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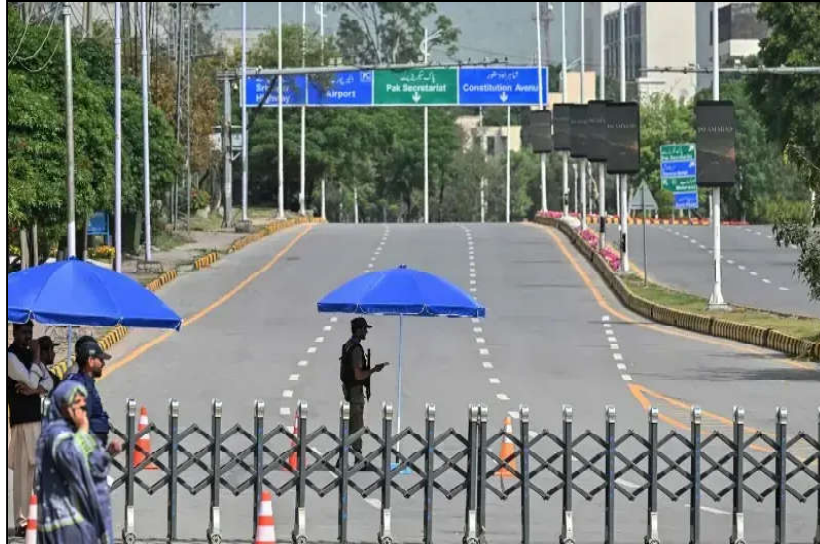
First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE

Saturday 25, April, 2026

Iranian delegation expected to arrive later tonight, Pakistani sources say

Sindh govt will fulfill its promise to rebuild Gul Plaza, CM Murad says



NEWS DESK:

An Iranian delegation is expected to arrive in Islamabad later tonight, Pakistani sources said on Friday.

According to the sources, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is expected to arrive with a small negotiating team.

The development comes hours after Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, in a phone call,

exchanged views on the US-Iran ceasefire and Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts, the Foreign Office (FO).

In a post on X, FO said, "Both sides exchanged views on regional developments, the ceasefire, and ongoing diplomatic efforts being pursued by Islamabad in the context of US-Iran engagement".

It added that Dar, for his part, stressed the importance of "sustained dialogue and engagement to address outstanding issues, in order to advance regional peace

and stability at the earliest". While his Iranian counterpart lauded "Pakistan's consistent and constructive facilitation role in this regard".

FO added that the two leaders agreed to remain in "close contact". Over the past few days, Pakistan has ramped up its diplomatic efforts to bring the US and Iran back to the negotiation table.

However, the expected second round of negotiations — to be held in Islamabad — has witnessed a delay due to continued friction between the US and Iran,

particularly regarding Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the US blockade of Iran's ports.

On Thursday, Naqvi held an "important meeting" with US Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, Natalie Baker, in Islamabad, where the two discussed diplomatic efforts regarding the possible second round of US-Iran negotiations in Islamabad.

On Wednesday, Trump had hoped that a second round of talks could take place within two to three days, despite persistent mistrust.

"It's possible!" Trump reportedly told the New York Post by text message, after the newspaper reached out to him to confirm whether the talks were "expected in Islamabad within the next 36 to 72 hours".

However, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei did not give a clear answer on resuming talks with the US.

The first round of historic direct US-Iran talks was held in Islamabad on April 11 and 12, following a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire on April 8.

JUI-F Boycotts Balochistan Government, Demands Apology from CM Bugti Amid Madrassa Row

Qaseem Shah News Desk:

QUETTA: A tense political situation is unfolding in Quetta, where Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F) has announced a complete boycott of all Balochistan government activities,

including visits to the Chief Minister's House and participation in official events.

Speaking to the media, provincial JUI-F chief Maulana Abdul Wasey, along with Senator Kamran Muraza, made it clear that party members will stay away from all government functions until further notice.

The move shows a clear breakdown in relations between the party and the provincial government.

At the center of the dispute is the issue of madrassa registration,

which JUI-F leaders say is a "red line" for them.

Maulana Abdul Wasey accused the government of crossing that line and putting pressure on religious seminaries without proper legal cover.

He warned that the party is ready to respond strongly if the situation continues.

The JUI-F leadership has also demanded an apology from Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.



According to Maulana Abdul Wasey, if the apology is not made by the 2nd of the month, the matter will move to the streets, signaling possible protests

across the province.

The party has called an important meeting on the 2nd, where it is expected to decide its next steps, including a possible protest

movement against the Madrassa-related policies and the Mines and Minerals legislation.

With both sides taking firm positions, the situation is be-

coming increasingly serious,

and the coming days will be crucial in determining whether tensions ease or turn into a larger political confrontation.

NEWS DESK:

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Friday said that the Sindh government would fulfil its promise of rebuilding Gul Plaza, a multi-storey shopping plaza which was reduced to ruins due to a deadly inferno that claimed the lives of more than 70 people in January.

In January, CM Murad had told the Sindh Assembly that the provincial government would demolish and reconstruct Gul Plaza within two years, ensuring no increase in the number of shops.

Addressing a ceremony for distributing compensation cheques among the affected shopkeepers in Karachi on Friday,

CM Murad said, "The Sindh government will rebuild Gul Plaza as promised, and will make the same number of shops as before. All the losses will be recompensed and no one will benefit through unfair means."

He said that this was the first phase of distributing the cheques to the affected shopkeepers.

CM Murad also expressed his gratitude to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) for providing the temporary places of business to these shopkeepers, especially in Ramadan, in Karachi Expo Centre and Bagh-i-Jinnah.

Rs 500,000 was also distributed to each affected shopkeeper immediately after the incident so they could stand on their feet," he stated.

CM Murad added that Rs 7 billion was set aside for the affected community, thanking his cabinet members for approving the funds immediately.

"The funds are there and they can be released immediately, but the valuation of losses is the real challenge," he said.

Talking about the demolition of the plaza to initiate the rebuilding process, he said that a first information report was registered after the incident and a court order would be sought to begin the demolition process.

CM Murad also noted that in the aftermath of the incident, a lot of criticism was levelled against authorities, after which the Sindh government formed the judicial commission to probe the incident.

"It has submitted its report. It was a very detailed report, so we formed a cabinet sub-committee to recommend how to execute all the recommendations made by the report,"

he said, adding, "In the next cabinet meeting, the sub-committee will submit its report."

"I haven't read the report in detail, but have scanned it. Action will be taken even if I am held responsible, or anyone else," he asserted.

CM Murad added that President Asif Ali Zardari was very distraught over the incident.

"President Zardari contacted a Chinese entity, which came to Pakistan twice after the incident.

We didn't ask them for financial or material support, but we asked them for a plan on how to manage the things, and we are working on it," he stated.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Taxpayers' Money Down the Drain: Favoured Outlets Feast While Balochistan's Real Media Starves

Quetta Voice

Investigative Report
QUETTA: Public money meant to inform the people of Balochistan is allegedly disappearing into a "black hole" as the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR) continues to favour a handful of "well" connected "blue-eyed" media houses in the distribution of government advertisements.

This concern was also echoed during a meeting of the Joint Media Action Committee at Quetta Press Club, which called for the fair and judicious distribution of government advertisements. Some "blue-eyed" newspapers getting lion's share

Despite tall claims of transparency and meritocracy by the provincial government, credible newspapers with actual circulation and readership are being sidelined, while outlets with little to no visibility continue to receive a lion's share of official ads.

Insiders and media observers say there is still no clear, fixed criteria for allocating advertisements. Powerful and well-connected houses allegedly enjoy preferential treatment.

