



Islamabad POST

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'Palestine was and will remain' exhibition at PNCA

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Pak-Russia to activate talks: Mohsin Naqvi

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Afghan players know things are 'not correct'

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Strengthening strategic ties

Pak, Uzbekistan to sign accords in trade and tech

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Visits Independence Monument in Tashkent, Strengthening Pakistan-Uzbekistan Ties

DNA

TASHKENT: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, paid a solemn visit to the iconic Independence Monument in Tashkent today, as part of his official trip to Uzbekistan. The visit underscores the shared historical and cultural ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, while reaffirming the commitment to deepening bilateral relations. Accompanied by a high-level delegation, Prime Minister Sharif laid a floral wreath at the monument, a symbol of Uzbekistan's rich history and its journey toward sovereignty. The Prime Minister expressed his admiration for Uzbekistan's progress and resilience, drawing parallels with Pakistan's own struggle for independence and development. In his remarks, Prime Minister Sharif stated, "The Independence Monument stands as a testament to the courage and determination of the Uzbek people. Pakistan and Uzbekistan share a common vision for peace, prosperity, and regional connectivity. This visit is a reminder of our shared values and the need to work together for a brighter future." Prime Minister was also briefed about the 3000 year history of Uzbek nation and its heroes while visiting the monument. The visit to the monument will follow a series of high-level meetings with Uzbek officials, focusing on enhancing trade, energy cooperation, and cultural exchanges. Both nations are committed to bolster regional connectivity and economic integration. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Uzbekistan marks a significant step in strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries. The trip is expected to yield new agreements in areas such as agriculture, regional connectivity, technology, and education, further solidifying the bond between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Pak, Iran sign MoU setting trade target to \$10b

Iran to cut business visa fees, boost trade ties with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), setting new bilateral trade targets and to remove the hurdles in the process. Iran also assured Pakistan of reducing business visa fees and facilitating trade activities. The MoU was signed during a high-level meeting between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Iran's Mashhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. During the meeting, both sides set a target to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion and signed an MoU to facilitate economic cooperation. The agreement aims to enhance trade, investment, and business collaboration between the two neighboring countries. The bilateral trade between Iran and Pakistan also witnessed an increase during the last fiscal year, reaching \$2.8 billion.



TASHKENT: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif laying a floral wreath at the Independence Monument in Tashkent. - DNA

Pakistan, Bangladesh begin direct trade

It was the first cargo ship in decades to sail directly between the countries

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Bangladesh and Pakistan have started direct government-to-government trade after decades of troubled relations with imports of 50,000 tonnes of rice, Dhaka said on Tuesday. The two countries have witnessed a thaw in ties after the ouster of India-aligned premier Sheikh Hasina. Long-time Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted in an August 2024 revolution, fleeing by helicopter to her old ally India,

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New oil and gas reserves discovered in Waziristan

Mari Energies says discovery at the Spinam-1 well, would contribute to strengthening Pakistan's hydrocarbon reserves

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: New gas and oil reserves have been discovered in Waziristan, marking a significant step in domestic energy exploration. Mari Energies, the operator of the block, confirmed the discovery at the Spinam-1 well, which began drilling on 28 May 2024.

Continued on Page 06

Imran seeks CJP's intervention over denial of rights

PTI founder decides to write another letter to CJP Afridi on jail issues; PTI members holding govt roles asked to relinquish party positions

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan issued instructions on Tuesday, through the party's secretary general, asking PTI members who are serving in government roles to relinquish party positions. "The move aims to assist [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter president] Junaid Akbar in getting a free hand to reorganise the party," PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja said while speaking to journalists after meeting the former prime minister in Adiala jail. Last month, the PTI founder removed

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ATC indicts Omar, others in May 9 case

Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar also indicted; hearing adjourned till Feb 28

DNA

SARGODHA: Legal woes of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders continue to pile up as an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Sargodha indicted National Assembly Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan in a May 9 case

Continued on Page 06

NYC cancels Roosevelt Hotel deal with PIA

Decision comes after some Trump supporters criticise use of taxpayers' money to house asylum seekers

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: New York City is ending its \$220 million lease agreement with the PIA-owned Roosevelt Hotel, which had been serving as a migrant shelter, following intense criticism from some of US President Donald Trump's supporters over the use of American taxpayer money to house asylum seekers. The iconic hotel in Manhattan was shut down in 2020 due to a severe loss of revenue resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Three years later, its manage-

ment signed a lease contract with New York City which converted it into a shelter for a large number of asylum seekers in the United States. Facing pressure from both the federal government and right-wing hardliners, Mayor Eric Adams announced the closure of the facility on Monday. Adams said the city will shut the Roosevelt Hotel in "the coming months." The announcement follows the closure or planned shutdown of 53 other migrant shelters, including a large tent facility on Randall's Island, which is expected to shutter at the end of the month. Mayor Adams credited the closure to the administration's successful emergency

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

IMF mission to arrive on March 3

The talks will continue until March 15 and will play a key role in shaping the country's 2025-26 fiscal policies

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A nine-member International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission, led by Nathan Porter, is set to arrive in Pakistan on March 3 to conduct a crucial economic review. The talks will continue until March 15 and will play a key role in shaping the country's 2025-26 fiscal policies. According to finance ministry sources, the negotiations will be held in two phases—technical-level discussions followed by policy-level talks. The mission will engage with officials from the finance ministry, SBP, FBR, OGRA, and NEPRA, among others.

Fazl meets Hamas leaders in Doha

JUI-F chief said it is the duty of Muslims to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque from Zionist occupiers

DNA

DOHA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman met with Hamas leaders in Qatar to discuss current situation in Gaza and Palestine. The JUI-F chief was accompanied by Maulana Rashid Mahmood Soomro and Mufti Abrar Ahmed Khan. The representative of Hamas were led by head of Palestinian Parliament Abu Umer. Speaking on the occasion, Fazlur Rehman said that Palestine is a free state and there is no justification for Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

Champions Trophy

England vs Afghanistan 02:00 pm PST

2nd phase of repatriation Afghan citizens evacuation to start soon, says FIA

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has also deployed special teams at the Deputy Commissioner's office to oversee the departure of foreign nationals residing illegally

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani government is set to initiate the next phase of its plan to repatriate Afghan refugees, focusing on Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders. According to official sources, around 800,000 Afghans currently residing in Pakistan under ACC status will be repatriated in the coming months. Preparations have begun to evacuate legally residing Afghan citizens from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Following the directives of the Ministry of Interior, district administrations have started making arrangements to facilitate the process. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has also deployed special teams at the Deputy Commissioner's office to oversee the departure of foreign nationals residing illegally. A deadline of March 31 has been set for the relocation of Afghan citizen card holders from the federal capital and Rawalpindi to other cities, after which they will be transferred to Afghanistan.

Continued on Page 06

Mily trials case SC references Bajwa's extension

No fundamental rights were available in Ayub era

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Counsel for PTI founder Uzair Bhandari said on Tuesday "practically" fundamental rights were not available at all during the Ayub Khan era. Advocate Bhandari was replying to a question by Justice Musarat Hilali during the hearing of the intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military courts by the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court here. A seven-member bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, and including

Continued on Page 06

"Bridging Cultures: Teresa Nicolau on Pakistan, Literature, and the Power of Storytelling"

Interview with Teresa Nicolau

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Acclaimed Portuguese journalist and author, Teresa Nicolau, is currently visiting Pakistan at the invitation of the Portuguese Embassy. Nicolau, a distinguished journalist known for her engaging storytelling and deep insights into culture and media's influence on public discourse, has made significant contributions to both Portuguese journalism and literature. She is currently the Director of Culture at Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Lisbon. Nicolau granted an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline magazine, and Diplomatic News Agency. Here are excerpts from her interview. The full interview will be published in the March issue of CENTRELINE.

On Her Impressions of Pakistan "This is my first time in Pakistan, and it's been a wonderful experience. Having traveled all over the world, I believe that what truly defines a country is its people



and culture. It's fascinating to see how a nation identifies itself through its cultural expressions, arts, and traditions. Pakistan is a vast country with a rich, ancient history and a key center of global knowledge. I am especially fond of spicy food, and I must say, Pakistan is one of the best places I've visited for its flavorful cuisine—perfectly spicy!"

On Areas for Mutual Cooperation "I see this visit as the beginning of a growing cultural exchange. The Portuguese Embassy has previously invited writers like José Luís Peixoto, an important figure in Portuguese literature, to Pakistan. This marks a step



toward deeper literary and cultural understanding between our nations. I've had the chance to meet with a few Pakistani writers and discuss ideas on how we can strengthen literary ties further."

On Promoting Cultural and Literary Linkages "As an author and journalist, I strongly believe in the power of arts and culture to foster diplomatic relations. Culture is often the first point of engagement when you visit a new country, and it is a key symbol of soft power. Portugal also has a growing Pakistani community, which plays an important role in strengthening people-to-people



relations between our two countries." On Her Inspiration to Become a Writer "I've been telling stories for the last 30 years, and I absolutely love it—whether as a journalist or an author. Storytelling allows me to explore emotions and connect with real people. All my fiction is based on true stories, because I believe truth is another side of reality. If you write with sincerity, you're telling an authentic story. I am an avid reader, and reading widely has been essential to my growth as a writer."

On the Impact of social media "Unfortunately, social media has distanced many people from books. However, it's crucial to adapt and embrace

digital platforms for publishing. Many writers aren't familiar with social media tools, but those who learn to use them effectively can gain wider recognition. While I'm not personally active on social media, I understand its importance. If you want to succeed in today's world, you must leverage these platforms. Interestingly, in Portugal, people often buy physical copies of books after reading them online, which shows the enduring love for traditional print." As regards translation of works in other languages, "I've started with a small English booklet, and I plan to translate my book into English and other languages in the future. Urdu is a language I deeply respect, and translating my books into Urdu will help readers who speak the language connect with my work."

On Her Visit to India "I also visited India, specifically Mumbai and Pune, because my daughter was studying there at the United World Colleges (UWC). UWC is an important global educational organization, and their Mahindra school in Pune is particularly well-known. It was a wonderful experience to visit my daughter and explore the culture there."

- The full text of the interview shall be published in the March issue of CENTRELINE.

KP's industrial sector faces several challenges: Kundi

The Open Public Day initiative at Governor House continues to provide a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and seek solutions to their problems

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi has acknowledged that the province's industrial sector faced extraordinary challenges compared to other provinces in the country and urged provincial government to facilitate the industry on priority basis. He said this at the Industrialists Association Peshawar's organized an award distribution ceremony last evening at the Governor House. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi graced the event as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by the President of the Industrialists Association, Ayub Zakari, prominent industrialist Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, Senator Mohsin Aziz, and several other business and industrial personalities. During the ceremony, Governor Kundi distributed awards among industrialists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the industrial sector. He congratulated the award recipients and the office bearers of the Indus-

trialists Association Peshawar, appreciating their role in the industrial development of the province. In his address, Governor Kundi emphasized the significance of the event, saying that hosting such a ceremony at the Governor House was a testament to the relentless efforts, determination, and services of the province's industrialists. He stressed the need for a favorable environment for investment and industrial growth. Governor Kundi assured the business community of his full support and pledged to discuss their issues with the Prime Minister. He reaffirmed that the Governor House would continue to work alongside industrialists to address their concerns. Highlighting the province's wealth of natural resources, he called for collective efforts to ensure its development. He also lauded the commitment of business and industry professionals in fostering trade and industry despite adverse conditions. Concluding his remarks, the Governor assured that the doors of the Governor House would always remain open to individuals from all sectors, offering encouragement

and assistance in their endeavors. Meanwhile, a significant number of citizens gathered at Governor House on the occasion of the third Public Day, where Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi, listened to public grievances and concerns. People from Peshawar and various other parts of the province presented their complaints regarding federal and provincial departments, as well as social and community-related issues, both in written and verbal form. Governor Kundi issued immediate directives on certain complaints and referred others to the relevant departments for further action. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor emphasized the importance of Open Public Day in addressing public issues, saying, "I dedicate a day specifically for citizens to ensure their problems are heard and resolved." He further added, "Being among the people and working towards solving their problems gives me immense satisfaction." The Open Public Day initiative at Governor House continues to provide a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and seek solutions to their problems.

