



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 04, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Palestinian film No Other Land wins Oscar for best documentary

Detailed News On Page-06

Saudi opp. welcome to return home

Detailed News On Page-08



Short ruled out of CT remainder

Detailed News On Page-06



British HC calls on PM

Shehbaz calls unity for peace in Gaza, Ukraine

The Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction at the progress made in bilateral ties between the two countries

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of the United Kingdom Ms. Jane Marriot, paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister at Prime Minister House. The Prime Minister conveyed his greetings to His Majesty King Charles III and wished him a quick recovery to full health. He also reiterated his invitation to His Majesty for undertaking a Royal visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience. The Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction at the progress made in bilateral ties between the two countries. While discussing the global situation, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for collective efforts to build lasting peace in Gaza and Ukraine. The High Commissioner said that the U.K. was committed to strengthening its ties with Pakistan and to continue partnering in the country's national progress and development. Meanwhile, Administration of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) fully prepared to start flight operations for United Kingdom (UK) after a period of four and half years. Negotiations are underway with the UK Department for Transport, and flights to the UK are expected to resume by June 2025, according to an official document. One flight will be operated from Islamabad to Manchester. A Boeing 777 will be used for flight operation. The final preparations on Britain's airport in this regard are currently underway. The management of Pakistan International Airlines is optimistic that a meeting which will be held on March 15 PIA will be granted final permission to start UK flight operations.

PM satisfaction at decrease in inflation

Inflation cools to 113-month low at 1.5% in Feb as slide continues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Monday expressed satisfaction at the continuous decrease in inflation related to consumer price index. In a statement, he said the present government was completing its one year and on this occasion it was a very good news. He said it was matter of great satisfaction that the rate of inflation came to 1.5 percent in February, 2025 which was the lowest rate of inflation after September 2015. The rate of inflation from July 2024 to February 2025 was 5.9 percent while in the last financial year during the same period inflation was at 28 percent, and this showed a remarkable decrease, he added. The prime minister said due to the magnificent efforts of the economic team of the government, the economic indicators were improving with every passing day. The continuous improvement in the economy was the result of diligent teamwork, he continued. He said all the institutions were working together for the betterment of economy and for promoting business and investment. He noted that the improvement in macroeconomic conditions had started to benefit the people. He was hopeful that inflation would come down further. He said it was top priority of the government to provide essential items to the people on low rates. Marking its lowest level since September 2015, Consumer Price Index-based (CPI) inflation in Pakistan declined to 1.5% year-on-year (YoY) in February 2025

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ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriot pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Bilawal, PM meeting delayed

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was scheduled to meet PM Shehbaz Sharif yesterday

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A scheduled meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday has been delayed. Bilawal, who was expected to arrive in Islamabad yesterday, postponed his visit due to "preoccupation with some important matters," according to party insiders. The two leaders are now expected to meet within the next few days. Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was scheduled to meet PM Shehbaz Sharif today. The PPP chairman was to attend a high level meeting of coalition

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US actions may set polio eradication back

US' planned withdrawal of from WHO has impacted organisation's efforts in polio eradication

AGENCIES

LONDON: The eradication of polio as a global health threat may be delayed unless US funding cuts - potentially totaling hundreds of millions of dollars over several years - are reversed, a senior World Health Organisation (WHO) official has warned. The WHO works with groups such as UNICEF and the Gates Foundation to end polio. The planned withdrawal of the United States from

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Hails govt's achievements

Tarar fires fresh salvo at PTI as govt completes first year

Coalition govt reversed country's global "isolation", all economic indicators positive: minister

KHAYAM ABBASI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: After Pakistan's inflation fell to the lowest level since September 2015, Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that the coalition government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would complete its first year in power tomorrow (Wednesday) with many achievements on the economic, diplomatic and foreign fronts. "Those who were betting on [Pakistan's] default are in turmoil today," Tarar slammed the former ruling party - the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) - while addressing a press conference in Islamabad today. The minister said the PML-N-led coalition government will complete its one year in power tomorrow. On March 4, Shehbaz Sharif took the oath to officially become prime minister for a second time, nearly four weeks after an

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IMF pushes for crackdown on tax evasion in Pakistan

In the first phase, the IMF delegation will focus on technical-level discussions

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has called for a crackdown on tax evasion in Pakistan's real estate sector as negotiations begin for the release of a \$1 billion loan tranche in Islamabad. This demand is part of the ongoing discussions aimed at securing the next tranche of the \$7 billion loan program. Pakistan has assured

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Briefs

PML-N leaders concerned over Khattak's inclusion

Due to differences, some PML-N leaders refrained from speaking to Khattak for past 15 years, says one leader

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Some Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders have expressed reservations about the inclusion of Pervez Khattak, a former close aide of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding-chairman Imran Khan, in the federal cabinet. Speaking on a TV program, PML-N leader Ikhthiar Wali said that certain party members were displeased with including Khattak, who served as the defence minister and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister during PTI's separate tenures, into the cabinet. He revealed that due to past political differences, some PML-N leaders had refrained from speaking to Khattak for the past 15 to 16 years.

Pakistan slams Israeli action to block aid

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan condemns in the strongest possible terms Israeli decision to block critical humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, during the Holy month of Ramadan. This latest action is part of Israel's systematic campaign to deny much needed humanitarian aid to millions of Palestinians in dire need. This constitutes yet another blatant violation of international law by the occupying power, and could imperil the ceasefire agreement. We call on the international community to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza.

Involved in terrorism

Afghan commander 'killed in Pakistan'

Mujeeb, an Afghan military commander, was among 14 militants killed in operation, say security sources

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Security sources have confirmed the identity of an Afghan militant killed in an operation in Pakistan, revealing his involvement in terrorism. According to the sources, on February 28, the Pakistani security forces eliminated 14 militants in an operation in Ghulam Khan Kalay. Among them was an Afghan militant identified as Mujeebur Rehman, also known as Mansoor, son of Mirza Khan. Mujeeb hailed from the Dandar village of Maidan Wardak province in Afghanistan. He was a commander of the third battalion at Afghanistan's National Military Academy, sources said. Additionally, on January 30, security forces killed another Afghan militant, Badruddin, during an operation in Dera Ismail Khan. Badruddin, son of Maulvi Ghulam Muhammad, was a lieutenant in the Afghan army and the son of

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FC soldier martyred in Kalat attack

Following the incident, security forces cordoned off the area

KALAT: A security forces vehicle was targeted in an attack on a major highway in Balochistan's Kalat district, resulting in the martyrdom of one soldier and injuries to four others. According to sources, the Wing Commander remained unharmed in the explosion, while Naik Ataulah embraced martyrdom. Soldier Wakeel and other personnel sustained injuries in the attack, which took place in the Mughalzai area. Following the incident, security forces cordoned off the area, and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Kalat confirmed the nature of the attack, stating that it was a suicide bombing as per the initial reports. - DNA

'Sec 94 will apply to those who are under Army Act'

Justice Mazhar asks how trials will proceed if cases transferred from military courts to ATCs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar on Monday inquired about the stage from where the trials of civilians would resume if the cases are transferred from a military court to an anti-terrorism court (ATC). The query was raised during the hearing of intra-court appeals against the military trial of civilians before a constitutional bench of the top court. The bench, led by Justice Amin Uddin Khan and comprising other judges including Justice Mazhar, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Hassan Azhar Naqvi and Justice Naeem Afghan, heard arguments from civil society's lawyer Faisal Siddiqi, who contended that the core issue was not how 105 suspects had been selected for military trial but whether the law allowed military trials at all. Justice Amin noted that the transfer of suspects was a matter of record and asked whether the lawyer had challenged Section 94 of the Army Act. Siddiqi responded that at the time of the suspects' custody, their crimes had not yet been determined, and that the unlimited

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ATC grants bails to 56 PTI workers

Cases are registered against them at Kohsar and Tarnol police stations

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court in the federal capital on Monday granted bail to 56 workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) who were arrested during November 26 protests. ATC Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain approved the post arrest bail while hearing the case registered against him. The PTI workers, who were arrested following the protests, were represented by their lawyer, Sardar Masroof Advocate. The cases were registered against him at Tarnol and

