

Islamabad Post

Friday, May 01, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

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PM launches Rs3.2 trillion housing program

Shehbaz Sharif described the "Apna Ghar" initiative as a sacred obligation of any government, intended to support the needy who have long been deprived of the security of homeownership

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday launched a landmark five-year, Rs3.2 trillion housing program, aimed at funding the construction of 500,000 homes nationwide, with a vision to provide affordable shelter for low-income citizens, lacking the financial means to build their own houses. The prime minister, addressing the program's launch ceremony of Waizee-Kham Apna Ghar Program, said that besides enabling people to own a house, the initiative will also act as a powerful economic multiplier to boost significant industrial growth and create jobs for a diverse workforce, ranging from manual laborers to engineers. "No program is quite as dear to me as this, for it holds the promise of revitalizing our industrial and commercial sectors while paving the way for economic prosperity. This landmark program is the culmination of extensive deliberations and tireless effort, having successfully overcome a myriad of complex challenges," the prime minister said. The program, announced by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Housing and Works Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, other federal ministers, banking professionals, representatives from the construction industry and the beneficiaries of the program. He described the "Apna Ghar" initiative as a sacred obligation of any government, intended to support the needy who have long been deprived of the security of homeownership. Prime Minister Shehbaz, who earlier pushed the button to launch the initiative, distributed cheques to 1000 beneficiaries, sanctioned by different banks, said that the program was a reflection of Ashiana housing scheme he had launched while being Chief Minister of Punjab.

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Govt extends fuel subsidy for bikers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved a one-month extension in fuel subsidy for motorcyclists, public transport operators, and goods transporters to sustain relief measures amid economic pressures linked to the Middle East crisis. The premier also directed that increases in passenger and freight transport fares be prevented, the PM's Office said in a statement. The decision approving the continuation of relief measures, the prime minister stated that effective monitoring of public welfare initiatives must be ensured to directly benefit deserving individuals. He further said that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial governments, provided a national relief package worth billions for the public under difficult circumstances and will continue to extend possible support. PM Shehbaz added that providing relief to the common man remains the government's top priority, stressing that the public will not be left alone. He also expressed hope that conditions in the region would improve soon, allowing for stability in petroleum product prices and easing economic pressure on the public. Earlier this month, PM Shehbaz Sharif unveiled a fuel subsidy scheme for motorcyclists,

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributes PM Apna Ghar Program cheques among the beneficiaries, Islamabad. — DNA

Briefs

13 Khwarij killed in KP

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On 28-29 April 2026, thirteen Khwarij belonging to Indian sponsored Fitas-ul-Khwarji were killed in two foiled infiltration attempts along Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In Mohmand District, movement of a group of Khwarij trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border was picked up by the security forces. Own troops effectively engaged this group of Khwarij. As a result of precise and skillful engagement, eight Khwarij belonging to Indian sponsored, Fitas ul Khwarij were sent to hell. In another engagement, own troops effectively foiled another infiltration attempt by a group of Khwarij along Pakistan-Afghanistan border in North Waziristan District and after intense fire exchange, five Khwarij were neutralised. These engagements once again substantiate Pakistan's repeated stance regarding strict failure of Afghan Taliban Regime to ensure effective border management on their side.

Govt hikes petrol price by Rs6.51

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government raised on Thursday the price of petrol by Rs6.51 per litre and that of high-speed diesel (HSD) by Rs19.39. Following the increase, the price of petrol stands at Rs35.35 per litre and HSD's at Rs380.19. The Petroleum Division's press release notifying the increase said the new prices would be effective from May 1. Petrol is mostly used in private transport, small vehicles, rickshaws and two-wheelers and has a direct bearing on the budget of the middle- and lower-middle class. High-speed diesel is mainly used in the heavy transport sector and for large generators.

LHC Bar challenges transfer of IHC judges

Petition, filed under Article 183(3) of Constitution, contends that transfer of judges is contrary to Article 2A and lacks transparency

FAISAL SHEKH

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore High Court Bar Association on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the transfer of three Islamabad High Court judges, filing a petition through senior lawyer Hamid Khan. The petition, filed under Article 183(3) of the Constitution, contends that the transfer of judges is contrary to Article 2A and lacks transparency. It further argues that no reasons were provided for the transfers, raising serious concerns over the legality and fairness of the process. The plea names the Centre and the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) as respondents, maintaining that transferring three IHC judges to different high courts is unconstitutional. It asserts that the process adopted for the transfers does not meet constitutional standards and undermines established judicial norms. The petition also challenges provisions introduced through the 27th Constitutional Amendment, arguing that

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PTI leaders manage to reach Adiala jail

FAISAL SHEKH

ISLAMABAD: After skipping Adiala jail visits for two consecutive weeks, PTI leaders on Thursday managed to reach the prison for a meeting with incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, which was once again denied. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has allowed Imran twice-a-week meetings — on Tuesdays and Thursdays — with his family, lawyers and other associates. Despite court orders, Imran's meetings with the family and the party leaders have been largely restricted. While Imran's sisters continue to show up at the jail on Tuesdays, party leaders were nowhere to be

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Afghan Taliban target civilians

DNA

PESHAWAR: Da'ish Taliban carried out shelling in the Angoor Aida area of South Waziristan, targeting a civilian settlement along the Pak-Afghan border, security sources said. Mortar shells were fired from across the border on April 29, landing in residential areas, the sources said. One of the shells reportedly struck the home of residents Karim Khan and Rahmatullah, injuring five members of the same family. Medical Officer Dr Ashraf confirmed that five injured individuals, including three children, were brought to the hospital for treatment. The security sources added,

Informal Pak-Afghan talks in Istanbul

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Informal discussions reportedly involving Afghan political figures and Pakistani representatives are taking place in Istanbul and heightened tensions between the two neighbouring countries, according to reports citing the US-based outlet Alghazwan International. Sources claim the meetings bring together individuals linked to the Taliban administration as well as Pakistani personalities described as being

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Middle East issue

Iran, US continue war of words on Strait of Hormuz

The US Central Command has requested deployment of the Army's Dark Eagle hypersonic missile system to the Middle East for potential use against Iran

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader on Thursday said that the Strait of Hormuz will move the matter into a "new phase." He indicated this shift "will bring calm" to the strategic waterway, which carries about one-fifth of global oil trade. The comments come amid a fragile post-conflict period following the recent US-Israel-Iran war and a ceasefire/truce. This follows earlier statements from Khamenei (in March 2026) where he described the closure or restriction of the Strait as a key "lever" to pressure adversaries. The latest remarks signal a strategic adjustment in

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Pakistan calls for swift restoration of normal flow

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Tabir Andrabi said on Thursday that Pakistan is maintaining sustained engagement with both Washington and Tehran to support de-escalation and ceasefire efforts. "The clock of negotiations has not stopped," he said while addressing a weekly briefing in Islamabad. He described ongoing mediation

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Lawyer seeks Khan release on humanitarian grounds

Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar questioned whether the petitioner was willing to settle the matter conclusively

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Counsel for former prime minister Imran Khan on Thursday urged the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to consider his client's release on humanitarian and

Continued on Page 06

UAE Telecom giant Etisalat may exit Pakistan

There is a growing sentiment among some industry observers that PTCL performed better when it was under government control. While it may not have been perfect, it was seen as more stable and aligned with national priorities. The privatization, once hailed as a milestone, is now viewed by some as a missed opportunity