20 female attend savories and delectable dessert making class

PESHAWAR: In a dynamic collaboration, renowned culinary expert Madiha Slaman conducted an exclusive Master Baking Class for 20 aspiring women, with sponsorship by Shama Banaspati & Cooking Oil and collaboration with Madiha's Artistry and Binte-Hawa Forum. The event, part of the Binte-Hawa Learning Skill Program, provided an enriching learning experience, focusing on a range of savory recipes and delectable desserts. The program aimed at enhancing the culinary skills of women, empowering them with the knowledge and confidence to turn their passion for baking into a professional pursuit or a rewarding hobby. The participants gained valuable insights into advanced techniques, including the preparation of sophisticated pastries, cookies, cakes, and savory delicacies, while also learning about the importance of quality ingredients and health-conscious cooking methods. Madiha Slaman, a distinguished chef and baking expert, guided the participants through hands-on sessions, sharing her extensive experience and tips for baking perfection. Her passion for food and dedication to fostering culinary talent was evident as she worked closely with the participants, ensuring they gained the skills necessary to succeed in the kitchen and beyond. Binte-Hawa Forum, an organization dedicated to uplifting and empowering women, partnered with Madiha's Artistry to create a learning environment that promotes self-sufficiency, creativity, and entrepreneurship. —APP

CM Sindh opens Pakistan Literature Festival

SUKKUR: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday inaugurated the two-day Pakistan Literature Festival Sukkur Chapter II at Sukkur IBA University. The festival is organized by the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi. The Chief Minister was welcomed by Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, President Muhammad Ahmad Shah. The event was attended by various dignitaries, including Provincial Minister for Culture and Tourism Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, MNA Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah, Mayor Sukkur Arsalan Islam Shaikh, and others. In his address, the Chief Minister appreciated the efforts of Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, and praised the literary and cultural activities in Sukkur. He emphasized the importance of promoting education, research, innovation, and economic development in the region. The festival aims to bring together writers, poets, scholars, and artists from diverse backgrounds to share their ideas, experiences, and creativity. It features

discussions on various topics, including arts, culture, economy, environment, technology, and more. The Chief Minister also highlighted the significance of preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Sindh. He assured the audience that the Sindh government would continue to support and patronize literary and cultural activities in the province. Other notable attendees included Nasir Hussain Shah, Mushahid Hussain Syed, Mayor Sukkur Arsalan Islam Shaikh, District Council Sukkur Chairman Syed Kamil Hyder Shah, Ali Hasan Zardari, Asif Ahmed Shaikh, Dr. Tariq Rafi, Owais Qadir Shah, Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Mukesh Kumar Chawla, Ghulam Nabi Memon, Farooq Shah, Madad Ali Sindh, Mumtaz Bukhari, Zahid Khund, Ghazi Salahuddin, and MNA Noman Islam Shaikh. Renowned actor Mustafa Qureshi, Manwar Saeed, and Adeeba Noorhuda Shah also graced the occasion. The event was moderated by Huma Mir, and Muhammad Ahmad Shah, President

of Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, thanked the guests and participants for their presence. The festival is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan and the importance of promoting literary and cultural activities in the country. In his keynote address, Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed emphasized the need for the younger generation to connect with their cultural heritage. He praised the efforts of the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, in promoting literary and cultural activities in the region. Renowned Writer, Ms Noorul-Huda Shah, in her keynote address, emphasized the importance of empowering women and promoting education in the region. She praised the efforts of the Sindh government in promoting literary and cultural activities in the province. Provincial Minister for Culture and Tourism Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, in his address, praised the efforts of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in promoting the rich cultural heritage of Sindh. —APP

Nuclear medicine ward of Allied Hospital-I expanded

FAISALABAD: The 60-bed Nuclear Medicine Ward at the Allied Hospital-I has been upgraded to 100-bed due to strenuous efforts of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). This was said by FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara while addressing a meeting of cancer specialists, including Professor Dr Muhammad Khalid Baig and Dr Aamir Shaikat. He said that process for acquiring a modern Linear Accelerator (LINAC) machine would commence soon to replace the old chemotherapy equipment. He said this meeting was a follow-up of the discussions with Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique and Secretary Health Azmat Mahmood. He said that practical steps had been initiated to address Faisalabad's healthcare needs. As per the health minister's directives, the ward has been expanded to cater 130-135 patients daily and this number may increase to 200 in future. He highlighted the high cost of cancer treatment and said that preventive measures were imperative over curative approaches to treat patients. He particularly underscored the need for breast cancer awareness among young girls and suggested chemotherapy awareness camps with the support of philanthropists. Dr Khalid Baig said the FCCI members should visit Allied Hospital-I to assess the available facilities and receive a technical presentation on cancer care. He said that most cancer medications are provided through government funds and private donations for ensuring quality treatment of middle-class patients. However, upgrading to a LINAC machine would significantly improve treatment outcomes, he added. Later, FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara presented an honorary shield to Dr Khalid Baig in recognition of his contributions. Senior Vice President FCCI Qaiser Shams Gucha was also present on the occasion. —DNA

Envoy Dr. Jemal chairs Ethio-Pakistan business forum at FPCCI

LAHORE: Dr. Jemal Bekir Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, presided over a Grand Ethio-Pakistan Business Forum along with the Senior Officials of the Ministry of Commerce, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) in Lahore. The major business gathering that saw a presence of more than 26 business chambers of Punjab was held in the FPCCI to mobilize the traders for this year Single Country Exhibition of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May, 2025. The Grand Business Forum is a joint effort of the Ministry of Commerce, the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad, FPCCI



and TDAP. H.E. Ibrahim Khalid Tawab, Chairman of the Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Council of FPCCI and the Honorary Consul of the FDR Ethiopia in Karachi, and Mr. Mokonnen Hailu, Senior Investment Promotion Team Lead at the Ethiopian Investment Commission participated in

the business forum online. Addressing the gathering, the Ambassador briefed the business community about political, legal and economic reforms undertaken by the Government of the FDR Ethiopia that has created a conducive environment for doing the business and investment in the coun-

try. As a result of the home grown economic reforms, he said, extraordinary business, trade and investment opportunities were generated in the five major sectors including agriculture and agro processing, manufacturing, mining, tourism and ICT. The business community of the Islamic Republic



LAHORE: Renowned religious scholar Dr. Zakir Abdul Karim Naik met with Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, at Mansoorah.

PSX, BSE sign MOU for cooperation

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) & Baku Stock Exchange (BSE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in an online ceremony, marking a significant step towards increasing bilateral collaboration between Pakistani and Azerbaijan Capital Markets. The MOU aimed at establishing robust communication channels and strengthening the relationship between the capital markets of Pakistan and Azerbaijan, fostering mutual growth and development in the financial services sectors of both countries, said a press release received here. The MOU was signed by Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Stock Exchange, Farrukh H. Sabzwari and CFA, Chairman of the Management Board, Baku Stock Exchange, Ruslan A. Khalilov. The virtual signing ceremony was attended by senior officials from Pakistan Stock Exchange & Baku Stock Exchange, highlighting the commitment of both institutions to strengthening ties and also help to further develop their respective capital markets. Under the partnership, PSX and BSE will exchange expertise in market operations, product development, and regulatory best practices. The collaboration will explore cross-border investments and initiatives to enhance market efficiency and liquidity. Key areas of cooperation include facilitating dual listings and investment fund trading, jointly developing products, sharing insights on market operations and regulations. —APP

Federal Capital experiences long-awaited rain

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Capital finally witnessed the arrival of much-anticipated rain and thunderstorms, marking a significant shift in weather patterns. While the downpour brought relief to some, it also led to health challenges for others, highlighting the dual impact of the seasonal change. Residents of the Federal Capital had been eagerly waiting for the rain, and their wishes were fulfilled as the skies opened up, delivering a series of thunderstorms. The rain, which began earlier this week, is expected to continue for the next few days, according to weather forecasts. The sudden change in weather had immediate effects

on the population. Many people reported suffering from cough, fever, and flu, ailments commonly associated with the shift from dry to wet conditions. Hospitals and clinics saw an increase in patients seeking treatment for these symptoms, putting a strain on healthcare facilities. Despite the health issues, a significant number of citizens and medical professionals welcomed the rain. They believe that the precipitation will help reduce the prevalence of seasonal diseases that thrive in dry, dusty environments. Doctors noted that the rain could improve air quality by washing away pollutants and allergens, potentially leading to a decrease in respiratory

problems over time. The rain also brought a sense of renewal to the city. Streets that had been covered in dust were now clean, and the air felt fresher. Parks and green spaces, which had been suffering from the prolonged dry spell, began to show signs of recovery. Residents took to social media to share their joy, posting pictures of rain-soaked landscapes and expressing their hope for more consistent rainfall in the future. However, not everyone was pleased with the sudden weather change. Commuters faced difficulties as roads became slippery and visibility decreased. Traffic congestion was reported in several parts of the city. —APP

Seminar for legal reforms to address int'l parental child abduction

ISLAMABAD: A seminar on Tuesday highlighted the urgent need for legislative reforms and stronger institutional mechanisms to address cases of international parental child abduction. Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CPWB) Punjab, in collaboration with the Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO), organized a seminar on the Hague Convention on International Parental Child Abduction. The event, held at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) in Islamabad, brought together legal experts, child rights activists, lawmakers, civil society representatives, and judicial officials to discuss Pakistan's obligations under the Hague Convention and the challenges surrounding cross-border custody disputes. Chairing the semi-

nar, Sarah Ahmad, MPA and Chairperson of the Child Protection & Welfare Bureau Punjab, reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding children from unlawful parental abduction. She emphasized that every child has the right to a safe and stable environment and stressed the need for legal reforms to prevent children from being entangled in prolonged custody battles. "The implementation of the Hague Convention in Pakistan should be a priority to protect children from emotional trauma and lengthy legal proceedings," she stated. Ahmad also called for judicial training, improved enforcement mechanisms, and stronger international cooperation to handle such cases effectively. Syed Kausar Abbas, Executive Director of SSDO, pointed out that

these cases are not merely legal disputes but have profound emotional and psychological impacts on children and families. "Pakistan must align its legal system with international standards to ensure the swift return of abducted children," Abbas said. He also advocated for capacity-building programs for the judiciary, better coordination with international agencies, and public awareness campaigns to address gaps in the existing legal framework. During a panel discussion titled "Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the Hague Convention," legal experts and policymakers from the apex court, the US State Department, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC), the Federal Judicial Academy, and PIPS analyzed the shortcomings. —APP

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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



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
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 Inquiry.....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

41ST National Day of Brunei celebrated

Brunei-Pakistan ties cordial, excellent, says HC Kamal

This year's theme, "Bersatu Mencapai Cita Negara", which can be translated as "unified in achieving the country's aspirations" reaffirms our belief that national unity is crucial in achieving sustainable development, particularly towards our Brunei Vision 2035

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Brunei High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam Colonel @ Pengiran Hj Kamal Bashah Pengiran Hj Ahmad has said Brunei and Pakistan share a warm and cordial friendship, founded on shared values and mutual respect. 'Last year, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brunei and Pakistan; a significant milestone showing our longstanding relations. Our bilateral relations have been rooted in many areas, particularly in defense, education and people-to-people exchanges'. He expressed these views on the occasion of the 41st National Day of Brunei Darussalam. Riaz Hussain Pirzada Federal Minister for Housing and Works was the chief guest. The high commissioner further said, 'on this auspicious occasion, we reflect on our journey as a sovereign and independent nation, guided by the vision and leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam'. This year's



theme, "Bersatu Mencapai Cita Negara", which can be translated as "unified in achieving the country's aspirations" reaffirms our belief that national unity is crucial in achieving sustainable development, particularly towards our Brunei Vision 2035 he added. He said the well-performing Pak-Brunei Investment Company has also joined the event, a joint venture between Brunei and Pakistan based in Karachi, as well as Mr. Waheed a young entrepreneur from this country, who has successfully established a business in Brunei and has now called Brunei his second home. 'Tonight, as we celebrate our 41st National Day, we also reaffirm our commitment to working with our friends and partners in the world stage for a peaceful and prosperous future. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for joining us in this celebration'. The high commissioner thanked Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada for his presence and gracing this event. 'Let us continue to uphold the spirit of unity, resilience, and progress. May Allah al-Mighty continues to bless both of our nations with continued peace and prosperity', he concluded.

