narcotics Rehabilitation Center, marking the third day of rehabilitation activities.—APP

Uplift projects timely completion top priority

QUETTA: Balochistan's Secretary for Communications and Works, Babar Khan, has emphasized that the timely completion of ongoing development projects across the province is the government's foremost priority, warning that negligence will not be tolerated. He made these remarks while presiding over a review meeting that assessed progress on various schemes based on reports from Deputy Commissioners, Planning and Development, and Monitoring and Evaluation departments. The session was attended virtually by chief engineers,

superintending engineers, and district engineering officers from all six zones of the province. During the meeting, district officers provided detailed briefings on incomplete projects, outlining progress, financial challenges, and technical obstacles. Babar Khan acknowledged that ensuring timely completion remains a major challenge but stressed that effective utilization of available resources can help achieve this goal. He directed officials to accelerate work and avoid unnecessary delays, making it clear that officers found guilty of

negligence or inefficiency would face strict disciplinary action. He further announced that contractors failing to deliver on projects would face blacklisting and legal proceedings. "The government is committed to completing public welfare projects within the stipulated timeframe and will take all possible measures to achieve this," Khan asserted. The meeting underscored the administration's resolve to strengthen accountability and ensure that development schemes directly benefit the people of Balochistan.—APP

Affordable energy for eco zones discussed

PESHAWAR: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC), along with his senior team, visited Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) Head Office for a focused meeting with his counterpart and senior management of both organizations on provision of affordable and reliable electricity to Economic Zones across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. CEO KPEZDMC highlighted that competitively priced power is critical for industrial clients and investors. He emphasized the need to bridge the existing gap between power production and productive power consumption, in line with the provincial government's industrialization agenda. Both sides agreed that PEDO's hydropower potential can support KP's industrial competitiveness through practical, legally viable, and financially sustainable mechanisms. A focused group comprising KPEZDMC, PEDO, and industrialists as primary stakeholders was proposed to take the discussion forward. This engagement reflects KPEZDMC's continued effort to facilitate investors and convert KP's energy potential into industrial growth, investment, and job creation.—APP

Export of footwear rise 2.36% to \$ 142.573m

ISLAMABAD: The export of footwear from the country witnessed an increase of 2.36 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year. The country exported footwear worth US\$ 142.573 million during July-March 2025-26 as opposed to the export of US\$ 139.284 million during July-March 2024-25, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the footwear products, the exports of leather footwear witnessed a nominal decline of 2.69 percent, from US\$ 108.096 million to US\$ 105.192 million during the months under review. The exports of canvas footwear also decreased by 46.17 percent by going down from US\$ 2.045 million last year to US\$ 1.101 million, the PBS data revealed. However, the exports of all other footwear rose by 24.49 percent to US\$ 36.280 million from US\$ 29.143 million in the same months last year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the footwear exports decreased by 15.99 percent during the month of March 2026 as compared to the same month of last year. The footwear exports during March 2026 were recorded at \$10.281 million against the export of \$12.880 million in March 2025.—APP

COURT NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF SHAMA YASEEN JUDGE CIVIL/Family COURT RAWALPINDI

Application Guardian Ward act 1890 Mst. Mehwish versus Muhammad Faisal Awan Notice to Muhammad Faisal Awan son of Muhammad Yousaf Awan R/o House No. 529, Mohallah Amar Pura, Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 04-05-2026 at 8 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, it is hereby informed to the general public that the project titled "Lead Refinery Plant" proposed by Gold Earth SMC (Pvt.) Ltd., located at Plot No. B-18, Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Risalpur, District Nowshera, is scheduled for a Public Hearing 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. The EIA report is available for public review at the offices of EPA, Peshawar, the proponent, and the concerned district office.

Date: 14-05-2026 Time: 11:30 AM
Venue: Project Site, Plot No. B-18, EPZ Risalpur, Nowshera
Contact: Gold Earth SMC (Pvt.) Ltd. House No. 33, Street 26, F-6/2, Islamabad Ph: 0301-5299889

Transgender protection policy endorsement hailed

PESHAWAR: TransAction Alliance, Provincial Alliance for Transgender and Intersex Community, has welcomed formal endorsement of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection and Welfare Policy on Transgender and Intersex Persons, 2026, by Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Department. "This milestone marks a significant step forward for the protection, dignity, and inclusion of transgender and intersex persons in the province," comments Farzana Jan, President Transgender Community KP. In a press statement issued here on Wednesday, Farzana Shah said this is a historic moment for our community. We are deeply grateful to the Social Welfare Department, National Commission for Human Rights and our dedicated legal team in the Peshawar High Court, Mr Imran Advocate and

Mr Kashif Advocate, for standing with us throughout this journey. Their support ensured that our voices were heard and our rights were recognized. This policy gives us hope for a more secure and dignified future, Farzana added. "The development comes after a long and challenging process as an earlier draft of the policy had been rejected by the Law Department due to legal, religious and constitutional observations," says Qamar Naseem, drafter of the policy, who provided technical support to the National Commission for Human Rights and the Social Welfare Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This policy reflects a shared commitment to human rights, inclusion, and justice. This is a critical step towards ensuring that transgender and intersex persons






are protected, empowered, and included in all aspects of life, Qamar. He also mentioned that in response to objections by Law Department, TransAction Alliance filed a writ petition with the Peshawar High Court, seeking judicial guidance and protection of fundamental rights. Following directions from the Honorable Court and subsequent consultations, revisions were made to ensure that the policy aligns with constitutional provisions, welfare principles, and protections guaranteed by law. As reflected in the official communication, the Law Department has now endorsed moving forward, recognizing the State's obligation to safeguard the life, dignity, and rights of transgender and intersex persons, Qamar continued. Meanwhile, Rizwanullah Shah,

Coordinator, National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) said his organization stands committed to the rights of all citizens, with a special focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups. This policy is a strong step towards ensuring dignity, protection, and equal rights for transgender and intersex persons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The TransAction Alliance emphasized that this policy has the potential to become a game-changer by providing a structured framework for the protection, welfare, and rehabilitation of transgender and intersex persons across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Alliance calls upon all relevant government departments to ensure timely implementation, resource allocation, and meaningful engagement with the community to translate this policy into real impact on the ground.—DNA

The Smooth Moving Connection

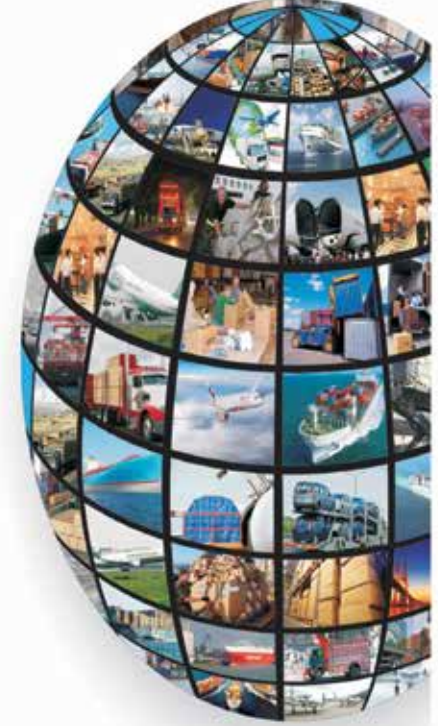
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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

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

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- Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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- MH.....5611116
- Dant Hospital...9270907-11
- CHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
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- Shifa International 4603666

Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

FPCCI chief calls on ambassador of Jordan

The meeting underscores a growing commitment to deepen trade linkages and remove barriers to investment. Both leaders agreed on the importance of continued dialogue to translate shared visions into tangible economic outcomes



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a move aimed at fostering stronger economic cooperation, Ambassador of Jordan, Maen Khreasat recently held a high-level meeting with the President of the Federation of Paki-

stan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), H.E. Atif Ikram Sheikh. Geographic Reference Describing the engagement as an "utmost pleasure," Mr. Khreasat welcomed his "dear brother" to discuss a wide range of business topics. The primary focus of the dialogue was to enhance mutual co-

operation, identify avenues for shared economic interest, and chart the way forward for sustainable growth between the respective business communities. "The discussions were highly productive," Mr. Khreasat noted. "We explored strategic opportunities to align our efforts for mutual benefit, leveraging the

strong institutional framework of the FPCCI." The meeting underscores a growing commitment to deepen trade linkages and remove barriers to investment. Both leaders agreed on the importance of continued dialogue to translate shared visions into tangible economic outcomes.

Pak-China livestock agreement on sheep and goat embryos signed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant milestone for Sino-Pak cooperation in advanced livestock biotechnology, the Chinese company Beijing Asia has signed an agreement with Pakistan's VitaGene Farms to produce 2,000 high-quality sheep and goat embryos during the first phase. These embryos will be sold commercially in the Pakistani market, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. The historic agreement was signed on April 28 in China between Dr. Jiang Yunji, Director of Beijing Asia, and Dr. Qaiser Shahzad, Head of VitaGene Farms. Beijing Asia owns over 10,000 sheep in China and has expertise in sheep embryo transfer. VitaGene Farms, an animal breeding company, owns state-of-the-art embryo produc-

tion and semen production units and provides services for embryo and semen production in Pakistan. In an interview with Gwadar Pro, Dr. Qaiser Shahzad explained that initially, embryos from sheep and goats will be imported from China. "Using Chinese technology, embryos will be collected from genetically superior female sheep and goats through in vivo methods. Hormonal treatments will then be applied to induce multiple ovulation, enhancing the chances of embryo transfer in Pakistani breeds, often at different developmental stages to optimize pregnancy rates," he added. China and Pakistan have already made significant strides in livestock collaboration. In 2024, Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan), a subsidiary of China's Royal Group, exported 10,000 embryos of the Nili Ravi buffalo - Pakistan's premium dairy breed known for high milk yields

- to its partner, Royal Cell Biotechnology Guangxi, in China. This marked the first-ever commercial export of buffalo embryos from Pakistan. The results in China have been impressive. The first embryo-derived calf was born in April 2025, marking a historic milestone in global buffalo reproduction. Since then, more than 3,000 embryo transfers have been completed, leading to the birth of over 400 calves, with another 500 pregnancies confirmed. In a further development, the Chinese company Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan) Co. Ltd has begun selling buffalo embryos produced through advanced Chinese IVF technology on a commercial basis in Pakistan. In collaboration with the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, these embryos are now being made available at an affordable price of Rs 30,000 each in local markets across Pakistan.

