



# Islamabad POST

Friday, February 28, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Japan supports rural education in Islamabad with \$44,025 grant**

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**PKK leader tells group to lay down arms**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Skipper Rizwan vows to 'learn' from mistakes**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Crown Prince conferred Nishan-e-Pakistan

# Pakistan, UAE ink MoUs to boost trade ties

President Zardari, PM Shehbaz receive Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed upon his arrival in Islamabad

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The government and the United Arab Emirates on Thursday signed five accords to boost bilateral cooperation in different fields on the occasion of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's first official visit to Pakistan. Pakistan and the UAE share close diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties. The UAE is one of Pakistan's largest trading partners in the Middle East and a major source of remittances, with a large Pakistani expatriate population living and working there. The documents were signed in different fields, including banking, railways, mining and infrastructural investment. The crown prince and the prime minister witnessed the ceremony as officials from both sides exchanged the pre-signed documents of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding for cooperation in various fields. Federal cabinet members, Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir and members of the UAE delegation were also present. "We held the most fruitful discussions and resolved to further strengthen our excellent bilateral ties, through enhanced trade, investment & energy cooperation. With the encouragement and support of the UAE's royal family, Pakistan-UAE ties are growing from strength to strength!" PM Shehbaz said in a post on X. Upon his arrival at the Prime Minister House in Islamabad, the Abu Dhabi crown prince was presented with a guard of honour by a contingent of the armed forces, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The national anthems of both countries were played, while a cultural troupe representing all four provinces also performed on the occasion. The crown prince landed earlier today at Rawalpindi's Nur Khan Airbase as he began his one-day official visit, which is focused on investment and economic cooperation.

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## Aurangzeb reaffirms commitment to structural reforms

Jefferies Investors Call on Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Jefferies Investors, led by Ms. Alia Moubayed from Jefferies, called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in Islamabad today. The delegation included Mr. Vasil Nikolov from HBK Investment Management, Mr. Khaled Sellami from Barings, Mr. Xin Xu from Ashmore, Mr. Salman Ahmed from Fidelity, Mr. Khurram Sheikh from Jefferies, and Mr. Mahmood Ali Shah Bukhari from Ktrade Securities. The delegation discussed Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook, investment climate, and ongoing economic reforms. They invited the Finance Minister to the Pakistani Investors Day in London, scheduled for May 2025, as part of efforts to strengthen engagement with global investors. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted Pakistan's economic stabilization, emphasizing the government's commitment to structural reforms in taxation, energy, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and privatization. He noted that

Continued on Page 06

## UAE president to release inmates

DNA

RIYADH: The UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan has ordered the release of 1,295 inmates from the nation's correctional institutions, state news agency WAM reported on Thursday. Sheikh Mohamed has also pledged to settle any financial obligations of the inmates in a gesture to mark Ramadan. The UAE president wants to ensure those released can have a fresh start in life, and alleviate any hardship faced by their families. The aim is to foster stability within their households and the local community, especially during Ramadan, WAM reported.

## Boat incident Bodies of 6 perished repatriated

Facilitation desks were set up at the airport for the grieving families

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The mortal remains of six Pakistani nationals, who tragically lost their lives in a boat incident off the coast of Zawiyah city, Libya, arrived in Islamabad today (Thursday) via Flight No. QR614 at 07:25 hours (PST). The repatriation was facilitated by the Government of Pakistan, following formalities completed by the Pakistani mission in Tripoli, Libya. The deceased individuals were among the 16 Pakistanis whose bodies were recovered after the tragic incident. Minister for Housing and Works Riaz Hussain Pirzada personally received the bodies upon arrival, ensuring that all necessary

Continued on Page 06

## Pak calls for ceasefire in Sudan

He warns against attempts to establish parallel governments in Sudan, saying it will fragment the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan called for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan on Wednesday, stressing the need for a political resolution to the nearly two-year conflict that has displaced about 12 million people, roughly a quarter of the African state's population.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring the award of Nishan-i-Pakistan upon the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

## Despite 'hurdles' Opp holds anti-govt conference in on second day

Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar vows to continue 'mission' come what many

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The coalition of several opposition parties, under the banner of the Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP), held their two-day conference after participating leaders forced their way into the hotel hosting the moot. The two-day conference took place at a local hotel in Islamabad on the second and final day, with the opposition accusing the government of pressuring the hotel administration to cancel the event's permission.

Continued on Page 06

## Congressmen urge top US diplomat to free Imran

Former PM Khan has been the victim of massive judicial abuse, not unlike President Trump: US lawmakers

FOTREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: Terming incarcerated prime minister Imran Khan a victim

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

**LHC moved against delay in Punjab LB polls**

The petition argued that delaying local government elections violated the spirit of accountability

DNA

LAHORE: The decision to delay local government elections in Punjab has been challenged in the Lahore High Court. Jamaat-e-Islami Lahore Emir Ziauddin Ansari filed the petition through Advocate Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali, naming the federal government, the Election Commission, and other relevant authorities as respondents. The petition argued that delaying local government elections violated the spirit of accountability and local self-governance as enshrined in the constitution. The absence of elected local bodies has led to administrative disorder, misallocation of resources, and halted development.

## Ramazan moon sighting meeting today

Central and zonal committees to finalise recommendations after reviewing moon sighting reports

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will convene tomorrow (Friday) to see the Ramazan moon. The central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's meeting will be held in Peshawar, while zonal committees will meet at their respective headquarters across the country.

**Champions Trophy**  
Australia vs Afghanistan  
02:00 pm PST

## President administers oath Cabinet swells to 46 as new ministers sworn-in

PML-N-led coalition govt inducts 24 new members to federal cabinet

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government expanded its federal cabinet after 24 new federal ministers, state ministers and advisers took oath at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on Thursday. President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath to the new federal cabinet members in the ceremony attended by PM Shehbaz, Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gilani and senior officials. The induction of 12 federal ministers, 9 state ministers, and three advisers to the federal cabinet saw the inclusion of the coalition parties in the PM Shehbaz-led government. Hanif Abbasi, Moeen Watto, Mustafa Kamal, Sardar Yousuf, Aurangzeb Katchi, Rana Mubashir, Raza Hayat Hiraj, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry were among the newcomers who took oath as federal ministers. Additionally, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Shaza Fatima, Junaid Anwar, and Khalid Magsi, have also taken oaths as federal ministers. Talal Chaudhry, Barrister Aqeel Malik, Malik Rasheed,

Continued on Page 06

## Pak democracy ranking 'drops in 2024

Country's score dropped from 3.25 in 2023 to 2.84, shows Economist Intelligence Unit's latest democracy index

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The new Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has claimed that Pakistan's democracy ranking dropped from 3.25 in 2023 to 2.84 in 2024 amid political chaos marked by election upheavals. According to the report on global democracy rankings, Pakistan witnessed violence ahead of and on polling day, 8 February 2024. "The most popular politician, Imran Khan, whose own democratic credentials are questionable,

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan, Uzbekistan vow to solidify defense cooperation

Major General Burkhanov Akhmad Jamalovich, Deputy Minister of Defence and Commander of the Air Defence Forces and Air Force of the Republic of Uzbekistan, calls on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza

RAWALPINDI: Major General Burkhanov Akhmad Jamalovich, Deputy Minister of Defence and Commander of the Air Defence Forces and Air Force of the Republic of Uzbekistan, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of bilateral strategic interest, with particular focus on evolving regional security situation. Both sides expressed keen interest in strengthening bilateral military-to-military cooperation. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented Guard of Honour to the visiting dignitary. - DNA



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## Moot commemorates 33th anniversary of Khojaly Genocide

ISLAMABAD: MUSLIM Institute in collaboration with Embassy of Azerbaijan organized a seminar titled "Khojaly Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing: A Crime Against Humanity" at National Library Islamabad. Distinguished speakers include Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu, Dean Social Sciences Air University Maj. Gen. (R) Zahid Mahmood, Ambassador R Naila Chohan, and Public Relations Associate MUSLIM Institute Asif Tanveer Awan. Speaker at the event reflected on the historical tragedy and emphasized the importance of justice and global solidarity. In a series of forced deportations, nearly 150,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled by Armenia between 1948 and 1953. Similarly, in 1988, 250,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands, transforming Armenia into a mono-ethnic state. The Khojaly genocide, an unforgettable tragedy of the 20th century, was a direct consequence of this expansionist policy of Armenia. In February 1992, Armenian forces launched an attack on the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly and in this brutal massacre, 613 innocent Azerbaijani civilians lost their lives, including 106 women and 83 children. Eight families were completely wiped out, and 476 people were left permanently disabled. Over 1,275 individuals were taken hostage, many of whom remain missing to this day. International media reports and medical examinations documented the inhumane treatment of victims, with acts of brutality that shocked the conscience of the world.

## IGP orders transparent and merit-based investigations

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, presided over a meeting on Thursday at the Central Police Office with officers of the investigation wing. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Muhammad Arslan Shahzaib, investigation teams, and other senior officers. He said the IGP Rizvi reviewed the investigation system and ongoing cases, directing officers to ensure efficient case resolution and the swift arrest of nominated suspects. IGP Rizvi said investigations should be conducted using modern technology to meet the demands of the evolving era. Officers were instructed to ensure all cases are handled transparently and on merit. IGP further said the revamping of the investigation wing aims to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. "Criminal cases should be investigated thoroughly and fairly, ensuring transparency so that criminals can be brought to justice and crime eradicated from society," he added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, Present crest to H.E. Maciej Pisarski, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland during the 2nd meeting of FPCCI Central Standing Committee on Business Development Europe and North America. Mr. Rashid Humayon Convener of the Committee organized the meeting. Mr. Tariq Khan Jadoon, Vice President FPCCI, Commercial Counselor Polish Embassy, Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Coordination FPCCI and other members of FPCCI, Presidents of Chambers and Conveners of FPCCI Standing Committees are also present in the meeting.—DNA

# Pak scales up climate resilience with DAP for Badin, DG Khan

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: In a significant step toward strengthening climate resilience, a national workshop was held to consult on the District Adaptation Plans (DAPs) for Badin, Sindh, and Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab. Rephrase These plans align with Pakistan's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023-2030, which provides a strategic framework for integrating climate adaptation into national and local policies. With Pakistan ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change, facing extreme heat, water scarcity, glacial melt, and increasingly frequent disasters, the urgency to act has never been greater. The devastating 2022 floods alone displaced 33 million people and resulted in an 8% GDP loss, compounding economic

challenges such as inflation, debt, and currency depreciation. Meanwhile, rising sea levels and salinity intrusion continue to threaten the Indus Delta, reducing freshwater availability, damaging agricultural lands, and increasing cyclone risks. "The newly developed District Adaptation Plans (DAPs) aim to provide localized solutions by conducting comprehensive climate risk assessments, aligning with district development priorities, and implementing nature-based solutions such as reforestation, wetland restoration, and sustainable agricultural practices", said by Lt. Gen Nadeem Ahmed, Regional Advisor ADPC. These plans emphasize community participation, ensuring that local knowledge and the needs of marginalized groups are central to adaptation strategies. Ad-

ditionally, the plans highlight the need for climate-resilient infrastructure, improved flood risk management, and financial mobilization through diverse sources, including government budgets, international climate finance, and private sector investments. The Badin District Adaptation Plan addresses the region's vulnerabilities as a coastal and agricultural hub, which is increasingly impacted by floods, salinity intrusion, and extreme weather events. Key adaptation strategies include the introduction of salt-tolerant rice varieties, enhanced water governance, and the restoration of coastal ecosystems to mitigate environmental risks. Similarly, the Dera Ghazi Khan District Adaptation Plan focuses on the challenges posed by hill torrents, soil erosion, and rising temperatures. Proposed ad-

aptation measures include flood channel reinforcements, resilient infrastructure development, and enhanced water resource management to protect local communities and sustain agricultural productivity. As climate risks continue to escalate, the successful implementation of these District Adaptation Plans will be critical for ensuring long-term resilience. These adaptation measures will play a crucial role in advancing Pakistan's climate commitments under the Paris Agreement and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Provincial governments and local administrations, with support from the federal government and development partners, need to take the lead in implementing the recommended adaptation strategies. "We must act swiftly to scale up adaptation measures

that protect lives, secure livelihoods, and ensure sustainable development," stated Muhammad Farooq, Senior Joint Secretary MoCC&EC. With a strong policy framework in place, these adaptation initiatives will serve as a model for other vulnerable districts across Pakistan, paving the way for a more climate-resilient future. The consultation was attended by officials from Federal and provincial ministries, district governments, donor organizations, UN, subject experts, I/NGOS and academia, etc. Moving forward, ADPC, the World Bank, through the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) for South Asia Project, and its partners will work towards operationalizing these adaptation plans, ensuring that communities in Badin and Dera Ghazi Khan have the necessary resources and institutional support to build resilience against climate change impacts.