Over 2,000 unlisted fishing vessels to be registered

ISLAMABAD: More than 2,000 unregistered fishing vessels will be registered under the newly approved Balochistan Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy 2025-2035. Once registered, boat owners will be eligible for the benefits outlined in the policy. Released on February 22, the policy highlights that for decades, the seafood sector in Gwadar has struggled with persistent infrastructure challenges, suffering from neglect despite its significant contributions to both the local and national economies. It aims to address key infrastructural issues, including the establishment of processing facilities for value addition, the expansion of cold storage and transportation capacities, and the replacement of aging wooden boats. The policy also promotes the development of aquaculture as a means of socio-economic uplift and alternative livelihoods in the region. Additionally, the policy emphasizes sustainable management and the rebuilding of fish stocks. It maintains a ban on trawling and restricts the use of harmful fishing gear. The policy envisions improving governance through the creation of the Balochistan Fisheries & Aquaculture Council. "A special provision has been included for the establishment of the Endowment Fund and the Balochistan Fisheries Welfare Fund. It also includes provisions to update outdated legislation and establish special courts for expedited justice. Reforms will be introduced to the current governance framework for harbors and coastal development," the policy explained. The Fisheries Department will establish a monitoring, control, and surveillance system, in collaboration with federal law enforcement agencies, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday.—DNA

Pak EPA to provide plastic recycled products

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to combat plastic from society, the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has taken an advanced step to provide plastic recycled chair and tables to Turkiye in exchange for raw plastic collected from them. This innovative move will help to address one of the most pressing environmental challenges—single-use plastics. This disposal procedure also helps to contribute eco-friendly products. This move marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's efforts to curb plastic pollution in the country. However, as many environmental experts warned, the harmful effects of these plastics far outweigh the benefits. Single-use plas-

tics, in particular, contribute significantly to pollution, with their production linked to fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions that accelerate climate change. Beyond production, improper disposal—often leading to clogged drainage systems and pollution—has grave consequences for the environment and public health. In response to these threats, Zaigham Abbas, Director EPA said that the agency was optimistic to launch a series of recycling initiatives designed to reduce the harmful impact of plastic waste. One of the most noteworthy of these is the plastic recycling exchange program, which utilizes confiscated single-use plastics to

produce valuable resources such as green benches and planters. This initiative not only highlights the importance of recycling but also aligns with the principles of a circular economy. "We are going to deliver recycled chairs after receiving plastic from the Turkish embassy," Abbas said, underscoring the agency's commitment to reducing plastic waste through collaboration. He further revealed that talks are underway with Quaid-e-Azam University to expand the program to dispose of it properly. Moreover, Pak-EPA's strategy also includes strict enforcement of regulations designed to minimize plastic usage. Since the implementation of a ban on

plastic bags in Islamabad in 2019, the agency has confiscated over 1,550 kilograms of plastic and polythene bags in the fiscal year 2023-2024 alone. In addition, 83 warning letters were issued, and violators faced fines totalling 200,000 rupees. These measures have already yielded results—many prominent businesses in Islamabad, including clothing brands and food outlets, have successfully transitioned to sustainable alternatives such as paper and jute bags, eliminating approximately 890 tons of plastic waste annually. But while these efforts have been successful in certain areas, there are still challenges.—DNA

Excise deptt brings vehicle services to Kachnar Park

This initiative marks a significant step in the government's efforts to streamline civic services and reduce bureaucratic hurdles

ISLAMABAD: The Excise and Taxation Department of Islamabad on Tuesday set up a temporary service center at 1-8 Kachnar Park parking lot for making civic services more accessible to the citizens of the Federal Capital. The initiative aimed to simplify vehicle-related processes for residents, offering a range of essential services in one convenient location, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration here. The service, organized by Director General Irfan Nawaz Memon, will continue from 2 to 4 pm, offering services such as vehicle registration, transfers, and token tax processing. According to a spokesman of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, the initiative was designed to reduce the burden on citizens by bringing these services closer to their communities. In addition to vehicle-related services, the department introduced the ICT Doorstep Service, allowing residents to access a variety of essential documents. These include Domicile Certificates, Birth Certificates, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permits, Fuel Permits (for both domestic and commercial use), and Motor Vehicle Registration. The spokesman highlighted that the goal was to create a seamless and efficient experience for citizens, eliminating the need for multiple visits to government offices. The temporary center aimed to cater to a wide range of administrative needs, making it easier for vehicle owners and individuals requiring official documents to complete their paperwork in one place. The spokesman emphasized that the initiative was part of a broader effort to improve service delivery and enhance convenience for the public. To further support residents, the department provided a toll-free number, 051-111-383-383, for inquiries and scheduling. Citizens were encouraged to contact the helpline to arrange appointments or seek additional information about the services offered. This initiative marks a significant step in the government's efforts to streamline civic services and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. By bringing essential services directly to the community, the Excise and Taxation Department hopes to set a precedent for future outreach programs, ensuring that residents can access the support they need without unnecessary delays or complications.—DNA

Electricity expensive because of thievery of elite

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Tuesday that the main reason for the expensive electricity and energy crisis is the selfishness and criminal negligence of the elite. The energy crisis has been consuming a large part of the GDP for decades, but instead of solving it, the energy sector is being looted further, and no one is stopping this robbery, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that many people, fed up with expensive electricity, have installed solar systems, which prompted the power bureaucracy to initiate conspiracies against it. The business leader said that the energy crisis has become a serious challenge, and personal interests and criminal negligence are hindering its solution. Energy contracts are deliberately left open to violation, mismanagement is commonplace, contracts are not implemented and regulatory agencies remain silent spectators, he observed. He lamented that the authorities' priorities of building more power plants than the country needs without upgrading the electricity transmission system and collecting capacity payments worth trillions of rupees from the public explain their priorities.—APP

AIOU holds seminar on Solid Waste Management

Dr. Sophia Khalid, Chairperson of the Department of Environmental Sciences, outlined the objectives of the seminar

ISLAMABAD: A seminar on Solid Waste Management held here on Tuesday at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). The Chief Executive Officer of Akhtar Hameed Khan Memorial Trust, Sumaira Gul, delivered the keynote lecture, emphasizing that a significant portion of the waste generated in Pakistan is lost due to the lack of a proper system and awareness. She stressed the need for recycling, highlighting that the trend of recycling is gaining momentum globally, whereas in Pakistan, the industry faces several challenges, pointed out that due to a lack of awareness regarding waste collection methods, a considerable amount of waste is not properly disposed of, which affects the quality of recyclable waste. Consequently, the cost of waste collection is also increasing. Sumaira Gul emphasized that an effective management strategy is required for proper waste disposal, as waste can be converted into useful products that can play a pivotal role in the country's economic development. The seminar was organized by the Faculty of Sciences, Department of Environmental Sciences, and was presided over by the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Professor Dr. Sher Muhammad. He stated that Pakistan is rich in natural resources, and to keep the country clean and benefit from these resources, we must set our priorities right. Dr. Sher Muhammad further mentioned that by utilizing waste properly, we can create many useful items. He urged people to dispose of household waste in designated areas instead of throwing it in the streets, ensuring that sanitation workers can collect it efficiently. He highlighted the need for awareness regarding solid waste management, which was the primary reason for organizing this seminar under the guidance of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood. He also mentioned that, following the Vice Chancellor's directions, the university will continue to organize seminars on various topics to enhance students' educational awareness. Dr. Sophia Khalid, Chairperson of the Department of Environmental Sciences, outlined the objectives of the seminar.—DNA

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Briefs

PIDE's RASTA conference to start today

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) will hold a two-day conference under the RASTA Competitive Grants Program, focusing on transformative policy research and development strategies, beginning from Wednesday. Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal is scheduled to attend the 5th Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) conference as a chief guest, which will bring together leading researchers, policymakers and key stakeholders, according to the agenda details shared by PIDE. The conference will cover various topics including "Tech for Competition and Growth," "Fiscal Management," "Sludge and Development," "Human Capital and Opportunities," "Sustainable Development," and "Political Governance." Experts and policymakers will explore these subjects from all perspectives to achieve the goals of national development and prosperity.

Afzal asks PTI to shun ego politics for national interest

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Coordinator, Rana Ihsan Afzal Tuesday appealed to PTI to set aside arrogance and adopt a conciliatory approach, emphasizing that engaging in constructive talks is the only viable path forward to address grievances. In an interview with a private news channel, he stressed that instead of resorting to undemocratic measures, PTI leaders should refrain from portraying themselves as victims. He emphasized that PTI should prioritize the nation's well-being over political interests, considering the welfare of Pakistan and its innocent citizens. By adopting this approach, PTI can work towards finding solutions that benefit the country as a whole, rather than perpetuating political polarization, he warned. Rana Ihsan Afzal strongly condemned PTI's involvement in the 9th May and 26 November incidents, terming them as undemocratic steps that undermined the country's stability and rule of law. He emphasized that such actions were unacceptable and went against the principles of democracy, which PTI claims to uphold.

"It is imperative for PTI leaders to respect the democratic process and refrain from inciting violence and chaos," he stated. Rana Ihsan Afzal also expressed his admiration for the policies of his party, praising their efforts to steer the country out of default and put it on the path to economic stability. He acknowledged the challenging circumstances under which the government was operating, but expressed confidence in their ability to navigate these difficulties and implement effective solutions.—APP

Exports up by 7.22% to Rs 5.448t in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 7.22 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Exports during July-January (2024-2025) were recorded at Rs. 5,448,181 million as against Rs. 5,081,403 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to provisional figures released by PBS. According to the provisional figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, exports from Pakistan during January, 2025 amounted to Rs. 822,732 million (provisional) as against Rs. 809,554 million in December, 2024 and Rs. 782,642 million during January, 2024 showing an increase of 1.63% over December, 2024 and of 5.12% over January, 2024.—APP

SUPARCO, BKK join forces to revolutionize agriculture

Since 1989, SUPARCO has played its role in the country's socio-economic development by leveraging satellite technology to monitor crops and provide timely insights to relevant ministries and departments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and Bakhbar Kissan (BKK), with M/S JAZZ as its communication partner have signed an agreement to empower farmers with smart agricultural solutions using space technology. This collaboration aims to drive a sustainable and productive food system in Pakistan by integrating advanced satellite technology into farming practices. Since 1989, SUPARCO has played its role in the country's

socio-economic development by leveraging satellite technology to monitor crops and provide timely insights to relevant ministries and departments. This agreement with BKK marks a significant step toward ensuring that crucial agricultural data reaches farmers directly, enabling informed decision-making at the grassroots level. SUPARCO will provide Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered geospatial services to BKK through an Application Programming Interface (API), utilizing high-resolution satellite imagery from its diverse fleet of remote sensing satellites. By leveraging

machine learning algorithms, SUPARCO will process vast datasets, performing mass computation with unparalleled efficiency to offer real-time decision-making tools for farmers. BKK, in turn, will use this space-based intelligence to provide tailored agricultural consultation through its mobile app, reaching farmers directly. By combining SUPARCO's strategic oversight from space with BKK's on-ground connectivity, this partnership will transform cutting-edge satellite intelligence into practical solutions for farmers. This collaboration

will enable real-time monitoring of crop health, soil conditions, and weather patterns, advancing precision and smart farming practices. Farmers will gain access to data-driven insights for optimized planting, irrigation, fertilization, and pest control leading to higher yields, reduced input costs, and improved sustainability. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SUPARCO, Muhammad Yusuf Khan emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "This partnership demonstrates our commitment to harnessing space technology for national progress. By brid-

ing the gap between science and agriculture, we are empowering farmers with vital information that will enhance productivity and sustainability." This collaboration marks a transformative step toward precision agriculture in Pakistan, paving the way for enhanced national food security, improved policymaking, better market price stabilization, and more efficient supply chain management. By integrating space technology into farming, Pakistan is moving towards a smarter, more efficient agricultural future, supporting the vision of "Uraan Pakistan".

DMA spokesperson appeals to citizens

ISLAMABAD: With a new spell of rain and snow expected to hit the region, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Tuesday issued a warning to citizens and tourists to take extra precautions to ensure their safety, particularly those residing near stream and other low-lying areas. In a statement with a private news channel, the PDMA spokesperson urged people to remain vigilant and take necessary measures to ensure their safety. "We are expecting another spell of rain and snow in the region and we want to caution citizens and tourists to take extra precautions to avoid any untoward incidents," the spokesperson said. PDMA spokesperson further elaborated on the situation. "The weather forecast indicates that a new spell of rain and snow is likely to hit the region, which may lead to landslides and flash flooding. We are advising people to remain indoors and avoid traveling to areas that are prone to landslides and flooding," spokesperson also advised tourists to check the weather forecast before traveling to hilly areas and to follow the instructions of local authorities.—APP

Special traffic plan for matches

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has issued a special traffic plan for the Champions Trophy matches scheduled to be played at Rawalpindi Stadium on Tuesday. A public relations officer told APP that due to the movement of foreign teams, route restrictions will be in place from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Affected roads include Srinagar Highway, Club Road, Murree Road, Faizabad, Jinnah Avenue, 9th Avenue, and Express Highway.