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Tessori distributes vegetable carts among poor

KARACHI: The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on 2nd Sehri of Holy month of Ramadan distributed vegetable carts among the poor people. The Governor announced to distribute 9 thousand carts to poor people as they could start their small level living trade. Kamran Khan Tessori distributed 1000 carts full of vegetables among the poor people in a ceremony organized by JDC. The Governor of Sindh reviewed prices of the vegetables and checked their weight. Later, talking to media persons, the Governor of Sindh Tessori said that no one could look with a bad eye because of strong Pakistan forces. He said that Army Chief was strengthening the defense of the country as well as economy and in this regard investment was being brought through SIFC project.—APP

Efforts afoot to improve road infrastructure

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Communications and Works (C&W) Malik Sohaib Ahmad Bherth said on Monday the Punjab government was undertaking significant steps towards the development of road infrastructure across the province. In a press statement, he said that several large-scale projects were currently underway to improve infrastructure in the province. The C&W Minister emphasized that the work to make the Lahore Ring Road "patch-free" was ongoing, with a concerted effort being made to complete the task swiftly. Teams from the Communications and Works Department (C&W), the Ring Road Authority, and the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) were working round the clock to ensure that the public had access to the best possible travel facilities, he added. Malik Sohaib Ahmad Bherth also mentioned that efforts were being made to replace the damaged signboards along the Lahore Ring Road with new ones, in order to provide complete guidance to travelers during their journey.—APP

KP to launch education card in divisional headquarters

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has decided to launch an Education Card in all divisional headquarters of the province by 2027. Due to the ongoing printing of textbooks for the upcoming academic year, the initiative would not be implemented immediately and was now planned to begin in the 2027 academic year. According to official release, the Education Card would be introduced at the primary and secondary education levels, benefiting students directly. KP's Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education, Faisal Tarakai, stated that the government spends billions.—APP

Romanian embassy, PNCA to bring opera singing courses to Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Romania, in partnership with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), is launching opera singing courses in Islamabad, starting April 9, 2025. This initiative aims to promote Romanian culture and foster artistic exchange between the two nations. Romanian embassy, PNCA collaborate to bring opera singing courses to Islamabad. Renowned Romanian soprano and opera singer, Georgiana Costea-Gluga, will conduct the sessions twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM at the PNCA premises in F-5/1, Islamabad. The courses are open to individuals aged 14 and above, with participants under 14 focusing on basic technique elements. This program offers a unique opportunity for vocalists to explore the depths of musical expression, combining classical singing techniques with grand theatrical productions. Under Ms Costea-Gluga's guidance, participants will delve into the fundamentals of opera, enhancing their vocal abilities and stage presence.



The PNCA, established in 1973, continues to serve as a premier institution fostering cultural enrichment in Pakistan. This initiative aligns

with the PNCA's mission to promote artistic activities across various forms, including visual and performing arts.

The Embassy of Romania's initiative promotes Romanian culture through canto classes, introducing Pakistani students to Romania's rich mu-

sical heritage. This program strengthens cultural ties between the two nations and offers valuable insights into the operatic world.

Heavy snowfall continues in Galiyat

NATHIAGALI: More than a foot of snow has fallen in Galiyat as the ongoing snowfall continues unabated, Assistant Director of Galiyat Development Authority (GDA), Ahsan Hamid, told APP that the region has received over a foot of snow so far, with GDA staff actively engaged in clearing roads and assisting the public. According to a spokesperson for Rescue 1122 Abbottabad, with snow accumulation 1 foot. Rescue personnel remain on high alert to respond to any emergencies. Tourists visiting Galiyat have been advised to ensure their vehicles are in good condition before traveling, maintain an adequate fuel supply, and use iron chains on tires for better traction. Authorities have urged drivers to operate their vehicles in low gear to prevent skidding. Visitors should also carry sufficient food and water supplies and confirm hotel bookings in advance. In case of any emergency, travellers can contact Rescue Emergency Services 1122 for assistance.—APP

Real-time tracking system for 15 helpline complaints launched

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has launched a modern tracking portal to ensure timely and effective resolution of complaints registered through the 15 helpline. The initiative aims to enhance transparency in public service centres and keep citizens informed about the status of their complaints. According to details, the new real-time tracking system would cover complaints lodged under the Virtual Women Police Station, Virtual Center for Child Safety and Virtual Center for Minorities. Each applicant will receive a username and password to track the progress of their complaint at any time.—APP

KP seeks report on removal of buses, wagons from BRT routes

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has sought a report on the removal of buses and wagons operating on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes in Peshawar, setting a 72-hour deadline for submission. The Regional Transport Authority, Traffic Police, and district administration have been directed to take strict action against unauthorized public transport on BRT routes. The Commissioner of Peshawar has been instructed to scrap these vehicles permanently instead of imposing fines and temporarily impounding them. Additional directives regarding traffic management have also been issued. To maintain smooth traffic flow on University Road,

a ban on heavy transport from 7 AM to 10 PM will remain in place throughout the holy month of Ramadan. Furthermore, TransPeshawar has been ordered to expedite efforts to extend BRT services to Warsak Road and other areas to ease local traffic congestion. The decisions were made during a meeting chaired by Peshawar Commissioner Riaz Mehsud, following instructions from Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. The meeting was attended by TransPeshawar Chief Executive Muhammad Imran, Regional Transport Authority Secretary Abrar Wazir, Excise Director Javed Khilji, SP Traffic Peshawar Cantt Zakoullah, Assistant Commissioner Town Haroon Saleem, and other officials. Commissioner Riaz Mehsud highlighted that be-

fore the launch of the BRT service, 504 permit-holding buses and wagons were compensated. He added that transport owners were previously given multiple warnings and financial penalties, with some even submitting affidavits agreeing to remove their vehicles from the BRT corridor. However, many continue to violate these regulations. To prevent further violations, authorities have been directed to take strict and permanent action without any leniency. Additionally, TransPeshawar has been urged to accelerate the expansion of the BRT network to facilitate better public transportation and reduce traffic congestion in Peshawar. The ban on heavy transport on University Road from 7 AM to 10 PM will remain enforced during Ramadan to ensure smooth traffic flow.

Over 67,000 deserving families to receive financial aid

LODHRAN: Deputy Commissioner Dr Lubna Nazir said that under the Nigebhan Ramzan Package, a total of 67,630 deserving families across the district would receive Rs. 10,000 each as financial assistance. According to the DC, the distribution was as followed as 23,864 families in Tehsil Lodhran, 20,931 families in Tehsil Kahror Pacca and 22,835 families in Tehsil Duniyapur. This year, instead of setting up Ramzan bazaars or providing ration packages, the Punjab government has opted for direct cash assistance.—APP

RWMC makes special plans for cleaning during rain

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has made special arrangements for cleaning in the rains. On the instructions of RWMC Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar, additional workers were deployed to ensure cleanliness in the rains as part of comprehensive measures to make the cleaning operation more effective and organized, an RWMC spokesman said on Monday. The workers ensured the cleaning of drains so that the flow of water was not obstructed, he added. The officers and supervisors of the company visited different areas and reviewed the cleaning arrangements and issued necessary instructions on the spot. Four workers each of the Company were performing duties in the morning and evening shifts in eight Ramazan Bazaars of the Rawalpindi district. The RWMC CEO said that the Company was making every effort to provide a clean environment to the citizens.—APP

Sharjeel for timely completion of uplift projects

KARACHI: The Sindh Senior Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon on Monday issued directives for timely completion of projects approved by the Content and Production Board. He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting of Information Department held at his office. The meeting was attended by the spokesperson of the Sindh government, Sumeta Afzal Syed, Secretary of Information Nadeem Ur Rehman Memon, Director P&D (Information) Moiz Pirzada, Director of Electronic Media Aziz Hakro, and Director of Films Hizbullah Memon. The meeting discussed the approved projects of the

Content and Production Board, the promotion of important initiatives of the Sindh government, and other key matters. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon reviewed the approved projects of the Content and Production Review Board and the preparation of content for these projects. Speaking in the meeting, Sindh's Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the purpose of the Sindh government's initiatives is to promote the cinema industry and ensure opportunities for new talent in acting, singing, directing, and all other sectors related to the film industry, which will create new employment opportunities.