## 6th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) and the Services Chiefs, pay tribute to the unwavering courage, professionalism, and sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces on the solemn occasion of the 6th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort. Launched on 27 February 2019, Operation Swift Retort was a resolute and measured response to India's unwarranted aggression, reaffirming Pakistan's unyielding commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, said an ISPR news release. The operation not only demonstrated the operational excellence and preparedness of Pakistan's Armed Forces but also underscored their ability to effectively deter aggression and immediately re-establish deterrence while maintaining complete operational dominance throughout the engagement. On this occasion, the JCSC and Service Chiefs reiterated their steadfast commitment to ensuring Pakistan's national security and stability while continuing efforts to foster regional peace. They reaffirmed that Pakistan's Armed Forces remain ever vigilant and fully prepared to counter any threat to the nation, upholding the trust and confidence reposed in them by the people of Pakistan. With unwavering resolve, Pakistan's Armed Forces stand ready to defend the motherland while actively contributing to regional and global peace initiatives, in line with Pakistan's enduring pursuit of stability and harmony.

## Romania opens Honorary Consulate in Peshawar to strengthen bilateral ties

**DNA**  
PESHAWAR: The Embassy of Romania in Pakistan proudly announces the opening of the Honorary Consulate of Romania in Peshawar, covering the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) region. This significant milestone marks a new chapter in strengthening diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties between Romania and Pakistan. His Excellency Dr. Dan Stoescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, inaugurated the Honorary Consulate in a special ceremony attended by distinguished

During the event, Mr. Masood Ahmad Qazi was for mally appointed as the Honorary Consul of Romania in Peshawar. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoescu emphasized the importance of the new consulate in fostering bilateral trade, investment, and academic collaboration. "This Honorary Consulate will play a crucial role in strengthening relations between Romania and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, promoting economic and cultural exchanges, and providing support to Romanian and Pakistani citizens," he stated. Mr.



guests, government officials, business leaders, and members of the diplomatic community.

Masood Ahmad Qazi, the newly appointed Honorary Consul, expressed his commitment to fos-

tering closer ties between Romania and KP. "I am honored to serve as Romania's Honorary Consul in Peshawar. I look forward to working towards enhancing cooperation in business, education, and cultural exchanges between our two nations," he said. The establishment of the Honorary Consulate in Peshawar reflects Romania's commitment to deepening its engagement with Pakistan, particularly in sectors such as trade, higher education, technology, and tourism. The consulate

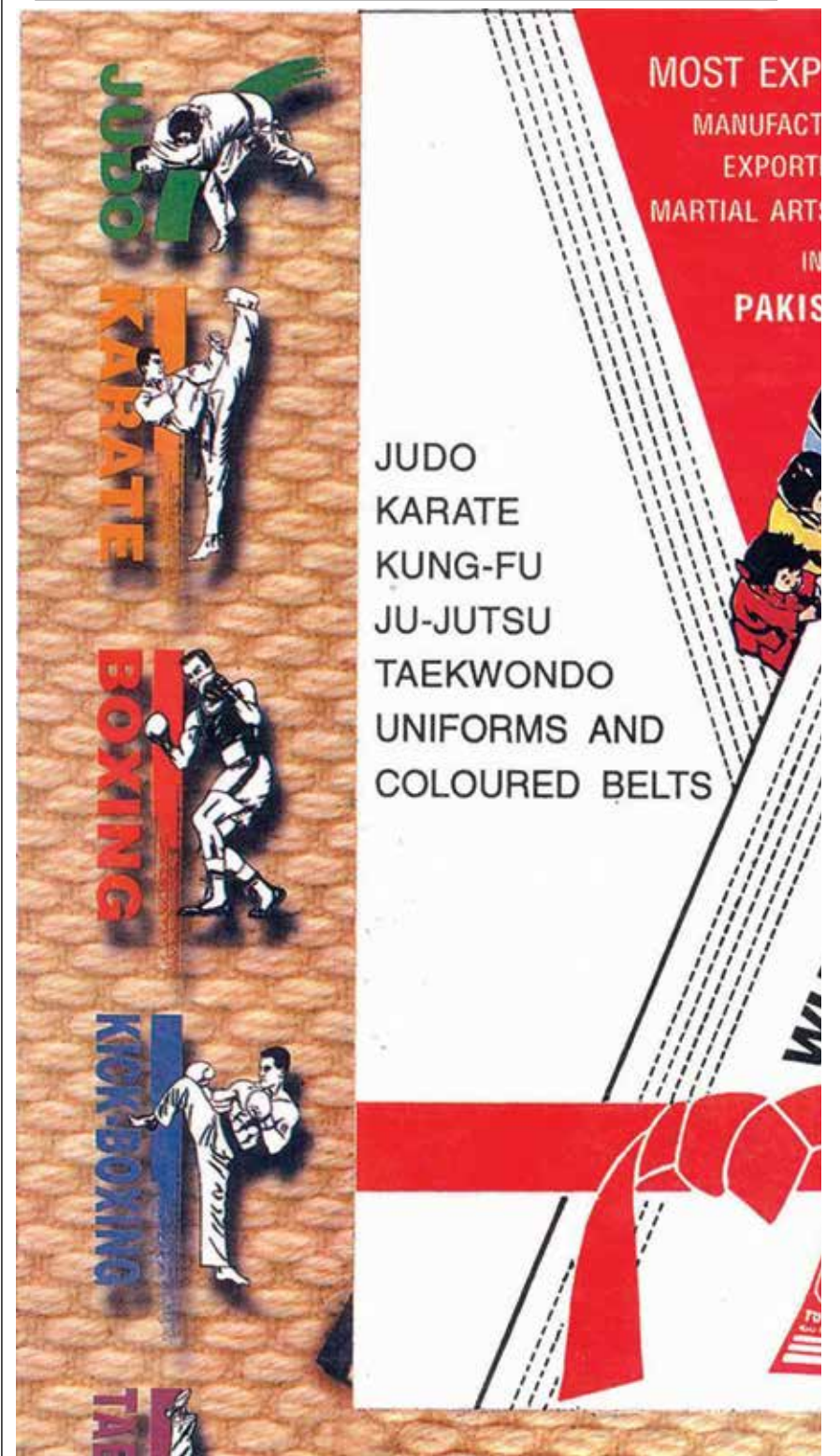
will facilitate diplomatic and business interactions, offering support to Romanian companies looking to invest in KP while assisting Pakistani businesses seeking opportunities in Romania. The event concluded with discussions on future initiatives to expand cooperation and enhance people-to-people connections. The Romanian Honorary Consulate in Peshawar is expected to play a pivotal role in furthering the longstanding friendship between the two countries.

## ICT admin cracks down on aggressive begging

ISLAMABAD: As Ramadan approaches, residents of Islamabad are voicing frustration over persistent issues with professional beggars and rising prices. They were growing increasingly frustrated with the presence of professional beggars in public spaces, particularly around shopping areas and open-air restaurants. Many had reported that these individuals often create disturbances, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, when they become more active and persistent in their demands for charity. This has led to discomfort among citizens who are trying to go about their daily routines or enjoy meals outdoors. In response to these concerns, the district administration have stepped up efforts to address the

sue. The administration has launched a crackdown on aggressive begging, aiming to reduce the presence of these individuals in high-traffic areas. While the move has been welcomed by some, others argue that a more long-term solution is needed to address the root causes of begging, such as poverty and lack of employment opportunities. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the district administration has also taken action against price gouging ahead of Ramadan. In this regard, the Assistant Commissioner recently led a raid in a local vegetable market, resulting in the arrest of six shopkeepers who were found charging prices higher than the government-approved rates. This crackdown is part of a broader effort to ensure that essential goods

remain affordable during the holy month, when demand typically surges. The arrests have sent a strong message to vendors across the city, with officials warning that strict measures will be taken against anyone found violating price regulations. The government has also urged citizens to report any instances of overcharging, emphasizing the importance of fair pricing during a time when many families are preparing for Ramadan festivities. As citizens prepare for Ramadan, the dual challenges of aggressive begging and price gouging remain at the forefront of public concern. While the recent crackdowns have provided some relief, it is clear that sustained efforts will be required to create a more equitable.—APP



## Climate change a crisis, not environmental issue: Kundi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday emphasized that climate change is not merely an environmental issue but a crisis affecting every aspect of life, including the economy and public health. Speaking at an international conference titled "Environmental Actions for the Future: Empowering Children and Women in Climate Resilience", organized by the renowned international organization KNH, the Governor highlighted the growing impact of rising temperatures on biodiversity, food security, and infrastructure. He stressed the need for im-

mediate and long-term policy measures to combat climate change, warning that failure to act would exacerbate existing challenges. Addressing the conference as the chief guest, Kundi shed light on environmental protection, sustainable development, and the role of women and children in these efforts. The conference aimed to highlight the effects of climate change on women and children, showcase successful climate initiatives led by them, and bring together policymakers, experts, and civil society organizations to discuss solutions. As part of the event, an art exhibition by students from various educational institutions was held, depicting climate-related issues. Several experts,

representatives from international organizations, embassies, and other relevant institutions participated in the seminar. KNH's Country Manager, Kiran Shehzadi, along with other speakers, underscored the importance of including children and women in climate action, saying that lasting solutions are impossible without their active participation. Governor Kundi remarked that climate change is a global challenge, with developing nations being particularly vulnerable. He said that Pakistan is among the countries most affected by climate change and called for collective efforts to tackle this crisis. He emphasized that while women and children are among the most affected by climate

change, they can also play a key role in the fight against it. He urged educational institutions, government and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to collaborate on strategies for environmental education, sustainable development, green energy, and forest conservation. He also called on universities and research institutions to focus on eco-friendly technologies and engage the younger generation in environmental conservation efforts. The Governor concluded by encouraging young people to contribute to environmental protection through scientific research and innovation, stressing that universities should play a leading role in promoting green technologies and fostering cli-

mate-conscious youth. Meanwhile, Faisal Karim Kundi, has emphasized the vital role of educated women in a society's progress and prosperity. Speaking at an event organized by the Islamabad Founders Lions Club in honour of International Women's Day, he highlighted the increasing contributions of women across various fields, driving economic, social, and cultural development. The event was attended by Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar, club president Muhammad Naveed Malik, and prominent women from different sectors. The Governor distributed awards to women for their outstanding achievements and stressed the need for greater female participation in all walks of life.

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### FEBRUARY

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



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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
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Shifa International.....	4603666



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TMA.....	5770886
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### Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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# 'Pak and Iraq keen to build upon bilateral cooperation,

Ayatollah Izz Uddin who hails from the influential Al-Hakim family of Iraq expressed desire for enhanced interaction with Pakistan in multiple sectors. While highlighting Iraq's progress in post-2003 period, Ayatollah Izz Uddin admitted Iraq's difficult journey which was marked by sectarian clashes, rise of terrorism, plunging economy and political instability

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Speaking at a seminar at the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad, Ayatollah Izz Uddin Al-Hakim, a high ranking religious scholar heading an Iraqi ulema delegation to Pakistan stated that Iraq was keen to expand relations with Pakistan in all areas, including promotion of interfaith harmony. The delegation comprised Iraqi professors, scholars, academicians and researchers. Ayatollah Izz Uddin who hails from the influential Al-Hakim family of Iraq expressed desire for enhanced interaction with Pakistan in multiple sectors. While highlighting Iraq's progress in post-2003 period, Ayatollah Izz Uddin admitted Iraq's difficult journey which was marked by sectarian clashes, rise of terrorism, plunging economy and political instability. He, however, expressed optimism about Iraq's future given that the country was inordinately blessed with natural resources. Ayatollah Izz Uddin also noted that Iraqi society, comprising various faiths and ethnicities, laid great emphasis on mutu-



al respect, and there was no space for sectarian strife. Highlighting his country's geo strategic importance in the region, Ayatollah Izz Uddin noted that Iraq's geography provided opportunity for the Gulf states, Iran and Pakistan to connect with Turkey and Europe.