He said that traffic flow on Srinagar Highway and Expressway would be slow due to the security arrangements. Citizens are advised to use alternative routes such as underpasses and service roads connected to Srinagar Highway to ensure smooth travel, the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Zeeshan said. CTO Zeeshan urged commuters to plan their journey with an additional 20-minute margin to avoid delays. Traffic coming from Express Highway is advised to use Khanna Pul and Park Road as alternative routes. Islam Chowk Bridge and IJP Road will remain open during the route implementation, the police stated. Traffic from sectors B-17, B-15, H-13, and G-13/14 heading towards Blue Area or F-6 should opt for Margalla Road. For Blue Area-bound commuters, the use of 9th Avenue and H-8 underpass is recommended, the police said. Those traveling to the Red Zone should utilize Margalla Road, Express Chowk, Ayub Chowk, and Nadra Chowk, while commuters from the Red Zone heading to Faizabad should take the route via Convention Center and Club Road, the police added.—APP

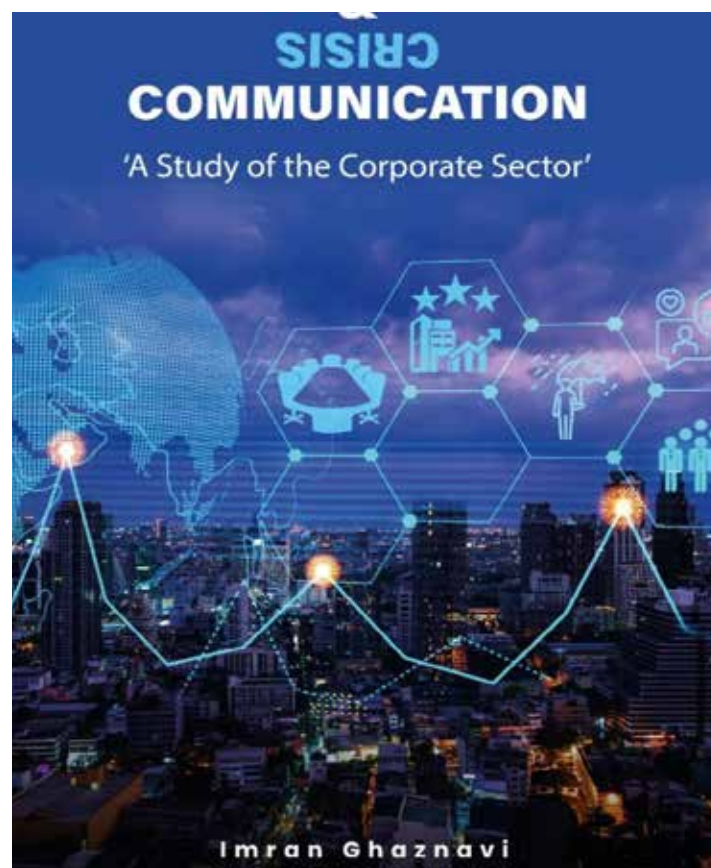
SB slams failure to remove riverside encroachments

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources, led by Senator Shahadat Awan, on Tuesday expressed serious reservations over the non-provision of details concerning the encroachments along the riverside and waterways. Officials informed that as per the data provided by SUPARCO, for the province of Punjab, after August, 2024, major encroachments were not removed. Additionally the report submitted by SUPARCO in February 2025, there have been 153 encroachments in the Sargodha Irrigation Zone, 676 encroachments in the Multan Irrigation Zone. The representative of Federal Flood Commission (FFC) claimed that all the encroachments had been removed before August 2024 but failed to provide the data to substantiate the claim. The Committee recommended that FFC alongwith the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) ought to coordinate with the concerned provinces for removal of the encroachments along the riverside within one month.—APP

Imran book 'Reputation Management, Crisis Communication' ready to go to printing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Reputation Management and Crisis Communication: A Study of the Corporate Sector" by Imran Ghaznavi is a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the critical importance of reputation management and crisis communication in today's rapidly evolving business environment. In a world where information spreads instantly, a company's reputation can be severely damaged by even a small mistake, making it essential for professionals in the corporate sector to understand how to protect and manage their brand image effectively. The book delves deeply into the strategic frameworks, methodologies, and best practices that organizations can use to anticipate potential crises, respond proactively when challenges arise, and recover from reputational damage. By providing real-world examples and case studies, Ghaznavi highlights how companies in various industries have successfully navigated crises, offering actionable insights for others to learn from. Key topics covered in the book include: 1. The Importance of Reputation Management: The book underscores why reputation is one of the most valuable assets a company possesses and how it can be vulnerable to both internal and external factors. It stresses the need for constant vigilance and strategic oversight to ensure the company's public image remains intact, even in the face of adversity.



2. Understanding Crisis Communication: Ghaznavi elaborates on the principles of crisis communication, providing a clear framework for managing high-pressure situations. He explains the crucial role communication plays in crisis management, from the initial response to main-

taining transparency, controlling the narrative, and ultimately rebuilding trust. 3. Cultural Sensitivity in Crisis Communication: The interconnected nature of today's global marketplace means that crises can transcend national borders. The book stresses the importance of un-

derstanding cultural nuances when managing a crisis, particularly in multicultural environments, to ensure that messages resonate with diverse audiences. 4. Strategic Communication Techniques: Drawing on proven strategies, the author demonstrates how organizations can plan ahead for potential reputational threats. The book explores tools such as media relations, social media management, and stakeholder engagement to create a robust crisis communication plan. 5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Ghaznavi explores the relationship between CSR initiatives and reputation management. The book argues that companies that engage in meaningful CSR activities not only enhance their public image but also build goodwill, which can be crucial in times of crisis.

6. Post-Crisis Recovery: The book emphasizes the importance of effective recovery strategies following a crisis, focusing on how organizations can restore their credibility, rebuild relationships with stakeholders, and emerge stronger than before. In a fast-paced, digitally driven world where the news cycle moves at lightning speed, professionals in public relations, marketing, and corporate communications will find this book invaluable. Business leaders, PR professionals, and policymakers can gain the knowledge and tools they need to develop comprehensive crisis management strategies, mitigate risks, and protect their organization's reputation in any challenging circumstance.

PM's visit to Azerbaijan set to strengthen bilateral ties

Both countries will hold individual exhibitions, Zubair Tufail, Khalid Tawab, Hanif Goher, Mazhar Ali Nasir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The visit of the Prime Minister to Baku, Azerbaijan, is expected to usher in a new era of cooperation between the two brotherly countries, which are both active members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). This was stated by UBG President Zubair Tufail and other leaders, Khalid Tawab, Hanif Goher, and Syed Mazhar Ali Nasir. According to a press release issued by the Gulzar Firoz, Central Spokesperson of the United Business Group (UBG), this statement was made by UBG

President Zubair Tufail and central leaders Khalid Tawab, Hanif Goher, and Syed Mazhar Ali Nasir. The high-level talks between the two countries are expected to boost the confidence of the business community, leading to strengthened bilateral relations, expanded trade and investment, and enhanced cooperation in key sectors such as energy, climate change, and cultural exchanges. The Pakistan-Azerbaijan Business Forum, followed by B2B meetings, is expected to provide a platform for businesses from both countries to explore joint venture opportunities and strengthen trade ties, they added. The current volume of bilateral trade stands at \$7 million,

with Pakistan's exports valued at \$5.7 million and imports at \$1.3 million. To further strengthen bilateral ties, the UBG leaders proposed organizing solo exhibitions in each other's countries to promote trade and cultural exchanges. They also emphasized the need to expand direct flights between the two countries to boost tourism and trade, and to intensify interaction between trade bodies and activate trade sections to facilitate the business community. The visit is expected to build on the existing strong bond of brotherhood between the two countries, underpinned by shared values and common inspiration.

China's AI model DeepSeek sparks debate

ISLAMABAD: A new report by Chinese academics predicts that "DeepSeek", a homegrown AI Large Language Model (LLM) launched in January 2025, could propel China to global AI leadership by 2030, challenging long-held U.S. dominance. The report, released at a seminar held in Beijing on February 23 predicts that China's AI development, led by the DeepSeek model, will surpass the United States by 2030. It argues that DeepSeek's "low-cost, high-performance, and open-source" strategy has triggered a "technological, cognitive, and geopolitical leap" that could reshape global tech and economic power dynamics, INP reported on Tuesday. Hosted by Renmin University and organized by the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China (RDCY), the event attracted attention from industry experts, think tanks, and media. Experts believe that this breakthrough could not only reshape the AI industry but also alter the global geopolitical landscape, shifting power dynamics and giving developing countries a stronger voice in technological advancements. Wang Wen, Dean of RDCY, shared firsthand observations, "I just got back from Malaysia three days ago - met a bunch of Malaysian politicians and professors - they were all talking about DeepSeek, and how Chinese AI developers are making this technology freely available to Malaysians. This is real global tech sharing, breaking away from those centralized AI ecosystems dominated by Western tech giants." The report also emphasizes how DeepSeek challenges traditional Western perceptions of China's technological capabilities and signals a shift in the global tech competition. After DeepSeek-R1's January launch sent Nvidia's stock price plunging and sharply eroded valuations across other tech giants, some observers labeled this development a "Sputnik moment" in the U.S.-China AI competition, marking a pivotal challenge to American technological dominance.—DNA

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3 years of proxy war in Ukraine

THE end of February marks three years since the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine and 11 years since the 'Euromaidan' coup of February 2014. The coup was the main cause of the current military conflict. The war in the now-former eastern territories of Ukraine could have been avoided had two successive presidencies in Kiev (Petro Poroshenko, 2014-2019 and Volodymyr Zelensky since 2019) complied with the Minsk 2 peace agreement of February 2015. Minsk 2 (text here), was agreed by Kiev and the pro-autonomy forces in the Donbass region on February 12, 2015. France, Germany, and Russia co-signed the agreement as guarantors. The agreement was unanimously endorsed by no less than the UN Security Council on February 17, 2015. Minsk 2 envisioned the return of Lugansk and Donetsk (the two rebellious 'peoples republics' of the industrialized Donbass region) to the fold of the Ukrainian constitution, this time as semi-autonomous oblasts (provinces). Kiev also agreed to a neutral status for Ukraine. It could apply for membership in the European Union if it chose, but membership in the NATO military alliance was for Russia a non-starter. EU membership increasingly became a goal of Western-oriented business interests in Ukraine during the decade of the 2000s. That decade followed 10 years of sharp economic decline following the dissolution in 1989-90 of Soviet Ukraine and of the Soviet Union (USSR, of which Soviet Ukraine was a key constituent). Tragically for the people of post-Soviet Ukraine, the Western countries, particularly the leading powers of NATO, quietly and deceptively opposed Minsk 2. They worked quietly from the get-go to sabotage the agreement. On February 12, 2025, the deputy secretary of the Russian Security Council, Aleksey Shevtsov, spoke on the ninth anniversary of the signing of Minsk 2, explaining once again to those who would listen that Russia's special military operation in Ukraine would never have happened had the West honored the agreement. He stressed that the people of Ukraine today have every right to demand an accounting for the deceptions that took place in 2015 and after. On the same day, the Ukrainian online publication Strana published a lengthy commentary in its Telegram messaging service headlined, 'Why did the Minsk agreement fail?' Strana wrote, "Russia says that Kiev deliberately refused to fulfill the conditions of the Minsk 2 agreement and instead proceeded to rearm its army and restart armed attacks against the people of Donbass. The Russian government says it can no longer trust the government in Kiev and so there is no possibility of a 'Minsk 3'." ('Minsk 1' was a first attempt, in September 2014, by the pro-autonomy forces of Donbass to reach a peace agreement with the new administration in Kiev.) Strana wrote further, "Russia did not launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2014 or 2015. Perhaps it wanted to, who knows, but it could not do so because it would have been hit with harsh economic sanctions similar to those levied against it by the Western powers beginning in February 2022. It would have faced economic sanctions worse than those initially levied against it following the Crimea referendum of March 2014.