ANF seizes 595 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 9 operations recovered over 595 kg drugs worth over Rs 40 million and arrested 6 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 91 intoxicated tablets were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near Jinnah Road Saddar in Karachi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 520 kg hashish was recovered from an uninhabited area of Chagai district in Balochistan. In an operation conducted in Panjgur area, 10 kg hashish was recovered and 39 kg hashish was recovered from Chaman area in Balochistan. 18 kg hashish hidden in a car near Tonmi Mor in D.G. Khan was seized and an accused was arrested during the operation. 2 kg ice was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near Tonmi Mor in Sakhi Sarwar Road D.I. Khan. 2 kg hashish was also recovered from the possession of an accused netted near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan. In 8th operation, 2 kg ice and 1.5 kg heroin were recovered from secret cavities of a car intercepted near Ring Road Peshawar and an accused was arrested. In 9th operation, 970 grams ice was recovered from the possession of a drug dealer arrested near Sakhi Sarwar Road in DG Khan. Cases have been registered against arrested accused under Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—DNA

HSA starts 423 posts' recruitment process

The Ministry of Health and the Health Services Academy have already initiated the screening process, ensuring transparency in the recruitments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Health Services Academy (HSA) has been tasked with recruiting for 423 positions, ranging from PPS-1 to PPS-22, across 10 different public health projects. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination (NHSRC) has assigned this responsibility to ensure transparency, efficiency, and merit-based recruitment process under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). According to Nadeem Sajjad Kayani, Controller

of Examinations and Focal Person for PSDP Projects at HSA, the academy has already successfully conducted recruitment for five major teaching hospitals in the federal capital, where over 150,000 candidates underwent screening tests in a transparent manner. Based on this success, the Ministry of Health has further strengthened its trust in HSA by assigning another large-scale recruitment task. This new recruitment drive involves conducting screening tests, psychological assessments, skill and trade tests, and other evaluation stages for 71,487

applicants. Talking to the media, Nadeem Sajjad Kayani said that on the direction of Vice-Chancellor HSA Dr Shehzad Ali Khan, the academy will conduct the recruitment process using modern technology, including Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) systems, and transparent policies. He emphasized that all testing phases will be conducted according to international standards, utilizing advanced assessment technology to eliminate any possibility of error or malpractice. The use of OMR systems will not

only ensure transparency in written examinations but will also facilitate an effective evaluation of candidates' actual skills in skill and trade tests. The academy aims to ensure merit-based selection, bringing qualified and skilled professionals into public health projects. These recruitments are part of various Prime Minister public health initiatives, including the elimination of Hepatitis C, the National Health Support Project, the establishment of Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Center,

diabetes prevention programs, quality medicine supply chains, community health centers, and primary healthcare facilities. The Ministry of Health and the Health Services Academy have already initiated the screening process, ensuring transparency in the recruitments. A final list of selected candidates will soon be submitted to the ministry for swift deployment of successful applicants. This initiative marks a significant milestone in strengthening Pakistan's public health system.

EXTENSION OF TENDER NOTICE

The Tender Notice published vide PID # 5607/24 dated 16 February 2025 (Sunday) in Daily Jang and The News (combined) is hereby extended as per following details:-

Extension in last date of Collection of Documents:	14 March 2025 at 1100 hrs
Extension in Quote submission Date:	18 March 2025 at 1130 hrs
Extension in Tender opening Date/Time:	18 March 2025 at 1200 hrs

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patricks Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A diplomat keenly observes paintings displayed at IMCG F 6/2 on the occasion of a function organized under the aegis of Embassies of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. —DNA

IFC, Romina discuss efforts on climate action

Secretary Moriani highlighted the popularity of two-wheelers in Pakistan and suggested that promoting electric two-wheelers could significantly reduce carbon emissions from transportation, improve air quality in urban areas, and decrease reliance on fossil fuels

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, A four-member delegation led by Global Director for Climate at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Jamie Fergusson met with Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam at her office on Monday to explore avenues for deepening collaboration in addressing the challenges of climate change. The meeting focused on strengthening the partnership between the IFC and Ministry of Climate Change with an emphasis on enhancing the capacity of stakeholders across various sectors to address the impacts of climate change. The delegation discussed strategies to improve Pakistan's ability to respond to climate change, emphasizing the importance of

continued global support for developing nations. Both Romina Khurshid Alam and Jamie Fergusson highlighted the need for stronger partnerships to empower key stakeholders, including environmentalists, academics, and technical experts, to effectively combat climate change. In her remarks, Romina underscored the urgent need for increased accessibility to climate funding to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. She pointed out that despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan is among the most vulnerable to the devastating impacts of climate change, including floods, droughts, and extreme temperatures. Alam called for streamlined access to climate finance to implement long-term adaptation and

mitigation plans. She emphasized the importance of simplifying processes for developing countries to access climate funds, enabling large-scale projects aimed at reducing the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems. Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change, Aisha Humera Moriani discussed the growing potential of electric vehicles (EVs) in Pakistan's efforts to cut carbon emissions and improve air quality. She proposed strengthening collaboration with the EV sector, particularly in light of rising demand for two-wheelers in the country. Secretary Moriani highlighted the popularity of two-wheelers in Pakistan and suggested that promoting electric two-wheelers could significantly reduce carbon emissions from transportation, improve air quality in urban

areas, and decrease reliance on fossil fuels. The delegation acknowledged the importance of this initiative and expressed interest in further exploring cooperation with the EV sector as part of a comprehensive strategy to address climate change. The discussion also covered the broader need to promote sustainable transportation solutions to reduce Pakistan's carbon footprint. Jamie Fergusson commended Romina Khurshid Alam's leadership on climate change, especially her advocacy for Pakistan's climate priorities at COP29. He recognized Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change and emphasized the necessity of global cooperation in supporting the country's climate efforts and reaffirmed the IFC's commitment to providing technical expertise and strategic guidance to help Pakistan implement projects

that promote climate resilience and sustainable development. Both parties agreed that stronger collaboration between Pakistan and international financial institutions like the IFC is vital for advancing the country's climate agenda. The exchange of resources and ideas will be key to overcoming the challenges posed by climate change, particularly in vulnerable regions like Pakistan. Alam reiterated her commitment to working closely with the IFC to secure the necessary resources for climate action projects. She emphasized the importance of involving local stakeholders and communities to ensure that climate solutions are tailored to Pakistan's unique needs. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to further strengthening collaborative efforts, with a shared focus on supporting Pakistan's climate resilience in the years ahead.

Railways install 17,810 meters on residential units

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways had installed as many as 7,810 WAPDA meters at residential units of the department while remaining residential units will be handed over upto the DICOs by September 25 this year. "The basic purpose of handing over of Railway residential units to DISCOs for direct billing to consumers and overcome the burden on the department," an official told APP. The official said that Pakistan Railways was also shifting electricity of its Railway Stations from WAPADA to solar system. For this purpose, he said initially 155 Railway Stations would be shifted to solar system to improve service delivery, cost effective and sustainable operations. To a question, he said rationalization of staff Pakistan Railways was conducting a right sizing exercise to improve efficiency, reduce costs and integrate new technologies for streamlined operations and enhanced productivity. There had been exponential growth in pension since 2016 in the wake of new pension policy. Resultantly, yearly expenditure on pension which used to be Rs 20.4 billion in 2015-16 had increased to Rs 49.8 billion in 2023-24 registering an increase of 144 percent, he added. The official said that Ministry of Railways had approached the federal government through summaries to the federal cabinet, ECC of the federal cabinet for transfer of pension liability of Pakistan Railway pensioners to the Finance Division/AGPR. However, Finance division was of the view that Pakistan Railways was an autonomous commercial entity which was expected to generate enough revenue to meet its expenditures and due to current fiscal limitations faced by the federal government the proposal to transfer pension related liabilities of Pakistan Railways to the books of Finance Division was financially untenable. He said the department was actively pursuing the matter with federal government to transfer pension liabilities to the books of Finance Division and creation of Public Service Obligation regime. —DNA