While expressing satisfaction at the positive trajectory of bilateral relations he also stressed upon the need for promoting people to people contacts. President IRS, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, reciprocated Ayatollah's sentiments and

underlined the huge potential that exists for enhanced cooperation between Pakistan and Iraq. He also noted that the two countries had a similar vision of connectivity and should join hands. While recognizing the importance of expanding bilateral economic

relations, Ambassador Jauhar noted that greater interaction between the private sectors was the way forward. He also expressed willingness to work with scholars and research institutions in Iraq to foster research collaboration and promote interfaith harmony.

## Zimbabwe envoy calls for enhanced trade coop

RAWALPINDI: His Excellency T.M.J. Abu-Basutu, Ambassador of Zimbabwe, accompanied by W.T. Chiyangwa, Head of Chancery, visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and met with RCCI President Usman Shaukat. The meeting was also attended by Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, executive committee members, and other RCCI representatives. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral trade ties, fostering economic cooperation, and identifying key sectors for collaboration. Ambassador Abu-Basutu encouraged the business community to explore opportunities for joint ventures, investments, and trade, particularly in renewable energy (solar and wind) and tourism. Commending RCCI's role in promoting trade and facilitating new business ventures, the ambassador expressed his full support for RCCI's Green Road Initiative and other climate change efforts. He emphasized the importance of sustainable economic partnerships and urged both sides to work closely in expanding trade avenues between Zimbabwe and Pakistan.—APP

## NUST hosts water conservation walk

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) successfully organized a Water Conservation Walk on Thursday aimed at raising awareness about the importance of preserving water resources and promoting sustainable practices among students, faculty, and the wider community. The event saw enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members, and environmental enthusiasts, all united in their commitment to addressing the global water crisis. The walk was graced by the esteemed presence of Rector NUST, Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif who emphasized the critical role of educational institutions in fostering environmental stewardship. In his keynote address, Dr. Latif highlighted the urgency of water conservation in the face of growing water scarcity and climate change. "Water is a precious resource, and its conservation is not just a responsibility but a necessity for our survival," said Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif. "At NUST, we are committed to leading by example and inspiring our students and community to adopt sustainable practices that ensure a better future for generations to come", he said. The event featured a walkathon across the NUST campus, followed by interactive sessions and awareness booths showcasing innovative water-saving technologies and practices. Participants were also educated on simple yet effective measures to conserve water in their daily lives.—APP

## PIDE's moot concludes after in-depth policy discussions

ISLAMABAD: A two-day conference organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) under the RASTA Competitive Grants Program concluded on Thursday, following in-depth discussions on transformative policy research and development strategies. During the 5th Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) conference, as many as 24 research papers were presented across six technical sessions. Conference participants covered various topics, including "Tech for Competition and Growth," "Fiscal Management," "Sludge and Development," "Human Capital and Opportunities," "Sustainable Development," and "Political Governance." Building on the momentum from previous sessions, the concluding day's discussions centered on some of the country's most pressing socio-economic challenges, including fiscal policy, environmental sustainability, technological innovation and labor market dynamics. In closing, the RASTA-PIDE management extended gratitude to all contributors who have been integral to the success of this initiative. They praised all presenters for their high-quality research and engaging presentations, which not only addressed critical policy gaps but also elevated academic discourse to new heights. The management noted that the methodologies and findings presented surpassed the standards often observed in PhD dissertations and university research, demonstrating the depth and impact of the work being carried out under RASTA-PIDE. Reflecting on the success of the conference, RASTA-PIDE emphasized the critical role of evidence-based policymaking in shaping Pakistan's future. "Today's discussions have reinforced the need for inclusive, forward-thinking policies that align with Pakistan's evolving socio-economic landscape. The RASTA platform continues to foster rigorous academic research that directly informs policymaking, bridging the gap between research and policy implementation." The management also said PIDE remained committed to fostering a collaborative, research-driven policy environment, ensuring that innovative ideas translate into actionable policy solutions for Pakistan's sustainable development.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of PIDE, Dr. Nadeem Javaid, presents a commemorative souvenir to Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on the occasion of the 5th PIDE RASTA Conference.

## Condolence reference held in memory of journalist, poet Asar Ali

ISLAMABAD: A condolence reference was held in memory of renowned journalist, poet, and senior columnist Rana Asar Ali Chauhan, organized by the Pakistan Cultural Forum and the National Press Club. The event was presided over by former Secretary of Information Syed Anwar Mahmood, while the host was Chairman of the Pakistan Cultural Forum, Zafar Bakhtawari. The special guests included Chairman PEMRA Saleem Baig, former Secretary of Information Ashfaq Gondal, and Convener of the World Minorities Alliance J. Salik. The event was attended by Secretary of the Ideology of Pakistan Institute Lahore Imran Gill, President of the National Press Club Azhar Jatoi, the late journalist's brother Liaqat Chauhan, ICCI Executive Members Rohail Anwar Butt and Nisar Mirza, President of Jinnah Super Market Asad Aziz, Ashraf Farzand, Khalid Chaudhry, along with members of the business community, renowned journalists, analysts, and other prominent personalities. The participants paid tribute to the journalistic services of the late Rana Asar Ali Chauhan. In his address, President of the session Syed Anwar Mahmood stated that Rana Asar Ali Chauhan was a true patriot who always prioritized Pakistan's interests and promoted national unity through his writings. His journalism was a symbol of honesty, courage, and truth. He always stood by the truth and never succumbed to any pressure. His writings reflected journalistic values and served as a guiding light for today's journalists. Chairman PEMRA Saleem Baig said that Rana Asar Ali Chauhan always promoted independent and impartial journalism. Through his journalism, he exposed anti-state elements and consistently raised his voice for Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity. Former Secretary of Information Ashfaq Gondal remarked that fearless and principled journalists like Rana Asar Ali Chauhan serve as a beacon of light for modern journalism. Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted that Rana Asar Ali Chauhan's journalism was a testament to integrity, bravery, and truth. He always defended Pakistan's ideological frontiers and played a role in upholding the nation's honor through his journalistic contributions. His writings reflected patriotism, addressing national issues and offering solutions for the country's progress. He always upheld journalistic principles and spoke the truth. His contributions will always be remembered. Through journalism and literature, he highlighted social and national issues and always stood by what was right. His writings were a reflection of national consciousness. J. Salik emphasized that journalists like Rana Asar Ali Chauhan are valuable assets to any nation. His services should be officially recognized, and he should be honored with a national award. He always raised his voice for resolving public issues, which is a great service.—DNA

## SECP holds online consultation sessions

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Thursday conducted two online consultation sessions 'Review of Research Analyst Regulations' and 'Improvement in conduct of Corporate Briefing Sessions (CBS)'. In addition to in-person sessions held in the Pakistan Stock Exchange auditorium, these sessions were organized to coordinate larger audience through online for engaging stakeholders across Pakistan, said a news release. Key industry stakeholders, including research analysts, brokerage houses, asset managers, and representatives of listed companies engaged in discussions with the senior management to help shape a more robust regulatory framework. During the Research Analyst Regulations consultation session, SECP highlighted that the proposed amendments aim to benchmark the regulations with international best practices, remove any interpretational ambiguities and promote objectivity in research reports. The participants were encouraged to provide their feedback particularly to address their concerns and suggestions for further refinement in the regulations. In the CBS consultation session, SECP underscored the importance of listed companies holding CBS in true letter and spirit to reduce information asymmetry. Valuable feedback from the session will refine the CBS framework, contributing to a more transparent and robust capital market ecosystem in Pakistan. These consultation sessions reinforce SECP's commitment to engage with industry stakeholders to strengthen regulations, enhance transparency, corporate governance, and improve investor relations among listed companies.—APP

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## Briefs

## Workshop to promote Pakistan's maritime development

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Maritime Affairs is set to host the National Maritime Policy Workshop 2025 here on Friday (February 28), bringing together key government officials, parliamentarians, maritime professionals, industry experts, international stakeholders, academics, journalists, and think tank representatives to discuss strategies for strengthening Pakistan's maritime sector. The discussions will focus on Pakistan's National Maritime Policy (NMP) 2025, covering key areas such as marine pollution control, shipbuilding, port development, coastal tourism, and international maritime co-operation. Additionally, the workshop will explore ways to expand the blue economy, enhance maritime security, and strengthen Pakistan's role in global trade, said a press release.

The Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, will be the Chief Guest, emphasizing the government's commitment to maritime development and policy-making. This workshop aims to define a roadmap for sustainable growth in Pakistan's maritime industry and enhance collaboration between public and private stakeholders.—APP

## AIOU launches spring tree plantation campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) under the Green Pakistan initiative will conduct a nationwide tree plantation campaign through its regional offices, stated the university's Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood while inaugurating the tree plantation campaign on Thursday. The campaign for the year 2025 was officially launched with tree planting at the "Students Park," located adjacent to the Science Block and Project Directorate Building. Participating in the event were Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University; Professor Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah, Vice Chancellor Punjab University; Dr. Waseem Qazi, Vice Chancellor Iqra University and Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, Vice Chancellor Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Dewan University, Karachi. On this occasion, the Vice Chancellors emphasized the importance of tree planting for the country, stating that they are making every possible effort to fulfill this crucial need. They highlighted that Pakistan is among the most vulnerable nations to climate change, and by participating in this plantation campaign, the country's youth can help mitigate this risk. At the end of the event, the Vice Chancellors and other participants prayed for the security and prosperity of the country.—APP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam here on Thursday highlighted the critical role of women in combating climate change, stressing the importance of gender-inclusive climate policies. Speaking at a seminar titled "Empower Her Empower Pakistan," Romina emphasized that women often have less access to essential resources, decision-making platforms, and adaptive technologies, which makes them more vulnerable to climate-related shocks. She called for the recognition of this disparity as the first step in designing effective, inclusive climate policies. "Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it is a social and

Khojaly Massacre  
Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center hosts open exhibition at NUML

Mr. Tamerlan Khalilov, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, delivered the opening remarks. He expressed his gratitude to NUML leadership for facilitating the event and warmly welcomed the presence of faculty members and students

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized an open exhibition to commemorate the Khojaly Massacre, one of the most tragic events in Azerbaijani history. Mr. Tamerlan Khalilov, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, delivered the opening remarks. He expressed his gratitude to NUML leadership for facilitating the event and warmly welcomed the presence of faculty members and students. He spoke about the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, highlighting how Pakistan has always stood by Azerbaijan, especially during the First and Second Karabakh Wars. He acknowledged Pakistan's unwavering support, noting



that it was one of the few countries that never recognized Armenia as a state. During his address, Mr. Khalilov also discussed the significance of the official visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to Azerbaijan. He emphasized the importance of further strengthening the already strong ties

between the two nations, particularly in areas of mutual interest. He noted that such high-level visits play a crucial role in consolidating the partnership between the two countries, fostering greater diplomatic, economic, and cultural cooperation. Speaking about the Khojaly

Massacre, he highlighted the brutality inflicted upon innocent Azerbaijani civilians on February 26, 1992, by Armenian forces and the 366th CIS regiment. He described it as the deadliest atrocity of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in which 613 civilians lost their lives, including



106 women, 63 children, and 70 elderly individuals. Additionally, 1,275 people were taken captive and subjected to torture, while the fate of 150 individuals remains unknown to this day. He emphasized the need to remember and honor the victims of this horrific tragedy and to continue

raising awareness about the injustices faced by the Azerbaijani people. The exhibition featured a powerful collection of photographs and historical accounts that depicted the tragic events of Khojaly. Attendees observed the displays with solemn reflection, gaining a deeper understanding of

the massacre and its impact on Azerbaijani history. Mr. Khalilov extended his sincere appreciation to NUML for its continued support in organizing events that highlight Azerbaijan's history and help foster a deeper cultural and political understanding between the two nations.

