

Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Ozil, world Cup winner, enters Turkish politics with Erdogan's party

Detailed News On Page-06

It's 'five to midnight' for Europe: Merz

Detailed News On Page-08



Pakistan-China cooperation to be expanded

Detailed News On Page-08



Azeri president to visit Pak in April

Pak, Azerbaijan reaffirm resolve to boost relations

Prime Minister Shehbaz said US\$2 billion investment in Pakistan announced by the Azerbaijan President will bring dividends to both countries

DNA

BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on Monday reaffirmed their commitment to boost trade turnover and increase cooperation across various sectors including defence, transportation and connectivity. During a joint press stakeout, following the exchange of pre-signed documents of various projects, the two leaders emphasized the importance of unlocking the full potential of bilateral trade and investment in a range of mutually beneficial areas. Prime Minister Shehbaz said US\$2 billion investment in Pakistan announced by the Azerbaijan President will bring dividends to both countries.

He said that a one-month time had been given to finalize all the projects and agreements in various sectors to be signed in April this year during the visit of Azerbaijan President to Pakistan. "This will be the first quantum jump in our trade and investment relations and will be a huge reflection of our fraternal ties," the prime minister said adding that "Our business, trade, and investment ties were not reflecting the true strength of our relations but today we have achieved that target and in a months' time we will celebrate this great decision into action". President Aliyev regretted that the bilateral trade turnover was only several tens of million of US dollars that was needed to be increased. "I think we have the way how to do it", he said adding that "We received concrete projects from Pakistan, and Azerbaijani representatives are evaluating them, today we put ambitious and realistic targets to finalize all the discussions within one month and by the beginning of April, the documents will be prepared for signing". The President of Azerbaijan emphasized that these projects covered infrastructure development areas as

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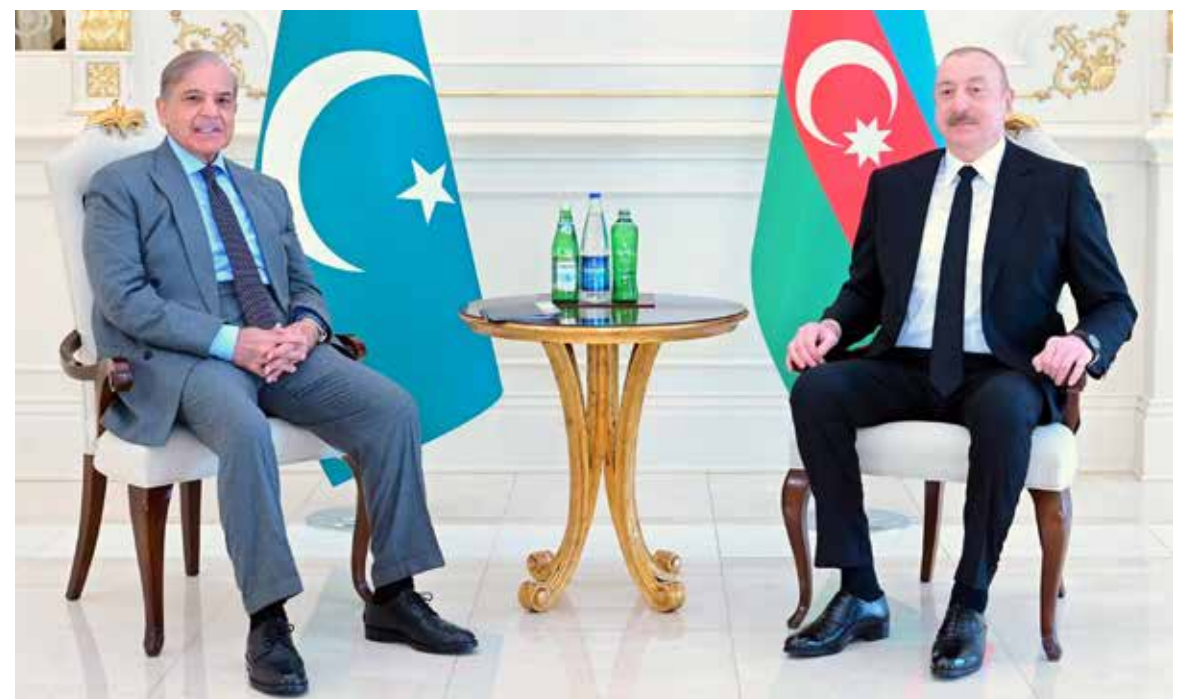
Pak, Azerbaijan sign accords in multiple sectors

Prime Minister Shehbaz and President Ilham Aliyev witnessed the documents exchange ceremony

DNA

BAKU: Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Monday signed multiple accords to boost bilateral cooperation in different fields including trade, energy, tourism, education and others. The pre-signed documents were exchanged during the two-day official visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here, at the invitation of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Prime Minister Shehbaz and President Ilham Aliyev witnessed the documents exchange ceremony, following their bilateral meeting and the delegation-level talks encompassing cooperation in multiple sectors. The two countries signed an MoU between the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and Pakistan's Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and Pakistan State Oil Company Limited for collaboration in Machike-Thalhan-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project.

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BAKU: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif holds one on one meeting with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev before delegation level talks, during his two day official visit to Azerbaijan. - DNA

Up to Rs 8 per unit cut in power tariff

Power secretary says govt working to cut taxes on electricity bills but needs IMF approval

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is pushing to slash electricity prices by Rs6-8 per unit within the next two months in a bid to provide much-needed relief to consumers, Power Division officials said on Monday. The high cost of electricity has become a contentious political issue, with opposition parties leveraging public dissatisfaction to criticise the incumbent government's handling of the energy sector and agreements with independent power producers (IPPs). The burden of high electricity tariffs falls disproportionately on the middle

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Civilians' military trial

SC questions scope of Army Act, judicial powers of military courts

Top court judge says Constitution clearly stated that Army Act was a law related to armed forces

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Monday said that understanding the purpose of the Army Act would solve half the military trials issue. The remarks came as a seven-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, including Justice Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Naem Afghan, Justice Musarrat Hilali heard intra-court appeals regarding the trial of civilians in military courts. Last year, the apex court's constitutional bench granted conditional permission to military courts to announce verdicts in cases involving 85 suspects - allegedly involved in the May 9, 2023, riots. In its order on the hearing of the appeals against civilians' military trial, the constitutional bench had said judgments of military courts would be conditional to the top court verdict on the cases pending before it.

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JCP member steps down over appointment issue

In his letter, he expressed dissatisfaction with the recent selection process for Supreme Court judges

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Senior Supreme Court advocate Akhtar Hussain has resigned from his position as a member of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), citing concerns over controversies surrounding judicial appointments. Hussain, who was nominated thrice by the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), submitted his resignation to Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, who heads the commission. In his letter, he expressed dissatisfaction

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NZ thump Bangladesh to reach semis

Ravindra top-scores for New Zealand with 112 runs off 105 balls

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Rachin Ravindra's brisk century, coupled with Michael Bracewell's four-wicket haul, powered New Zealand to a resounding five-wicket victory over Bangladesh, which propelled them into ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 semi-finals alongside India. Chasing a modest 237-run target, the Blackcaps knocked the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and 23 balls to spare, courtesy of an

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Briefs

IMF technical team arrives in Pakistan

Washington-based mission will also discuss green budgeting during its three-day stay

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD, KARACHI: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has confirmed that a technical mission of IMF has reached Pakistan to hold talks on climate financing during its three-day stay. Speaking to the media on Monday, the finance czar further confirmed that a second IMF team would visit next month to discuss matters pertaining to the country's \$7 billion EFF. The federal minister's confirmation comes after IMF's resident chief Mahir Binici said that two missions were due in Islamabad, with the first delegation set to focus on discussions regarding authorities' request for assistance under a RSF arrangement.

PM in Tashkent for official visit

DNA

TASHKENT: At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will pay an official visit to Uzbekistan on February 25-26, 2025. The agenda for the upcoming high-level negotiations includes further developing and expanding the strategic partnership and multifaceted cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Champions Trophy

Australia vs South Africa Today 02:00 pm PST

Opp leader criticizes govt

Imran is only former PM to face jail trial

He accused the authorities of police brutality against PTI workers

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and PTI leader Omar Ayub has stated that Imran Khan is the only former prime minister undergoing a trial in jail. Speaking to the media outside the Judicial Complex Islamabad, Omar Ayub revealed that Chief Justice had invited him for a meeting as Opposition Leader. He further stated that when he met Imran Khan, he sought permission three times before engaging in discussions with the Chief Justice. Imran Khan permitted the meeting, and PTI shared its agenda with the Chief Justice, which focused on human rights and judicial reforms. He added that Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi's fundamental rights were being deliberately violated in jail, as neither he nor their sons are allowed to meet them. Omar Ayub also pointed out that unlike other former prime ministers who were tried in open courts, Imran Khan is the only one facing a trial in prison.

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Ji plans protest drive against govt after Ramazan

Tells media the party has reviewed facilities available to the masses and planned protest

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman said on Monday the party would launch a protest movement against the government after Ramazan. Speaking to media after JI's Majlis-e-Shoora (consultative committee) meeting, he said the party had reviewed facilities available to the masses.

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Ukrainian embassy marks third anniversary of war



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Ukraine in Pakistan commemorated the third anniversary of Ukraine's resistance against Russia's military aggression, highlighting the resilience of its people and the ongoing struggle for sovereignty. The event, organized with the support of the

Polish Embassy, was attended by diplomats, dignitaries, and officials from various nations. In his address, Ukraine's Ambassador to Pakistan, Markian Chuchuk, reflected on the hardships endured by his country while emphasizing Ukraine's unwavering determination. "Today, we remember the sacrifices of our brave men and women in the face of a brutal and unjust war. Ukraine's fight is not

just for its land but for the principles of freedom, sovereignty, and international law," he stated. Over the past three years, the conflict has caused immense suffering, with thousands of civilians killed and millions displaced. Ambassador Chuchuk noted that approximately 15 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes,

Continued on Page 06

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Eye units announced across Punjab

Vice Chancellor of King Edward Medical University, Professor Mahmood Ayaz, acknowledged the contributions of Professor Munir ul Haq, Professor Asad Aslam Khan, and Professor Moin in the development of these institutions. "Through the Institute of Ophthalmology, we are not only providing vision care across Punjab but also extending our services nationwide," he stated.

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has announced that state-of-the-art eye units are being established across the province with the coordination of international organizations. He made this announcement while addressing a ceremony marking the completion of 40 years of the Institute of Ophthalmology Mayo Hospital and 25 years of the College of Ophthalmology and Allied Vision Sciences at King Edward Medical University on Monday. "Today, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Institute of Ophthalmology at Mayo Hospital and the 25th anniversary of the College of Ophthalmology and Allied Vision Sciences. These institutions have played a fundamental role in spreading knowledge, research, and awareness of eye diseases in the world of ophthalmology," the minister stated. "The eye department holds a crucial position in Pakistan's healthcare system, and we are committed to taking revolutionary steps through the Department of Specialized Health Care and Medical Education." He emphasized that the Punjab government, in collaboration with international organizations, is implementing significant measures to prevent and treat eye diseases. "State-of-the-art eye units are being established with the support of global organizations, including the

International Agency for Prevention of Blindness, World Health Organization, Christian Blind Mission, Sight Savers, Brain Holden Vision Institute, and Fred Hollows Foundation," he added. "Our joint efforts have led to remarkable improvements in diabetic retinopathy screening, retinopathy of prematurity detection, and low vision rehabilitation programs." The minister highlighted the government's focus on training and capacity building. "We are promoting specialized post-graduate programs and subspecialty fellowships to enhance the skills of healthcare professionals. The Chief Minister's Cornea Transplant facility is now available to the public free of cost, and pediatric ophthalmology departments have been set up in various government hospitals," he said. Discussing technological advancements, the minister remarked, "We are in a modern scientific era where innovations in gene therapy, artificial intelligence, and advanced imaging techniques are transforming healthcare. The Punjab government is committed to ensuring that people receive the best medical facilities at their doorstep." He also discussed about the construction of state-of-the-art Nawaz Sharif Institutes of Cardiology in Lahore and Sargodha, as well as Asia's largest government-run Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research in Lahore. "Additionally, flagship programs such as the Chief

Minister's Children's Heart Surgery Program, Chief Minister's Dialysis Program, and Chief Minister's Special Initiative for Transplant are being implemented to improve healthcare accessibility," he noted. Vice Chancellor of King Edward Medical University, Professor Mahmood Ayaz, acknowledged the contributions of Professor Munir ul Haq, Professor Asad Aslam Khan, and Professor Moin in the development of these institutions. "Through the Institute of Ophthalmology, we are not only providing vision care across Punjab but also extending our services nationwide," he stated. Earlier, the minister inaugurated a newly donated mobile van and participated in a cake-cutting ceremony celebrating the anniversaries of the Institute of Ophthalmology Mayo Hospital and the College of Ophthalmology and Allied Vision Sciences. The event was attended by Vice Chancellor Professor Mahmood Ayaz, Professor Asad Aslam Khan, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Muhammad Moin, Dr. Maryam Malik, Professor Abrar Ashraf, Professor Raza Ali Shah, Professor Nasir Chaudhry, Munaza Gillani, Dr. Farooq Awan, Fehmida Hussain, Representative Pakistan CBM, Dr. Zahid H. Awan, Inclusive Eye Health Manager, Dr. Qarat-ul-Ain, Health Specialist at UNICEF, faculty members, and a large number of attendees.



