



Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign agreement to extend \$3bn deposit



Aleem Khan visits Turkish Embassy, expresses condolences over tragic school shootings



Ethiopian Ambassador calls on minister for investment, discusses bilateral cooperation

Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



Saturday 18 April 2026 Shawwal 29, 1447 A.HVOI No: 06 Issue No. 72 Pages 4 Rs. 20

Erdogan hails PM Shehbaz's Mideast peace efforts at diplomacy forum

PEAK POINT

TURKEY: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday held a bilateral meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

According to a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office, during the warm and cordial meeting, President Erdogan welcomed PM Shehbaz to Türkiye and thanked him for attending the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

The meeting comes a day after the premier reached Türkiye on the third leg of his tri-nation tour after concluding visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

During his visit to Riyadh and Doha, PM Shehbaz held meetings with Saudi Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The Turkish president, during the meeting with PM Shehbaz on the sidelines of the diplomacy forum earlier today, praised the prime minister's peace efforts and said Türkiye would continue to support Pakistan's diplomatic initiative to bring peace to the region.

The prime minister thanked President Erdogan for his warm invitation and traditional Turkish hospitality extended to him and his delegation during his stay in Antalya.

He congratulated the Turkish president on the success of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which he said had transformed into an important global event.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a bilateral meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye on the sidelines of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Antalya.

Govt slashes diesel price by Rs32

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The government on Friday reduced the price of diesel by Rs32.12, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The statement said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had decided to provide relief to the nation and approved a reduction of Rs32.12 in the price of diesel. "After the approval, the price of diesel has decreased from Rs385.54 to Rs353.43," the statement said. "The effects of the reduction in oil prices will be conveyed to the public as soon as possible," the premier was quoted as saying.

Iran opens Hurmoz: Trump thanks Pakistan, praises PM, CDF Asim Muneer



PEAK POINT

DUBAI: US President Donald Trump on Friday thanked Pakistan, its Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir shortly after Iran announced to open the Strait of Hormuz for passage of all commercial vessels.

"Thank you to Pakistan and its Great Prime Minister and Field Marshall, two fantastic people," he stated.

Iran's foreign minister said on Friday that passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire,

in line with the ceasefire in Lebanon.

The passage of vessels through the strait will be on the coordinated route as already announced by Ports and Maritime Organisation of Iran, Abbas Araqchi added in a post on X.

In response to the announcement by Iran for opening the Strait of Hormuz for passage of commercial vessels, Trump in a social media post said: "Thank you."

Trump thanked Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar as well. "Thank you to Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar for your great bravery and help." He also claimed that Iran has agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again. "It will no longer be used as a weapon against the World!"

DPM/FM Dar, FM of TRNC reaffirm commitment to strengthening bilateral ties



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday met with Foreign Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Tahsin Ertugruloglu, on sidelines of Antalya Diplomacy Forum. During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation across various sectors, particularly for education and welfare of the Pakistani diaspora in the TRNC, according to a press release issued by the Foreign Office spokesperson.

They also agreed to maintain close engagement and continue working together to promote the mutual benefit of their peoples.

Israel kills 4 Palestinians in Gaza ceasefire violations

PEAK POINT



GAZA: Four Palestinians, including a child, were killed on Thursday in separate Israeli attacks across Gaza, in the latest violations of the ceasefire agreement in force since

October 10, 2025.

Medical sources told Anadolu that the bodies of brothers Abdelmalek and Abdel Sattar al-Affar arrived at the Al-Shifa Hospital after an Israeli drone strike targeted Beit Lahia in northern Gaza.

Witnesses said the strike hit an area outside the zone under Israeli control, according to the ceasefire agreement. The Israeli army claimed that its forces identified two Palestinians crossing the so-called "yellow line" and approaching troops in a way that posed an "immediate threat." It said the two were killed in an airstrike.