ANSAR M BHATTI

IN a development that could significantly reshape Pakistan's telecommunications landscape, UAE-based telecom giant Etisalat is reportedly considering an exit from Pakistan. Etisalat, a joint venture between the United Arab Emirates Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and the Government of Pakistan, has been a major player in the market since its launch in 2005. While no formal announcement has been made, sources suggest that a combination of geopolitical tensions, unresolved financial disputes, and longstanding operational challenges has pushed relations to a breaking point. At the heart of the issue lies a complex mix of regional politics and bilateral strain. The ongoing Iran-related conflict has had ripple effects across the region, placing Pakistan in a delicate diplomatic position. The UAE, which has taken a firm stance aligned with Western and regional allies, has reportedly grown uneasy with Pakistan's posture. This divergence has contributed to a noticeable cooling of ties between Islamabad and Abu Dhabi. Tensions escalated further when the UAE recently asked Pakistan to return over \$3 billion in deposits held with the State Bank. Pakistan complied and returned the funds, but the move appears to have deepened mistrust rather than easing it. In a reciprocal development, Pakistani authorities have now pressed Etisalat to clear approximately \$800 million that has remained unpaid since the privatization of PTCL in 2005. Etisalat, however, has consistently maintained that the payment was withheld due to the Pakistani government's failure to transfer certain properties and assets as per the original privatization agreement. Nearly two decades later, the dispute remains unresolved, symbolizing a broader pattern of friction that has defined the relationship. When Etisalat took over PTCL in 2005, there were high expectations that the UAE firm would modernize and transform Pakistan's state-run telecom giant into a competitive, efficient enterprise. The early days of the takeover did offer some promise, particularly under the leadership of Mohamed Bamakhrama, the first UAE national appointed as president of PTCL. Bamakhrama earned a reputation as an upright and principled leader who sought to bring discipline and transparency to the organization. He made efforts to root out corruption, reduce political interference, and establish a merit-based culture. Among his bold steps were withdrawing official vehicles from influential figures, including the then IT and telecom minister, and removing politically appointed officials who were seen as underperforming. However, his reformist agenda soon ran into resistance. Powerful interests, uncomfortable with the loss of privileges, reportedly mobilized against him. Eventually, Bamakhrama was removed from his position, marking a turning point that many insiders believe altered PTCL's trajectory. He was succeeded by Waheed Ishaq, whose tenure is often described by critics as a period of decline. Known for a more lavish and accommodating management style, Ishaq allegedly fostered a culture of favoritism and entitlement. During this era, what insiders dubbed the "email and female" culture became prevalent, symbolizing a workplace environment driven more by personal connections than professional merit. The consequences were significant. Experienced and hardworking employees began leaving the organization, disillusioned by the shifting priorities. Operational efficiency declined, and PTCL gradually started losing its competitive edge. Financial performance weakened, and the company's reputation suffered. Today, PTCL continues to struggle in an increasingly competitive telecom market. Customers frequently complain about poor after-sales service, slow complaint resolution, and outdated infrastructure. Many have shifted to private operators offering better reliability and customer support, leaving PTCL lagging behind. Ironically, there is a growing sentiment among some industry observers that PTCL performed better when it was under government control. While it may not have been perfect, it was seen as more stable and aligned with national priorities. The privatization, once hailed as a milestone, is now viewed by some as a missed opportunity. Against this backdrop, the possibility of Etisalat's exit is being viewed with cautious optimism in certain quarters. Some believe that a change in ownership or management could provide a much-needed reset for PTCL. Others, however, warn that any transition must be carefully managed to avoid further disruption. For now, uncertainty looms large. The combination of geopolitical tensions, unresolved financial disputes, and a troubled operational history has brought the Etisalat-PTCL relationship to a critical juncture. Whether this results in a complete exit or a renegotiation of terms remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the outcome will have far-reaching implications—not just for PTCL, but for Pakistan's broader telecom sector and its investment climate.

Balochistan to launch air ambulance service

QUETTA: In a historic step for healthcare in the province, Balochistan is set to launch its first-ever public air ambulance service, aimed at providing emergency medical assistance to citizens across remote and underserved areas. Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti announced that the "Peoples Air Ambulance" is ready for service and will soon begin operations. Sharing images of the aircraft on social media, he described the initiative as the fulfillment of another promise made to the people of Balochistan. Sarfaraz Bugti explained that the air ambulance will enable the rapid transfer of critically ill and injured patients to major hospitals in larger cities, saving precious lives. He emphasized that the service will be particularly transformative for residents of far-flung and underdeveloped regions, where timely access to healthcare has long been a challenge. "This facility will revolutionize emergency response in cases of accidents, natural disasters, or any urgent medical situation," Bugti said, adding that the project reflects the government's commitment to modernizing healthcare and ensuring quality services for every citizen. He further noted that the initiative is part of the vision of Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, whose dream of improved healthcare access is being realized through the provincial government's efforts. The Peoples Air Ambulance would significantly strengthen Balochistan's emergency medical infrastructure, offering swift response and bridging healthcare gaps across the province. APP

Mineral royalties reviewed

QUETTA: The Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority (MIFA) convened on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Provincial Finance and Minerals Minister Mir Shoaib Noshayri to deliberate on reforms in the mining sector. The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister on Environment Nasomaur Rehman, Parliamentary Secretary for Forests Sardar Masood Khan Luni, MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail, Mines and Minerals Secretary Syed Khan Luni, DG Mines and Minerals Abdullah Shahwani and President of the All Pakistan Mine Owners Association Mir Behroz Raki. Commission Inland Revenue Zabeer Qureshi joined via video link. Minister Shoaib Noshayri highlighted the central role of mineral revenues in Balochistan's economy, noting that a significant portion of the population depends on mining for livelihood. He stressed that the promotion of the mining sector remains a top government priority. The meeting discussed proposed revisions to mineral royalty rates and other fees, which were last updated in 2017. MIFA unanimously recommended adjustments and forwarded them to the provincial government for cabinet approval. Participants also agreed on the need for a comprehensive strategy to safeguard mine owners and workers, ensuring both economic growth and labor protection. APP

HEC chairman lauds NTU academic, research initiatives

Faisalabad: Professor Dr. Naz Ahmed Akhtar (Sitara-e-Imtiaz), Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, paid an official visit to the National Textile University (NTU) Faisalabad. During the visit, the Rector Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Dr. Rashid Mansoor, along with the senior leadership and administration, warmly welcomed the HEC Chair-

Air power remains foundational prerequisite for success

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, emphasised that the character of warfare is changing, with air domain as the primary arena where tactical actions can lead to operational and strategic results



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies Lahore organised a seminar titled "Air Power and the Changing Character of Conflicts". The event was attended by academics, intellectuals, senior officers, and domain experts. Ms Nidaa Shahid, Associate Director, CASS Lahore, delivered the opening address. Mr Amir Rana,

President PIPS highlighted the global evolution of non-state drone warfare from early experimentation to the advancements of today. Armed groups across multiple theatres are integrating these systems into sustained campaigns for surveillance, coercion, and kinetic effects. Pakistan is entering this same trajectory, with weaponised quadcopters transitioning from sporadic and unattributed incidents to a geographically dispersed and operationally routine tool by non-state actors. This raises risks for escalation to stability, requiring a coordinated response. AVM Tariq Ghazi, DG Projects, AIQ, emphasises that air power remains the foundational prerequisite for success in modern conventional warfare and freedom to manoeuvre across land and maritime domains. He emphasised that contemporary conflicts have shifted

from platform-centric operations to a network-centric, multi-layered and effect-based combat architecture, where manned aircraft, unmanned systems, and precision missiles operate as integrated nodes. Additionally, space, cyber, and the electromagnetic spectrum are becoming decisive factors in this contested environment. AVM Ghazi stressed that success now depends on the effective integration of systems rather than isolated

platform superiority, with airpower increasingly shaping the tempo, depth, and outcome of conflict. Brig Zahir Kazmi (Retd), Advisor Arms Control, SPD analysed how dual-capable missiles, hypersonic systems, and compressed decision timelines affect nuclear signalling and escalation risks in South Asia. Drawing lessons from recent conflicts, he emphasised that victory no longer depends on individual platforms but on a system-of-systems

approach. At the strategic level, he warned that the increasing ambiguity surrounding payloads and intent are eroding traditional boundaries between conventional and nuclear signalling, particularly in South Asia. He emphasised that airspace has become the most direct pathway from tactical action to strategic consequence, making clarity in signalling, and robust command and control essential for maintaining stability. In his concluding

remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, emphasised that the character of warfare is changing, with air domain as the primary arena where tactical actions can lead to operational and strategic results. Advances in drones, smart weapons, and live surveillance have shortened the gap between spotting, deciding, and striking, while the integration of multi-domain operations across air, cyber space, and electronic warfare is now critical.

DG NAB listens to 450 complaints at open court

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Mirza Faran Baig on Thursday chaired a monthly open public hearing and listened to complaints of citizens, promising prompt redress and strict action against those involved in corruption and fraud

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Mirza Faran Baig on Thursday chaired a monthly open public hearing and listened to complaints of citizens, promising prompt redress and strict action against those involved in corruption and fraud. According to NAB officials, around 450 individuals attended the open court, with a majority of complaints pertaining to fraudulent housing schemes and cheating cases. The complaints were mainly related to projects including Anya Grand Mall, For U Real, Omega Residencia, Al-Noor Orchard, Al Jilil Garden, Future Vision, Bismillah Garden, Khayabaan, Ahmed Rice Mill, Sarmayadari, Pak-Arab Housing

Scheme, Palm Vista and Unique Solar. During the hearing, the DG, along with senior officers, reviewed each case in detail and directed the relevant wings to take immediate and effective action on the complaints. He reiterated NAB's commitment to safeguarding the rights of citizens and ensuring provision of justice, in line with the vision of the Chairman NAB against corruption and public deception. Mirza Faran warned that individuals involved in corruption and defrauding the public would face strict legal consequences. Participants appreciated NAB Lahore's initiative, terming the open court an effective platform for timely resolution of public grievances. -DNA

CM opens Down syndrome's center in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: In a major stride toward inclusive social development, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Mirza Ali Shah inaugurated the Karachi Down Syndrome Programme (KDSP) on Thursday. Addressing the ceremony, the CM said the new centre fulfilled a commitment which he had made during the inauguration of KDSP's North Nazimabad facility in July 2025. He recalled that a parent had requested a similar centre in Hyderabad, prompting him to direct immediate action. "It's a matter of pride that in a short span of time we have delivered on that promise," he said, adding that the new centre would provide services comparable to those available in Karachi. Shah informed that the centre's administrative and operational staff had been recruited locally in order to strengthen the community's ownership and to ensure effective service delivery. He also announced plans to establish similar divisional centres in Sukkur, Larkana, Shohrod, Benazirabad and Mirpurkhas to further expand outreach across the province. The CM appreciated the efforts of KDSP and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) for their continued work in supporting individuals with Down syndrome. "The Sindh government's policy is to provide equal opportunities to all segments of society," he underlined. He shared that 65 children had already been registered at the Hyderabad centre, which had the capacity to accommodate up to 300 children. Shah directed the Mayor of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) Kashif Ali Shoro to identify additional space for future expansion. He believed that collaborative efforts between government institutions and organisations like KDSP were essential to building an inclusive and equitable society. Earlier, the CM unveiled commemorative plaques and performed ribbon-cutting, followed by a guided tour of the facility led by KDSP CEO Tabish Shahzad and Co-Founder and Chairman Ali Allawalla. He was briefed on key programmes, including early childhood intervention, healthcare, education, skills development and family support. The formal proceedings included the national anthem, welcome remarks by the KDSP CEO, a keynote address by the organisation's leadership, and a parent testimonial highlighting the impact of such services. The speakers at the event underscored the importance of partnerships and community support in advancing inclusion. -APP

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حکومت پاکستان

Oil & Gas
Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

PETITION FILED BY SUI NORTHERN GAS PIPELINES LIMITED (SNGPL) FOR DETERMINATION OF ITS ESTIMATED REVENUE REQUIREMENT (ERR) / PRESCRIBED PRICES FOR F.Y. 2026-27.