CDA chief chairs meeting to discuss various uplift projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held here on the other day via Zoom at the CDA Headquarters, chaired by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, to discuss various projects and initiatives for the development and beautification of the city. The meeting was attended by Member Engineering, Member Environment, NESPAK Consultants, architects and other relevant senior officers from various formations of CDA. During the meeting, the senior officers briefed Chairman CDA on the repair and maintenance work of the Islamabad Police Academy. They apprised that detailed estimates for the repair and beautification of the Islamabad Police Academy building are currently being prepared. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that timelines and other important matters related to the repair and maintenance of the Police Academy be finalized promptly, and daily progress reports

on the work be submitted. He also suggested that NESPAK consultants assist in the repair and maintenance work of the Police Academy. The meeting also discussed the beautification of the Pakistan Secretariat buildings. Chairman CDA emphasized the need for a low-cost design for the facade of the Pakistan Secretariat to beautify its appearance. He directed that soft landscaping and horticultural work around the Pakistan Secretariat be ensured. Additionally, he instructed the Planning Wing to identify a dedicated space to address the parking issue at the Pakistan Secretariat and suggested conducting a survey using drones for this purpose. Chairman CDA directed the DMA Directorate to assess its assets and estimate their market value. During the briefing, it was informed that the repair and maintenance of graveyards in Islamabad are progressing rapidly. Chairman CDA instructed that all charges for the funeral bus be immediately waived off and that an electric bus be launched as coffin carrier for the graveyards. Chairman CDA also directed that a uniform design

for advertisements and signboards be introduced outside all commercial markaz and shops in Islamabad. He emphasized that the best architects should be hired to create aesthetically pleasing designs for advertisements and signboards at these markaz and shops. The meeting discussed the repair, maintenance, and beautification of Islamabad's major roads. It was apprised during the briefing that patchwork and kerb stone repairs are ongoing on the city's major highways. Chairman CDA directed immediate completion for the repair & maintenance, patchwork and beautification of key highways, including Club Road, Constitution Avenue, Express Highway, Faisal Avenue, Srinagar Highway, Margalla Road, and Jinnah Avenue. He also instructed that the process of installation of permanent lights on these highways and pedestrian bridges be completed soon. Chairman CDA emphasized that the repair and beautification work on these highways should be completed day and night during the holy month of Ramadan.

BHC's Chevening Climate Mentorship Group celebrate their success

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission in Pakistan held a closing ceremony to celebrate the achievements of the Chevening Climate Mentorship Scheme participants. Through the scheme, 25 young climate activists, journalists and professionals were connected with 11 Chevening alumni who are actively working in the climate sector. With support from their mentors and the wider group, mentees have developed podcasts, documentaries and articles on the impacts of climate change for major channels and publications. They have organised youth climate conferences and events on climate negotiations and climate finance. They have established social media platforms for women in remote communities to share their climate stories. Further, they have been supported in submitting key policy proposals to government departments like the Ministry of Climate Change. They have been coached through presenting at COP 29. And they have set up new climate fellowships and internships to foster the new talent on climate. Alongside this, participants benefited from attending Chevening's series of climate debates, where the British High Commission brought together prominent Chevening alumni in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad to debate key themes like green finance, urbanisation and COP29. British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott CMG OBE said: "Climate change such is a huge challenge that it can be difficult to know how to engage and make a difference. Linking young climate professionals with more experienced experts is a win-win situation: expertise, enthusiasm and idealism are shared to try and make a difference to help humanity. I'm confident that the connections forged this year will grow and inspire others beyond this beginning." Ahmed Kamal, university student and climate mentee, established a toolkit with simple actions children can take to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This is now being rolled out to Beaconhouse schools across the country. —APP

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Briefs

NHA extends deadline for Toll Plaza bidding

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority (NHA) has announced an extension for the submission of e-bids for the management and operation of 13 toll plazas along national highways. According to the spokesman of NHA, the new submission date is now March 5, 2025. The contracts include responsibilities such as toll collection, maintenance, and managing operations at strategic locations. He said that anyone having a National Tax Number (NTN) can apply for the e-bidding process as NHA is facilitating everyone to include in this process. The NHA teams are visiting Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) to raise awareness about this opportunity and encourage participation, he added. The toll plazas are spread across multiple locations on key national highways, including N-5, N-55, and M-8, with significant toll plazas in cities like Qazi Ahmed, Ghotki, Lahore, and Larkana. The NHA first published the advertisement for this opportunity in February 2025, and interested parties must submit their bids through the e-bidding platform by the new deadline.

For any queries about the bidding process, including issues related to uploading e-bids, the NHA has provided contact numbers for assistance.—APP

Ramazan price crackdown: 51 sellers arrested

ISLAMABAD: As Ramazan begins, the Islamabad's district administration has launched a citywide operation against overpricing, arresting 51 vendors and sealing three shops and two superstores. The crackdown targeted markets, Ramazan bazaars, and residential areas to enforce official price lists and protect consumers during the holy month. The district administration reported widespread inspections across key markets, including Pakistan Town, H-9 Ramazan Bazaar, Sabzi Mandi, and DHA. Officials confirmed that the 51 vendors were detained for charging above government-mandated rates, while three shops and two superstores were temporarily closed for repeated violations. In Pakistan Town, Assistant Commissioner teams sealed three stores and arrested eight sellers during surprise checks. While, at the H-9 Ramazan Bazaar, three persons were detained for parking mismanagement and mismanaging vehicle arrangements, causing public inconvenience. Separately, the Industrial Area administration arrested seven vendors in H-9 for overpricing daily essentials. The Sabzi Mandi vegetable market saw 17 sellers arrested for inflating prices of daily use edibles like tomatoes, onions, and potatoes. In Tramri Market, four shopkeepers were taken into custody, while five others in Sattar Market faced action following consumer complaints. Authorities also targeted upscale areas, sealing two DHA superstores and arresting three staffers for overcharging.—APP

Four Paws team rescues severely wounded Asian bear

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The first day of the holy month of Ramazan brought much-awaited relief for a 7-year-old Asian bear who was kept in illegal captivity and used for baiting (for fighting with trained dogs) in Punjab's city Jauharabad (Khushab). The nonstop rescue operation—from Vienna to Lahore; from Lahore to Jauharabad and then from Jauharabad to Islamabad—ended with safe landing of the poor creature at the animal rescue & rehabilitation centre (previously Murghazar Zoo) of Islamabad. According to details, the rapid response team from global animal welfare organ-

The underprivileged find hope in AST's hospital

AST leadership is committed to ensuring that no one in the hills suffers from preventable blindness in Pakistan

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Gilgit has emerged as a beacon of hope for thousands of poor people suffering from vision-related ailments even before its completion. The hospital's construction started in July 2024 and was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026. Still, the exceptionally high demand for quality eye care prompted the trust's leadership to initiate operations in the incomplete facility, said Project Director Brig. (ret) Arshad Mehmood. Talking to the media, he said that as soon as the hospital started functioning limitedly, it was flooded with poor patients lacking the financial freedom to afford quality treatment in the country's urban centres. He said that the trust is bringing hope to isolated corners of the country through its visionary leadership, dedicated team, community support, generous donors, and state-of-the-art eye



care solutions. He underlined that the locals, who long suffered from a lack of specialized care amid poverty and harsh environmental conditions, have better options than home remedies, which are making a difference in their lives. Brig. (Ret) Arshad Me-

hmoood said that the trust had to overcome challenges, including geographical isolation, a lack of skilled workforce, financial constraints, etc., to start the project, which will cost Rs335 million. The AST has become a trusted name, attracting patients across the region. Of the people living in 14 districts, 10 to 15 percent have eye-related issues due to poverty, extreme weather, and improper living conditions. Since December 17, a team of doctors led by Prof. Dr. Qaim Ali Khan has conducted an impressive total of 3,268 OPDs, providing crucial medical care to patients. Among these, 1,338 were female, 1,373 were male, and 557 were children. In addition to consultations, they have successfully performed 166 surgeries. It is important to emphasize that nearly 80 percent of patients receive free treatment in all trust-run hospitals in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Sukkur, Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit. AST leadership is committed to ensuring that no one in the hills suffers from preventable blindness in Pakistan.