SIALKOT: Ambassador of Morocco Muhammad Karmoune being presented with a gift of football during his recent visit to a football factory.— DNA

No cost to Punjab govt for biker lane colour: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that the biker lane colour in Lahore was applied by a local company as a test with a one-year guarantee. She said the Punjab government has neither incurred any financial loss, nor has any payment been made to the company. The company will reapply the colour. She made these remarks in response to Barrister Saif's statement. The information minister said that Peshawar BRT had operated less and caught fire more frequently in the past five years, regularly facing accidents. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government still owes Rs 60 billion for Peshawar Metro. The Peshawar BRT case is still ongoing in the international court, she added. She said that Barrister Saif always tries to stay in the news by criticising Punjab. — DNA

CDA chief outlines vision for Gandhara Citizen Club renovation

The Chairman emphasized the need to prepare a detailed plan for the 2025 tree plantation campaign, which will be carried out in the Gandhara Citizen Club and F-9 Park

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, held a meeting on Monday to discuss the renovation, beautification, and operationalization of the Gandhara Citizen Club. During the meeting, Chairman Randhawa emphasized the need to expedite the operationalization of the Gandhara Citizen Club, which is undergoing renovation and upgradation. He directed officials to ensure optimal utilization of the club's building and instructed teams to carry out extensive landscaping and beautification work around the premises. "The Gandhara Citizen Club holds immense potential to become

a state-of-the-art facility for the citizens of Islamabad. We must ensure that the renovation and operational plans are executed efficiently and sustainably," said Randhawa. The Chairman also highlighted the importance of renovating the adjacent cricket ground as part of the project. He further announced that the revenue generated from the club's operations would be allocated to the improvement and maintenance of F-9 Park, one of the city's most popular recreational spaces. In addition to the club's renovation, Randhawa directed the environment and engineering teams to collaborate with consultants and architects to develop a comprehensive operational plan. He also instructed the joint team to conduct

a site visit for better planning and to finalize an effective operational model. The Chairman emphasized the need to prepare a detailed plan for the 2025 tree plantation campaign, which will be carried out in the Gandhara Citizen Club and F-9 Park. This initiative aligns with the CDA's broader environmental goals and commitment to enhancing green spaces in the federal capital. Expressing confidence in KPMG's expertise, Randhawa urged the consultancy firm to provide top-tier advisory and technical support. "KPMG's role is critical in developing the best operational and business model for the Gandhara Citizen Club. We expect their advisory and technical capabilities to be utilized to their fullest potential," he said.

CS stresses for collaboration for innovation, eco growth

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, was held to review the performance and future plans of the Science, Technology, and Information Technology Department. Senior officials from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) and the Directorate of Science and Technology attended the meeting, presenting updates on key initiatives and achievements. The KPITB showcased its significant accomplishments, including the successful launch of digital stamping services across various districts, which has transformed the delivery of public services. Additionally, Citizens Facilitation Centers have been established in seven divisional headquarters, automating multiple services to improve efficiency and accessibility. Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Employment Program, over 16,000 young individuals have been trained in digital skills, equipping them for the modern workforce. The meeting highlighted the international recognition of KPITB's "Dastak Public Service Delivery Platform," which has set a benchmark for excellence in public service delivery. The platform has facilitated the issuance of more than 94,000 arms licenses, generating revenue of one billion rupees while enhancing transparency and streamlining processes. The Directorate of Science and Technology presented the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Science Agenda, focusing on eight key natural resource targets.—APP

Maritime security exercise Sea Guard-25 commences

KARACHI: The Opening Brief of Exercise SEA GUARD-25 was conducted under the auspices of the Pakistan Navy, with Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, in attendance. The second in its series, Exercise SEA GUARD is a Pakistan Navy initiative aimed at bringing together representatives from Pakistan's diverse maritime sectors, including shipping, fisheries, law enforcement agencies, private entities, and NGOs under one platform to collectively address multifaceted challenges in the maritime domain, said a news release of Directorate General Public Relations (Pakistan Navy).

In addition to prominent figures from the private sector and fishing community, representatives from various organizations, including the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Pakistan Coast Guards, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Anti-Narcotics Force, Federal Investigation Agency, Karachi Port Trust, and Port Qasim Authority, attended the session. During the opening brief, participants were apprised of the aims and objectives of Exercise SEA GUARD and the critical role of the Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) in ensuring maritime safety and security along Pakistan's coast-

line. The exercise seeks to enhance coordination among national stakeholders while operating within their respective legal frameworks, using JMICC as a common platform to strengthen the security of Pakistan's maritime zones. It includes a series of practical scenario-based exercises at sea, along with tabletop discussions, to refine and improve existing security mechanisms. Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, expressed his gratitude to all national stakeholders for their participation and commended their contributions towards fostering a safer maritime environment.—DNA

9th edition of Italian design day celebrated

KARACHI: The Consulate of Italy in Karachi celebrated the ninth edition of the Italian Design Day in Karachi. An initiative promoted and organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome through its network of diplomatic missions abroad. "Inequalities. Design for a better life" is the theme of this year's design day, in dialogue with the next International Exhibition of the Triennale di Milano. Consul of Italy Mr. Fabrizio Bielli, while welcoming the audience, highlighted the role of quality design in reducing the impact of inequalities on the well-being of individuals in everyday life. The Italian diplomatic network in the world is a true protagonist in the framework of strategy, "Diplomacy for Growth" launched by Minister Antonio Tajani with the aim of strengthening design as a distinctive element of MADE IN ITALY, a communique said on Monday. The Consul organized an exclusive Curtain Raiser for the forthcoming Pakistan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale for Architecture 2025, which was presented to the audience by a team of architects from Coalesce Design Studio and MAS Architects. The theme of the Pakistan Pavilion - titled (Fr)agile Systems coincides with the theme of IDD 2025 and is a reminder of the stark inequity of architecture and design that continues to ravage landscapes and ecosystems on an unprecedented scale. To reiterate the imperative to rethink climate resilience as an adaptation process attuned to asymmetries and imbalances of an interconnected world for a call to action for a future in which architecture is both deeply rooted in cultural heritage and critically engaged with ecological realities. With the cooperation of Italian Trade Agency, the Italian Development Committee and its member companies; Axis Design Studios, Best Board Industries, Novacolor by Innovators, S. Abdullah, participated along with Natuzzi Italia represented by Salmis Luxury Interiors to showcase Italian excellence in Pakistan. — DNA

Canada, UNODC strengthen Pak's security through strategic partnerships



DNA

ISLAMABAD: With the financial support of the Government of Canada, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Country Office Pakistan is working hand in hand with the Government of Pakistan to enhance security, law enforcement, and judicial systems. Through a series of strategic initiatives and high-level engagements in Karachi and Islamabad, this collaboration underscores the strong and enduring partnership between Pakistan,

Canada, and the UNODC. Together, they are strengthening institutional capabilities to address emerging security threats and governance challenges effectively while promoting human rights and gender responsiveness through initiatives for law enforcement and criminal justice stakeholders. Handing over Ceremony of Advanced Body Scanners to Airports Security Force - Karachi In a significant step toward strengthening Pakistan's aviation security, UNODC and Government of Canada officially handed over one of several advanced 360-degree body scanners

to the Pakistan Airports Security Force (ASF). These scanners, which would be installed at major airports, will enhance the screening processes of passengers, preventing the smuggling of illicit goods and strengthening border security. At the formal ceremony held at the ASF Center in Karachi, Major General Adnan Asif Jah Shad, Director General of ASF, received the equipment, highlighting its role in modernizing security operations. UNODC Country Representative Mr. Troels Vester stressed the long-term impact of this initiative, reaffirming UNODC and Canada's commitment to Pakistan's aviation security and border management. Her Excellency Leslie Scanlon, High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan, emphasized the deep-rooted partnership between the two governments and the importance of global cooperation in tackling common security challenges. Inauguration of an eLearning Centre at CTD Sindh Police - Karachi UNODC and the Government of Canada, in collaboration with NACTA and Sindh Police, inaugurated an eLearning Centre at the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), Sindh Police.



Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

FOR SELECTION OF AUDIT FIRM FOR AUDIT OF THE INLAND FREIGHT EQUALIZATION MARGIN (IFEM)

1. Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) intends to conduct audit of IFEM for the complete financial years FY 2023-24.
2. OGRA invites interested QCR rated audit firms registered with ICAP and rated at category 'A' of State Bank of Pakistan' Panel of Auditors maintained under Section 35(1) of Banking Companies Ordinance, 1962, having minimum of twenty five years' experience. The firm must have undertaken at least 10 audits per year during last three years in respect of each company having annual turnover of minimum Rs. 10 billion. Further, Audit firms who have conducted IFEM audit for the period of consecutive last 10 years shall not be eligible to apply;
3. Audit Firm(s) shall complete the assignment/submit the first draft report within 90 working days of the award of the contract. Thereafter the report shall be finalized in 20 working days.
4. Interested audit firm must provide detailed CV(s) of member(s) of core team (to be verified) highlighting relevant experience. The core team must comprise of at least one (01) lead partner of minimum 20 years post qualification experience supported by a team of minimum 5 qualified professional accountants as Team Manager and at least 4 working Professionals with each team manager. Further, no team member shall be replaced during the audit process without the prior consent of OGRA.
5. The applicant has not been declared blacklisted or debarred by any local procuring agency and/or foreign country, international organization, and/or other foreign institutions. The Applicant to provide the undertaking in the form of an affidavit to the above effect;
6. Method of selection will be Quality and cost basis in line with section 3 (b) of the PPRA Regulations of Consultancy Services Regulation 2010. The Financial Bid should contain a lumpsum figure, inclusive of all charges, taxes and out of pocket expenses. Conditional bids shall not be accepted;
7. OGRA invites Electronic Expression of Interest (EOI) from the Chartered Accountants firm as mentioned per para. 2 above, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department. Electronic Expression of Interest documents containing detailed requirements, terms and conditions is available for the registered bidders on EPADS at (www.eprocure.gov.pk).
8. Bidders should submit the electronic expression of Interest, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the EOI documents, must be submitted through EPADS on March 17, 2025, 10:00 AM. Manual bids, shall not be accepted. The electronic expression of interest (EOI) will be opened on the same day by using EPADS (opening time 10.30 AM). The bids will be evaluated based on single stage-two envelope procedure under PPRA rules 36(b).
9. Before the award of contract, the successful bidder shall execute a performance guarantee equal to mobilization advance and 10% of bid amount. The guarantee shall be released after the submission of Final Report.
10. The instant EOI is for the IFEM audit for FY 2023-24. The Authority may however consider to engage the services of the Auditor for next financial year on the same terms and conditions.
11. OGRA reserves the rights to reject any or all the bids as per rule 33 of PPRA Rules, 2004.

Scope of work/TORs along with the evaluation criteria can be obtained from the OGRA website www.ogra.org.pk and PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk

Senior Executive Director (Finance)
OIL & GAS REGULATORY AUTHORITY
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Public Service Message

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day
Feb 06/Uganda Army Day
Feb 11/Iran Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania National Day
Feb 18/Gambia National Day
Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day
Feb 23/Brunei National Day
Feb 23/Guyana National Day
Feb 23/Russia National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait National Day



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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Enquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Former Employees of Monal Restaurant holds placards and shouting slogans during protest in the favor of their demands outside National Press Club.

Nasir sounds alarm over growing water scarcity

The conference concluded with a consensus among the participants on the importance of collaboration between the government and the business community to strengthen Pakistan's economic future

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi participated in the All Chambers President's Conference held at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The conference, attended by Presidents of various chambers across Pakistan, featured the Finance Minister of Pakistan, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, as the

Chief Guest. In his address Nasir Mansoor Qureshi appreciated the government's efforts in maintaining consistent economic policies, acknowledging their role in fostering a stable business environment. He urged the government to extend maximum support to the business community, particularly the industrial sector, which he emphasized as a key driver of economic growth.

President Qureshi highlighted that empowering industries is essential not only for national economic development but also for strengthening Pakistan's export potential. He underscored the importance of providing industries with the necessary incentives and support to enhance productivity and global competitiveness. Another crucial issue raised by the ICCI President was the grow-

ing water scarcity in Pakistan. He stressed the need for immediate and long-term measures to address the country's water crisis, noting its direct impact on industrial growth, agriculture, and overall economic sustainability. He urged stakeholders to work collectively towards water conservation initiatives and infrastructure development to mitigate this pressing challenge.