Hidden Scandal Demands Enquiry



raising serious questions about misuse of taxpayers' money.

CM Mir Sarfaraz Bugti's Personal Social Media Accounts

Performing Well Than Mighty Information Ministry

The anomaly has become more glaring as the national press largely ignores

Balochistan, including important statements of the Chief Minister and the Governor. Meanwhile, even the Chief Minister's personal social media ac-

counts appear to perform better in public outreach than the entire machinery of the Information Ministry. Journalists and concerned citizens are

now demanding an independent inquiry into the distribution of government advertisements. They insist that those who received

funds without delivering any real service or performance must be held accountable.

"The time for cosmetic promises is over," said one senior

journalist on condition of anonymity.

"First fix the rot in advertisement distribution, then talk about any digital media policy."

First Ensure Transparency Then Speak About Digital Policy

The proposed digital policy, currently under discussion, risks losing all credibility if the foundational issue of unfair and opaque ad distribution is not addressed immediately.

Balochistan stands at a critical juncture. The common citizen expects the government to spend public funds responsibly — not to subsidise ghost outlets or reward political favourites while genuine voices struggle for survival.

Transparency is not a favour; it is the basic right of the people.

Merit must replace patronage. Only then can any talk of digital reform carry weight.

The provincial government must direct chief minister inspection team, anti corruption or the national accountability bureau to conduct a thorough investigation into this scandal.

How AI Is Making Modern Production Smarter and Faster

Syed Muhammad Wisem

AI is changing the way we create and collaborate, with 41% of brands already using it for video production. Production teams now have to create more content faster than ever. Staying on track while keeping ideas fresh is a daily challenge. AI is changing how production teams plan, shoot, and edit. It's making the process faster, smarter, and more creative.

As the need for faster content grows, AI is becoming a key player in modern studios. It helps creators stay up to date with new trends and what audiences want. Studios are using AI to work faster and save money. According to Deloitte's 2024 report, 42% of executives say it boosts efficiency and productivity.

Let's explore how AI is changing production from planning to editing. You'll learn how it saves time, cuts costs, and boosts creativity. By the end, you'll see how it's making modern production smarter and faster.

The Evolution of AI in Media Production

AI in media production has evolved from simple editing tools to reduce editing time, reduce expenses, and creating computer graphics. Over time, it has transformed into a powerful creative partner that now supports teams at every stage of production.

In the beginning, AI was mainly used for CGI, video automation, and voice synthesis. These tools helped save time but still required significant human input. Today, AI plays an active role across pre-production, production, and post-production, making the entire process more efficient and consistent.

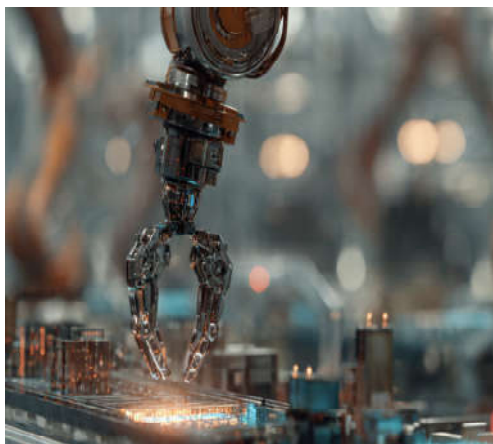
During pre-production, it assists with scriptwriting, budgeting, and storyboarding. In production, it enhances camera tracking, lighting adjustments, and virtual set design. Finally, in post-production, it streamlines editing, color correction, sound design, and even creates advanced visual effects.

Major studios such as Netflix and Warner Bros. are now using AI-driven tools to analyze audience preferences, optimize workflows, and enhance storytelling. As a result, AI has shifted from being a simple technical assistant to becoming an essential force shaping the future of modern media production.

Why Production Houses Are Turning to AI

Production houses are facing rising costs and tighter schedules. Keeping up with deadlines while staying creative has become a major challenge. To stay efficient, many studios are now using AI to manage time and 60% of post-production studios utilize AI-powered editing tools to reduce editing time, reduce expenses. This trend is growing rapidly as the global AI in media and entertainment market is projected to reach \$34.1 billion by 2027.

The demand for quick content is also increasing. Streaming platforms compete to release new shows faster, putting pressure on production teams. At the same time, advertising agencies are already using AI tools for content creation, showing how quickly the industry is adapting to new technology. There is also a shortage of skilled post-production professionals. AI tools step in to



handle repetitive work like cutting scenes or syncing dialogue. This gives creative teams more time to focus on storytelling and innovation while keeping projects on schedule and within budget.

How Production Houses Are Using AI

AI is changing how production houses work from start to finish. It supports every stage of filmmaking, from planning and shooting to editing and final delivery. In Pre-Production AI is making the pre-production stage faster and more creative. Writers now use tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, and Sudowrite to draft scripts or explore story ideas. In fact, 60% of film studios are exploring AI-driven scriptwriting tools to speed up brainstorming and script development.

AI is also improving casting and budgeting. Some tools analyze data to predict how well an actor will connect with audiences. AI software like Celtx and StudioBinder helps plan budgets and schedules. These tools make it easier for studios to manage costs, track

spending, and stay on time. Production AI is transforming the way films are shot on set. For example, AI-powered cameras can automatically track actors, adjust framing, and optimize lighting in real time. This helps directors capture perfect shots faster and reduces the need for repeated takes. According to MarketsandMarkets, the use of AI cameras in film production is expected to grow by 22% annually by 2027.

Virtual production is becoming more common. Tools like Unreal Engine and NVIDIA Omniverse allow filmmakers to create realistic digital environments before filming begins. These virtual sets save time, cut costs, and give teams more creative freedom, especially for large-scale or fantasy projects.

AI supports crews during filming. Voice recognition systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands. As a result, on-set work becomes smoother, and the crew can focus more on storytelling rather than technical details.

In Post-Production

This phase gets a big boost from AI, especially in editing and sound design. Tools like Runway ML, Adobe Premiere Pro AI, and Descript automate tasks like cutting, syncing, and scene detection. Smart apps can identify key moments and streamline workflows, helping editors focus on storytelling.

AI also improves color grading and sound editing. It can automati-

cally balance colors, refine lighting, remove background noise, and sync soundtracks. Even some free tools can apply complex color grading for a consistent look. These features save time and make the final product polished and professional.

In addition, AI enhances VFX, CGI, and localization. It removes green screens, fills missing frames, and generates realistic effects quickly. Voice tools like Resemble.ai and ElevenLabs speed up dubbing and translations for multiple languages.

The use of AI in video editing has reduced production time by an average of 30%, showing how much it improves efficiency.

AI also helps with versioning and distribution. It can create multiple edits for different platforms like social media, TV, or YouTube Shorts. This allows studios to repurpose content easily and deliver it quickly. Overall, AI makes post-production systems can follow script lines or adjust camera settings through simple voice commands.

Case Studies: How AI is Shaping Modern Production

Case Study 1: Netflix Builds a Cloud-Based VFX Studio

Netflix, one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world, began producing its own content in 2012. To make collaboration easier, the company wanted to create a visual effects (VFX) studio in the clouds. This would let artists work from anywhere and more consistently. Falciner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

Case Study 2: Crophy's AI Innovation in Grain Grading

In South Australia, Anna Falkner and Andrew Hannon founded Crophy to make grain testing faster and more accurate. Traditional testing relied on human inspection, which often caused mistakes and disagreements. The founders wanted a smarter AI-based way to grade crops. Working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML), they built AI software that could analyze grain samples and more creative.