## Fair price shops across 17 locations

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The district administration of Islamabad on Thursday decided to set up fair price shops at 17 key locations across the city, allowing citizens to purchase essential food items at wholesale rates. In this regard, the district administration has released a list of locations where fair price shops will be established. These shops will offer essential groceries at reduced rates, helping residents manage their expenses during Ramadan. The initiative is part of a broader effort to support the community during a time when demand for food items typically rises. The fair price shops will be operational in prominent areas, including G-9 Markaz, I-8, F-8, and E-11. Other locations such as

F-10, F-11, G-13, and Bara Kahu will also host these shops. Additionally, residents in areas like Bari Imam, Bhara Kahu, Pakistan Town, F-7, and F-6 will benefit from the initiative. Shops will also be set up in G-6, G-7, Lethrar Road, and I-11/4, ensuring widespread coverage across the city. The district administration has assigned responsibilities to all assistant commissioners to oversee the smooth operation of these shops. Their role will include monitoring the availability of goods, ensuring fair pricing, and addressing any issues that may arise. This step is intended to maintain transparency and efficiency in the distribution process. The fair price shops will offer a range of essential items, including staples like flour, sugar, rice, and cooking oil. By providing these goods at wholesale rates,

the administration aims to reduce the financial burden on households, particularly those with limited incomes. The initiative is expected to benefit thousands of families across Islamabad. This move comes in response to the annual surge in demand for groceries during Ramadan, a month marked by increased consumption due to fasting and communal meals. By setting up these shops, the administration hopes to curb price hikes and prevent exploitation by middlemen, ensuring that residents can access affordable food without difficulty. The decision has been welcomed by residents, who often face challenges in managing their budgets during Ramadan. Many have expressed appreciation for the administration's efforts to address their concerns and provide practical solutions. The initiative is seen

as a step toward fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility during the holy month. In addition to the fair price shops, the district administration is also exploring other measures to support residents. These include monitoring market prices, cracking down on hoarding, and ensuring the availability of essential goods in local markets. The goal is to create a balanced and fair environment for both consumers and retailers. The establishment of fair price shops is not a new concept, but its implementation during Ramadan holds particular significance. The holy month is a time of reflection, charity, and community, and the administration's efforts align with these values. By making essential goods more accessible, the initiative aims to promote a sense of solidarity and care among residents.—DNA

## IST, Education Ministry launch 'Disruptive Education' Project

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with LearnOBots has launched the transformative project titled "Disruptive Education-Creating Foundries of Emerging Tech" to empower Pakistan's youth with 21st-century skills. The project, funded by the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, aims to revolutionize the education system by equipping students with hands-on training in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Robotics, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), Space Technology, Entrepreneurship, and other emerging technologies. As part of this initiative, 150 Tech Fellows will be recruited and given specialized training by IST and LearnOBots. These fellows will then be placed in federal government schools to educate and inspire over 22,000 students across Pakistan, preparing them to thrive in the global tech landscape. Highlighting the importance of the project, an IST official said, "This initiative is a significant step towards bridging the technological skills gap and fostering a new generation of innovators who will lead Pakistan's tech industry on the global stage." IST has been actively engaged in empowering young minds through workshops, training programs, and summer schools, making it a frontrunner in promoting emerging technologies among students. For this project, IST has also initiated a process of recruiting Tech Fellows with expertise in technology and education.—DNA

## UoB, BUET clinch top positions in Debating bout

ISLAMABAD: University of Balochistan, Quetta and Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) secured first position, respectively in the English and Urdu debate contests during the Balochistan Regional Round of Pakistan University Debating Championship 2025. According to HEC on Thursday, the winners of both English and Urdu contests of the regional round held at UoB, Quetta were awarded shields and cash prizes of Rs. 100,000 each. BUITEMS Quetta clinched second position in the Urdu debate, followed by SBK Women University, Quetta which secured the third position. Similarly, University of Turbat clinched the second position in the English debate, while SBK Women University won the third position. The second and third position holders respectively received Rs. 80,000 and Rs. 60,000.—APP

## President upholds FOSPAAH's verdict

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan has upheld the decision of the Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (FOSPAAH) after dismissing the appeal of the guilty person. According to FOSPAAH, the case pertained to an incident during the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt Programme, where the accused Mubashir Mukhtar was found guilty of workplace harassment and gender-based discrimination. Following a thorough investigation, FOSPAAH imposed minor penalties, including the stoppage of his increment for three years and a compensation of Rs. 100,000 payable to the complainant under the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, the FOSPAAH said in its statement. Challenging FOSPAAH's ruling, the accused filed a representation before the President of Pakistan, seeking to overturn the penalties. How-

ever, after careful review and hearing both parties at length, the President dismissed the appeal, emphasizing that the accused's total denial of the incident was an attempt to obscure the truth. The FOSPAAH said, "The President's ruling reaffirms FOSPAAH's commitment to ensuring a safe and harassment-free work environment for women in the country." It added that the decision further solidified the Ombudsman's order, underscoring that harassment at the workplace would not be tolerated. The statement said FOSPAAH remained steadfast in its mission to protect employees, particularly women, from workplace harassment and ensures that perpetrators are held accountable. "This verdict is a significant milestone in upholding justice and sends a strong message that any form of workplace harassment will be met with legal consequences," it said.—APP

## Women's empowerment crucial, says Romina

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam here on Thursday highlighted the critical role of women in combating climate change, stressing the importance of gender-inclusive climate policies. Speaking at a seminar titled "Empower Her Empower Pakistan," Romina emphasized that women often have less access to essential resources, decision-making platforms, and adaptive technologies, which makes them more vulnerable to climate-related shocks. She called for the recognition of this disparity as the first step in designing effective, inclusive climate policies. "Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it is a social and

economic challenge that disproportionately impacts women, particularly those in vulnerable and marginalized communities. Addressing these challenges requires a gender-inclusive approach that ensures women are not just beneficiaries but active agents of climate resilience and policy-making," Romina stated. The seminar, hosted by COPAIR (Coalition of Organizations Promoting Action for Inclusive Resilience), served as a vital platform for advancing gender-responsive climate action. Romina outlined the profound impact of climate change on women, particularly those living in rural areas, who bear the brunt of climate-induced disasters. From prolonged droughts that affect agricultural productivity to floods that displace entire communities and extreme weather events

that disrupt livelihoods, the effects of climate change are deeply gendered. PM's aide further emphasized that women's leadership in climate adaptation and resilience-building is not just necessary—it is transformative. "Across Pakistan, women are leading community-driven initiatives in sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and disaster risk reduction. Their contributions must be recognized, supported, and scaled up," she said. Romina also noted the importance of capacity-building programs, financial inclusion, and skills development, which are essential to empowering women with the tools needed to combat climate challenges effectively. However, the Prime Minister's aide acknowledged that while there is growing recogni-

tion of gender-responsive climate policies, challenges remain in translating policy frameworks into impactful grassroots action. "Implementation gaps, lack of gender-disaggregated data, and insufficient financial support continue to hinder the effectiveness of these policies," she stated and stressed that overcoming these barriers would require strengthening institutional mechanisms, ensuring meaningful participation of women in climate governance, and fostering multi-sectoral collaboration. "Climate justice must be at the heart of all policy decisions," Ms. Romina asserted. "Equitable access to resources, technology, and decision-making platforms can empower women to become key stakeholders in climate solutions."



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## BBC bows to Zionist pressure

IN 2003, the BBC aired Israel's Secret Weapon, an investigative documentary exposing Zionist's nuclear program. The Zionist government was furious, banning its officials from engaging with the BBC in retaliation. Yet, despite the pressure, the BBC stood its ground, refusing to capitulate. Eventually, Zionist lifted its boycott, and the BBC's journalistic integrity remained intact. Fast forward twenty-five years, and the BBC's stance on Zionist has shifted dramatically. Last week, the corporation pulled Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone from its streaming platform, citing a need for "due diligence." This documentary, a nine-month chronicle of life in besieged Gaza through the eyes of Palestinian children, faced intense scrutiny—not for inaccuracies, but because the main child narrator, Abdullah, was the son of Ayman Alazouri, a deputy minister in Gaza's Hamas-run government. Despite an amendment acknowledging this, relentless external pressure led to its removal. The backlash against the documentary was swift and coordinated. Critics, many of whom have historically dismissed Palestinian suffering, focused on discrediting the documentary rather than addressing the humanitarian crisis it highlighted. Among the most vocal detractors was Zionist ambassador Tzipi Hotovely, who astonishingly claimed that Gaza was not facing a humanitarian crisis—despite years of blockade and destruction. It is worth asking: How many of those condemning the documentary had actually watched it? By all critical measures, it was an objective and powerful portrayal of war's impact on children, not a pro-Hamas or anti-Zionist manifesto. In fact, the film included Gazans voicing strong criticism of Hamas. One Palestinian woman cursed former Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, while another admitted regret over the October 7 attacks, saying, "If we had known this would happen to us, no one would have celebrated." Yet, the BBC caved. The same BBC that had previously stood firm against Zionist pressure in 2003 now appeared eager to appease its critics, no matter the journalistic cost. A critical question arises: Would the BBC have pulled a documentary if a narrator or crew member were related to a Zionist settler or a soldier accused of war crimes in Gaza? History suggests otherwise. The BBC's selective application of "due diligence" is troubling, revealing an institutional bias that undermines its credibility. The BBC's deference to government influence also raises alarms. UK Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy's intervention in the documentary controversy suggests undue political meddling in what should be an independent media organization. This interference not only jeopardizes press freedom but also highlights the UK government's alignment with Zionist interests. This is not an isolated incident. The BBC's coverage of Zionist's ongoing military campaign in Gaza has been widely criticized—even by its own staff. In November 2023, over 100 BBC journalists signed a letter condemning the network's failure to hold Zionist accountable for its actions. When interviewees mention Zionist war crimes, BBC presenters routinely interject with, "You know what I am going to have to say. I'm going to say Zionist denies that."



## Fighting wrong technology war

IN the Art of War, Sun Tzu famously counsels "know your enemy, know yourself." With America's second cold war, this time against China, Washington may have seriously misdiagnosed China's foreign conduct, ambitions and ultimate goals. None is perhaps more glaring than the suppositions behind a key plank of its China containment strategy – the tech war. It reflects a projection of its own strengths and weaknesses in science, technology and industry, gleefully unaware that China has rather worked in reverse. The typical value chain in the tech industries is defined by the starting phase of research and development and design, the middle phase of manufacturing, and then the final phase of marketing the product. By contrast mainland China – and before it, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan – has mastered and built an entire industrial base on manufacturing, the middle part of the value chain – whereby incremental innovations are made during production processes, as opposed to flashy breakthroughs at the start and sales hype at the end. By its sheer population size, skilled workforce, science and engineering graduates, as well as production and manufacturing experiences accumulated over decades, China has been able to scale up the nation's whole industrial base in a way that none of the other Asian economies could match, and that the US may never be able to match again, despite the latter's "Johnny come lately" industrial policy which it once disdained. This is perhaps a crucial East-West industrial divide that has been much neglected. Instead of the old famous historical question from Joseph Needham "why didn't the [first] industrial revolution start in China?", the new question that needs to be answered is, how has China joined and dominated the fifth industrial revolution – for artificial intelligence, telecommunications, robotics, quantum computing etc? The US tech war is mainly premised on denying advanced technologies – that is, the beginning and the end of the tech value chain – to the Chinese. These two stages are indisputably dominated by US firms and research institutes, whether private or government funded. Having no access to the most advanced tech, so the thinking goes, the Chinese will not be able to produce technologically advanced products to move up the value chain. But China has shown it's possible to push and refine manufacturing to bring forth incremental tech breakthroughs and advanced products. Even before Washington openly pursued its tech war, President Xi Jinping has made "moving up the value chain" the main goal of China's industrial state policy, whether it was "Made in China 2025" or becoming a hi-tech "manufacturing superpower". At least for now, but especially with the return of Donald Trump and his anti-climate agenda, the world, and the West, will still have to depend on China in the global drive to decarbonise, including its dominant electric car industry. US policymakers are, of course, well aware of all these. At least those with the Biden administration were, but with that of Trump, not so much. Besides isolating China, Biden's Chips Act and the Inflation Reduction Act have also been about "reshoring" and "friendshoring" – to rebuild American manufacturing at home.