CONSULTATIVE SESSION FOR DETERMINATION OF UFG BENCHMARK FOR SNGPL AND SSGCL STARTING FROM FY 2026-27.

CASE NO. : 1

RESCHEDULING OF PUBLIC HEARING

Petition Filed by Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited for Determination of its Estimated Revenue Requirement (ERR) / Prescribed Prices for F.Y. 2026-27

This is in continuation of OGRA's earlier Public Hearing Notices published in the national press on 15-04-2026 and public hearing held on 21-04-2026. Due to prevailing uncertainty arising from the ongoing Gulf crisis, including disruptions in gas supply, the public hearing was adjourned. In this regard, SNGPL has submitted its Revised ERR Petition for FY 2026-27 on 27-04-2026. Breakup of projected Revenue Requirement of natural gas is tabulated below:

Description	The Petition Rs. in Million
Projected Gas Sales Volume (BBTU)	282,828
Cost of Gas	393,900
Operating Cost including HR cost & Others	46,750
Financing Cost for Working Capital	1,132
Depreciation	29,367
Return on Assets	39,022
Subsidy for LPG Air-Mix Projects	445
Prior Year Shortfall	7,240
UFG Adjustment	(750)
Other Operating Income	(35,988)
Estimated Revenue Requirement for FY 2026-27	481,118
Average Prescribed Price w.e.f July 01, 2026 (Rs./ MMBTU)	1,701.10

Besides above, RLNG cost of service has been claimed at Rs. 68,344 million (i.e. Rs. 382.29/MMBTU) for FY 2026-27, that shall form part of RLNG sale price to be determined by OGRA under Section 43(B) of the Ordinance, 2002 for RLNG consumers. The Authority, therefore has decided to reschedule the Public Hearing according to the date, time and venue mentioned below:

Date : May 12, 2026 (Tuesday) | Time : 10:30 a.m. | Venue : Pearl Continental (PC) Hotel Lahore

Copy of the Revised Petition available on OGRA's official website i.e. www.ogra.org.pk. The interested parties may attend the Public Hearing in person or through Zoom Link application via Registrar's Office E-mail (registrar@ogra.org.pk).

CASE NO.2

Stakeholder's Consultative session on UFG study for Determination of UFG Benchmark for SNGPL and SSGCL starting from FY 2026-27

Unaccounted for Gas (UFG) is the difference between net volume received and delivered in particular year and its benchmarking has a major impact on gas pricing and efficiency of Gas Transmission and Distribution Companies. OGRA is carrying out a study for determining and fixing the UFG benchmark(s) for the gas utility companies i.e. SNGPL and SSGCL for next five years, starting from DERR 2026-27 through a consultant i.e. M/s KPMG. The draft report submitted by M/s KPMG can be downloaded from OGRA's website or can be obtained from Registrar Office on payment of charges. In this regard, the Authority is pleased to schedule the Stakeholder's Consultative Session according to the date, time and venue as mentioned below:

Date : May 12, 2026 (Tuesday) | Time : 12:30 p.m. | Venue : Pearl Continental (PC) Hotel Lahore

Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority invites all interested/affected persons/parties and general public to furnish their comments, suggestions and intervention requests before May 12, 2026. All correspondence in this connection may be addressed to Senior Registrar, OGRA and should contain the names and addresses of applicant. The interveners must indicate the manner in which they are likely to be affected by the instant determinations of the Authority. Intervention request can be filed along with a copy of receipt fee amounting to Rs.500/- (Submitted through OGRA Online payment system available on its official website) accompanied by an affidavit verifying the contents of the intervention. Copy of the KPMG draft report can be downloaded from OGRA's website.

All parties to the proceedings, stakeholders, general public and interested / affected persons are hereby informed of the above proceedings. The interested parties may attend the stakeholder's consultative session in person or through Zoom Link application via Registrar's Office E-mail (registrar@ogra.org.pk).

FPD(I) No. 8782/25

Raheela Mustafa
Senior Registrar,

Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
37-Mauve Area, Service Road South, G-10/4, Islamabad.
Phone: 051-9108889, 0313-5065588, 051-9108890-98 (Ext-123)
Website: www.ogra.org.pk

Public Service Message:

گیس لینکس جان لیوا حادثات کا سبب بن سکتی ہے احتیاطی تدابیر یقینی بنائیں اور حادثات سے بچیں

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 Forces 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

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- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
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- WASA Rawalpindi: 5555489
- CAA.....9281092

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- MH.....5611116
- Coast Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9281170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666

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- CDA.....9221334-43
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- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
- Potshar Town.....9209224
- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Sector G-14/1 still undeveloped after 2 decades

The issue has now taken a more serious turn, with allottees calling upon the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take suo motu notice of the situation. They are demanding an independent inquiry into the alleged nexus between land mafia groups and officials within the housing authority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: More than two decades after its launch, Sector G-14/1 in the federal capital remains largely undeveloped, with allottees accusing land mafia elements and alleged administrative complicity for the prolonged delay. Sector G-14 was opened for development in 2004, and while sub-sectors G-14/2, G-14/3, and G-14/4 have seen significant progress over the years, G-14/1 continues to lag far behind. A majority of plots in the sub-sector are still under illegal occupation, preventing legitimate owners from taking possession and constructing their homes. Affectees and allottees have alleged that organized land grabbers have entrenched themselves in the area,

building structures and resisting eviction efforts. They further claim that instead of decisively removing encroachments, the concerned housing authority has allowed the situation to persist, only to later compensate the illegal occupants to vacate the land—causing financial losses and further delays in development. “This has become a cycle,” said one allottee, requesting anonymity. “First, the land is occupied. Then, instead of taking firm action, authorities negotiate and pay compensation to the encroachers. Ultimately, it is the genuine plot owners who suffer.” Residents and investors say that despite repeated assurances, little practical progress has been made on ground. Basic infrastructure such as roads, water supply, and electricity networks remains either incomplete or entirely absent in

large parts of G-14/1. The delay has not only increased construction costs but also shattered the dreams of thousands of middle-class families who had invested their life savings in the sector, hoping to build homes in the capital. Many allottees expressed frustration that some of the original investors have passed away without ever seeing development begin on their plots. “People bought land here with the hope of settling their families. Some are no longer alive, and their dream remains unfulfilled,” another allottee said. Issue has now taken a more serious turn, with allottees calling upon the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take suo motu notice of the situation. They are demanding an independent inquiry into the alleged nexus between land mafia groups and

officials within the housing authority. They have also urged the government to ensure immediate clearance of encroachments without compensation to illegal occupants, strict accountability of officials found negligent, and a time-bound plan for development of the sector. Urban development experts say that such delays not only undermine public trust but also discourage investment in planned housing schemes. “If a sector remains undeveloped for over 20 years, it raises serious questions about governance and enforcement,” an expert noted. Despite its prime location in Islamabad, G-14/1 stands as a stark reminder of administrative inefficiencies and the challenges posed by illegal land occupation. For now, allottees continue to wait—hoping that their long-deployed dreams of owning a home will finally become a reality.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan Dr. Maen Khreassat in a meeting with the head of Islamabad Research Institute Ambassador Jauhar Saleem. DNA

Zardari's visit expands industrial partnership

ISLAMABAD: With his weeklong China visit drawing to a close, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has used the trip to push for deeper industrial cooperation alongside several ceremonial engagements, as the two countries mark 75 years of diplomatic ties. According to *Coastal Post* on Thursday, his stay in Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, Zardari visited SANY Heavy Industry, a leading Chinese manufacturer of heavy equipment. His interest in Chinese manufacturing was clear. According to a video released by Xinhua, Zardari—after viewing high-tech equipment, including unmanned counterbalanced forklifts—said, “It’d like to get an agency to manufacture it in Pakistan.” He even joked, “Why haven’t you been invited to Pakistan?” a lighthearted suggestion that he would gladly take the equipment home. From heavy machinery, he turned to agribusiness, touring Hunan Tea Group and noting opportunities for cooperation in value addition, agro-processing, and export development. He noted the company to explore collaboration with Pakistan in these fields. That interest soon bore fruit. Zardari witnessed the signing of three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) focused on seamarine desalination in Karachi, agricultural technology and tea sector cooperation, underscoring continued Pakistan-China engagement in these priority sectors. Under the agreements, Mestek & Femtec Trading Company partnered with Hunan Tea Group and Jiangling International Technology (Jiangling) to boost cooperation in the tea supply chain. Separately, the Sindh government signed separate agreements with Lacton Environmental Technology Group for a seamarine desalination project in Karachi and with Long Ping Litch Information Company on agricultural technology. Factory tours and MoUs then matured into a strategic investment call in Sanya, a shift from the concrete to the visionary. While in Sanya, Hunan Province, President Zardari said Pakistan is actively encouraging foreign investment in key sectors—water treatment, electric-vehicle battery systems, and alternative energy. He also pledged that the Sindh government would facilitate foreign investors, particularly under public-private partnership frameworks.—DNA

