



# Islamabad POST

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### President Trump okays gas pipeline with Canada

Detailed News On Page-08

### Sohail Afridi not being removed as KP CM

Detailed News On Page-01

### Infantino to seek fourth term as FIFA president

Detailed News On Page-06

## Middle East issue

# Republicans say they will defer to Trump on Iran war

### White House declines to comment on Iran proposal, cites 'private diplomatic conversations'

NEWS DESK/DNA

WASHINGTON: Many Republicans who have been uneasy with President Donald Trump's war in Iran emphasized that there would be a May 1 deadline for Congress to intervene. But the date is now set to pass with no action from GOP lawmakers who continue to defer to the White House. Under the War Powers Resolution of 1973, Congress must declare war or authorize the use of force within 60 days — a deadline that falls on Friday — or within 90 days if the president asks for an extension. But Congress made no attempt at enforcing that requirement, leaving town for a week on Thursday after the Senate rejected a Democratic attempt to halt the war for a sixth time. The Trump administration has shown no interest in seeking congressional approval at all. It is arguing that the deadlines set by the law don't apply because the war in Iran effectively ended when a ceasefire began in early April. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Thursday he doesn't plan on a vote to authorize force in Iran or otherwise weigh in. "I'm listening carefully to what the members of our conference are saying, and at this point I don't see that," Thune said. The reluctance to defy Trump on the war comes at a politically perilous time for Republicans, with public frustration mounting both over the conflict and its impact on gas prices. Still, most GOP lawmakers say they are supportive of Trump's wartime leadership, or are at least willing to give him more time amid the fragile ceasefire. Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota says he'd vote for an authorization of war if Trump asked for it. But he questioned if the War Powers Resolution, passed during the Vietnam War era as a way for Congress to claw back its power, is even constitutional. "Our founders created a really strong executive, like it or not like it," Cramer said. Still, some GOP senators made clear

Continued on Page 06

## Iran war redraws sea routes with Africa as the pivot

AGENCIES

PARIS: The closure of the Strait of Hormuz as well as tensions in the Red Sea are reshaping trade routes, with Africa becoming a hub of global container ship traffic, according to logistics and maritime sources. Over the past two months, the blockade has also pushed shipowners to find alternative land corridors to deliver foodstuffs and manufactured goods by truck, as they can no longer reach the Gulf's coastal countries by sea. - What are the alternative routes for delivering to Gulf countries? - The Saudi port of Jeddah on the Red Sea is becoming a new regional "hub," where ships from maritime giants MSC, CMA CGM, Maersk and Cosco arrive via the Suez Canal. Cargo then leaves by truck along a desert highway to deliver to places such as Sharjah, Bahrain and Kuwait, which have not been served by sea for the past two months. "The port of Jeddah is not at all sized to handle such import volumes and a port congestion situation is emerging," Arthur Barillas de The, cofounder of freight forwarder Ovrsea, told AFP. According to data from Kpler Marine Traffic, 11 container ships were docked in

Continued on Page 06

## Turkiye envoy calls on Ishaq Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Irfan Neziroğlu, called on Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador conveyed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's appreciation and support for Pakistan's ongoing efforts to promote peace and stability in the Middle East region. DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's continued commitment to advancing lasting peace in the region. Appreciating the close coordination and regular high-level exchanges, DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further deepen Pakistan-Turkiye strategic partnership.



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Irfan Neziroğlu, called on Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

## Absue of women journalists made easier

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Reports of on-line violence against women journalists have doubled since 2020, with serious impacts on their health and well-being, according to a study published ahead of 'World Press Freedom Day,' which is marked annually on May 3. The report by UN Women and partners highlights how online violence targeting women in public life is becoming increasingly technologically sophisticated, invasive, and damaging in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). The survey findings indicate that these forms of abuse, which were considered relatively rare just a few years ago, now account for a significant portion of the broader ecosystem of online violence. Overall, 12 per cent of

Continued on Page 06

# Much-needed LNG cargo arrives amid global energy crisis

### Cargo carrying 140,000 cubic metres of LNG marks first shipment to reach country in almost two month

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: After a gap of almost two months, Pakistan's energy sector witnessed a relief as LNG carrier Seapeak Magellan docked at the Pakistan GasPort terminal and started feeding re-gasified LNG (RLNG) into the national network. Carrying around 140,000 cubic metres of LNG, the vessel berthed at the terminal operated by Pakistan GasPort Consortium Limited on Thursday morning. The cargo — arranged by TotalEnergies at a price of \$18.40 per mmbtu — marks the first LNG shipment to reach the country since a US-origin cargo arrived weeks earlier. Re-gasification began cautiously, starting at 50 MMcf and continuing at that level until 5pm.

Continued on Page 06

## Load shedding Finally comes to and end

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari on Friday said electricity load management had ended in the country following the arrival of liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies, warning reliance on costly fuels could place a financial burden on consumers. Addressing a press briefing, he said that Pakistan received LNG shipments a day

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### PMD warns of heavy rains from May 2

FAIZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of dust-thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, hailstorms, and strong winds in parts of Pakistan over the coming days. In an advisory issued on Friday, the Met Office predicted a fresh westerly wave to approach the north-western parts of the country on the evening of May 2, persisting in upper regions until the morning of May 5. Widespread dust-thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, hailstorms, and strong winds are expected to batter upper and central Pakistan during the period, it said, adding that the prevailing intense heat is likely to ease during the forecast period. According to the PMD, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is set to be the most severely affected province during this weather system.

### Two new polio cases in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: The two new cases were reported from Bannu and North Waziristan districts, according to health authorities. The affected children include a five-month-old infant and a two-year-old girl. With these latest infections, the total number of polio cases in Pakistan this year has risen to three, as the first case of 2026 was earlier reported from Sujawal district in Sindh. According to the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), a special anti-polio campaign will be conducted in selected districts across the country later this month. During the drive, nearly 19 million children are expected to be administered polio drops to protect them from the disease.

## To seek a solution

# Iran submits revised proposal to Pakistan for talks with US

### Text of the proposal was handed to Islamabad on Thursday evening, reports state media

NEWS DESK

TEHERAN: Iran delivered a new proposal for peace talks with the US via mediator Pakistan, state media reported on Friday, with negotiations between the two sides frozen despite a weeks-long ceasefire. The text of the proposal was handed to Islamabad on Thursday evening, the IRNA news agency reported. The war, launched by the United States and Israel with a vast wave of surprise strikes on February 28 has been on hold since April 8, but only one failed round of direct talks has taken place between Iranian and US representatives. In the meantime, Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off vast amounts of oil, gas and fertiliser from the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counterblockade on Iranian ports. The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that US President Donald

Continued on Page 06

## Constable martyred in KP

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: A police constable was martyred on Friday when militants targeted an armoured police vehicle with a rocket and sniper attack at Kingar Jan Bahadar, within the jurisdiction of Mandan Police Station near the Fatah Khel police post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district. The attack occurred while the vehicle was on a routine patrol. According to the police, the assault was sudden, causing severe damage to the vehicle and leaving driver, a constable, critically injured. He later succumbed to his injuries.

Continued on Page 06

# Afridi to remain KP CM, says PTI chief amid removal rumours

### Barrister Gohar says KP chief minister's performance reflects positively on party's governance in the province




BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday said that Sohail Afridi will continue as chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reaffirming that he enjoys the complete support of the party leadership. Speaking in Peshawar, Gohar rejected reports circulating on social media about Afridi's removal, saying that he was nominated for the position by incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan and is performing effectively in office. He added that the chief minister's per-

formance reflects positively on the party's governance in the province. The PTI chairman termed such claims baseless and part of a failed campaign against him. "Those running a campaign against Sohail Afridi will face disappointment and failure," he said. Gohar further asserted that Afridi cannot be disqualified and dismissed any notion of internal divisions, stating that there is no forward bloc within the PTI. He reiterated that the party stands firmly behind the chief minister. In a recent media talk, Imran's sister Aleema Khan had bitterly criticised the party leadership, including the chairman and secretary general for not "doing enough" in relation to the PTI protest movement and her brother's health as well as raised strong objection to the postponement of the party's public meeting, slated for April 9, the day, PTI government was sent packing in 2022 through a no-confidence motion. However, PTI Secretary General Barrister Salman Akram Raja also dismissed reports of internal rifts within the party leadership

Continued on Page 06



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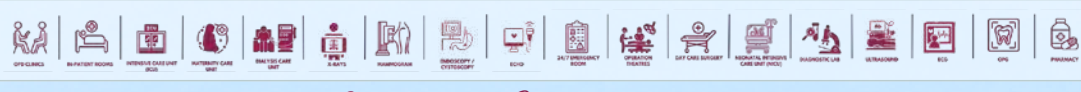
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## CJP stresses Labourers' legal protection

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi, has emphasized that the strength of a nation was measured not merely by its economic growth but by the dignity it affords to its workforce. In a message on the occasion of International Labour Day on Friday, the Chief Justice stated that International Labour Day invited not only the recognition of workers' contributions but also a reflection on the quality of justice and protection available to those who sustain the national economy. "Our constitutional framework places the dignity of labour at the heart of governance. The guarantees of fair wages, humane working conditions, and social justice are embedded within it as binding commitments," the Chief Justice said. Justice Afridi noted that these were not abstract ideals but enforceable entitlements that must translate into real safeguards for workers across all sectors. He underscored the central role of the judiciary in ensuring that these protections are not diluted in practice. By interpreting labour laws in a purposive and rights-oriented manner, the courts have contributed to addressing workplace imbalances and curbing exploitative practices, he said. However, the Chief Justice observed that the task remained ongoing, particularly as new forms of employment and economic organization continued to emerge. "Labour justice must respond to changing realities, including the expansion of informal work, evolving employer-employee relationships, and the growing presence of digital and platform-based employment," he stated. "Judicial and institutional responses must therefore be adaptive, efficient, and grounded in an understanding of these shifting dynamics." On this occasion, the Chief Justice reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening access to justice in labour matters, promoting timely dispute resolution, and reinforcing protections against forced labour, child labour, and unsafe working environments. —APP

## Workers backbone of economy: Kundi

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said that workers played a vital role in the economic development of any country and served as the backbone of the economy. In his message on International Labour Day, the Governor paid tribute to labourers and said the day reminded the world of the sacrifices rendered by workers who laid down their lives for the protection and attainment of labour rights. He said that the rights being enjoyed by workers at the global level today were the result of their long struggle and sacrifices. Faisal Karim Kundi said Islam had laid special emphasis on the protection of workers' rights and termed earning lawful livelihood a respected act. He said Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad PBUP had also stressed timely payment of wages and directed that labourers should be paid before their sweat dries. —APP