Later on Thursday, nine-year-old Saleh Badawi was killed, and several others were injured after Israeli forces opened fire in the Zeitoun neighbourhood east of Gaza City. In southern Gaza, Mohsen al-Dabbari, 38, was killed by Israeli fire in the Ard al-Laymoun area south of Khan Yunis.

Govt abolishes free electricity units facility for power sector employees

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The federal government has abolished the free electricity units facility for power sector employees, according to Radio Pakistan.

In a post on X, Power Minister Awais Leghari said for the first time in the country's history, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, free units for power sector staff have been ended. He added that Lahore High Court accepted the Power Division's petition.

Leghari further said ending free units was the public's oldest and long-standing demand. The minister maintained that government will take every step necessary for the collective betterment of the country.

Leghari's statement came after the Lahore High Court ruled that the government's decision to discontinue free electricity units for senior officers was constitutional, dismissing a petition filed against the policy. Justice Malik Javed Iqbal Wains issued the verdict while hearing a case brought by the GEPCO Officers Association. The petition had challenged the federal government's move to withdraw free electricity units previously granted to officers.

In its ruling, the court observed that officers in grades 17 to 22 had been receiving between 450 and 1,300 free electricity units per month.

However, it declared that the withdrawal of the benefit was lawful and did not violate any constitutional provisions.

Bushra Bibi shifted back to prison following surgery: Adiala jail authorities

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, the wife of incarcerated ex-premier and PTI founder Imran Khan, was shifted back to Adiala jail on Friday after undergoing an eye surgery at a Rawalpindi hospital, according to jail authorities.

Bushra is serving a seven-year sentence in the £190 million corruption case. In December 2025, she was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in the Toshakhana 2 case, which revolved around the purchase of an expensive jewelry set gifted to Imran by the Saudi crown prince during his May 2021 visit. The PTI has expressed concern over reports about her health, demanding that she be taken to a hospital for diagnosis and treatment. According to a press release by the Adiala jail authorities, she had complained of impaired vision in her right eye, due to which the prison administrators immediately had her examined by ophthalmologists. The superintendent of the jail said that retinal detachment was diagnosed in the right eye. In view of the diagnosis, doctors advised surgery, he added. On Thursday evening, the patient was shifted to a private hospital in Rawalpindi, where the necessary tests and medical examination were completed before the surgery.



SPORTS



Unbeaten Peshawar Zalmi seal PSL 11 playoff spot



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi, champions in 2017, have formally qualified for the playoffs of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11. Zalmi, who holds the top spot in the eight-team tournament's standings with 13 points in seven matches, had their top-four finish guaranteed following Quetta Gladiators' six-wicket victory over Lahore Qalandars here at the National Bank Stadium earlier today. The Gladiators' victory meant that Zalmi's tally of 13 points can no longer be topped by

the fourth-placed side by the end of the league stage. Peshawar Zalmi started their PSL 11 campaign with a commanding five-wicket victory over debutants Rawalpindiz in the high-scoring affair, while their subsequent fixture against Islamabad United was washed out due to rain in Lahore. The former champions then registered consecutive victories over Hyderabad Kingsmen, Karachi Kings, defending champions Qalandars, Multan Sultans and the Gladiators, respectively, to

consolidate their top spot. Zalmi's next match is scheduled against the Gladiators at the aforementioned venue on Sunday, before they head back to Lahore, where they will be locking horns with the Kings and home side Qalandars on April 22 and 25, respectively. It is pertinent to mention that despite Zalmi's guaranteed top-four finish, all seven remaining sides remained in the race to make it to the playoffs, with three-time champions United and 2021 winners Sultans in strong contention. United are second in the PSL 11 standings with nine points after seven matches, closely followed by Sultans, who have eight points, having played a game less. Babar Azam (c), Sufiyan Mueqem, Abdul Samad, Ali Raza, Aaron Hardie, Aamir Jamal, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Haris, Khalid Usman, Abdul Subhan, Tanzid Hasan, Michael Bracewell, Kusal Mendis, Iftikhar Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Kashif Ali, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Farhan Yousuf, Brian Bennett, Mohammad Basit and Shoriful Islam.