Case Study 3: What's Next Entertainment's Use of AI in Creative Production

Their system reduced testing time from 24 minutes to just 90 seconds and achieved 98% accuracy. This made the grain supply chain faster and more reliable. In 2024, Crophy raised \$2 million AUSD from investors to expand its technology. Their success proved that AI can bring real value to agriculture by making testing faster, fairer, and more consistent. Falkner advises businesses to focus on real problems first and then see if AI is the right solution.

Case Study 4: Amazon EC2 G4 Instances, Netflix built fast and secure remote workstations. These cloud tools allowed artists to edit, animate, and

Israel, Lebanon extend ceasefire as Iran peace talks stall

NEWS DESK: Israel and Lebanon extended their shaky ceasefire by three weeks. President Donald Trump said on Thursday, as the United States remained at a standstill in negotiations with Iran to end the Middle East war.

Trump announced the truce extension as he met with ambassadors of the two countries and despite recent Israeli strikes in Lebanon and fresh rocket fire from Hezbollah, which was not part of the talks in Washington.

"I think there's a very good chance of having peace. I think it should be an easy one," Trump told reporters on Thursday. The initial truce had been set to expire on Sunday.

Still, the US president said earlier he was in no rush to end the war with Iran, adding that "the clock is ticking" for the Islamic republic as a third American aircraft carrier arrived in the Middle East.

Iranian media reported blasts over the capital Tehran, a first since the ceasefire in the Middle East war came into effect two weeks ago.

It was not clear what caused the explosions, though an Israeli security source told AFP that their country was not currently striking Iran.

Prospective peace talks in Pakistan were hanging in the balance, meanwhile, with no sign of a return to diplomacy to end a standoff in the Strait of Hormuz.



Since the ceasefire, the United States and Iran have shifted their focus to the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports ordinarily flow. Iran has effectively closed it in retaliation for the war.

"I have all the time in the world, but Iran doesn't — the clock is ticking!" Trump said on social media.

Trump, who on Thursday ruled out the use of a nuclear weapon against Iran, had earlier ordered the US Navy to destroy any Iranian boat caught laying mines in the Strait.

The USS George H.W. Bush aircraft carrier has arrived in the Middle East, the US military said on Thursday, bringing the number of the massive American warships operating in the region to three.

A second carrier was operating in the Red Sea on Thursday, while a third is also in the region, according to social media posts by US Central Command.

Iran's state news agency IRNA said the "sound of air defence firing" was heard in western Tehran, while the Mehr news agency reported that air defence systems were activated in several parts of the

capital to counter "hostile targets".

Earlier, US forces boarded a vessel in the Indian Ocean that was transporting oil from Iran and a senior Iranian official said Tehran had banked its first proceeds from the tolls it exacts on shipping through the Strait.

Iran has vowed it would keep the Strait closed to all but a trickle of approved vessels for as long as the US Navy blockades its ports, brushing off demands from Trump to both re-open Hormuz and surrender its enriched uranium.

The US has imposed its own blockade of Iranian ports, and on Thursday the Pentagon announced that US forces had "carried out a maritime interdiction and right-of-visit board-

ing of the sanctioned stateless vessel M/T Majestic X transporting oil from Iran, in the Indian Ocean".

Deputy parliament speaker Hamidreza Hajjibabaei said Iran received its first revenue from tolls it is imposing on ships seeking to cross Hormuz.

Responding to remarks from Trump suggesting that Iranian leadership was "seriously fractured", the Islamic republic's president, parliament speaker and chief justice all posted a nearly identical message on social media on Thursday.

"One God, one nation, one leader, and one path; that path being the path to the victory of our dearer-than-life Iran," they all said.

A post on supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei's X account took aim at "the enemy's media operations" that "seek to undermine unity and national security" after the New York Times reported that he was seriously wounded in a strike that killed his father and predecessor but is mentally sharp.

Peace talks? Trump told the New York Post on Wednesday that talks could begin within two to three days, though a delegation was presently headed to Islamabad.

In the Pakistani capital, blanket security remained in place for the fourth straight day in anticipation of possible talks.

UK, France sign three-year deal to stop migrant crossings

NEWS DESK: Britain and France on Thursday signed a new three-year deal to stop undocumented migrants making the risky journey across the Channel in small boats.

Under the deal, France pledged to increase law enforcement personnel on the coast by more than half, reaching 1,400 officers by 2029.

Besides the step-up in law enforcement on the beaches, France is also looking to deploy

drone, helicopters and digital resources to prevent crossings, the roadmap said.

Britain will in return provide up to €766 million in funding, though nearly a quarter of that, around €186m, is conditional on the measures being effective.

The cross-Channel neighbours have wrangled for months over renewing the Sandhurst treaty, which sets out the UK's financial contribution to French efforts to stop

migrants attempting the perilous sea crossing to Britain.

London to provide €766 million after Paris agrees to step up enforcement.

The UK has accused France of doing too little to prevent would-be asylum seekers from setting off from French shores, with smugglers and migrants taking ever-greater risks to avoid detection.

As a result, London insisted it would renew the Sandhurst treaty — first signed in 2018, extended in 2023 and set to expire this year — if it could impose conditions on how some of its money is used by the French government.

"We will now have flexibility to fund things that we know are working... UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said Thursday, during a visit to northern France, where she inked the deal with her French counterpart.

According to a French interior ministry document on the accord, if the new measures do not deliver "sufficient results, based on a joint annual assessment, the funding will be redirected to new actions".

French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said the agreement was key for "combating" and "eradicating" illegal immigration networks.

Even if the conditional portion is not paid, the UK's core contribution of €380 million still represents a €40m hike on what it paid under the last treaty.



Israel, Lebanon extend ceasefire as Trump seeks 'best deal' with Iran

NEWS DESK: Israel and Lebanon extended their ceasefire for three weeks at a meeting at the White House brokered by President Donald Trump, who said he "was prepared to wait for the best deal" to end his conflict with Iran.

Fighting between Israel and Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon has been one of a number of sticking points "to resolving the wider eight-week regional conflict, along with Iran's nuclear ambitions and control of the crucial Strait of Hormuz, Trump said he was in no rush to reach a peace agreement and wanted it to be "everlasting" while continuing to push that the US had a clear upper hand in the naval stand-off in the Strait.

A day after Iran flaunted its tightened grip over the key shipping corridor, Trump dismissed the threat posed by Iran's "little wise-guy ships" and said he be-

lieved Tehran "was hankering from making a deal because its leadership was in turmoil." On Thursday, he said the US could knock out in a day any refurbishing of weapons that Iran has been believed to be safe and that it expected the ships to be cleared soon. Oil prices resumed their rise on Friday as the ceasefire remained shaky with the blockade of the Strait resumed.

The Philippine government said 15 Filipino vessels were "on the two vessels and believed to be safe and that it expected the ships to be cleared soon. Oil prices resumed their rise on Friday as the ceasefire remained shaky with the blockade of the Strait resumed.

The US dollar was moving closely with oil prices, on track for its first weekly gain in three weeks, with dampened hopes for an immediate easing of tensions leading to increased safe-haven demand. Iran's use of a swarm of small, fast vessels to seize container ships cast doubt on Trump's suggestions that US forces have disabled its naval threats and underscored Tehran's evolving tactics in the Strait as it countered US interception of Iran-linked oil tankers and other vessels.

Tehran continued to cause trouble for oil markets and pose major strains to the global economy.

The Philippines government said 15 Filipino vessels were "on the two vessels and believed to be safe and that it expected the ships to be cleared soon. Oil prices resumed their rise on Friday as the ceasefire remained shaky with the blockade of the Strait resumed.