## Governor distributes laptops among female students

Addressing the participants, the Governor said that while ensuring stability from the initial crises, we resolved all the problems being faced at the university level, now it is the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor of each university and his team to deliver results and perform better

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Thursday distributed laptops among female students under Prime Minister Youth Laptop Scheme at Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU) and thanked the PM for providing laptops to students. He said that we have increased the budget of all public sector universities to 8 billion for improvement of quality education and wider interest of students future. He said this while addressing the participants of the laptop distribution ceremony organized by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU) under the Prime Minister Pakistan Youth Laptop Scheme. The laptop distribution program was attended by Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Durrani, Mir Asim Kurd Gelu, Parliamentary Secretary Zareen Khan Magsi, Vice Chancellor Women University Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Prime Minister

of Pakistan's Focal Person Chaudhry Naem Karim, Secretary Higher Education Saleh Baloch and Principal Secretary to Governor Balochistan Abdul Nasir Dotani along with a large number of faculty members and students. Addressing the participants, the Governor said that while ensuring stability from the initial crises, we resolved all the problems being faced at the university level, now it is the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor of each university and his team to deliver results and perform better. He said that it is a pleasure that under our supervision all public sector universities have seen an increase in both ranking and scoring, it is a matter of pride that the Women University has now crossed the score of 80 percent which is a very encouraging milestone. He also thanked to Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth

Programme Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan for providing laptops to the students of the Women University. The Governor said that focus should be on modern skills development, now Women University should introduce diploma and IT courses to equip students with modern skills as per the market requirements, which they need to get jobs quickly so that they could become economically independent. He said that parents have put their trust in Women University, they are sending their daughters with great hope, now it is the responsibility of the university to provide high-quality education to meet the expectations of parents. Jaffar Khan Mandokhel said that we are entering an era of artificial intelligence and robotic technology where for the first time in history, the relationship between man and pen and paper is ending forever. —DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) Minister Attaullah Tarar along with students lighting candles during a ceremony to commemorate one year anniversary and pay tributes to the Martyrs and heroes of "Marka-e-Haq" organized by MoIB at Lok Virsa, in the Federal Capital.

## Punjab sets stage for film revival: Marriyum

She emphasized that the initiative is expected to generate millions of employment opportunities for unemployed youth, marking a major step toward economic and creative revival

ISLAMABAD: Punjab' Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said the Punjab government, under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, is establishing a state-of-the-art film city to revive the "declining" film industry and generate employment opportunities for millions of youth on global standards, with the project targeted for completion by 2029 and private sector involvement planned. While speaking exclusively to a local media outlet, she highlighted that under the Chief Minister's leadership, record funds have been allocated and significant progress has been made across multiple sectors, including education, health, tourism and sports. She added that the government is now moving forward with plans to revive the "declining" film industry through the establishment of a modern Film City in Lahore, where all essential facilities

will be provided under one roof, with dedicated land allocated for the project. She further said that the private sector is also being invited to participate in this initiative, reaffirming that under the Chief Minister's vision, it is a landmark project aimed at transforming the country's entertainment landscape. She emphasized that the initiative is expected to generate millions of employment opportunities for unemployed youth, marking a major step toward economic and creative revival. While speaking about the completion time line, she expressed confidence that the project will be made fully functional by 2029, terming it a key milestone in the revival of the film sector under the Chief Minister's vision. She said that under the Chief Minister's programmes, film workers are being included in scholarship schemes along with other welfare initiatives, aimed at providing

financial and professional support to those associated with the industry. She further described the initiative as a holistic programme, adding that it also includes loan schemes, modern technology-based facilities and structured training opportunities, along with production infrastructure and acting facilities to develop skilled talent and strengthen the film industry on contemporary lines. Responding to a query on the selection of Lahore, she said the city is the nerve centre of Punjab and a vibrant hub of cultural diversity and creative expression. She added that Lahore's long-standing association with art, music and cinema makes it the most suitable location for the project. She further stated that its rich cultural and historical identity provides an ideal environment to develop the film industry on modern and international lines. —DNA

## Nehal opens Thalassemia week

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi formally inaugurated Thalassemia Week at the Governor House. On the occasion, he emphasized that awareness and preventive measures regarding Thalassemia are of critical importance. Governor Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi stated that only Allah grants healing, while the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) encompass principles of health and well-being. He noted that many diseases emerge due to lack of awareness, negligence, and carelessness. He said that advancements in medical science over the past two centuries have made early diagnosis of conditions like Thalassemia possible, whereas in the past, lack of awareness hindered proper treatment. He added that scientists have identified thalassemia as a hereditary blood disorder. Governor

Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi further stated that modern research and treatment have created hope for improved health outcomes in children affected by thalassemia. He appreciated the services of Sundas Foundation, acknowledging its significant role in patient care. He stressed the importance of raising awareness among young couples about pre-marital thalassemia screening and highlighted that timely medical testing is a responsibility linked to health awareness. Governor Sindh Syed Muhammad Nehal Hashmi said that the working class served as the backbone of the country's economic development and prosperity, and their contributions can never be forgotten. Paying glowing tribute to the workers on the occasion of Labor Day on Friday, the Governor remarked that Islam regarded the laborer as a friend of Allah and therefore,

we must fully respect their hard work. He further added that labor and hard work were traditions of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon them) and a source of blessings. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) emphasized the importance of paying workers their full wages promptly and fairly, he said. Muhammad Nihal Hashmi clarified that protecting workers' rights and ensuring their welfare was the government's top priority. Providing workers with facilities related to health, education and social security is a fundamental responsibility of the state, he added. The Governor of Sindh stated that the role of the working class was of critical importance in the industrial and economic development of Sindh. The International Labor Day reminds us to renew our commitment to stand in solidarity with workers and safeguarding their rights. —APP

## CPI records inflation at 10.9pc in April

ISLAMABAD: The core inflation measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) CPI inflation increased by 10.9 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.3 percent in the previous month and 0.3 percent in April 2025, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. On month-on-month (MoM) basis, it increased by 2.5 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 1.2 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 0.8 percent in April 2025. According to PBS data, CPI inflation urban, increased by 11.1 percent on year-on-year basis in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.4 percent in the previous month and an increase of 0.5 percent in April 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 2.7 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 1.3 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 0.7 percent in April 2025. CPI inflation rural, increased by 10.6 percent on year-on-year basis in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.2 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 0.1 percent observed in April 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 2.1 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 1.0 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 1.0 percent in April 2025. The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on YoY basis increased by 10.1 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 5.6 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 3.6 percent in April 2025. On MoM basis, it increased by 2.0 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.7 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 2.1 percent in April 2025. The Wholesale Price Index inflation on YoY basis increased by 13.6 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 6.7 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 2.2 percent in April 2025. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 5.1 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 5.9 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 1.3 percent in April 2025. The Core inflation measured by non-food non-energy for urban increased by 8.0 percent on YoY basis in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 7.4 percent in the previous month and 7.4 percent in April 2025. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 1.9 percent in April 2026 as compared to 0. percent in previous month and an increase of 1.3 percent in the corresponding month of last year i.e. April 2025. The core inflation measured by non-food non-energy for rural increased by 8.5 percent on YoY basis in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 8.4 percent in the previous month and an increase of 9.0 percent in April 2025. On MoM basis, it increased by 1.1 percent in April 2026 as compared to an increase of 0.8 percent in the previous month and an increase of 0.9 percent in the corresponding month of last year i.e. April 2025. —DNA

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MAY

May 03/Poland National Day
May 06/Bulgaria Armed Forces Day
May 06/UAE Armed Forces Day
May 07/Kazakhstan Armed Forces Day
May 08/Czech Republic National Day
May 09/European Union National Day
May 17/Norway Constitution Day
May 21/Hungary Armed Forced Day
May 22/Yemen Republic Re-unification Day(National Day)
May 24/Eritrea National Day
May 25/Lebanon Liberation and Resistance Day
May 25/Argentina National Day
May 25/Jordan Independence Day
May 28 /Azerbaijan Republic Day
May 28/Ethiopia National Day
May 31/Brunei Armed Forces Day

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/

Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



### Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange.9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi...5555489

CAA.....9281002



### Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....5611116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

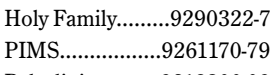
RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3



### Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Labourers folding iron bars at an iron factory in the Federal Capital on the eve of the International Labour Day.

## Ulemas' role urged for compliance with humanitarian law

The conference explored the foundations of IHL and Islam in humanitarian approaches to identify the relationship between IHL and Islamic teachings. The speakers particularly drew on the tradition of Siyar, i.e., Islamic international law

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The growing erosion in compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) in contemporary conflict settings underscores the need to revisit ethical frameworks and enhance the role of religious communities in promoting humanitarian norms, protecting human dignity, and fostering accountability. Experts emphasized that Islamic traditions offer significant guidance for regulating conduct during armed conflict and safeguarding non-combatants. These views were expressed at a conference titled "Eroding Compliance of IHL and Role of Religious Communities," organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Karachi. The event brought together scholars, religious leaders, practitioners, and civil society representatives to examine the challenges facing IHL implementation and explore the constructive role religious

actors can play in reinforcing humanitarian principles. The speakers included prominent religious scholars, academics, humanitarian workers, lawyers, and media practitioners. Prominent among those who spoke at the conference included Mufti Munib ur Rahman, Mufti Abdur Rahim, Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad, Dr. Mohsin Naqvi, Dr. Nigar Sajjad Zaheer, Dr. Umair Mahmood Siddiqui, Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Sani, IPS Chairman Khalid Rahman, and Regional Advisor ICRC Dr Ziaullah Rahmani. The first session highlighted the increasing disregard for established norms governing armed conflict, noting that violations of IHL have become more visible in recent global crises. Speakers underscored the importance of bridging legal frameworks with moral and religious values to strengthen compliance. The keynote address by Dr. Anis Ahmad reflected on the causes and manifestations of declining adherence to humanitarian principles and called for greater engagement by Muslim societies in upholding ethical conduct in times of

conflict. The conference explored the foundations of IHL and Islam in humanitarian approaches to identify the relationship between IHL and Islamic teachings. The speakers particularly drew on the tradition of Siyar, i.e., Islamic international law. They examined the principles governing conduct in war, including the protection of civilians, religious personnel, symbols, and places of worship, as well as the ethical treatment of prisoners and non-combatants. The discussion also highlighted the role of religious scholarship and education in promoting awareness of humanitarian norms and fostering inter-communal harmony. In the second session, panelists deliberated on the practical dimensions of the role of Muslim communities in promoting compliance with IHL in contemporary contexts. They emphasized the critical role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations in advocating humanitarian values, especially during crises. The contributions of welfare organizations in conflict situations, challenges faced by media in re-

porting armed conflicts, and the protection of medical personnel and infrastructure were also discussed. Speakers noted that strengthening institutional cooperation and public awareness remains essential for improving adherence to humanitarian standards. In the concluding session, speakers emphasized the need for sustained intellectual and policy engagement to address the declining respect for IHL. They highlighted the importance of integrating ethical, legal, and religious perspectives to develop more effective responses to humanitarian challenges. The conference concluded with a call for continued collaboration between academic institutions, humanitarian organizations, and religious communities to promote a more humane and principled approach to conflict. IPS Chairman Khalid Rahman said the conference formed part of IPS's ongoing efforts to facilitate dialogue on critical global issues, bridging classical ethical traditions with contemporary policy frameworks and contributing to a more informed and responsible discourse on humanitarian law and practice.