Junaid takes global stage at financial asset resolution summit

ISLAMABAD /: Junaid Abbasi, Managing Principal of S&S Law Firm, emerged as a key voice at the International Financial Asset Resolution Summit 2026, where he delivered a widely noted keynote address focusing on ethical and technology-driven approaches to financial recovery systems in emerging economies. Addressing a high-level gathering that included representatives from the International Monetary Fund and the Islamic Development Bank, alongside regulators and policymakers from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, Abbasi positioned Pakistan as a "living laboratory" for global financial inclusion challenges. He highlighted that with over 100 million unbanked adults, a rapidly expanding non-banking financial sector, and a strong Islamic finance base, Pakistan offers lessons with global relevance. "When we solve non-performing loan resolution in Pakistan, we are writing a playbook for frontier markets worldwide," he said. Abbasi outlined a three-pronged framework for what he termed "responsible resolution." The first principle emphasized borrower dignity, arguing that respectful engagement improves repayment outcomes and reduces litigation. The second focused on the ethical use of artificial intelligence, advocating for technology as a facilitator of inclusion rather than coercion. The third stressed the importance of regulatory collaboration, urging institutions to treat regulators as partners in building resilient financial ecosystems. His remarks sparked strong engagement from international delegates, with participants from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, East Africa, and South and Southeast Asia seeking deeper insights into S&S Law Firm's operational model and AI integration strategies.—DNA

PM for safe railway travel

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed Pakistan Railways to ensure public convenience and safe rail travel across its network, and to make railway freight services more effective and robust to boost economic activity. The prime minister, in a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Mohammad Hanif Abbasi, who called on him here, expressed satisfaction over the recent steps taken by Pakistan Railways to improve facilities for passengers. Besides discussing the ongoing development projects, the minister briefed the prime minister on the ministry's operational matters and the progress of various initiatives to improve infrastructure. They also exchanged views on other matters of mutual interest.—APP

Grant convocation ceremony at IMCG F-7/2

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model College for Girls (Postgraduate) F-7/2, hosted a grand 45th Convocation and Prize Distribution Ceremony on 29th April, 2026 to honour the academic achievements of graduates of BS Psychology, Chemistry, Economics, and Islamic Studies. The event celebrated the dedication and hard work of students from multiple academic sessions, including 2018-2022, 2019-2023, 2020-2024, and 2021-2025. The ceremony was graced by the Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar, who attended as the Chief Guest. Her presence served as an inspiration for the young minds in the audience. The ceremony formally commenced with a solemn academic procession comprising of the respected faculty, the Vice principals, Principal of the college and the Chief Guest. The Principal of the college, Prof. Dr. Fauzia Tanveer Sheikh, thanked the Chief Guest for her august presence at the Convocation Ceremony. She also presented the College Performance Report, highlighting the institution's academic progress, achievements, and commitment to excellence in higher education. The report showcased improvements in academic results, co-curricular engagement, and institutional development. Her parting words carried a message of hope for the bright future of the graduates. A total of 585 students have graduated to date and nearly 299 students were awarded their degrees during the ceremony, marking a significant milestone in their academic journey. Among them, 198 students earned positions on the Roll of Honours, reflecting outstanding scholastic performance. Additionally, 47 position holders were recognized for their exceptional achievements across the respective subjects and sessions. Rabia Khan, Sana Mughal, Khadija Imran and Sidra Shehzadi secured 1st positions and Roll of Honours in BS Economics in various sessions. Uzma, Leeza Batool Rafiqat, Aroofa Azeem and Muniba Naeem secured top positions and Roll of Honours in BS Psychology in sessions included in the convocation. Tayyaba Zia, Zonash Seher and Huda Khalid received top honours in BS Chemistry in different sessions. Lastly, Mahnoor Ahmed, Ayesha Arshad, Tayya-

ba Mushtaq and Zainab Ashraf took 1st positions and Roll of Honours in BS Islamic Studies in their respective sessions. Huda Khalid, a graduate of BS Chemistry, was given Dr. Azra Raza Award along with a cash prize of Rs. 50,000 for achieving a perfect CGPA in her degree. Service Awards were also bestowed upon 12 committed staff members of the college who had completed 25 years of dedicated service. The Minister of State for Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar, addressed the Convocation and congratulated the graduates and their parents. She acknowledged the efforts of the college administration, especially of Prof. Dr. Fauzia Tanveer Sheikh, in making

IMCG (PG) F-7/2 Ibd. a premier educational institution. She emphasized upon the importance of educating the young girls for the sake of national development. She appreciated the role of the parents in shaping the future of their daughters. Ms. Wajiha Qamar advised the graduates to stay away from mediocrity in whatever role they choose to undertake in their lives. She encouraged the graduates to contribute positively to our country by pursuing knowledge and becoming a morally sound person. The Principal of the college presented the college insignia to the Chief Guest, Ms. Wajiha Qamar as a mark of respect and gratitude.



Naqvi orders acceleration of public projects

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting chaired by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reviewed the progress of ongoing public projects in Islamabad and assessed new development initiatives during a marathon four-hour session. The meeting approved the complete digitalization of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) records. Mohsin Naqvi directed that the process must be completed within 120 days, enabling citizens to check the updated status of their applications online without any hassle. The Interior Minister made it clear that no illegal housing society will be allowed to operate in Islamabad under any circumstances. Briefing the meeting, officials announced that three international companies have been pre-qualified for the construction of the new Convention Centre, Expo Centre, and Islamabad Arena, with instructions to ensure completion before the upcoming SCO Summit. It was also decided to allocate land in F-6 for a new Khidmat Markaz to facilitate public services.

To enhance recreational facilities in the capital, Mohsin Naqvi ordered the swift launch of several modern leisure projects including Top Golf, hot air balloon rides, zip line, water park, and an amusement park. He also highlighted the importance of promoting sports activities through the establishment of state-of-the-art sports complexes. The Interior Minister sought a comprehensive plan to develop F-9 Park on the model of Hyde Park and to introduce recreational facilities near Shahdara Dam. He also directed immediate commencement of beautification and lighting work on Expressway and Club Road. Mohsin Naqvi congratulated CDA Chairman Sohail Ashraf and Member Estate Zaman Wattoo for exposing a major corruption scandal within the CDA, stressing that no leniency will be shown to anyone involved in corruption.—DNA

Briefs

SSP Qazi Ali Raza chairs meeting

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza chaired a meeting of City Zone officers to review performance and devise strategies against crime. An official told APP on Wednesday that SDPOs and SHOs attended the meeting, where performance of each officer was reviewed. SSP Qazi issued directions to ensure indiscriminate action against criminal elements and active gangs. Officers were directed to keep patrolling units active in the field and ensure timely response to incidents. Emphasis was laid on improving coordination and enhancing operational effectiveness to curb crime.—APP

IGP meets GB IGP, DG NCCIA discuss policing

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi held a meeting with Inspector General of Police Gilgit-Baltistan Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and Director General National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Syed Khuram Ali at the Central Police Office. An official told APP on Wednesday that matters related to policing, inter-agency coordination and professional cooperation were discussed during the meeting. He said the participants exchanged views on enhancing coordination to effectively tackle emerging security challenges. IGP Rizvi emphasized the importance of collaboration between law enforcement agencies to ensure public safety and improve service delivery.—APP

NPO to organize webinar

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar on "Strategic Conflict Management" on 30 April, 2026 (tomorrow). The session aims to equip participants with practical tools to handle workplace conflicts effectively by understanding the root causes, managing emotions, and improving communication skills, said NPO document shared here on Wednesday. The course will cover key areas including responding to conflict with confidence, preparing for difficult conversations, and resolving conflicts successfully.—APP

Aleem, Hanif discuss inter-ministerial coop

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan Wednesday visited the Ministry of Railways and held a detailed meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi to discuss matters of mutual interest and inter-ministerial cooperation. Upon his arrival, Hanif Abbasi warmly received Abdul Aleem Khan at the ministry, said a news release. During the meeting, both ministers exchanged views on enhancing cooperation between the railways and communications sectors, with a focus on improving the country's transport infrastructure and introducing reforms for better public service delivery.—APP

PIDE explores Pak's role in shaping global peace

A central theme of the seminar was Pakistan's remarkable diplomatic reinvention- from a country battered by two decades of the war on terrorism to an active mediator in the US-Iran conflict, earning rare public praise from Washington

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a thought-provoking seminar titled "Economics of War & Interdependencies: Iran, Pakistan, & The Middle East" at its campus in Islamabad. The seminar brought together distinguished speakers for a compelling discussion on the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, Pakistan's role as a peacemaker, and the interconnections between security, economic policy, and global diplomacy. The event featured Syed Hassan Akbar, Chairman of the Strategic Policy Planning Cell at the National Security Division, and Sarah Zaman, Senior Journalist for Global Affairs. Moderated by Fasi Zaka, a well-known commentator and policy expert, the seminar delved deep into the changing role of Pakistan in global security and economic affairs. Syed Hassan Akbar addressed the evolving nature of national security, noting how the traditional divide between security policy and economic policy has

largely disappeared. He explained that as global interdependencies have increased, both military and economic tools are now being used in tandem to pursue strategic and political objectives – a shift that has greatly influenced Pakistan's national security framework, as reflected in the country's first comprehensive National Security Policy released in 2022. He cited US-China strategic competition, the Huawei and TikTok cases, and sweeping tariff wars as examples of geoeconomics being deployed as strategic coercion. Mr. Akbar also spoke about the transition from a unipolar world to a multipolar one, cautioning that multipolarity does not automatically bring stability. He projected at least a decade or two of global turbulence before any new equilibrium sets in. For Pakistan, he argued, this transition presents an opportunity: the ability to navigate great-power competition through strategic flexibility and a deliberate policy of "no camp politics" – maintaining deep ties with China (its largest investor and defence technology partner) while preserving a productive relationship with the United States (its largest export market and key influence

in multilateral financial institutions). In the second half of the seminar, Sarah Zaman discussed the growing influence of media and technology, particularly in shaping public opinion during global conflicts like those in Iran and Gaza. She highlighted the role of social media in democratizing information – noting that troop movements and military logistics are now traceable through open-source platforms – and pointed out the challenges this poses for governments and news outlets trying to ensure the credibility and accuracy of their reporting. The Iran internet blockade, now in its second month, was cited as evidence of how seriously states are treating the social media battlespace. A central theme of the seminar was Pakistan's remarkable diplomatic reinvention – from a country battered by two decades of the war on terrorism to an active mediator in the US-Iran conflict, earning rare public praise from Washington. However, both speakers stressed that diplomatic salience alone cannot substitute for structural reform. Ms. Zaman observed that Pakistan has historically positioned itself as a "glorified highway rather than a factory," questioning how transit-route di-

plomacy can translate into productive economic capacity without investment in manufacturing, labour force development, and population management. She cautioned that "flattery and hope are not strategy," and that sustaining Washington's goodwill beyond the current administration would require deep structural reforms. The seminar concluded with a stimulating exchange of ideas between the speakers and the audience on the concrete economic dividends of Pakistan's mediation role. Syed Hassan Akbar outlined several near-term gains: the arrival of the first US LNG cargo diversifying Pakistan's energy supply; growing US interest in Pakistan's critical minerals sector; Washington's support for Pakistan's latest IMF programme; new land transit revenues from routes opened with Iran; and the potential revival of the stalled \$18 billion Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline should Iran sanctions be lifted, which could open transformative trade and energy corridors through Iran and Turkey into Central Asia and Europe. He also emphasized the need for Pakistan to continue fostering regional connectivity through initiatives like CPEC, despite the hurdles posed by regional instability and sanctions.