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China's DeepSeek releases long-awaited new AI model

NEWS DESK: Chinese startup DeepSeek released a new artificial intelligence model with "drastically reduced" costs on Friday, more than a year after it stunned the world with a low-cost reasoning model that matched the capabilities of US rivals.

The AI race has intensified the rivalry between China and the United States, and the White House on Thursday accused Chinese entities of a massive effort to steal artificial intelligence technology.

Hangzhou-based DeepSeek burst onto the scene in January last year with a generative AI chatbot, powered by its R1 reasoning model, that upended assumptions of US dominance in the

strategic sector.

The new version, DeepSeek-V4, "features an ultra-long context of one million words," the company said in a statement on social media platform WeChat, hailing it as "world-leading... with drastically reduced compute (and) memory costs" in a separate announcement on X.

The model's context length, which determines how much input a model is able to absorb to help it complete tasks, "achieves" leadership in both domestic and open-source fields across agent capabilities, world knowledge, and reasoning performance," the WeChat statement said.

A "preview version" of the open source model is now available, the company said.

Experts say V4's release marks an "inflection point" in terms of hardware and cost.

"This addresses the long-standing issues of slower performance and higher costs associated with long context lengths, marking a genuine inflection point for the industry," Zhang Yi, the founder of tech research firm iMedia, told AFP.

"For end users, this will bring widespread, accessible benefits. For instance, if ultra-long context support becomes a standard feature, long-text processing is expected to move beyond high-end research labs and enter mainstream commercial

applications," he said.

The new V4 is released as two versions, DeepSeek-V4-Pro and DeepSeek-V4-Flash, with the latter being a more efficient and economical choice "because it has smaller parameters."

"Sputnik moment" V4-Pro has 1.6 trillion parameters while the V4-Flash has 284 billion parameters, which refine models' decision-making ability.

The model has also been "optimised" for popular AI Agent products such as Claude Code, OpenC1w, OpenCode, and CodeBuddy.

DeepSeek statement said "In world knowledge benchmarks, DeepSeek-V4-Pro significantly leads other open-source models and is only slightly outperformed by the top-tier closed-source model, (Google's) Gemini-Pro-3.1," the statement added.

Last year's so-called "DeepSeek shock" sparked a sell-off of AI-related shares and a reckoning on business strategy in what was also described as a "Sputnik moment" for the industry.

The chatbot performed at a similar level to ChatGPT and other top American offerings, but the company said it had taken significantly less computing power to develop.



Polish PM questions US loyalty in case of Russian attack, FT reports

NEWS DESK: Europe's "biggest, most important question" is whether the United States is ready to be a loyal NATO partner in case of a Russian attack, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told the "Financial Times".

He also called for the European Union to become a "real alliance" in protecting the continent.

reflecting growing worries about U.S. President Donald Trump's unpredictable policies and "threats towards his European partners."

"For the whole eastern flank, my question is if NATO is still an organisation 'ready' politically and also logistically, to react, for example against Russia 'if they try to attack,'" he said in an interview published in the "British newspaper on Friday."

Tusk said a potential Russian attack was "something really serious."

"I'm talking about short-term perspectives, rather months than years... For us, it's

really important to know that everyone will treat the NATO obligations as seriously as 'Poland'."

Tusk was speaking on the occasion of an informal EU summit in Cyprus, where EU leaders will also discuss the war in the Middle East, in response and the Union's next long-term budget.

Tusk suggested that the bloc could also reflect on its mutual defence clause, Article 42 of the EU Treaty, after the departure of Hungarian Prime Min-

ister Viktor Orban, an ally of Russia.

"What you need if you want to 'have, not only on paper, a real alliance, is 'true tools' and real power when it comes to defence instruments and mobility of military forces from country to country etc. It's a very practical problem 'for today,'" he said.

"This is why my obsession 'now and my mission is to reintegrate Europe. It means common defence, a common effort 'to protect our eastern borders."

India carrying out terrorism in various countries to sabotage regional peace'

ISLAMABAD (INP): India's notorious intelligence agency "RAW" is carrying out terrorist acts in various countries, including Pakistan. According to Kashmir Media Ser-

vice, the horrific face of the state terrorism of the Indian government, including Pakistan. Numerous undeniable evidence of Indian state terrorism and the seditious activities under

"RAW", is active in spreading terrorism in various countries, including Pakistan. Numerous undeniable evidence of Indian state terrorism and the seditious activities under

RAW have already been revealed on the world stage. Kalbhusain Yadav, an officer of the RAW, involved in terrorist acts in Pakistan, has also openly confessed to Indian terrorism. Indian National Security Advisor Ajit

Doval has repeatedly openly threatened to break up Balochistan. Terrorists arrested from Balochistan have also made sensitive revelations about the provision of financial, training and intelligence support by India. The brutal killing of Sikh leaders in Canada, the US and other countries, under the aus-

ponsorship of India, is also clear evidence of Indian state terrorism. According to experts, Pakistan has constantly presented irrefutable evidence of Indian state-sponsored terrorism to the international community. India is running a systematic campaign of terrorism and false propaganda abroad to sabotage regional peace, they maintained.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan H.E. Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

SUPARCO sends Astronaut Candidates to China for Landmark Space Mission

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a landmark development for its human space-flight ambitions, the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) announced that two Pakistani astronaut candidates will depart for advanced training in China, marking the country's first concrete step toward participation in a manned space mission.

These will focus on material science, fluid physics, life sciences, and biotechnology, with potential applications in climate resilience, food security, and industrial development. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the development as a milestone for Pakistan's scientific and technological progress, commending SUPARCO's efforts and highlighting the enduring strategic partnership between Pakistan and China.

KP govt forms Climate Resilience Committee to promote sustainable development

PESHAWAR (INP): The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has stepped up efforts to address escalating environmental threats by forming a high-level Climate Resilience Committee aimed at strengthening policy coordination and promoting sustainable development across the province.

The officials said the initiative reflects the province's renewed commitment to climate resilience, particularly as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains highly vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change due to its unique geography and natural resource base. The Committee will focus on strengthening mitigation and adaptation strategies, ensuring equitable allocation of resources, and integrating environmental considerations into development planning.

KP IGP awards police personnel for bravery, professional excellence

PESHAWAR (INP): An awards distribution ceremony was held at the central police office here under the chairmanship of Inspector General of Police Zulfikar Hameed.

According to a spokesperson for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, the IGP presented cash rewards and commendation certificates to police officers and personnel from Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar, Lower Chitral, Special Branch, and the FRP Elite Force for their successful operations against terrorists, murder suspects, attempted murder cases, target killers, and kidnappers.

Investigation staff from districts including Hangu, Charsadda,

Karakoram, Haripur, Maridan, Shangina, Nowshera, Buner, Bajaur, and Lower Chitral were also honored for outstanding investigative performance. In addition, ministerial and executive staff of the accounts, logistics, and establishment branches at the central police office were recognized for professionalism in administrative duties.

The ceremony also acknowledged the contributions of former RPO Dera Ismail Khan Ashfaq Anwar for his effective efforts against crime and terrorism, which helped restore public confidence and strengthen law and order.

Lakki Marwat police thwarted both light and heavy weapon attacks, killing one terrorist, while Dera Ismail Khan police foiled an terror assault. In another operation, DI Khan police intercepted an attempt to smuggle a large cache of weapons and ammunition to Balochistan, arresting the suspect on the spot. Peshawar police were commended for solving a blind murder and attempted murder case using scientific investigation methods, and for arresting a suspicious individual near the American Consulate compound over suspected terrorist intent. Lower Chitral police were also recognized for successfully tracing a missing Australian national through professional efforts.