## Trump hails Xi as a great friend

Qamar Bashir



President Trump's latest remarks indicate a desire for constructive relations with China, but they do not suggest unilateral concessions. His statements emphasize that the U.S. will continue economic engagement with China while ensuring that trade relations remain fair and mutually beneficial. This aligns with President Xi's own vision of creating a "win-win" global economy where competition and cooperation can coexist without exploitation or undue advantages. President Xi has long promoted the belief that the world is large enough for all nations to prosper together

FOR decades, the United States has led global efforts to counter China's influence, positioning it as its most formidable geopolitical adversary while pressuring its allies to align their policies toward China in accordance with U.S. interests. This strategy has ensured that any country at odds with the U.S. would face collective Western opposition. However, in a surprising shift, President Donald Trump has taken a diametrically opposite approach—one that prioritizes economic collaboration and diplomatic stability over escalating tensions. His remarks following his first cabinet meeting on February 26, 2025, reflect a commitment to pragmatic engagement with China rather than escalating rivalry. In his statement, he highlighted his strong relationship with President Xi Jinping and expressed his commitment to fostering mutually beneficial economic ties. His exact words were: "I have a great relationship with President Xi. I've had a great relationship with him." "We want them to come in and invest. I see so many things saying that we don't want China in this country—that's not right. We want them to invest in the United States. That's good, that's a lot of money coming in, and we'll invest in China. We'll do things with China. The relationship we'll have with China would be a very good one." "I see all of these phony reports that we don't want that money; we don't want anything to do with them—that's wrong. We're going to have a good relationship with China, but they won't be able to take advantage of us." During the said media address, while replying to a nasty question, quote, Is it also your policy that as long as you are president, China will never take Taiwan by force? President Trump's refused to be drawn into a reckless or inflammatory declaration on the sensitive Taiwan issue. He said, "I never comment on that. I don't comment on any [military strategy] because I don't want to ever put myself in that position. And if I said it, I certainly wouldn't be saying it to you. I'd be saying it to other people, maybe people around this table and very specific people around this table." This response disrupted efforts to escalate tensions, disappointing those who seek to fuel conflict

between China and the U.S. for political or economic gain as they thrive on conflict, tension, and instability. President Trump's approach signaled that his administration will navigate the Taiwan issue carefully, with restraint, justly, and fairly without escalating tension. Trump's recalibrated approach toward China is in stark contrast to the prevailing sentiment among U.S. congressmen, senators, and many hawkish policymakers, media elites, and analysts. There hostility towards China became particularly evident during the Congressional and Senate hearings for President Trump's nominees, where China was repeatedly and viciously framed as the primary rival of the United States across nearly all strategic domains. His statement represents a 180-degree shift toward a more pragmatic, balanced, and constructive U.S.-China relationship, rooted in common sense and mutual benefit while prioritizing economic cooperation and diplomatic engagement over unnecessary hostility. His words—grounded in practicality and strategic foresight—have resonated globally, bringing relief to nations that depend on Chinese trade, investment, and infrastructure projects while fostering a more predictable and stable engagement with the United States. Most importantly, his pragmatic remarks have reassured global markets by signaling a more stable and predictable trade environment between the two economic superpowers and the rest of the world. This shift is expected to help reestablish disrupted global supply chains, facilitate smoother and faster trade negotiations, and eliminate trade and investment distortions, ultimately paving the way for greater economic stability, cooperation, and global prosperity. For nations reliant on Chinese infrastructure projects and funding, this diplomatic recalibration provides reassurance that they will not face U.S. reprisals for maintaining economic ties with China. It also relieves them from the delicate task of balancing relations with both the U.S. and China, allowing them to engage in economic partnerships without fear of geopolitical consequences. While some may view this shift as unexpected,

President Trump's remarks align closely with his previous statements about China and President Xi Jinping. His longstanding stance has been rooted in pragmatism and economic realism, as reflected in his past remarks. In a 2024 interview with Politico, President Trump stated: "Look, I want China to do great; I do. And I like President Xi a lot; he was a very good friend of mine during my term." Similarly, in a 2020 interview, he highlighted the strength of U.S.-China relations, saying: "Our relationship with China has now probably never been better. He's for China, I'm for the U.S., but other than that, we love each other." In another interview, he described President Xi as: "A brilliant guy." These statements confirm that President Trump's diplomatic approach to China has been consistent—maintaining an open line of communication with global leaders while protecting U.S. interests. This strategic balance ensures stability in international relations, preventing unnecessary economic and military confrontations. President Trump's latest remarks indicate a desire for constructive relations with China, but they do not suggest unilateral concessions. His statements emphasize that the U.S. will continue economic engagement with China while ensuring that trade relations remain fair and mutually beneficial. This aligns with President Xi's own vision of creating a "win-win" global economy where competition and cooperation can coexist without exploitation or undue advantages. President Xi has long promoted the belief that the world is large enough for all nations to prosper together. President Trump's shift from a confrontational stance to a diplomatic and economic one complements this perspective. Rather than fostering division, this approach seeks to enhance global stability by focusing on trade, investment, and diplomatic relations. By recognizing China's economic importance while maintaining U.S. lead in trade and diplomacy, this approach has the potential to reshape international relations, prioritizing economic stability over conflict. As the world watches the evolving engagement between the United States and China, it remains to be seen how this strategic realignment will unfold in the coming years.

## Europe must wake up to hard power reality

Khaled Abou Zahr

The new reality Younger mentioned is anything but new. As he stated, "it is not soft power or values" that determines countries' sphere of influence, "it is hard power." It has always been hard power and nothing else that has determined everything. You can sprinkle some soft power and values on top of the cake to make it look nice and to cover the taste of eggs in the recipe, but the recipe is, always has been and always will be hard power. I will not go deeper into the values he mentions, as Europe and the West have lost their true values to the progressive movement

CLIP of Alex Younger, the former head of the UK's MI6 intelligence service, speaking about the current situation in Ukraine during an appearance on the BBC's "Newsnight" program has been widely distributed across social media this week. In the clip, Younger starts by stating that we are no longer living in a world determined by "rules and multilateralism" but by "strongmen and deals." Ask anyone in the Middle East and they will tell you the hard truth: we never left the world of strongmen and deals. It is Europe and the West, under full US protection, that have lived under the illusion or delusion that it is multilateralism and international rules that are key to global geopolitics. For the rest of the world, we are still in the Yalta-type situation Younger referenced. The Yalta Conference, held in the Crimea in February 1945 and attended by Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, outlined postwar Europe's division, Germany's occupation, the formation of the UN and Soviet influence over Eastern Europe. The true division happened during the Potsdam Conference, held in July 1945, which finalized Germany's division and demanded Japan's unconditional surrender. Afterward, the two superpowers moved into the Cold War era. The new reality Younger mentioned is anything but new. As he stated, "it is not soft power or values" that determines countries' sphere of influence, "it is hard power." It has always been hard power and nothing else that has determined everything. You can sprinkle some soft power and values on top of the cake to make it look nice and to cover the taste of eggs in the recipe, but the recipe is, always has been and always will be hard power. I will not go deeper into the values he mentions, as Europe and the West have lost their true values to the progressive movement. On the topic of soft and hard power, I remember a

conversation I had with a retired French official who already understood these realities more than a decade ago. He stated the reality of the softening of the Western world on the international scene. He bluntly stated that, without hard power, "we are only cheese and wine salespeople." And so, the calculations when it comes to Ukraine and for Europe to achieve its own "sphere of influence," as mentioned by Younger, are quite simple. The Europeans need to cut through the fog and ask themselves: Are we willing to enter an all-out war? This is the costly "entry ticket" Younger alluded to if Europe is to enter the conversation and gain a sphere of influence. He is right that Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine has been clumsy and weak. Many military analysts I talked to in 2008 said the same of Russia's campaign in Georgia, which it nevertheless won. This was also evident in the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the support of Turkey – a NATO ally – proved much more powerful than Moscow's. But Russia is now in an economy of war and is adapting fast. Europe is an economy of Ozempic and Louis Vuitton bags. Hence, the delusion that you can apply soft power and get what you want in an arena of war must be destroyed. Might I remind everyone that it was the victors that sat together in Yalta, not the defeated. Millions died. And so, what do we see on the ground in Ukraine? Let us firstly remember that the Russian military move took place in 2022, when Joe Biden was US president, and the buildup to it has often been disregarded. Today, Ukraine is doing the best it can with US military support. But it will not be able to defeat Russia or even repel it. This is now clear. It has been for the past three years. So, what should be the next step? Negotiate an exit from the war or fight harder? In that context, if someone can tell me how they can

turn the negotiations to Ukraine's advantage with soft power, as per the wishful thinking of the BBC host, I am all ears. It is the situation on the ground that will dictate the outcome, just as it did in Afghanistan. There is no sugarcoating a loss. So, what is Europe going to do about it? It can pin the blame on Donald Trump as much as it wants, but the real question is whether Europe is willing to go to war to stand up to Vladimir Putin and save Ukraine? So, who will go to war? And for what outcome? Europe does indeed need to "wake up" and swiftly prepare for this "new" reality, which has actually governed the world since the beginning of history. It might need to start by having a unified position on Russia and China. This is far from being the case today. As Younger stated, the "free ride" on the US' back needs to end. Continuously putting the blame on Washington must stop too. The real enigma is can Europe do this without going to war in Ukraine? It is precisely the mistake Europe has made – that of thinking soft power has any value without hard power – that led us to this situation. At the very least, the next step should be to invest more in defense. Europe has the capability to build the military forces it needs to be a superior force. It lacks the will to do so. But more than spending billions, as war has already started, the real deterrence would be to convince its adversaries that it has the will to fight. Both Russia and Ukraine have shown this. So has the US. There needs to be strong action to make this buildup happen and to project the deterrence Europe needs and which can – with US support – change the reality. But let us be realistic: the US still has this deterrence, with Younger stating "you underestimate America at your peril." Europe needs to bring its real values back to the fore and show its resolve; then its allies and enemies will listen. Not before.

## Briefs

Pakistan, UAE  
ink MoUs  
to boost...

FROM PAGE 01  
He was received by President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy PM Ishaq Dar, and First Lady Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari. Other cabinet members, along with senior diplomatic and government officials, were present as well. Prince Khaled shook hands with the president, the premier, and the deputy PM as they greeted him, while two children clad in traditional dress presented him with bouquets. The venue was decorated with the flags of Pakistan and the UAE while a group of kids also welcomed the dignitary by waving the flags of both countries. The crown prince is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including ministers and senior officials, as well as prominent business leaders. Pakistan and the UAE are set to sign several agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during the visit to "bolster [the] existing robust framework for long-term collaboration in multi-faceted sectors", according to the Foreign Office (FO).

Aurangzeb  
reaffirms  
commitment

FROM PAGE 01  
the economy is now in a stable position in quantitative terms and outlined the government's proactive approach to fiscal discipline, revenue mobilization, and investment facilitation. The Minister informed the delegation about key tax reforms, including the activation of the National Tax Council to enhance coordination between the federal government and provinces. He elaborated on the expansion of the tax base, with a focus on formally bringing the wholesale, retail, and real estate sectors into the tax net. He also discussed the agricultural income tax, stating that all four provinces have approved the bill, and it is expected to take effect from July 1, 2025. Additionally, he noted that tax policy has been moved from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to the Finance Division, ensuring a more strategic and policy-driven approach.

Cabinet  
swells to 46  
as new...

FROM PAGE 01  
Kheal Das Kohistani, Abdul Rehman Kanju, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Mukhtar Bharath, Aun Chaudhry, and Wajaha Qamar were among the new state ministers. Muhammad Ali, Tauqir Shah and Pervez Khattak also took oath as special advisers in the ceremony. Overall 27 members had to take oath today, however, a federal minister - Imran Shah - and two state ministers - Shezra and Armgan - failed to reach on time due to traffic jam. Some ministers may see their portfolios reassigned, while others could be removed altogether. The sources said that Abbasi may be appointed as the Minister for Railways, while Chaudhry is expected to take charge of the Ministry of National Health Services. Magsi is likely to be given the Ministry of Communications, whereas Kamal may be assigned the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Pakistan  
democracy  
ranking...

FROM PAGE 01  
was jailed shortly before the election took place," the EIU stated. It is worth noting that the 2024 general election had the highest voter turnout in Pakistan's history, according to the Free and Fair Election Network (Faen). However, the events before and after the polling day raised questions over democratic rights and freedom in the country. Concerns were also raised regarding the reliability and trustworthiness of the general election by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). HRCP's election monitors observed prominent issues as they conducted on-site inspections in 51 constituencies.

## Beyond boundaries

Australian HC empowers  
Pakistani girls' cricketers

Since 2016, Australia's support for girls' cricket in Pakistan has expanded from Islamabad to Lahore and Karachi, uncovering new talent along the way

DNA

LAHORE: The Australian High Commission (AHC), in partnership with Kinnaird College for Women, and the Pakistan Cricket Board, hosted the 6th AHC-Kinnaird Girls' Cricket Cup, bringing together Pakistani school girls to compete, lead, and break barriers through sport. The participants were specifically drawn from communities with limited resources, ensuring that girls from all walks of life have an opportunity to showcase their talents. Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, applauded the players' participation and determination. "Australia believes in the power of sport to transform lives, create opportunities, and bring people together. We are pleased to support Pakistan in championing women's cricket."