Ten busted, over 3.5 kg hashish, 82 lit liquor seized

RAWALPINDI: Police on Wednesday arrested three drug suppliers and recovered more than 3.5 kilograms of hashish in separate operations. Police said that Bani Police Station recovered 1.38 kg of hashish from a suspect, Race Course Police Station recovered 1.2 kg, while New Town Police Station seized 1.1 kg and registered separate cases. Police said operations against drug trafficking would continue. Meanwhile, seven individuals were also arrested with 82 litres of liquor recovered during operations in different areas. According to the details, Ganjmandi Police Station arrested five suspects and seized 66 litres of liquor, Mandrah Police Station recovered 10 litres from one accused, while Race Course Police Station seized 6 litres from another suspect.—APP

CDL earns WHO pre-qualification

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (NHSR&C) announced that the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) Karachi, a statutory facility of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), has secured World Health Organization (WHO) pre-qualification, marking a major milestone for the country's healthcare system. The certification confirmed that DRAP's testing services meet stringent global standards, ensuring that medicines assessed at the facility are safe, effective and of high quality. Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal congratulated DRAP leadership and the CDL technical team, calling the achievement a key step in advancing regulatory excellence and health sector reforms. He described the development as a "historic moment," highlighting the government's shift toward a preventive, quality-focused healthcare system. He said ensuring globally compliant drug testing serves as a critical safeguard for public health. The minister added that the recognition would also strengthen Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry by enhancing international credibility and supporting the "Made in Pakistan" brand in global markets. The ministry reiterated its commitment to modernizing the national regulatory framework and supporting DRAP in achieving WHO global benchmarking, aiming to curb substandard and counterfeit medicines.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Geopolitical tensions reshaping maritime trade in Indian Ocean Region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), organized a seminar titled: "The Impact of the Current Geopolitical Situation on Maritime Trade in the Indian Ocean Region." The speakers included: Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed (Retd.) Chairman KPT; Rear Admiral Syed Faisal Shah (Retd.), Defence & Security Analyst; Prof. Dr. Adam Saud, former Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University; Commodore Dr. Baber Bilal Haider (Retd.), Director IOS, NIMA, and Rear Admiral Javid Iqbal, President NIMA. Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, was the Chief Guest. The seminar was moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI. Chief Guest Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, in his address, highlighted that the current geopolitical situation serves as an important lesson for Pakistan. He emphasized that the impact of such crises must be analyzed across all sectors, not just maritime. Referring to the maritime sector, he stated that several long-pending reforms, projects, and legislative amendments were fast-tracked in response to the situation. He also highlighted the increased focus on foreign transshipment, noting that Karachi Port played a key role in ensuring operational success. A package of fiscal incentives offering up to 60 percent concessions in port-related charges was introduced to attract foreign-flagged transshipment vessels to Karachi Port and boost shipping activity. He concluded by stressing the need for Pakistan to strengthen its inter-

national capacity so that it does not remain dependent on external actors. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman of the ISSI Board of Governors, in his welcome remarks, stated that the recent conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran has severely disrupted global maritime trade. The Strait of Hormuz, through which flows 20 percent of the world's oil and a quarter of its liquefied natural gas, has remained functionally closed to commercial traffic for over five weeks. War-risk insurance has been withdrawn, and the International Energy Agency has described the disruption as exceeding the impact of the 1970s oil crises. He noted that the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), already highly contested, has been transformed into a theatre of active geo-economic competition. The crisis has exposed the fragility of supply chains, energy dependencies, and maritime governance frameworks long considered stable. He highlighted that to emerge through the current challenges, Pakistan must move from reactive crisis management to proactive maritime strategy, leveraging Gwadar as the region's alternative transshipment and energy transit hub. Pakistan must actively participate in the construction of an inclusive cooperative regional maritime governance architecture to meet the new challenges. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa highlighted that Pakistan, owing to its unique geo-strategic location, has emerged as a key mediator in efforts to defuse tensions. He added that Pakistan continues to play an active diplomatic role in bridging the gap between Washington and Tehran to prevent further escalation. Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed (Retd.) emphasized that the Indian Ocean Region has been reshaped by three simultaneous pressures: the near-paralysis of the Strait of Hormuz, disruptions in Red Sea traffic, and renewed great-power competition over energy flows. He further noted that Pakistan's response to the crisis has been significant.

Running event at Dasu HPP brings Pakistani, Chinese workers closer

ISLAMABAD: In a move highlighting its broader role beyond infrastructure development, a running competition was organized at the Kass Camp of the Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) in Upper Kohistan, aimed at strengthening ties between Pakistani and Chinese workers. The event, held at a camp of China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) under the umbrella of WAPDA, brought together employees from diverse backgrounds to promote teamwork, discipline, and a shared sense of purpose at the project site. Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Participants competed in a friendly yet spirited environment, demonstrating a commitment not only to physical well-being but also to building stronger interpersonal connections within the workforce. Organizers noted that the initiative was designed to foster mutual understanding and improve coordination between local and international staff working on the strategic hydropower project. The competition concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony, where winners were recognized for their performance, sportsmanship, and dedication. CGGC remains actively engaged in promoting a healthy work culture through extracurricular activities and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, contributing to a more cohesive and motivated workforce. DHPP stands as Pakistan's largest hydropower initiative in terms of annual energy generation, reflecting its strategic importance and long-term national benefit. The project is being developed in two stages, with the total installed capacity reaching 4,320 MW and electricity generation expected to commence in 2028. Stage I, currently under construction, will contribute 2,160 MW and supply around 12 billion units of clean, affordable energy to the national grid. Beyond power generation, the project has already spurred socio-economic development through 31 completed schemes under the local area development program and the creation of approximately 7,000 jobs during construction, reinforcing its role as both an energy and community development milestone.—DNA

Ahsan for science-driven strategy to ensure water security

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday outlined a comprehensive, multi-pronged national strategy to tackle Pakistan's growing water crisis, urging a unified, science-based approach to ensure long-term water security. Addressing a Round Table Consultation on National Water Security under "Uraan Pakistan," the minister said the country's water challenge was no longer limited to scarcity but also stemmed from persistent mismanagement. "Sometimes we face extreme shortage and at other times destructive floods, therefore, water management is as critical as water availability," he remarked. Calling for a shift beyond "traditional statements," Ahsan stressed the need for a national consensus on water conservation and a cohesive water security policy.

"This challenge cannot be solved in silos, whether between federation and provinces, sectors or regions. It has now become a matter of national security," he said, warning that external pressures, including attempts to use water as a strategic tool, had further heightened vulnerabilities. The minister emphasized that Pakistan's response must be "national, united, scientific and future-proof," identifying key pillars of a multi-dimensional strategy. Highlighting limited storage capacity as a major concern, he mentioned that Pakistan could store water for only around 90 days, far below global benchmarks. He called for a national agreement on expanding water reservoirs through large, medium and small dams, recharge and delay-action dams, floodwater reservoirs, hill torrent management and urban rainwater harvesting. "New water reserves should be seen as the

foundation of national survival, not political debate," he added. On water use efficiency, Ahsan pointed out that agriculture consumed the bulk of water but with low productivity due to outdated irrigation practices. He proposed a national water efficiency and conservation mission, including modernization of irrigation systems, laser land leveling, drip and sprinkler technologies, digital irrigation, wastewater recycling and transparent water accounting. "We must adopt the principle of more value per drop," he said, linking water use reforms with crop patterns, subsidies and pricing policies. The minister also flagged the unchecked exploitation of groundwater, describing it as a "silent lifeline" under threat. He called for a national groundwater governance framework encompassing aquifer mapping, recharge systems, regulation of extraction, solar tube well

management and community-based conservation. "The falling water table and rising pollution are creating a silent storm beneath our feet," he warned. Underscoring the role of technology, Ahsan stressed the need to transition towards data-driven water management. He proposed real-time telemetry, satellite monitoring, artificial intelligence, precision agriculture, smart metering, flood modeling and early warning systems. "Pakistan needs a reliable, real-time national water information system to guide decisions on river flows, groundwater levels, reservoirs and climate risks," he said. He further highlighted climate resilience as a key pillar, calling for improved preparedness against droughts, glacier melt and hill torrents, along with better drainage systems and land protection measures within a national resilience framework.—DNA

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 07 Issue:172

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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Gaza's Board of Peace a monument of broken promises

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

Gaza's Board of Peace, a body that US President Donald Trump created with much fanfare more than six months ago, is proving to be a monument of broken promises for the 2 million barely surviving inhabitants of the Strip. Trump stepped in to end two years of what most of the world described as a genocide being perpetrated by Israel against Gazans following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. His Gaza plan, through which the Board of Peace was established, called for an immediate ceasefire, an exchange of living and dead Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners of war, and the immediate resumption of full humanitarian aid. A Civil-Military Coordination Center under Adm. Brad Cooper was established to facilitate the flow of aid. In addition, an International Stabilization Force was to be deployed earlier this year, while the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza was to relocate to the enclave and assume responsibility for its administrative affairs. But none of what was promised – and endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution – has been fulfilled. One party to the deal, Israel, has taken it upon itself to derail, delay and obstruct the entire process. What the people of Gaza find themselves confronting today is a state of no-peace, no-war, while the Israeli military actively violates the ceasefire daily. One party to the deal, Israel, has taken it upon itself to derail, delay and obstruct the entire process Israel has reportedly carried out strikes and bombardments across the narrow corridor where 2 million Gazans are confined more than 2,000 times since last October. The most recent figures put the number of Palestinians killed at more than 800, with some 2,000 injured, since the ceasefire came into effect. Israel has established a so-called Yellow Line as a separation boundary and now maintains effective control over 50 to 55 percent of the Strip, including large swaths of Rafah, Khan Younis and northern Gaza. In the areas under its control, Israel has carried out systematic infrastructure destruction and dug a trench along the separation line to prevent the return of displaced Palestinians. A joint EU-UN assessment found that two years of hostilities caused Gaza's development to leap back by an estimated 77 years. Beyond the relentless killing, which has intensified sharply in the past week, Israel has barred members of the national administrative committee from entering the enclave, while restricting the flow of humanitarian aid to about 20 percent of what was agreed. Aid agencies, including UNRWA, have been prevented from operating in Gaza and those still present report shortages of food and medicine. The situation in Gaza is so dire that, with rising tempera-



