

Oil falls below \$100/barrel

HONG KONG, Apr 1 (AP)

WORLD shares were higher and oil fell briefly below \$100 per barrel on Wednesday after US stocks soared to their best day in almost a year on renewed hopes that the Iran war could soon end.

Oil prices fell and were briefly down 4% to below \$100 a barrel on Wednesday, though the losses later narrowed. Brent crude, the international standard, was down 1% at \$102.98 per barrel. Benchmark US crude dropped 1.1% to \$100.31.

NO DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS as US' trust level is at zero: Iran

Iran acknowledges for the first time that US is in direct contact over ceasefire

DUBAI, Apr 1 (AP)

EVEN as Iran acknowledged for the first time that Washington had been in direct contact about a possible ceasefire, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signalled Tehran's willingness to keep fighting. He insisted that there were no direct negotiations and said, Iran has no faith that talks with the US could yield any results, saying "the trust level is at zero."



A firefighter extinguishes a car at the site of Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, Lebanon on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

Speaking to 'Al Jazeera', Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signalled Tehran's willingness to keep fighting.

"You cannot speak to the people of Iran in the language of threats and deadlines," he said. "We do not set any deadline for defending ourselves."

Meanwhile, Iranian missiles hit an oil tanker off the coast of Qatar and Kuwait's airport on Wednesday. Airstrikes also battered Tehran, hours after US President Donald Trump said he was nearly ready to wind down the war in two to three weeks.

Trump's statement raised the possibility that the US could withdraw without any guarantee from

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Balochistan's issues raised in UNHRC

Activist Shalee Baloch calls on global community to hold Pak accountable

- In 2025 alone, Shalee Baloch mentioned that there have been around 1,355 cases of enforced disappearances, including 18 women and 225 murders, which “have never been justified”

GENEVA, Apr 1 (IANS)

SHALEE Baloch, the central organiser of the Baloch Women Forum (BWF), during the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, drew attention to human rights abuses across Balochistan, including enforced disappearances and the extrajudicial killings committed by the Pakistani forces.

Expressing serious concern, she stated that Pakistan is constantly engaged in targeting and killing Baloch civilians while branding them as “terrorists.”

Addressing the session virtually, Shalee said, “Balochistan, situated under the rule of Pakistan, is facing severe human rights abuses, including a direct attack on Baloch women and children in the latest shift. From enforced disappearances to extrajudicial murders, the law enforcement agencies of the country, including the military and the paramilitary forces, are involved.”

In 2025 alone, she mentioned that there have been around 1,355 cases of enforced disappearances, including 18 women and 225 murders, which “have never been justified”.

“Pakistan is constantly engrossed in targeting and killing

civilians and terming them terrorists. The local testimonies are very different from what the Government claims,” the Baloch activist added.

Shalee called on the global community to hold Pakistan accountable for all its human rights abuses in Balochistan and demanded an impartial inquiry into the enforced disappearances and killings of civilians.

Meanwhile, violence continues to escalate across Balochistan. A leading human rights organisation on Wednesday brought to light the extrajudicial killing of another civilian by Pakistani forces. Condemning the incident, Baloch Voice for Justice (BVJ) said that the bullet-riddled body of Israr Baloch was discovered in the Turbat region of Kech district on March 28, after nearly four months of being forcibly disappeared.

The rights body said that Israr's family received no information about his whereabouts throughout his detention, while “his body was subsequently dumped after being killed in custody.”

Asserting that the international community must not remain silent, the BVJ said, “This is not an isolated incident but part of a systematic pattern of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings targeting Baloch civilians with complete state impunity. We demand an immediate independent investigation, accountability for those responsible, and an end to the illegal detention and murder of Baloch people.” Balochistan continues to reel under relentless atrocities by the Pakistani forces, marked by enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of Baloch civilians at an unprecedented level.

West Asia conflict, bilateral ties top agenda for Russian Deputy PM's India visit

NEW DELHI, Apr 1 (PTI)

RUSSIA'S First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov will undertake a two-day visit to India beginning Thursday to review bilateral ties and exchange views with his Indian interlocutors on the fallout of the West Asia conflict.

Manturov is scheduled to hold separate talks with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, according to the External Affairs Ministry.

Under the bilateral framework, Doval and Manturov are expected to deliberate on India-Russia ties in critical areas of defence, energy security and trade.

The Russian First Deputy Prime Minister's visit to New Delhi comes days after India cleared procurement of a fresh batch of five S-400 missile systems from Russia.