DUBAI: H.E. Hussain Muhammad, Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, in a group photo with Mr. Ali Zeb Khan, Trade Commissioner, Mr. Muhammad Saleh, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Humayun Murad, Executive Director, Index Exchange, and Mr. Syed Abdul Salam, Chief Operating Officer, Index Exchange, along with members of the Pakistani business community.

PM terms energy security as crucial part of country's overall future planning

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has termed energy security as a crucial part of the country's overall future planning. He was addressing a meeting regarding energy security in Islamabad.

The Prime Minister said energy conservation and timely measures in the current regional situation prevented the emergence of an energy crisis. Shehbaz Sharif said work is underway

on a plan to maintain strategic crude oil reserves in the country in view of future energy needs. The Prime Minister emphasized that for energy conservation and sustainable development, means of transportation should be gradually shifted to environmentally friendly electric vehicles.

In the future, only electric buses and motorcycles should be purchased for official use. The Prime Minister said steps should be taken more rapidly to establish EV charging stations.

Shehbaz Sharif said a strategy should be developed to facilitate the acquisition of batteries for storing excess electricity generated from solar energy. He said local production of high-quality storage batteries should be encouraged.

It was informed that the country currently has ample petroleum reserves, and that the food security situation in the country is stable.

PMD predicts scattered rain, thunderstorms for upper parts of country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain-windstorms and thunderstorms at scattered places in upper parts of the country during next 24 hours, while hot and dry conditions are expected to persist in most other regions.

According to the Meteorological Office, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir are likely to receive rain-thunderstorms at scattered locations. Isolated rain-windstorms are also expected in Islamabad, upper and central Punjab, north-east Balochistan and upper Sindh. In Islamabad and surrounding areas, partly cloudy weather with isolated rain-thunderstorms has been predicted.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most districts will experience partly cloudy conditions, with rain-thunderstorms likely at isolated places including Dir, Chitral, Swat, Malam Jabba, Kohistan, Abbottabad,

Deal signed to develop CPEC's M-6 Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Pakistan's National Highway Authority (NHAI) signed an agreement to develop two sections of the M-6 Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan and Member PPP NHA Faz Ahmed signed the agreement, witnessed by Member Planning NHA Dr. Shafiq Ahmad, Syed Hussain Haider, ADB Deputy Country Director and Mohammed Azim Hashmi, Director, Advisory Division 1, OMDP ADB, according to a Gwadar Pro's report.

The project will connect the missing link in Pakistan's North-South high speed road network, streamlining logistics, reduce travel time, and strengthen trade flows across the country. "ADB will provide advisory support covering project feasibility studies, developing a bankable PPP structure facilitating transparent procurement processes

to attract private sector expertise, achieving commercial and financial closure," read an official statement of ADB. The project includes building a 120km six-lane motorway with modern tolling, traffic management, and safety systems starting from Hyderabad.

It's a critical step toward completing the Peshawar-Karachi Motorway corridor. The Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway represents the last missing link in Pakistan's north-south motorway network, and its completion is expected to significantly cut travel time across Sindh while improving freight movement. Port, Karachi Port, and key inland industrial hubs.

The multibillion-rupee project is a critical component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's transport and logistics framework, supporting Pakistan's broader ambition to position itself as a regional trade and transit corridor connecting South Asia, Central Asia, and western China.



BRUNEI: Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain addresses the 38th FAO Regional Conference, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to sustainable agrifood systems and food security.

Construction's ceremony of school buildings in Seo village under Dasu HPP held

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) advanced community development efforts under the Dasu Hydro Power Project (DHPP) with the launch of new school infrastructure in Upper Kohistan. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in Seo village for the construction of buildings for a government high school and a government primary school, with a combined estimated cost of 640 million rupees, Gwadar

Pro reported on Thursday. The schools are being developed under the Local Area Development Program of the DHPP, a flagship hydropower initiative that also includes social investment aimed at improving conditions in surrounding communities. According to WAPDA, the new institutions will feature modern classrooms, science and computer laboratories, a multipurpose hall and staff rooms, designed to provide a contempo-

rary learning environment. The ceremony was attended by DHPP General Manager Ameer Shafiqur Rehman, Deputy Commissioner Upper Kohistan Azzamallah Jan, senior WAPDA and district officials, along with local elders, political and social representatives, teachers and students. Officials said the project reflects WAPDA's commitment to promoting education alongside infrastructure development, particularly in remote areas impacted by large-scale energy projects.

Under the DHPP, WAPDA has undertaken multiple initiatives for socio-economic uplift, including establishing computer laboratories, providing furniture and solar systems to schools, offering transportation services for students and awarding scholarships. Authorities added that projects related to road infrastructure and healthcare have also been completed in the area, with several others currently under implementation.

Price monitoring committee claims transport fares remain unchanged

NEWS DESK: The National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) on Friday claimed transport fares remained unchanged, while chicken prices eased back to pre-Middle East conflict levels following earlier volatility.

An NPMC meeting, chaired by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, however, did not provide a breakdown of transport fares, even though public transport has seen sharp increases on both intra-city and inter-city routes following the recent surge in petroleum prices.

Over the past month, provincial governments have intervened by extending subsidies to goods transporters, which may have helped contain freight charges. However, the official statement issued after the meeting did not specify any details on transport fares.

During the briefing, officials informed the meeting that transport fares had not witnessed any increase, while chicken prices



had returned to pre-conflict levels following earlier volatility linked to tensions in the Gulf region. Officials from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) briefed the committee on prevailing price trends and market conditions. The NPMC reviewed

the trend in essential commodity prices and the impact of recent policy measures.

The minister expressed satisfaction that fertiliser prices had remained stable despite international pressures, calling it a positive development for the domestic mar-

ket. The minister further went on to say that the provincial governments' interventions were gradually helping stabilise inflation, indicating an improving price environment across key sectors. Emphasising structural reforms, Iqbal said the estab-

lishment of cold chain infrastructure in the poultry sector was essential to ensure sustained price stability. He directed relevant authorities to prepare concrete proposals on cold chain development within five days.

The proposal evolved in connection

with the volatility in the prices of chicken in domestic prices. Iqbal also called for effective measures to curb the proliferation of substandard ghee and other food items in rural areas, stressing the need for stricter enforcement and monitoring.

The meeting also expressed concern over the substantial gap between wholesale and retail prices in certain cities. The NPMC instructed the provincial governments to ensure better alignment between wholesale and retail pricing. The minister

urged all provincial and federal institutions to remain vigilant in maintaining price stability and directed officials to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities across the country.

The government has reactivated the NPMC to hold weekly meetings aimed at tracking trends in essential commodity prices and recommending policy measures to contain any upward pressure.

Provincial chief secretaries, or their representatives, also attend the meetings to report on interventions taken in response to unusual price movements identified by the PBS. On April 11, NPMC had directed the Sindh government to take corrective measures regarding rising fares in Karachi.

Transporters in Punjab also increased fares by up to 30 per cent following the recent fuel price hike, stressing that the government's subsidy was insufficient to offset rising operational costs.

Gallup survey shows dip in private sector confidence in 2026

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's private sector confidence has deteriorated sharply in the first quarter of 2026, with a majority of businesses reporting worsening conditions amid rising energy costs and spillover effects of regional geopolitical tensions, according to a survey released by Gallup Pakistan.

The 17th quarterly Gallup Business Confidence Survey, conducted in April 2026, based on responses from 510 businesses across the country, shows a broad-based decline across all key indicators — current performance, future expectations, and perception of national direction.