tures, the population is now suffering from waterborne diseases, pollution and pest infestations. UNRWA reports surging cases of ectoparasitic infection and chickenpox amid critical shortages of medication and pesticides, with rodent infestations spreading across residential areas and displacement camps. A report by Doctors Without Borders has accused Israel of using access to water as a weapon against Palestinians, documenting cases of people being injured or even killed while attempting to reach water sources. Even before the eruption of the Iran war at the end of February, attention on Gaza's plight had already begun to wane. Warnings and appeals from the UN and other agencies have gone unheeded. The Board of Peace has not convened once to review implementation of the agreed steps and neither Trump nor his aides have spoken publicly about Gaza since US envoy Steve Witkoff announced in January the launch of stage two of the ceasefire. Since then, not a single one of the plan's goals has advanced. All the early optimism surrounding the plan's prospects has since evaporated. Even before the eruption of the Iran war, attention on Gaza's plight had already begun to wane. The eruption of the US-Israeli war on Iran has further complicated matters. The crises spawned by that conflict – the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a global energy crunch, a military buildup across the region, the prospect of renewed hostilities, the volatile situation in southern Lebanon and faltering nuclear talks – have kept Gaza's ordeal firmly in the shadows. Israel has exploited the current environment to make life in Gaza unbearable. Even the key intermediaries – Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar – have shifted their focus toward resolving the US-Iran conflict amid its regional fallout. Meanwhile, the death toll in Gaza continues its climb. The confirmed Palestinian death toll as of this month stands at more than 72,500, including 20,000-plus children, 270 journalists, 120 academics and at least 560 humanitarian aid workers. At the International Court of Justice, proceedings in the South African genocide case against Israel are moving at a glacial pace. In March, Israel and a number of other countries, including the US, submitted counter memorials and interventions to the court, to which South Africa will respond. The court may hear rebuttals by year's end and it is clear the case will drag on for many months more. Even then, Israel will almost certainly reject the ruling. The International Criminal Court, meanwhile, has been preoccupied with a sexual misconduct case against Prosecutor Karim Khan, who was finally cleared of all charges last month. Khan – who issued an arrest warrant in November 2024 against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes – had been on leave to contest the allegations. Now that he has returned, there is speculation that a new round of arrest warrants may be issued against senior Israeli ministers. Trump's Board of Peace was supposed to halt the killing of Palestinians and create the conditions for a political process to restore life to the enclave and begin reconstruction. The US president secured the backing of prominent Arab and international figures for his controversial initiative. Yet, here we are, mired in a gray zone where neither the UN nor its agencies are permitted to intervene in an ongoing conflict, while the Board of Peace is nowhere to be found. This suits Israel perfectly. Its daily violations continue unchecked and unpunished, while the world's attention is trained elsewhere. The question that demands an answer is: How much longer must the people of Gaza endure the most horrific atrocities amid a peace plan that is terminally paralyzed?

The challenge before Rana Sikandar Hayat

DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER



Rana Sikandar Hayat's political identity is closely tied to Pattoki, a region often described as politically vibrant yet developmentally uneven. His emergence from this locality is not merely incidental; rather, it reflects the enduring importance of constituency politics in Punjab. Leaders who maintain a strong connection with their electorate often carry that sensibility into provincial governance. In Hayat's case, his familiarity with grassroots issues

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

than managerial competence. It demands a vision that addresses deeper structural inequalities—urban-rural divides, gender disparities, and the persistent gap between public and private schooling systems. In this regard, the expectations from Rana Sikandar Hayat remain high. His ability to move beyond administrative reforms and articulate a long-term educational philosophy will likely define his legacy. Another dimension of his role is political balancing. As a well-known figure in Pattoki, Hayat carries the weight of local expectations alongside provincial responsibilities. Constituents often expect tangible development new schools, upgraded facilities, and employment opportunities. Balancing these demands with broader policy priorities is a delicate task, one that tests the political acumen of any minister. In Punjab's highly competitive political environment, maintaining this equilibrium is crucial for both governance and electoral viability. Furthermore, the education sector in Pakistan is increasingly influenced by global trends. From digital learning platforms to curriculum reforms aligned with international standards, the pressure to modernise is constant. Rana Sikandar Hayat's ministry must navigate these demands while remaining sensitive to local contexts. The introduction of technology in classrooms, for instance, cannot succeed without addressing basic infrastructural gaps such as electricity and internet access in rural areas. There is also the question of curriculum and ideological orientation. Education in Pakistan has long been a site of contestation, reflecting broader societal debates about identity, history, and modernity. Any attempt at reform inevitably invites scrutiny from various quarters—political, religious, and civil society. How Rana Sikandar Hayat approaches this sensitive domain will be indicative of his political skill and policy clarity. Supporters of the minister point to his accessibility and engagement with stakeholders as a positive sign. Teachers, administrators, and local representatives often emphasise the importance of a responsive

leadership style in addressing day-to-day challenges. If sustained, this approach could help bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, a persistent weakness in the education sector.

Yet, the scale of the challenge cannot be overstated. Punjab's education system serves millions of students across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Issues such as dropout rates, quality of instruction, and resource allocation require sustained attention and innovative solutions. Short-term interventions, while necessary, are insufficient without a coherent long-term strategy. In assessing Rana Sikandar Hayat's performance, it is important to recognise the broader institutional constraints within which he operates. The education ministry does not function in isolation; it is part of a larger governance ecosystem that includes finance, planning, and local government departments. Effective coordination among these entities is essential for meaningful reform. The minister's ability to navigate this administrative landscape will significantly influence outcomes. Ultimately, the significance of Rana Sikandar Hayat's role extends beyond his individual political trajectory. As Punjab's education minister, he occupies a position that directly impacts the province's human capital development. Education, after all, is not merely a sectoral concern; it is the foundation upon which economic growth, social cohesion, and democratic stability are built. For Pattoki, his leadership represents a source of local pride and political visibility. For Punjab, it is an opportunity to advance educational reform at a critical juncture. Whether this opportunity is fully realised will depend on a combination of vision, execution, and political will. Rana Sikandar Hayat's tenure offers a telling case study of contemporary governance in Punjab where local roots intersect with provincial responsibilities, and where the promise of reform must contend with the realities of implementation. The coming years will reveal whether his stewardship of the education ministry can translate ambition into lasting impact.

Rethinking R&D Priorities in Pakistani Universities

DR. JAM MUHAMMAD ZAFAR

The evidence stares back from multiple angles. Pakistan spends merely 0.16 per cent of GDP on research and development, negligible beside India's 0.8 per cent, China's 2.6 per cent, or South Korea's commitment exceeding five per cent. Our universities produce over 7,000 research papers annually with 28 per cent appearing in top-tier journals, yet Pakistan files fewer than 1,000 patents yearly and ranks 91st on the Global Innovation Index 2024. These numbers indicate systemic failure to align research with national needs

FOR decades, we have measured the health of Pakistan's higher education research by a single metric: the number of publications. We celebrate when universities climb international rankings and when PhD production increases yearly. Yet a troubling silence hangs over more fundamental inquiries: what actual problems have we solved? What industries have we transformed? What innovations have emerged from our laboratories to touch ordinary Pakistani lives? The uncomfortable truth is that our research priorities have been profoundly misdirected, and national progress has paid the price. The evidence stares back from multiple angles. Pakistan spends merely 0.16 per cent of GDP on research and development, negligible beside India's 0.8 per cent, China's 2.6 per cent, or South Korea's commitment exceeding five per cent. Our universities produce over 7,000 research papers annually with 28 per cent appearing in top-tier journals, yet Pakistan files fewer than 1,000 patents yearly and ranks 91st on the Global Innovation Index 2024. These numbers indicate systemic failure to align research with national needs. Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal recently articulated this dilemma, expressing concern that much of Pakistan's research remains confined to journals without contributing to national development. He described this phenomenon as "academic inflation": like currency printed without backing, research without application loses value even as quantity increases. His vision that universities must evolve into "innovation engines, startup launchpads and policy think tanks" represents precisely the reorientation our circumstances demand. The Higher Education Commission has begun responding with initiatives signalling changing priorities. The HEC has directed universities to introduce artificial intelligence as a compulsory subject in all degree programmes from Fall 2026, recognising that Pakistan must prepare youth for coming technological demands. The government's plan to invest significantly in AI by 2030 and establish national research centres represents strategic investment long absent from our research landscape. The HEC recently showcased over 100 locally developed technology solutions, demonstrating that Pakistani researchers can produce commercially

viable innovations when properly directed. Yet the deeper pathology lies in university-industry relationships. Less than 20 per cent of university research is utilised by industry, reflecting a lack of applied research and private sector distrust. The private sector contributes less than 10 per cent of total R&D investment, and 93 per cent of firms conduct no research whatsoever. Industry relies on imported technology, increasing production costs and foreign dependence, while researchers remain unaware of practical challenges facing the economy. Research without industry engagement produces knowledge nobody needs, while industry starved of research input limps along with outdated methods. Recognising this gap, the HEC has strengthened mechanisms for bridging academia and industry. The establishment of Offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialization at universities facilitates technology transfer and industry partnerships. The HEC has formed high-level committees to develop a Five-Year Reform Roadmap, focusing on strengthening government-academia-industry linkages through the Triple Helix model and creating new accreditation councils for emerging fields like Artificial Intelligence and Renewable Energy. The Pakistan Engineering Council has deployed 600 engineering graduates in over 40 organisations nationwide, creating a structured framework for closing the academia-industry gap. Punjab University's Research, Innovation and Commercialisation Policy 2026 offers a compelling example of reoriented priorities. The policy permits faculty spin-off companies, provides institutional support for commercial ventures, and establishes transparent revenue-sharing through which researchers receive between fifty and eighty per cent of royalty income from products they develop. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali describes this initiative as converting research excellence into national benefit. The Ministry of Science and Technology has sought Rs 10 billion for 38 projects under the Public Sector Development Programme for 2026-27, including NUST's Chip Design Centre and Surface Engineering Centre for advanced materials research. These initiatives demonstrate growing recognition that targeted investment in strategic areas can yield substan-

tial returns. Yet the ministry's development budget was reduced by Rs 700 million this year, prompting warnings that cutting research funds at a critical time could hamper national progress. The fault, however, does not lie solely with academics. Our university promotion systems overwhelmingly reward publications rather than patents, prototypes, or market impact. A faculty member who publishes advances their career; one who develops commercially viable technology often finds their work relegated to hobby status. Until performance evaluation aligns with national development priorities, researchers will continue producing what earns promotion rather than what creates impact. HEC's reform initiatives, including faculty salary revisions and efforts to combat brain drain, must accelerate if we expect priorities to shift. We must also confront uncomfortable questions about research quality and sectoral imbalances. Funding remains concentrated in mature sectors with limited innovation potential: agriculture received average annual funding of Rs 19.7 billion from 2015 to 2025 but displayed only 2.38 per cent growth, while the IT sector received one-sixth of that allocation and recorded nine times higher growth. Strategic allocation toward sectors with higher innovation margins proves more effective than mere spending. Additionally, plagiarism and unethical practices have undermined the credibility of Pakistani research. If we pursue new priorities while tolerating old corruptions, we will merely displace problems rather than solving them. Encouraging developments suggest priorities may finally be changing. Minister Iqbal's call for transformation "in emergency mode" reflects appropriate urgency given global technological change. HEC's Dr Zia Ul Haq has reiterated commitment to bridging academia and industry, emphasising that innovation depends on strong partnerships between all stakeholders. The question remaining is whether urgency will translate into sustained action, whether promising policies announced today will yield transformed practices tomorrow, and whether we will finally prioritise not how much research we produce, but what difference that research makes. The answer will determine not merely the future of our universities but the future of Pakistan itself.