The decision to procure the additional batch of five S-400 air defence missile systems was taken against the backdrop of the missile system proving its capability during Operation Sindoor.

The missile system played a crucial role in India's dominance over Pakistan during the May 7-10 hostilities last year.

Oil, gas prices won't immediately return to normal even if war ends: EU

NICOSIA, Apr 1 (AP)

SKYROCKETING oil and gas prices in Europe as a result of the ongoing Iran war won't return to normal levels any time soon, even if peace is declared tomorrow, the European Union's Energy Commissioner warned.

Commissioner Dan Jorgensen said

although there are no immediate oil and gas supply shortages in the 27-member bloc, there's pressure on diesel and jet fuel supply as well as "increasing constraints" in global gas markets that are resulting in higher electricity prices. "What I find extremely important is to state as clearly as I can, that even if that peace is here tomorrow,

still we will not go back to normal in a foreseeable future," Jorgensen said on Wednesday.

He said the EU's executive arm is preparing a string of measures designed to help families and businesses weather the huge spike in oil prices that have resulted in about a 70% price hike for gas and 60% for oil in Europe.

US journalist kidnapped in Baghdad, search underway: Iraq officials

BAGHDAD, Apr 1 (AP)

AN AMERICAN journalist was kidnapped in Baghdad on Tuesday and Iraq security forces are pursuing her captors, officials said. The journalist was identified as freelancer Shelly Kittleson by one of the outlets she worked for.

A US official blamed the Iran-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah.

The Iraq interior ministry confirmed a foreign journalist had been kidnapped but didn't give more details. Two Iraqi security officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly about the case, said the kidnapped journalist is a woman

and a US citizen.

They said that two cars were involved in the kidnapping, one of which crashed while being pursued near the town of Al-Haswa in Babil province southwest of Baghdad. The journalist was then transferred to a second car that fled the scene.

The interior ministry said security forces had launched an operation to track down the kidnappers, and intercepted a vehicle belonging to the kidnappers that overturned as they tried to flee. One suspect was arrested and one of the vehicles used in the kidnapping was seized, but others remain on the loose, the statement said.

The two Iraqi security officials said the journalist was abducted

in central Baghdad's Saadoun Street, and that an alert was sent to all checkpoints, leading to the pursuit of the kidnappers as they headed toward Babil province.

Al-Monitor, a regional news site covering the Middle East, said it was "deeply alarmed" and identified the journalist as Kittleson, a freelancer who contributed to the publication.

"We call for her safe and immediate release," the statement said. "We stand by her vital reporting from the region and call for her swift return to continue her important work."

Kittleson has been a longtime freelancer in the region, reporting extensively from Syria and Iraq.

The US Embassy in Baghdad

declined to comment. The US State Department issued a statement, saying the Trump administration "has no higher priority than the safety and security of Americans" and that it is "tracking these reports."

Dylan Johnson, US assistant secretary of state for public affairs, said on X that the "State Department previously fulfilled our duty to warn this individual of threats against them."

"An individual with ties to the Iranian-aligned militia group Kataib Hezbollah believed to be involved in the kidnapping has been taken into custody by Iraqi authorities," Johnson added.

Iraqi officials have not publicly said anything about the kidnappers' affiliation.

Israeli defence firm supplies first batch of light machine guns to India

■ **By Harinder Mishra**
JERUSALEM, Apr 1 (PTI)

A LEADING Israeli small arms manufacturer has delivered the first batch of light machine guns (LMGs) to India under the 'Make in India' initiative with technology transfer.

The first batch of 2,000 NEGEV 7.62x51 LMGs, part of a larger contract for 41,000 units, was delivered over the last weekend, with an additional 4,000 scheduled for delivery later this year, the Israel Weapons Industries (IWI) said in a press release.

The delivery was carried out

by PLR Systems, a joint venture between IWI and Adani Group, the first private company in India to manufacture small arms and ammunition.

"The milestone follows the successful completion of the technology transfer process under India's 'Make in India' initiative and reflects IWI's commitment to delivering advanced systems in accordance with contractual schedules and the highest quality standards, while supporting India's defence manufacturing ecosystem," the company said.

The NEGEV 7.62x51, one of the lightest 7.62 mm light

machine guns in its class with a semi-automatic mode, is deployed by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and is designed for reliability in harsh operational environments, offering high precision and effective target acquisition.

Its lightweight design and use of 7.62 mm ammunition enable it to penetrate fortified cover, making it suitable for urban combat and critical missions.

The weapon offers both semi-automatic and fully automatic modes and can be mounted on helicopters, vehicles and naval platforms for operational flexibility.