As per the survey report, only 41 per cent of the businesses de-

scribed their current operations as "good" or "very good," reflecting a 13 percentage point drop from the previous quarter. The net proportion of firms reporting positive conditions has fallen by 27pc, indicating a clear shift toward pessimism after earlier gains.

The report says the outlook for the coming months appears even weaker. While 44pc of respondents expressed optimism about future performance, a larger 57pc expect conditions to worsen. The net future confidence score has declined by 25pc compared to Q4 2025, pointing to growing uncertainty and weakening business momentum.

Mentions rising energy costs and Middle East situation among

major factors. Perceptions regarding the country's overall direction also deteriorated significantly, with the score dropping to -32pc from 5pc in the previous quarter, it mentions.

The survey report observes that sentiment has firmly entered negative territory, reflecting heightened concern among businesses about the broader economic trajectory.

Structural challenges continue to weigh heavily on the private sector. Inflation remains the top concern, cited by 37pc of businesses, while concerns over fuel and petrol prices surged to 25pc, highlighting intensifying cost pressures.

Energy reliability remains another major is-

ssue, with 57pc of firms reporting loadshedding on the day of the survey, a 15 percentage point increase from the previous quarter.

It mentions that rising costs have emerged as the dominant operational risk, with 62pc of businesses identifying inflation and input costs as their biggest challenge. The Gallup survey also shows declining confidence in economic management, as 46pc of respondents believe governance has worsened, compared to 33pc who see improvement.

A key feature of the latest Gallup survey is the strong impact of regional developments, particularly tensions in the Middle East. It says around 81pc of businesses reported negative effects linked to these developments, primarily through rising fuel and energy costs.

The survey shows nearly 58pc of firms said their energy expenses had increased, while 75pc reported overall cost escalation compared to the previous quarter. Looking ahead, 76pc of businesses expect conditions to deteriorate further if regional instability persists over the next three months, it says. The report concludes that Pakistan's business environment is facing a period of heightened uncertainty, driven by a combination of domestic economic pressures.



OGDC revives gas production at Jand-1 well

NEWS DESK: Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) on Thursday announced the revival of gas production from Jand-1 well, located in Attock district of Punjab province, marking a significant operational achievement.

According to a statement issued by the company, following recompletion and targeted stimulation, the Jand-1 well is currently producing over 21 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscf) of gas. The well is flowing through a 32.64-inch choke at a pressure of 3,585 pounds per square inch (psi). "The current gas production is substantially higher than the previous output level of around 7 mmscf," OGDC said. The well was initially brought into produc-



tion in 2019 through the Dakhni Gas Processing Plant. The well was producing gas with high hydrogen sulphide concentration of around 8%. However, production was halted due to mechanical failure caused by challenging downhole conditions associated with the sour gas en-

vironment. Based on detailed in-house technical assessments and risk analysis, OGDC said it executed a comprehensive revival plan through its own technical team expertise and equipment deployment. The operation involved the safe retrieval of downhole

materials and restoration under challenging sour gas conditions.

To ensure long-term operational safety and efficiency, the well has been recompleted using corrosion-resistant tubing designed specifically for sour service.

Govt agrees Rs2.8tr surplus target

NEWS DESK: Pakistan has agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to walk a fiscally tight path and show a primary budget surplus of Rs2.8 trillion in the new budget and increase net foreign exchange reserves by \$5.6 billion to end the vicious cycle of negative reserves, according to official sources.

To offset the impacts of the tight budget in the midst of higher inflation, the cash disbursement budget of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) would be increased by 22% to Rs845 billion for the fiscal year 2026-27. The sources said that as per the understanding reached with the IMF for the release of the next loan tranche, the provinces would also be required to generate cumulative cash surpluses of Rs1.65 trillion.

The agreement was reached with the IMF staff as part of the third review talks, and the executive board of the IMF would give a formal endorsement of the agreement in the first week of May, the sources added. Considering the staff-level agreement, Pakistan has requested the IMF executive board to modify the end-June 2026 international reserves target to negative \$4.1 billion.

For end-June 2027,

the central bank and the federal government have committed to the IMF that their net foreign exchange reserves would be equal to their foreign exchange liabilities, the sources added. This means that for the first time in many years, the foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank would not be negative.

For end-March 2026, the IMF had given a negative \$5.6 billion net international reserves target. To achieve equilibrium, Pakistan will have to add at least \$5.6 billion to its foreign exchange reserves to pay off its liabilities. Pakistan's current gross foreign exchange reserves of \$15 billion are the result of loans from Saudi Arabia and China. After excluding these loans and

other short-term liabilities, the reserves stand on a negative trajectory, compelling the authorities to keep knocking on the doors of friendly countries or buying dollars from the local market. However, the sources said that a central bank's short-term exposure in the shape of foreign currency swaps would still be \$1 billion by June next year. But central bank authorities said that despite a challenging external environment, the floor on the net international reserves target remained at negative \$5.6 billion, compared with the end-December 2025 target of negative \$7 billion. Budget agreement

The sources said that although the IMF budget mission is arriving next month, a broader agreement on the overall size and the primary budget surplus targets has been reached. The primary budget surplus target for the next fiscal year could be Rs2.8 trillion, or 2% of GDP. This is lower than this fiscal year's Rs3.4 trillion due to an end to the windfall profits of the central bank.

There was a strong lobby within the federal cabinet that wanted to ease fiscal and monetary policies and try to target higher economic growth. However, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb was against ending the path of fiscal consolidation — a view that seems to be prevailing in the next budget.



Pakistan repays \$3.45bn to UAE, confirms central bank

NEWS DESK: Pakistan repaid the \$3.45 billion deposit to the United Arab Emirates, the State Bank of Pakistan confirmed on Friday.

The central bank said the \$1bn deposit was repaid to the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development on April 23 and \$2.45bn was repaid to the UAE "last week."

"This completes the repayment of total deposits of \$3.45 billion to UAE," said the SBP in a post on X.

A senior official said earlier this month that Pakistan had decided to return \$3.5 billion in debt to the UAE before the end of this month.

The official described the move as a cost the country was willing to bear to uphold "national dignity," even as it is set to significantly draw down foreign exchange re-

sources.

These funds were part of external financing support extended by the UAE in 2019 to help stabilise Pakistan's balance of payments.

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 con-

cerns about near-term financing gaps.

In a separate post on X, a day earlier, the SBP said foreign reserves held by the country stood at \$20.63bn as of April 17.

During the current month, Pakistan received a \$3bn deposit from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The deposit came in two tranches, with the second

tranche of \$1bn received on April 21.

Pakistan's foreign exchange position, though under pressure, remains part of a broader stabilisation effort under IMF-supported reforms.

Analysts say external financing risks remain a key vulnerability, particularly amid volatile energy prices and constrained global capital markets.



Rawalpindiz finally get off the mark with clinical win over United

NEWS DESK: Rawalpindiz finally broke their winless streak in the HBL Pakistan Super League with a composed six-wicket victory over Islamabad United in the twin-city derby at the National Bank Stadium on Thursday, a result that had more emotional than tournament significance.

Coming into the contest with eight defeats in as many matches, Rawalpindiz produced a disciplined all-round performance to chase down a modest 138-run target with 11 balls to spare, handing their supporters a long-awaited moment of relief.

Earlier, after opting to field first on a sluggish surface, Rawalpindiz's bowlers justified their captain Mohammad Rizwan's decision by restricting United to 137. The pitch, offering variable bounce and grip, made stroke-making difficult, and the bowling unit exploited the conditions expertly.