"While the men's teams battle it out in the ICC Champions Trophy, today was about investing in the future—giving Pakistani girls the chance to compete and strive towards one day representing their province and country," High Commissioner Hawkins added.



To prepare for the tournament, players attended an intensive three-day coaching clinic led by Pakistan's national women's and U-19 team members. Since 2016, Australia's support for girls' cricket in Pakistan has expanded from Islamabad to Lahore

and Karachi, uncovering new talent along the way. Former participants of the AHC-Kinnaird Cup have gone on to represent Pakistan's Under-19 national team. Head of Pakistan Women's Cricket, Rafia Haider, emphasised the tournament's importance

in shaping future stars. "Tournaments like this help us discover and nurture talent. With the right support, these girls could be the next big names in Pakistani cricket." Dr. Irum Anjum, Principal of Kinnaird College for Women, highlighted the

tournament's wider impact. "When girls play, they gain confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging. Kinnaird is proud to provide a platform where young women can shine." The tournament featured spirited performances from teams representing

Government Shuhda-e-APS Memorial Girls High School, Government Central Model School, Government Tehzeeb-ul-Binat Model Girls School, Government Yasmeen Islamia Girls High School, Mughalpara, and Kinnaird Cricket Academy.

Former pacer blames PCB for  
team's disastrous campaign

'I write to the PCB chairman because he doesn't know much about cricket,' says former pacer

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan cricketer Sarfraz Nawaz has held the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) responsible for the Mohammad Rizwan-led side's disappointing campaign in the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Defending champions Pakistan were among the first teams to be eliminated from the tournament, suffering back-to-back defeats in the group stage against New Zealand and India, which ended their title defense. Nawaz revealed that he had written to the PCB chair-

man, criticizing his lack of cricketing knowledge. He also attributed the decline of Pakistan cricket to PCB officials, whom he described as bureaucrats rather than cricketers. "Yeah, I watch closely, and on and off, I write to the PCB chairman because he doesn't know much about cricket. I suggested things to him, but it's up to him what he does. Pakistan cricket is gone now. I think it's because of all the PCB officials running the board," said Sarfraz. "They are non-cricketers; they are bureaucrats. That's why I think they don't know how to go about things like

that. They've picked people who previously destroyed Pakistan cricket. And then there are frequent changes in the PCB. Within a year and a half, there were three chairmen and four captains. What else do you expect?" he added. It is pertinent to mention that the Men in Green ended their tournament campaign winless after their final group stage match against Bangladesh here in Rawalpindi on Thursday was called off due to rain. Rizwan-led Pakistan began their tournament campaign on February 19 at the National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi against

New Zealand. Batting first in the tournament opener, the Blackcaps posted a formidable total of 320/5, courtesy of anchoring centuries from opener Will Young and wicketkeeper-batter Tom Latham. In response, the home side's batting lineup faltered, managing only 260 before being bowled out in 47.2 overs. Returning all-rounder Khushdil Shah top-scored with a 49-ball 69, while captain Babar Azam contributed a scratchy 64 off 90 deliveries. Pakistan then faced arch-rivals India on Sunday in Dubai in a must-win clash to stay alive in the tournament.

'McCullum's problems  
go far beyond Jos  
Buttler's future'

DNA

LAHORE: The Afghanistan fans had barely stopped dancing as Rob Key departed Pakistan in the early hours of Thursday morning. England's director of men's cricket was booked on the 3am flight out of Lahore long before a miserable Champions Trophy exit was confirmed, but left with plenty to ponder. Key is yet to sack a captain since taking on his role in April 2022 but, when the jetlag subsides, must decide whether Jos Buttler's time is done. It may be that Key is spared the most difficult decision. Buttler did not sound like a man keen to stay on after the eight-run defeat by Afghanistan - a tantalising encounter in which Joe Root almost rescued England from the brink. "I don't want to say any emotional statements right now," he said. "For myself and the guys at the top, we should consider all possibilities." It was hard not to feel for Buttler when he slumped in his chair, having dragged himself from the dressing rooms to face the media. From Bangalore to Barbados, Lucknow to Lahore, the 34-year-old has been here before over the past 15 months. The same questions asked by the same faces after three poor showings in global events. "I know lots of people think it doesn't sit well with me being captain and that kind of thing but I really do enjoy it," Buttler said.

Ex-England coach  
returns to SA staff

WEB DESK

LONDON: Former England defence coach Felix Jones will become an assistant coach with South Africa from next week. Jones stepped down from his position with England in December after becoming disillusioned in Steve Borthwick's set-up. The 37-year-old was part of the Springboks' coaching staff during their 2019 and 2023 World Cup victories, working under head coach Rassie Erasmus in the first of those triumphs. "We are delighted to welcome Felix back and we are excited to see him pick up where he left off in 2023," said Erasmus, who returned as head coach when Jacques Nienaber left for Leinster following the 2023 World Cup win. "He was a vital cog in the coaching team from 2019 to 2023 and his experience, professionalism, and excellent work ethic will make him a great addition. "After spending some time in England, his experience of studying opposition teams in the Six Nations and other international tournaments will add immense value in assisting us as we cast an eye on a tough international season ahead." Former Ireland wing Jones is one of three new appointments to Erasmus' backroom staff along with physiotherapist Lance Lemmetjies and team dietician Robyn Moore. "As a team we are well aware that we need to keep improving and growing if we want to remain one of the best teams in the world and to give ourselves the best possible chance to defend our World Cup title in Australia in 2027," Erasmus added.

Pakistan-Bangladesh match  
washed out due to rain

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: The ninth match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 between hosts Pakistan and Bangladesh, scheduled for Thursday, has been completely washed out due to continuous rain. Despite high expectations for an exciting contest, continuous light to heavy rain-fall 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. As a result, both teams ended their Champions Trophy campaign winless and are currently at the bottom of the points table. It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan began their tournament campaign on February 19 at the National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi against New Zealand. Batting first in the tournament opener, the Blackcaps posted a formidable total of 320/5, courtesy of anchoring centuries from opener Will Young and wicketkeeper-batter Tom Latham. Pakistan's bowling



unit struggled against a disciplined New Zealand batting lineup, with Naseem Shah being the standout performer, taking 2/63 in his 10 overs. Fellow pacer Haris Rauf proved expensive, conceding 83 runs in his full quota of overs. In response, the home side's batting lineup faltered, managing only 260 before being bowled out in 47.2 overs.

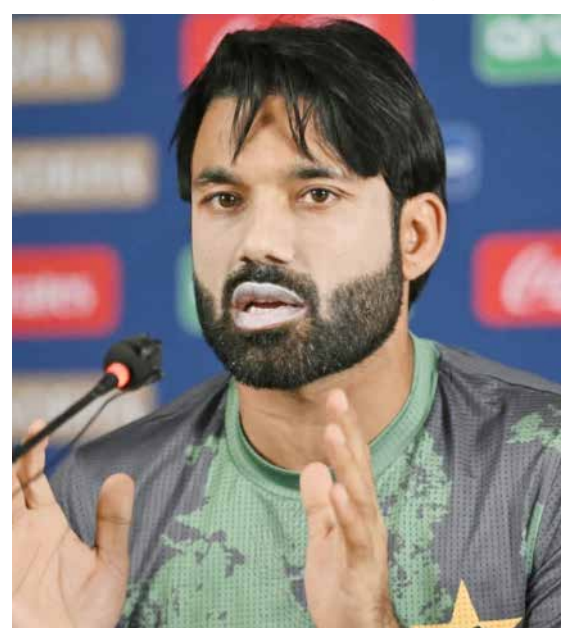
Returning all-rounder Khushdil Shah top-scored with a 49-ball 69, while captain Babar Azam contributed a scratchy 64 off 90 deliveries. Pakistan then faced arch-rivals India on Sunday in Dubai in a must-win clash to stay alive in the tournament. However, their batting unit failed to deliver under pressure, posting a modest total of 241 before being bowled out in the final over. Middle-order batter Saud Shakeel was the top scorer with a cautious 62 off 76 balls, including five boundaries. Left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav was the pick of the bowlers for India, claiming 3/40 in nine overs. In response, India comfortably chased down the 242-run target for the loss of four wickets with 45 balls to spare, thanks to a masterful century by Virat Kohli.

## Mohammad Rizwan vows to 'learn' from mistakes

Pakistan conclude Champions Trophy 2025 without a victory

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan expressed his determination to learn from the shortcomings moving forward after his side's winless campaign at the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, underway until March 9. Pakistan, defending the title, had a forgetful campaign as they suffered back-to-back defeats against New Zealand and arch-rivals before their final group-stage fixture against Bangladesh was abandoned without a ball bowled earlier today. The abandonment of the aforesaid fixture kept the hosts devoided of the victory and they, as a result, finished at the bottom of Group A with just one point. Speaking at the post-match presentation, Pakistan captain Rizwan acknowledged his team produced disappointing for the last few weeks during the tri-nation home ODI series and the Champions Trophy 2025. The wicketkeeper then claimed that they have identified their mistakes and will rectify them before their white-ball tour to New Zealand next month. "The results from us have been disappointing for the last few weeks now and we wanted to perform today in front of our home nation as they have high expectations to which we have not lived up," said Rizwan. "You can learn from your mistakes, and we have looked at



our mistakes in this tournament and the Tri-Nation series and by the will of Almighty Allah, we will look to work on them. Our next tour is of New Zealand, hopefully we will perform there since we have made a lot of mistakes against them here," he added. Mohammad Rizwan also admitted that young opener Saim Ayub's injury 'disturbed' their preparations for the mega event but denied using it as an excuse. "When a player who has performed in the last two to three series in Australia and South Africa, and he gets injured, so the team will get disturbed," Rizwan said. "As a leader, you have to look forward since there are other players in the Pakistan team too. This is not an excuse and we will learn from them," he added. When probed about the team's bench strength, Rizwan shared that he will look up to Pakistan's Champions tournaments before highlighting the need for professionalism and game awareness in making the team rank amongst the top sides in the world. "It is a tough question, we have seen some bench strength in the five-team Champions Cup. If we want to see ourselves among the top teams, we need to improve in various aspects like professionalism and game awareness," Rizwan remarked. "It is disappointing, we are here for the whole nation. We have to accept that we did not perform. They are upset; we are too. InshaAllah we will learn from these mistakes and improve in the next tournaments," he concluded.

Opp holds  
anti-govt  
conference..

FROM PAGE 01  
During the first day, the opposition alliance discussed various issues, including freedom of speech and political instability in the country, constitutional breaches, and human rights violations. Meanwhile, as Islamabad authorities sealed the local hotel today to prevent the opposition parties' conference from taking place, some leaders climbed over the gate to enter the venue. According to Geo News, the administration had locked the premises beforehand. Police told the participants that no such gathering had been permitted. With official approval denied, some opposition leaders scaled the hotel gate and unlocked the main entrance from inside, allowing others to enter. Among those who managed to enter were opposition leaders TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, SIC chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja. Subsequently, the opposition leaders announced that they would hold the conference in the hotel lobby, while police personnel and FC units remained stationed outside.

Congressmen urge  
top US...

FROM PAGE 01  
of "judicial abuse", two US Congressmen - Joe Wilson and August Pfluger - urged Secretary of State Marco Rubio to engage with Pakistan to free the PTI founder, it emerged on Thursday. The 71-year-old cricket-returned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition's no-trust motion in April 2022. It was not the first time that Wilson advocated for Khan's release. In the recent past, he made several posts on his X account calling for Khan's release. Earlier this month, Republican Congressman Wilson asked President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir to release Khan.

Boat incident  
Bodies of...

FROM PAGE 01  
arrangements were in place for their onward transfer to their hometowns. Facilitation desks were set up at the airport for the grieving families, while ambulances were arranged to transport the remains to Peshawar. The six deceased Pakistanis repatriated today included Musawir Hussain son of Sher Mehdi, from Kurram, Shoaib Ali son of Muhammad Ali, from Kurram, Muhammad Ali Shah son of Abdullah Shah, from Orakzai, Abid Hussain son of Muhammad Hassan, Musab Hussain son of Jamil Hussain, and Shoaib Hussain son of Noord Ali, from Kurram. The bodies were handed over to their respective families, who were devastated by the loss of their loved ones.

Pak calls for  
ceasefire...