As far as the ICCI is concerned it remains committed to advocating for policies that foster a conducive business environment and drive sustainable economic progress, he added. The conference concluded with a consensus among the participants on the importance of collaboration between the government and the business community to strengthen Pakistan's economic future.

Langlands school & college Chitral delegation visits Parliament House

ISLAMABAD: A 15-member delegation from the Langlands School & College, Chitral, comprising students and faculty members, visited the Parliament House in Islamabad on Monday. The delegation was warmly received by senior Senate officials, who introduced them to various parliamentary functions. During the visit, the delegation toured the Senate Museum, where they received a detailed briefing on the history and evolution of Pakistan's parliamentary system. A documentary showcasing the establishment of the Senate, its historic decisions, and parliamentary traditions was also presented. —APP

PTA grants license to VPN service providers

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has initiated the licensing of Virtual Private Network (VPN) service providers under the Class License for the Provision of Data Services in Pakistan. As part of this process, PTA has approved the applications of two companies for the grant of Class Licenses to provide VPN services according to a news release. This initiative enables businesses to utilize VPNs for lawful purposes, ensuring data security, privacy, and regulatory compliance while promoting transparency. PTA remains committed to supporting organizations in meeting their connectivity needs responsibly. VPN service providers are encouraged to apply online for the Class License for the Provision of Data Services by visiting PTA's official Services portal at <https://eservices.pta.gov.pk>. —APP

Rang-e-Pakistan concludes with grand celebration of culture

ISLAMABAD: The Rang-e-Pakistan Festival, a grand three-day cultural event celebrating Pakistan's diverse heritage, successfully concluded at Lok Virsa on Monday. Organized under the directions of the National Heritage and Culture Division, in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of Arts, Pakistan Academy of Letters, Department of Archeology and Museums, National Language Promotion Board, and Iqbal Academy, the festival brought together artists, craftsmen, musicians, and literary figures from across the country to highlight Pakistan's rich cultural and artistic traditions. A number of visitors, including families, students, art lovers, and foreign delegates, attended the festival over the three days, making it one of the most successful cultural gatherings in recent times. The festival served as a platform to promote inter-provincial harmony, foster appreciation for traditional arts, and provide recognition to local talent. A major highlight of the festival was the artisan craft exhibition, where over 30 skilled craftsmen from different regions of Pakistan participated, showcasing intricate handmade products ranging from traditional pottery and embroidery to woodwork and calligraphy. The festival played a key role in connecting these artisans with cultural organizations and buyers, providing them with opportunities to sustain and expand their craft. The event also featured captivating folk performances, where traditional dancers and musicians kept the audience entertained with their vibrant expressions of cultural identity. One of the most engaging segments was the poetry session, hosted by the Academy of Letters Pakistan, where renowned poets presented their literary works, drawing an enthusiastic response from attendees. Adding to the immersive experience, famous storyteller Badar Khan mesmerized the crowd with tales of Lahore and Bazar-i-Husn, preserving the oral traditions that have been a significant part of Pakistan's cultural fabric. The festival culminated in a spectacular closing concert, held at the Lok Virsa Mela Grounds, featuring energetic performances that left the audience spellbound. The PNCA dance troupe presented an array of traditional dances, representing the diverse cultural landscape of the country. The musical performances were another key highlight, with Shahid Ali Khan delivering a soulful performance, while the Manwa Sisters and Hajvery Qawwal Group enthralled the audience with their powerful and melodious renditions, celebrating the rich legacy of Sufi and folk music in Pakistan. The Rang-e-Pakistan Festival not only provided a dynamic cultural experience but also reinforced the importance of preserving and promoting Pakistan's artistic and literary traditions. The overwhelming participation and appreciation from visitors reaffirmed the significance of such events in fostering national pride and cultural understanding. The festival's success has set a precedent for future cultural initiatives, further strengthening Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding its heritage. —DNA

Rubina for strengthening social protection system

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid on Monday urged development partners, policymakers, and stakeholders to collaborate in fortifying Pakistan's social protection framework. She made this call during the Second National Social Protection Conference, which commenced in Karachi, said a news release. The three-day conference, running from February 24th to 26th, is organized by GIZ Pakistan on behalf of the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The event aims to enhance cooperation, promote digital innovation, and ensure financial sustainability in Pakistan's social protection system. Speaking at the conference's opening session, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized BISP's role as the largest social safety net in Asia. She recalled the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who once said, "No nation can truly progress if its most vulnerable communities are left behind." This vision laid the foundation for BISP's establishment in 2008, ensuring social protection as a fundamental right rather than a privilege. Highlighting BISP's achievements, Senator Khalid noted that the Benazir Kafalat program has been a lifeline for 9.8 million families, providing them with quarterly financial support. —APP

AIOU introduces new system for books' printing & mailing

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has inaugurated a digital print production facility and extension of print production facility. The inauguration ceremony was held on Monday by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood. The digitized examination, printing, and mailing of books is being supported by Pakistan Post Foundation. On this occasion, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood stated that this is a revolutionary step that will help ensure transparency in the examination system and streamline the printing and distribution of books. The use of modern machinery will accelerate the process of delivering educational materials to students on time. The Vice-Chancellor further emphasized that the university's primary objective is to provide students with quality educational resources, which will enhance the learning process. AIOU aims to offer state-of-the-art facilities to its students, enabling them to achieve better academic results. Managing Director of Pakistan Post Foundation, Abdur Razzaq, was also present on the occasion, while Print Manager, AIOU Dr. Sarmad Iqbal briefed the Vice-Chancellor on all stages of machinery design, plate-making, printing, and binding. Thanks to the digitized examination system, results processing will now be faster, more transparent, secure, and accurate. With the introduction of barcodes and serial numbers on exam sheets, tasks that previously took days will now be completed in minutes using machine learning software. Additionally, the automated preparation and verification of results will be more effective, significantly reducing cheating and modernizing the examination process. —DNA

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Briefs

IG reviews security arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi visited a private hotel on Monday, where players and officials participating in the ICC Championship are staying, to review security arrangements. A police spokesperson told APP that IG Rizvi met with officers deployed on security duty and assessed the security measures in place for the teams. IG Rizvi said all law enforcement agencies must remain on high alert during the movement of teams and ensure full coordination for a seamless security operation. IG directed officers to wear their security cards at all times while on duty and emphasized the importance of keeping citizens informed about route timings. Rizvi further instructed that security checks at all entry and exit points be made more effective to maintain a secure environment.—APP

EOBI empowers record number of Pensioners

ISLAMABAD: The Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) had empowered considerable number of pensioners in 2024, enhancing their financial security and independence. According to an official, a staggering beneficiaries had been empowered through financial assistance provided by EOBI. This substantial payout underscores the government's commitment to ensuring the welfare and well-being of its citizens, particularly pensioners rely on these benefits for their livelihood. The EOBI's pension scheme had provided a vital safety net for employees in the private sector, offering financial support during old age, disability, or death. The EOBI's assistance program was a crucial lifeline for many elderly persons who were struggling to make ends meet.—APP

PTA grants license to VPN service providers

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Efforts urged for water management in OIC member states

In the inaugural session, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, emphasized the urgency of addressing water challenges, particularly in the face of climate change

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A two-day meeting for the Networking of Water Centers of Excellence in OIC Member States commenced at the COMSTech Secretariat, Islamabad, on Monday. It is being jointly organized by OIC-COMSTech and the OIC General Secretariat in collaboration with the Hisaar Foundation, SESRIC (Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries and INWADARM (COMSTech Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management). The meeting is a significant step toward strengthening research, knowledge sharing, and coordinated action on water security. The initiative follows the Resolution No. 1/4-ICWM/2018, adopted at the 4th Islamic Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water in Cairo, Egypt, in October 2018, and the recommendations of the 2nd OIC Water Council meeting in 2019. In the inaugural session, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, emphasized the urgency of addressing water challenges, particularly in the face of climate change. She highlighted the central role of COMSTech and stronger policy frameworks,



regional cooperation, and investment in research and development to ensure sustainable water management. She also commended COMSTech for its leadership in spearheading this crucial initiative. H.E. Ambassador Aftab Ahmad Khokar, Assistant Secretary-General of OIC for Science and Technology, underscored the OIC's commitment to tackling water-related challenges through collaborative research and policy initiatives. He stated, "The OIC is dedicated to strengthening

regional cooperation in water security and management. This initiative will serve as a platform to harness scientific expertise and innovative solutions for the benefit of all member states." He further elaborated on the significance of technology-driven solutions and the mobilization of resources to support sustainable water policies. Ambassador Aftab also commended COMSTech for its leadership in spearheading this initiative and its continued efforts in advancing scientific

cooperation. In his welcome address, H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTech, outlined major initiatives that COMSTech is undertaking to enhance capacity building in water research and technology. "COMSTech is planning to launch a major initiative to facilitate the mobility of experts, researchers, and students among water research institutions in member states. Additionally, we will organize two major training workshops, one in Bangladesh

and the other in Uganda, focusing on the One Water Concept and the use of modern technologies in water management," he announced. He further elaborated on COMSTech's ongoing efforts, which include one of the largest scholarship programs, support initiatives for women scientists, the Health Africa program, technician training, fellowships for refugee scientists, and the COMSTech Expert Service. "We are committed to strengthening academic and research institutions, particularly in member states facing critical water challenges," he added. He also emphasized that COMSTech's country-specific programs in Nigeria, Somalia, Palestine, Yemen, Mauritania, and Uganda are designed to cater to the unmet needs of these nations. He expressed gratitude to the OIC and its partners for their continuous support in making these initiatives successful. Other notable speakers included Dr. Zehra Zumurat, Director General of SESRIC, who emphasized the role of data-driven policies and capacity-building programs, and Dr. Marwan Alraggad, Executive Director of INWADARM, who highlighted the importance of integrated water resource management strategies.

Srinagar Highway sealed amid security measures

ISLAMABAD: In light of law and order considerations, the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced the closure of the Srinagar Highway from Zero Point to Serena Hotel in both directions until further notice on Monday. He said that traffic coming from Faizabad should use Jinnah Avenue. Similarly, vehicles travelling from Club Road towards Aabpara and the Red Zone should take the Faizabad loop and use the Jinnah Avenue underpass to reach Margalla Road. He said that traffic from Bhara Kahu should take Club Road and Faizabad Expressway, while vehicles travelling from Aabpara to Bhara Kahu should use the Shakarparian Road. He said that the Islamabad Traffic Police remains committed to ensuring smooth traffic flow and guiding commuters. For further information, citizens are advised to contact the ITP helpline at 1915 or follow Islamabad Traffic Police's official social media platforms.—APP

Heavy rain and snowfall to lash this week

ISLAMABAD: A strong westerly weather system has entered Pakistan, bringing widespread rain, thunderstorms, and snowfall to various regions as per Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast. The system entered western parts of the country will extend to upper areas by February 25 and persist in northern regions until March 2. Widespread rain and thunderstorms, accompanied by heavy snowfall over the hills, are expected in Gilgit-Baltistan, including Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, and Shigar. Similar conditions will prevail in Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bimber, and Mirpur in Kashmir from February 25 to March 2. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, areas such as Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shang-la, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Buner, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Waziristan, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan will receive heavy rain and thunderstorms from Monday night until March 1. Moderate to heavy snowfall is forecasted for Murree, Galiyat, and surrounding areas from February 25 to March 1.—APP

ITP announces heavy traffic diversion plan

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced a comprehensive heavy traffic diversion plan for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 matches at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. To regulate traffic flow during match hours on February 24, 25, and 27, the entry of all heavy vehicles into Islamabad will be strictly restricted from 7:00 AM to 1:30 AM to minimize congestion. A public relations officer told on Monday that alternative routes have been designated for heavy traffic to ensure smooth movement and reduce disruption in and around the twin cities. He said heavy traffic traveling from Peshawar to Lahore should use the Motorway via Taxila or the Fateh Jang Motorway accessible from Tarnol Phatak. He said those traveling from Lahore to Islamabad or Rawalpindi via GT Road are advised to take Chak Beli Road leading to the Chakri Motorway to avoid congestion. He said vehicles heading from Peshawar to Rawat via GT Road should opt for the route through Taxila Motorway, Chakri, Chak Beli Road, and then proceed to Rawat. He said heavy traffic moving from Lahore to Peshawar via GT Road should take the Rawat, Chak Beli Road, Chakri, and Taxila Motorway route. He said due to these diversions, traffic congestion is expected on Srinagar Highway and the Expressway, and commuters within Islamabad are advised to use underpasses for smoother travel. He said Islamabad Traffic Police personnel will be stationed at various points to guide motorists, while citizens can contact the Traffic Police Helpline at 1915 for assistance. He said real-time traffic updates will also be available through ITP's official social media platforms to keep the public informed. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider conducted an early morning visit on Monday to inspect traffic flow on the city's main roads during peak hours. An official told APP that the CTO Zeeshan reviewed the traffic situation and issued immediate directives to address the difficulties faced by citizens. CTO instructed officials to arrange alternative routes for commuters to ensure smooth traffic movement. Additionally, officers deployed on the routes designated for guest cricket teams were given special briefings. CTO Zeeshan directed traffic personnel to perform their duties with responsibility and courteous behavior. The CTO urged citizens to cooperate with traffic authorities to ensure seamless mobility. He added that efforts would continue to enhance travel facilities and ensure safe transportation for all.