Pakistan beat SL to set up title clash with India in ITF U-12 event



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Pakistan secured an emphatic 2-0 victory over Sri Lanka to book their place in the final of the ITF Asia 12&Under Team Competition – South Asia 2026, setting up a high-voltage clash against arch-rivals India. The young Pakistani side delivered a composed and confident performance in the semifinal, winning both singles matches to seal a comfortable passage into the title decider. In the opening rubber, Muhammad Aayan of Fatima Group overcame Seneviratne Kashya in straight sets, while Muhammad Ibraheem Hussain Gill sealed the tie with a hard-fought win over Akbar Zacharia in a closely contested second singles. Earlier, Pakistan team defeated Nepal and Maldives. Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) President, Secretary General, and officials congratulated the team on their impressive display and expressed confidence in their ability to carry the momentum into the final. They extended their best wishes ahead of the much-anticipated encounter against India. The team's participation is supported by Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited, which continues to play a key role in promoting grassroots tennis and youth development.

Canada T20 World Cup game under ICC scrutiny after corruption claim



PEAK POINT

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday it is investigating Cricket Canada over allegations of match corruption, including the team's loss to New Zealand at the recent T20 World Cup hosted by India and Sri Lanka. The game in Chennai — which

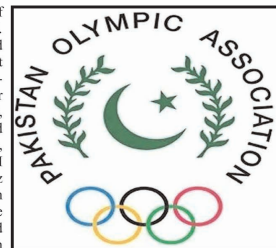
Canada lost by eight wickets — is under scrutiny following allegations of corruption highlighted in a documentary aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on Thursday. "The ACU (anti-corruption unit) is aware of the programme broadcast by CBC," Andrew Ephgrave, interim

general manager of the ICC's Integrity Unit, said in a statement. The documentary made by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on Thursday. "The ACU (anti-corruption unit) is aware of the programme broadcast by CBC," Andrew Ephgrave, interim general manager of the ICC's Integrity Unit, said in a statement. The documentary made by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on Thursday. "The ACU (anti-corruption unit) is aware of the programme broadcast by CBC," Andrew Ephgrave, interim

Pakistan names strong contingent for Asian Beach Games 2026

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has announced a strong national contingent for the 6th Asian Beach Games, set to take place in Sanya, China in 2026. Pakistan will be represented across a wide range of disciplines, including athletics, handball, judo, kabaddi, triathlon, and wrestling, reflecting the country's commitment to broad-based sporting development and international participation. The contingent comprises a balanced mix of athletes, coaches, and support staff. In athletics, Maqsood Ali and Faiza Riaz, Tameen Khan, and Sami Ullah as coaches. Pakistan's will spearhead triathlon hopes will rest on Hamza Asif under the guidance of coach Rafique Ahmed. The handball squad forms the largest group, featuring players such as Mudassar Shahzad, Kashif Ali, Asif Ali (senior and junior), Imran Khan, Hazrat Hussain, M Shahid Bashir, Muazz Ali, Ahmad Hassan Baig, and M Saim. The team will be coached by Azhar Ul Haq. In judo, Shahzaib and Ambreen Tariq will represent Pakistan, accompanied by coach Liaquat Ali. The kabaddi lineup includes Kashif Razaq, Farhan Ali, Usman Ahmad, Muhammad Zohaib Niaz, Muhammad Jamshaid, and Waqar Ali, with Rahat Maqsood Ali and Badshah Gul serving as coaches. Pakistan's will spearhead triathlon hopes will rest on Hamza Asif



under the guidance of coach Rafique Ahmed. The handball squad forms the largest group, featuring players such as Mudassar Shahzad, Kashif Ali, Asif Ali (senior and junior), Imran Khan, Hazrat Hussain, M Shahid Bashir, Muazz Ali, Ahmad Hassan Baig, and M Saim. The team will be coached by Azhar Ul Haq. In judo, Shahzaib and Ambreen Tariq will represent Pakistan, accompanied by coach Liaquat Ali. The kabaddi lineup includes Kashif Razaq, Farhan Ali, Usman Ahmad, Muhammad Zohaib Niaz, Muhammad Jamshaid, and Waqar Ali, with Rahat Maqsood Ali and Badshah Gul serving as coaches. Pakistan's will spearhead triathlon hopes will rest on Hamza Asif