PMD director advises public to protect vulnerable groups

In response to questions about social media reports of temperatures reaching 50°C, he rejected the claim, stating that it is not fact-based and seems intended to gain attention

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director Anjum Nair Zaiqham of the Pakistan Meteorological Department on Thursday cautioned the public about a significant rise in temperatures and urged comprehensive safety measures to shield the elderly, children, vulnerable, and animals from an expected heatwave. While speaking to local media, the official said a heatwave is expected to persist in Karachi until the 3rd, with temperatures remaining high and dry conditions prevailing in the city. Residents have been advised to avoid unnecessary outdoor exposure and take precautionary measures during peak hours. He added that following this phase, westerly winds are likely to influence the region, which may bring slight relief in temperatures and temporarily ease the intensity of the heat. However, the official warned that the overall outlook for May and June remains severe, with a strong likelihood of intense heatwaves across parts of Sindh, southern Punjab, and Balochistan, as temperatures are expected to stay significantly above normal. Weather experts Anjum Nair urged citizens to avoid unnecessary outings during the ongoing heatwave, warning that exposure to extreme temperatures can increase health risks. They advised people to stay indoors during peak hours as much as possible. He further recommended that residents drink plenty of water to remain hydrated and reduce the risk of heat exhaustion or heatstroke. They stressed that special care should be taken for children, elderly people, and outdoor workers. Weather experts also advised Karachi residents to carefully plan outdoor activities as the heat is expected to intensify. They said avoiding direct sunlight, staying hydrated, and limiting exposure during peak hours can help reduce health risks. In response to questions about social media reports of temperatures reaching 50°C, he rejected the claim, stating that it is not fact-based and seems intended to gain attention. He maintained that temperatures are expected to range between 39°C and 45°C.—APP

Abbasi conducts hands-on railway track inspection

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi adopted a proactive and hands-on approach by personally inspecting the railway track from GoTRA Railway Station to Rawalpindi Railway Station while traveling on a track trolley. During the visit, the minister emphasized that field inspections are essential to understanding ground realities. He said that traveling on the track trolley allowed him to closely observe the condition of the railway tracks, assess operational matters and gain firsthand insight into inspection procedures. The Divisional Superintendent (DS) Rawalpindi accompanied the minister during the inspection and provided detailed briefings on various operational aspects of the railway system. Hanif Abbasi directed the concerned officials to remain more active in the field and ensure effective on-ground monitoring. He also instructed railway authorities to further improve track maintenance, operational efficiency and passenger facilities. At Rawalpindi Railway Station, passengers expressed pleasant surprise upon seeing the minister among them, appreciating his direct engagement. The minister’s practical leadership style, combining administrative oversight with field monitoring, has drawn attention. Meanwhile, a video of his track trolley visit has gone viral on social media, receiving positive feedback from users.—APP

Food authority destroyed substandard juice

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Food Authority on Wednesday destroyed 2,780 litres of substandard juice and fined multiple dealers over Rs.100,000 in a crackdown aimed at curbing unsafe food sales. The action was carried out in Ganjmandi, where food safety teams tested juice samples on the spot using modern equipment and found them unfit for consumption, prompting immediate disposal. Officials said two dealers involved in supplying the sub-standard juice were penalised and warned of stricter action, including business closure, in case of repeated violations. The authority said inspections would continue across the district, stressing zero tolerance for food adulteration and sub-standard products.—APP

یکم مئی
عالمی یوم مزدور

مزدور کی جدت

کوششوں کو سلام

مزدور کا پسینہ ہی قوموں کی ترقی کا اصل سرمایہ ہے

PHD/1884-D/25

دیس کی ترقی کا سفر
مزدور کی محنت کا ثمر

حکومت پاکستان
URBAN PAKISTAN

Briefs

SHC ruling on grade 17-plus recruitments suspended

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court on Thursday suspended the Sindh High Court's ruling in a case concerning recruitments to Grade 17 and above posts, and issued notices to all parties for further proceedings. A three-member bench headed by Justice Ihsan Azhar Rizvi heard the case. During the hearing, the court questioned how appointments to posts in Grade 17 and above had been made without the involvement of the Public Service Commission, and whether the prescribed recruitment procedure had been followed at the time. The Advocate General Sindh informed the court that 11 individuals had been appointed in Grades 17, 18, and 19 under a government project, which has since been completed. Justice Rizvi observed that there appeared to be irregularities in the recruitment process that were now being addressed. He further remarked that the employees had been serving for the past eight years and should obtain clearance from the Public Service Commission. The court was also informed that the Sindh High Court had earlier directed that the matter be referred to the Public Service Commission to examine the legality of the appointments.—APP

Petition against Kagan Valley Society polls dismissed

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has dismissed a petition challenging the elections of the Kagan Valley Society in Karachi, declaring it non-maintainable. A three-member bench headed by Justice Ihsan Azhar Rizvi heard the case on Thursday. During the proceedings, counsel for the petitioner, Zulfiqar Malooka, argued that around 180 allegedly bogus votes were not removed from the voters' list prior to the elections, which, he claimed, compromised the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. Justice Rizvi, however, questioned whether such a matter fell within the jurisdiction of the constitutional court, observing that the case appeared to be a factual dispute rather than a constitutional issue.

He also remarked critically on the naming of the society, stating that a housing society in Malir, Karachi, named after Kagan Valley was a "stain" on the name of the scenic region. The judge also expressed displeasure over media reports suggesting that the court had decided the case within 60 seconds. He clarified that judges thoroughly review case files for hours before hearings and come fully prepared, rejecting the notion that decisions are made hastily. Subsequently, the court ruled the petition inadmissible and dismissed it accordingly.—APP

Hearing on Nai Gaj dam construction set for may 7

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has fixed May 7 for the hearing of an important case related to the construction of the Nai Gaj Dam, directing all relevant authorities to submit a progress report on the project. A two-member bench headed by the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court will take up the case. The court has issued notices to provincial governments of Sindh and Balochistan, and has also summoned the Attorney General, the Planning Commission, WAPDA, and other concerned parties. The court directed the relevant authorities to present a detailed report on the progress made so far on the Nai Gaj Dam project, in order to assess its current status and implementation.—APP

Green finance, climate-linked investment coop discussed

The Finance Minister highlighted Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen its climate and development framework, underscoring the importance of translating policy priorities into well-structured and actionable initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Arrangzeb, held a comprehensive meeting today with Dr. Ma Jun, President of the Institute of Finance and Sustainability, Beijing, China. The meeting focused on advancing cooperation in sustainable finance, promoting green investment, and supporting Pakistan's transition towards a climate-resilient economic framework. Welcoming the delegation, the Finance Minister appreciated the strong and longstanding cooperation between Pakistan and Chinese institutions in the area of sustainable finance and development cooperation. He emphasized that strengthening implementation capacity and enhancing institutional readiness remain critical to achieving meaningful outcomes in climate and development initiatives. He further noted that Pakistan has recently operationalized its green taxonomy through the State Bank of Pakistan, building on earlier collaborative efforts and international best practices. The Finance Minister highlighted Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen its climate and development framework, underscoring the importance of translating policy priorities into well-structured and actionable initiatives. He underlined that while financing avenues are gradually expanding, greater focus is needed on project preparation, coordination across stakeholders, and timely execution to ensure effective utilization of available resources. Reaffirming the Government's commitment to macro-economic stability, the Finance Minister outlined the broader reform agenda aimed at mobilizing sustainable finance, deepening capital markets, and facilitating investment across priority sectors including agriculture, energy, and climate-resilient infrastructure. He emphasized a pragmatic approach that prioritizes effective utilization of available resources while progressively expanding financing options. During the meeting, Dr.