FROM PAGE 01  
Hostilities in Sudan erupted in April 2023 due to a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), escalating into a full-scale civil war. The fighting has caused a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions facing acute hunger and displacement. Pakistan's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, urged all parties to implement an unconditional ceasefire and engaging in dialogue for a sustainable political resolution during a Security Council briefing. "We call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan," Jadoon told the world body. "Both parties must respect the inalienability of human life during this blessed month." Jadoon reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to Sudan's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as he condemned attempts to establish parallel governments, warning that such actions threatened to further fragment the country.

## Briefs

## PSX loses 78 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) loses 78.02 points on Thursday, a negative change of 0.07 percent, closing at 113,784.31 points as compared to 113,862.33 points on the last trading day. A total of 397,393,389 shares were traded during the day as compared to 640,178,422 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs19.327 billion against Rs22.740 billion on the last trading day. As many as 454 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 145 of them recorded gains and 253 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 71,837,021 shares at Rs.7.81 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 20,251,564 shares at Rs.1.45 per share and At-Tahur Limited with 17,624,004 shares at Rs.32.84 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.75.02 per share closing at Rs.23,399.99 whereas runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with Rs.30.75 rise in its share price to close at Rs.884.29. Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.184.68 per share price, closing at Rs.3,002.79, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with Rs.44.52 decline in its per share price to Rs.1,890.40.—APP

## Gold price decreases by Rs.3,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.3,000 and was sold at Rs 303,300 on Thursday against its sale at Rs306,300 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 2,829 to Rs 259,773 from Rs. 262,602 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down by Rs.2,594 to Rs 238,133 from Rs.240,727. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.3,314 and Rs.2,841.—APP

## Rupee sheds 11 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 11 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.61.

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 Rs0.70 to close at Rs292.92 against the last day's closing of Rs293.62, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.87, whereas an increase of 54 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs354.43 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs353.89. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paise to close at Rs 76.16 and Rs74.58.—APP

## TDAP CE meets business community

SIALKOT: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Chief Executive Faiz Ahmad Chahdar met stakeholders from the textile and apparel industry at an event organized by the Pakistan Readymade Garments and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) here on Thursday. The gathering brought together prominent business leaders, including former PRGMEA chairman Ijaz Khokhar, Chairman AirSahar Instruments Manufacturing Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) Zeeshan Tariq, Chairman Dryport Trust Raza Iqbal, Chairman AirSahar Fazal Jilani and Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) Hassan Ali Bhatti. Recognizing the importance of the textile and apparel industry in Pakistan's export landscape, Chief Executive TDAP Faiz Ahmad.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Lt. General Munir Afzal Chairman NADRA in a group photo with the Heads of States of the SAARC countries on the occasion of Nepali Army Day, held at Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

## Parliament role crucial for boosting Pak-Hungary ties

Emphasizing the responsibility of the global parliamentary community, Ayaz Sadiq stated that lawmakers must not remain passive observers while their people endure the consequences of global recession, escalating conflicts in Ukraine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Gaza, as well as emerging threats such as fake news and the unchecked spread of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

BUDAPEST: Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday underscored the critical role of parliaments in fostering people-centric and mutually beneficial relations between Pakistan and Hungary. According to a message received from Budapest, Hungary, he made these remarks during a meeting with Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly. Upon his arrival at the Hungarian Parliament, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq received a warm welcome from his Hungarian counterpart, alongside Bela Fazekas, Co-Chairman of the Hungary-Pakistan Friendship Group, and other senior officials. Speaker László Kövér termed the visit a historic occasion, marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Hungary. During formal discussions,

the Speaker briefed his Hungarian counterpart on key challenges faced by Pakistan, including its contributions to the global fight against terrorism, the economic impact of climate change, and the influx of 4.6 million Afghan refugees. He also highlighted Pakistan's parliamentary initiatives addressing the rights and welfare of women, children, and marginalized communities. Emphasizing the responsibility of the global parliamentary community, Ayaz Sadiq stated that lawmakers must not remain passive observers while their people endure the consequences of global recession, escalating conflicts in Ukraine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Gaza, as well as emerging threats such as fake news and the unchecked spread of Artificial Intelligence (AI). He identified AI as a new

global challenge, warning that its misuse could fuel discord, misinformation, and social unrest. He urged parliamentarians to address this challenge by ensuring the responsible and ethical use of technology for public welfare. He also commended the Prime Minister of Hungary for maintaining a neutral stance on the Ukraine war, fostering relations with China and Russia, and leading Hungary to become the only EU country to join the One Belt, One Road Initiative. During the meeting, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq handed over a letter from Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, addressed to Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, inviting him to visit Pakistan. The of Hungary received the letter with appreciation and expressed hope for more frequent

high-level bilateral visits. The Speaker provided an overview of Hungary's economic and political stability, attributing it to the "Hungary First" approach adopted under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's leadership since 2010. He highlighted the success of the Hungarian government's policies, which have led to three consecutive electoral victories. Stressing the importance of relations based on mutual benefit and shared interests, he reaffirmed Hungary's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Pakistan, citing Hungarian investments in Pakistan's energy sector through MOL as a key example. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the growing educational and cultural ties between Pakistan and Hungary. Hungary currently offers 500

fully funded scholarships annually to Pakistani students, with 1,500 students having benefited from the program in recent years. Ayaz Sadiq called for expanding the scholarship program further and proposed that Pakistani students be provided internship opportunities in Hungarian institutions. He hoped that this program would allow them to return to Pakistan as skilled professionals and goodwill ambassadors. Ayaz Sadiq, accompanied by the Pakistani Parliamentary delegation, visited the Hungarian National Assembly Hall and other sections of the Hungarian National Assembly. During the visit, the NA Speaker also inscribed his remarks in the Guest Book of the Hungarian National Assembly.—Agencies

## NTC, PYMA join forces to boost textile exports

KARACHI: A high-level delegation from the National Tariff Commission (NTC), led by Chairman Naem Anwer, visited the Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA) to engage in productive discussions about the challenges facing the textile sector. Accompanying Anwer were Iqbal Tabish, Member of the NTC, and Mazhar Ghafoor, Deputy Director of the NTC. The PYMA was represented by a strong line-up of industry leaders, including Altaf Haroon, Vice Chairman of the Sindh & Baluchistan Region; Khurshid Ahmed Shaikh, Former Central Chairman and Chairman of the NTC Committee at PYMA; Muhammad Usman, Former Central Chairman; M. Aslam Moten, Former Vice Chairman; Sohail Nisar, Former Senior Vice Chairman; Javed Khanani, Former Vice Chairman; and other key members of the Executive Committee. The meeting focused on critical issues, particularly grievances tied to anti-dumping measures impacting the textile sector, a vital pillar of Pakistan's economy. The NTC delegation presented an in-depth study titled "Industrial Competitiveness and Export Growth of the Textile Sector Including MMF," shedding light on strategies to enhance the industry's global standing. "One of the key topics addressed during the meeting was the impact of these anti-dumping measures, which have posed significant challenges for the sector. Both sides reviewed the issue in detail and explored ways to mitigate the negative effects on the industry." During the discussions, the NTC outlined specific data requirements essential for shaping effective policies. PYMA committed to providing the requested information promptly, signaling a collaborative effort to bolster Pakistan's textile exports.—DNA

## AI drives revolution in China's automobile industry

BEIJING: Imagine a driving experience that is as self-centered as it can be: seats, music and temperature that adjust automatically according to your mood, routes planned by the auto-driving system using real-time traffic data, and charging notifications sent in advance based on the nearest charging stations...Increasingly, these futuristic scenarios are turning into reality in China. AI has seamlessly integrated into every part of China's automotive industry, revolutionizing each aspect from intelligent cockpit, autonomous driving, to vehicle design, production, marketing, sales, and after-sale services. "It can be a travel expert, planning itinerary for you; it can be a secretary, extracting key information from your phone calls in vehicles; it can also read your facial expressions and gestures, engage in intelligent conversations, and cater to your needs," shared Mr. Chen Xiaobo, Senior System Architect in iFLYTEK, a Chinese tech giant that has ventured into the realm of intelligent vehicles. Human-like emotions, judgement, and decision-making capabilities are driving unprecedented efficiency, innovation, and personalization. In design, AI-powered tools such as AiCube enable designers to generate car sketches in seconds with minimal input. In manufacturing, AI optimizes processes from configuration to quality control, cutting costs by 25%. In marketing, AI analyzes consumer behavior to deliver tailored content, train livestreamers, and slash unnecessary advertising by 70%. In after-sales, AI-powered algorithm enables predictive diagnostics and defect recognition... This shift towards AI-driven innovation is gaining momentum, with over a dozen major automakers, including BYD, Geely, Dongfeng, and Chery, announcing collaborations with DeepSeek. Additionally, companies like XPeng and Li Auto have announced to develop their own AI models, aiming to transform cars into "smart travel companions." According to S&P's data provider IHS Markit, over 75% of new cars produced in China this year will feature smart cockpits-up from just over 50% four years ago. Prices for a regular "smart car" have also been dropping to less than RMB 20,000 (\$30,000). As vehicles evolve from simple transportation tools into "third spaces"-integrating leisure, entertainment, and even office functions—consumers are increasingly seeking a homelike experience in their cars. Ms. Xian Bijuan from the automotive research institute Autohome highlights that 47% of consumers report spending more time in their cars, while 55.3% of buyers are replacing their vehicles with more spacious, comfortable models. "In the future, AI will become as essential to cars as water and air to human," said Mr. Chen. While car makers are racing to innovate, the intelligent evolution of Chinese cars present vast opportunities for international investment. Basemark, a Finnish AR software developer has just entered into the Chinese market this year. "China is poised to become one of the markets with the most abundant AI applications in vehicles. Partnership is essential in your business in China. In collaboration with local hardware suppliers or original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), a whole set of solution can be provided", Paul Yeh and Mr. Xiao Zhihao from the company told China Economic Net (CEN) at China International New Energy Vehicle Technology, Parts and Services Exhibition that concluded in Beijing on Monday. Over 10,000 international visitors participated in the exhibition to seek opportunities of trade and investment. Virgilio Gonzalez from Spanish multinational Govvarri told CEN that as vehicle architectures in China are increasingly intelligent and electrified, sales of related products from their four factories in China are growing at around 20% annually.—DNA

## Residents of south Syria fear Israeli escalation after strikes

KISWEH, Syria: In the Syrian region of Kisweh, southwest of Damascus, residents jolted awake by Israeli strikes voiced their fears Wednesday of a fresh escalation after similar attacks had appeared to taper off in recent weeks. Israel said it had targeted military sites containing weapons in the Tuesday night raids, which came just days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded the demilitarization of Syria's south. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least two people were killed at the headquarters of a military unit in Kisweh, while other raids struck military sites in Daraa province to the south. "We heard successive strikes followed by explosions. The sky lit up, then we saw tongues of flame rising," said Ahmed Mohammed, who works at a service station near the military site in Kisweh. "We fear the resumption of Israeli strikes and an Israeli

incursion." Members of the new Syrian government's armed forces occupied the site, located in a large field. Aerial photos taken by AFP showed 20 tanks at the site, three of them blackened by flames. The owner of a nearby car dealership, who gave his name as Rayan, said most of the tanks had been moved there after they were abandoned by the former Syrian armed forces around the time of the fall of president Bashar Assad. "When the missiles fell, the houses and windows shook," he said, adding that a drone had been filming in the area about an hour beforehand. After the strikes, the Israeli military said that military assets in southern Syria "pose a threat to the citizens of Israel," adding it would "continue to operate in order to remove" such threats. The nighttime raids came hours after demonstrations in several Syrian cities in response to Netanyahu's call

## US aid cuts hit Rohingya in Bangladesh refugee camps

DHAKA: The US government's recent executive order suspending aid funding worldwide has already started to affect the Rohingya sheltering in camps in Bangladesh, a top refugee affairs official said on Thursday. The Rohingya, a mostly Muslim ethnic minority, lived for centuries in Myanmar's western Rakhine state but were stripped of their citizenship in the 1980s. Since then, many of them have fled to Bangladesh, with about 700,000 arriving in 2017 after a military crackdown that the UN has been referring to as a textbook case of ethnic cleansing by Myanmar. Today, more than 1.3 million Rohingya are cramped inside 33 camps in Cox's Bazar district on the southeast coast of Bangladesh — the world's largest refugee settlement. The refugees are almost completely reliant on humanitarian aid, which has been declining since the COVID-19 pandemic. The US has been the largest donor, which last year contributed \$301 million, or 55 percent of all foreign aid for the Rohingya. The Donald Trump administration announced in late January it was eliminating most of the US assistance globally.—Agencies

on Sunday for the "complete demilitarization" of the country's south. Following the toppling of Assad in December, Israel carried out a wave of hundreds of strikes against positions formerly held by his military, while also sending troops into a UN-patrolled buffer zone that has separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the strategic Golan Heights since 1974. "While the strikes were previously focused on border crossings and abandoned weapons warehouses, they are now directly targeting vital military sites and strategic hills," Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. Netanyahu, he added, was starting "to put his threats into action." Syria's new authorities have condemned Israel's strikes in their territory, but the country's interim President Ahmed Al-Sharaa has also said it is too exhausted by years of civil war to undertake any new conflicts.—APP

## Daraz Pakistan ushers in Ramadan festivities with grand savings

KARACHI: As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, Daraz Pakistan, the country's leading online marketplace, invites shoppers to embrace the season of giving, reflection, and celebration with its much-anticipated Grand Ramadan Sale, running from March 3 to March 9, 2025. Designed to bring the festive spirit into every home, this mega campaign offers up to 80% off across a wide range of products, along with Free Shipping and exclusive Choice bundles—all curated to help Pakistanis prepare for Ramadan and get a head start on Eid shopping, according to a press release issued here on Thursday. Ramadan is a time for community, family gatherings, and thoughtful reflection. Daraz Pakistan aims to make this season even more joyful by offering unbeatable deals on everything from sehri and iftar essentials to home décor, beauty products, fashion, and Eid gifts. Whether it's stocking up on groceries or finding the perfect outfit for Eid, Daraz Pakistan ensures a seamless shopping experience that is both affordable and convenient.