Pakistan Dominates as Boys Clinch Singles and Doubles Titles



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) is pleased to announce the successful conclusion of the Subh-e-Nau ITF Pakistan Junior International Tennis Championship (Leg-II), held at the PTF Tennis Complex, Islamabad. A total of 22 boys and 19 girls from 15 countries, including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia, Russia, Poland, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hong Kong, the

Netherlands, and Thailand, participated in the championship, showcasing a high standard of international junior tennis. The event was proudly sponsored by Bank Alfalah, Serena Hotel Islamabad, Mari Energies, Arif Habib Group of Companies, and Subh-e-Nau. In the Boys' Singles Final, Pakistan's Mikeel Ali Baig delivered an outstanding performance to defeat Ganuka Fernando of Sri Lanka 6-1, 6-2, clinching the championship title. In the Boys' Doubles Final, Mikeel Ali Baig, partnering with Ahtesham of Pakistan, continued their dominant run by defeating Ganuka Fernando (Sri Lanka) and Jayden Park (Hong Kong) 6-1, 6-2 to secure the doubles title. In the Girls' Singles Final, Zhiyu Zhou of China defeated Varvara Rubtsova of Russia 6-2, 6-1 and won the girls singles title. In the Girls' Doubles Final, the pair of Varvara Rubtsova (Russia) and Safiia Urazalina (Kazakhstan) overcame Ai Teng and Zhiyu Zhou of China in a thrilling contest, winning 2-6, 6-1, (10-7), 7-6. Saleem, Director-Administration of Mari Energies, graced the occasion as the

Chief Guest. Mrs. Shahida Kausar Farooq, Chairperson of Subh-e-Nau, was the Guest of Honour. Col. Gul Rehman, Director C&S PTF, was also present and distributed prizes among the winners and runners-up. The ceremony was attended by a large number of players, coaches, parents, and tennis enthusiasts. It is further informed that the Treet ITF Pakistan Syed Dilawar Abbas Memorial Junior Tennis Championship J-60 (Leg-III) will commence on Monday, 20 April 2026, at the same venue.



IRS roundtable highlights Pakistan's emerging mediatory role in US–Iran crisis



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, convened a roundtable discussion on the 'Israel-US War on Iran', examining its regional fallout and Pakistan's Mediation Role. The session brought together a distinguished panel, including Iran's Ambassador to

Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam; Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed; Ambassador Asif Durrani (former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran); Maj. Gen.(r) Zahid Mahmood, senior defence analyst; renowned journalist Hamid Mir; and media analyst Ms. Muneezay Jehangir. The discussion was chaired by the President of the Institute,

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem. Opening the session, Ambassador Saleem underscored the far-reaching repercussions of the 40-day US-Israel war against Iran, citing surging energy prices, trade disruptions, and the threat of broader regional escalation. He highlighted Pakistan's emergence as a key diplomatic actor, helping bring Iran and the United

States back to the negotiating table from the "brink of an uncontrolled escalation carrying global repercussions". In his keynote address, Senator Mushahid Hussain described the current moment as one of the most significant in Pakistan's diplomatic history. Drawing parallels with Pakistan's role in facilitating the

Beijing–Washington backchannel in the 1970s, he outlined three major structural consequences of the conflict: the collapse of the "Greater Israel" concept, the erosion of US influence in the region, and the urgent need for a new cooperative security architecture in the Middle East. He emphasized that "the security of the Gulf must be determined by

regional stakeholders, not external powers". Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, offered a first-hand perspective on Iran's experience during the conflict. He expressed appreciation for Pakistan's support and conveyed cautious optimism regarding the Islamabad Talks.