Ma Jun shared international experiences in advancing green finance, highlighting the role of taxonomies, capacity-building initiatives, and blended financing approaches in facilitating investment in environmentally sustainable and commercially viable activities. He also underscored ongoing efforts to support developing countries in strengthening their investment pipelines, with a focus on enhancing scalability and readiness for financing. In this context, he outlined potential avenues for collaboration, including greater engagement with financial institutions and the private sector to support the expansion of sustainable finance. The Finance Minister welcomed these perspectives and underscored the

importance of developing a coherent pipeline of investment opportunities, supported by strong collaboration between the public and private sectors. He emphasized that greater engagement with financial institutions and market participants would be essential in translating policy direction into tangible outcomes. He also highlighted ongoing efforts to develop climate-related financing instruments, including potential capital market initiatives, and emphasized the role of partnerships with international financial institutions in supporting Pakistan's sustainable development agenda. Both sides agreed on the value of continued technical engagement, knowledge sharing, and structured collaboration to support Pak-

istan's transition towards a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economic trajectory. The Finance Minister reaffirmed the Government's focus on ensuring that policy initiatives are grounded in practicality, supported by sound institutional frameworks, and capable of delivering measurable outcomes. The meeting was attended by Mr. Li Qun, Senior Advisor, Institute of Finance and Sustainability; Mr. Ruyi Zhao, Vice President for Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, Green Technology Bank; Mr. Leiko Huang, Researcher at the Institute of Finance and Sustainability; Mr. Wei Cheng, Country Manager, Habib Bank Limited China; and Mr. Farhan Talib, Head International, HBL.

Ulema announce nationwide Friday sermons on unity

ISLAMABAD: Ulema and Mashaikh associated with the National Paigham-e-Aman Committee (NPAC) on Thursday felicitated the nation on the completion of one year of Pakistan's victory in Marka-e-Haq, Buryan-ul-Marsoos, while announcing that Friday sermons across the country would focus on unity, brotherhood, and national cohesion. The announcement was made during a seminar held at Jamia Masjid Marhaba in Rawalpindi, where Prime Minister's Coordinator for NPAC, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashraf, addressed participants and highlighted key national development achievements, including the Pakistan Army's operations in Pakistan without credible evidence, adding that Pakistan's growing international credibility, Ashraf said the country had emerged as a peace-promoting state, referring to its role in facilitating dialogue between the United States and Iran. He paid tribute to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff and Chief Defence Forces Syed Asim Munir for their leadership in strengthening national defence and safeguarding the country's interests. Urging unity, Ashraf called on the nation to stand shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces to reinforce Pakistan's strength and stability. He reiterated that the special Friday sermons, to be delivered nationwide, would emphasize unity, intersect harmony, brotherhood, and collective responsibility in safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty and peace. Also addressing the gathering, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood and Mufti Zahid Mansoor emphasized the importance of unity and national cohesion, while paying rich tribute to the Pakistan Army for its role in safeguarding the country and ensuring peace and stability. At the conclusion of the seminar, Ulema and Mashaikh offered prayers for peace, progress, and prosperity of the nation and the country.—DNA

Dengue emergency committee reviews surveillance

RAWALPINDI: A meeting of the District Emergency and Response Committee on dengue was held at the Deputy Commissioner Office to review surveillance and ongoing anti-dengue measures in Rawalpindi. The meeting was jointly chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarter, Abdul Rehman Khan, and Chairman, Committee on Dengue member Dr. Wassem Akram, and attended by officials of all relevant departments. Officials were given a detailed briefing on dengue situation, surveillance and field activities. Addressing the meeting, Abdul Rehman Khan directed all departments to enhance their field presence and intensify surveillance in high-risk urban clusters, warning that negligence in anti-dengue efforts would not be tolerated. Dr. Wassem Akram stressed the need for stronger inter-departmental coordination and focused action on hotspots, saying timely response and public awareness were key to preventing the spread of dengue. According to the briefing, a total of 933 cases had been reported so far in

2026, including one confirmed, 26 non-dengue and 906 suspected cases. Under indoor vector surveillance, over 1.6 million houses were checked, with larvae found in more than 14,000 houses. During outdoor surveillance, over 598,000 locations were inspected, with more than 2,000 positive cases detected. It was further informed that since April 13, over 345,000 houses and more than 100,000 outdoor spots had been monitored, while over 1,000 teams were active across the district. From April 1 to 27, action was taken on over 11,000 larvae-registered spots, with 98 percent addressed promptly and only 2 percent pending. Officials said 69 FIRs had been registered, 201 challans issued and fines amounting to Rs. 224,500 imposed during the ongoing campaign. The meeting directed authorities to further improve monitoring of hotspots and coordination among departments to effectively curb dengue spread. Citizens were also urged to maintain cleanliness and avoid stagnant water.—DNA

2.6m olive plants cultivated in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: About 2.6 million olive plants have been cultivated across Balochistan, which have entered the production phase and are expected to reach full output by 2028-29, said Abdul Raouf Kakar, former director general of the Agriculture Research Institute, Balochistan. Speaking to Waqar Pakistan, Kakar termed the development a breakthrough, noting that Loralai has emerged as the hub of olive cultivation in the country. "The oil content of Loralai olives is between 25% and 32%, which is the highest in Pakistan," he said, adding that olives have provided farmers with a viable alternative after heavy losses in traditional orchards. Balochistan's fruit sector has been severely impacted by a prolonged drought that began around year 2000. "Apples, apricots and almonds have been badly damaged. In many areas, olive orchards have been wiped out due to water scarcity," Kakar noted. He highlighted the need to improve water management systems and emphasized the importance of investing in storage infrastructure. Noting the region's unique conditions, he said that developing canal

networks and small dams could significantly reduce water loss and enhance sustainability. "Unlike Punjab and Sindh, we currently lack extensive canal systems and adequate damwater storage facilities, but this also presents a strong opportunity for future development," he observed. Kakar said olive cultivation is well-suited to Balochistan's environment, noting the presence of millions of wild olive trees in the region. Domesticated varieties introduced with the Italian government's cooperation have now reached the harvesting stage, and farmers are increasingly adopting them. The government has supported the sector by installing oil extraction units in Loralai, Zhab, Khuzdar and other areas, allowing farmers to process olives locally at nominal costs. However, he said more processing facilities are needed as production expands. He noted that enhancing value addition and strengthening marketing strategies present important opportunities for growth, emphasizing that focused efforts in these areas can help producers secure better prices for their

products and improve overall returns. He said that locally produced olive oil is superior to many imported products. "Our oil is pure and free from adulteration, unlike imported oils, which are often pomace or mixed," he claimed. Currently, all locally produced olive oil is consumed within the country, reflecting strong demand despite prices reaching around Rs3,000 per litre or more in Karachi. Also dispelling the perception that olive requires little water, "For commercial yield, proper irrigation, pruning and fertilisation are essential. Without water, a tree may survive, but it will not produce a good crop," he explained. He further noted that olive oil from Loralai has earned international recognition, winning a silver award at a New York competition, largely due to its rich antioxidant profile and high phenolic content. Calling olive cultivation a "blessing" for Balochistan, Kakar said the crop is not only reviving agriculture but also creating sustainable economic activity in the province.—APP

EU delegation visits Islamabad Airport

ISLAMABAD: A senior European Union (EU) delegation visited Islamabad International Airport to review immigration operations and border control mechanisms being implemented by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). An official told DNA on Thursday that the delegation was led by Peteris Ustas, Director (Asia Pacific), Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), and included EU Ambassador to Pakistan Raimundas Karoblis along with officials from EUB, FRONTX and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). He said the delegation was received by Deputy Director Immigration Maham Khan, who briefed the visitors on FIA Immigration and departure operations, functioning of the second line of border control and procedures for dignified handling of returnees. The delegation later met Chief Executive Officer Islamabad International Airport Syed Atif Gillani, who gave a comprehensive overview of overall airport operations. The visiting delegation appreciated the measures taken by the Government of Pakistan and FIA to curb irregular migration while ensuring smooth travel for bona fide passengers.—APP

Tarar pays tribute to martyred child Irtaza Abbas

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday paid tribute to seven-year-old Irtaza Abbas Tur, son of Lieutenant Colonel Zabeer Abbas Tur, who was martyred in Azad Kashmir, last year, due to unprovoked Indian cross-border aggression. "Martyrdom of young Irtaza Abbas has raised the nation's pride, and the sacrifices rendered in the Marka-e-Haq will never be forgotten," the minister said. Tarar expressed these views as a delegation of federal ministers visited the residence of the martyred child to offer condolences and pay homage. He added that victory in the Marka-e-Haq achieved through the sacrifices of the armed forces and the prayers of the nation, for which the country remains deeply grateful to Almighty Allah, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musaddik Malik, and Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Waqar Qamar, were also present on the occasion.—APP

Female students honoured at MSG ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model School for Girls (ISMSG), Mohra Noor, organised its Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony 2026 to honour students for their outstanding performance during the academic year. The event was held with great enthusiasm to recognise achievements across academic, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Dr. Shaqir ul Rehman, AEO Bilawal Koha, attended as chief guest and distributed prizes, certificates and trophies among high-achieving students. In his address, he commended the institution's performance and encouraged students to uphold hard work, integrity and perseverance as key values for success and national development. Principal Ms Ruth Salam, in her remarks, congratulated the award-winning students and appreciated the dedication of teachers along with the continued support of parents. She said such ceremonies play a vital role in motivating students to excel and aim for higher goals. The ceremony witnessed strong participation from parents, teachers and students. Speeches and activities during the event underscored the importance of education, discipline and character-building. The event concluded with a reaffirmed commitment by the institution to continue delivering quality education and fostering student development.—APP

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May Day or Mere Display?

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

May 1 arrives every year like clockwork—a global emblem of solidarity with the working class. In cities and towns across the world, governments declare a public holiday. Streets fill with rallies, banners flutter with fiery slogans...