## Salik pays tribute to workers on Int'l Labour Day

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Friday paid rich tribute to the working class on the occasion of International Labour Day, acknowledging their pivotal role as the backbone of Pakistan's economy and development. In his message, the minister stated, "Today, on International Labour Day, I salute the great workers who laid the foundation of labour rights through their struggle. Workers are the fundamental pillar of any nation's progress. The minister emphasized that the government has made the welfare of workers a top priority both at the national and international levels. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to protecting fundamental labour rights, including the ratification of key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions.

The government is also committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to decent employment, economic growth, and social protection. Highlighting the achievements of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development over the past year, the minister noted that over 762,000 Pakistanis were provided employment opportunities abroad. Remittances have increased to nearly \$40 billion, and new jobs have been created through bilateral agreements with Italy, Qatar, South Korea, Belarus, and several other countries. "The government has increased financial assistance for workers – marriage grants have been raised from Rs. 400,000 to Rs. 600,000, and death grants have been increased from Rs. 800,000 to Rs. 1 million," the minister announced. He further stated

that industrial workers would soon be allotted homes and flats on merit in Islamabad. A significant increase has also been made in pensions under the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), alongside reforms to make the pension system more transparent and effective. Digital reforms have also been introduced in institutions. The launch of the Workers' Welfare Fund mobile app and the e-Protector system has improved transparency and service delivery. Strict measures have been taken to protect workers from exploitation, including the cancellation of licences of illegal recruitment agents. "Our vision is to build an inclusive and just society where every worker enjoys dignity, social protection, and empowerment – because our workers are the true breadwinners of this nation," the minister concluded.—APP

## Stronger labour policies to ensure workers' dignity

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Prof. Zabta Khan Shinwari, on Friday paid tribute to labour for their invaluable contributions to the country's economy and society, calling for stronger labour policies to ensure worker's dignity. In a message on the occasion of International "Labour Day", he said hard work of labourers form the backbone of national development, adding that the day serves not only as recognition of their role but also as a reminder to strengthen policy commitments ensuring safety and equal opportunities for all workers. Prof. Shinwari emphasized that sustainable development and national progress are closely linked with the well-being of workers across both formal and informal sectors. He noted that

industrial labourers, agricultural workers, skilled professionals, and daily wage earners all play a critical role in driving economic growth and maintaining social stability. The Vice Chancellor called for expanding social protection measures, including pensions, health insurance, and unemployment support, particularly for workers in the informal sector. He further emphasized the importance of skills development, digital literacy, and continuous training to prepare the workforce for emerging economic challenges and opportunities. Addressing gender equality and inclusion, Prof. Shinwari said labour policies must ensure equal opportunities, safe working environments for women, and protection for marginalized and vulnerable groups. He also highlighted the need to strengthen labour rights by ensur-

ing access to grievance redressal mechanisms, collective bargaining, and worker representation in decision-making processes. Prof. Shinwari stressed that achieving these objectives requires coordinated efforts among government institutions, employers, academia, civil society, and international partners. He noted that universities and research institutions have a vital role in providing evidence-based policy recommendations and promoting inclusive and ethical economic practices. Reaffirming the university's commitment, he reiterated efforts would continue to build a just, inclusive, and resilient labour system where every worker is respected, protected, and empowered. He added that the dignity of labour must remain central to national priorities, concluding that a nation's true strength lies in the dignity of its labour.—DNA

## Magsi raises alarm over lead exposure risks

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi on Friday expressed serious concern over the dangerous effects of lead exposure on maternal and child health during a meeting with a high-level delegation of UNICEF. The minister underscored the urgent need for effective governmental and regulatory measures to address the growing issue of lead contamination. Both sides emphasized that protecting mothers and children from lead poisoning must be treated as a national public health priority. The officials from the Ministry of Science and Technology informed the meeting that a proposal is under consideration to establish a lead-free testing laboratory at PCSIR Karachi. In addition, the establishment of sub-centers in Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar was also discussed to expand testing capacity and outreach across the country. The meeting also reviewed the possibility of further tightening regulations under the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) regarding permissible lead limits in paints, cosmetics, and food items.—APP

## Two drug convicts handed nine-year sentences

TAXILA: A special court for Control of Narcotic Substances (CNSA) in Taxila has sentenced two drug convicts to nine years' rigorous imprisonment each, along with fines of Rs80,000, after their involvement in separate narcotics cases was proven. The verdict was announced by Additional Sessions Judge Farhan Mudassar on Friday, who presided over the CNSA court. One of the convicts, Hussain Nazir, a resident of HMC Colony, was found guilty in a case registered at Wah Cantt Police Station under the Narcotics Act. In a separate case, the court awarded the same sentence to Aliyan Ali, a resident of Sukho. During proceedings, it was revealed that Hussain Nazir is a habitual offender, with a criminal record spanning 14 cases registered across multiple police stations in Rawalpindi and Attock, including Wah Cantt, Taxila, and Hassanabad. Following the court's decision, both convicts were transferred to Adiala Jail to serve their sentences, marking a continued crackdown on drug-related crimes in the region.—APP

## US, Iran confrontation entering volatile phase

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani diplomat and former president of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan on Friday cautioned that the evolving confrontation between the United States and Iran is entering a dangerously volatile phase, marked by military posturing, economic pressure, and strategic signaling from multiple global actors. Khan observed that while both Washington and Tehran are escalating pressure through military deployments and strong rhetoric, parallel efforts are underway to explore diplomatic off-ramps. "We are witnessing a dual-track approach—on one hand coercive strategies, and on the other, a search for a negotiated middle ground," he stated. Ambassador Khan underscored that Pakistan continues to play a pivotal and trusted role as a facilitator between the two sides. He noted that Pakistan's engagement remains "consistent, discreet, and constructive," with both parties recognizing its credibility as a neutral intermediary capable of bridging deep mistrust. Referring to recent developments, he highlighted that U.S. military preparedness in the region, including deployment of aircraft carriers and amphibious forces, is aimed at exerting pressure rather than initiating full-scale war. "Even the United States does not appear to be seeking outright conflict, but rather leveraging military superiority to shape negotiation outcomes," he added. At the same time, he emphasized that Iran has demonstrated resilience despite sustained attacks and leadership losses. "Iran's decentralized command structure and strategic depth have enabled it to maintain operational continuity," he noted, while cautioning that vulnerabilities remain, particularly in critical infrastructure and economic stability. Khan warned that any targeted strikes on Iranian assets could trigger a broader regional response, including threats to Gulf energy installations, maritime routes, and international shipping. He pointed out that thousands of vessels and seafarers remain stranded, signaling an emerging humanitarian and economic crisis. Highlighting the broader geopolitical implications, he said that global markets, including energy and stock exchanges, are already under strain, increasing pressure on all stakeholders to de-escalate. He also noted shifting regional alignments and the risk of fragmentation within the Muslim world. On diplomacy, he stressed that progress lies in identifying a "lowest common denominator," including simultaneous easing of blockades, phased sanctions relief, and deferring contentious issues such as the nuclear programme for structured negotiations. "Neither side can afford a win-lose outcome. The current trajectory is leading toward a lose-lose situation for all," he concluded, urging immediate, coordinated international efforts to stabilize the situation and revive meaningful dialogue.

## Reception hosted for women lawyers

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture and Member National Assembly Farah Naz Akbar has said that Youm-e-Marka-e-Haq would be commemorated with traditional enthusiasm and active participation of women, highlighting its national significance. She was speaking at a dinner reception hosted on Thursday in honour of young women lawyers where a large number of members from the Islamabad Bar Women Wing attended. In her address, Farah Naz Akbar lauded the emerging cohort of young and talented women lawyers, describing them as the "bright future of Pakistan's legal fraternity." She said her vision was aligned with the leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, reflecting a broader commitment to women's empowerment. Highlighting the government's initiatives, she said the federal government was taking concrete steps to promote women's empowerment through improved access to education, employment, and equal opportunities in the legal profession. "Providing a conducive environment for young lawyers to grow and excel remains among our top priorities," she added.—APP

## Briefs

## Call for bridging gap between traditional labour, digital age

ISLAMABAD: Reflecting on Pakistan's evolving economy this Labour Day, Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) CEO Muhammad Anwar underscored the urgent need to bridge the gap between traditional labour and the digital age. In his message, he envisioned a future where the "sweat of the brow" is complemented by the power of technology—ensuring that every citizen, from street vendors to tech professionals, has a fair opportunity to succeed in a modern economy. He noted that the true spirit of Labour Day lies in empowering individuals to grow without unnecessary barriers. By adopting digital compliance tools, he said, Pakistan can create a more inclusive environment in which small traders and cottage industries are no longer excluded by the complexities of the formal sector. Anwar also highlighted the potential of digital ledgers and innovative technological solutions to provide small farmers with greater security and transparency. He emphasised that bringing Silicon Valley-style innovation to rural areas could ensure that those who feed the nation benefit more equitably from economic growth. He further remarked that the transition to renewable energy is not only an environmental necessity but also a matter of labour rights, noting that solar power offers an affordable alternative for small businesses.—APP

## Mushaal urges world to act on plight of Kashmiri workers

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of detained Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, on Friday marked International Labour Day by calling on the global community to take urgent notice of the worsening condition of workers in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), urging concrete action to address the deepening economic and humanitarian crisis. In her Labour Day message issued on May 1, she expressed solidarity with Kashmiri labourers, stating that the day symbolised not only recognition of workers' rights worldwide but also a reminder of the suffering of those deprived of basic protections in conflict regions. Ms Mullick said that Kashmiri workers are facing "severe oppression" and economic marginalisation, adding that ongoing conditions had pushed the labouring class into extreme hardship while stripping them of fundamental rights. Emphasising the global significance of Labour Day, she urged international human rights organisations and world powers to step forward, become the voice of oppressed Kashmiri workers and ensure tangible measures for their relief and protection.—APP

## Muhammad Rauf named focal person

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A significant development has emerged from the Prime Minister's Office, where Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan, has appointed Muhammad Rauf as Focal Person. According to an official statement issued here, Muhammad Rauf has been designated as the Focal Person to strengthen linkages within the tourism and hospitality sector under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. The appointment has been made on an honorary basis. Sources indicate that in his role as Focal Person, Muhammad Rauf will enhance coordination among relevant institutions, stakeholders, and partners.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of Faisal Mosque under clouds in the Federal Capital.