Briefs

'Not a punishment': Govt...

FROM PAGE 01
favour of convening the meeting, he would not have attended it, adding that a "wrong impression" was being created about the proceedings. Commenting on individual cases, he said Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz, who belongs to Sindh, was being transferred back to her home province, and added that rotation of judges was necessary to avoid groupings. "It is common knowledge that roots are formed," he said, referring to prolonged postings, while adding that the government had not "cut the roots of the judiciary" and that no restrictions had been placed on judicial independence.

Govt notifies transfer of IHC judges

FROM PAGE 01
The move comes a day after JCP approved the transfer of three judges to other high courts under Article 200 of the Constitution. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) and JCP Chairman Yahya Afridi chaired the commission meeting, which was convened by the JCP secretary in exercise of powers conferred by clause (22) of Article 175A of the Constitution. The meeting was attended by Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Mumib Akhtar, Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, representative from Pakistan Bar Council Ahsen Bhoon, Farooq H Naek, Barrister Ali Zafar and Barrister Gohar Ali Khan.

Israel, Lebanon ceasefire...

FROM PAGE 01
towns and warnings for evacuations, while intercepting drones allegedly launched by Hezbollah. The ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, initially brokered in mid-April as part of wider diplomatic efforts tied to the Iran conflict, has been repeatedly tested by violations and mutual accusations. Analysts warn that without coordinated international diplomacy, the truce risks collapsing, potentially reigniting full-scale conflict across multiple fronts in the Middle East.

Trump approval rating...

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if the incident, in which a gunman was stopped before he could enter a hall where Trump was dining, might affect people's views of the US leader. Federal prosecutors have charged the accused shooter with attempting to assassinate the president. Trump's standing with the US public has trended lower since taking office in January 2025, when 47% of Americans gave him a thumbs-up. His popularity has taken a beating since the US and Israel launched a war against Iran on February 28, which has led to a surge in gasoline prices. Only 22% of poll respondents approved of Trump's performance on the cost of living, down from 25% in the prior Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Trump rejects...

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Iran's oil exports, with estimates suggesting daily revenue losses for Tehran in the range of \$400-500 million. Trump has previously described Iran as being in a "state of collapse" and claimed the regime is urgently seeking relief from the maritime restrictions. The Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil trade normally passes, has been at the center of the crisis. Iran's initial closure of the strait in response to US and Israeli strikes triggered a sharp spike in global energy prices. The US responded with its own blockade targeting Iranian ports and vessels, creating a tense dual-blockade situation that continues to disrupt international shipping.

PFF Chief Holds Key Global Talks Ahead of FIFA Congress

The CFA chief praised the strong diplomatic ties between Pakistan and China, calling the two nations "Iron Brothers." China also offered assistance in futsal training, while both federations agreed to hold detailed discussions after the FIFA World Cup

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) president Syed Mohsen Gilani led a high-level delegation in a series of important meetings with global football officials in Vancouver, Canada, ahead of the 76th FIFA Congress scheduled for Thursday. The PFF delegation, which also includes vice-president Hafiz Zakullah and Chief Operating Officer Shahid Niaz Khokhar, attended the 36th AFC Congress before engaging with senior representatives from several football federations. During the meetings, the delegation held talks with German Football Association (DFB) president Bernd Neundorff, Canada Soccer president Peter Augurso, Chinese Football Association (CFA) president Song Kai and Tajikistan Football Federation (TFF) vice-president Dzhaliyov Iskandar. The DFB assured Pakistan of full cooperation in key areas including coach education and women's football development. Neundorff also invited Pakistani players and coaches to visit Germany and benefit from its advanced football system. In discussions with Canada Soccer, Gilani thanked the hosts for their hospitality during the FIFA Congress. Both sides explored cooperation in grassroots football, coaching courses and a possible exhibition series, while the PFF also offered support in engaging the Pakistani community in Canada. The CFA chief praised the strong diplomatic ties between Pakistan and China, calling the two nations "Iron Brothers." China also offered assistance in futsal training, while both federations agreed



to hold detailed discussions after the FIFA World Cup. Meanwhile, the Tajikistan Football Federation offered support in referee training, goalkeeper coaching and women's football development. The meetings

formed part of an extensive diplomatic and development programme by the PFF delegation, which is expected to continue talks with several other federations to strengthen football growth in Pakistan.

Rs1.17bn sports projects planned

The document further outlines plans for the construction of 10 pedal courts costing Rs126.804 million, with a proposed allocation of Rs100 million, while Rs87.559 million has been estimated for the provision of 500 sports cycles across schools and colleges, with Rs50 million proposed for the upcoming year

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has proposed a series of new sports development initiatives worth approximately

Rs1.17 billion for educational institutions in the capital under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2026-27. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, multiple projects aimed at promoting physical activity and enhancing modern sports facilities in federal schools and colleges in Islamabad have been included in the upcoming fiscal plan. The largest initiative costs Rs368.598 million for the construction of three indoor swimming pools, with a proposed demand of Rs450 million for 2026-27. Another major initiative involves the construction of 15 futsal grounds, estimated to cost Rs359.986 million, with Rs225 million proposed for the next fiscal year alone. In addition, the government plans to establish 50 e-sports laboratories in federal educational

stitutions at an estimated cost of Rs229.650 million, reflecting a growing focus on digital and competitive gaming infrastructure. An amount of Rs200 million has been proposed for this initiative in 2026-27. The document further outlines plans for the construction of 10 pedal courts costing Rs126.804 million, with a proposed allocation of Rs100 million, while Rs87.559 million has been estimated for the provision of 500 sports cycles across schools and colleges, with Rs50 million proposed for the upcoming year. The proposed projects signal the government's intent to enhance sports infrastructure and extracurricular opportunities in federal educational institutions and are expected to contribute to youth engagement, talent development, and improved physical well-being, once approved and implemented. - APP

S. Korea, Qatar to push for deeper cooperation

SEOUL: Trade ministers of South Korea and Qatar agreed Wednesday to expand the two countries' cooperation in advanced industries, including artificial intelligence (AI) transformation of the manufacturing sector, semiconductor and biohealth, a Seoul ministry said. Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo met with his Qatar counterpart, Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Sayed, in Seoul to discuss ways to expand economic and investment cooperation between the two nations, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources. The ministers concurred to bolster bilateral cooperation in advanced industries by integrating Seoul's manufacturing capabilities and Qatar's capital and strong commitment to industrial diversification, the ministry said. In particular, they discussed possible cooperation in the manufacturing AI and robotics sectors with Korea's push for the manufacturing AI transformation (MAX) initiative. - APP

Annual number of new hepatitis B infections down 32% globally

The WHO said 287 million people were living with chronic hepatitis B or C infections in 2024, while treatment gaps remain severe, with fewer than 5% of people having chronic hepatitis B receiving treatment

GENEVA: The annual number of new hepatitis B infections has fallen 32% globally, while hepatitis C-related deaths have dropped 12%, the World Health Organization (WHO) said, calling the progress significant but insufficient to meet elimination goals. According to the WHO's 2026 Global Hepatitis Report, the decline reflects sustained global efforts, though viral hepatitis still caused 1.34 million deaths in 2024 and continues to infect 1.8 million people annually. "Around the world, countries are showing that eliminating hepatitis is not a pipedream, it's possible with sustained political commitment, backed by reliable domestic financing," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. At the same time, he warned progress remains "too slow and uneven." The report also found hepatitis B prevalence among children under five dropped to 0.6%, with 85 countries meeting or surpassing the 2030 target of 0.1%. The WHO said 287 million people were living with chronic hepatitis B or C infections in 2024, while treatment gaps remain severe, with fewer than 5% of people having chronic hepatitis B receiving treatment. "The data shows that progress is possible but also reveals where we are falling short," said Tereza Kasasava, director of WHO's department for HIV, TB, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections. The UN health agency urged faster expansion of prevention, testing and treatment to reach 2030 targets. - APP

Armed forces destroy...

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Chaman sector on Tuesday, according to security sources. On Sunday, the forces destroyed the gun positions of Afghan Taliban involved in unprovoked firing at civilians in South Waziristan. Security sources said that the posts were destroyed after the Afghan Taliban fired at civilians and left three people, including two women, injured. Due to a resurgence of militancy, especially in KP and Balochistan, where attacks of ten target security personnel and LEAs, the state has intensified counter-terrorism operations. Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Afghan Taliban to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries on its soil, particularly those linked to the banned TTP.

Attack on Bannu police...

FROM PAGE 01
from the Rapid Response Force and Quick Response Force, reached the scene immediately. They cordoned off the area and initiated a search operation. Police also recovered blood traces from multiple locations, indicating further casualties among the terrorists. During the attack, a constable sustained minor injuries and was shifted to a hospital, where he was reported to be out of danger. Police recovered weapons and other equipment from the site, including magazines, hand grenades, bandoliers and other material. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General (IG) Zulfiqar Hameed praised the performance of the Bannu Police for their successful operation and announced cash rewards and commendation certificates.

Trump urges Iran to sign...

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"They don't know how to sign a nonnuclear deal. They'd better get smart soon!" Trump said in the post on Wednesday, without explaining what such a deal would entail. Iran wants some kind of US acknowledgment of its right to enrich uranium for what it says are peaceful, civilian purposes. It has a stockpile of roughly 440 kilograms (970 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60 percent, material that could be used for several nuclear weapons if further enriched. Iranian officials said on Tuesday the country could withstand the blockade as it was using alternative trade routes, and the Islamic Republic did not consider the war over.

US has spent \$25 bn on...

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cost over \$11.3 billion, with daily rates reaching hundreds of millions as the U.S. conducted strikes and defended bases amid Iranian drone and missile activity. These figures cover troop deployments, munitions depletion, base repairs, and operational costs, though longer-term commitments (replenishment, contracts) are expected to push the total higher. The Trump administration has faced criticism and calls for more transparency on exact war expenditures, with some supplemental funding requests reportedly in the \$200 billion range discussed.

Real Estate: file...

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The NAB chief added that cases against members of parliament were still ongoing, but the bureau no longer issued press releases on such matters. He said that NAB had referred several cases to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and anti-corruption departments, while emphasising that suspects deserved the same respect as investigators. "The current NAB does not agree with what NAB did in the past," he added. Lt Gen (ret) Ahmed also criticised the International Monetary Fund's diagnostic report on Pakistan as "completely baseless", saying the IMF would never grant a "clean chit" to any country.