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily
Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza
Member APNS / ABC Certified
Vol: 07 / Issue: 174
Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960
Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markazi Islamabad



elegant stages, rehearsal slogans, revolutionary poetry recited under chandeliers—has become a hollow spectacle. Leaders in crisp attire praise the dignity of labor, yet return to offices where their gages earn less than the cost of one catered lunch.

The Contradictions at the Heart of America's Iran War

Qamar Bashir



Testimony from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, delivered under sustained questioning from lawmakers in Washington, D.C., combined with emerging reporting and prior briefings, suggests that the war has been driven less by a unified strategic vision and more by shifting justifications and disputed assumptions.

The recent Pentagon hearing on the Iran war, held on April 29, 2026, before the House Armed Services Committee, was expected to bring clarity to the most consequential military decisions in recent U.S. history. Instead, it revealed a pattern of contradictions, evasions, and inconsistencies that raise serious questions about the coherence of the policy itself.

Its legitimacy. Further complicating the narrative is new information indicating that key risks associated with the war were clearly identified before it began. According to reporting, Dan Claitor, a former U.S. attorney who served as Iran's legal representative in the attack of closing the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital shipping lanes.

civilian casualties, yet remains officially classified as under investigation. The persistence of such responses raises questions about accountability and the extent to which civilian harm is being addressed or acknowledged. The economic impact of the war is also becoming increasingly evident within the United States, even as official assessments remain limited.

The Hands That Build, Yet Remain Inseem

Dr. Ahmed Zaman Jamali

1 We celebrate 1st May every year. Deliver speeches and repeat the slogans and promises. 1st May is not just a symbolic day for remembering the sacrifices offered by labors on the roads of Chicago in 1886 for eight hours/ day working time and other labor rights.

The way we measure development is very ironic. Mega projects like highways, multistory buildings and growing economic indicators as criteria of development without remembering the work force who made them possible is not justified.

realities of survival. Consequences should not be considered on individuals' level but on society as whole. A generation deprived of education means missed a potential in that generation. Women participation in work force is about twenty percent, which place Pakistan in lowest rank countries among the world.

nomon. Another factor is little or no space for labour rights in political discourse. Electoral politics is bargaining activity in context of incentive and support. You will be given importance according to vote you have in your basket. As a result, workers are being considered as input commodities rather than stakeholders.

Briefs PM launches Rs3.2 trillion housing...

FROM PAGE 01 He told the gathering that the program was not confined to Islamabad as it would cater to the needs of all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

LHC Bar challenges transfer...

FROM PAGE 01 abolishing Article 184(3) and amending Article 175(2) are unconstitutional. It further states that the authority of the Supreme Court cannot be transferred to a federal constitutional court.

PTI leaders manage to reach...

FROM PAGE 01 seen the past two weeks, prompting criticism of the leadership. On Wednesday, a list of PTI leaders' names was sent to the Adifa jail superintendent for a meeting with Iran.

Govt extends fuel subsidy for bikers

FROM PAGE 01 public transport, and freight vehicles, outlining targeted relief measures across key transport sectors.

Australia supports blind Women cricket in Pakistan

CEO Serena Hotels, Aziz Bolani, said: "This initiative reflects the power of partnerships in advancing inclusion and opportunity through sport"

DNA ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission, in partnership with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels, supported a national training camp for visually impaired women and girls in Islamabad from 25-30 April.



5th National Women Blind Cricket Championship 25th to 30th APRIL 2026, ISLAMABAD Council, Syed Sultan Shah, said: "Blind cricket is more than a sport - it is a platform for empowerment. With the right support, these women can excel both on and off the field."

Applying universal design and inclusivity

BAKU: The United Nations (UN) World Urban Forum (WUF) is one of the most important global platforms for urban planning, sustainable development, and urban policy.

May 17 to 22 at the Baku Olympic Stadium, WUF13 will demonstrate the capital's capacity to host large-scale international events while serving as a practical testing ground for innovative urban management.

Gwadar gains strategic boost from Pakistan-Iran transit rules

"Against a complex and volatile global landscape, international economic connectivity faces mounting headwinds. We stand ready to deliver upgraded professional services to our partners."

DNA ISLAMABAD: Gwadar has been further positioned as a key regional trade hub radiating across the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia following Pakistan's approval of goods transit to Iran via its territory.

Sri Lanka govt 'temporarily' takes over cricket board

Eran Wickramaratne to lead newly appointed nine-member Sri Lanka Cricket interim administration

DNA COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's government took control of the island's cricket board on Wednesday and appointed a nine-member interim administration to carry out "structural reforms".

Toolkit distribution ceremony

PESHAWAR: A toolkit distribution ceremony was held here at Hiris Institute with the support of Helvetia Pakistan, benefiting 25 graduates of the CCTV cum General Electrician training batch.

Bank of Canada holds policy rate at 2.25%

The bank said the Iran war has led to sharply higher energy prices and transportation disruptions, weakening growth prospects in oil-importing countries and boosting inflation worldwide

ISTANBUL: The Bank of Canada has kept its policy rate unchanged at 2.25%, saying the Iran war and US trade policy continue to cloud the economic outlook.



Zeina Zein clinches K2 Squash Challenger Crown

The tournament concluded with a memorable closing ceremony and marked the club's first-ever women's international squash championship, as well as its second international tournament overall.

ISLAMABAD: Egypt's top seed Zeina Zein claimed the K2 Squash PSA Women's Challenger K2 Championship 2026 title after defeating America's Lucie Stefanoni 3-1 in the final.

Iran, US continue war of words on Strait...

FROM PAGE 01 how Tehran handles the chokepoint rather than an immediate reopening or full escalation, Iran dismisses GCC Allegations regarding its retaliatory strikes during the recent conflict, calling them "groundless."

Pakistan calls for swift...

FROM PAGE 01 efforts as constructive, noting that recent ceasefire understandings had helped prevent further escalation and civilian casualties.

Lawyer seeks Khan release...

FROM PAGE 01 questioned whether the petitioner was willing to settle the matter conclusively through a final decision on the appeal, observing that suspension of sentence could be decided without a final relief, but the appeal itself should be concluded expeditiously.

Informal Pak-Afghan talks in...

FROM PAGE 01 close to or supportive of the Government of Pakistan, with the stated aim of exploring possible avenues for easing bilateral tensions.

Briefs

Rupee gains
03 paise
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.77 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 278.80.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279 and Rs 279.80, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.49 to close at Rs 325.69 from the previous day's close of Rs 326.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.29 and closed at Rs 376.09 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.38. The exchange rates of the Emirati Dirham and the Saudi Riyal declined by 01 paise each to close at Rs 75.89 and Rs 74.32, respectively.—APP

Gold price
surges by Rs
4,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold increased in the local market on Thursday, with 24 karat gold per tola rising by Rs 4,400 to settle at Rs 483,982 compared to Rs 479,582 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold went up by Rs 3,772 to Rs 414,119 from Rs 411,147, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold increased by Rs 3,458 to Rs 380,359 against Rs 376,816. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$44 to \$4,616 per ounce from \$4,572. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs 55 to Rs 7,821 from Rs 7,766, while the price of 10 grams of silver also rose by Rs 47 to Rs 6,765 from Rs 6,658. The price of silver in the international market increased by \$0.55 to \$27.37 per ounce from \$27.82.—APP

Over a million
Lebanese at
risk of going
hungry

NEW YORK CITY: More than 1 million people in Lebanon are at risk of acute food insecurity in the coming months as violence, mass displacement and economic hardship worsen an already fragile humanitarian situation, the UN warned on Wednesday in a report on the same day that Israeli authorities issued a new displacement order for 16 areas in Lebanon south of the Litani River, which forced residents to relocate to the nearby city of Safat. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the latest order adds to growing displacement pressures across the country as civilians continue to bear the brunt of ongoing hostilities. Women and children continue to be disproportionately affected, he added, with reports indicating rising levels of psychological distress. Many are facing compounded hardships stemming from displacement, family separation, and worsening economic conditions. Overcrowded shelters also increase the risk of gender-based violence, further exacerbating the vulnerabilities among displaced populations. "We and our partners are responding to the mounting needs where access allows," Dujarric told reporters in New York, but he pointed out that humanitarian operations remain constrained by limited access in affected areas. The crisis has been further aggravated by deteriorating conditions affecting food security. A new analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme concluded that recent gains had been reversed by the recent sharp escalation in violence, pushing Lebanon back into a state of crisis. Findings from the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification indicate that about 1.24 million people, nearly one-in-four of those assessed, were projected to face "phase 3" or crisis-level food insecurity or worse between now and August. This level means that households are forced to adopt coping mechanisms such as skipping meals or selling essential belongings to afford food. Despite the scale of the crisis in the country, funding for humanitarian efforts remains critically insufficient.—APP

Pak products attract attention at Canada fair

The High Commissioner, Consul General Faisal Abro and Trade and Investment Counsellor Altamash Janjua hosted visit of the Canadian Federal and Quebec Government dignitaries as well as private sector representatives to various stalls of Pakistan Pavilion.