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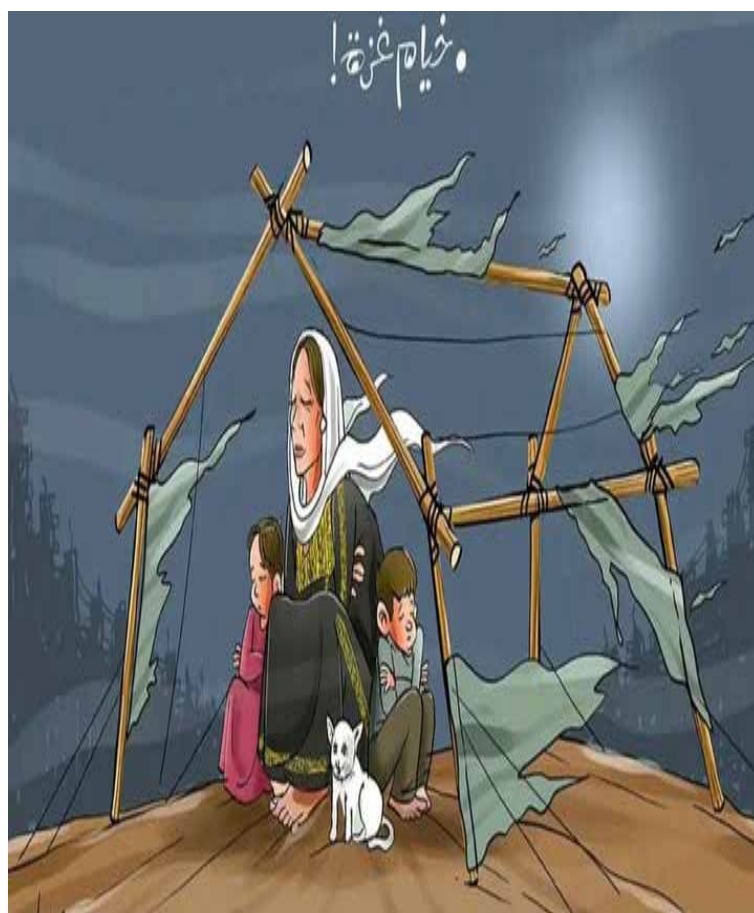
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Western media & Zionist agenda

IN times of war and political turmoil, the role of the media in shaping public perception is paramount. Accuracy, fairness, and responsible journalism should be the cornerstones of any reporting, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues that have far-reaching consequences. The recent controversy surrounding statements attributed to Dr. Mousa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official, underscores the dangers of misrepresentation in conflict reporting. The New York Times article titled "Hamas Official Expresses Reservations About Oct. 7 Attack on Israel" suggested that Abu Marzouk had expressed doubts about the attack, stating that he would not have endorsed it had he known the level of destruction it would bring upon Gaza. However, Hamas has categorically denied this characterization, accusing the publication of taking his words out of context and misrepresenting his stance. According to the movement, Abu Marzouk reaffirmed the Palestinian right to resist occupation and emphasized that Israel bears full responsibility for the ongoing devastation in Gaza. This incident highlights a critical issue: the selective framing of statements to fit a particular narrative. While responsible journalism demands rigorous fact-checking and balanced reporting, too often, selective quoting and misleading interpretations serve to shape public opinion in ways that distort reality. In a conflict as protracted and complex as the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, such distortions can be detrimental to any prospects of justice and peace. The ongoing war on Gaza, launched by Israel following the October 7 attack by Hamas and other Palestinian factions, has led to catastrophic human loss. Reports indicate that over 48,000 Palestinians—mostly women and children—have been killed, with more than 111,000 others injured. The immense scale of destruction raises profound questions about accountability and proportionality in warfare. While the international community remains divided on the crisis, it is imperative that media outlets report with integrity, ensuring that all perspectives are fairly represented. Furthermore, the recent ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took effect on January 19 highlights the need for dialogue and diplomacy. The Palestinian cause remains deeply rooted in historical grievances, with Hamas maintaining that armed resistance is a fundamental part of their struggle. Whether one agrees or disagrees with their methods, the underlying issue—the occupation and dispossession of the Palestinian people—cannot be ignored or diminished by selective media narratives. It is evident that Western media is now attempting to apply pressure on Hamas on behalf of the Zionist regime in preparation for negotiations over the second phase of the ceasefire. This comes after Israel has failed to achieve its stated objectives of eliminating Hamas from Gaza. Additionally, Israel has violated key terms of the ceasefire by blocking essential humanitarian aid from entering Gaza and failing to release Palestinian prisoners as agreed. Having failed militarily and diplomatically, the Zionist regime is now relying on Western media to manipulate narratives and manufacture consent for its actions, attempting to win a war through misinformation after failing to do so through unprecedented destruction over the past 15 months.

What Germany's election means for the Western left

Bartosz M. Rydlinski

This drop-off can be largely attributed to the "Agenda 2010" and "Hartz" reforms that Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder introduced in the early 2000s. Schroeder's neoliberal project, which sought to revive a stagnant German economy by deregulating the labor market and reducing welfare benefits, put the SPD at odds with its working-class base, organized in powerful trade unions. It also led the charismatic finance minister and former party leader Oskar Lafontaine to defect to a left-wing alliance, taking the SPD's socialist faction with him. Despite this exodus of voters, the SPD could rest on its laurels as the junior coalition partner to the CDU/CSU — its main competitor — under Angela Merkel. When Merkel retired in 2021, the SPD won that year's election with a quarter of German votes. But party leader and Chancellor Olaf Scholz had to form a "traffic-light coalition"...

GERMANY'S Social Democrats are one of the West's oldest political parties, with a legacy of advocating parliamentary democracy, opposing Nazism and leading the modernization of postwar Germany. In addition to the many notable labor, economic and human rights reforms that the party has implemented over the years, former Social Democratic Party leader and West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's "Ostpolitik" in the 1970s laid the groundwork for Germany's reunification in 1990. But today's party is a shadow of its former self: it won only 16.4 percent of the vote in Sunday's federal election, putting it behind both the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and the far-right Alternative for Germany. It is worth considering how this defeat came about and what it means for the future of Western social democratic forces. Support for the SPD began to fall toward the end of the 2000s. In the 2005 and 2009 federal elections, the party received 34.2 percent and 23 percent of the vote, respectively — a drastic decline from the 1998 federal election, when it won nearly 41 percent. This drop-off can be largely attributed to the "Agenda 2010" and "Hartz" reforms that Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder introduced in the early 2000s. Schroeder's neoliberal project, which sought to revive a stagnant German economy by deregulating the labor market and reducing welfare benefits, put the SPD at odds with its working-class base, organized in powerful trade unions. It also led the charismatic finance minister and former party leader Oskar Lafontaine to defect to a left-wing alliance, taking the SPD's socialist faction with him. Despite this exodus of voters, the SPD could rest on its laurels as the junior coalition partner to the CDU/CSU — its main

competitor — under Angela Merkel. When Merkel retired in 2021, the SPD won that year's election with a quarter of German votes. But party leader and Chancellor Olaf Scholz had to form a "traffic-light coalition" (so named for the parties' colors) with the Greens and the liberal, market-oriented Free Democrats. This led his government to pursue conflicting goals, such as advancing social justice and lowering taxes; constructing social housing and boosting support for entrepreneurs; and combating climate change and protecting Germany's automotive industry. Such a wide-ranging agenda did little to win back the trust of workers, especially with fear of globalization on the rise. In the lead-up to Sunday's election, neither Scholz nor his party seemed to gauge German voters' primary concerns accurately. According to one survey, 37 percent of Germans consider immigration to be the most important problem facing the country — an issue on which the SPD has been ambivalent and indecisive. The party tacitly supported Merkel's "open-door policy" in 2015, when Germany accepted more than 1 million asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. And yet, Scholz has advocated deporting "serious criminals" to Syria and Afghanistan following terror attacks. Instead of winning over voters, this muddled approach to migration and security has bolstered the anti-immigration AfD. The second most important issue for voters, according to the recent survey, is the economy, with 34 percent of respondents agreeing that it should be the government's top priority. As an article about Scholz in Der Spiegel recently pointed out, the German economy contracted for the second consecutive year in 2024, the number of unem-

ployed people is rising, industry is cutting jobs and consumer confidence has tanked. The fact that this occurred on Scholz's watch undermined his image as a successful economic steward, tarnished during Merkel's term. This resulted in a devastating loss of working-class support for the SPD. According to Infratestdimap's exit poll, the AfD won 38 percent of workers' votes, compared to just 12 percent for the SPD. Scholz fell short in other areas, too. The much-heralded turning point ("Zeitenwende") in foreign policy and national security after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has not materialized. Germany barely meets NATO's 2 percent defense spending target and has not honored its commitments to Ukraine. As Benjamin Tallis concluded in his German Council on Foreign Relations report titled "The End of the Zeitenwende," Scholz's project has been a failure. The SPD's electoral disaster is reminiscent of the Democrats' defeat in the 2024 US presidential election. Both parties failed to formulate an effective response to migration concerns, win over working-class voters and adopt major progressive economic reforms. Instead, they chose to emphasize cultural liberalism, which appealed to the winners of globalization — people who do not fear for their future. But fear of being left behind economically and socially proved to be potent fuel for both Donald Trump and the AfD. So long as social democrats fail to address this fear, the far right will continue to exploit it. If center-left parties want to regain their relevance, they must confront and analyze their electoral failures and declining support while finding new ways to make inroads with workers and shield them from the effects of deindustrialization, automation and artificial intelligence.

The misuse of words and the crisis of religious thought

Muhammad Zaka Ullah

A similar argument is found in socialist thought and ideology. Great thinkers like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and other socialist philosophers argued that until wealth and resources are distributed equitably, people cannot attain true intellectual consciousness. If a person is hungry, deprived of basic needs, and struggling for survival, they will not be receptive to lofty ideological concepts. The Quran, too, preaches social justice, but do today's religious leaders actively promote this message? No because their vested interests lie in maintaining...

THE selection and proper use of terminology hold fundamental importance in any intellectual and social system. Words are not only tools for expressing thoughts, but they also shape the ideological structure of society. Unfortunately, a common tendency in our society is to adopt terms without uncritically understanding and deep reflection, leading not only to intellectual confusion but also to the distortion of the original message. This issue becomes even more critical in religious discourse, where the careless use of terminology can give rise to multiple interpretations, ultimately obscuring the true essence of the message. Take, for example, the term "Islamic governance." Different schools of thought interpret it in their own way. In addition, words like "Islamic economic system," "Islamic teachings," and "Islamic society" have become ambiguous because every sect claims its own interpretation as the ultimate "Islamic" understanding. In contrast, the term "Quranic teachings" is far more precise, as the Quran is an immutable, preserved, and universally applicable code of life. When we describe a principle and law as "Quranic," it is not confined to any particular school of thought; rather it assumes a clear and undisputed status. This problem extends to religious discourse as well. Some individuals want to impose their own interpretations as the definitive understanding of faith, and leaving no room for different ideas and perspectives. This mind set deepens religious divisions and fuels ideological chaos. Then the question arises, if the Quran is a clear and self-explanatory book, why do different people derive different meanings from it? Is this due to

the vastness of the Arabic language, or is it simply a means for some to establish a unique intellectual identity? The truth is that understanding the Quran is not limited to literal translations and interpretations; its primary purpose is to inspire critical thinking and improve human actions. If intellectual engagement with the Quran fails to bring moral and behavioural refinement, then such discussions are meaningless. This intellectual turmoil becomes even more complex when the traditional religious elite and clergy use faith as a tool to distance people from their fundamental needs and social development. Religions were meant to promote human welfare and social justice, but unfortunately, religious authorities have turned them into instruments of exploitation, deprivation, and ideological rigidity. Humanity was not sent to this world merely for worship but also to establish a just and equitable social order where every individual has access to food, dignity, and security. This is the core message that religious leadership has ignored, leading to a society where religion is often used to foster division rather than unity. A well-known truth is that the first word of society is bread, this sentence reflects a fundamental social reality. Until a person has food to eat, a shelter over their head, and access to basic necessities, no high level ideology and belief system can truly influence them. A starving person does not ponder philosophical debates or religious injunctions his primary concern is finding his next meal. This is why intellectuals and religious leaders must prioritize human welfare over abstract ideological disputes. A similar argument is found

in socialist thought and ideology. Great thinkers like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and other socialist philosophers argued that until wealth and resources are distributed equitably, people cannot attain true intellectual consciousness. If a person is hungry, deprived of basic needs, and struggling for survival, they will not be receptive to lofty ideological concepts. The Quran, too, preaches social justice, but do today's religious leaders actively promote this message? No because their vested interests lie in maintaining a system where hunger, fear, and exploitation persist. We must recognize that real social progress requires not only intellectual and religious freedom but also economic justice. Before preaching any ideology or belief system, it is essential to address the basic needs of those we seek to influence. Only when a person is free from hunger and enjoys social security can they truly grasp the meaning of knowledge, awareness, and intellectual freedom. This is why, if we genuinely desire societal improvement, intellectual debates and religious discourse alone will not suffice, we need concrete actions. We must build a society where everyone has equal rights, where no one goes to bed hungry, and where religion is not used as a tool of oppression but as a force for true human service. Until these fundamental issues are resolved, we will remain entangled in ideological discussions without achieving real progress. The question is: Are we ready for this intellectual revolution? Are we willing to break free from traditional religious and ideological constraints to build a genuinely humane society? If not, then we must accept the reality that we will continue to exist in a cycle of endless words, devoid of any real change.

Briefs

Afghan citizens evacuation..

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, Afghan citizens who wish to travel to a third country have been granted an extension on their residence permits until June 30. However, sources indicate that those awaiting visas for other destinations will not be allowed to remain in Islamabad beyond the deadline. The Ministry of Interior will submit an implementation report, including updates from intelligence agencies, to the Prime Minister's Office every 15 days. Sources further revealed that if Afghan nationals do not secure visas from a third country by September, they will be considered illegal residents in Pakistan. The repatriation initiative is part of Pakistan's broader efforts to regulate foreign residency and address security concerns, with authorities emphasizing a structured and phased approach to the process.