Twin City Women's Baseball Series to begin on May 18

The camps will also serve as selection trials for the Islamabad squad for the upcoming Women's National Baseball Championship, as well as for the YES team preparing for an international tour of Malaysia

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Minister Punjab Twin City Women's Baseball Series will get underway on May 18 in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, featuring a five-match contest between the women's teams of the twin cities. According to Secretary General of the Pakistan Federation Baseball (PFB), Tahir Mahmood, the series is being organized by the Youth Education and Sports (YES) Welfare Society Rawalpindi in collaboration with the Islamabad Baseball Association. He termed the initiative a significant step forward in promoting and strengthening women's baseball in the country. He said dedicated training camps would be set up for both Rawalpindi and Islamabad teams to ensure quality competition. The camps will also serve as selection trials for the Islamabad squad for the upcoming Women's National Baseball Championship, as well as for the YES team preparing for an international tour of Malaysia. Tahir Mahmood added that the Pakistan Federation Baseball would closely supervise the entire process to maintain transparency and merit. In this regard, a joint meeting between officials of the federation and YES Welfare Society will be held on Thursday at the Shahbaz Sharif Sports Complex, Rawalpindi, where technical and administrative committees for the series will be constituted. - APP

Pakistan boosts women's boxing growth plan

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major push to strengthen women's sports, the Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) is taking further measures to accelerate the growth of women's boxing, develop new talent, and prepare female boxers for success at the international level. PBF President Lt Col (R) Muhammad Nasir Ijaz Tung said the federation, with the backing of the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), and other stakeholders, would launch further initiatives to provide quality training, better facilities, and greater global exposure to women boxers.

He said women's boxing in Pakistan formally began in 2018 with the first-ever National Women's Boxing Championship in Lahore, laying the foundation for the structured development of the sport. The momentum continued in 2022 with the first Inter-University Women's Boxing Championship, which significantly widened the talent pool. Nasir Tung added that national, provincial, and departmental competitions, along with participation in the National Games, had played a key role in expanding women's boxing across the country. Highlighting Pakistan's growing success on the world stage, he said Laura Akram won bronze at the World Championships, while Fatima Zahra secured Pakistan's first-ever women's boxing medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games. Ayesha



Mumtaz, Malaika Zahid, and Maria also earned medals at Asian and international events in China. He further said the federation had recently donated a standard boxing ring to Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) in collaboration with the POA to improve training facilities and encourage greater female participation. Nasir Tung said women boxers are now being prepared through structured training and international exposure for upcoming global events, including the Commonwealth Games. He expressed confidence that with continued support from all stakeholders, the future of women's boxing in Pakistan is bright.

Babar Azam equals three PSL records with ton against Islamabad United

Zalmi skipper remains top scorer in PSL 11 Qualifier against United with blistering 103-run knock

DNA

KARACHI: In a major achievement, Peshawar Zalmi skipper Babar Azam on Tuesday matched three major Pakistan Super League (PSL) records with a blistering century against Islamabad United in the Qualifier of the ongoing 11th edition at the National Bank Stadium. Babar top-scored in the high-stakes fixture with a swashbuckling 103 off just 59 deliveries, studded with 12 fours and four sixes, and helped the table-toppers pile up a massive total of 221/7 in their 20 overs. His 57-ball century in the ongoing match marked his second in the ongoing edition,

meaning he became only the second batter in the history of the marquee league to score two centuries in a single season, joining Usman Khan, who registered the feat in PSL 9 with Multan Sultans. Overall, it was Babar's fourth century in the PSL, and it helped him draw level with Hyderabad Kingsmen's Usman, who also has four hundreds, with his most recent coming in the league stage of the ongoing eight-team tournament against Multan Sultans. **Most centuries in PSL**

- Usman Khan - four in 35 innings
- Babar Azam - four in 110 innings
- Kamran Akmal - three in 74 innings
- Rilee Rossouw - three in 98 innings

- Fakhar Zaman - three in 105 innings

Furthermore, Babar's 103-run knock also helped him equal Lahore Qalandars' Fakhar Zaman's long-standing record of scoring the most runs in a single edition of the PSL. Notably, the left-handed opener piled up 588 runs in 13 innings for the Qalandars in the seventh edition of the PSL with the help of one century and seven half-centuries. Babar Azam, however, conceded 10 innings to accumulate as many runs in the ongoing season, scoring at an astounding average of 98.00 and a strike rate of 146.63, having smashed two centuries and three fifties. **Most Runs in a PSL Season**

- Fakhar Zaman (Lahore Qalandars) - 588

- runs in 2022
- Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi) - 588 runs* in 2024
- Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi) - 569 runs in 2024
- Babar Azam (Karachi Kings) - 554 runs in 2021
- Mohammad Rizwan (Multan Sultans) - 550 runs in 2023
- Mohammad Rizwan (Multan Sultans) - 546 runs in 2022
- Kusal Mendis (Peshawar Zalmi) - 541 runs* in 2026
- Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi) - 522 runs in 2023
- Mohammad Rizwan (Multan Sultans) - 500 runs in 2021

Briefs

PSX stays bearish

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 2,588.35 points, a negative change of 1.54 percent, closing at 165,823.88 points against 168,412.23 points on the last trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,087.439 million shares with a traded value of Rs 39,547 billion, compared to 1,190.338 million shares valuing Rs 34,542 billion in the previous session.

The market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.336 trillion from Rs 18.646 trillion a day earlier. Out of 488 active companies in the ready market, 88 advanced, 362 declined, and 38 remained unchanged. Energyco PK topped the volume chart with 105.652 million shares, followed by Clover Pakistan with 91.111 million shares and Hascol Petrol with 65.847 million shares. The top gainers included Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, which increased by Rs 91.73 to close at Rs 9,489.24, and Al-Abbas Sugar Mills Limited, which gained Rs 40.75 to settle at Rs 942.98. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 160.00 to close at Rs 26,220.00, while PIA Holding Company Limited fell by Rs 102.67 to close at Rs 17,500.00. In the futures market, turnover stood at 186.275 million shares with a traded value of Rs 9.637 billion, compared to 228.439 million shares worth Rs 8.083 billion in the previous session. Out of 318 futures-market companies, 43 recorded gains while 275 declined, and none remained unchanged, according to PSX data.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.80 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.81. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.25 and Rs 279.90, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.12 to close at Rs 326.18 from the previous day's close of Rs 326.30, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.25 and closed at Rs 376.38 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.63. The exchange rates of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant and closed at Rs 75.90 and Rs 74.33, respectively.—APP

Gold prices decline by Rs 5,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Wednesday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 5,500 to settle at Rs 479,562 compared to Rs 485,062 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold declined by Rs 4,715 to Rs 411,147 from Rs 415,862, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 4,322 to Rs 376,898 against Rs 381,220. In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$55 to \$4,572 per ounce from \$4,627. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs 45 to Rs 7,766 from Rs 7,811, while the price of 10 grams of silver also fell by Rs 38 to Rs 6,658 from Rs 6,696. The price of silver in the international market decreased by \$0.45 to \$72.82 per ounce from \$73.27.—APP

ICCI for steps to ensure uninterrupted edible supply

The Acting President stressed that in future, timely transportation and efficient market access must be ensured through better planning and coordination. He underlined that avoidable hurdles such as transport restrictions, road blockages, and administrative delays should be effectively managed to guarantee seamless movement of goods

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Tahir Ayub, has urged the concerned authorities to take proactive and preventive measures to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted supply of fruits and vegetable to markets in future. He expressed these views while talking to a visiting delegation of the Islamabad Wholesale Fruit Market, led by its Patron-in-Chief Mohammad Arshad Chaudhry and Vice Chairman Malik Khizer, who called on him at the Chamber House to highlight challenges in the transportation and distribution of fresh produce. Tahir Ayub emphasized that the ongoing season is critically important for the agriculture sector, as a wide variety of crops is also being harvested and any disruption in the supply chain can not only cause shortage of food, fruit and vegetable but could result in significant financial losses for farmers and wastage of produce as well. He noted that the fruit and vegetable supply chain is highly sensitive and interconnected, involving farm labourers, growers, transporters, wholesalers, and retailers. Any bottleneck in the movement of goods not only affects farmers' incomes but also disrupts the entire value chain, ultimately burdening consumers through price volatility," he added. The Acting President stressed that in future, timely transportation and efficient market access must be ensured through better planning and coordination. He underlined that avoidable hurdles such as transport restrictions, road blockages, and administrative delays should be effectively managed to guarantee seamless movement of goods. The delegation



informed the ICCI leadership that recent transportation delays and logistical inefficiencies caused spoilage of perishable items, increased operational costs, and led to shortages and higher prices for consumers. They urged authorities to adopt a more coordinated and forward-looking

approach in future. Tahir Ayub called upon relevant authorities, including district administrations and law enforcement agencies, to develop a coordinated mechanism with market stakeholders so that fruit-laden vehicles are given priority passage in future to prevent recurrence of such dis-

ruptions. Others present on the occasion included ICCI Executive Members Malik Mohsin Khalid and Zulqurnain Abbasi along with representatives of the Wholesale Fruit Market, including Sohail Chaudhry, Majid Butt, Arslan Chaudhry, Chaudhry Sufyan, and others.

PARC achieves milestone in commercializing seed research

ISLAMABAD: In a historic and landmark development for Pakistan's seed sector, "PATCO Seeds," an initiative of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), has successfully secured approval as a seed business enterprise from the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA). This milestone marks a significant step forward in strengthening Pakistan's seed industry and enhancing the availability of high-quality seeds for farmers across the country, said a press release issued by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Wednesday. Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, has demonstrated strong leadership and unwavering commitment to modernizing Pakistan's agriculture sector, particularly the seed industry, through innovation, regulatory reforms, and enhanced private sector engagement. The Federal Minister stated that the approval of PATCO Seeds as a seed business enterprise is a major step toward transforming Pakistan's agriculture into a modern, resilient, and competitive sector. He emphasized that the government remains committed to empowering national institutions, including PARC, to deliver innovation directly to farmers and to ensure sustainable food security. Under the minister's guidance, PARC has undertaken strategic initiatives to strengthen institutional frameworks, promote public-private partnerships, and facilitate investment in agri-business ventures. These efforts aim to bridge the gap between agricultural research and its commercial application. The approval of PATCO Seeds underscores PARC's continued commitment to translating research into practical and commercial success. As a certified seed business enterprise, PATCO Seeds is now well-positioned to play a transformative role in the production, processing, and distribution of certified seeds, contributing to improved crop yields and national food security. Chairman PARC, Dr Syed Murtaza Hassan Andrabi, welcomed the development and termed it a significant milestone in PARC's journey toward commercialization of research. He highlighted that PATCO Seeds will serve as a vital link between cutting-edge agricultural research and its application at the farm level, ultimately benefiting farmers nationwide. PATCO Seeds will focus on ensuring the commercial availability of high-quality, climate-resilient, and high-yielding seed varieties tailored to Pakistan's diverse agro-ecological zones. The initiative is expected to enhance agricultural productivity, strengthen rural livelihoods, and create new employment opportunities. In the context of emerging challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and population growth, the Federal Minister's forward-looking vision, coupled with PARC's innovative initiatives like PATCO Seeds, reflects the government's commitment to building a resilient, sustainable, and self-reliant agricultural sector.—DNA