18%–25% Mobile tax under fire as committee flags double taxation burden

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's mobile phone taxation regime has come under sharp scrutiny after lawmakers flagged what they described as "double taxation" practices, raising serious concerns over consumer burden and policy inconsistencies in the country's revenue framework. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by Syed Naveed Qamar, took strong notice of the current tax structure, questioning why

income tax is effectively being treated like sales tax on mobile devices. The observation triggered calls for an urgent review, with the chairman directing authorities to submit a comprehensive policy note examining the rationale, revenue impact, and fairness of existing tax rates. Officials briefed the committee that mobile phones are subject to multiple layers of taxation, including income tax and sales tax ranging between 18% and 25%, depending on the value and category of the device.

The taxation applies to both imported units (CBU) and locally assembled devices (CKD/SKD), under provisions of the Income Tax Ordinance and Sales Tax Act. Lawmakers expressed concern that the current structure may be disproportionately affecting consumers while failing to strike a balance between revenue generation and affordability. Members emphasized that high taxation could discourage legal imports and push consumers towards undocumented markets, undermin-

ing both revenue collection and regulatory control. The committee also reviewed exemptions available under existing laws, including relief for visually impaired individuals and limited concessions under personal baggage rules. However, it was noted that the overall policy requires reassessment to ensure fairness and alignment with broader economic goals. In response, the committee recommended a full review of the taxation regime to promote equity, reduce consumer burden, and sup-

port local manufacturing. Members stressed that taxation policies must be transparent, consistent, and aligned with national industrial objectives. Beyond taxation, the committee also advanced several key legislative items, recommending the passage of amendments to the Special Economic Zones Act, the Parliamentary Budget Office Bill, and the Export Import Bank of Pakistan Act. Several other financial and regulatory bills were deferred for further deliberation. Senior govern-

ment officials, including ministers and representatives from the Finance Division and Federal Board of Revenue, attended the session as the committee pushed for reforms aimed at strengthening fiscal governance and ensuring a more balanced taxation system. The development signals growing parliamentary pressure on the government to revisit policies that directly impact consumers, particularly at a time when inflation and cost of living concerns remain high.

Opinion & Editorial

Health: Rafiq Khan | Opinion: Arif Mehmood
DAILY PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD
Arif Mehmood Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Notice, consent, harm

Sufyan Bin Muneer
EVERY second, thousands of people tap 'I agree' without reading a word. The law is satisfied. The platform is protected. The user is not. Consent, as it operates in the digital environment today, is not a legal safeguard. It is a legal loophole. To meet the legal condition, you are given a privacy notice, you agree, and business continues as usual. The post-consent digital harm follows quietly and legally.

People do not agree on much these days. But one thing that brings them together is the feeling that they have reached a point of digital exhaustion, scrolling through mindless content. Even when they want to stop, the system is designed to keep them manipulated and glued to screens. The most they can do is raise their protest on the same social media platforms before being swept away in a fleeting storm of reels.

People are lonelier and more hopeless than ever before. Technology is the predominant reason. Everyone is desperate to understand why today's youngsters seem unhappier than the generations that came before. Marc Zao-Sanders' study in the Harvard Business Review found that therapy and companionship had become the single most common use of generative AI in 2025, surpassing coding, research and content creation combined. People are not just scrolling; they are seeking a connection with machines because they