SC references Bajwa's...

FROM PAGE 01
Justices Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Musarat Hili, Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Shahid Bilal Hassan is hearing the appeal. Justice Hilali asked the advocate whether people had fundamental rights under the 1962 constitution of Ayub Khan's era. She remarked that according to the Army Act, a military trial can be held if a collaboration is proven. Advocate Bhandari submitted that only a civil court can try under criminal provisions as far as civilians are concerned. Justice Mandokhail questioned how civilians can be involved under 2(1)(D)? Advocate Bhandari replied that nothing is given in the FB Ali case as far as 2(1)(D) is concerned. Justice Rizvi observed that there were provisions of terrorism in the Mehram Ali case and the Rawalpindi Bar case. Military installations were attacked. Their security must be under the control of an army personnel. Will a police officer investigate them? Where there is military involved, will military courts be involved? Advocate Bhandari submitted that there are 103 accused who are being tried in the military court. Justice Rizvi remarked that we have seen the footage in the media.

Imran seeks CJP's intervention

FROM PAGE 01
KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur from his position as the party's provincial president and appointed Junaid Akbar as the new head. The former ruling party clarified that the decision to relieve Gandapur of the provincial presidency was made upon his request, allowing him to focus on addressing the challenges faced by the province. He has faced criticism over the deteriorating law and order situation, particularly the ongoing unrest and violent incidents in Kurram and Parachinar. Following his appointment, Akbar hinted at a large-scale reshuffle in the party's hierarchy, saying that "hardliners" would be appointed to key positions in the Khan-founded party, and that the "homoeopathic leadership" would be sidelined after the party reorganisation, slated for May this year. Talking to the media today, Raja rebuffed concerns regarding Imran's health issues, saying the former premier was in good health. "Imran had said the jail administration was under the control of unseen forces," Raja said, announcing Khan's decision to write to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi on issues within the prison system. The secretary-general noted that the delegation apprised Khan of their recent visit to Sindh, including the resistance against the construction of dams. "Imran has vowed that PTI will fight for the rights of Sindh," he added. Quoting the former premier, he said PTI was doing politics for the people of Pakistan and lambasted Punjab government for its "continued fascism".

Australia bolsters blind women cricket in Pakistan

This year, 50 additional visually impaired women and girls had the opportunity to sharpen their skills and chase their cricketing dreams



DNA
ISLAMABAD: DThe Australian High Commission, in partnership with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels, supported a national blind women's cricket training camp and tournament in Islamabad. Women and girls from across Pakistan participated in the event. The initiative followed the historic formation of Pakistan's first blind women's cricket team in 2018, which played its inaugural international T20 match that same year. This year, 50 additional visually impaired women and girls had the opportunity to sharpen their skills and chase their cricketing dreams. Speaking at the concluding awards ceremony, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, highlighted how sports diplomacy strengthens ties between nations and transforms lives:

"Cricket is a powerful force for connection and inclusion. It opens doors for women and girls in Pakistan and Australia, including for those with disabilities, challenging perceptions and breaking barriers." Chairman of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, praised the initiative: "Blind Cricket has become a beacon of hope for visually impaired athletes. It's more than a game—it's a statement that no disability can hold you back. With the right support, these women can be champions in sport and in life." The players were coached by some of Pakistan's finest blind cricket mentors, including Abdul Razaq, Ibrar Shah, Shahida Shaheen, and Tahir Mehmood Butt, who have trained world-class athletes. With a legacy of cricketing excellence, Australia has been at the forefront of promoting blind cricket, a sport that was invented in Melbourne in 1922 when visually impaired factory workers improvised by putting rocks in a tin can to create a ball.

Afghan players know things are 'not correct'

Under Taliban rule, there has been an assault on women's rights. Women have been banned from parks and universities. The Taliban also raided the homes of female athletes and many women's cricketers fled Afghanistan for their safety

DUBAI: Afghanistan's players know "full well" things are "not correct" in their home country, says coach Jonathan Trott amid criticism of women's rights under Taliban rule. Female participation in sport has effectively been outlawed in the country since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. At the start of this year, nearly 200 UK politicians demanded England boycott Wednesday's Champions Trophy match between the sides. However, the one-day international will go ahead in Lahore, Pakistan and former England batter Trott told the BBC: "Hopefully we can make a difference. I know the players want to do that. They have expressed that on their social media platforms. "All they are doing is asking for equality and trying to grow the game of cricket, for fairness and an uplift in their country." Trott has coached Afghanistan since 2022 but still lives in Birmingham. He travels when the players meet for camps in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which is home to their main training base and hosts many of their fixtures. The majority of the players live in Afghanistan and play in the domestic cricket leagues. Under Taliban rule, there has been an assault on women's rights. Women have been banned from parks and universities. The Taliban also raided the homes of female athletes and many women's cricketers fled Afghanistan for their safety. Some of Afghanistan's highest profile men's players, including superstar leg-spinner Rashid Khan, have spoken out against the issues. The men's team has been allowed to continue to compete on the world stage, despite the banning of its women's team being an apparent breach of International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations. "These guys are brave," Trott said. "They know the difference between right and wrong. It is a real tricky situation for them. "They know who they are playing for and representing. "We work hard to bring joy to the country and the guys are passionate, brave and proud of being able to do that, but knowing full well that there are things that are not correct." Asked if his side could bring change in Afghanistan, Trott said: "I don't know but I hope it could. "This side has that ability at the moment." The Afghan female cricketers who fled to Australia played a match there last month. They have said they are "proud" of the men's team but wanted to be treated the same. In January, a cross-party letter, signed by nearly 200 UK politicians, was sent to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) calling for England to refuse to play the match. The ECB has been critical of the ICC's response, calling for it to take unified action, but when that was not forthcoming agreed the match would go ahead. Trott was born in South Africa, which was banned from the global sporting stage because of the apartheid regime. In contrast, the ICC's stance is that the Afghanistan team should not be punished for government policy. "I can see the world's concern," Trott said. "I am concerned. I have daughters who play cricket. "I am proud of where I come from and the change the country made for the betterment of everybody. Hopefully one day I can see that in Afghanistan." After defeats by Australia and South Africa respectively, both England and Afghanistan will likely have to win both of their remaining matches to progress to the semi-finals. England are expected to make one change for Wednesday's match in Lahore after bowler Brydon Carse was ruled out of the tournament with a toe injury. Rehan Ahmed has been called up in his place, but the leg-spinner is not expected to arrive in Pakistan until Wednesday so Jamie Overton is most likely to replace Carse. - Agencies

Australia-South Africa CT match abandoned due to rain

Continuous light to heavy rainfall disrupted the game, preventing even the toss from taking place

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: The seventh match of the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy 2025 between Australia and South Africa, scheduled for Tuesday, has been completely washed out due to persistent rain. Despite high expectations for an exciting contest, continuous light to heavy rainfall disrupted the game, preventing even the toss from taking place. As weather conditions worsened throughout the day, officials had no choice but to call off the match without a single ball being bowled. Following this result, both teams remain unbeaten in the tournament and are currently at the top of the points table with three points each from two matches. South Africa holds the number one position due to a superior Net Run Rate (NRR) of +2.140, while Australia sits second with an NRR of +0.475. England, having played one match and lost it, is in third place with zero points and an NRR of -0.475. Afghanistan, also without a win, occupies the bottom spot with zero points and the lowest NRR of -2.140.

Shoaib Akhtar calls Babar Azam 'fraud'

Who is Babar Azam's role model? Let's not name any cricketer,' asks Akhtar

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar strongly criticised Babar Azam, labeling him a "fraud" after Pakistan's loss to India in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 clash on Sunday. Babar and Virat Kohli are often compared due to their similar batting styles, but Akhtar dismissed the parallels, emphasizing that Kohli's mindset and influences are far superior. Speaking on a TV show, Akhtar questioned Babar's choice of role models, contrasting it with Kohli's deep admiration for cricketer Sachin Tendulkar. "We often hear comparisons between Babar Azam and Virat Kohli. But let me ask you, who is Virat Kohli's hero? It's Sachin Tendulkar, a man with 100 international centuries, and Kohli is chasing that legacy," Akhtar remarked. The former right-arm pacer then took a direct shot at Babar, suggesting that his mindset and influences were misguided. "Who is Babar Azam's role model? Let's not name any cricketer, but you've chosen the wrong role models. Your thought process is wrong. You were a fraud from the beginning," he added. Babar, already under heavy scrutiny, had a disappointing performance in the high-pressure clash against India. He scored just 23 runs off 26 balls, despite hitting five boundaries, before falling cheaply. Pakistan posted a modest target of 241, which India comfortably chased down in 42.3 overs, securing a six-wicket victory. Meanwhile, Akhtar lauded star Indian batter Kohli, who once again rose to the occasion against Pakistan with a match-winning century. "When Virat Kohli plays against Pakistan, you just know he's going to get a hundred. He's a modern-day legend, a white-ball run machine! There's no debate about his greatness. I'm genuinely happy for him—he deserves all the accolades he gets," he concluded. For the unversed, on Monday, defending champions Pakistan officially became the first team, alongside Bangladesh, to be eliminated from the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, which is set to continue until March 9. The Green Shirts, who won the prestigious title in 2017 under Sarfaraz Ahmed's leadership, began their title defense against New Zealand. Following their loss to the Kiwis in the Champions Trophy opener, Pakistan suffered a second consecutive defeat at the hands of India, where Virat Kohli led from the front with an unbeaten century (100*) while successfully chasing Pakistan's total of 241 runs in Dubai.

ATC indicts Omar, others in May 9 case

FROM PAGE 01
related to the attack on the Mianwali's judicial complex. Those indicted in Judge Muhammad Naeem's court, among others, also include Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar. With the accused refusing to admit the charges against them, the court adjourned the hearing till February 28 while summoning the witnesses to the next hearing. As many as 57 people are named in the case along with 150 unknown individuals in the case concerned, the police said in a statement. The indictment comes weeks after an ATC in Faisalabad issued non-bailable for Ayub and Senate Opposition Leader Shibli Faraz, and others in a case related to their alleged involvement in the May 9 riots.

NYC cancels Roosevelt Hotel deal...

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response and policy decisions, stating that it will help the city save millions of taxpayer dollars. "While we are not done caring for those who came into our care, today marks another milestone in demonstrating the immense progress we have achieved in turning the corner on the unprecedented international humanitarian effort," Adams said in a video release. The Roosevelt Hotel served as both the literal and symbolic centre of the city's struggle to manage the influx of new arrivals under its right-to-shelter laws. It sits in a prime midtown Manhattan location, steps from Grand Central Terminal and some of the highest-priced office buildings on Park Avenue. It opened in 1924, was named after President Theodore Roosevelt. New York has cared for more than 232,000 migrants since 2022, according to City Hall. There are currently fewer than 45,000 in the city's care, down from a high of 69,000 in January 2024.

Pakistan, Bangladesh begin...

FROM PAGE 01
where she has defied extradition requests to face charges of crimes against humanity. Relations between India and Bangladesh's new government have been frosty since then, allowing Islamabad and Dhaka to slowly rebuild ties. Direct private trade between the countries restarted in November 2024, when a container ship sailed from Pakistan's Karachi to Bangladesh's Chittagong. It was the first cargo ship in decades to sail directly between the countries. "For the first time we are importing 50,000 tons of rice from Pakistan, and it is the first government-to-government deal between the two countries," Ziauddin Ahmed, a senior official at the food ministry in Dhaka, said on Tuesday. Bangladesh's Directorate General of Food signed a memorandum of understanding with the state-owned Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) in January for rice imports.

New oil and gas reserves discovered...

FROM PAGE 01
The well has produced 12.96 million cubic feet of gas per day along with 20 barrels of crude oil. The company holds a 55% stake in the Waziristan block, with Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Oil and Gas Investment Limited (OGIL) as joint venture partners. Mari Energies stated that the discovery would contribute to strengthening Pakistan's hydrocarbon reserves. The firm also acknowledged the support of national security agencies and both federal and provincial governments in facilitating the project. Last year, the Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) announced the discovery of new oil and gas reserves in the Shah Bandar block located in the Sujawal district of Sindh. The company disclosed the details of the discovery in a formal communication to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX).