## Citizens from every corner stand proud as Marka-e-Haq marks a year

The visuals reflected powerful emotional reactions, with many criticizing India's false narratives, highlighting how they have failed to stand against the truth. This strong public sentiment underscored the unity and pride felt in support of Pakistan's military strength

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Marka-e-Haq marks a year of pride and unity as citizens across Pakistan and Kashmir, from children to adults, come together to celebrate the steadfastness of our military forces, making this collective triumph a moment that will always be remembered, especially as we stand strong against challenges from India. Citizens from across Pakistan have paid rich tributes to the Armed Forces as Marka-e-Haq completes one year, with media reports highlighting messages of pride

and solidarity from all segments of society. Government to private departments and local communities expressed appreciation for the strong and decisive response of the military, reflecting a nationwide sentiment of unity and gratitude. Newspapers and broadcast media carried widespread accounts of citizens acknowledging the forces' role in safeguarding national strength and stability. In Kashmir as well, citizens joined in expressing their support, with tributes reported through various media platforms. Children also featured prominently in media stories, with schools and communi-

ty programs showcasing messages of pride and hope for the future. A student shared that they are proud of the Armed Forces on the completion of Marka-e-Haq's first year, while a citizen remarked that the occasion reflects unity, strength and national pride. A Kashmiri student expressed standing in solidarity with the nation on this historic moment, and a school student said their hearts are filled with respect for the defenders of the country. A teacher noted that the day highlights national unity and resilience, while another citizen stated that

the courage and commitment of the Armed Forces remain a source of pride for the entire nation. Video reports circulating across media platforms captured a surge of public enthusiasm, as citizens voiced deep respect for the Pakistan Armed Forces, praising their courage, resilience and vital role in defending the nation. The visuals reflected powerful emotional reactions, with many criticizing India's false narratives, highlighting how they have failed to stand against the truth. This strong public sentiment underscored the unity and pride felt in support of Pakistan's military strength.

## Unionists mark Labour Day, demand crack-down on exploitation

They also emphasized increasing women's participation in trade unions, strengthening labour policies and launching awareness drives to ensure workers are informed of their rights and have stronger platforms to voice their concerns

ISLAMABAD: Unionists from various departments, including Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen, Shahid Waheed and Ramzan Laghari Friday marked International Labour Day by paying tribute to workers and calling for the implementation of basic labour rights, stronger policies and greater inclusion across trade unions. While speaking in an exclusive conversation with PTV News, union leaders Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen, Shahid Waheed and Ramzan Laghari shed light on the pressing challenges faced by workers, stressing the urgent need for effective implementation of labour laws, fair and timely payment systems and better documentation of the workforce. They also emphasized increasing women's participation in trade unions, strengthening labour policies and launching awareness drives to ensure workers are informed of their rights and have stronger platforms to voice their concerns. Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen, General Secretary of the CDA Workers Union, underscored the relentless efforts of sanitary workers who serve the capital day and night under challenging conditions. He pointed out that despite being the backbone of the city's cleanliness system, these workers are still deprived of basic respect and recognition. Calling for urgent reforms, he demanded the restoration of dignity for labourers and urged the government to revive and implement the pro-labour policies introduced during the tenure of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to safeguard workers' rights and improve their living standards. Afshan Tehseen Bajwa, former Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC), paid tribute to workers nationwide, highlighting the vital contribution of women in the labour force and stressing the need for stronger enforcement of labour laws to ensure protection, equality and dignity for all workers. Shahid Waheed, President of the State Life Insurance Employees Union of Pakistan, also paid glowing tribute to workers across various sectors, including both formal and informal labour. He emphasized the need for greater awareness of labour rights, the introduction of worker-friendly and beneficiary laws and the creation of more effective platforms to ensure workers' voices are heard and they have access to justice. Ramzan Laghari, President of the PIA Employees Union, demanded registration of unions with the NIRC and urged strict government checks and balances in departments, along with the effective implementation of labour laws to prevent violations and safeguard workers' rights.

## Kitchen items' prices up by 0.62pc

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation increased by 0.62 percent during the week ended on April 30, 2026 for the combined consumption group, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. According to PBS data, SPI for the week under review for the combined group rose to 354.23 points as compared to 352.04 points recorded in the previous week. On year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 14.52 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 0.17 percent to 332.16 points from 331.60 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 increased by 0.26 percent, 0.37 percent, 0.51 percent and 0.83 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 14 items (27.45 percent) increased, 13 items (25.49 percent) decreased, while 24 items (47.06 percent) remained stable. Major increase was observed in the prices of diesel which rose by 7.53 percent, followed by petrol 7.18 percent, wheat flour 4.74 percent, potatoes 1.39 percent, bread 0.75 percent, washing soap 0.68 percent, pulse moong 0.66 percent, mutton 0.45 percent, beef 0.39 percent, bananas 0.37 percent, fresh milk 0.30 percent and cigarettes by 0.24 percent. On the other hand, prices of tomatoes declined by 17.17 percent, chicken 6.00 percent, garlic 2.38 percent, electricity charges for Q1 0.94 percent, pulse mash 0.89 percent, LPG 0.80 percent, rice IRRI-6/9 0.43 percent, eggs 0.38 percent, pulse gram 0.28 percent and pulse masoor 0.16 percent. On year-on-year basis, the SPI for the week under review increased by 14.52 percent compared to the corresponding week of last year. During the period, major increase was recorded in the prices of petrol by 54.44 percent, electricity charges for Q1 by 52.58 percent.—APP

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## AI boom is fundamentally different from dot-com bubble

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH

THE bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000 was a hugely important development. Some commentators and analysts are now attempting to frame the present artificial intelligence boom through that historical lens. Such comparisons, however, are inaccurate. It has been argued that the enthusiasm surrounding AI resembles the speculative landscape that preceded the bursting of the dot-com bubble. But this view is detached from the economic reality of AI. Some technological cycles and booms do contain speculative elements, but the current AI boom is not merely a repetition of the internet bubble. Yes, the dot-com era was defined in large part by expectations and speculations. But by contrast, the rise of AI is occurring in a world where there is already an infrastructure for deploying it. Secondly, it is already generating tangible outcomes. AI is not just a promise that may happen in the future. It is already reshaping sectors such as production, services, logistics, healthcare, finance, education and governance. As a result, this is not just a replay of 2000 but rather the early phase of a structurally transformative technological shift. While the dominant perception of the late 1990s that the internet would change communication, media and other sectors was correct, the infrastructure to support such a large shift was not in place. This is not just a replay of 2000 but rather the early phase of a structurally transformative technological shift. For example, we did not have a digital system or smartphones or the cloud, while networks were underdeveloped. This means that while the internet was revolutionary, we did not have the infrastructure to translate its potential into reality. In other words, the markets had anticipated the future too quickly. The current AI boom is emerging under profoundly different circumstances. Firstly, we already have high-speed connectivity, hyperscale cloud computing, advanced semiconductor manufacturing, sophisticated software ecosystems, mature digital payment systems and billions of digitally connected users. We do not have to wait to be technologically ready before using AI. Secondly, we can examine the revenue profile of leading participants. The dot-com era was heavily populated by unprofitable startups that were dependent on speculative financing. But AI is led, to a significant extent, by some of the most profitable corporations in modern economic history. Firms such as Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Nvidia and



Oracle are financing large-scale AI investment from existing cash flows, diversified revenue streams and robust balance sheets. This shows how unlikely it is that these investments are just speculative. Thirdly, AI is already producing measurable outcomes. Many organizations are using it to lower costs, increase efficiency and improve decision-making, as well as to expand service capacity. For example, in healthcare, AI systems are helping with various issues, such as radiology analysis, medical imaging, clinical documentation and appointment scheduling. Hospitals and healthcare networks are increasingly adopting these tools to reduce administrative burdens and improve operational efficiency. In finance, AI is being used for fraud detection, anti-money laundering reviews, credit scoring, compliance monitoring and customer service automation. Financial institutions are not investing in AI because it is trending but because they are seeing tangible results. When it comes to manufacturing, Germany's industrial sector, Japan's robotics ecosystem, South Korea's electronics manufacturers and China's smart factories all show how AI has become an indispensable part of growth. Even in education, AI tutoring systems, language learning assistants, grading tools and curriculum generators are changing how students are learning and how instruction is delivered. AI has applications across nearly every sector. Some even argue that, in that respect, it is similar to electricity. All these examples demonstrate the crucial issue that AI is not limited to one industry. It has applications across nearly every sector. Some even argue that, in that respect, it is similar to electricity. While the internet certainly had transformative potential in the late 1990s, AI today can often be inserted directly into existing workflows. It enhances processes already taking place inside firms and institutions. Fourthly, the dot-com bubble was strongly centered on US equity markets and startup culture, though its effects were broader. The current AI expansion is occurring across multiple regions. While the US remains central, China is aggressively deploying AI across manufacturing, logistics, e-commerce and financial technology. Europe is focusing heavily on industrial AI and advanced manufacturing. India is leveraging AI within its vast information technology services sector. Japan and South Korea are integrating AI into robotics and automotive production. And Gulf states are investing in sovereign-scale AI infrastructure, data centers, smart city initiatives and diversification strategies. This worldwide competition is critical. Some people might criticize the massive spending on data centers and chips, but it is vital to remember that, historically, transformative technologies often require large up-front investment. Finally, labor markets also reveal that AI capability is already economically meaningful. Firms across many sectors are using AI to automate customer support; therefore, it is affecting real tasks now, not merely as a speculative narrative. In other words, AI has crossed an important threshold from demonstration to implementation. In a nutshell, the current AI boom is not the same as the late-1990s dot-com bubble. AI is already generating tangible outcomes and is a tool that governments are increasingly funding, firms are deploying, scientists are using and industries are integrating.