ISSI hosts seminar on navigating the cyber frontier

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted a seminar on "Navigating the Cyber Frontier: Governance and Security in a Global Digital Commons" to underscore the commonalities and differences between cyberspace and other global commons by exploring potential threats to national and international security arising from or through cyberspace. Mr. Zarrar Hasham Khan, Secretary, IT & Telecommunication, Government of Pakistan, was the keynote speaker. Other distinguished speakers included: Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood (Retd.), Director, Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies; Dr. Mehreen Afzal, Director GRC, National Cyber Emergency Response Team (nCERT); Dr. Saadia Zahoor, Lawyer and Policy

Expert; and Mr. Javaid Iqbal, Member of the Authority, Special Technology Zones Authority. The seminar was moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director, ACDC-ISSI. Mr. Zarrar Hasham Khan, in his keynote address, underscored the transformative impact of industrial revolutions on global power dynamics, highlighting the emergence of data sovereignty as a critical aspect of national security. He emphasized the evolving nature of threats in an increasingly globalized world, necessitating robust digital governance frameworks. He further stressed the need for economic protection, advocating a shift from conventional strategic alliances to a comprehensive framework centered on data security. He highlighted that safeguarding national digital assets is imperative for long-term stability and resilience. While discuss-

ing critical infrastructure, he cautioned against the vulnerabilities posed by large-scale internet disruptions and emphasized the importance of proactive measures to enhance cybersecurity, ensuring national resilience in an era where digital connectivity is integral to governance, economic security, and strategic stability. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, emphasized the strategic significance of cyberspace as a global common, akin to maritime and outer space, serving as the backbone of communication, trade, governance, and security. He underscored the growing cyber threats, including cyber warfare, espionage, and cybercrime, highlighting the urgent need for robust governance structures. Citing the Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025, he noted that 72% of organ-

izations reported increased cyber risks, with ransomware remaining a top concern and geopolitical tensions shaping cybersecurity strategies worldwide. He stressed that cyber governance is no longer a technical matter but a national security imperative, requiring comprehensive policies, legal frameworks, and international cooperation. He advocated for a holistic cybersecurity strategy crafted through multi-stakeholder consultations and envisaging collaborative action — aligned with Pakistan's national security objectives. He also called for national capacity-building as well as multilateral engagement. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC, underscored the growing reliance on cyberspace and its profound impact on national security.—DNA

Sirajuddin stresses need for public awareness

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to combat the alarming rise in financial scams, Federal Banks Ombudsman Sirajuddin Aziz on Monday issued an urgent call to action, advising the public to safeguard their personal banking details and never share OTPs, following a shocking 27,000 reported cases of electronic and ATM frauds in 2024. In an exclusive conversation with a private news channel, Sirajuddin Aziz warned public about the dangers of sharing sensitive information, such as PINs and OTPs, with unauthorized individuals or agencies which can lead to serious financial losses and identity theft. He advised the public to be cautious when receiving suspicious calls, messages, or emails that request sensitive information. He stressed the imperative need for public vigilance, warning citizens against sharing sensitive financial information, including OTPs, with anyone, not even with close relatives. "Stay informed, stay alert, and stay safe," he emphasized. "Regularly review your account statements, monitor your credit reports, and report any discrepancies to your bank promptly," he added. He said that while using an ATM, it is essential to lock the door and, if your card gets stuck, immediately call and report the incident. Additionally, when using an ATM in a crowded area, avoid entering your PIN in a rush; instead, wait for your turn and ensure no one is watching, he advised. He also emphasized the importance of personal responsibility when filling out bank forms. "Individuals should fill out their own bank forms and carefully select the services they need, rather than relying on others to do it for them," he advised. "This helps prevent unauthorized access to sensitive information and ensures that customers are aware of the services they are signing up for."—DNA

Veteran journalist Asar Chauhan dies at 86

ISLAMABAD: Veteran journalist, writer, poet and columnist Rana Asar Ali Chauhan, fondly remembered as the "Poet of the Ideology of Pakistan", breathed his last on Monday, leaving behind a rich literary legacy at the age of 86. Accredited to media channel reports, renowned journalist Rana Asar Ali Chauhan embarked on his distinguished career in 1958, starting in Sargodha before making a mark in Lahore, where he earned a reputation as a fearless and principled voice in the industry. He launched the weekly magazine "Panjab" in 1971 and the daily "Siyasat" on July 11, 1973, with editions from Lahore, Sargodha, and Multan. He also introduced the Punjabi magazine "Chanan." Asar Chauhan's dedication to journalism was unparalleled. He wrote columns for several major newspapers, including Daily Pakistan, Jang, and Nawa-i-Waqt, remaining associated with Nawa-i-Waqt until his last breath. He had a special bond with legendary journalist and owner of the Nawa-i-Waqt, Majid Nizami, who honoured him with the title "Poet of Pakistan Ideology." His wife, Najma Asar Ali Chauhan, made history by becoming the first Secretary-General of the PPP Women's Wing Punjab in 1976. His sons are settled in the UK, USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai. In his final days, Asar Chauhan was working on his autobiography, but fate did not grant him the time to complete it.—DNA

KBM Care - serving the underserved

KHALID BIN MAJEED



MIGHTY oaks from little acorns grow". This proverb encapsulates the KBM Care Foundation's rapid rise as a trusted humanitarian force since its inception in 2022. Despite minimal initial publicity, the Foundation has transformed lives in Pakistan's underserved regions, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, through collaborative efforts with volunteers, donors, and partners. Headquartered in Islamabad, the Foundation

operates through its strong volunteer's base across the county including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. This decentralized model enables tailored responses to the local needs, such as earthquake relief in Muzaffarabad and drought mitigation in Balochistan. We believe that dealing with healthcare in hospitals and man-made disasters is not enough until we deal with some major causes of these problems. : Tobacco products, sugary drinks, substandard ghee and oils, low quality food items etc. account for much of the most of diseases we come across in hospitals. Similarly, ignoring safety protocols and violating environment protection guidelines lead not only to natural disasters but also squandering of resources like water. A team of self-motivated students of different universities working on these themes under the guideline of Dr. Hassan Shehzad, a known media professional and teacher, whose reports have been referred to by as prestigious institutions as IMF, is dedicated to address the causes of diseases and natural disasters. Be-

low is a streamlined overview of its impact, challenges, and vision is as und. Equitable aid for marginalized communities: Over the past three years, our trained volunteers have provided food and nonfood items and financial assistance to over 17,300 low-income and marginalized families in the underserved areas. Fifty sessions were con-

ducted to train the volunteers in effectively responding to the emergency situations. Health and care service: Providing comprehensive health services — including primary health care, communicable diseases, maternal health, psychological support services, nutrition and capacity-building of health facilities — is a fundamental segment of our

programe, prioritizing women, children and vulnerable people. During the period in question, 15,430 patients were served by arranging 12 medical camps and 10 eye camps. Water, sanitation and hygiene services: Our carefully crafted and meticulously executed WASH programs have benefited around 25,000 people by enhancing their access to hygiene and clean water. The communities were engaged through the media campaigns in national newspapers and area elders. Five filtrations plants have been installed at different places to cater to the deserving people. Displacement and migration assistance: This segment focuses on enhancing the wellbeing and resilience of displaced people by ensuring their access to health, education, and social services. So far, a total of 713 displaced individuals have been supported. Ten education support programs have been launched for their welfare. Community development programs: By leveraging indigenous wisdom and fostering shared vision, our community development initiatives have driven

regional awareness and contributed to SDG health outcomes and climate action. Twenty events have been held so far for community engagement, while 15 partnerships have been established with the academia, media, and art councils. Cash assistance and livelihood support: Our cash assistance program aims to provide livelihood and food security to the vulnerable and disaster-hit individuals through dignified and transparent assistance. Cash has been provided to 60 individuals while 30 training sessions have been conducted for imparting vocational training. Youth engagement and development: Our youth programs remained focused on leadership development, volunteerism and skill training, preparing the next generation go contribute in a big way to the society. Twenty-five leadership workshops have been conducted so far, training 5,000 volunteers. Legal support program: This program aims to provide free technical and legal support to the juveniles and prisoners who can't afford legal representation. Under the program,

the Foundation has provided 50 individuals with legal assistance by holding five legal aid clinics. Challenges & Resilience: Resource constraints: Limited funding delayed the expansion of a Gilgit-Baltistan maternal health project. Political instability: Operational pauses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to 2023 election-related disruptions. Logistical hurdles: The Foundation leveraged partnerships with local NGOs to reach the isolated communities during natural or man-made disasters. Despite these challenges, partnerships with international organizations and local governments ensured continuity. A beacon of hope: The Foundation remains committed to dignity, equity, and resilience. By refining strategies based on past lessons — such as integrating community feedback into program design — it aims to empower marginalized populations, ensuring sustainable growth and hope for generations. —The writer is founder at KBM Care Foundation



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DRC's crisis

THE Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the most resource-rich nations on Earth, particularly in its eastern region, where valuable minerals are found in high concentrations. Despite this, the country remains among the poorest in the world, with extreme poverty levels. The wealth of natural resources has not benefited the local population but has instead been exploited under the capitalist system, which prioritizes profits over human lives. Historically, Western powers have played a significant role in controlling Congo's wealth, using violence to maintain their influence. After the United States and Belgium orchestrated the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the leader who championed independence, foreign nations continued to exert dominance over the country's resources. In recent years, China has emerged as a major trading partner, extracting resources without resorting to violence, unlike the West. The value of Congo's untapped mineral reserves has been estimated at \$24 trillion by the US Geological Survey—surpassing the Gross Domestic Product of the entire European Union, which stands at \$17.7 trillion. The fact that the United States conducted this calculation suggests a strategic interest in these resources. In January 2024, during the World Economic Forum in Davos, DRC's President Felix Tshisekedi signed agreements with investors for a massive infrastructure project known as the "Lobito Corridor." This project includes the construction of a 2,600 km railroad linking the mineral-rich Kivu provinces to the Atlantic coast. This railway, promoted as a "green" initiative by the G7 countries, is intended to facilitate the extraction of key minerals such as cobalt, copper, coltan, and lithium—crucial for the global green energy transition. The project is backed by a 150 billion euro investment from the United States, the European Union, private companies, and the African Development Bank. The significance of these minerals for new technologies and sustainable energy solutions has led the Davos Forum to identify "resource scarcity" as one of the major risks for the next decade. In response, Western nations are accelerating efforts to secure supply chains. Meanwhile, Rwanda has been deeply involved in the illegal exploitation of Congo's resources. In February 2024, Rwanda signed an agreement with the European Union to export strategic minerals, despite lacking such resources within its own territory. These minerals are plundered from eastern Congo, where Rwanda has maintained military operations since its invasion in 1996. Western nations have deliberately ignored Rwanda's ongoing crimes in the region, including massacres and human rights abuses. The expansion of the Lobito Corridor has raised concerns about Rwanda's role in the illegal mineral trade. Historically, stolen Congolese resources have been funneled through Rwanda's capital, Kigali. The fear is that Western-backed infrastructure projects might bypass this route, reducing Rwanda's control over these illicit transactions. This could explain the intensification of violence by the Rwandan-backed M23 rebel group during the Davos Forum. M23, with the support of approximately 5,000 Rwandan troops, has escalated its attacks on eastern Congo, committing horrific atrocities such as mass rapes, civilian executions, and beheadings. For the past three decades, various rebel groups linked to the Rwandan government have terrorized eastern Congo, committing crimes against humanity, including mass killings, sexual violence, and forced displacement.