Galatasaray accuse Mourinho of making 'racist statements'

In a statement, Galatasaray said: "Since the commencement of his managerial duties in Turkey, Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho has persistently issued derogatory statements directed towards the Turkish people. Today, his discourse has escalated beyond merely immoral comments into unequivocally inhumane rhetoric"

WEB DESK

LONDON: Galatasaray said they would "initiate criminal proceedings" against Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho after claiming he made "racist statements" following the teams' 0-0 draw on Monday. It was not clear which statements Galatasaray were referring to. Speaking in the news conference after the Istanbul derby, Mourinho said the home bench had been "jumping like monkeys" and also repeated his criticism of Turkish referees, saying it would have been a "disaster" to use an official from the country. Monday's match was refereed by Slovenian Slavko Vincic after both clubs requested a foreign official take charge of the fixture. As well as the threat of legal action, Galatasaray said they would submit "official complaints" to football's governing bodies. After the game Mourinho was asked about the performance of 19-year-old defender Yusuf Akcicek and said: "I have to thank the referee. After the big dive in the first minute and their bench jumping like monkeys on the top of the kid... with a Turkish referee you would have a yellow card after one minute and after five minutes I would have to change him." He added: "I went to the referee's dressing room after the game, of course the fourth official was there, a Turkish referee. I told him 'thank you for coming here, you come for a big match' and I turned myself to the fourth official and I

said 'if you were a referee this match would be a disaster.'" In a statement, Galatasaray said: "Since the commencement of his managerial duties in Turkey, Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho has persistently issued derogatory statements directed towards the Turkish people. Today, his discourse has escalated beyond merely immoral comments



into unequivocally inhumane rhetoric. "We hereby formally declare our intention to initiate criminal proceedings concerning the racist statements made by Jose Mourinho, and shall accordingly submit official complaints to Uefa and Fifa. "Furthermore, we shall diligently observe the stance adopted by Fenerbahce - an institution professing to uphold 'exemplary moral values' - in response to the reprehensible conduct exhibited by their manager." On Tuesday Fenerbahce released a statement saying Mourinho's comments had been taken "completely taken out of context". "As every sensible person can see and understand, these statements used by Jose Mourinho to describe the excessive reaction of the opposing team's technical staff to the referee decisions during the match can in no way be associated with racism," the club said. "Trying to portray this statement as racist is a completely malicious approach. "We would like to inform the public that we will use our legal rights regarding this pathetic slander that was made in order to take the competition off the field, change the agenda and manipulate it." Two-time Champions League winner Mourinho, 62, was appointed Fenerbahce manager last summer and was banned and fined earlier this season for condemning refereeing standards in Turkey. Before Monday's game he had welcomed the decision to use a foreign official after previously describing the environment in the country as "toxic". "I think it's important for the credibility, for the image of the match," Mourinho said.

Briefs

Gold decreases by Rs.800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs 308,700 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 309,500 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 686 to Rs 264,660 from Rs.265,346 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down by Rs.629 to Rs 243,613 from Rs. 243,242. The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs.45 to Rs.3,350 and that of ten gram went down by Rs.38 to Rs.2,872. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$8 to \$2,940 from \$2,948 whereas the prices of silver in international market went down by \$0.40 to \$32.20, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 01 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.66.

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 Rs0.30 to close at Rs292.87 against the last day's closing of Rs293.17, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.86, whereas a decrease of 47 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs353.05 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs353.52. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham remained stagnant and closed at Rs 76.14 and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa to close at Rs74.58.—APP

UN chief calls nuclear weapons 'one-way road to annihilation'

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned that the risk of nuclear conflict is rising — as global security arrangements unravel and military spending soars — urging governments to push for total disarmament. "The nuclear option is not an option at all," he said, addressing the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on Monday. "It is a one-way road to annihilation. We need to avoid this dead-end at all costs." The UN chief warned delegates of heightened global security concerns, noting that trust between nations is crumbling, international law is being undermined and multilateral treaties are under strain. The so-called "Doomsday Clock" — a metaphorical indicator of how close humanity is to destroying the world — moved one second closer to midnight last month, underscoring the growing peril. "Others are expanding their inventories of nuclear weapons and materials. Some continue to rattle the nuclear sabre as a means of coercion. We see signs of new arms races including in outer space," Guterres said. "And the weaponization of Artificial Intelligence is moving forward at an alarming pace." Despite the grim picture, the Secretary-General highlighted the Pact for the Future adopted by world leaders at the General Assembly last September, as a sign of hope. It marked the first new international nuclear disarmament agreement in over a decade. "Through the Pact, Member States also committed to revitalizing the role of the United Nations in disarmament," he said, calling also for holding accountable anyone who uses chemical or biological weapons. Alongside, he urged delegates to prevent an arms race in outer space through new negotiations, calling for the UN's role in disarmament and global security to be strengthened.—APP

Palestine embassy, PNCA host 'Palestine Was and Will Remain' exhibition

Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamadallah Zaid delivered a heartfelt address, emphasizing that the exhibition is not just a visual display but a testament to the existence, perseverance, and identity of the Palestinian people

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Palestine in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) inaugurated a compelling photo exhibition titled "Palestine Was and Will Remain" on Tuesday. The exhibition, showcasing a powerful collection of photographs, reflects the resilience, heritage, and struggle of the Palestinian people. The event was inaugurated by President and Chief Curator of Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts, Jamal Shah. A distinguished gathering of diplomats, including ambassadors from Jordan, Portugal, Libya, Oman, Indonesia, and other nations, attended the ceremony. Director General PNCA, Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, along with other prominent figures, was also present to witness the exhibition. Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamadallah Zaid delivered a heartfelt address, emphasizing that the exhibition is not just a visual display but a testament to the existence, perseverance, and identity of the Palestinian people. "This exhibition is more than just a collection of photographs; it is proof of our history, our suf-



ferings, and our struggle that has continued for generations. The Nakba was not just an event of 1948; it is an ongoing catastrophe that persists to this day," Dr. Zaid remarked. He underscored the significance of documenting the realities faced by Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, and urged the international community not to turn a blind eye. "Through this exhibition, we seek to ensure that the world does not look away, that the voices of the oppressed are heard, and that the evidence of these atrocities is observed," he added. The exhibition aims to provide visitors with a firsthand insight into the Palestinian experience, calling on viewers to stand for justice, humanity, and truth. The collection serves as a reminder of Palestine's historical presence and cultural significance. "Palestine Was and Will Remain" is open to the public until February 28 with visiting hours from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The Embassy of Palestine in Pakistan expressed its gratitude to all contributors and attendees whose presence demonstrated solidarity and commitment to justice.

HAMAS leader regrets Oct 7 attack on Israel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mousa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official, has voiced regret over the group's decision to launch the October 7 attack on Israel, highlighting the immense destruction it unleashed on Gaza. His striking comments, delivered in an interview with The New York Times, reveal a rare moment of introspection from a key figure within the militant organization amid the escalating conflict. Speaking to The New York Times, Mousa Abu Marzouk said, "If I had known ahead of time about all the destruction that would follow the attack, the scope of the catastrophe that would befall us, believe me, I wouldn't have supported it." The admission points to the devastating impact of Israel's military response, which has left Gaza in ruins, claiming numerous

lives and intensifying an already dire humanitarian situation. The October 7 operation triggered a fierce Israeli counteroffensive that demolished entire neighborhoods and uprooted countless families. Hamas has traditionally justified such actions as resistance against Israeli policies, but Mousa Abu Marzouk's remarks suggest a reassessment of the toll on Palestinians. He further told The New York Times, "We didn't expect this scale of disaster," underscoring the unanticipated severity of the fallout. He also tells the Times that Hamas is ready to consider proposals for disarmament: "We are ready to speak about every issue. Any issue that is put on the table, we need to speak about it." As the Qatar-based head of Hamas's foreign relations office, Mousa Abu Marzouk holds a prominent role within the group. His public reflection has yet to draw

an official response from Hamas, leaving analysts to ponder whether it reflects a broader sentiment or an individual viewpoint within the leadership during this protracted war. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates strongly condemns Israel's outrageous decision to expel members of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Palestine and ban their entry into the occupied Palestinian territory. Last night, Israeli airport authorities detained and subsequently expelled MEPs Rima Hassan and Lynn Boylan upon their arrival at Tel Aviv airport. Both parliamentarians were traveling as part of an official European Union delegation to Palestine. Israel, the occupying power, has no sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem nor legal right to deny access to Palestine,

especially to official representatives on diplomatic missions. This European delegation was scheduled to hold high-level meetings with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU representative, and members of civil society in both Israel and Palestine. By preventing their entry, Israel has not only obstructed diplomatic engagement but also shown blatant disregard for the European Parliament and the European people as a whole. Israel's decision to deny access is a calculated move to prevent European officials from witnessing firsthand the atrocities it is committing against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. This shameful act is an affront to democratic values and international diplomatic norms.

Promote Urdu language, envoy to US tells community members

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, has called on the Pakistani community to make future generations aware of Urdu literature and the country's rich cultural heritage. Speaking at an event held to pay tribute to subcontinent's great poet, Asadullah Khan Ghalib, he invited the community members to utilize the embassy's resources for holding functions dedicated to promoting cultural heritage. Organized by Bazm-e-Harfo-Sukhan—a subsidiary of Muslim Response USA—in Woodbridge, Virginia, the event was attended by prominent literary figures, community leaders, media representatives, and individuals from various walks of life. They included Dr. Abdullah, Khalid Hameed, Naghma Sabohi, Faiz Rehman, Rahila Firdous, Babar Sarwar, Rashid Ansari and Ali Shoaib Hassan. Emphasizing Ghalib's intellectual depth, the Ambassador called for preserving his legacy but also passing it on to future generations. In this regard, he stated that the new technology should be leveraged to protect and promote the Urdu language as well as cultural heritage. "Urdu is an integral part of our identity, and its promotion and development will strengthen Pakistaniyat," Ambassador Sheikh added. About promotion of the Urdu language and Pakistani culture in the United States, he said that raising global awareness about Pakistan's cultural heritage was a key aspect of public diplomacy. The Ambassador said that the Embassy had recently organized an exhibition of Islamic calligraphy to showcase Pakistani arts and literature. All events at the Embassy would be documented and published as Embassy Papers to ensure that such activities become part of historical records, he said. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Ambassador congratulated Dr. Arif Mahmood and other officials of Bazm-e-Harfo-Sukhan for their dedication, efforts, and successful organization of the event.—APP

Palestine condemns expulsion of European parliament team by Israel

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has condemned in the Strongest Terms Israel's Expulsion of European Parliament Delegation Members. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates strongly condemns Israel's outrageous decision to expel members of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Palestine and ban their entry into the occupied Palestinian territory. Last night, Israeli airport authorities detained and subsequently expelled MEPs Rima Hassan and Lynn Boylan upon their arrival at Tel Aviv airport. Both parliamentarians were traveling as part of an official European Union delegation to Palestine. Israel, the occupying power, has no sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem nor legal right to deny access to Palestine, especially to official representatives on diplomatic missions. This European delegation was scheduled to hold high-level meetings with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU representative, and members of civil society in both Israel and Palestine. By preventing their entry, Israel has not only obstructed diplomatic engagement but also shown blatant disregard for the European Parliament and the European people as a whole.—APP

Taiwan detains Chinese-crewed ship after subsea cable cut

TAIPEI: Taiwan detained a Chinese-crewed cargo ship on Tuesday after a subsea telecoms cable was severed off the island, the coast guard said. It is the latest in a series of Taiwanese undersea cable breakages, with previous incidents blamed on natural causes or Chinese ships. Taiwan's Chunghwa Telecom reported the cable between Penghu, a strategic island group in the sensitive Taiwan Strait, and Taiwan was disconnected early Tuesday, the Ministry of Digital Affairs said. The Togolese-registered ship Hongtai was intercepted in the area and escorted back to Taiwan, the coast guard said. The case was being "handled in accordance with national security-level principles," it added. "Whether the cause of the undersea cable breakage was intentional sabotage or a simple accident remains to be clarified by further investigation." The Hongtai, using a flag of convenience, was crewed by eight Chinese nationals and had Chinese funding, the coast guard said. Flags of convenience allow shipping companies to register their vessels in countries to which they have no link — for a fee and freedom from oversight. Beijing claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring it under its control. And Taiwan fears China could sever its communication links as part of an attempt to seize the island or blockade it. "It cannot be ruled out that it was a grey zone intrusion by China," the coast guard said, referring to actions that fall short of an act of war.—APP



Doha: President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman meeting with Hamas leadership on Tuesday