## Rethinking Labor Day in the Modern World - A Take-Home Message from 1st May

Prof Dr Shujaul Mulk Khan



History shows that meaningful improvement occurs when governments enact strong labor laws and ensure their enforcement. Legal frameworks protecting minimum wages, occupational safety, collective bargaining rights, and social welfare programs have transformed working conditions in many parts of the world. Yet laws alone are insufficient unless supported by transparent governance, effective inspection systems, and accountability

EVERY year, the arrival of 1st May brings speeches, rallies, official holidays, and public recognition of workers across the globe. Known as Labor Day or International Workers' Day, it is meant to celebrate the dignity of work and honor those whose labor sustains societies and economies. Yet beyond the celebrations, an important question remains: Does Labor Day truly change the lives of workers, or has it gradually become a symbolic event that reminds us more of unfinished responsibilities than completed achievements? Labor Day emerged from struggle rather than ceremony. In the late nineteenth century, industrial workers protested exhausting working hours, unsafe conditions, and extremely low wages. The demand for an eight-hour workday became a global movement that reshaped labor laws and forced governments to recognize workers as central to economic development. The rights many workers enjoy today - weekly holidays, workplace safety regulations, minimum wages, and social protections - are rooted in those historic sacrifices. Labor Day, therefore, represents a victory for human dignity. However, the realities faced by millions of workers today suggest that the struggle is far from over. For many laborers, especially in developing countries, Labor Day offers recognition but little immediate relief. A daily wage worker who depends on each day's income may not experience the holiday as celebration but as lost earnings. Ceremonial speeches rarely translate into improved working conditions or stronger social protection systems. The true value of Labor Day lies not in public events but in whether it inspires governments, employers, and societies to renew their commitment to justice and fairness in the workplace. Despite technological progress and economic globalization, labor exploitation still exists in different forms. Across South Asia, construction workers, factory employees, agricultural laborers, and domestic workers often work long hours with minimal job security. Informal employment remains widespread, leaving workers without contracts, insurance, or legal protection. Economic growth has expanded industries, yet many workers remain trapped in cycles of poverty.

In Africa, miners extracting valuable minerals essential for modern electronics frequently operate in dangerous environments. Their labor supports global technological advancement, yet they often receive low wages and limited safety protection. The situation reflects a global contradiction: the modern world depends on workers whose own living conditions remain fragile. The experience of migrant workers in Gulf countries further illustrates these challenges. Millions leave their homes in South Asia and Africa seeking better livelihoods. While many succeed in improving their families' economic conditions, others face delayed salaries, recruitment debts, restricted mobility, or crowded living arrangements. Reforms introduced in countries such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have aimed to improve wage protection and labor rights, but implementation gaps still affect workers' daily realities. Migration offers opportunity, yet it also exposes workers to vulnerability when oversight is weak. The issue of wages remains at the heart of labor dignity. Around the world, workers struggle not only with low salaries but also with irregular or delayed payments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world witnessed migrant laborers walking long distances after losing jobs overnight, revealing how fragile economic systems can be for those living without savings or social security. Even in wealthier economies, gig-economy workers face uncertain incomes and lack long-term protection such as pensions or healthcare benefits. Employment exists, but stability does not always follow. History shows that meaningful improvement occurs when governments enact strong labor laws and ensure their enforcement. Legal frameworks protecting minimum wages, occupational safety, collective bargaining rights, and social welfare programs have transformed working conditions in many parts of the world. Yet laws alone are insufficient unless supported by transparent governance, effective inspection systems, and accountability. Governments must treat labor protection not as charity but as a cornerstone of sustainable development. There is also significant room for improvement in preparing workers for future challenges. Automation, artificial intelligence, and climate change are reshaping labor markets. Workers

displaced by technological change require access to education, vocational training, and reskilling opportunities. Formalizing informal employment sectors can extend legal protection to millions who currently remain invisible in economic statistics. Expanding digital payment systems, worker registration, and social protection coverage can help ensure that no worker is excluded from national development. Another overlooked dimension of labor welfare is the impact of wars and conflicts. Throughout history, workers have borne the heaviest burden of instability. Armed conflicts destroy factories, disrupt agriculture, and collapse local economies, leaving workers unemployed and displaced. Families lose livelihoods overnight, and migration becomes a necessity rather than a choice. Reconstruction after wars again depends on laborers, highlighting the deep connection between peace and economic security. Protecting workers therefore requires not only economic policies but also political stability and international cooperation. The deeper message of Labor Day is profoundly human. Every building constructed, every road paved, every harvest gathered, and every service delivered reflects human effort and perseverance. Workers are not merely economic units; they are individuals supporting families, nurturing communities, and sustaining nations. Economic growth that ignores worker welfare ultimately weakens social stability and moral responsibility. The take-home message from 1st May is clear: celebrating workers once a year is not enough. True respect for labor must appear in fair wages paid on time, safe workplaces, equal opportunities, and social protection systems that safeguard dignity during hardship. Labor Day should serve as a yearly reflection - a reminder that progress must be measured not only by economic indicators but by the well-being of those who make development possible. When societies move beyond symbolic celebration toward genuine commitment, Labor Day becomes more than a historical remembrance. It becomes a living promise that work will always be connected with dignity, justice, and hope for a better future.

## America Diverts Global Oil Revenues

Qamar Bashir



Taken together, the combined effect of crude oil and LNG exports suggests that the United States has realized an additional \$15 to \$20 billion in energy export revenues by the end of April alone. This figure is not merely a reflection of increased production capacity; it is the direct consequence of a reordering of global energy flows. As Middle Eastern supply chains became uncertain, buyers were compelled to seek alternative sources...

THE unfolding crisis in the Persian Gulf, triggered by escalating tensions with Iran and the disruption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, has reshaped the global energy landscape in ways few could have anticipated just months ago. By April 30, 2026, one of the clearest beneficiaries of this upheaval has been the United States, which has witnessed a remarkable surge in oil and gas export revenues. What began as a geopolitical confrontation has rapidly evolved into a powerful economic windfall for American energy producers, fundamentally altering trade flows, pricing dynamics, and global dependence on U.S. energy supplies. Before the crisis, global oil markets were relatively stable, with Brent crude trading near \$70 per barrel and supply chains functioning efficiently through traditional Middle Eastern routes. The United States, already a leading energy producer, was exporting approximately 4.1 to 4.2 million barrels of crude oil per day. These exports generated a steady but predictable stream of revenue, reflective of moderate prices and stable demand. However, the outbreak of hostilities and the subsequent risks to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz—a chokepoint through which nearly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes—triggered a dramatic shift. As fears of supply disruption intensified, global oil prices surged. Brent crude quickly climbed past \$110 per barrel, briefly touching even higher levels as markets reacted to the uncertainty. This price escalation alone would have been sufficient to boost revenues for exporting nations, but for the United States, the gains were compounded by a significant increase in export volumes. By April, U.S. crude exports had risen to an average of approximately 5.1 to 5.2 million barrels per day, representing a substantial jump from pre-crisis levels. In one remarkable week toward the end of April, exports peaked at over 6.4 million barrels per day—a historic high. This combination of higher prices and increased volumes translated into a dramatic rise in daily export revenues. Prior to the crisis, U.S. crude exports were generating roughly \$290 million per day. By late April, that figure had climbed to approximately \$560–\$570 million per day. In simple terms, the United States was earning an additional \$270–\$280 million every single day from crude exports alone. Over the course of the month, this equates to an incremental gain of approximately \$8 to \$9 billion—an extraordinary windfall driven largely by geopolitical instability. Yet crude oil tells only part of the story. The global natural gas market has experienced an equally significant transfor-

ation, with U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports playing a central role. As traditional suppliers in the Middle East faced logistical constraints and uncertainty, import-dependent regions such as Europe and Asia turned increasingly toward the United States to secure their energy needs. American LNG facilities ramped up production to meet this surge in demand, pushing exports to record levels. Between January and April 2026, U.S. LNG exports are estimated to have reached over 32 million metric tons, representing a year-on-year increase of approximately 28 percent. This surge was accompanied by sharp increases in global gas prices. European benchmark prices rose by roughly 35 percent, while Asian prices experienced an even steeper increase of over 50 percent. These price movements significantly amplified the revenue impact of higher export volumes, ensuring that U.S. gas producers benefited from both sides of the equation. Taken together, the combined effect of crude oil and LNG exports suggests that the United States has realized an additional \$15 to \$20 billion in energy export revenues by the end of April alone. This figure is not merely a reflection of increased production capacity; it is the direct consequence of a reordering of global energy flows. As Middle Eastern supply chains became uncertain, buyers were compelled to seek alternative sources, and the United States emerged as the most reliable and scalable provider. This shift has broader implications beyond immediate financial gains. First, it reinforces the United States' position as a dominant energy superpower. Over the past decade, advancements in shale technology and infrastructure have enabled the U.S. to transition from a net importer to a major exporter of both oil and gas. The current crisis has accelerated this trajectory, highlighting the strategic importance of American energy in maintaining global stability during periods of disruption. Second, the redirection of energy flows toward the United States has altered trade balances and geopolitical relationships. Countries that once relied heavily on Middle Eastern suppliers are now deepening their energy ties with Washington. This shift carries long-term consequences, as energy dependence often translates into broader economic and political alignment. In effect, the crisis has expanded the United States' sphere of influence, not through military intervention, but through the quiet leverage of energy supply. Third, the economic benefits are not confined to energy companies alone. Higher export revenues contribute to improved trade balances, increased tax receipts, and

stronger performance in related industries such as shipping, refining, and infrastructure. The ripple effects extend across the broader economy, supporting jobs and investment at a time when global uncertainty might otherwise dampen growth. However, it is important to recognize that these gains are not without risks or complexities. Elevated energy prices impose significant costs on consumers worldwide, contributing to inflationary pressures and economic strain, particularly in developing countries. Moreover, the sustainability of current revenue levels depends heavily on the geopolitical tensions. A sudden de-escalation or restoration of normal shipping routes could quickly reverse price gains and reduce export margins. There is also the question of strategic intent. Some analysts argue that the prolonged disruption of key maritime routes indirectly benefits U.S. exporters by forcing a structural shift in global supply chains. Whether by design or coincidence, the outcome is clear: as traditional pathways become less reliable, the world becomes increasingly dependent on American energy. As of April 30, 2026, the numbers tell a compelling story. Record export volumes, sharply higher prices, and unprecedented global demand have combined to generate a massive revenue surge for the United States. What began as a regional conflict has produced global economic consequences, with the U.S. energy sector emerging as one of the primary winners. Looking ahead, the durability of this windfall will depend on how the crisis evolves. If tensions persist and alternative supply routes remain constrained, the United States is likely to continue reaping substantial financial and strategic benefits. Conversely, a resolution that restores normal trade flows could moderate prices and reduce export volumes. Either way, the events of early 2026 have already demonstrated the transformative power of energy geopolitics—and the central role of the United States within it. In the final analysis, the Iran crisis has done more than disrupt markets; it has redefined them. By April's end, the United States stands not only as a supplier of last resort but as a cornerstone of global energy security, capturing billions in additional revenue while reshaping the contours of international trade and influence.