Trump's handling of Ukraine war

ATECTONIC shift is reshaping global power dynamics as the US redeploys strength from Europe and the Middle East to East Asia, confronting a resurgent China seeking to reclaim its historical status. As the Ukraine war edges toward a frozen conflict, Washington is gaining latitude to redirect assets and attention from European commitments to counter Beijing's growing influence. Elbridge Colby, US President Donald Trump's nominee for a senior defence role, crystallised this urgency in a Wall Street Journal letter, saying that "[the US] core interest is in denying China regional hegemony over Asia". Far from an isolated move, this strategic realignment triggers a cascade of adjustments among key players – Russia, China, Europe and US allies in Asia. For Russia, the US refocus could be a chance to rethink its "no-limits partnership" with China – a marriage of convenience, in large part, developed due to its isolation after it invaded Ukraine. Historically wary of a powerful, revisionist China along its nearly 4,300km border, Moscow has leaned on Beijing out of necessity, not affinity. With Washington signalling an openness to improve ties – potentially admitting Russia into the Group of Seven, formerly the Group of Eight – this dependency may wane. Russia could emerge as a pivotal US ally in balancing China, leveraging its Pacific presence to force Beijing to split its strategic focus. This possibility echoes Cold War precedents. The 1960s Sino-Soviet split allowed the US to align with China against Russia, shifting the global order. Today, with Russia as the weakest of the three great powers, a partnership with the Kremlin against a stronger China makes pragmatic sense. Unlike China, which has ample capability to pursue East Asian hegemony, Russia lacks the military, economic or demographic strength to dominate Europe or Eurasia. This is underscored by Russia's military stumbles in Ukraine, its population size – less than one-third that of the European Union's – and its economy, which is smaller than Italy's. For the US, peeling Russia from China's orbit could be a strategic coup, even if it means tempering Ukraine's territorial integrity. Trump won't let Europe turn Uncle Sam into 'Uncle Sucker', US defence chief says. China, acutely aware of this threat, has moved decisively to cement its alliance with Russia. Beijing has bolstered ties with Moscow through joint military drills across the East Sea, South China Sea and the northern Pacific in 2024. Beijing's special envoy for Eurasia, Li Hui, reportedly treated EU officials to a "full dose of Moscow's talking points" during his visit to Brussels last year. China's strategy is clear: prevent Russia from imitating its own Cold War shift towards the US. A US-Russia alignment would force Beijing to contend with threats on multiple fronts, diluting its focus on East Asia. The US shift marks a departure from its post-Cold-War role as Europe's security guarantor, a role that enabled Western European powers like Britain, France and Germany to ramp up their presence in Asia – deploying naval assets and forging regional defence ties – in exchange for the American security umbrella.

Trump's shift: Bully to peacemaker

Qamar Bashir



In his speech, Trump revealed that he had engaged in serious discussions with both Putin and Xi on denuclearization, recognizing that while the U.S. and Russia currently possess the largest nuclear arsenals, China is rapidly closing the gap and will reach parity within a few years. He emphasized that these three superpowers hold the key to preventing a nuclear apocalypse and that negotiations must extend beyond just the U.S. and Russia to include China and other nuclear-armed nations. Trump described his direct talks with Putin as "very successful" and highlighted his discussions with Xi, signaling that China was open to negotiations

PRESIDENT Trump, in his speech at the Future Investment Initiative (FII) Summit, shifted America's stance from a global enforcer to a peacemaker. He pledged to bring an end to the conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, vowing to leverage America's unmatched military prowess—not for war, but to secure peace. "Nobody knows how to fight better than the USA," he declared, "but now, we will lead the world toward stability, not destruction." With this powerful statement, President Trump redefined America's role on the world stage—not just as an economic powerhouse, but as the ultimate force for peace and progress. For decades, the United States has been portrayed as a nation that fuels wars and conflicts, profiting from endless cycles of destruction by supplying weapons to both sides while ensuring that conflicts never truly subside. The global perception of America as a war machine—bullying nations, destabilizing regions, and keeping arms sales perpetual—has been deeply ingrained. However, President Trump has taken an entirely opposite stand, declaring that his greatest legacy will be that of a peacemaker, not a warmonger. By making this bold proclamation, he has shattered the long-standing image of the U.S. as an aggressor and repositioned it as a nation committed to peace and stability. His approach signifies a monumental shift in American foreign policy—one that prioritizes diplomacy over dominance, negotiations over military interventions, and peace over perpetual war. With this stance, Trump has begun rewriting America's role on the world stage, transforming it from a force of coercion into a beacon of peace and cooperation. President Trump laid out a clear roadmap to end both the Russia-Ukraine war and the Middle East conflict and denuclearize the globe by emphasizing diplomatic negotiations, strong leadership, and economic incentives as the key to achieving lasting peace. The selection of Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, to lead peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, as well as to initiate discussions with parties in the Middle East, has surprised many. It was not India, not China, nor any European country or

the United Nations, but Saudi Arabia—led by the dynamic Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (affectionately known as MBS)—that was entrusted with this critical role. The role assigned to Saudi Arabia is also arguably the most suitable one. Due to the acumen of Saudi leadership, all stakeholders in the conflict have a high level of trust and confidence in the Kingdom, as it is seen as a neutral, non-controversial, and fair mediator. This stands in contrast to other global powers, many of whom are perceived as biased or having vested interests in the conflicts—factors that jeopardize both regional and international peace. In pursuit of peace, his speech emphasized the unimaginable destructive power of nuclear weapons, urging serious negotiations with President Putin of Russia and President Xi of China to curb nuclear proliferation before it spirals out of control. Trump underscored his philosophy of "peace through strength," arguing that without military strength, peace remains unattainable. However, he made it clear that nuclear weapons are a force so powerful that their use would mean the end of civilization. He referenced the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, warning that today's nuclear weapons are 500 times more powerful than those that obliterated the two Japanese cities. In his speech, Trump revealed that he had engaged in serious discussions with both Putin and Xi on denuclearization, recognizing that while the U.S. and Russia currently possess the largest nuclear arsenals, China is rapidly closing the gap and will reach parity within a few years. He emphasized that these three superpowers hold the key to preventing a nuclear apocalypse and that negotiations must extend beyond just the U.S. and Russia to include China and other nuclear-armed nations. Trump described his direct talks with Putin as "very successful" and highlighted his discussions with Xi, signaling that China was open to negotiations. He emphasized that the world must come together to prevent new nations from acquiring nuclear weapons—not just Iran, which is often at the center of nuclear concerns, but other emerging nuclear powers as well. The urgency of Trump's message was clear: if nuclear war occurs, the

world as we know it will disintegrate. His words reflected a deep understanding of the devastating consequences of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation. He positioned himself as a leader who recognizes the dire necessity of preventing nuclear war—not through weakness, but through diplomacy backed by strength. By taking bold steps to initiate serious negotiations with both Russia and China, Trump reaffirmed that denuclearization is not just a political strategy, but a moral imperative to save humanity from a future of unimaginable destruction. His approach marks a shift in global power dynamics, where instead of escalating arms races, leaders must engage in dialogue to prevent the ultimate catastrophe—nuclear annihilation. President Trump has repeatedly claimed that his party believes in common sense. Surprisingly, he is now taking steps that had long seemed unimaginable to many nations—steps that challenge the conventional, often destructive, approaches of global powers. For decades, nation after nation has abandoned the path of common sense, indulging in wars and conflicts that have wreaked havoc on humanity, bringing untold misery to the vanquished. Despite knowing that wars are inherently destructive and bring no real benefit to humanity, even in this age of advanced knowledge, intense diplomacy, technological innovation, and supposed political maturity, nations have continued to subject hundreds of thousands of innocent people to suffering in the name of their convictions, ideologies, and misguided geopolitical ambitions. Instead of prioritizing diplomacy and peace, wars have been fueled by religious extremism, ethnic divisions, and racial animosities, pushing common sense to the back seat and leaving the world reeling under the weight of irrationality and destruction. Now, President Trump is reversing this trend—steering the world away from senseless conflict and back toward common sense with full force. His approach aims to restore fairness, logic, and practical diplomacy as the foundation for global peace. If successful, this shift could lead the world to embrace a renewed commitment to reason, cooperation, and shared prosperity—ushering in an era of stability, development, and growth across the board.

Ramadan: A divine refresher course for the soul

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "When Ramadan enters, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the devils are chained." (Sahih Bukhari, 1899). This Hadith highlights the unparalleled opportunity presented to believers—one where evil influences are minimized, and good deeds are multiplied. The abstention from food...

THE month of Ramadan is a divine blessing, a spiritual retreat, and a moral rehabilitation program designed by Allah Almighty to realign the lives of believers with His commandments. It serves as a sacred pause in the ceaseless distractions of the world, an opportunity to cleanse the soul, refine character, and renew faith. The act of fasting, or Roza, is not merely an abstention from food and drink; rather, it is an intensive course in self-discipline, patience, and devotion. Almighty Allah, in His infinite wisdom, has ordained Ramadan as a month of mercy and forgiveness, offering His servants a chance to return to Him with a purified heart. The Holy Quran states: "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:183). This verse underscores the true essence of fasting—attaining righteousness. It is a month that serves as a spiritual mirror, reflecting one's weaknesses and providing the means for self-correction. The temptations and distractions that veer one away from the path of piety are momentarily set aside, allowing the believer to focus entirely on seeking the pleasure of Allah and His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "When Ramadan enters, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the devils are chained." (Sahih Bukhari, 1899). This Hadith highlights the unparalleled opportunity presented to believers—one where evil influences are minimized, and good deeds are multiplied. The abstention from food and drink is a symbolic exercise in self-restraint, fostering a greater awareness of one's actions, words, and intentions. Besides Ramadan being a time of spiritual rejuvenation, fasting also helps to overhaul the entire body and provides protection and cure from many diseases, according to medical science. The process of intermittent fasting during Ramadan has been linked to improved metabolism, detoxification, and enhanced immune function. It reduces the risk of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity

while promoting mental clarity and emotional well-being. This holistic benefit of fasting further reinforces its divine wisdom, making it not only a spiritual duty but also a means of attaining physical well-being. The moral transformation that Ramadan encourages extends beyond mere personal piety. It is a time to cultivate virtues such as patience, kindness, humility, and generosity. It teaches a lesson in empathy, allowing the privileged to experience the hunger and deprivation of the less fortunate. This moral awakening fuels acts of charity, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known to be the most generous during Ramadan: "The Messenger of Allah was the most generous of people, and he was even more generous in Ramadan." (Sahih Bukhari, 6) Fasting serves as a means to break free from destructive habits. Whether it is dishonesty, backbiting, arrogance, or negligence in worship, Ramadan provides a structured environment to abandon these vices. The Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the importance of ethical conduct during fasting: "Whoever does not give up false speech and evil deeds while fasting, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink." (Sahih Bukhari, 1903) Thus, fasting is not merely a physical exercise but a comprehensive moral discipline. It is an opportunity to cleanse the heart from malice, the tongue from harmful speech, and the mind from impure thoughts. True fasting extends beyond hunger; it involves the fasting of the eyes from what is forbidden, the ears from idle gossip, and the heart from hatred and envy. Ramadan also revitalizes the relationship between the believer and the Quran. It is the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed, as Allah says: "The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:185) The recitation of the Quran during this month strengthens faith, deepens understanding, and provides clarity in distinguishing right from wrong. It is a time for reflection, where one contemplates the deeper meanings of life and one's purpose in this world. Moreover, Ramadan instills a deep sense

of accountability. The believer becomes acutely aware of their actions, knowing that Allah is ever-watchful. This heightened consciousness extends beyond Ramadan, fostering a lifelong commitment to righteousness. When a person successfully controls their desires and refrains from sinful behavior for a month, they are better equipped to resist temptations throughout the year. The true success of Ramadan is measured by the transformation it brings in a person's character. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) beautifully stated: "The best among you are those who have the best manners and character." (Sahih Bukhari, 3559) This month provides an opportunity to develop patience in adversity, gratitude in abundance, and sincerity in worship. It is a training ground for humility, reminding the believer that all worldly possessions are temporary and that true success lies in the pleasure of Allah. Ramadan also fosters unity within the Muslim Ummah. The collective experience of fasting, praying Taraweeh, and sharing meals with family and the needy strengthens bonds of brotherhood. It eradicates social barriers, as all—rich or poor, young or old—partake in the same spiritual journey. As Ramadan comes to an end, the challenge lies in maintaining the spiritual progress achieved during this blessed month. The habits formed, such as regular prayer, Quran recitation, and acts of kindness, should not be abandoned. Rather, they should serve as a foundation for continuous self-improvement. Allah's mercy is not confined to Ramadan; His doors of forgiveness remain open throughout the year. The month of Ramadan is, indeed, a refresher course in a believer's life. It is a period of renewal, a time to realign one's life with the divine commands, and an opportunity to cleanse the soul of impurities. It is a gift from Allah, a means of redemption, and a path to eternal success. Let us make the most of this sacred month, not just through ritual fasting but by truly embodying the principles of Islam in our daily lives. May Allah grant us the ability to utilize Ramadan as a means to attain His pleasure and guidance. **Ameen.**

Briefs

Pak, Azerbaijan reaffirm...

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well as energy, economic, mining and others. He said during his meeting with PM Shehbaz Sharif, they discussed important issues, and reaffirmed resolve to continue to support each other on all issues of international relations. He said they also discussed numerous issues of current international development and cooperation in defence area including defence industry. "Azerbaijan has already acquired defence equipment from Pakistan and we are satisfied with the quality of this equipment and we will continue to do it. At the same time, he said, they also discussed opportunity of joint manufacturing in defence industrial items, which will be another important sector of bilateral cooperation.

Pak, Azerbaijan..

FROM PAGE 01
The documents were exchanged by President of SOCAR Rovshan Najaf and Director General of FWO Abdul Sami. President of SOCAR Rovshan Najaf and MD PRL Zahid Mir exchanged the documents of an MoU between Azerbaijan's SOCAR and Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) and Pakistan State Oil Company Limited. Pakistan and Azerbaijan also signed an amendment agreement No. 1 to Framework Agreement for the Sale and Purchase of LNG cargoes related to Master LNG Sale and Purchase Agreement. The SOCAR President Rovshan Najaf and CEO Pakistan LNG Limited Masood Nabi exchanged the pre-signed documents.