OTTAWA: The Pakistan Pavilion at the SIAL Canada 2026 food products exhibition in Montreal featured six prominent exhibitors,

showcasing Pakistan's diverse and high-quality food products. The pavilion at SIAL Canada, the largest Food and Beverage exhibition in North America region, was inaugurated by High Commissioner Muhammad Saleem. The High Commissioner, Consul General Faisal

Abro and Trade and Investment Counsellor Altamash Janjua hosted visit of the Canadian Federal and Quebec Government dignitaries as well as private sector representatives to various stalls of Pakistan Pavilion. Pakistan's strong presence at the three-day

long (April 29 - May 01, 2026) exhibition highlighted the country's deep interest in enhancing export of food products to Canada and offered platform for exporters to connect with international buyers and agri-food industry stakeholders.

US-Venezuela
flights to resume in
new sign of thaw

MIAMI: The first direct flight between the United States and Venezuela in seven years was set to take off Thursday, a new sign of a thaw after Washington deposed leftist leader Nicolas Maduro. The American Airlines flight is scheduled to take off at 10:16 am (1416 GMT) from Miami en route to Caracas, where the United States has resumed diplomatic relations after years of tension. To mark the occasion, representatives of the US government, the City of Miami, and the Venezuelan ambassador to Washington, Felix Plasencia, will greet passengers before the flight departs Gate D65. Media are expected to assemble when the flight lands more than three hours later at Simon Bolivar Airport, better known as Maiquetia. The inaugural flights will feature a special Venezuelan menu including corn pancakes known as cachapas and a Venezuelan-style chicken salad with mayonnaise, according to the airline. Some 1.2 million Venezuelans live in the United States, and there is expected to increase the US business presence in the South American nation, which has the world's largest proven gas reserves. But President Donald Trump has also been moving aggressively to remove Venezuelans from the United States, terminating a program that sheltered migrants from deportation back to the crime-ridden nation. US forces on January 3 carried out a deadly raid in Caracas, snatching longtime US newsman Maduro and his wife to New York to face charges of drug trafficking, which they deny. Maduro was replaced by his vice president, Dely Rodriguez, who has largely cooperated with the United States despite her ideological background. Trump has voiced satisfaction with her policies toward US companies and has tried to enforce compliance by threatening violence. Venezuela has moved to open the oil and mining sectors to the private sector. Trump in turn has started an easing of sanctions on Venezuela, with measures imposed personally on Rodriguez prospect. American Airlines subsidiary Erroy Air will run the flight daily to and from Caracas and Miami, a hub for Venezuelans and other Latin Americans.—APP

In Bangladesh, thousands
of Russian engineers
build first nuclear plant

ROOPOUR: When Arsen Matukhin left his home city near the Ural Mountains for a job in riverine Bangladesh three years ago, even those closest to him struggled to understand the decision. But he has never regretted it, and will soon see the fruits of his work: a 2,400-megawatt nuclear power plant. "When I got the job in Roopour, all my friends and relatives were asking: why are you going there?" Matukhin, a 34-year-old civil engineer from Chelyabinsk, told Arab News. "But when I arrived, I kind of got hooked. I absolutely don't regret coming here. I made new friends, Russians and Bengalis, and I just like it here... The nature here is incredibly beautiful." The facility in Roopour, some 160 km from Dhaka, is developed by the Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom, which started the construction of its two reactors in 2017. Since then, Russian professionals like Matukhin have been settling in the surrounding area, which gradually came to be known as the "Russian enclave" or "Little Russia." Most of the signatories in the locality, as well as shop, hotel, and restaurant names, are written in Cyrillic, while many local vendors have already picked up some Russian. "Bangladeshis are very welcoming toward us — they always smile and communicate with us well," said Elena Zoshchikova, a schoolteacher from Voronezh. "They learn our language, and that's very nice." She has been working with the children of Russians employed at Roopour for the past 18 months — an experience she enjoys, although sometimes she misses home. When that happens, she would cook the dishes like borscht or pelmeni, which she usually eats in Russia. "And sometimes I go to restaurants that also serve our Russian cuisine," she said. "I also miss winter... But I'm not sad, for I've also met new friends here, new acquaintances. I'm glad for that." Currently, more than 5,000 Russian engineers, nuclear specialists, technicians and their family members live and work in Roopour, where Bangladesh is going to open its first nuclear facility this year. They now constitute some 20 percent of the municipality's population and have been welcomed by the local community — also since the power plant project has generated about 30,000 jobs, according to data from the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, which oversees the facility. "The project has brought significant socio-economic benefits to the region. These include job creation, infrastructure development, increased business activity, and improvements in healthcare and transportation," Saikat Ahmed, the commission's spokesperson, told Arab News. "The project has attracted several thousand Russian scientists, engineers, and technical experts, making it one of the largest concentrations of foreign nuclear professionals in Bangladesh's history." They will stay in Roopour for at least another few years to train Bangladeshis staff in operating the plant and for technical support. "The plant is expected to be progressively operated by Bangladeshi personnel, with Russian experts remaining in advisory and support roles," Ahmed said. "From the outset, strong emphasis has been placed on capacity building of Bangladeshi professionals. Thousands of engineers, scientists, and technicians have already been trained." Those sharing their knowledge believe more such collaborations are yet to come. "With work, I started to have many Bengali friends... And I'm so grateful for this companionship," said Denis Shalikov, a civil engineer who arrived in Roopour from Tbilisi in Yutania. "There's a long history of cooperation between our nations, and the future looks good." Natalia Plutynaya, a teacher from Krasnodar, was also sure of that. "I think that relations between Russia and Bangladesh are quite trusting. They are friendly toward each other, open to cooperation, and the future looks promising." Russia was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence. Those working at Roopour are well aware of that. "Since the independence of Bangladesh, our countries have been in a very friendly relation," said Olesya Moskova, who arrived to work at the site from Yekaterinburg and heads its translation department. "It hasn't changed." She has been part of the Roopour development since 2019, observing how the construction progressed and is now working for the moment when a reactor is started for the first time.—DNA



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, and Zahid Hussain, Chairman Policy Advisory Board (FPCCI), to discuss business climate and reform priorities.

Turkiye braces
for difficult
tourism
season in fog
of war

ISTANBUL: Turkey's tourism season is off to a difficult start and officials expect tough months ahead, as the Iran war has already prompted cancellations and a shift toward last-minute bookings as travelers weigh uncertainties. Even as data on Thursday showed a modest 5 percent year-on-year rise to 2.46 million foreign visitors in March — the first full month of war — hotel owners and tour operators said bookings have dropped and travelers are wary. "A difficult second quarter lies ahead, during which the negative effects of the war will be strongly felt," Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy said at a quarterly briefing. Arrivals rose 2.2 percent to 6.84 million in the first quarter as a whole, while separate data showed tourism revenues rose 4.2 percent to \$9.9 billion. Ersoy said a recovery hinges on a lasting ceasefire, adding that last-minute bookings are growing in prominence. In 2025, revenues increased by 6.8 percent from the previous year to a record \$65.2 billion, according to official data. According to last year's projections before the war began, the government targets \$68 billion this year. Lower revenues could add to Turkey's current account deficit, which is already under pressure from soaring energy prices due to war fallout. The war, now resting on an uneasy ceasefire between the United States and Iran, has hurt demand for travel to Turkey's historic sites and Mediterranean beaches. Switzerland-based tour operator Bentour told Reuters that bookings almost halved after reports in early March that a few Iranian missiles were downed heading toward neighboring Turkey, as some of their remnants landed.—APP

Israeli strikes
kill 9 people
in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Israeli strikes on south Lebanon killed nine people including two children, the health ministry said Thursday, shortly after the president described what he described as a "catastrophic" situation of a nearby town's ceasefire. Israel has pressed its attacks on Lebanon as the fragile ceasefire, announced earlier a week ago, has been some of their remnants landed.—APP

India exit polls
suggest ruling
party gains in
state elections

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party appeared set for gains in crucial state elections in India, according to exit polls released Thursday ahead of final results due on May 4. Exit polls have a patchy record in India, but they often show early markers of the final outcome. Elections in five states and territories have taken place in April including in the major opposition-held states of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party in the national parliament, is hoping to make inroads in the opposition strongholds. Results in all the elections — which were also held in Assam, the smaller coastal territory of Puducherry and the Communist-run Kerala — will be released on Monday. All eyes will be on West Bengal, where the BJP waged an aggressive bid to dislodge Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the firmhand leader of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), in power in the state since 2011. Exit polls predict the BJP has a slight edge over TMC.—APP

Briefs

Swift action underway for Pakistanis detained in Cambodia

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development An Chaudhary Thursday stated that urgent action has been initiated over reports of Pakistani nationals detained in Cambodian jails, with the embassy responding promptly and efforts underway to ensure their swift repatriation, expected shortly after legal procedures are completed. In an exclusive conversation with a local media outlet, he explained that the government is closely monitoring the situation regarding Pakistani nationals detained in Cambodia. He said that urgent notice has been taken of the matter to ensure timely action and effective coordination at all levels. An also expressed appreciation for the role of the Pakistani Embassy in Cambodia and the ambassador, acknowledging their prompt engagement and detailed briefings on the case. Minister also highlighted that their continuous communication and efforts have been instrumental in handling the situation responsibly. He further assured that all necessary steps are being taken to secure the safe return of the affected Pakistani nationals. He expressed confidence that, following the completion of legal procedures, they will soon be repatriated safely. To another query, Minister further stressed the importance of awareness in media reporting and public understanding of overseas employment matters.