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



## Briefs

## Syria relies on Russia's oil despite pivot to the West

BANIYAS, Syria: Russia has emerged as the main supplier of oil to Syria, Reuters reporting shows, despite the new government's alignment with the West and widespread distrust of Moscow over its military support for fallen leader Bashar Assad. Oil shipments from Russia have jumped 75 percent to about 60,000 barrels per day this year, the reporting found, based on Reuters calculations of official announcements and ship tracking data on LSEG, MarineTraffic and Shipnext. The volumes represent a tiny share of Russia's daily global oil exports. But for Syria, where domestic production remains far below demand, the flows make Moscow the country's dominant crude supplier following the fall of Assad in December 2024, taking over from Iran which was a key ally of the ousted leader during the country's 14-year civil war. The dynamic highlights how limited Syria's options remain. Despite emerging from the war as Western-leaning, its economy is not closely integrated into the global financial system, even after Europe and Washington last year ended decades of sanctions on the country. —APP

## Iraq starts work on Basra-Haditha oil pipeline

BAGHDAD: Iraq has commenced work on an oil pipeline linking Basra to Haditha with a planned capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day, the state news agency said on Friday citing the oil ministry, as the OPEC producer seeks to expand export routes. About \$1.5 billion has been allocated for the project, although its pace will depend on securing further budget allocations, the ministry said. The 700-kilometer (435-mile) pipeline will transport crude for export through multiple routes, including Syria's Baniyas, Turkey's Ceyhan and Jordan's Aqaba, while also supplying refineries along its path, a ministry spokesperson said. On Sunday, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani chaired a meeting to follow up on the Basra-Haditha pipeline project, approved in 2024, and said it had been conceived as a proactive step anticipating current regional conditions and guarding against potential disruption to existing export routes. Crude exports through the Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline had resumed in March, after Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government agreed on restarting flows. Baghdad is also working to revamp a disused pipeline that would allow oil to be pumped directly to Turkey's Ceyhan port without passing through the Kurdistan region. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz due to the Iran war has curtailed oil exports from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq, sending prices higher. Sudanese schoolchildren race to make up for years lost to war. —APP

## ME disruptions drag global air cargo demand down 4.8%

RIYADH: Global cargo demand in the aviation industry declined by 4.8 percent in March, as escalating conflicts in the Middle East disrupted supply chains and weighed on air freight volumes, latest industry data showed. In its new report, the International Air Transport Association revealed that cargo demand among carriers in the Middle East region dropped by 54.3 percent year on year in March, while capacity decreased by 52.4 percent. The escalation of conflict in late February and March triggered widespread airspace closures and flight cancellations across the region, causing severe disruptions at major Gulf cargo hubs, including Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi. Willie Walsh, director general of IATA, said: "Air cargo demand fell 4.8 percent in March compared to the previous year. This was mostly due to severe disruptions at major Gulf hubs due to the war in the Middle East. The timing of the usual post-Lunar New Year slowdown also added to the decline." He said the underlying demand trends in the aviation sector appear strong and that recent revisions to trade and gross domestic product forecasts by the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund continue to point to economic growth in 2026. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Farmers busy in threshing wheat crop at their field in the Golra area of the Federal Capital.

## Pakistan, S Korea expand trade, investment coop

The two sides held detailed discussions on the ongoing CEPA negotiations, agreeing on the need to accelerate technical engagements with a shared objective of concluding the agreement within a mutually agreed timeframe

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and South Korea agreed to engage on Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), expand trade and investment cooperation. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a virtual meeting with Yeon Han-koo, Trade Minister of South Korea, to discuss strengthening bilateral trade ties, advancing negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), and enhancing investment cooperation between the two countries. Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and senior officials from both sides also participated in the meeting, said a release issued here on Friday. At the outset, the Korean Trade Minister lauded Pakistan's leadership role in promoting peace amid the current Middle East situation, stating, "Pakistan's efforts to bring peace are better for the whole world, not just for the countries involved." He also ap-

preciated his past visits to Pakistan, including Lahore, describing them as memorable and praising the country's hospitality and potential. In response, Jam Kamal Khan appreciated the acknowledgment, reaffirming that Pakistan has acted as a responsible state in facilitating dialogue and promoting peace. He expressed hope that ongoing efforts would lead to stability in the region, which is vital for global trade, energy markets, and economic connectivity. The two sides held detailed discussions on the ongoing CEPA negotiations, agreeing on the need to accelerate technical engagements with a shared objective of concluding the agreement within a mutually agreed timeframe. Both ministers emphasized that the agreement should be ambitious, balanced, and reflective of their respective economic realities. Highlighting Pakistan's economic potential, Jam Kamal Khan underscored opportunities across multiple sectors including agriculture, mining, textiles, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, and

sports goods. He emphasized the importance of diversification in trade partnerships, noting that evolving global dynamics require countries to explore new markets and build resilient economic linkages. He reiterated that Pakistan, with its strategic location, can serve as a gateway to Central Asia and Africa. The Korean Trade Minister noted that many Korean companies are keen to invest in Pakistan, considering it a safe and promising destination, particularly in manufacturing and energy sectors. He emphasized that a structured framework like CEPA would further enhance investor confidence and facilitate greater economic engagement. On investment-related concerns, Jam Kamal Khan assured that issues faced by Korean companies operating in Pakistan would be addressed in coordination with relevant ministries. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing a stable and conducive business environment for foreign investors. Both sides also discussed the establishment of a Joint

Trade Committee, agreeing to revive and finalize the mechanism to ensure regular institutional engagement and effective follow-up on bilateral trade matters. Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul, while elaborating Pakistan's position, highlighted the need for a balanced and development-sensitive approach in tariff liberalization under CEPA. He stressed that an asymmetrical arrangement would help accommodate Pakistan's developmental needs and ensure broader stakeholder support. He further assured that Pakistan's technical teams are actively engaged in inter-ministerial consultations and will provide feedback on remaining negotiation chapters soon. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides expressing optimism about the future of Pakistan-South Korea economic relations and reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, and industrial development.

## Turkish police fire tear gas, arrest hundreds at Istanbul May Day rallies

ISTANBUL: Turkish police on Friday fired tear gas and arrested hundreds of people holding May Day demonstrations in Istanbul, as thousands rallied nationwide. According to the CHD Lawyers' Association, at least 370 people were arrested in Istanbul, where police fired tear gas from riot-control vehicles into the crowd, AFP journalists observed. Images aired on the opposition channel HALK TV also showed the president of the Turkish Workers' Party, Erkan Bas, engulfed in pepper spray. "Those in power already speak 365 days a year, so let workers talk about the hardships they face at least one day a year," he said. Two groups were specially singled out in the city's European side after signalling their intention to march to Taksim square — the scene of several anti-government protests in the past — which was sealed off overnight by police. A union official, Basaran Aksu, was arrested just after he had denounced the Taksim lockdown. "You can't close off a square to the workers of Turkey. Everyone uses Taksim, for official ceremonies, for celebrations. Only the laborers, the workers, the poor find the square closed to them," he fumed. May Day, which celebrates workers and the working classes, sees a major police deployment in Turkey every year, with a large area in the heart of Istanbul around Taksim Square sealed off. —APP

## Call for coordinated economic response for fiscal stability

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman, Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, Syed Naveed Qamar called for a coordinated economic response to external shocks and accelerated structural reforms for fiscal stability. The Chairman of the Standing Committee recommended that the Ministry of Finance provide quarterly updates to the Committee on the implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act. The 24th meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue was held today at the Parliament House, Islamabad, under the chairmanship of Syed Naveed Qamar, MNA. The Committee was briefed by senior economists and public financial management specialists on the potential economic implications and spillover effects of the ongoing Middle East crisis on Pakistan's economy, trade, and external sector. It was highlighted that heightened geopolitical tensions may significantly disrupt global oil markets, shipping routes, and supply chains, thereby transmitting inflationary pressures into the domestic economy. The briefing further noted that inflation remains broad-based, with particularly sharp impacts on food, energy, and transport sectors. Persistent energy shortages were also identified as a key constraint, undermining industrial productivity and transport efficiency, increasing the cost of doing business, and slowing overall economic growth. The Committee was further apprised that rising international oil and petroleum prices are adding pressure on domestic fuel costs and the inflation outlook. Key concerns were raised regarding external sector vulnerabilities, including an increasing import bill, widening trade imbalance, and sustained pressure on foreign exchange reserves. In addition, rising freight and logistics costs are adversely affecting trade competitiveness, alongside mixed export performance, stagnation in non-tax revenues, and shortfalls in tax collection. The briefing also covered austerity measures and their fiscal implications, including expenditure rationalization efforts and expected savings, while emphasizing the cumulative impact of these challenges on fiscal stability and the medium-term economic outlook. Syed Naveed Qamar sought clarification on several key issues arising from the briefing. He inquired about the specific policy measures the Government intends to adopt to cushion the economy from the anticipated spillover effects of the Middle East crisis, particularly in stabilizing inflation in essential sectors such as food and energy. He also asked about immediate steps being taken to address mounting external sector pressures, including rising import bills, escalating freight costs, and the resulting strain on foreign exchange reserves. The Chairman of the Standing Committee sought details on the effectiveness of ongoing austerity and revenue enhancement measures in narrowing the fiscal deficit, as well as the structural reforms being considered to strengthen tax collection and improve non-tax revenue performance on a sustainable basis. The Committee observed that the ongoing Middle East crisis poses significant risks to Pakistan's macroeconomic stability through potential disruptions in global oil markets, supply chains, and trade routes, contributing to inflationary pressures, rising import and freight costs, and continued strain on foreign exchange reserves. It further noted that persistent energy shortages are undermining industrial productivity and economic growth, while fiscal challenges, including shortfalls in tax collection, stagnant non-tax revenues, and limited fiscal space under austerity measures, continue to constrain policy options. —DNA