SC questions scope of...

FROM PAGE 01
Subsequently, the military courts sentenced 85 PTI activists for two to 10 years of "rigorous imprisonment" for their involvement in the May 9 protests, marking the conclusion of trials for those held in military custody over the attacks on army installations and monuments. Later in January, the military accepted mercy pleas of 19 out of the 67 convicts sentenced in the May 9 riots case on "humanitarian grounds", the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

JCP member steps...

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with the recent selection process for Supreme Court judges. "On present controversies with regard to judicial appointments, I am unable to continue and, hereby, resign as a member of JCP," he wrote, requesting the PBC to nominate a new representative in his place. Despite stepping down, Hussain assured his continued support for judicial independence and democratic institutions. The resignation comes shortly after the JCP appointed six new judges to the Supreme Court, a move that sparked criticism from some legal and political circles.

Up to Rs 8 per unit...

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and lower-income segments of society, fueling public outrage and eroding trust in the government's ability to manage the economy. Federal Secretary Energy (Power Division) Dr Muhammad Fakhr-e-Alam Irfan on Monday told the Senate Standing Committee on Power that the government was working on reducing taxes on electricity bills but noted that any such move would require approval from IMF.

NZ thump Bangladesh..

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anchoring fourth-wicket partnership between centurion Ravindra and information Tom Latham. New Zealand, however, had a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost in-form Will Young (0) and veteran Kane Williamson (five) inside four overs with just 15 runs on the board.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins taking selfie with female blind players during 4th National Women Cricket Championship at NUST Cricket Ground H-12, in Federal Capital. - Online

City need a full reset after their latest humbling: Gary

Defeat to Liverpool was City's eighth in the league so far this season. Their worst campaign for defeats under Guardiola came back in 2019/20 when they lost nine games

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Gary Neville believes Manchester City have "run out of legs" and need a "full reset" after their latest defeat to Premier League leaders Liverpool. Reigning champions City are now 20 points behind Arne Slot's side after the 2-0 defeat at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday. City, without the injured Erling Haaland, lacked potency and their defeat underlined their startling decline this season after winning the title for the past four seasons. Pep Guardiola's side remain fourth in the table, but he says qualification for the Champions League is not guaranteed after Liverpool completed a league double over City. Former Manchester United defender Neville told Sky Sports: "This will be painful for Man City but maybe Pep Guardiola needs it, maybe the club needs it. A full reset. They have been running at a million miles an hour for years, the title battles against Liverpool. But they have just run out of legs, run out of steam. They've grown old together. Pep Guardiola is going to have to build a brand new title-winning team. He knows what one looks like, that's for sure." Defeat to Liverpool was City's eighth in the league so far this season. Their worst campaign for defeats under Guardiola came back in 2019/20 when they lost nine games. Despite their struggles this season Guardiola is adamant City still have a bright future, but concedes qualifying for the Champions League is not guaranteed. "If you lose, you have to lose the way we lost today," Guardiola told Sky Sports. "I saw many things that this club has a bright future with the players that we have. Except Kevin de Bruyne and maybe Nathan Ake, all the players are so young. What the club decides next for the future, there is a bright future for this club in the next years. Everyone knows that a part will be here next season for the older players but we have to build for the next step. There is a question of time. Even with the amount of absences we have, we played well. They break the lines and



can break behind you. They really threaten but we bring them there and all we missed is that in the final third, it depends on the talent to dribble or shoot in the right moment. From there, we build for the future. We are far away. We will see in the future. What we have done in previous seasons is good but now we are away from them." Asked about Champions League qualification in his press conference, Guardiola said: "If it doesn't happen it's because we're not good enough, not for lack of passion or desire. We saw it against Newcastle, we saw it today. I have no doubts. But it is so tight and there are good teams. It will not be easy but we will try it." "This season hasn't been good enough by Manchester City's standards. They have

lost a lot of energy in the midfield area. We've talked about losing Rodri, which has been massive. The players also need to get some confidence back. Phil Foden, who was outstanding last season, doesn't seem to be at the same level this season. They also need a few more new faces. Omar Marmoush looks good and Nico Gonzalez has come into the team and looked good. Abdulkodir Khusanov and Vitor Reis are young kids and there are a couple of injured players to come back too. The future is bright for Manchester City but they are just going through a time where the energy is lacking. Next season they will be back." Meanwhile, Roy Keane thinks there will be further change to come this summer and expects some senior players to be moved on by Guardiola. Manchester City had a busy January transfer window spending £180m bringing in Omar Marmoush, Abdulkodir Khusanov, Vitor Reis and Nico Gonzalez. With Kevin De Bruyne out of contract and the futures of other senior players not certain, Keane expects a further overhaul of the squad in the summer. "Some of the City players will be under pressure," he told Sky Sports. "Will Pep want to keep some of them? It will depend a lot on their contract situations and with the likes of Kevin De Bruyne out of contract and few others, you'd think automatically that they'd probably move on. Asked if that would be the right thing, Keane replied: "Probably. We've all been there, particularly when you are playing in midfield, and it is tough going. The manager then has to make a decision. You've got to look at the bigger picture but, from City's point of view, I wouldn't be panicking. They've recruited and they will have another look in the summer. Some of the senior players will move on but that is just the nature of the beast." Jamie Carragher thinks City will be back challenging for honours again next season but only if they get their recruitment right. "Liverpool were in the same position as Manchester City a couple of years ago and they got their recruitment right. You look at the midfield of Mac Allister, Gravenberch and Szoboszlai, they were bought on the back of Liverpool being in a similar situation to City.

Venus turns down Indian Wells wildcard

Williams has dropped to 974th in the world and has not played a WTA Tour-level match since losing in the first round of the Miami Open last March

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Former Germany, Real Madrid and Arsenal star Mesut Ozil, who retired in 2023, was elected on Sunday to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) party of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the party announced. The German-born 2014 World Cup winner became a member of the AKP's central council at a congress in Ankara where Erdogan was re-elected for the ninth time as head of the conservative party which has ruled Turkey since 2002. Ozil, who ended his club career in Istanbul, is a longtime Erdogan supporter, having chosen him as his best man in 2019 for his wedding to a former Miss Turkey, Amine Glse. A photo of Ozil and Erdogan with former Germany teammate Ilkay Guendogan, also of Turkish origin, caused controversy, with Berlin accusing the Turkish head of state of repressive drift, while Ozil was criticised by the German far right. Ozil, previously held up as a symbol of a multicultural Germany, turned his back on the German national team, accusing the German Football Association of racism. After months of silence over a controversial photograph with Erdogan in 2018, Ozil erupted. The former Arsenal midfielder posted a stinging four-page statement taking aim at German Football Association (DFB) bosses, sponsors and the media.

Inzamam lashes out at Pakistan's Champions Trophy 2025 disaster

'This is not the first tournament where we've performed like this,' says Inzamam

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan cricket legend Inzamam-ul-Haq expressed his disappointment over the national team's lackluster performance against India in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 match on Sunday in Dubai. The former captain criticized both the team and the selection committee for their approach, calling for a serious review of Pakistan's strategy in major ICC events. In a social media video, Inzamam did not hold back his frustration. "Review the players' performances once again. This is not the first tournament where we've performed like this. I'm not referring to a bilateral series. I'm talking about ICC events such as the Asia Cup, World Cup, and T20 World Cup," said Inzamam. The former chief selector lamented Pakistan's inability to perform on big occasions, stating that the team struggles under pressure and collapses when it matters most. "We are not even standing anywhere. We get knocked out right at the start. The moment there's a little pressure, we completely collapse," he said. One of the key points of Inzamam's criticism

was the team's selection choices, particularly the lack of a backup spinner. "I have a question for the selection committee. Out of these eight teams, seven have come from outside and are playing with at least one regular spinner," he said. "Even if you look at the India match, Abrar bowled 10 overs and gave away only 28 runs, effectively containing the opposition. But you only selected one spinner for the entire squad, with no backup option.



Akram calls for major changes in Pakistan cricket

'Even if you have to make 5-6 big changes, do that, lose for the next six months,' says Akram

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Former Pakistan pace legend Wasim Akram criticized the Pakistan cricket team, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and the selectors following the teams six-wicket loss to India in the Champions Trophy 2025 clash on Sunday. During a recent television appearance, Akram called for sweeping changes in the team, urging selectors to drop underperforming senior players and invest in young, fearless cricketers. The former captain expressed frustration over the current squad's inability to meet expectations. "Enough is enough. We are losing in white-ball with these players from some couple of years. The time is to take a bold step. What is the bold step?" Akram questioned. "As Waqar Younis was saying, bring young players, fearless cricketers, bring them in white ball cricket. Even if you have to make 5-6 big changes, do that, lose for the next six months, support those players. Start making the 2026 T20 World Cup team from now," he added. He further highlighted Pakistan's alarming bowling statistics, stating that the team's bowlers have collectively taken only 24 wickets in their last five games at an average of 60. He also noted that among the 14 teams that have played ODI cricket this year, including Oman and the USA, Pakistan has the

'Brainless captaincy' Shoaib Akhtar reacts to Pak loss

LAHORE: Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has slammed the national cricket team following their crushing defeat against India in the fifth match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday. While speaking on a cricket show, the Rawalpindi Express expressed disappointment with the poor show of green shirts in all departments against arch-rivals. "We always speak about intent but I think they also lack skills. If they had skills, they wouldn't have played like way." He also talked about the team management and captaincy during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, labeling them "clueless" and "brainless". "Clueless management, to be honest, brainless captaincy... absolutely average team who displayed the skills there... nothing to talk about it," Akhtar said. Shoaib Akhtar lamented the team's 'successive' failures in the past few years. "It is not unusual (from Pakistan team). Nothing to talk about it... they don't know what to do... honestly nothing," Shoaib Akhtar added. - Agencies

second-worst bowling average. "We have seen everything, we have given chances, created superstars. In the last five games, all Pakistani bowlers together have taken 24 wickets at an average of 60. The shocking stat is that among 14 teams including Oman and USA who have played ODI cricket this year, Pakistan's bowling average is second worst among these teams," he said. The 58-year-old also revealed that PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi had advised selectors to reassess the squad before the Champions Trophy, but they chose to persist with the same underperforming players. "PCB chairman has to call up the selection committee, call the captain, coach and our five legends and ask them what is this selection. Khushdil Shah and Salman Agha, did it look like they will get out someone, Virat Kohli types," he said. "This is the fact and we have to say it. We had been screaming that this squad was not good. Even the chairman asked them one day before that change the squad if there is a need. These guys met for one hour and came out with the same squad," he added. Akram did not spare Pakistan's captain, Mohammad Rizwan, holding him accountable for failing to assess home conditions and pick the right players accordingly. "The captain is also responsible. He is the captain of the ship and leader. If he doesn't know which match winners he needs in his own conditions, if he is unable to read his own conditions then it's embarrassing," he said.

Ukrainian embassy...

FROM PAGE 01
while estimates suggest over a million soldiers from both sides have been killed or wounded. Despite facing daily airstrikes and relentless attacks on civilian infrastructure—including schools, hospitals, and power facilities—Ukraine continues to defend 82% of its territory. The Ambassador condemned Russia's military actions, stating that occupied regions have witnessed widespread human rights violations, including forced deportations, unlawful detentions, and persecution of Ukrainian civilians. The Ukrainian envoy also addressed the issue of disinformation, accusing Russia of spreading propaganda to manipulate global opinion. "This war is not fought with weapons alone—it is also a battle of truth against lies," he said, adding that some leaders mistakenly blame Ukraine instead of recognizing Russia's aggression. Refuting Moscow's claims that the invasion was to prevent Ukraine's NATO membership, Chuchuk pointed out that Ukraine was never formally invited to join the alliance before 2014. He also dismissed Russian assertions that the war aimed to protect Russian-speaking Ukrainians, stating that Russia's attacks have killed thousands of them and displaced millions. The war has also had global consequences, particularly in food security. Ukraine, a key grain exporter, has continued its commitment to feeding millions despite disruptions caused by the conflict. Under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's "Grain from Ukraine" initiative, the country has provided over 286,000 tons of agricultural goods to African and Asian nations, along with humanitarian aid to Palestine and Syria. The Ukrainian leadership remains committed to achieving a just and lasting peace. Ambassador Chuchuk reiterated support for President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, urging the international community to unite in pressuring Russia into meaningful negotiations. He emphasized that peace must be based on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, with firm international guarantees. The event concluded with a cultural segment titled "Culture vs. War," featuring a documentary and photo exhibition by renowned photographers Kostiantyn and Vlada Liberov and Serhii Mykhalechuk. The exhibition aimed to highlight the human and cultural impact of the war. Calling for continued international support, the Ambassador specifically appealed to Pakistan, stating that its stance on peace in Ukraine aligns with international law and Pakistan's national interests. "The outcome of this war will shape global security, defining the boundary between the power of law and the right of force," he said. As Ukraine enters its fourth year of war, it remains determined to defend its sovereignty while looking toward a future of peace and stability.