cannot find enough of it elsewhere. We have moved, quietly and without deliberate choice, from an attention economy to an attachment economy. This is not a technology story. It is a loneliness story. To address digital harms, governments have reached for the most irrational tool available. Australia outlawed social media accounts for children under 16. Britain, France, Spain and dozens of other countries are moving in the same direction. Yet a blanket ban is not a solution; it is a relocation. Children do not disappear from the internet, they migrate to encrypted messaging apps and gaming platforms — spaces with less oversight and more danger. Bans also create a cliff edge, where children who have never been taught to navigate social media are suddenly let loose on unfiltered platforms the moment they turn 16. We are not teaching children to swim. We are ensuring they drown somewhere less visible. Liability should be grounded in a duty not to harm. The real flaw lies in the legal architecture underpinning all of this. Today, privacy is not about being private but about regulating relationships of power, and consent does not meaningfully constrain powerful actors such as corporations and state authorities. The disconnect between legal assumptions and social reality is particularly acute in Pakistan, where no comprehensive data protection statute exists and courts have acknowledged that millions

may be subjected to warrantless surveillance through centralised interception systems. In the corporate domain, the absence of oversight exposes individuals to identity theft, financial fraud and pervasive misuse of personal information. There is little incentive for the state to regulate data privacy when it too receives copies of that data and benefits from the same surveillance infrastructure it ought to restrain. It is unclear whether, in practice, there is any meaningful consent at all. Consent in privacy law rests on the false assumption that digital transactions resemble traditional two-party commercial exchanges. In reality, digital platforms involve extensive third-party data collection beyond users' knowledge or control. Even in lopsided standard-form contracts, parties are at least aware of what they are exchanging, and legal scholars call this a 'meeting of minds'. That meeting does not happen here. Individuals do not know what they are giving up, and what is being taken can be changed unilaterally, without notice. Human-computer interaction has evolved beyond what existing law was built to govern, and the law must be rebuilt accordingly. Ignacio Cofone argues for shifting towards a harm-based liability framework, requiring corporations to be held accountable for the consequences of their data practices, not for the checklists they complete or the notices they send.

Courtesy Dawn

Islamabad Talks 2.0

Anela Shahzad
What was happening behind stage was in fact more defining than what was happening at the stage. Saudi Arabia declaring the arrival of military support from Pakistan; Aramco finalising a \$10 billion oil refinery in Gwadar while partnering with PSO, OGDCL, PPL & GHPL; and Pakistan sending its first export container to Uzbekistan via Iran, were all unprecedented shockers.

One should understand that all this did not happen per chance. Rather, this points to increasingly deepening strategic alliance between Pakistan, the Arabs and the Persians. Seems like these players were already measuring their moves for integrating in an emerging Global South environment, just waiting for the right time to play the right moves.

One should understand that in the lapse of the first round of these talks, Pakistan has become the security provider for Saudi Arabia; and this service will soon be sought by other Gulf states. Also, that Pakistan cannot solely provide this service without China's participation, with whom it shares technology, reconnaissance, intelligence and strategic allegiance.

So, to complete the security architecture, the Peninsula will soon be getting rid of US fighter jets, defence mechanisms, satellite coverage and intelligence penetration, all in one go — replacing them with everything Pakistani and Chinese.

Moreover, having the Saudi refinery closer to finalisation was exactly the push needed for Gwadar and CPEC. With this move, not only will international shipping be refueling from Gwadar, Pakistani consumers will also be getting a 20 per cent cut in oil prices. Topping that, Pakistan's opening of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan route means the opening of the long-awaited markets of Central Asia to the world via Pakistan and Iran.

Courtesy Tribune

Mpox spread

Containment is no longer the operative word. The steady rise in locally transmitted Mpox cases across Sindh has pushed the situation beyond early warning into a phase that demands a coordinated public health response. With the provincial tally now at 25 confirmed cases and nine deaths, the trajectory is deeply concerning. The addition of fresh cases in Karachi and Khairpur, coupled with official acknowledgment that all infections are linked to local transmission, signals that the virus is no longer confined to isolated clusters. Khairpur, with 18 confirmed cases, has clearly emerged as the epicentre, but the spread to Karachi and Sukkur underscores a wider geographic risk that cannot be ignored. Out of 122 reported suspected cases this year, a significant number have tested positive, suggesting that surveillance may still be catching up with reality. In outbreaks of this nature, delays in detection often translate into exponential spread. That nine lives have already been lost is a stark indicator of both the virulence of the outbreak and the fragility of existing containment measures. Hospitals and clinics must now be subjected to strict, enforceable sterilisation audits with zero tolerance for non-compliance. Authorities have rightly initiated contact tracing, but this effort must be expanded in both scale and speed.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign agreement to extend \$3bn deposit