## Iran's monthslong internet shutdown crushing businesses

TEHRAN, Iran: At her studio in Iran's capital, Amen Khademi prepared a fashion shoot for a jacket she designed with Persian-inspired motifs. But even as she applied lipstick to the model, she was distracted, worrying if her business would survive after four months without its main link to customers — the Internet. Iran's 90 million people have been cut off from the Internet for most of 2026, one of the world's longest and strictest national shutdowns. That is devastating an online economy that had long defied government restrictions and international sanctions. From fashion to fitness, to advertising and retailers, many have seen their incomes evaporate. Khademi hasn't made a sale in months. "The Internet outage in the past four months has completely destroyed not only my business, but many online businesses," she said. Despite an uneasy truce with the US and Israel, Iran's rulers have refused to reverse the shutdown they have depicted as a wartime necessity. But they are facing an outcry as it adds to mass job losses from strikes on key industries and an ongoing US blockade. Before January, Iranians could access the Internet, but authorities blocked a large amount of content. Now all access to the global web has been shut down. Some workarounds exist, but they have become enormously expensive, out-

of reach for most Iranians. The Internet cutoff costs the economy an estimated \$30-40 million daily, with indirect losses likely twice that much, a member of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Afshin Kolahi, told a local newspaper. About 10 million people have jobs that depend on Internet connectivity, according to the communications minister, Sattar Hashemi. Throughout years of economic turmoil in Iran brought on by sanctions and mismanagement, platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp helped small businesses to find customers, and people to earn extra income to afford skyrocketing prices for basic goods. Iranian authorities first shut down the Internet in January during mass anti-government protests. That cutoff was just starting to ease when the government imposed a complete Internet blackout on Feb. 28 as the US and Israel launched the war. Mahsa Alimardani, an expert on Internet censorship, said Kashmir and Myanmar have had longer blocks affecting specific regions or platforms. Countries like China, with its "Great Firewall," and North Korea, have always strictly limited access to the global Internet. "What makes Iran's shutdown unprecedented is the combination of scale and severity: an entire country of 90 million people with a developed digital economy de-

liberately reverted to a controlled national intranet," said Alimardani, an associate director for technology threats and opportunities at the rights group Witness. A flagship company of Iran's digital economy, online retailer DigiKala, recently said it was laying off 200 people, about 3 percent of its workforce. The pain extends to "production, foreign trade and even traditional business," Reza Olfatnasab, head of a national group representing digital businesses, said in comments published in Iranian media. Khademi's storefront is Instagram. But her studio's page — with more than 30,000 followers — is now inactive. She was doing the photo shoot to save the pictures for later, hoping to find an alternative. Her model, Farnaz Ojaghloo, is also a fitness coach. The shutdown has dried up both her modeling gigs and the online courses she ran for people inside Iran and abroad. "Psychologically, it really hits hard," Ojaghloo said. "All the plans you had for six months or a year ahead get pushed aside, and your only concern becomes surviving in the moment." For years, authorities in Iran have enforced filters and policed content on platforms like YouTube and Instagram. But before the war, Iranians could bypass restrictions with cheap virtual private networks, known as VPNs, and other easy workarounds. —DNA

## AgriFood moot, expo on May 14

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), in collaboration with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development (ICCD), is set to organize the "AgriFood: Global Investment and Partnership Conference & Expo" on May 14, 2026 in Karachi. President FPCCI Atif Iqbal Sheikh, in a statement issued on Thursday, informed that the event will serve as a vital platform for enhancing trade linkages, attracting investment and showcasing Pakistan's potential in agriculture which remained a cornerstone of the national economy.

The event will be participated by representatives from Agriculture Chambers across all provinces and prominent chambers of commerce and industry along with leaders of key sectoral associations, including pesticides, fertilizer, seeds, allied industries and academia. The joint initiative reflects a shared commitment to promote investment, strengthen international partnerships and unlock the vast potential of Pakistan's agriculture and agri-based industries. Atif Iqbal emphasized, expressing FPCCI's commitment to ensure the event is impactful and result-oriented by facilitating meaningful engagement between local and international stakeholders in the agri-food sector. Broader high-profile participation including the international delegates and members of the diplomatic community will be facilitated, he maintained. Geopolitical risk premium to lift gold prices further RIYADH: The geopolitical risk premium that has helped lift gold prices over the past few years is set to continue and possibly expand as the year progresses, according to an industry body.

In its latest report, the World Gold Council said that rising gold prices are weighing on jewelry demand, while mine supply is expected to increase slightly in response to stronger margins and higher prices.

Amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East region, gold has experienced heightened safe-haven demand as investors seek protection from geopolitical uncertainty, supply disruptions, and volatile energy prices. —APP

## Qatar real estate trading volume falls 5.7%

JEDDAH: Qatar's real estate trading volume fell by 5.7 percent week on week to 438.52 million riyals (\$120.5 million) in the period from April 19 to 23, official data showed.

The figure declined from more than 465 million riyals in the previous week, according to the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice, which said in its weekly bulletin that the latest figure included 398.67 million riyals in registered sales contracts and 39.84 million riyals in residential unit transactions.

Qatar's real estate market is gaining momentum as part of the country's broader economic diversification drive, with sales transactions rising to 9.2 billion riyals in the first quarter of 2026 from 7.2 billion riyals a year earlier, marking annual growth of 28.5 percent and reflecting sustained investor confidence. The latest Qatari bulletin showed that traded properties included vacant land, residential homes, residential buildings, commercial shops, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, and residential units. Sales activity was concentrated across the municipalities of Doha, Al Rayyan, and Al Wakrah, as well as Al Daayen, Umm Salal, and Al Khor, among others. The department noted that real estate trading volume exceeded 465 million riyals in sales contracts during the period from April 12 to 16, including more than 61.6 million riyals from residential unit transactions.

Regionally, Dubai's real estate sector delivered a strong performance in the first quarter of 2026, with total transactions reaching 252 billion UAE dirhams (\$68.5 billion), marking a 31 percent year-on-year increase in value and a 6 percent rise in volume. In Saudi Arabia, the real estate price index declined by 1.6 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2026, data issued by the General Authority for Statistics showed. —APP

## Briefs

### FBR records Rs684bn tax shortfall

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has recorded a tax shortfall of Rs684 billion, as it collected Rs10,261 billion during the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year, against the assigned target of Rs10,945bn. The Gulf War has further aggravated the revenue shortfall as official data shows that the Sales Tax at the import stage has nosedived, making it harder for the FBR to achieve the desired results. The FBR will have to collect Rs3,718bn in the remaining two months (May and June) of 2026 to materialise the revised target of Rs13,979bn by the end of June 2026. In April 2026, the FBR made a collection of Rs956bn so far against the assigned target of Rs1,029bn, witnessing a revenue shortfall of Rs73bn in achieving the desired tax collection target. If the FBR's tax collection crossed Rs13,000bn mark and touched Rs13,200bn, it should be considered an achievement on the part of the tax machinery. The FBR had made a request to the IMF for slashing the annual target from Rs13,979bn to Rs13,400-13,500bn but the Fund had flatly refused to accommodate the demand. The Gulf War has negatively impacted the revenue performance of FBR as imports decreased and economic activities also halted, resulting in shrinking revenue collection, said an FBR official. According to provisional figures, the FBR collected Rs5,142bn under Income Tax during the first 10 months, along with Rs3,825.5bn in Sales Tax, Rs672.9bn in Federal Excise Duty, and Rs1,119.5bn in Customs Duty.

### Crude edges up after wild swing, stocks track Wall St rally

DNA

HONG KONG: Oil prices edged up Friday after the previous day's wild swings, with investors awaiting the next move in the Middle East crisis, while stocks rose in holiday-thinned trade following a tech-led record day on Wall Street. With peace talks between the United States and Iran stalled for the past week, there appears to be little sign that they will agree a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz any time soon, choking off a fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies. After tumbling early in April on news of a ceasefire between the rivals, crude has spiked in recent weeks amid stuttering negotiations, and they soared Thursday after Axios said Donald Trump would be briefed on potential fresh military strikes. The report compounded fears after the US president warned the blockade of Iranian ports could last months.

# Trump gives go-ahead to major new Canada-US oil pipeline

The pipeline needs additional state and federal environmental approvals before construction, which company officials expect to start next year. Environmentalists hope to stop the project over worries that the pipeline could break and spill