Chinese beef noodles winning hearts

ISLAMABAD: Lanzhou Chinese Beef Noodles Restaurant, offering authentic Chinese cuisine, has recently been making waves in Pakistan, particularly in Rawalpindi's bustling food street. Known for its eye-catching and original Chinese flavors, the restaurant has become a focal point for food enthusiasts seeking a unique culinary experience. The restaurant is run by a Chinese family from Lanzhou, China, which has been residing in Pakistan for the past 12 years. According to Gwadar, over the years, they have successfully established two branches—one in Islamabad and another recently in Rawalpindi. Daniyal Khan, the manager, told Gwadar Pro that their menu features a variety of traditional Chinese dishes, including dumplings, Chinese soups, and fried beef and chicken dishes, all prepared with authentic techniques and flavors. He said the restaurant has quickly gained popularity, especially among young customers. He mentioned that the dining area is often full, with the restaurant welcoming around 400-500 customers each week, showcasing its rising popularity. The restaurant employs a mix of Chinese and Pakistani staff, with two skilled Chinese chefs at each branch ensuring the authenticity of the dishes. The remaining team consists of 10-12 Pakistani staff members who assist in operations and customer service. Daniyal Khan emphasized the restaurant's commitment to maintaining an authentic Chinese dining experience. He revealed that all ingredients, as well as the machinery and crockery, are imported directly from China. This dedication to authenticity ensures that every dish served retains its original flavors and quality. Nadiya Sohai, a customer, shared her experience, praising the large bowl of noodles with a light broth, expertly hand-pulled by a Chinese chef in the kitchen. She expressed deep admiration for the skill and effort behind the dish. "The dish includes a mix of chicken and vegetables, tossed in authentic Chinese sauces, and can be enhanced with a drizzle of chili oil for an extra kick. The portion is generous—perfect for one hungry individual or two people with lighter appetites," she said. Nadiya highly recommends it, especially for those who enjoy exploring different cuisines. "The restaurant has a cozy, homely vibe and tends to attract a mix of foreigners and Chinese patrons.—DNA

IFA inspects 26 outlets, warns violators

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director of the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr. Tahira Siddiqui on Monday said that the IFA teams inspected 26 food outlets in the Margalla Ramazan Bazaar, including general stores, fruit vendors, dry nut shops, and food processing units. Talking to APP, she said as Ramazan begins, Islamabad's food safety teams are conducting daily inspections across markets and Ramazan bazaars to ensure compliance with health standards. She announced intensified efforts to monitor food quality, targeting both established shops and small-scale vendors citywide. Dr. Tahira confirmed that daily inspections will continue in regular markets and Ramazan-specific bazaars throughout the holy month. Meanwhile, she said that a special attention is being given to neighborhood dairy shops, street vendors, and temporary stalls to prevent the sale of unsafe products. Inspectors flagged violations such as the use of substandard cooking oil and missing sales records. Vendors found violating guidelines face immediate penalties, including fines or closures. Dr. Tahira warned, "Unsafe practices, like frying food in low-quality oil or failing to maintain records, will not be tolerated." Dr. Siddiqui said. The IFA emphasized collaboration with the public, urging residents to verify expiry dates, packaging seals, and storage conditions before purchasing items.—APP

Strict action urged against profiteering

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday welcomed the Prime Minister's Rs 20 billion Ramadan relief package. He said that the profiteering mafia needs to be punished harshly as it is robbing poor masses in the holy month of Ramadan. Mian Zahid Hussain said that people are being robbed through artificial price hikes as usual in the blessed month, which should be stopped. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that inflation has been a major problem for the past several years, ruining people's standard of living. However, he said, inflation crosses all limits during Ramadan because the administra-

tive mechanism to control prices has become ineffective. The business leader said that the people are tired of paying the high price of inflation and do not have the strength to bear the situation. He said the masses should be given relief so that they can breathe a sigh of relief. He added that profiteering is on the rise this year, too, and no one can stop these elements. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the central and provincial governments keep making loud claims about ending inflation. Still, the people do not get any relief. With the arrival of the holy month, the profiteers have become active. The prices of essential commodities are skyrocketing, and the problems of the middle and poor class continuously increase. He noted that the grip of profiteers and hoarders has strengthened in the markets across the country, and the inflation rate is continuously increasing. The retail and wholesale prices of many essential items are growing. Mian Zahid

Hussain said that, like every year, this year, too, powerful groups involved in the food business had assured the government that prices would not increase, but these assurances proved futile. He further said that if immediate action is not taken against this mafia and middlemen, a second wave of inflation will also come during the same month, further reducing the people's purchasing power. He demanded that the central and provincial governments take strict measures to ensure the provision of cheap goods to the people at all levels during the holy month of Ramadan. Mian Zahid Hussain said that until strict action is taken against illegal profiteers, the people will not get any relief, which will affect the government's popularity. In dozens of countries, including Europe, America, Canada, Australia and India, people are given relief on religious and national festivals, but in Pakistan, influential mafias start skinning masses during such times, which is regrettable, he said.

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OGDCL to organize Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan's leading exploration and production (E&P) company, will host the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025 (PMIF25) on April 8-9, 2025, in collaboration with the government of Pakistan and strategic partners. The forum will serve as a premier platform for global stakeholders to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan's emerging minerals sector and unlock the country's vast mineral potential, said spokesperson of the OGDCL. Under the patronage of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), OGDCL is at the forefront of this landmark event to showcase the country's immense untapped mineral wealth. Partners for the event include Barrick, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), Government Holdings (Private) Limited (GHPL), Pakistan Minerals Private Limited (PMPL), Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Mari Energies, and Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC). During the event, the federal government will formally unveil Pakistan's newly developed, investor-friendly National Minerals Harmonisation Framework 2025. This policy framework aims to attract investment in the country's mineral sector. PMIF25 will bring together high-level government representatives, foreign and local investors, leading corporations, policymakers, international diplomats, financial organizations, and industry experts to explore lucrative opportunities in Pakistan's mining sector. The event will highlight recent policy reforms, large-scale mining potential, and the country's commitment to sustainable resource development, reinforcing its ambition to become a global mining hub.—APP

Shaping endgame

THE extraordinary White House meeting last Friday between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky has provoked much global shock. Yet, it may have – unexpectedly – unlocked for Europe a crucial window of opportunity to become more involved in any settlement deal with Russia. In February, the Trump administration indicated that it saw a purely bilateral process between Washington and Moscow of trying to end the war. However, the diplomatic bust-up between Trump and Zelensky has helped foster a new Franco-British-led initiative to end the conflict. This plan, which Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk says is proof that Europe has “woken up”, was the centrepiece of discussion at Sunday’s summit in London convened by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Around a dozen European national leaders attended, plus Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Nato secretary general Mark Rutte, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, European Council president Antonio Costa and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. In a statement issued ahead of the summit, Starmer said: “Three years on from Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, we are at a turning point.” Yet, much uncertainty remains. Despite the assurances that Trump appeared to have given Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron on their separate visits to the White House late last month, it is not clear how the White House will receive the Franco-British-led initiative. Discussion at the summit focused on three main points that will be further defined at forthcoming meetings, including Thursday’s EU emergency summit. This is all centred around bolstering Ukraine’s position ahead of any settlement endgame. Firstly, the Western allies sought to strengthen Ukraine’s immediate position, including with military support. For instance, London signed a £2.26 billion (US\$2.85 billion) loan to Kyiv for defence finance. The loan will be repaid with frozen Russian assets, with Zelensky, who also met King Charles on Sunday, remarking, “This is true justice – the one who started the war must be the one to pay.” The second focus is around securing a strong, sustainable deal with Russia. This includes ensuring Kyiv can credibly deter and defend against future Moscow attacks. To this end, Starmer announced on Sunday £1.6 billion in export funding for Ukraine, which will see the manufacture of more than 5,000 lightweight-multiple missiles. In total, the new contract will enable Ukraine to draw on £3.5 billion of export finance to acquire military equipment from British companies. At Sunday’s summit, Starmer urged other European nations to follow the UK’s new commitment to boost defence spending to at least 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product. He made clear that Europe now needs to step up for the good of collective security. This message was also echoed by Tusk, who noted the irony that “500 million Europeans are asking 300 million Americans to defend them from 140 million Russians”. The third focal point is planning for post-war security guarantees, from both Europe and the United States. On the European dimension, Starmer on Sunday threw his weight behind the idea of a “coalition of the willing” of like-minded countries providing such guarantees, including the United Kingdom and France, western Europe’s two nuclear weapons powers.