Palestinians struggle to restart their lives in the ruins of Gaza

BEIT LAHIYA, Gaza Strip: When night falls over northern Gaza, much of the cityscape of collapsed buildings and piled wreckage turns pitch black. Living inside the ruins of their home, Rawya Tamboura's young sons get afraid of the dark, so she turns on a flashlight and her phone's light to comfort them, for as long as the batteries last. Displaced for most of the 16-month-long war, Tamboura is back in her house. But it is still a frustrating shell of a life, she says: There is no running water, electricity, heat or services, and no tools to clear the rubble around them. Nearly 600,000 Palestinians flooded back into northern Gaza under the month-old ceasefire in Gaza, according to the United Nations. After initial relief and joy at being back at their homes — even if dam-

aged or destroyed — they now face the reality of living in the wreckage for the foreseeable future. "Some people wish the war had never ended, feeling it would have been better to be killed," Tamboura said. "I don't know what we'll do long-term. My brain stopped planning for the future." The six-week ceasefire is due to end Saturday, and it's uncertain what will happen next. There are efforts to extend the calm as the next phase is negotiated. If fighting erupts again, those who returned to the north could find themselves once again in the middle of it. A massive rebuilding job has no way to start. A report last week by the World Bank, UN and European Union estimated it will cost some \$53 billion to rebuild Gaza after entire neighborhoods were decimated by Israel's bombardment and of-

fensives against Hamas militants. At the moment, there is almost no capacity or funding to start significant rebuilding. A priority is making Gaza immediately livable. Earlier in February, Hamas threatened to hold up hostage releases unless more tents and temporary shelters were allowed into Gaza. It then reversed and accelerated hostage releases after Israel agreed to let in mobile homes and construction equipment. Humanitarian agencies have stepped up services, setting up free kitchens and water delivery stations, and distributing tents and tarps to hundreds of thousands across Gaza, according to the UN. President Donald Trump turned up the pressure by calling for the entire population of Gaza to be removed permanently so the US can take over the territory and redevelop it

for others. Rejecting the proposal, Palestinians say they want help to rebuild for themselves. Gaza City's municipality started fixing some water lines and clearing rubble from streets, said a spokesperson, Asem Alnabih. But it lacks heavy equipment. Only a few of its 40 bulldozers and five dump trucks still work, he said. Gaza is filled with over 50 million tons of rubble that would take 100 trucks working at full capacity over 15 years to clear away, the UN estimates. Families try to get by day by day. Tamboura's house in the northern town of Beit Lahiya was destroyed by an airstrike early in the war, so she and her family lived in the nearby Indonesian Hospital, where she worked as a nurse. After the ceasefire, they moved back into the only room in her house that was semi-intact. The ceiling

is partially collapsed, the walls are cracked; the surviving fridge and sink are useless with no water or electricity. They stack their sheets and blankets in a corner. Tamboura said her 12-year-old son lugs heavy containers of water twice a day from distribution stations. They also have to find firewood for cooking. The influx of aid means there is food in the markets and prices went down, but it remains expensive, she said. With the Indonesian Hospital too damaged to function, Tamboura walks an hour each day to work at the Kamal Adwan Hospital. She charges her and her husband's phones using the hospital generator. Many of Tamboura's relatives returned to find nothing left of their homes, so they live in tents on or next to the rubble that gets blown away by winter winds or flooded during rains, she said.—DNA

ICCI President commits to addressing business community's challenges

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has emphasized the urgent need for unprecedented unity among the business community to address their challenges, streamline the ease of doing business, and contribute to the country's economic well-being. He made these remarks while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office bearers of Super Market Traders Welfare Association, where Chairman Founder Group ICCI Tariq Sadiq administered the oath to President Shahzad Abbasi, General Secretary Saqib Abbasi, and others. The event was attended by a large number of business leaders, including former ICCI Presidents Zubair Ahmed Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Shaukat Masood, Ejaz Abbasi, and Khalid Javadi, as well as ICCI's Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry. Highlighting the challenges faced by traders, industries, and service sectors, Qureshi stressed that while ICCI is actively engaged in discussions with key decision-makers.—APP

Briefs

Pak to witness pleasant Ramadan's first half

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Director at Pakistan Meteorological Department Zaheer Ahmad Babar forecasted on Tuesday that the initial half of Ramadan will experience a combination of cloudy and sunny weather, offering maximum relief and a fresh spell of rain will commence from February 25, persisting until early March. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, Director Met said that the new spell of rain is expected to bring much-needed relief to the country, which has been experiencing dry weather conditions. The rain will also help to replenish water reservoirs and improve agricultural conditions, providing a boost to the country's agricultural sector, he added. According to Zaheer Ahmad Babar, the mix of cloudy and sunny weather will prevail during the first half of Ramadan, making the fasting period relatively more comfortable for the faithful. Responding to a query, Zaheer Ahmad Babar stated that a strong westerly weather system brought heavy rainfall to several parts of Punjab, northern areas, and Balochistan on Tuesday, accompanied by thunderstorms and snowfall in the mountainous regions.

Dr Zakir Naik meets JI Emir at Mansoorah

DNA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Hafiz Naemur Rehman met with famous religious scholar Dr Zakir Naik. The scholar was not able to visit Mansoorah due to security concerns last October. He reached the Lahore Airport on Tuesday where he was welcomed by JI Emir. The Emir briefed the guest about the services provided by the JI - ranged from religious to educational activities. JI Emir said the JI was a champion of Islamic unity and a great proponent of respect for all beliefs and belief in humanity. He said the JI wanted to bring about a prosperous revolution so that the country become a welfare state in a true sense.



BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with volunteers during his visit to ASAN KHIDMAT center in Baku, Azerbaijan - DNA

Pakistan, Russia to establish counter-terrorism dialogue

"We will promote bilateral contacts to further strengthen relations with Russia," the statement quoted Naqvi as saying. He noted that there were vast opportunities to expand cooperation between the countries in various areas

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Russia have agreed to enhance cooperation in countering terrorism and drug trafficking, with plans to activate an anti-terrorism dialogue between the two nations. The development came during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Russia's Ambassador to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorev, on Tuesday in Islamabad. The two sides acknowledged the importance of joint efforts in tackling global security threats and pledged to promote bilateral exchanges to strengthen diplomatic ties. A statement issued by the interior ministry after the meeting highlighted the consensus reached between Pakistan and Russia on bolstering security cooperation. "There was an agreement between both countries to activate an anti-terrorism dialogue," the statement read. The ministry emphasized that terrorism remains a global challenge, and multilateral cooperation is essential to effectively counter it. The discussions between Naqvi and Khorev extended beyond counterterrorism, covering other areas of security collaboration. The two leaders decided to enhance their countries' joint efforts in combating drug trafficking, another major challenge affecting regional stability. Ambassador Khorev extended an invitation to Pakistani officers to attend anti-narcotics training programs in Moscow and Siberia, underscoring Russia's commitment to sharing expertise and resources in this critical area. The two officials also agreed to maximize the bilateral exchange of delegations, which will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices between the two nations. Naqvi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepening ties with Russia, stat-

ing, "We will promote bilateral contacts to further strengthen relations with Russia." He noted that both countries have vast opportunities to expand cooperation in various domains, including trade, energy, education, and technology. The recent meeting follows a series of engagements between Pakistan and Russia aimed at fostering diplomatic and economic ties. Just last week, Ambassador Khorev met with a delegation led by Habib Ahmed, honorary consul of the Russian Federation in Lahore, where they discussed Pakistan-Russia relations, including student exchange programs and ways to boost tourism between the two countries. In October 2024, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin visited Islamabad for the 23rd summit of SCO. During this visit, Pakistan's then-Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Russia for supporting Pakistan's bid to join BRICS, a leading Global South bloc, marking a significant step toward deeper engagement on the global stage. Pakistan and Russia have also shown growing interest in enhancing economic cooperation. In October 2024, two agriculture companies from both countries signed barter deals to facilitate trade in agricultural products. Under this arrangement, Russia would export chickpeas and lentils to Pakistan in exchange for rice, mandarins, and potatoes. The agreement followed high-level delegation talks between the deputy prime ministers of both nations in Islamabad. Defense collaboration has also been a key aspect of Pakistan-Russia relations. In October 2024, both countries conducted a joint military exercise, codenamed Druzhba (Friendship) VII, demonstrating their commitment to security cooperation. Furthermore, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir to discuss future defense partnerships.

US sides with Russia in UN resolutions on Ukraine

NEW YORK: The US has twice sided with Russia in votes at the United Nations to mark the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, highlighting the Trump administration's change of stance on the war. First, the US opposed a European-drafted resolution condemning Moscow's actions and supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity - voting the same way as Russia and countries including North Korea and Belarus at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. Then the US drafted and voted for a resolution at the UN Security Council which called for an end to the conflict, but contained no criticism of Russia. The Security Council passed the resolution, but two key US allies, the UK and France, abstained after their attempts to amend the wording were vetoed. The UN resolutions were tabled as French President Emmanuel Macron visited President Donald Trump at the White House in an attempt to address their sharp differences over the war. On Thursday, British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer will likewise visit the new American leader. Trump's White House has upended the transatlantic alliance, currying favour with Moscow and casting doubt on America's long-term commitment to European security. That rift was laid bare on the floor of the 193-member UNGA on Monday as US diplomats pushed their limited resolution mourning the loss of life during the "Russia-Ukraine conflict" and calling for a swift end to it. European diplomats tabled a more detailed text, blaming Russia for its full-scale invasion, and supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. "We need to reconfirm that the aggression should be condemned and discredited, not rewarded," said Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Mariana Betsa. UNGA members backed the European resolution by 93 votes but, extraordinarily, the US did not abstain but actually voted against it, along with Russia, Israel, North Korea, Sudan, Belarus, Hungary and 11 other states, with 65 abstentions. The UNGA also passed the US resolution but only after it was amended to include language supporting Ukraine, which led to the US abstaining. Republican Senator John Curtis said he was "deeply troubled" by the vote "which put us on the same side as Russia and North Korea". - Agencies

Prime accused in Mustafa murder case earlier tortured girl

ASI deployed at Gizri Police Station allegedly facilitated Armaghan, says DIG Raza

NAZIR SIYAL

Karachi: In a shocking revelation, police investigators on Tuesday claimed that Armaghan, the prime accused in the Mustafa murder case, also subjected a girl to brutal torture earlier. According to media reports, the girl was hospitalised after the ordeal, but due to Armaghan's influence, police did not lodge a report in this regard. Citing call data, police Deputy Inspector General (DIG) South Asad Raza confirmed that ASI Nadeem was in contact with the accused.

"No action was taken against Armaghan over the incident due to the police officer," he added. The ASI was deployed at the Gizri Police Station as a "duty officer" when the incident occurred, the DIG added. "The ASI allegedly facilitated Armaghan," said Raza. Anti-violent Crime Cell (AVCC) has not taken the ASI into custody so far, he said, adding that an SP was instructed to probe into the matter. "Action will be taken against the suspect once the inquiry is completed," he added.

Syria president vows state 'monopoly' on weapons

FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria's new interim president pledged on Tuesday to ensure the state has a monopoly on weapons at a national dialogue conference on the country's future after Bashar al-Assad's overthrow. Ahmed al-Sharaa, whose Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham [HTS] led the rebel alliance that toppled Assad in December, also said he plans to establish a transitional justice committee. The conference, held at Damascus's presidential palace, marks the beginning of a crucial phase for Syria's future governance after years of devastating civil war. "The unity of arms and their monopoly by the state is not a luxury but a duty and an obligation," Sharaa told the gathering. "Syria is indivisible; it is a complete whole, and its strength lies in its unity."

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Petroleum dealers in KP threaten strike

Dealers fear move to create oil mafia, lead to market manipulation, urge govt to drop it in broader interest of economy

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Voicing grave reservations over the proposed petroleum deregulation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Petroleum Dealers and Cartage Association (KPPDCA) has warned of a province-wide strike if the proposal was not reversed by the next week. Last week, Federal Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik stated that the government was planning to implement a deregulation policy, enabling oil marketing companies (OMCs) to compete by setting their fuel prices. "This move will create an oil mafia and lead to market manipulation," said KPPDCA president Gul Nawaz Afridi, addressing a press conference in the KP's provincial capital. If implemented, it will allow OMCs to sell fuels at rates lower than the government's fixed prices to expand their market share - a prospect which has sparked concerns over its potential fallout on local refineries and petroleum dealers. Afridi said the policy would grant oil marketing companies (OMCs) the power to act in their interest, potentially increasing smuggling and hoarding manifold. "The country's economy relies heavily on the taxes collected from the petroleum industry, and any mismanagement in the sector could have serious consequences," Afridi said and warned that the deregulation could undermine transparency in the oil industry, causing disruptions. After building his case, the KPPDCA chief announced that if their demands were not met by March 3, petroleum dealers across the province would go on strike for an indefinite period of time. Afridi's statement comes a day after Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) Chairman Abdul Sami Khan's similarly strong reaction to the government's announcement. The PPDA chief, in a letter to the petroleum minister, expressed surprise and concern regarding his recent announcement about the deregulation of the oil industry. Referring to a previous meeting, he mentioned that it was conveyed that any move towards deregulation would not proceed without consultation with the PPDA, which is a major stakeholder in the petroleum industry, with a network of over 15,000 retail outlets across Pakistan and significant investments amounting to trillions of rupees. "[The]PPDA condemn[s] this unilateral decision by the government. This decision has been made without our input, contradicting the assurance given by the minister in our last meeting that no actions would be taken without prior discussions with us", Khan stated.

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