DNA

FORT COLLINS, Colorado: President Donald Trump granted a key approval Thursday for a major new oil pipeline from Canada into the US that's been dubbed "Keystone Light" over its similarities to a contentious project blocked by the Biden administration. The three-foot-wide Bridger Pipeline Expansion would carry up to 550,000 barrels of oil a day from Canada through Montana and Wyoming, where it would link with another pipeline. The pipeline needs additional state and federal environmental approvals before construction, which company officials expect to start next year. Environmentalists hope to stop the project over worries that the pipeline could break and spill. At peak volume, the 650-mile pipeline would move two-thirds as much oil as the better-known Keystone XL pipeline that got partially built before President Joe Biden, citing climate change, canceled its permit on the day he took office in 2021. "Slightly different from the last adminis-

tration. They wouldn't sign a pipeline deal. And we have pipelines going up," Trump said after signing his approval for it to cross the border between Saskatchewan and northeastern Montana. Trump in his first term approved the Keystone XL project in 2020 despite concerns from Native American tribes about possible spills and environmental groups about fossil fuels' contribution to climate change. Its cancellation by Biden frustrated Canadian officials, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, after Alberta invested more than \$1 billion in the project. Sometimes called "Keystone Light," the Bridger Pipeline Expansion would not cross any Native American reservations. More than 70 percent would be built within existing pipeline corridors and 80 percent on private land. Bridger Pipeline LLC said in a statement. The line would carry various grades of crude, including from Canada's oil sands region, to be exported or refined in the US, company spokesperson Bill Salvin said. The permit from Trump also authorizes other petroleum products including gasoline,

kerosene, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas. Salvin said including those fuels keeps the company's options open, but it remains focused for now on crude oil. Bridger Pipeline could avoid a reversal by a future administration if it's able to complete its project before Trump leaves office. It hopes to start construction in the fall of 2027 and finish it by late 2028 or early 2029, Bridger spokesperson Bill Salvin said. Trump's term ends Jan. 20, 2029. Bridger Pipeline and other subsidiaries of True Company have been responsible for several major pipeline accidents including more than 50,000 gallons of crude that spilled into the Yellowstone River and fouled a Montana city's drinking water supply in 2015, a 45,000-gallon diesel spill in Wyoming in 2022 and a 2016 spill that released more than 600,000 gallons of crude in North Dakota, contaminating the Little Missouri River and a tributary. Subsidiaries of True agreed to pay a \$12.5 million civil penalty to settle a federal lawsuit over the North Dakota and Montana spills. Salvin said Bridger Pipeline in the years since the Yellowstone spill developed

an AI-based leak detection system that allows it to be notified more quickly when there are problems. It also plans to bore 30 to 40 feet beneath major rivers including the Yellowstone and Missouri to reduce the chances of an accident. The 2015 accident occurred on a line that was constructed in a shallow trench at the bottom of the river. "We designed the pipeline with integrity and safety in mind. We have emergency response plans should something happen where oil happens to get out of the line, which is fairly rare," Salvin said. The Casper, Wyoming-based company operates more than 3,700 miles of gathering and transmission pipelines in the Williston Basin of North Dakota and Montana and the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. Environmental groups opposed to the project include the Montana Environmental Information Center and WildEarth Guardians. "The biggest concern we see right now is the concern inherent in all pipeline projects which is the risk of spills," said attorney Jenny Harbine with the environmental law firm Earthjustice. "Pipelines rupture and leak. It's just a fact of pipelines."

## Syria relies on Russian oil

NEWS DESK

BANIYAS: Syria: Russia has emerged as the main supplier of oil to Syria, Reuters reporting shows, despite the new government's alignment with the West and widespread distrust of Moscow over its military support for fallen leader Bashar Assad. Oil shipments from Russia have jumped 75 percent to about 60,000 barrels per day this year, the reporting found, based on Reuters calculations of official announcements and ship tracking data on LSEG, MarineTraffic and Shipnext. The volumes represent a tiny share of Russia's daily global oil exports. But for Syria, where domestic production remains far below demand, the flows make Moscow the country's dominant crude supplier following the fall of Assad in December 2024, taking over from Iran which was a key ally of the ousted leader during the country's 14-year civil war. The dynamic highlights how limited Syria's options remain. Despite emerging from the war as Western-leaning, its economy is not closely integrated into the global financial system, even after Europe and Washington last year ended decades of sanctions on the country.

## Activists on Gaza aid flotilla detained by Israel disembark in Crete

ATHENS: Dozens of activists on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla which was intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters off Crete disembarked on Friday in the Greek island, an AFP journalist saw. Escorted by Greek coast guards, some 175 activists were taken in four buses to a town whose name was not disclosed by the authorities. Israel's foreign ministry earlier said around 175 activists had been taken off more than 20 boats on Thursday. Flotilla organizers put the number at 211. "In coordination with the Greek government, the individuals transferred from the flotilla vessels to the Israeli vessel will be disembarked on a Greek beach in the coming hours," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar wrote on X late Thursday, thanking Greece "for its willingness to receive the flotilla participants." - Agencies



SINGAPORE: High Commissioner Rabia Shafiq, accompanied by Trade & Investment Officer, visited Milipol TechX (MTX) 2026 in Singapore on the invitation of ST Engineering, a leading global tech and def group with operations in 100 countries. - DNA

# Voicing concern over Korean tensions, Pakistan urges dialogue

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Amid growing concern over North Korea's expanding nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes, Pakistan has called for diplomatic engagement and dialogue to address the challenges confronting the Korean Peninsula. "We strongly support the calls for revival of talks among the relevant parties." Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council debate on 'Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'. "Coercive or provocative actions as well as threats and heated rhetoric must come to an end," the Pakistani envoy said, adding, "These developments are detrimental to regional and international peace and security." Pakistan, he said, supported the objective of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the goals of global non-proliferation and disarmament. "Recent overtures may be reciprocated and followed up

with resumption of diplomatic engagement to address underlying disputes", Ambassador Jadoon said, urging the Security Council to act with unity to promote peace and stability in the Korean peninsula. "The Council must find ways to contribute to stabilizing the situation in the region through supporting a robust political process and exploring all possible confidence building measures."

The Pakistani envoy said a critical function of the 1718 Committee is processing humanitarian exemptions. "We believe that humanitarian exemptions should continue without political considerations," he said. "We will continue to support the Committee's efforts to facilitate humanitarian assistance to DPRK through a robust exemptions mechanism." Earlier, the UN Under-Secretary-General in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Rosemary DiCarlo, told the 15-member Council that DPRK has continued to conduct ballistic-missile launches, including ballistic and cruise missiles. "In the past month, the DPRK has also tested ballistic missiles equipped with what it calls cluster-bomb and fragmentation-mine warheads," she added.

## US's Hormuz coalition 'not in competition' with France, UK

ABU DHABI: France's top diplomat on Friday said a new US-led coalition to reopen the Strait of Hormuz would complement and not compete with a similar mission spearheaded by France and Britain. Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, speaking in Abu Dhabi following a regional tour, said he briefed Gulf allies on the UK-France initiative which was now at an "advanced" stage. On Thursday, a US official confirmed to AFP that Washington was launching an international coalition dubbed the "Maritime Freedom Construct" to restart shipping in the vital route. The strait, which normally carries one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, has been effectively blockaded by Iran over the Middle East war, sending prices soaring and choking trade networks. The UK and France have led talks on a separate maritime effort, recently holding a meeting with more than 50 countries. The US mission is "not of the same nature as the one we established... it comes as a sort of complement," Barrot said in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, following visits to Saudi Arabia and Oman. "It is not in competition with the initiative we have launched and on which we are focused," he added. The Wall Street Journal said a reported diplomatic cable called on US embassies to press foreign governments to take part in the US-led effort. Asked whether France would join Washington's initiative, Barrot said he could not comment at this stage. The UK-France mission "is now at an advanced stage, the planning has been finalized, and I have come to present the concept of this mission to a number of our closest partners in the region," he added. US President Donald Trump has lashed out at allies' reluctance to get involved in the US-Israeli war on Iran, and previously urged oil-reliant nations to take responsibility for reopening the strait. Iran has vowed not to reopen the waterway as long as the United States blockades its ports. The closure has had a widespread impact on the global economy, with oil prices hitting a four-year high this week. - DNA

# Ukraine sees path to Japanese arms

Lutovinov said Ukraine was trading carefully because of the sensitivity of defense exports in Japan. More immediately, he said, Tokyo could help fund Kyiv's development of an air-defense system that would reduce its reliance on US-made Patriot missiles, which are in increasingly short supply

TOKYO: Japan's relaxation of its weapons-exports rules opens a path for talks that could one day lead to Tokyo supplying military equipment to help Ukraine resist Russia's invasion, Kyiv's ambassador to Japan told Reuters. "This allows us to talk," Yuri Lutovinov said in an interview at Ukraine's embassy. "Theoretically, it's a very big step forward." Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's move last week to ease export rules - Japan's latest shift away from a strict postwar pacifist stance - has sparked broad interest as conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East strain Western arms production. While the overhaul maintains controls on exports to conflict zones, it allows exceptions that serve Tokyo's security interests, a caveat Kyiv hopes to benefit from. Ukraine seeks investments for missile defence Japan has linked Ukraine's fate to its own security as it faces China's growing military power. With Japanese territory stretching to within 110 km of Taiwan, Tokyo worries that any attempt by Beijing to seize the island could draw it into a conflict. Soon after Russia launched the war against its smaller neighbor in 2022, Japan's then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida warned that "Ukraine today could be East Asia tomorrow." He approved Japan's biggest military buildup since World War Two, a plan Takaichi has accelerated since taking office in October. "If Ukraine falls, it's going to be a big domino

effect," Ambassador Lutovinov said. "That's why the Indo-Pacific and the European continent are inseparable from the point of view of our security." Japan's Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Takaichi has given no public indication she would support arms exports to Ukraine. She told President Volodymyr Zelensky in November that "Japan stands with Ukraine" and supported its "efforts toward achieving a just and lasting peace" as soon as possible, her office said in a readout of their phone call. Like other countries eyeing Japanese military gear, Ukraine would need to conclude a defense and equipment technology transfer agreement with Tokyo. Japan has made such agreements with 18 countries, including Germany, Australia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Lutovinov said Ukraine was trading carefully because of the sensitivity of defense exports in Japan. More immediately, he said, Tokyo could help fund Kyiv's development of an air-defense system that would reduce its reliance on US-made Patriot missiles, which are in increasingly short supply. "We have all necessary industrial capacities for production. But we need investment. We need funds," he said. Japan could join NATO arms-funding plan, envoy says Discussions are also under way about Japan contributing to NATO's Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List, or PURL, a program that funds

purchases of US-made equipment for Kyiv, Lutovinov said. The program has supplied more than \$4 billion of equipment and munitions, with Australia and New Zealand last year becoming the first non-NATO countries to join. "Every country can participate in this mechanism respecting its own legal framework. It can be non-lethal weapons as well," Lutovinov said. Japanese firms could help Ukraine diversify the sources of electronics and micro-components it needs for the thousands of drones it has deployed on the front lines, he said. Chinese-made components have historically dominated Ukraine's drones, according to a 2025 report by Ukrainian think tank Snake Island Institute. Behind Lutovinov in the embassy reception room sat a Vampire bomber drone built by Skyfall, a leading Ukrainian manufacturer of low-cost drones that says it now has enough production capacity to export. Takaichi's administration plans to unveil a defense strategy and military procurement plan this year that is expected to call for a significant increase in the air, sea and land drones of the kind that Kyiv has used to repel Russian attacks. "We are not the country that would like to just ask. We are the country that is going to provide as well," said Lutovinov. "The technology of Japan and experience of Ukraine, if we can put them together, it would be a high-class product." - APP

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