Erdogan rejects criticism of Turkiye's peace efforts with Kurdish militants

The conflict, which began in 1984, has killed more than 40,000 people and has had spillover effects in Iraq and Syria

ANKARA: President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday that the peace process aimed at ending Turkiye's decades-long conflict with Kurdish militants was progressing in a "positive atmosphere," after criticism from pro-Kurdish lawmakers. Speaking in parliament, Erdogan said recent steps had brought the process to a more sensitive stage following the approval of a parliamentary commission report outlining a roadmap for legal reforms alongside the disbandment of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). His remarks come a day after the pro-Kurdish DEM Party issued one of its strongest criticisms yet of the government, accusing it of acting in a "hesitant, timid and stalling manner" despite what it described as a historic opportunity for peace. Erdogan rejected such criticism, saying: "There is a positive atmosphere, what needs to be done is clear, and the process is progressing as it should." He added that those drawing pessimistic conclusions about the process were "acting on illusions, not facts." "With the approval of the commission report, we have reached a crossroads that needs to be managed more carefully," Erdogan said, adding that the ruling People's Alliance aimed to navigate this stage with the support of other political parties. The PKK, designated a terrorist organization by Turkiye, the United States and the European Union, halted attacks last year and said in May it had decided to disband and end its armed struggle, following a February 2025 call by its jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan. However, a standoff remains over next steps, with Ankara saying disarmament must be verified before further legal or political measures, while Kurdish political actors have called for faster reforms. The conflict, which began in 1984, has killed more than 40,000 people and has had spillover effects in Iraq and Syria.—APP

Cairo's night buzz returns

CAIRO: Cairo's famed nocturnal rhythm flickered back to life on Tuesday after Egypt eased energy-saving measures spurred by the Middle East war that had forced shops, cafes and restaurants to close early, dimming a city long defined by its late-night buzz. Soaring energy prices, driven by the US-Israel conflict with Iran, had prompted month-long restrictions to curb electricity use, compressing social and commercial life in the region's largest metropolis into unfamiliar early hours. Initial shutdowns at 9 p.m. local time, later extended to 11 pm, left streets unusually quiet and fueled frustration among traders and customers alike. On Sunday, the government announced the measures would be lifted, allowing cafes and restaurants to stay open until 1 am. Shops and malls can now operate until 11 pm, and until midnight on weekends. By Tuesday night, the change was already visible in Heliopolis, a historic eastern Cairo neighborhood known for its wide boulevards, early 20th-century architecture and cafe culture. At 10 pm, when chairs would normally have been stacked away, tables were instead full. Arcaded buildings glowed as friends gathered over shisha, families strolled with children and couples lingered over coffee. Residents say the change has been about more than business hours. "People were depressed," said Ahmed Megahed, an 82-year-old retiree. "With rising prices and daily pressures, staying at home every night made things worse. Now people can go out, breathe fresh air and feel normal again," he told AFP. For Osama El-Sayed, a 56-year-old government employee, the return of late nights has restored a sense of belonging. "I was feeling out of place. Now I finally feel like I fit again," he told AFP with a smile from a roadside cafe in downtown Cairo, a day before the easing took effect. Shop owner Wafaa Ahmed, 58, said the whole city felt the pain of the early closures. "It was a disaster before, not just for us shop owners, but for everyone," she said. A millennium old and home to over 20 million people, Cairo is known for nights that come alive with traffic, noise and light. During the curbs, which began in late March, shops shuttered early, restaurants cleared their tables and cafes ushered customers out. With street lights off, residents walked home through shadowy neighborhoods while cinemas that usually buzz with late screenings stayed dark. Some stretched out their final cups of tea or took a last pull on their shisha pipes as police patrols enforced the closures, with fines of up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds (\$946) and repeat violations risking prison. Wael el-Nahas, an economist, said the early closures had turned Cairo into a "ghost town," running counter to the city's distinct social character and threatening its vital tourism industry. "When streets go dark and businesses shut early, you're not just closing shops, you're shutting down the soul of the city and risking the livelihoods that depend on it," he told AFP. Egypt, which relies heavily on imported fuel, has been hit hard by the Iran war. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said the monthly energy import bill more than doubled early this year to \$2.5 billion. The pound has shed about 15 percent of its value, while inflation rose above 13 percent in March. Madbouly has urged incentives to accelerate a shift to solar power, as the government aired TV campaigns calling on consumers to cut electricity use. But for Ahmed, the relaxed measures came just in time for her and her business. "It is the right decision, especially with the summer season coming," she said, adding that the restrictions had slashed her revenues by 80 percent. "No one shops in the morning in summer. Now customers have time."—APP

Israeli strikes kill five in south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Two successive Israeli strikes on a building in a southern Lebanese town killed five people on Tuesday, including three rescuers who went to help those wounded in the initial attack as well as a soldier. Lebanon's authorities said. A spokesperson for the Lebanese Civil Defense, a state-run rescue force, told Reuters the three rescuers were initially trapped under rubble by the second Israeli strike on the town of Majdal Zoun and were later confirmed dead. The Lebanese army said a Lebanese soldier and his brother were killed in the strike in Bint Jbeil. It said the pair were on a motorcycle travelling from the soldier's post to his home when the strike occurred. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the strikes as "a new and blatant war crime committed by Israel." The United Nations Human Rights office said last month that Israeli airstrikes on civilians including health care workers in Lebanon may amount to war crimes. More than 2,500 people have been killed in Israeli strikes across Lebanon since March 2, when Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah fired on Israeli positions and triggered a widespread Israeli air and ground campaign. The toll includes more than 100 medics, as well as over 270 women and more than 170 children.—APP

Syria says Australia won't repatriate families from camp

BEIRUT: A group of Australian women and children who left a camp in Syria that houses people with alleged ties to Daesh group militants are stuck in the country because Australian authorities have refused to allow their return, Syrian officials said Wednesday. Thirteen women and children from four families last week left Roj camp, a remote facility near the border with Iraq that houses relatives of suspected militants, on Friday and traveled to Syria's capital. An official at the camp at the time said that the families were expected to remain in Damascus for around 72 hours and then be sent to Australia. In response to an Associated Press inquiry about their status, Syria's information ministry said in a statement that after the families left the camp, the foreign ministry was informed that "the Australian government had refused to receive them."—APP

UK warns Afghans it won't help them flee country to reach Britain

"Having seen increased evidence of successful self-moves and after assessing carefully again the risks to this cohort and other factors, including value for money for the taxpayer, we have decided to end in-country assistance for movements out of Afghanistan," Pollard said

LONDON: The UK's Ministry of Defence has warned that Afghans approved for resettlement in Britain will need to make their own way out of their homeland. Nearly 9,000 people in Afghanistan are eligible to come to the UK, mainly as a result of serving alongside British forces, but will be given no assistance to "make their own way to a third country," Luke Pollard, defense minister, told the House of Commons in a written statement on Tuesday. Once they arrive in a third country, the UK will assist with housing and travel until 2028, he added. "Having seen increased evidence of successful self-moves and after assessing carefully again the risks to this cohort and other factors, including value for money for the taxpayer, we have decided to end in-country assistance for movements out of Afghanistan," Pollard said. The MoD closed applications for its

Afghan resettlement schemes last year in the wake of a major data breach that left thousands of people's identities and personal information freely available to the Taliban. Despite the closure, the UK's National Audit Office said in March it would take at least three years for all outstanding applicants with resettlement approval to be moved to Britain. Temporary housing in the UK owned by the MoD for the purpose of the Afghan Resettlement Programme will also be discontinued, and Pollard said that of the six hotels currently holding Afghan families, two are set to be closed within days. "The MoD's announcement to stop in-country support for moving safely out of Afghanistan will come as a complete shock to Afghans with a relocation offer. The fact that some have been able to escape doesn't mean that that option is open to everyone," Prof. Sara de Jong, a co-founder of the Sulha

Alliance established to help former Afghan interpreters working with UK forces, told The Independent. "Those who can't take the risk to go out of hiding to get the paperwork and don't have the financial means to pay hugely inflated visa prices are now abandoned. The (Pollard) statement also ignores the ongoing security issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which makes independent moving even more challenging." Last week, The Independent reported that two Afghans given approval to be relocated to the UK were taking the MoD to court over the failure to assist people to flee Afghanistan. Acting on behalf of one of the claimants, Tim Owen KC told a judge at the High Court in London that "on the face of it, it appears there is a freeze on relocations from Afghanistan," adding that people left there "are being faced with a complete information black hole."—AGENCIES

Briefs

Improper to compare Karachi and Lahore governance

DNA

KARACHI: Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab on Wednesday expressed objection to comparisons between Karachi and Lahore in terms of infrastructure and governance, noting that both provincial capitals had different ground realities. Speaking alongside Punjab Housing Minister Bilal Yasin in Lahore, Wahab said, "When you compare Karachi to Lahore, this comparison is improper because of the population. We get water from a distance of 125 kilometres. Our daily water requirement is 1,100 million gallons per day (MGD), while our daily supply is 550 MGD, and the population continues to grow." "Therefore, I think that comparing them leads to conflict," he added, calling for both administrations to "work together" and share expertise. At one point, a reporter asked Wahab why the PPP "could not deliver what the public wanted" despite ruling Sindh for years, prompting Yasin to ask media persons to be "mindful of respecting the guests". Responding to another question, Wahab said making such comparisons "leads to an unfortunate situation", highlighting that the government was aiming to complete under-construction bridges within 90 days. Referring to Karachi as Pakistan's "commercial capital", Wahab noted there was a need for everyone to work together. "By portraying a Karachi-Lahore divide as political conflict, we are not serving Pakistan," he asserted.

France calls its nationals to leave Mali

DNA

PARIS: France has urged its nationals in Mali to leave "as soon as possible" following coordinated attacks at the weekend, including in the capital Bamako, a travel advice update for the West African country said. The security situation remains volatile and pending their departure, French citizens should stay at home, limit movement and follow instructions from local authorities while keeping relatives informed, the French foreign ministry said. All travel to Mali is strongly discouraged, the update said. West Africa's Al-Qaeda affiliate and a Tuareg-dominated separatist group hit Mali's main army base and the area near Bamako's airport in the attacks on Saturday, while also pushing Russian troops supporting government forces out of the strategic town of Kidal in the north. The leader of Mali's military government vowed on Tuesday to "neutralize" those responsible.