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Natural stupidity

IN February, the United Kingdom joined the United States in refusing to sign a landmark declaration agreed by 60 other nations at an international summit on artificial intelligence held in Paris to develop a coordinated approach to the ethical use and regulation of that technology. Donald Trump’s administration is unambiguous in its resistance to any form of transnational regulation – or indeed transnational cooperation – and especially any kind of regulation which might negatively impact on the profits of his friends and backers in the technology and energy industries. His debt to those allies was emphasized that same week by a bizarre press conference which the eccentric supervillain Elon Musk held in the Oval Office, while balancing his son on his shoulders, as the American president – having been told to “shut up” by the four-year-old – gazed up from his desk at the tech giant in wonder and awe. Britain’s reasons for declining to endorse the Paris AI agreement were rather more obscure than those voiced by the lackeys of the protectionist president. But many believe that the UK’s reticence to stand alongside its peers in the international community represented an attempt by Keir Starmer to further ingratiate himself with the US leader. This seems like something of an about-face for the head of a political party which hasn’t always expressed its love for Mr. Trump... an act of sycophancy which, ironically, took place the same week that Boris Johnson – once the Donald’s best friend – provocatively suggested that perhaps, if the American president really thinks he has the right to displace the people of Gaza so that he can turn their land into a holiday destination, maybe he could invite them to come and stay at his Mara-Lago resort on Florida’s Palm Beach instead. Meanwhile, the UK government’s official reason for failing to sign the AI declaration was that it “didn’t provide enough practical clarity on global governance, nor sufficiently address harder questions around national security and the challenge AI poses to it” – but neither the experts in diplomacy nor the digital buffs appeared quite sure what the Brits might have meant by that. Then, during the week of the AI Action summit – with a timeliness which underlined the urgency of their message – boffins from Microsoft and Carnegie Mellon University published the findings of a research project which demonstrated that the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence serves to dull its users’ critical faculties. The word ‘duh’ might spring immediately to mind. It’s pretty obvious, isn’t it, that machines designed to do your thinking for you won’t help you become a sharper thinker...? We haven’t stopped teaching children arithmetic because calculators exist. It’s only by being versed in basic mathematical skills that we can automatically recognise errors in calculations, and – for example – think critically about the statistical analyses which governments, corporations and the media tend to throw at us every day. We haven’t stopped teaching literacy because we can now dictate our words to computers or because those computers can now read texts back to us. We recognise there’s a value in the art of reading and writing, in the assimilation, processing, understanding, expression and communication of thought in written form. This idiom was last month ably demonstrated by the former boss of a Scottish brewery who announced that he is unilaterally establishing his own unofficial UK version of Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, prompting the political economist Richard Murphy to respond that “every time an idiot comes along on the world stage... someone will come along who wants, at the very least, to match them in terms of stupidity”.

EU founded for peace, now engaged in war

Qamar Bashir



Analysts who have studied European opinion trends note a significant shift in public sentiment. Many now believe that the war is unwinnable and that Russia holds the key to both prolonging and ending the conflict at its discretion. There is a growing recognition that continuing down the current path will only lead to further instability, economic hardship, and a potential escalation that could have devastating consequences for Europe. With Europe already facing challenges from extremist threats and economic struggles, adding a military confrontation with Russia and increasing dependence on U.S. foreign policy could spell disaster for the continent

URSULA von der Leyen recently announced, following the London summit, that the European Union would unveil a “comprehensive rearmament plan for Europe on March 6.” She emphasized the urgency of increasing military investments in order to “prepare for the worst.” However, this announcement has sparked significant skepticism and criticism. Many Europeans question the source of the funding for such a militarization effort, wondering if their remaining resources will be stripped away. For years, the European Union has been portrayed as a beacon of prosperity and peace. Yet, critics argue that fear has consistently been used as a tool to push citizens into supporting harmful policies. Increasingly, Europeans perceive that the real threat does not come from Moscow, Ukraine, the USA, or China, but as the vice president of the United States, J.D. Vance, recently echoed the true threat comes from within Western institutions, not from external adversaries, specifically from Brussels, where leaders like Ursula von der Leyen, Emmanuel Macron, and Olaf Scholz are accused of manipulating narratives to sustain the war in Ukraine.

European project, originally built on the promise of peace, now seems to be leading the continent toward war. The European Union, rather than securing the future, seems to be digging the grave of Europe itself. Klaus Schwab’s infamous quote, “You will own nothing and be happy,” is now being interpreted as a grim prophecy rather than a utopian vision. The skepticism extends to concerns about political rhetoric. Many see the discourse surrounding figures like Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as exaggerated, questioning the credibility of those who label him a “hero.” Detractors argue that European leaders could have just as easily fabricated a threat from extraterrestrials, highlighting what they see as the absurdity of the current narrative. The focus, they claim, should not be on an external aggressor but rather on the internal decisions that have led to economic hardship and political instability across the continent. A significant segment of European public opinion believes that Russia has not pro-

voked the EU, NATO, or France, but rather that European leaders are pushing for a prolonged confrontation with a nuclear power that possesses 5,000 warheads. Critics warn that such reckless policies could lead Europe into another catastrophic conflict—just as the continent was at the center of two world wars in the past century. Calls for rearmament are met with sarcasm, as some Europeans express mock enthusiasm about facing Russia alongside Sweden, questioning the feasibility and necessity of such a move. Public concern is growing over Ursula von der Leyen’s authority and the legitimacy of the decisions she is making on behalf of European nations. Detractors argue that these actions undermine national sovereignty and democracy, concentrating power in Brussels while stripping individual nations of their ability to determine their own paths. The criticism does not stop at von der Leyen; Macron, Scholz, and other European leaders are also being accused of leading the continent down a destructive path.

The argument is that the push for increased military spending diverts crucial funds away from essential public services, environmental sustainability, and social welfare programs. Instead, these resources are being funneled into a “cannon fodder project” that benefits the wealthy elite at the expense of the general population. The war means according to them, raising taxes, which could lead to public outrage, cutting social benefits, further impoverishing struggling families and printing more money, causing hyperinflation and economic collapse. Analysts who have studied European opinion trends note a significant shift in public sentiment. Many now believe that the war is unwinnable and that Russia holds the key to both prolonging and ending the conflict at its discretion. There is a growing recognition that continuing down the current path will only lead to further instability, economic hardship, and a potential escalation that could have devastating consequences for Europe. With Europe already facing challenges from extremist threats and economic struggles, adding a military confrontation with Russia and increasing dependence on U.S.

foreign policy could spell disaster for the continent. Critics argue that unless European citizens wake up and demand accountability from their leaders, they will be dragged into a war with catastrophic consequences. Ultimately, the core of the argument is that European leaders are not safeguarding the interests of their people. Instead, they are prioritizing a militaristic agenda that serves political and financial elites. As tensions continue to rise, the question remains: Will European citizens take control of their future, or will they allow themselves to be led into another devastating conflict?