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Friday signed an agreement to extend a \$3 billion deposit from the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD). Saudi Arabia, earlier this week, pledged an additional \$3 billion in deposits for Pakistan and extended its existing \$5bn facility for a further three years. "The agreement, signed between the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), provides for the extension in the maturity of a USD 3 billion deposit placed by SFD with the State Bank of Pakistan," said a post on X by the Ministry of Finance. The ministry

said that the agreement was signed between SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed and Chief Executive Officer of the SFD Sultan bin Abdulrahman Al-Marshad. Minister for Finance and Muhammad Aurangzeb witnessed the signing of an important financial agreement in Washington, DC, in the presence of Pakistan's ambassador to the United States. The development took place on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings. The ministry added that the extension of the deposit reflects "strong and longstanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and will support the country's external sector stability. On Thursday, the Saudi Press Agency also reported that Saudi Arabia had extended the \$5bn deposit with the central bank and announced an "additional \$3bn deposit". "This assistance aims at supporting Pakistan's economy and strengthening its resilience amidst evolving global economic challenges, and comes in accordance with the leadership's directives to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between the two countries, affirming the kingdom's commitment to

fostering the economic growth of Pakistan, which is expected to reflect positively on the living conditions of Pakistani citizens," it said. Pakistan will reportedly return a \$3.5bn loan to the UAE this month, putting pressure on its reserves and risking breaches of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme targets. The development comes at a sensitive time for the country's external account position, which is already under strain from rising global oil prices and economic spillovers linked to tensions in the Middle East. According to official figures, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$16.4bn as of March 27, sufficient to cover close to three months of imports. However, the repayment requirement from the UAE has added fresh pressure on the country's external buffers. In March, Islamabad failed to secure an agreement with the UAE to roll over the \$3.5bn facility, marking the first such failure in seven years and raising concerns about near-term financing gaps.

Aleem Khan visits Turkish Embassy, expresses condolences over tragic school shootings

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday visited the Turkish Embassy to express profound grief and offer condolences over the tragic school shooting incidents in the Turkish provinces of Sanliurfa and Kahramanmaraş that claimed several lives. During the visit, the minister met with Turkish Ambassador Dr. Irfan Neziroglu and conveyed that the entire Pakistani nation stands in unwavering solidarity with their Turkish brothers in this hour of immense sorrow. He described the act of targeting innocent children as an extremely brutal and barbaric deed that defies humanity, said a press release. During the conversation, Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that addressing psychological issues and implementing measures to prevent gun violence must be a

collective priority. Both leaders reached a consensus that a strong and stable family system plays a vital role in preventing such tragic occurrences in society. The minister further remarked that Türkiye and Pakistan are like "one soul in two bodies," sharing each other's joys and sorrows as inseparable partners. He offered special prayers for the deceased, requesting that Allah Almighty grant the bereaved families courage and patience, and wished for the swift and complete recovery of those injured in the incidents. On the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Irfan Neziroglu thanked the minister for his visit and appreciated the solidarity extended by the people of Pakistan. The two sides also exchanged views on the prevailing regional situation and common challenges faced by both countries.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan meets with Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan H.E. Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, to offer Condolence for deadly school shootings in the provinces of Kahramanmaraş and Sanliurfa in Türkiye.