Imran is only former PM...

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He accused the authorities of police brutality against PTI workers, claiming that PTI leaders in Punjab, Islamabad, Sindh, and Balochistan are being harassed. Meanwhile, in the Islamabad Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC), a hearing was held regarding nine cases against Omar Ayub. ATC Judge Abul Hasanat Zulfarnain presided over the proceedings. During the hearing, a defense lawyer requested an adjournment due to the unavailability of senior counsel Dr. Babar Awan. The court accepted the request and postponed the hearing until April 10.

JI plans protest...

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He said the participants decided to launch a movement against the government after the holy month as there was no relief for the public despite renewed agreements with IPPs. The government should provide substantial relief to the masses in prices of fuel and electricity, he demanded. As part of the strategy, he said, the JI would stage protests on national highways and besiege chief minister and governor houses. He said the farmers should join protest everywhere to force the government to reduce prices. There should be a government on the basis on Form 45, he added. The JI chief said the people of Palestine would not compromise on its dignity.

Briefs

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 1,529 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining, 1,529.17 points, a positive change of 1.36 per cent, closing at 114,330.10 points as compared to 112,800.93 points on the last trading day. A total of 455,533,414 shares were traded during the day as compared to 455,394,404 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25.888 billion against Rs21.524 billion on the last trading day. As many as 440 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 176 of them recorded gains and 211 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were At-Tahur Limited with 43,118,680 shares at Rs.28.00 per share, K-Electric Limited with 27,220,140 shares at Rs.4.79 per share and Fauji Cement with 25,755,312 shares at Rs.42.47 per share. —APP

Gold increase by Rs.1,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,500 and was sold at Rs 309,500 on Monday against its sale at Rs 308,000 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1,286 to Rs 265,346 from Rs. 264,060 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.1,179 to Rs 243,242 from Rs. 242,063. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.15 to Rs.3,395 and that of ten gram went up by Rs.13 to Rs.2,910. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$12 to \$2,948 from \$2,936 whereas the prices of silver in international market went up by \$0.16 to \$32.60, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 09 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 09 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.57. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.00 and Rs281.50, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs0.22 to close at Rs293.17 against the last day's closing of Rs293.39, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.87, whereas an decrease of Rs0.68 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs353.52 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.20.—APP

Turkiye says Ukraine-Russia talks should involve 'both sides'

ANKARA: Turkiye's foreign minister on Monday said Ankara backed a US initiative to end the Ukraine-Russia conflict but stressed that talks should involve both warring sides. Moscow and Washington have begun a direct dialogue in recent weeks, against a backdrop of rapprochement between new US President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin. "We attach great importance to the new US initiative as a result-oriented approach. We believe that a solution can be reached through negotiations in which both sides participate," Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told a news conference with Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Ankara. Lavrov's visit comes on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a week after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traveled to the Turkish capital.—APP



BAKU: Members of the federal cabinet and officers from the Pakistani delegation at the guard of honor for Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Zugulba Presidential Palace on Monday.—DNA

EU lifts sweeping energy, transport sanctions on Syria

"A piecemeal approach of temporary exemptions and limited waivers is not enough. Sanctions that harm civilians should immediately be lifted, not refined," Zayadin added.

BRUSSELS: On Monday, the Council decided to maintain lists linked to the Al-Assad regime, but approved the lifting of wide-ranging sanctions on key industries such as the energy, transport and financial sectors. EU foreign ministers decided on Monday to suspend a series of far-reaching sanctions against Syria to help the country's economic recovery and reconstruction after nearly 14 years of civil war. The Council decided to remove five financial entities (Industrial Bank, Popular Credit Bank, Saving Bank, Agricultural Cooperative Bank and Syrian Arab Airlines) from the list of entities subject to the freezing of funds and economic resources and to allow funds and economic resources to be made available to the Central Bank of Syria. The EU has also suspended sectoral measures in the oil, gas, electricity, and transport sectors and introduced exemptions to the ban on banking relations between Syrian banks and financial institutions in the EU to facilitate transactions for humanitarian and reconstruction purposes, as well as for the energy and transport sectors.

The bloc will monitor the country's situation to guarantee that suspensions remain appropriate with Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat, stressing that "if everything does not go right, then we are also ready to put the sanctions back". "Any kind of government needs to be all-inclusive and taking into account all the different groups that are in Syria," she said. Most of the EU's sanctions were imposed following Bashar al-Assad's violent crackdown on Syrian protesters in 2011, including broad restrictions on trade, financial transactions, and key industries such as energy and transport. The sanctions led to the collapse of EU-Syria economic relations, with trade flows worth 396 million in 2023. The regime of Bashar al-Assad was toppled in December last year by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which has since been calling for the lifting of wide-ranging sanctions to help the war-torn country's economy. There have also been calls to remove HTS and its leader Ahmed al-Sharaa from international terrorist lists, but the Council decided to maintain such lists in relation to the

EU approves fresh sanctions on Russia

BRUSSELS: The European Union has agreed on a new package of sanctions against Russia, targeting key sectors of its economy as concerns grow over U.S. president Donald Trump's push for negotiations with Moscow. The 16th sanctions package, adopted on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, includes bans on Russian aluminium imports, exports of chemicals and precision machine tools, and the servicing of oil and gas refineries. It also blacklists 74 shadow fleet vessels used to bypass existing restrictions on Russian oil exports. EU foreign ministers approved the measures at a meeting in Brussels, where many officials wore blue and yellow in solidarity with Ukraine. The bloc's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, emphasised the need for unwavering support: "We must support Ukraine now, more than ever." European leaders have been unsettled by Trump's willingness to engage with Moscow while sidelining Kyiv and Brussels. Belgian foreign minister Maxime Prévot criticised any suggestion that Ukraine and Russia should be treated equally in peace talks, stating, "There is an aggressor and there is a victim." Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, echoed that sentiment, rejecting efforts to equate the two sides. Kallas is set to meet U.S. secretary of state Marco Rubio in Washington later this week to discuss transatlantic cooperation and Ukraine's future. Meanwhile, several EU officials, including European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, travelled to Kyiv to reaffirm support as the country marks the third year of Russian aggression. Von der Leyen announced that Ukraine would receive a 3.5 billion euro aid payment in March. She also highlighted EU efforts to boost arms production, which would benefit Kyiv, and a plan to integrate Ukraine into the EU's power grid.—DNA

al-Assad regime, as well as those on arms trafficking, dual-use goods, the chemical weapons sector, and illicit drug trafficking, among others. The EU's blacklist, which was renewed in November, covers 318 individuals and 86 entities. All are subject to an assets freeze and a travel ban. More than 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line and at least 16.5 million people across Syria rely on some form of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, according to a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Last week, Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that sweeping EU, US, and UK sanctions on Syria are hampering the country's economic recovery and preventing millions of Syrians from accessing essential services such as electricity, health care, water, and education. "Rather than using broad sectoral sanctions as leverage for shifting political objectives, Western governments should recognize their direct harm to civilians and take meaningful steps to lift restrictions that impede access to basic rights," said Hiba Zayadin, senior Syria researcher at HRW.—APP

Saudi, Indonesian agree on closer coop to improve health workforce

JAKARTA: Saudi Arabia and Indonesia signed on Monday a new agreement on the training and exchange of medical workers, as the Southeast Asian nation seeks closer partnership with the Kingdom to improve its healthcare system. The Kingdom's Health Minister Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Jalal is on a two-day visit to Indonesia, leading a high-level delegation of officials. As a part of the visit, Al-Jalal and his Indonesian counterpart, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, held talks in Jakarta and witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding on health workforce cooperation between their countries. "The MoU covered various areas of cooperation, including collaboration for Saudi doctors to practice in Indonesia, and for Indonesian doctors to study in Saudi Arabia," the Indonesian Ministry of Health said in a statement. The deal also covers nursing scholarships, a fellowship program and exchange of health workers, it added. "Through the exchange of health workforce, we hope to increase the standard of education and health services, while also strengthening the capacity of our human resources here in Indonesia," Sadikin said after the bilateral meeting. Saudi Arabia-Indonesia ties in the healthcare sector have been growing over the years.—APP

Philippines, Japan agree to boost military ties

MANILA: The Philippines and Japan have agreed to deepen defense cooperation in an "increasingly severe" security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, their defense chiefs said on Monday. Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani was on an official visit to Manila, where he held a meeting with his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, to discuss regional security issues, including the maritime situation in the East and South China Seas. "We are not only to enhance existing alliances in terms of the scale of mutually cooperative activities, but also to the scope of these arrangements by also inviting like-minded partners potentially to join these alliances," Teodoro said at a joint press conference. "We share also the common cause of resisting any unilateral attempt to reshape the global order without the consent of the participants of this global order and the attempt to reshape international law by force. And this endeavor we will resist." The Philippines, China and several other countries have overlapping claims in the disputed South China Sea, a strategic waterway through which billions of dollars of goods pass each year. Beijing has maintained its expansive claims of the area, despite a 2016 international tribunal ruling that China's historical assertion to it had no basis. Security ties between Manila and Tokyo — both US allies — have strengthened in the past two years over shared concerns in the region, with the two countries signing a landmark military pact in 2024, allowing the deployment of their forces on each other's soil for joint military drills. It was Japan's first such pact in Asia. Japan has a long-standing territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea, while Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships have been involved in a series of tense incidents in the South China Sea. During their talks on Monday, Nakatani and Teodoro agreed to strengthen operational cooperation by establishing a strategic dialogue mechanism, enhanced people-to-people exchange and by promoting collaboration in defense equipment and technology. "In today's Japan-Philippines defense meeting, first of all, Secretary Teodoro and I firmly concurred that the security environment surrounding us is becoming increasingly severe," Nakatani said through a translator. "It is necessary for the two countries as strategic partners to further enhance defense cooperation and collaboration in order to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific amid such a situation." Prof. Renato De Castro, an international studies expert and professor at De La Salle University in Manila, said defense cooperation with Japan is closely linked with the Philippines-US security ties. "Now Japan is a very vibrant and reliable security partner ... You cannot actually separate it from the security relationship with the United States. It's also the enhancement of what I call the base of the US-Japan-Philippines security partnership that was formed last year," De Castro told Arab News, referring to a summit of the three countries' leaders last April.—DNA

Turkiye's foreign minister praises BRICS and criticises EU

BRUSSELS: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan praised BRICS and criticised the EU at a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Ankara. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Ankara on Monday, the three-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, for talks on issues ranging from the conflict to Turkiye's EU and BRICS aspirations. Speaking at a joint press conference after the meeting, Fidan claimed that Turkiye's EU membership negotiations had "de facto stopped" due to the bloc's "Islamophobic" view. NATO member Turkiye became a candidate to join the EU in 1999 and started membership negotiations in 2005. Yet its bid stalled in 2018 over the country's democratic backsliding and erosion of the rule of law under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as well as its disputes with EU member Cyprus. "We have a long-standing membership adventure with the European Union, which is right next to us and which is highly institutionalised," Fidan said. "The membership negotiations

have frozen at some point due to the European Union's discomfort in taking a large Muslim country into its fold due to its identity politics. No one says this openly, but this is the situation," he added. Touching upon the issue of cooperation with the BRICS group of

emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Iran, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates), Fidan emphasised the importance of Turkiye's presence in different forums in order to consolidate its place in the global economic order. Turkiye



requested to join the group, which is chaired by Russia, as a full member last year with the stated aim of "simultaneously" strengthening its ties with East and West, but Fidan said it had not been offered membership. "We closely follow BRICS, we have clearly shown our interest, but as far as we understand, BRICS has frozen the recruitment of new members in order to carry its own institutionalisation to a point," he said. "We have not been offered membership. Therefore, we continue to follow closely at the moment." Praising BRICS in comparison with the EU, Fidan said, "Unlike the European Union, the composition of BRICS is very inclusive. Seeing countries of all colours, religions, cultures and civilisations coming together ... Whatever people and civilisations there are, they are trying to create a platform here. I hope that an institutionalised and inclusive economic approach will also develop here." In September last year, Fidan said that Turkiye would not be seeking BRICS membership if the country had been granted EU membership.—Agencies

New ADB President Masato Kanda assumes office

ISLAMABAD: Masato Kanda officially assumed office as the 11th President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday, the bank said in an official statement received here. "I am deeply honored to take on the role of ADB President at this important moment for our region," the statement quoted Kanda as having said. "With the trust of our 69 members and strong support of our dedicated staff, I am committed to advancing ADB's mission to promote sustainable, inclusive, and resilient growth. Together, we will respond to pressing development challenges, ensuring that ADB remains the partner of choice for the region," he added. Kanda succeeds Masatsugu Asakawa, continuing a legacy of excellence and innovation. With nearly four decades of experience in international finance and development policy, Kanda is widely recognized for his forward-thinking leadership and his decisive interventions during periods of market volatility. During his tenure as Japan's Vice-Minister of Finance for International Affairs, he was instrumental in pioneering innovative financial solutions and orchestrating policy actions that helped stabilize markets.—Agencies