King Charles, Trump toast ties despite Iran tensions

"In the centuries since we won our independence, Americans have had no closer friends than the British," Trump said

DNA

WASHINGTON: Britain's King Charles and Donald Trump hailed their countries' longstanding ties at a White House state dinner Tuesday – despite the US president claiming the monarch agreed with him on Iran's nuclear weapons. Over a lavish meal, Charles echoed the tone of his earlier speech to Congress in which he urged London and Washington to stick together, without directly mentioning the tensions over the US-Israeli war with Tehran. But in his toast to a gala dinner attended by tech titans and golfer Rory McIlroy, Trump made his first public comments on the sensitive topic during the four-day visit by the British royals. "We have militarily defeated that particular opponent," Trump said at the White House dinner. "Charles agrees with me even more than I do – we're never going to let that opponent have a nuclear weapon." Trump has repeatedly lambasted British Prime Minister Keir Starmer over his opposition to the Iran war, and there is no indication that King Charles has shown support for the US leader's stance. Nevertheless, both leaders strongly praised the "special relationship" between Britain and Washington, putting aside, however briefly, the transatlantic tensions. In his toast, Charles said he was "here to renew an indispensable alliance which has long been a cornerstone of prosperity and security."



Yet Charles pointedly mentioned the importance of international alliances like NATO that Trump has repeatedly disparaged – and called for continued support for Ukraine as it battles Russia's invasion. "Together, we can meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and contested world," he added. The menu for the lavish dinner included a garden vegetable veloute, spring herbed ravioli and Dover

sole meuniere, followed by a White House honey and vanilla bean cremeux. Invited guests included Apple boss Tim Cook, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Nvidia's Jensen Huang, and two-time Masters-winning golfer Rory McIlroy, who was born in Northern Ireland. Trump also hailed Charles's "fantastic" speech to Congress, adding: "He got the Democrats to stand – I've never been able

to do that." The king received a warm reception from lawmakers in Congress as he urged the United States on Tuesday to stand firm with its Western allies, and broached topics like the environment that Trump often scorns. Charles stressed that "unyielding resolve" was needed to secure a "just and lasting peace" in Ukraine, which has been fighting a full-scale invasion by Russia since 2022. In just the second speech to Congress by a British monarch following his mother, Elizabeth II, in 1991, Charles also pointed to shared democratic traditions that opponents have accused Trump of undermining. He noted that the British Magna Carta had been cited in more than 160 US Supreme Court cases, highlighting – to rapt applause from the opposition Democrats – the principle that executive power is subject to checks and balances. Trump earlier hailed Britain as America's closest ally as he welcomed Charles and Queen Camilla to the White House with pomp, ceremony, a 21-gun salute and a fly-past. "In the centuries since we won our independence, Americans have had no closer friends than the British," Trump said. The visit comes at a delicate moment, with Trump criticising Britain over its stance on Iran and other policies. Despite the tensions, the US president struck a jovial tone, joking about his Scottish-born mother having "a crush on Charles" and making a jibe about the British weather.

Russia attacks hospital in Ukraine

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has attacked port infrastructure in Ukraine's southern Odesa region with drones in overnight strikes that also damaged residential buildings and a hospital and left two people wounded, Ukrainian officials said on Wednesday. Regional Governor Oleh Kiper, writing on Telegram, said the attack in the south of the Odesa region destroyed the admissions department of a hospital there, and badly damaged other parts of the facility. At the time of the attack, medical staff and patients were in a shelter, and they were later moved to another facility, he said. Regional prosecutors said port infrastructure facilities came under attack, without giving details. Emergency services said two people were hurt in fires in a residential area. They posted pictures of buildings engulfed by fire and firefighters battling the flames. Kiper added that a fire was also recorded at the Danube Biosphere Reserve, a nature reserve in the region. The Odesa region, which houses major Ukrainian seaports and river ports on the Danube, has been a repeated target of Russian attacks during Moscow's more than four-year-old war.

Pak warns disinformation, hate speech eroding trust

With obviously Palestine and Kashmir in mind, he voiced particular concern over the use of disinformation in situations of foreign occupation and conflict

UNITED NATIONS: Amid multiplying disinformation, rising tensions and armed conflicts, Pakistan has urged the United Nations to take steps aimed at promoting an information environment that is truthful, inclusive, and respectful of human dignity. "Timely, accurate, and impartial communication is most essential particularly at a time marked by geopolitical tensions, polarization, widening and inequalities," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the world body's Committee on Information, a General Assembly's subsidiary body established to oversee the work of the Department of Global Communications (DGC). With obviously Palestine and Kashmir in mind, he voiced particular concern over the use of disinformation in situations of foreign occupation and conflict. "False narratives are deployed to obscure human rights violations, demonize lawful struggles for self-determination, and silence affected populations," the Pakistani envoy said, referring to the profoundly

transforming global information landscape. "While technological advances have democratized access to information, they have also enabled the rapid spread of disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech at an unprecedented scale," Ambassador Jadoon said, adding, "These challenges strike at the core of public trust, social cohesion, and the credibility of multilateral institutions, including the UN." Information, he emphasized, must serve as a bridge for dialogue and cooperation, not as a tool for manipulation, division, or repression. "We remain deeply concerned at the misuse of digital platforms to amplify falsehoods, deepen polarization, and target vulnerable communities," the Pakistani envoy said. "The persistence of hate speech, racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia in digital spaces is particularly alarming, often translating into real-world harm." In this regard, Ambassador Jadoon pointed out that the rise of artificial intelligence and generative technologies has added a new layer of complexity.

President Zardari invites Chinese firms to Pakistan

President Zardari held a meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Hangzhou Jinjiang Group, Wang Jian, in Sanya, where he invited the Chinese company to invest in "priority sectors, including alternate energy, water treatment, and electric vehicle battery systems, according to Radio Pakistan

BEIJING: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday invited Chinese investment into "priority sectors," particularly alternative energy sources, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The president arrived in China on Saturday for a week-long visit to the Hunan and Hainan provinces for engagements related to economic and trade cooperation. President Zardari held a meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Hangzhou Jinjiang Group, Wang Jian, in Sanya, where he invited the Chinese company to invest in "priority sectors, including alternate energy, water treatment, and electric vehicle battery systems, according to Radio Pakistan. The president, according to the report, "noted that Pakistan is actively encouraging foreign investment in various sectors, especially water treatment, electric vehicle battery systems and alternate energy". "Such partnerships could support sustainable growth and industrial development," the report said, adding that President Zardari assured the company of "all possible facilitation to foreign companies seeking to invest in the province, particularly under private partnership frameworks". The report added that the president was also briefed that the "Hangzhou Jinjiang Group is already engaged in multiple projects in Pakistan and ranks among the top one hundred business groups in China, with operations spanning heavy industry, fertiliser, oil and gas, coal gasification, renewable energy, agriculture and irrigation". President Zardari has held a range of engagements during his China visit so far, including the signing of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in water desalination, agricultural technology, and the tea industry. – DNA

Lebanon details ex-Palestine envoy

NEWS DESK

BEIRUT: Lebanese authorities detained the former Palestinian ambassador to Lebanon on corruption charges shortly after he arrived in the country, officials said Wednesday. The officials said Ashraf Dabbour was arrested upon arrival at Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport late Tuesday. The two judicial and two security officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas relieved Dabbour of his post as Palestinian ambassador to Lebanon last year after the Palestinian Authority accused him of corruption. The Lebanese officials said authorities detained Dabbour in Beirut based on a Red Notice issued by the Interpol late last year.

Banned reusable syringes remain available in market

ISLAMABAD: Reusable syringes, including some falsely marketed as auto-disable devices, continue to be manufactured, supplied and used across Pakistan despite a nationwide ban, raising concerns over enforcement failures and risks of blood-borne infections, an investigation by The News uncovered. Even more troubling, syringes are being fraudulently marketed as "auto-disable" while in reality remaining fully reusable, according to the report. This deceptive practice is undermining a crucial infection control measure designed to prevent the reuse of syringes and curb the spread of disease. Samples collected from multiple cities show that syringes marketed and sold as single-use safety devices can be easily reused, with plungers moving freely back and forth instead of locking after one use, raising

serious concerns about regulatory failure and the unchecked spread of blood-borne infections. Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, however, said they are aware of compliance gaps and are taking steps to enforce their directives. Officials of the provincial authorities also claim that they are actively ensuring compliance with the ban, rejecting the impression of any laxity on their part. Field findings indicate that such syringes are available in Peshawar, Multan, and Jacobabad, with reports of their presence in rural as well as some Urban areas across the country, suggesting that the ban on 2ml, 3ml and 5ml conventional disposable syringes largely exists on paper. Investigations by this scribe further traced a significant number of these syringes to manufacturing units in the Gadoon Amazai industrial zone. – APP


Stocks swing, oil edges up with US-Iran peace talks stalled

Concerns about stalled peace efforts push crude prices higher for more than a week

NEWS DESK









KARACHI: Asian stocks fluctuated on Wednesday while oil prices swung as talks to end the Iran war appeared to be at a standstill and the crucial Strait of Hormuz no nearer being reopened. While the White House has said Donald Trump and his team were considering Tehran's latest proposal to restore traffic through the waterway, CNN and the Wall Street Journal said the president was sceptical. The Islamic republic this week submitted a plan that would reportedly see it ease the chokehold and Washington lift its retaliatory blockade on the country's ports as talks continued, including over its nuclear programme. While US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran's proposal was "better than what we thought they were going to submit", he insisted any eventual deal had to be "one that definitively prevents them from sprinting towards a nuclear weapon". Iranian defence ministry spokesman Reza Talei-Nik said Washington "must abandon its illegal and irrational demands", adding the United States was "no longer in a position to dictate its policy to independent nations". Qatar warned of the possibility of a "frozen conflict" if a definitive resolution is not found. Concerns about the stalled peace push have pushed crude prices higher for more than a week, with Trump's decision to cancel his envoys' trip for peace talks in Pakistan last weekend adding to the down-

beat mood. Brent is above the level it hit before the two sides announced a ceasefire at the start of April, sitting around \$112, while West Texas Intermediate broke \$100 Tuesday for the first time in two weeks. Both contracts were slightly higher on Wednesday. "Iran wants the blockade lifted and access to its flows restored," wrote Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management. "Washington holds that lever and is in no hurry to give it away without extracting value. "Meanwhile, the longer this drags on, the more second-order effects start to bite. Storage pressure builds, production risks emerge, and the system begins to strain in ways that futures prices cannot ignore." There was little major reaction to news that key producer United Arab Emirates had decided to withdraw from the OPEC and OPEC+ oil cartels on Friday, calling it a strategic decision. Still, CNN also cited sources familiar with the mediation as saying the two sides were not as far apart as they seemed. It added that intense diplomacy continued and talks were focused on a staged process with the first part of a potential deal aimed at returning to the pre-war status and reopening the Strait. Iran's nuclear programme would be dealt with down the line, it said. Equity markets were mixed, with Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta and Manila up while Sydney, Singapore, Seoul and Taipei fell. Traders were given a weak lead from Wall Street, where the Nasdaq-led losses owing to a tech selloff that came on the back of a report in the Wall Street Journal that ChatGPT-maker OpenAI had missed targets on the number of users and revenue. The news came as markets gear up for the release of earnings from Wall Street titans Amazon, Google, Meta and Microsoft this week.



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