66 schools reopen in Upper Kurram

PESHAWAR: In a positive development for the education sector, authorities have announced the reopening of 66 schools in Upper Kurram district following an improvement in the security situation. According to an official notification on Thursday, all 66 educational institutions resumed normal operations starting today. These schools had been temporarily closed due to security concerns arising from recent tensions along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Officials stated that the decision to reopen the schools was made after a noticeable reduction in security threats. The prolonged closure had disrupted students' education, raising concerns among parents and educators. "With the reopening of these institutions, academic activities have resumed, providing relief to students and ensuring that their educational future is not further affected," the statement added. The phased reopening of schools in the region reflects the administration's efforts to restore normalcy and prioritize education despite challenging circumstances. - APP

Pakistan, Iran reaffirm multifaceted cooperation



Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghaddam expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Pak for their constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik was called on by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, I.E. Reza Amiri Moghaddam. They discussed bilateral relations and areas of mutual interest. Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghaddam expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Pakistan for their constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region. He appreciated Pakistan's diplomatic efforts. "We thank our Pakistani brothers and highly value Pakistan's efforts for peace in the region," the Ambassador stated. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik welcomed the Ambassador's remarks and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to regional peace.

Amb Sheikh meets Congressman Brian Mast

DNA

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Razaan Saad Sheikh on Thursday met with Chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee Brian Mast to discuss matters of mutual interest and regional peace. "Delighted to meet Rep. Brian Mast, Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee. Thanked him for his acknowledgment of Pakistan's key role in facilitating peace in the Middle East and beyond," the ambassador wrote on his X timeline. The two sides held a broad and constructive exchange of views on the regional and global situation. During the discussion, Pakistan reiterated its commitment to promoting dialogue and continuing to play a positive role in the resolution of conflicts. Furthermore, the two sides discussed possibilities for a roadmap to further strengthen the Pakistan-US partnership.

PSX under pressure as oil spike, rate hike hit sentiment

KSE-100 Index drops to intraday low of 161,461.09, losing 4,362.78 points, or 2.63%

ISLAMABAD: Stocks at the bourse came under pressure on Thursday as an oil-price spike triggered by fears of a prolonged US blockade of Iranian ports rattled global sentiment, with investors also weighing the fallout from the latest interest-rate hike and the risk of higher domestic inflation. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index traded between a high of 164,357.47 (down 1,664.4 points, or 0.88%) and a low of 161,461.09 (down 4,362.78 points, or 2.63%) against the previous close of 165,823.87.

Market came under pressure following international markets where crude oil also rose after Trump warned the Iran blockade could last months. This created fresh concerns on domestic inflation," said Huzefa Kiaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited. Oil jumped after US President Donald Trump warned the US blockade of Iranian ports could last months, while reports said he would be briefed on potential fresh military action.

The Wall Street Journal reported Trump had told national security officials to prepare for a prolonged blockade to pressure Tehran, while Axios cited unnamed sources as saying Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US Central Command (Centcom), would brief the president on possible military options. The prospect of the Strait of Hormuz remaining effectively shut, a route through which around a fifth of global oil and gas normally passes, pushed crude to its highest level since 2022. Brent for June delivery surged 7.1% to \$126.41 a barrel in Asian trade, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose 3.4% to \$110.31, with both later paring gains. "The interest rate hike was expected to derate the valuation of the overall index. Since then, continuously rising oil prices and the US preparation to endure months-long naval blockade are bad for global economies." "Hence, Pakistan's stock market is taking a breather where investors assess risks versus rewards of staying invested," said AAF Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. Global equities softened, with most Asian markets lower, while investors also weighed the outlook for US monetary policy after dissent at the US Federal Reserve's latest vote. - APP

Maryam announces development projects

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif announced development projects worth Rs 23 billion including 'Own Farm, Own Employment' in Katicha area, and directed the authorities concerned to distribute 14,500 acres of government land in people of Katicha. She noted that government's writ has been firmly established in the area, as it is for the first time in history that no criminal incident has occurred in Katicha area in 05 months. She said that out of Rs 23 billion Katicha Area Development Program, Rs 7.1 billion will be spent on law and order, Rs 13.9 billion on social infrastructure projects, and Rs 1.7 billion on other matters. She added that schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges will also be built, and directed the relevant authorities to send 'Clinic on Wheels' to Katicha, besides providing a mobile veterinary hospital and lab in the area. Chief Minister Punjab said that for the first time in Katicha area, modern solar-energy-powered drone surveillance has been launched, and state-of-the-art drones are capable of flying for more than 24 hours. She added that modern APCs and police vans will also be equipped with surveillance cameras, besides Safe City monitoring in police stations and check posts in the areas.

Crude oil rockets to 4-year high as traders price in prolonged Iran blockade

Brent crude jumps 6% to \$122.53 per barrel amid concerns over constraints, rising energy market volatility

SHARP surge in crude oil prices, driven by fears that US President Donald Trump could tighten or prolong a months-long blockade affecting Iranian oil flows, rattled global markets on Thursday, sending bond yields higher and reinforcing expectations of prolonged inflationary pressure. Brent crude jumped 6% overnight to a four-year high of \$122.53 a barrel, amid concerns the Strait of Hormuz may remain constrained, amplifying energy market volatility. The spike in oil weighed heavily on global bonds, with yields climbing as investors reassessed the outlook for interest rates in a more inflationary environment. Markets have largely priced out rate cuts from the US Federal Reserve this year, with a roughly even chance of a hike by next spring. The shift follows one of the most divided Federal Reserve decisions since 1992, with three policymakers opposing the central bank's easing bias, while another backed a rate cut. The central bank also acknowledged that rising global energy prices were feeding into inflation risks. Investors are now watching upcoming signals from the European Central Bank and the Bank of England, both of which are expected to strike a more hawkish tone. Equity markets in Asia showed resilience, with technology and artificial intelligence-linked shares supported by strong corporate earnings. Futures tracking US tech stocks advanced after upbeat results from major firms, reinforcing optimism around AI-driven growth. "Macroeconomic risks are significant at this juncture, but stock market bulls hope a rosy path for artificial intelligence can continue to offset cyclical weakness," said Jose Torres, senior economist at Interactive Brokers. "If earnings, capital expenditures and outlooks are buoyant, investors could remain sanguine even as the threat of a slowdown in overall activity, lofter borrowing costs and widening credit spreads raise eyebrows," he added. In Asia, equities were mixed, though major regional indices remained on track for strong monthly gains, supported by robust demand linked to artificial intelligence. - APP

US Fed holds rates steady in split decision

THE Federal Reserve held interest rates steady on Wednesday, but in its most divided decision since 1992, noted rising concerns about inflation in a policy statement that drew three dissents from officials who no longer feel the US central bank should communicate a bias towards lowering borrowing costs. A fourth dissent at the meeting came in favour of a quarter-percentage-point rate cut. "Inflation is elevated, in part reflecting the recent increase in global energy prices," the Fed said in its policy statement, a shift from previous language saying that inflation was just "somewhat" elevated. "Developments in the Middle East are contributing to a high level of uncertainty about the economic outlook," it said. The 84 vote was the most divided since October 6, 1992, and shows the breadth of opinion presumed incoming Fed Chair Kevin Warsh will face in pursuing rate cuts that President Donald Trump says he expects from his chosen successor to Jerome Powell, whose term as central bank chief ends on May 15. "Though the latest policy statement retained language about how the Fed would respond to future cuts as the next likely move, those policymakers objected. - APP

Commissioning ceremony of HANGOR submarine

RAWALPINDI: Commissioning ceremony of 1st HANGOR Class Submarine, PNS/M HANGOR was held at Sanya, China. President Asif Ali Zardari presided the occasion as Chief Guest. Admiral Nawod Ashraf, NI (M), T.Bi, Chief of the Naval Staff, was also present at the ceremony. President Zardari described the commissioning of HANGOR as a historic milestone in Pakistan Navy's modernization, affirming Pakistan's resolve to maintain a robust, balanced and

credible defence posture. He stated that Pakistan is fully capable of defending its sovereignty, protecting its maritime interests and ensuring the security of its economic lifelines. Naval Chief highlighted that disruptions at critical maritime choke points increasingly threaten global trade and energy security, and maintaining a stable, rule-based maritime order demands technologically advanced naval forces. He stated that HANGOR Class Submarines - armed with state-of-the-

art weapons, advanced sensors and Air Independent Propulsion - will be key in preserving maritime order and stability in the region. These submarines will play a pivotal role in deterring aggression and ensuring security of vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) across the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean region. Naval Chief reiterated that the same HANGOR holds a significant place in our national history. In 1971, earlier HANGOR became the first submarine since World War II to sink a warship. PNS/M HANGOR will carry this illustrious legacy forward as this is an important milestone for Pakistan Navy that will bolster our maritime defence and modernize our fleet with cutting-edge technology.



The commissioning of 1st HANGOR Class Submarine marks another chapter in the time-tested and enriching friendship between Pakistan and China. The ceremony was attended by senior officials from Pakistan Navy and PLA (Navy). The Prime Minister of Pakistan and COAS & CDF have congratulated the entire nation and the Pakistan Navy on achieving this historic milestone. - APP

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