CDNS achieves Rs 850b savings target by Feb

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 850 billion in fresh bonds and achieved 51.52 per cent of the annual target for the ongoing second half of the current fiscal year, from July 1 to February 20th, 2025. The senior official of CDNS told APP on Monday that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the country's saving culture. Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs 170 billion in investment in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country. Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 per cent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30. National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.7 trillion for the year 2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 per cent of the annual target.—APP

Iraqi Kurdistan can start oil flows within days on Turkish approval

BAGHDAD: Iraq is waiting for Turkiye's approval to restart the oil flows from the Iraqi Kurdistan region, the Iraqi oil minister said on Monday, adding that Kurdish oil exports will hopefully be ready in two days. Asked if resuming Kurdish oil exports will affect Iraq's OPEC compliance, Hayan Abdel-Ghani told reporters that Baghdad is committed to the OPEC+ decisions and exported volumes under the control of the Iraqi oil ministry. Iraqi Kurdistan authorities have agreed with the federal oil ministry to restart Kurdish crude exports based on available volumes, Kurdistan's regional government said on Sunday. The pipeline was halted by Turkiye in March 2023 after the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) ordered Ankara to pay Baghdad \$1.5 billion in damages for unauthorized exports between 2014 and 2018. US President Donald Trump's administration is putting pressure on Iraq to allow Kurdish oil exports to restart or face sanctions alongside Iran, sources have told Reuters. An Iraqi official later denied pressure or the threat of sanctions. A speedy resumption of exports from Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region would help to offset a potential fall in Iranian oil exports, which Washington has pledged to cut to zero as part of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.—APP

Briefs

Portuguese author arrives in Islamabad for 3-day tour

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Portuguese author and journalist, Teresa Nicolau, will be in Islamabad from today 25th to 27th February, engaging in several cultural and literary activities. Teresa Nicolau will visit the NUST University today, with the Portuguese Ambassador Frederico Silva, holding an interactive session with students and professors, discussing arts, society, literature, journalism, and cross-cultural narratives. On Wednesday, 26th, she will have a session at the Pakistan Academy of Letters, where she will interact with intellectuals, media, and cultural figures for discussions on heritage, culture, language, communication, society, and artistic expression. Finally, on Thursday, 27th, Teresa Nicolau and Portuguese Ambassador Frederico Silva will attend an event hosted by the Roots Millennium Schools at Pakistan National Council of Arts, Islamabad, where she will engage with students and their parents on the significance of literature and culture in shaping perspectives and societies. All those events and session are managed by the Embassy of Portugal in Islamabad in cooperation with Islamabad entities and universities with the support of Camões Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, I. P., underscoring Portugal's commitment to cultural exchange and literary collaborations.

PTA grants licence to VPN service providers

MEHTAB PIRZADA
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) initiated on Monday the licencing of VPN service providers under the "Class License" category for the provision of data services. As part of this process, the country's telecom regulatory body approved the applications of two companies for the grant of class licences to provide VPN services, an official statement said on Monday. "This initiative enables businesses to utilise VPNs for lawful purposes, ensuring data security, privacy, and regulatory compliance while promoting transparency." The statement reiterated that the PTA remained committed to supporting organisations in meeting their connectivity needs responsibly. The authority also asked more VPN service providers to approach for licencing purposes. In November last year, the telecommunication authority introduced a streamlined process for legitimate users to register their private internet gateways after the regulatory body blocked unregistered VPNs in Pakistan to "regulate internet security and ensure the safety of users." VPNs are commonly used worldwide to bypass restricted content.

Sudan army ends two-year siege of key city

KHARTOUM: The Sudanese army says it has broken a near two-year siege imposed by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the key southern state capital of el-Obeid. The breakthrough came hours after the RSF signed a political charter in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, to establish a breakaway government in areas under its control. The RSF and the army have been in a vicious battle for power since April 2023, with tens of thousands of people killed and millions forced from their homes. The war has split the country, with the army controlling the north and the east while the RSF holds most of the Darfur region in the west and parts of the south. El-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state, is a strategic hub connecting the capital, Khartoum, to Darfur. - Agencies

National Day of Brunei Darussalam



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister for housing and works, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam Colonel @ Pengiran Hj Kamal Bashah Pengiran HJ Ahmad and others cutting cake to celebrate the 41st National Day of Brunei Darussalam. - DNA

EU leaders in Kyiv on 3rd anniversary of war

"We'll continue supporting Ukraine as long as necessary," Sanchez told leaders, emphasizing the need for both Ukraine's government and the European Union to be present at any peace talks with Moscow

NEWS DESK
KYIV: On the third anniversary of the Russia's invasion, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has honored his country's resilience. Meanwhile, the UN is scheduled vote on rival resolutions on Ukraine. DW has the latest. The package of measures targets "Russia's military machine, entities in third countries who support it and the fragile supply networks that it relies on," a Foreign Office statement said. It includes 67 new sanctions designations and naming 40 new vessels under the UK's Russia sanctions regime. Britain sanctioned manufacturers and suppliers of machine tools, electronics and dual-use goods, including microprocessors used in weapons systems. These were located in a number of third countries, including Central Asian states, Turkey, Thailand, India and China. The package also targeted North Korean Defense Minister No KwangChol over the deployment of North Korean forces in Russia. The French government condemned an incident in Marseille in which three improvised explosive devices were thrown at the Russian consulate, saying diplomatic missions are inviolable. "France condemns any infringement of the security of diplomatic compounds," a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. No one was

Xi affirms 'no limits' partnership with Putin

BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping affirmed his "no limits" partnership in a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday, China's state media reported, on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The leaders held the talks as US President Donald Trump has pushed for a quick deal to end the Ukraine war, raising the prospect that Washington could draw a wedge between Xi and Putin and focus on competing with the world's second largest economy. The call appeared aimed at dispelling any such prospects - the two leaders underscored the durability and the "long-term" nature of their alliance, with its own "internal dynamics" that would not be impacted by any "third party." "China-Russia relations have strong internal driving force and unique strategic value, and are not aimed at, nor are they influenced by, any third party," said Xi, according to the official readout published by Chinese state media. "The development strategies and foreign policies of China and Russia are long-term," said Xi, adding that the two countries "are good neighbors that cannot be moved apart." Trump has alarmed Washington's European allies by leaving them and Ukraine out of talks with Russia last week and blaming Ukraine for Russia's 2022 invasion. On Ukraine, Xi said that China was "pleased to see the positive efforts made by Russia and all parties concerned to defuse the crisis," noting China's initiatives such as the creation of a group of nations called "friends of peace." "All in appearance is normal and seems nothing happened to Sino-Russian partnership, but either side must know that many things could be different after Trump-Putin bilateral diplomacy, though itself highly confusing and uncertain," said Shi Yinhong, professor at the School of International Studies, Renmin University. This was the second call both leaders have held this year, after they discussed how to build ties with Trump in January. - Agencies

injured in the morning attack, which came on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Spain will provide Ukraine with a new €1 billion (\$1.05 billion) military aid package this year, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said in Kyiv during an international summit marking the third anniversary of the full-scale Russian invasion. "We'll continue supporting Ukraine as long as necessary," Sanchez told leaders, emphasizing the need for both Ukraine's government and the European Union to be present at any peace talks with Moscow. "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine, and nothing about European security without Europe," he added. Meanwhile, EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, who also announced €3.5 billion of fresh aid to Kyiv, said at the summit that Russia's President Vladimir Putin was set on Ukraine's "capitulation." "The war in Ukraine remains the most central and consequential crisis for Europe's future. Putin is trying harder than ever to win this war on the ground. His goal remains Ukraine's capitulation," von der Leyen said. Speaking to the summit via video link, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that the Group of Seven (G7) rich countries should be willing to take more risks on sanctions against Russia, including capping oil prices, sanctioning Russia's oil giants and going after banks that enable sanctions evasion.

Fin minister Aurangzeb reiterates commitment to structural reforms

NAZIR SIYAL
KARACHI: Federal Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, reiterating the government's determination to structural reforms for paving a foundation of resilient economy and sustainable growth, on Monday urged that every sector has to contribute in efforts for export-led growth. He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural session of 2-day Pakistan Banking Summit 2025 and later talking to the media. The maiden banking summit is being organized by Pakistan Banks Association to promote collaboration among the industry leaders and foster integration into the global banking spectrum. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the incumbent government had taken arduous decisions which resulted in a significant progress in macroeconomic stability depicted by improvements in key economic indicators like current account balance, inflation and stock market. The government is implementing an agenda of fundamental reforms for sustainable economic stability in various sectors, he said while referring to reforms in FBR, fiscal prudence, restructuring and right-sizing of public sector entities and governance structure as

well as energy and other important sectors of the economy. Further elaborating the government's reform agenda, he said that the ministry of finance is being engaged in tax policy formation, as tax policy should not be limited only to mathematical calculations but it should also take the economic value in consideration. The government is introducing appropriate reforms and we will not give in, he categorically stated and vowed to take forward the reform agenda with the same spirit. "Pakistan needs to transform the DNA of its economy and move towards sustainable and inclusive growth," he argued. We are heading in the right direction and all these factors are boosting the confidence of investors in the national economy as well, he said and emphasized, but we need sustainability and resilience to face the emerging challenges. The finance minister also appreciated provincial governments for legislation regarding agriculture income tax and said that it was a remarkable structural reform and a milestone in the history of the country. The government is vying to relaunch the privatization process of PIA while measures were underway for reducing the expenditure of federal government, he stated adding that a cabinet committee was reviewing rightsizing measures in a phased manner and recommendations were being presented to the cabinet.

Pakistan and China cooperation in education, media to be expanded

KHAYAM ABBASI
ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong Monday said that it is a high time to take profound and substantial steps to further strengthen China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. Pakistani cuisine recipes "We are ready to expand cooperation with Pakistan in education, media, think tanks, youth exchanges, and the film and television industries, to foster mutual learning between civilizations and strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties," the ambassador said talking to media after addressing a ceremony. The ambassador said, "We will help Pakistan in developing human resources, increasing training opportunities, and implement the bilateral initiative of sending 1,000 Pakistanis to China for modern agricultural training." He said that at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari paid a successful state visit to China earlier this month. "We are pleased to see that since the establishment of the new Pakistani government last year, China and Pakistan have maintained close high-level exchanges." He said, "We are ready to work with Pakistani side for the implementation, and turn those important consensus into tangible practices and fruitful outcomes of our bilateral cooperation." The ambassador said, "We must aim high to deepen high-level strategic

cooperation." He added the development of China-Pakistan relations over the past year further indicates that high-level strategic guidance is the fundamental guarantee for the steady and long-term development of our bilateral relations." He said that this year marks the 10th anniversary of President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Pakistan in 2015, and in the next year, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, presenting significant moments and development opportunities for China-Pakistan relations. He said that China is ready to work with Pakistan to fully understand and appreciate the profound significance and valuable insights from President Xi's historic visit and consistently view and develop China-Pakistan relations from a strategic level. The ambassador said, "By combining a long-term vision with pragmatic actions, we aim to continuously advance the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with the vivid practice of high-quality CPEC development and other cooperation." He said that China is ready to deepen practical cooperation with Pakistan in various fields, work together to upgrade CPEC cooperation, and help Pakistan consolidate its development foundations and unleash its development potential.

PTI announces protest on Feb 25

SHAMIM SHAHID
PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter has announced a protest on Feb 25 against the non-hearing of cases related to the party's founder. Protests will be held in all district of the province, and PTI provincial president Junaid Akbar has instructed district officials to mobilise the supporters. According to PTI sources, a major protest will take place at the Assembly Chowk in Peshawar, while a province-wide strategy for demonstration is being finalised.

Doctors should not engage in advertising

DNA
SIALKOT: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif criticised that advertising is unbecoming of the medical profession. Addressing a ceremony in Sialkot, Asif remarked that the city is flooded with advertisements for doctors, like that of posters for Punjabi films in the past. "The healing touch of a doctor is an advertisement in itself," he stated. "When a doctor possesses the skill bestowed by God, patients come of their own. I came across an advertisement by a doctor that left me embarrassed. Promoting oneself through advertisements does not benefit the medical profession—such tactics are better suited for politicians." Defence minister further noted that while oaths are rarely upheld. Despite establishment of numerous hospitals in Sialkot, healthcare facilities remain poor.

Merz says AfD results are 'alarming'

BERLIN: Friedrich Merz, poised to be Germany's next chancellor, was met with resounding applause as he made televised remarks regarding the CDU's election victory. First he thanked voters and campaign workers for the "extraordinarily good election result," saying it showed that the conservatives had "a clear mandate to govern." He confirmed the assumption that his bloc will seek to build a coalition with the Social Democrats, narrowly forming a majority govt. - Agencies

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