There is growing resentment toward European leadership, with some comparing the current EU to a “Fourth Reich” that seeks to impose its will on member nations. Rather than serving the interests of its people, the EU’s current trajectory appears to be one of decay, defeat, and disintegration. Instead of focusing on the prosperity and well-being of its citizens, the Union is investing in military escalation. But this time, the people will not be deceived. The resistance against this war is growing. After nine years, European public, analysts and thinkers seem to have reached the same conclusion that former U.S. President Donald Trump did regarding military preparedness. However, financing a military expansion while already supporting a costly war is problematic. Money does not fall from the sky, and diverting funds means making painful cuts elsewhere. The challenge now is whether European leaders will dare to increase taxes without triggering a backlash from an already frustrated population. This growing frustration among European citizens mirrors sentiments expressed by former U.S. President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly criticized NATO and questioned its role in global conflicts. Many Europeans now share Trump’s perspective that NATO initiated the war under false pretenses, framing it as an act of aggression. As public discourse shifts, more people in Europe are aligning with the idea that the conflict is not in their best interests but rather serves as a means to further impoverish ordinary citizens while enriching the powerful.

Emotions in diplomacy: A dangerous shift in global politics?

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Protocol dictates that such meetings are carefully choreographed. Before any head of state visits another country, a detailed agenda is set, and diplomats ensure that both parties understand the tone and structure of the conversation. Official statements, body language, and gestures are all considered in advance

THE conduct of diplomatic meetings between heads of state is governed by established norms of foreign relations, ensuring that discussions adhere to a level of decorum that reflects both national dignity and international expectations. These protocols are not just formalities but essential components of diplomacy that help maintain mutual respect, even between adversaries. The recent meeting between the President of the United States Donald Trump and the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensk in the Oval Office of the White House, however, broke many of these conventional barriers. The language, tone, and emotions displayed during the conversation were extraordinary, raising the question: do heads of state really talk like this?

Diplomatic meetings between world leaders, whether in private or public, follow certain specific unwritten rules. These include maintaining a respectful tone, ensuring that grievances or concerns are expressed in a manner that does not undermine either party, and avoiding personal confrontations that could escalate tensions. The essence of diplomacy lies in controlled dialogue, where even the most serious matters are addressed with calculated words. Traditionally, even during high-stakes discussions between rival nations, leaders are expected to engage in a composed and restrained manner. Heated exchanges, emotional outbursts, or open expressions of frustration in front of the media are highly uncommon.

While it is true that heads of state sometimes engage in direct and blunt conversations, such moments are usually reserved for behind closed doors. The public display of strong emotions by the leaders of the United States and Ukraine during their recent meeting challenges the conventional wisdom of diplomatic interactions. In the past, there have been instances where leaders have used

strong rhetoric, but these were often strategic rather than impulsive. For example, Soviet and American leaders during the Cold War exchanged harsh words, yet they did so within the framework of controlled diplomacy, ensuring that no side was publicly humiliated in a way that could escalate tensions. Protocol dictates that such meetings are carefully choreographed. Before any head of state visits another country, a detailed agenda is set, and diplomats ensure that both parties understand the tone and structure of the conversation. Official statements, body language, and gestures are all considered in advance. Even the seating arrangements, the order in which leaders speak, and the level of media access are decided to maintain decorum. When deviations from these protocols occur, they are often the result of deliberate political strategy rather than spontaneous emotions. However, there have been instances in history where heads of state deviated from traditional diplomatic conduct. One of the most notable examples is the interaction between former U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Their exchanges, at times, involved direct insults and threats, something rarely seen in modern diplomacy. However, despite their verbal clashes, their eventual meetings followed diplomatic protocols. Similarly, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson often displayed a casual and unconventional approach in international forums, sometimes using humor or blunt remarks that were outside the usual diplomatic tone, but even then, he adhered to the basic tenets of statecraft. In contrast, the conversation between the American and Ukrainian presidents in the Oval Office appeared to break multiple diplomatic norms. The openness of their emotions, the lack of restraint in their words, and the visible display of frustration were unusual. This raises concerns about whether personal senti-

ments are overtaking strategic considerations in global diplomacy. Leaders are not expected to be emotionless, but their words carry weight beyond personal feelings. Every statement made in such high-level meetings can impact international relations, shape alliances, and even influence conflicts.

The question that arises from this event is whether such behavior sets a new precedent or is merely an exception. If world leaders begin to conduct diplomacy based on emotions rather than calculated words, it could have unpredictable consequences. The balance of power, especially in conflicts where multiple nations are involved, depends on controlled and strategic communication. Public displays of emotions, particularly between allies in a sensitive conflict like the Ukraine-Russia war, can create confusion and signal instability in decision-making. Diplomacy has survived for centuries because it operates on established principles, regardless of personal relationships between leaders. Even during moments of extreme crisis, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, U.S. President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev maintained careful diplomatic channels to avoid war. Their messages, though firm, were carefully worded to prevent escalation. This highlights the importance of measured language in high-stakes international discussions.

It remains to be seen whether the recent conversation between the American and Ukrainian presidents was an isolated incident or a sign of shifting norms in global diplomacy. While emotional appeals can have political benefits, they should not come at the cost of diplomatic stability. The world watches closely when major leaders speak, and every word they utter carries implications far beyond the room they are in. The rules of diplomacy exist for a reason—to ensure that even in moments of tension, dialogue remains a tool for resolution rather than division.

Briefs

Rains across KP claim 4 lives: PDMA

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Four people were killed, while nine others were injured in rain-induced accidents across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since February 26, a report released by the KP Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said on Monday. Last week, passengers traveling to and from Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad were stuck on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) as heavy rains caused landslides that blocked the main road at several points in Kohistan. Snowfall and rain also continued across the northern region of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan, paralyzing life in the area.

According to the report the dead include three men and one woman, while four children, three women and two men sustained injuries.

"A total of 14 houses were damaged due to the rains, of which 10 were partially damaged and three houses were completely destroyed," the report stated. Accidents due to rains occurred in the districts of Hariipur, Battagram, Bajaur, Upper and Lower Kohistan, Dir, Hangu, Khyber and Torghar of the province, the report said. "PDMA has directed the concerned district administration to provide immediate assistance to the affected family and ensure the provision of best medical facilities to the injured," a statement from the spokesperson said.

Iran's Zarif resigns amid political wrangling

TEHRAN: Mohammad Javad Zarif, strategic foreign policy adviser to Iran's president and a prominent figure advocating for talks with the West, has again resigned amid fierce push-back from hardline opponents. The former foreign minister and face of reformist-backed negotiations with global powers that led to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal confirmed the move in an online post early on Monday, saying it comes after "the most bitter era of my 40-year period of service". Remarkably, Zarif said he was "advised" by judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei to resign and go back to a university teaching job "to prevent further pressure on the government" in a tumultuous period for the country. He was under pressure from hardline factions to resign for months, based on a 2022 law that forbids nationals with dual citizenship or those with dual-national first-degree family members from assuming political office. Zarif's two children are natural-born United States citizens. Centrist President Masoud Pezeshkian has yet to publicly react to the news, although state media reported his office received the resignation. — Agencies

PTI claims Imran held in solitary confinement

Sheikh Waqas said that Imran Khan has been denied any visitors, including political allies and family members

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has accused the government of placing former Prime Minister Imran Khan in solitary confinement at Adiala jail, claiming that he is being held in the prison's death cell. The party's Central Information Secretary, Sheikh Waqas, made the claims during a press conference, stating that Imran Khan had been denied any visitors, including political allies and family members, Express News reported. Sheikh Waqas emphasised that, according to the law, Imran Khan is entitled to meetings with his legal counsel and family. However, he alleged that even these rights were being blocked. He further claimed that, despite a court ruling permitting six people to meet Khan, the authorities had not allowed the meetings to take place. "The courts' orders are being disregarded. Even Imran Khan's wife has been denied meetings with him twice, and no explanation is being given," Waqas said. "We have filed a contempt of court petition. To meet Imran Khan, one has to approach the court, yet even after the contempt petition, meetings are not being allowed. Political associates are being stopped, and even his family is not being permitted to meet him. The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is



also being denied permission to meet him." Sheikh Waqas said that with so many cases against Imran Khan, how will he consult with his lawyers? Court orders are being ignored. Sheikh Waqas further stated that despite court orders, Imran Khan is not being allowed to meet his children, nor is he allowed to sign power of attorney papers. These actions reveal the government's mindset. Such ac-

tions by the government are forcing us into protest. PTI's Central Information Secretary said that Imran Khan's resolve is strong, and he cannot be broken. He also noted that Imran Khan's medical consultations with his personal doctor have been denied, raising concerns about his well-being. Additionally, PTI leaders have expressed frustration that Imran Khan's books and newspapers were being withheld from him by jail authorities.