The Grand Ramadan Sale features Choice bundles packed with household and lifestyle staples, all with Free Delivery, alongside a variety of daily necessities such as packaged foods, beverages, kitchenware, cleaning supplies, and personal care items. Shoppers can also explore home appliances like air fryers, juicers and blenders at discounted rates.—APP

## Morocco announces \$2.9b deal for French, Spanish and S Korean trains

RABAT: Morocco announced on Wednesday it would buy up to 168 trains from Spain's CAF, South Korea's Hyundai and France's Alstom for \$2.9 billion as part of preparations for the 2030 FIFA World Cup it is co-hosting with Spain and Portugal. The National Railway Office (ONCF) said in a statement that it had awarded the contracts for the "new train acquisition program, with a total cost of 29 billion dirhams, as part of the development plan for 2030." They include 18 high-speed trains from Alstom, sealing a deal first mentioned during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Rabat in October. Morocco already has one 350-kilometer (220-mile) high-speed railway line between the coastal cities of Tangier and Casablanca, and is planning a second that will extend 400 kilometers (250 miles) from Kenitra on the coast to Marrakech in the interior. The first line, built by Alstom, has been in operation since 2018. The contract with Spain's CAF is for 30 intercity trains with an option for a further 10, while the deal with Hyundai Rotem is for 110 commuter trains.—APP

## Turkish police detain opposition mayor

ANKARA: Turkish police on Thursday detained an Istanbul district mayor from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), along with 20 others, over alleged collusion tendering, broadcaster NTV reported, amid a widening government crackdown on opposition figures. An Istanbul prosecutor ordered the detention of Beykoz Mayor Alaattin Koseler and three others over the alleged collusion, as well as 17 others for establishing, joining, and aiding an organization with criminal intent, according to NTV. The state-owned Anadolu news agency had said on Tuesday that prosecutors had launched an investigation into three concerts by the Beykoz Municipality last year over irregularities, and added that the municipality's cultural and social matters representative was detained as part of the probe. The move is the latest in a wave of arrests, detentions, and investigations carried out by authorities in recent months into opposition politicians, mayors and journalists. Critics say the crackdown aims to silence the opposition.—APP

## Briefs

### Witness identifies accused in Mustafa case

DNA

KARACHI: In the Mustafa Amir murder case, a key witness and employee of the accused, Armaghan, recognised both Armaghan and Shiraz in court. During the hearing at Karachi's Judicial Magistrate South Court, the statement of Ghulam Mustafa, the key witness, was recorded. The witness testified that on the night of January 6, at around 9 PM, a boy arrived, and they opened the door for him. The boy was wearing trousers and a jacket, but he did not see his face. About an hour and a half later, they heard shouting and abusive language, followed by two or three gunshots. Both he and his companion stepped out of the room. After offering the Fajr prayer, they woke up around midday to find Armaghan and his friend present. They were not allowed to go upstairs. A few days later, the police raided the bungalow. They hid in their room but eventually left. On the 10th, when they returned near the bungalow to collect their belongings, the police arrested them.

### Russian, US teams meet in Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Russian and US diplomats met in Turkey on Thursday for talks to resolve disputes over their respective embassies in Washington and Moscow, a first test of their ability to reset wider relations and work towards ending the war in Ukraine. The Kremlin last year described relations as "below zero" under the administration of Joe Biden, who backed Ukraine with aid and weapons and imposed waves of sanctions on Russia to punish it for its invasion in 2022. But his successor, President Donald Trump, has upended that policy and moved swiftly since taking office last month to open talks with Moscow, pledging to fulfil his repeated promise to bring a quick end to the war. The talks in Istanbul follow a phone call between Trump and President Vladimir Putin on February 12 and a high-level diplomatic meeting in Saudi Arabia six days later. - Agencies

### Italian Jews call for end to 'ethnic cleansing'

DNA

ROME: More than 200 Italian Jews have signed an appeal against "ethnic cleansing" in the Palestinian territories, provoking strong media reaction and dividing the country's Jewish community, AFP reports. Writers, academics, philosophers and journalists were among the 220 signatories of the text, which was published in daily newspapers La Repubblica and Il Manifesto. It claimed that US President Donald Trump "wants to expel Palestinians from Gaza. Meanwhile, in the West Bank the violence of the Israeli government and settlers continues".

## Independence Day of Bosnia & Herzegovina



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries Rana Tanvir Hussain, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaisar Shiekh, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Emin Cohodarevic and others cutting cake to celebrate the Independence Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

## Ocalan urges PKK to lay arms, dissolve itself

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: PKK's imprisoned ringleader Abdullah Öcalan called on the terrorist group to disarm and dissolve itself, according to an announcement read by the delegation that visited him in prison. "The collapse of real socialism in the 1990s due to internal reasons, the erosion of identity denial in the country, and advancements in freedom of expression have led to the PKK's loss of meaning and excessive repetition. Therefore, like its counterparts, it has reached the end of its lifespan, making its dissolution necessary." Öcalan finally issued his historic call to the group to lay down arms, marking a turning point in terror-free Türkiye initiative launched last year by a government ally. A delegation from Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) visited Öcalan in island prison he was held off the coast of Istanbul. The delegation which included lawmakers of the party known for its links to the terrorist group, read the statement of Öcalan at a news conference in Istanbul.

## Japan supports rural education in Islamabad with \$44,025 grant

At the signing ceremony, His Excellency, Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi emphasized that the education lays a strong foundation for a prosperous country Education plays a central role in Japan's ODA from its own experience of achieving its economic growth



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program,

has decided to provide grant assistance of USD 44,025 (equivalent to around PKR 12.2 Million) to a local NGO for development project in Tarnol, Islamabad. The grant contract was signed between His Excellency, Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and a representative of the NGO at the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on February 27, 2025. The NGO that will implement the project is Community Services Program which has been working in the

sector of education, health and infrastructure for the last fifteen years at grassroots level in rural area of Pakistan. Community Services Program will receive the grant of USD 44,025 to construct the school building and install furniture in village Ramzania, Tarnol, Islamabad to expand their school capacity to provide better learning environment to more children in the region. The school will offer the education from the pre-school stage to the 5th grade, both girls and boys, ensuring a better learning environment. The new school building is scheduled to be completed in February, 2026. At the signing ceremony, His Excellency, Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi emphasized that the education lays a strong foundation for a prosperous country Education plays a central role in Japan's ODA from its own experience of achieving its economic growth by emphasizing education. He also expressed his expectation that this project will bring positive impact on uplifting the living standard of Pakistani people and children, who are the future of Pakistan. The Government of Japan will continue to provide flexible and timely support to local NGOs through grant assistance to achieve human security in Pakistan.

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## Sweden attack: Germany jails two Afghans

BERLIN: Two Afghan men linked to the Daesh group were jailed in Germany on Thursday for planning an attack on the Swedish parliament in retaliation for Qur'an burnings by protesters. The two suspects, identified as Ibrahim M. G. and Ramin N., had allegedly tried but failed to buy guns for the plot. They were found guilty of plotting to "kill members of parliament... in response to the burning of Qur'an in Sweden," the higher regional court in Thuringia said in a statement. Ibrahim M. G., 30, was sentenced to five years and six months in jail, and Ramin N., 24, received a sentence of four years and two months. The defendants, who arrived in Germany in 2015 and 2016 respectively, were Daesh sympathizers who "shared the Daesh worldview and endorsed (its) violent approach," the court said. - Agencies

## MQM-P slams 16 years of PPP government in Sindh

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Pakistan has pledged to release a white paper against the Sindh government, while calling the 16-year-long rule of the Pakistan People's Party in the province the worst and most corrupt. In a press conference, senior MQM-P leaders including Farooq Sattar and Nasreen-Jail accused the provincial government of gross mismanagement and corruption, claiming that they had brought yet another lament for Karachi. The white paper will include details the state of governance under the PPP, pointing out that 25 billion rupees in dues remain unpaid to government employees residing in Karachi and working in local government bodies. Farooq Sattar remarked that these employees had their monthly gratuity contributions deducted over 30 to 40 years of service, but those dues have not been paid to retirees since

2017. He questioned, "What could be a bigger economic crime than this?" He further explained that all these Karachi-based institutions, led by the Mayor of Karachi or the Provincial Minister for Local Government, have been under the control of Sindh's feudal lords since 2017, when MQM-P was removed from overseeing them. Farooq Sattar stated that Rs 25 billion of dues for Karachi's retired employees remain unpaid since 2017, with similar issues affecting Hyderabad. He emphasized that after the 18th amendment, the Sindh government is responsible for paying these dues. The MQM leaders revealed that Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) owes Rs 15 billion to 10,000 employees, while Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) owes Rs 6 billion to 5,000 employees. Similarly, the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) owes Rs 5 billion to over 1,000 retired employees. Other bodies, such as WASA, HMC, and HDA in Hyderabad, owe another Rs 4-5 billion.



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## Hamas says negotiations only path to free Israeli captives

Israeli authorities' "failed" attempts to obstruct the prisoner exchange have left the regime with "no choice" but to begin talks for the second phase of the truce, it added

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: The Palestinian Hamas resistance group has expressed its "full commitment" to a ceasefire deal, emphasizing that negotiations are the only way to secure the release of the remaining Israeli captives. Hamas made the announcement on Thursday, as Israel began releasing 642 Palestinians after the resistance group handed over the bodies of four Israeli captives as part of the final prisoner swap in the first phase of the ceasefire deal. "We renew our full commitment to the ceasefire agreement with all its details and provisions and our readiness to enter into negotiations related to the second phase of the agreement," Hamas said in a statement. It also noted that the only way to free the Israeli captives still held in Gaza is through "negotiation and commitment" to the ceasefire agreement. Israeli authorities "failed" attempts to obstruct the prisoner exchange have left the regime with "no choice" but to begin talks for the second phase of the truce, it added. Raising victory signs, freed Palestinian abductees prostrate upon their arrival at the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Yunis. The Palestinian abductees had been initially slated for release on Saturday in exchange for six living captives freed

by Hamas. However, Israel had delayed the process over alleged mistreatment of captives during their handover. Hamas accused Israel of "sabotaging" the Gaza ceasefire by the delay. The Palestinian Prisoners' Information Office said that the seventh and eighth batches of abductee releases were merged, bringing the total number to 642. "We are witnessing one of the achievements of the Palestinian people with the release of the seventh and eighth batches of prisoners, which is the largest so far within the ceasefire agreement arrangements," Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem said on Thursday. Israel launched a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, after Hamas carried out a historic operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. The Tel Aviv regime failed to achieve its declared objectives of freeing captives and eliminating Hamas despite killing at least 48,348 Palestinians, mostly women and children, in Gaza. Israel accepted Hamas' longstanding negotiation terms under the Gaza truce, which began on January 19. The ceasefire consists of three phases, each lasting 42 days. In phase one, a total of 33 Israeli captives, including eight bodies, were released in exchange for some 1,900 Palestinian abductees held in the regime's jails.