Spin proved particularly effective for Asif Afridi and Saad Masood maintaining tight lines to choke the middle overs, while opener Devon Conway anchored the innings with a measured 40 off



of Shadab, while Asif's slow left-armers accounted for an economical spell, tightening the screws further.

United never quite found momentum. opener Devon Conway anchored the innings with a measured 40 off 33 balls, but wickets at regular intervals stalled progress.

Sameer Minhas, who had starred in the previous meeting, fell cheaply, while Shadab Khan's milestone 100th PSL appearance ended in disappointment with a

challenging surface. Mohammad Amir was instrumental with two wickets, using slower deliveries effectively, while Naseem Shah marked his return from injury with a tidy spell before leaving the field again due to a knee concern. Rizwan, despite appearing to struggle with a hamstring niggle, played a controlled knock of 45 off 38 deliveries, striking five boundaries and a six. Kamran ably partnered him with a fluent 42 off 30 balls, mixing caution

with aggression to keep the required rate in check. At 84 for one after 10 overs, Rawalpindiz looked in complete control before United clawed their way back through their captain Shadab. He dismissed Rizwan and effected a sharp run-out of Sam Billings, briefly reviving hopes of an unlikely defence.

The pressure mounted as the scoring rate crept up, but Daryl Mitchell ensured there would be no late collapse. The New Zealander's unbeaten 32 proved decisive, particularly his assault on Richard Gleeson in the 17th over, which yielded 17 runs and swung the contest firmly in Rawalpindiz's favour.

Mitchell found support in Dian Forrester, who finished unbeaten on 13 and struck the winning boundary, sealing a comfortable victory with 11 balls to spare.

For United, the defeat highlighted familiar issues while batting first this season, as their inability to accelerate on slow surfaces once again proved costly. Shadab's figures of one for 18 and a spirited middle-overs fightback were among the few positives.

K-P hosts senior hockey trials with strong turnout of 155 players

NEWS DESK: Senior hockey team trials were held in Peshawar on Thursday, drawing participation from 155 players across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, reflecting continued interest in the sport despite longstanding challenges.

The trials took place at Lala Agha Hockey Stadium, located within the Peshawar Sports Complex. Chief Selector of the national hockey team, Samiullah Khan, supervised the process alongside members of the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) selection committee. Prominent Olympians and former players, including Nasir Ali, Naem Akhtar, Asyaz Mahmood, Aftab Bashir, Shakil Abbasi and Kashif Jawad, were also present.

Speaking to reporters, Samiullah Khan highlighted the decline



of hockey at the grassroots level, noting that schools once played a vital role in nurturing talent. "In the past, hockey was actively played at the school level, which was the golden era of Pakistan hockey. Unfortunately, that system no longer exists," he said.

He pointed out the lack of basic sports infrastructure, citing a recent visit to Karachi's Sohrab Goth area where only a single school had a hockey ground.

"There are over 18,000 schools in Karachi, but very few have proper sports facilities," he added, emphasizing that hockey now survives mainly in Punjab and parts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

A member of the selection committee said the trials in Peshawar are part of a broader evaluation process, adding that final results will be announced after thorough assessment of players' performance and feedback from selectors.

Kane, Diaz send Bayern past Leverkusen into German Cup final

NEWS DESK: Harry Kane and Luis Diaz scored as Bayern Munich won 2-0 at Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday to reach the German Cup final for the first time since 2020.

Just three days after Bayern sealed back-to-back Bundesliga titles with a home win over Stuttgart, Kane and Diaz got the goals to keep hopes of a treble alive.

Bayern's comfortable victory avenged their defeat by Leverkusen in the round of 16 last season.

They will face either holders Stuttgart or Freiburg in the final.

"We're feeling good," Leverkusen, the 2024 cup winners, were appearing in a third successive semi-final but struggled under the bright lights as Bayern pinned them back.

Diaz and Kane forced good saves from Leverkusen goalkeeper Mark Flekken inside the opening 20 minutes but the England captain eventually broke through.

Jamal Musiala threaded a pass through from the right which was intended for Diaz, but

Josep Stancic, Kane and Diaz all going close to putting the match to bed.

The hosts won a corner in the final minute of normal time but Bayern launched an immediate counter-attack, with Flekken once more blocking a Diaz shot.

Diaz added gloss to the victory in the third minute of stoppage time, turning in a Leon Goretzka pass. Originally flagged for offside, the decision was overturned after a VAR review, sending the Bayern players streaming from the bench.



India climbers face obstacles

NEWS DESK: Blink and you might miss Indian speed climber Deepu Mallesh scaling a wall five buses high in five seconds.

India, a country obsessed with cricket, has seen a surge in popularity in climbing but those who want to compete internationally have had to crowdfund and there is little government recognition or help.

Some have had to quit the sport they love.

"What I like most about climbing is how raw and honest it is," said 28-year-old Mallesh, who has climbed for his country and dreams of being the first Indian climber to qualify for the Olympics.

"It's just you, the wall and the clock."

Mallesh works part-time as a climbing instructor while pursuing his goal of reaching the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"I have to somehow make some money, that is the only way for me to survive in this sport," he said.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) estimates there are tens of thousands of people who sport-climb regularly, with more than a dozen climbing gyms opening in the last decade.

But the rise in those picking it up as a professional career is slow - high costs and scarce sponsorship deals hold back many.

There are about 3,500 climbers who compete across various levels in the country and



among them, about 60 participate internationally annually.

Mallesh didn't win at the world championship in China this month, but at 5:39 seconds he set a national record in men's speed climbing.

He also qualified for the Asian Games in Japan in September-October.

Shoes, chalk powder Mallesh only manages to compete with support from the IMF.

Previously he raised the cash to compete via crowdfunding. Two years ago he collected about one million rupees (\$10,500) to attend six international competitions.

"I have had to miss competitions because I could not gather the requisite amount," he said.

"If I get proper funding and proper support I might see my career through till the Olympics. Otherwise I will have to find something else to do."

Since 2002, India has won nearly 70 medals in international climbing competitions, including in the Asian youth championships.

Among them's long Purty, who won silver in 2024. Purty, 19, said she was lucky because she was sponsored by the Tata conglomerate.

"If I didn't have this I also would not have been able to quit the sport," she said.

"It's not just about validation, it directly impacts support, funding, infrastructure and sponsorship opportunities," he said.

Pais said government support to make it easier to build climbing gyms would help too.

"That will be the game-changer. This is how it will grow."

Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mustafizur Rahman fire as Bangladesh seal ODI series against New Zealand

NEWS DESK: Najmul Hossain Shanto hit a timely century and Mustafizur Rahman claimed five wickets as Bangladesh secured a 55-run victory over New Zealand in the third One-Day International on Thursday to complete a 2-1 series triumph.

Bangladesh set New Zealand 266 for victory after Shanto's partner 100 and Litton Das's fluent 76, and while the Black Caps overcame some initial turbulence to get into a strong position in their chase, they were bowled out for 210 in 44.5 overs.

"It wasn't easy. Boys bowled really well... we knew the conditions, that it would spin and fast bowling would have uneven bounce. We knew early wickets would bring us momentum," said Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

Nick Kelly gave the tourists hope, scoring 29 but perished chasing a slow, wide ball from Rahman (5-43), and the Bangladesh seamer ran riot from there to ensure

his team's victory despite late fireworks from Dean Foxcroft (75).

New Zealand struck early after winning the toss and asking Bangladesh to bat, as Wilf O'Rourke (3-32) sent back opener Saif Hassan for a two-ball duck and got Tanzid Hasan to play one onto his stumps in the third over.