They questioned how Imran Khan could consult with lawyers regarding his numerous cases when he was not allowed access to legal documents or communication.

Waqas continued by criticising the government's approach to the Ramadan relief package, highlighting the contrast between the assistance offered by the previous PTI government and the current administration's limited support. Criticising the federal government's Ramadan package, he mentioned that during PTI's tenure, the Ehsaas programme offered Rs. 15,000 per family. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is giving Rs. 10,000 per family, while, despite high inflation, the federal government is offering only Rs. 5,000 per family in its Ramadan package. He urged the federal government to spend money on the public instead of on personal publicity. The misuse of authority as a form of political bribery should be avoided.

Saudi opposition welcome to return home

WEB DESK

RIYADH: Saudi opposition staying overseas are welcome to return home without any fear of punishment, Abdulaziz Al-Howairini, head of the Presidency of State Security, said in an interview. "Under the directives of the crown prince, if there are no lawsuits filed against you for homicide, theft or assault, and you were misled, the state will welcome you and will not punish you," he said. "If a person has not actually committed a crime, but only entertained the thought of it, the state will address this issue and fix it." Al-Howairini, quoting Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, said: "Anyone who decides to return, without having any lawsuits filed against them for assault, homicide, or other violent acts, and if their actions were limited to opposition or they were exploited by haters or received money at some point or were misled, they are welcome to come back without fear of punishment." He added that the Kingdom's embassies were fully aware of the new directive, and nationals seeking assistance can contact a designated number (990) where they can provide their name and location and request to communicate with their family members.

Saudi envoy, Dar pledge to boost bilateral relations



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar

@MishaqDar50 today. Both expressed their commitment to further strengthen the existing deep-rooted ties between the two countries, particularly in the areas of trade & investment. The Ambassador conveyed Ramadan greetings for DPM and people of Pakistan. DPM reciprocated the same for the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia.

Hamas says Israel pushing things back to 'square one'

The senior Hamas official said the Palestinian group has honoured its commitments to the agreement in a "precise and timely" manner despite Israeli violations

NEWS DESK

Doha: Hamas says Israel is trying to push the situation back to "square one" by refusing to enter the second phase of their Gaza ceasefire deal and asking to extend the first one. Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan says Israel has been violating several provisions of the first stage of the ceasefire agreement. Some of the breaches, as outlined by Hamdan in a televised statement, include:

- Israeli forces violated the ceasefire 962 times, killing 116 Palestinians during the truce.

- Israel allowed an average of 23 fuel trucks daily instead of 50.
 - Israel did not allow commercial imports of fuel.
 - Israel only allowed 15 mobile homes into Gaza, instead of 60,000 as stipulated by the deal.
 - Nine heavy equipment machines to remove the rubble were let into Gaza, while at least 500 were needed.
 - Reconstruction material and medical equipment were restricted.
 - Israel did not allow the restarting of the power station.
- The senior Hamas official said the Palestinian group has honoured its commitments to the agreement in a "precise and timely" manner despite Israeli violations.

PM takes notice of gas suspension

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took notice of the complaints about gas supply suspension to domestic consumers yesterday in Karachi during Sehri and Iftar hours. The absence of cooking gas on the first day of Ramadan piled misery on the residents of the city as the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) completely failed to deliver on its promises to provide uninterrupted supply during Sehri and Iftar. Last week, the SSGC announced a new schedule and said it would ensure gas supply to domestic consumers during Sehri and Iftar times. The SSGC had already reduced the gas supply by two and a half more hours as part of its load-shedding schedule for Ramadan. According to a statement issued by the SSGC today, the premier took immediate notice of these complaints. To address these complaints, emergency meetings were held at both the secretary and minister levels with the managing directors and senior management soon after Iftar on Sunday, the statement said. Consequently, the SSGC increased the pressure by an average of 10 per cent through sales meter stations to improve the flow. It was also decided to open gas distribution centres for around half an hour before Sehri and Iftar timings to improve the system pressure in areas with low network capacity. Besides, the SSGC arranged an additional 20 million cubic feet per day of gas to enhance the transmission line pack. The utility further set up control rooms at the head and regional offices to monitor the gas supply and network status daily. Furthermore, the company said it would address low gas pressure complaints on an emergency basis at regional levels as well as submit daily reports to its senior management. "These measures aim to address consumer complaints and ensure a reliable gas supply during Ramadan," the statement read. Separately, Sindh Minister for Planning, Development and Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah requested the premier to ensure that there were no gas suspensions during the month of Ramadan.

Austria's three-party govt takes office

VIENNA: Austria's first three-party coalition since the aftermath of World War Two took office on Monday, ending the country's longest-ever wait for a new government and keeping the Russia-friendly, far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) out of power. Although the FPÖ won September's parliamentary election with about 29% of the vote, the eurosceptic party failed to form a workable coalition, opening the door to a centrist alternative. When the FPÖ bid crumbled, the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), Social Democrats (SPÖ) and liberal Neos struck an alliance, overcoming their own earlier failure to do a deal. New government takes office after two years of recession, and plans spending cuts and tax hikes on big business to bring Austria's budget deficit back within EU limits and avoid disciplinary proceedings from Brussels.

Petroleum dealers withdraw strike call after govt talks

Govt assures deregulation policy won't affect profit margin of dealers, says spokesperson

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (APPDA) on Monday withdrew its strike call for March 4 (today) after successful negotiation with the federal government on the deregulation policy. Following their negotiation with Petroleum Minister Dr Musadik Malik, a spokesperson for the APPDA announced: "Petroleum dealers have taken back their strike call for tomorrow." Sources privy to the matter said that both sides agreed that the dealers' association

would be taken on board over the deregulation process of the petroleum sector. Talking to journalists, APPDA central spokesperson Noman Ali Butt announced: "Our negotiations with the government have been successful." He said that the petroleum minister assured them that deregulation process won't affect profit margin of the dealers. Butt said that the minister also assured them of curbing smuggling of oil from Iran. Last month, the petroleum minister stated that the government was planning to implement a deregulation policy, enabling oil marketing companies (OMCs) to compete by setting their fuel prices.

Mustafa case: Tied, dragged, burned, report reveals details

Co-accused Shiraz Bukhari claims of being pressurised to confess for lesser sentence

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As authorities continue to investigate the high-profile Mustafa Amir murder case, harrowing details have emerged in the investigation report revealing the brutality, and criminal conduct of prime suspect Armaghan Qureshi. The probe report discloses that Mustafa was dragged down the stairs – from the first floor of Armaghan's residence – with his hands and feet tied by a white piece of cloth and was taken to Hub in the trunk of his own car where he was burned. The case relates to victim's, a BBA student, alleged kidnapping and murder after going missing on January 6. The whole saga unfolded after Armaghan opened fire at a team of the Anti-Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) – a specialised unit of the Karachi police responsible for tackling cases related to murder and extortion – during a raid at his residence in Karachi's DHA on February 8. The deceased's body – found by police in

a car near the Hub checkpoint on January 12 and buried by the Edhi Foundation on January 16 – was exhumed and later buried by his family following the identity confirmation in the initial DNA report. With, Armaghan – who is in police custody along with other suspect Shiraz Bukhari – also suspected of being involved in money laundering and cyber crimes, the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) has handed over the laptops seized during the raid had been handed over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) along with the key suspect's mobile phones. Meanwhile, authorities have also accused him of using earnings from his illegal call centre – obtained via fraudulent means – to buy cryptocurrency. Confirming the police's earlier claim that Armaghan had tortured a girl prior to Mustafa's alleged murder, the investigation report says that a girl had visited his house prior to the New Year's Eve party – not attended by the victim – arranged at the said residence by the key suspect.

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