Ethiopian Ambassador calls on minister for investment, discusses bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, called on the Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh. The federal minister warmly welcomed the Ambassador and appreciated the longstanding friendly relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia, said a release issued here Friday. The Ambassador commended the rich culture and hospitality of the Pakistani people and congratulated the Federal Minister on Pakistan's constructive and positive role in promoting global peace. The federal minister appreciated the visionary leadership and diplomatic efforts of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in enhancing Pakistan's global standing and promoting peace. During the meeting, both sides discussed areas of mutual interest including trade, investment, and economic cooperation. The Ambassador highlighted Ethiopia's vast potential, noting its population of approximately 130 million and its growing economic sectors. He underscored Ethiopia's strengths in agriculture, livestock exports to the Middle East, and hydropower generation, which provides cost-



effective electricity. Ethiopian Ambassador calls on minister for investment, discusses bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador also highlighted the success of Ethiopian Airlines, one of the

Pakistan's mediation efforts thwart regional conflict; says Iranian minister

ISLAMABAD: Iran on Thursday has formally acknowledged Pakistan's key role in helping ease recent regional tensions, with Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni describing Islamabad's diplomatic intervention as "historic" during a high-level meeting in Tehran with Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. In the meeting, Momeni thanked Pakistan for mediating a ceasefire at a critical moment when the region appeared to be edging toward a broader conflict. He said Iran would "always remember" Pakistan's sincere and positive role in preventing escalation, noting that the ceasefire was made possible through Islamabad's timely engagement. Naqvi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional stability,



stressing that the country's foreign policy is rooted in the pursuit of peace. He said war could never resolve disputes and emphasized that lasting solutions can only be achieved through dialogue and diplomacy. He added that Pakistan is actively working with regional partners to find a durable settlement to ongoing tensions in the Middle East. Both sides also agreed to strengthen cooperation on border management and counter-terrorism, concluding the meeting with a shared commitment to enhancing bilateral ties.

Muqam announces compensation for gas pipeline explosion victims

HARIPUR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam here Saturday visited the site of the tragic gas pipeline explosion near Hattar Industrial Estate in Haripur and announced financial assistance for the families of the deceased. The Federal Minister said that, on the directions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, each bereaved family will be given 1 million rupees, while the injured will receive 500,000 rupees as compensation. During the visit, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam conducted a detailed inspection of the affected area and received a briefing from the authorities at the spot.



Amir Muqam at the site of the gas pipeline explosion near Hattar Industrial Estate in Haripur.

Pakistan Ulema Council welcomes Lebanon ceasefire, lauds Army Chief Asim Munir's diplomatic efforts

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulema Council on Friday welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon and appreciated the diplomatic efforts for de-escalation in the region. In a joint statement, the council's central chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, along with senior leaders including Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Nauman Hashir, Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maqbool Ahmed, Tahir ul Hassan, Tahir Aqeel Awan and Aziz Akbar Qasmi, commended the role of Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and President of the United States Donald Trump in efforts



leading to the ceasefire. They appreciate the initiatives undertaken by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir to promote peace and stability, particularly his efforts for reducing tensions between Iran and the United States, as well as supporting a ceasefire in Lebanon. They said these efforts reflect Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and the unity of the Muslim Ummah. They termed the initiatives as significant contributions.

Governor KP, British HC discuss bilateral cooperation, regional situation

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday met British High Commissioner Jane Marriott here and discussed the evolving regional situation and matters of mutual interest, with a focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on strengthening collaboration in various sectors, including energy, security, minerals, investment promotion, and sustainable development through technical cooperation and institutional partnerships. The British High Commissioner appreciated



Pakistan's effective diplomacy and constructive efforts in facilitating the Iran-US ceasefire, acknowledging its role in promoting regional stability. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said Pakistan remained committed to promoting peace and stability in the region and across the globe through dialogue and diplomatic engagement. He emphasized that Pakistan.

improving ease of doing business in Pakistan. Both sides acknowledged the improving global perception of Pakistan and agreed that there exists immense potential for enhanced bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador extended an invitation to the Federal Minister to visit Ethiopia, which was warmly reciprocated. The minister also invited the Ambassador to visit his constituency, Chiniot, to experience firsthand the rich Punjabi culture, historical heritage, and renowned wooden craftsmanship of the region. Senior officials of the Board of Investment, including Director General.