The paceman similarly bowled out Soumya Sarkar for 18 to leave Bangladesh in

trouble at 32-3, but the hosts fought back through a 160-run partnership between Najmul and Litton when New Zealand's bowlers went off the boil slightly.

That fourth-wicket stand was broken by Jayden Lennox (2-50) when he bowled Litton before Najmul scored his first ODI century since 2024 and then departed while looking to raise the scoring rate with seven overs remaining.

"The way Litton played, really outstanding. He held one side and I tried to score some runs."

It wasn't an easy wicket to bat on, player of the match Najmul said at the post-match presentation.

Bangladesh finished on 265-8 after handy knocks from Towhid Hridoy (33) and Mehidy Hasan Miraz (22), while Ben Lister (2-62) claimed late wickets to keep things in check.



China-Backed Health Project Boosts Maternal Care in Balochistan

NEWS DESK: A major health initiative has officially begun in Balochistan with the support of the Chinese government, aimed at improving maternal and newborn healthcare facilities.

The project will upgrade medical services across 100 health centers in seven districts of the province, marking a significant step toward strengthening maternal and child care systems and ensuring quality healthcare for the public.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, praised China's cooperation, describing the project as a shining example of Pak-China friendship and mutual collaboration.

He emphasized that the initiative reflects the strong ties between the two nations and will prioritize the health and well-being of mothers and infants.

Bugti reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to utilizing all



available resources to bring substantial improvements in the

health sector. He noted that the Pak-China friendship

is a guarantee of development and prosperity, with joint ef-

forts providing facilities in health and other sectors.

The Chief Minister expressed determination to expand the

scope of such projects so that more citizens can benefit.

paving the way for Balochistan's progress and stability.

CJP Afridi openly opposes Judicial Commission of Pakistan meeting for judges' transfer

NEWS DESK: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi has opposed the scheduled meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) being called to consider the transfer of the judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to different high courts of the country. Although the CJP had earlier declined to call the meeting of the JCP, he eventually scheduled the session after it was requisitioned by a two-thirds majority of the commission's members. An informed source privy to the development confided. The commission is

able to judges' transfer. Such an approach, the source stated while citing the CJP's letter, would "carry serious implications for the institutional integrity of the judiciary", thus "eroding public confidence" in its independence and stability. Article 200 of the Constitution empowers the JCP to recommend transfers without the consent of the judges concerned. However, the consent of judges was mandatory before the 27th Constitutional Amendment. The amended provision has now vested this authority in the JCP, where de-

ferred reservations regarding the seniority principle. At the time, the CJP described the transfer of three judges to the IHC from different provinces under Article 200 as something to be "re-joined", setting a precedent that should be followed in the future. "The IHC is the symbol of four federating units and not merely a white marble building," the CJP had observed while sharing his reason why he agreed with the proposal to transfer three judges to the high court. He had also read out a summary stating that the transfer of the judges



scheduled to meet at 1pm on April 28, during which it may consider the contents of the CJP's letter to the JCP in which he expressed his reservations as well as deliberate upon the transfer of five serving IHC judges to different provincial high courts.

In his letter, the CJP expressed concern that allowing transfers of sitting IHC judges would set an "undesirable and potentially far-reaching precedent, effectively normalising the treatment of judges as administratively interchangeable

from different federating units was fully "synchronised with the spirit of federalism as enshrined in the Constitution". "It is also in conformity with Section 3 of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Act 2010... [there is] thoughtful consideration behind the proposal, [which] illustrates the resolve and equitable share to the linguistic diversity of our country and [a] fair chance of representation to all the federating units in the high court of the federation.

He had also read out a summary stating that the transfer of the judges

Two young men abducted, killed in Bannu's Domel area

NEWS DESK: An incident in the Domel area of Bannu has left the community in mourning after two young men were abducted and later killed by unidentified militants on Thursday night, police said.

According to local sources, the two men were traveling in a car late at night when they reached the Painda Khel area. Armed militants reportedly signalled them to stop, but when they did not comply, the attackers opened indiscriminate fire on the vehicle.

Subdivision in Wazir, Bannu. Residents have urged the government and law enforcement agencies to take immediate measures to restore peace and security in the area.

The following morning, the bodies of the victims were recovered from separate locations. One body was found at Umarzai Chowk, while the other was found near Isparka Chowk.

Both victims belonged to the Taus Khel tribe of the Hathi Khel

22 terrorists killed in joint IBO in KP's Khyber, says military's media wing

NEWS DESK: Security forces killed 22 terrorists in a joint intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber District, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Friday.

According to the ISPR, on April 21 (Tuesday), security forces and law enforcement agencies conducted a joint IBO in Khyber on the reported presence of terrorists.

During the operation, after an intense exchange of fire, "22 khawarij belonging to Indian-sponsored Finaal-Khawarij were sent to hell", it said.

Finaal-Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "Due to cowardice and fear of getting apprehended, alive khawarij resorted to indiscriminate firing, which resulted in [the] martyrdom of a 10-year-old innocent child," the ISPR added.

The military's media wing added that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists, who were

actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. A sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other khawarij found in the area, the ISPR statement added.

The country's "relentless" counter terrorism campaign under vision "Azmi-Istekham" will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country, it said, adding that the sacrifice of innocent civilians further strengthened resolve.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif both lauded the security forces for the successful operation, state broadcaster PTV reported.

President Zardari, in his statement, expressed sorrow at the martyrdom of the 10-year-old child. He stated that "at a time when Pakistan was making every effort to promote peace in the region and the world, terrorists were attempting to undermine our efforts".

PM Shehbaz also offered condolences at the martyrdom of the child as well, labelling it a "crime against humanity". The premier vowed to "continue the war against terrorism until its total elimination from the country".

Despite record militant deaths, Pakistan saw a sharp escalation in militant violence in 2025, with terrorist attacks rising by 34 per cent and terrorist-related fatalities increasing by 21 per cent year on year, according to a report released by the Islamabad-based Pak Institute for Peace Studies, KP in particular has



Pakistan presses on with peace efforts

NEWS DESK: Amid ongoing efforts to break the deadlock in US-Iran peace talks, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday discussed the evolving Middle East situation and Pakistan's diplomatic push for regional peace with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, who called on him.

Separately, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi held a meeting with Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Bekher, during which both sides discussed the latest regional developments in detail.

During talks with the Chinese envoy, the prime minister was assisted by Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Dr Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Farar, SAPM Syed Tariq Qatari and Foreign Secretary

Ambassador Anna Baloch, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The prime minister conveyed his warm regards and greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. While expressing his satisfaction at the positive trajectory of Pakistan-China bilateral relations, the prime minister reaffirmed that Pakistan took great pride in its All-Weather Cooperative

Strategic Partnership with China. He also spoke of his resolve to continue working closely with the Chinese leadership to ensure that the relationship grows from strength to strength.

The Chinese Ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and expressed China's appreciation of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for lasting peace in the region. He reaffirmed China's

commitment to strengthening its iron-clad ties with Pakistan and to taking them to new heights, as envisioned by President Xi Jinping.

Interior minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated US President Donald Trump's initiative to extend the ceasefire, calling it a welcome and significant step toward reducing tensions.

He expressed hope that positive progress would also come from Iran's side.

Naqvi stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal General Asim Munir were making strong efforts at all levels to help resolve the issue.

He expressed optimism that all parties would give diplomatic and peaceful solutions a chance.

US Ambassador Natalie Baker praised Pakistan's constructive role in promoting peace and contributing to efforts aimed at resolving the regional conflict.

