



Islamabad POST

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China retaliates against US tariffs, but also wants talk

Detailed News On Page-08

Anger over Vance 'random country' remark

Detailed News On Page-08

CT creates memories that last a lifetime

Detailed News On Page-0



One year in power

PM vows to boost country's exports to \$60 billion by 2029

"We should work in unison instead of pulling each other's legs," says PM Shehbaz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has vowed to eliminate terrorism from the country to pave way for the foreign investment in the country as the PML-N coalition government completed its one year in power. "We should work in unison instead of pulling each other's legs," the premier said while addressing a special session of the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad. The premier said his administration stabilised the economy during its one year in power with the help of allies. Highlighting the economic achievements of the coalition government including significant drop in inflation and key policy rate, the premier praised the cabinet members for the hard work. "It has been a year, let alone a contentious scandal, opposition even failed to bring up a fake scandal against the government. What could be a greater achievement of yours than this," he added.

The premier was of the view that the country was on the brink of bankruptcy when he assumed the office one year ago. He slammed the former ruling party for writing letters to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and urging the global lender not to approve loan for the cash-strapped nation. The prime minister said that they should have to work hard to provide succour to hapless and financially weaker segments of society with all kind of assistance and compassion especially in the holy month of Ramadan, adding that the government had rolled out Rs20 billion Ramadan package to benefit 4 million deserving families through digital wallets system. Each family would get Rs5,000 each, thus the new system would shut doors on all kind of allegations of financial mismanagement which had badly marred the functioning of entities like Utility Stores Corporation, he said, terming the relief initiative as 'quantum jump which will succeed'. With hard work, the government succeeded in achieving the economic turnaround and steering the country out of the financial straits.

Continued on Page 06

PM directs to increase Pakistan-Azerbaijan trade

PM forms committee for early realisation of accords with Azerbaijan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday formed a committee to ensure the early realisation of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements signed with Azerbaijan during his recent visit to the country. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the implementation of accords, directed the authorities concerned to present an action plan to take the Pakistan-Azerbaijan current trade volume to \$2 billion. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will head the newly-formed committee that will prepare agreements in the energy and infrastructure sectors, according to a PM Office press release. The prime minister also directed to complete all preparations on a priority basis ahead of the expected visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to Pakistan next month. He also instructed the appointment of trade officers in Azerbaijan and other countries with a significant potential for trade with Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighting the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and

Continued on Page 06

At least 15 civilians, killed in twin blasts

At least six terrorists also killed

DNA

BANNU: Security forces foiled a major terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and killed at least six attackers, security forces said on Tuesday. Sources added that suicide bombers belonging to the militant group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) drove two explosive-laden cars into the compound's perimeter, triggering massive explosions. Facing stiff resistance from security forces, two explosive-laden vehicles were rammed into the cantt's perimeter wall in an attempt to gain entry, added security sources. Meanwhile, security personnel at various entry points neutralised six terrorists and apprehended others. Sources reported that the explosion caused damage to a nearby mosque and led to the collapse of a house's roof. In a statement, a spokesperson for the District Headquarter Hospital said that at least 15 civilians, including four children and two women, were killed in the blast, while 25 others sustained injuries. The attack comes days after a suicide bomber killed six people at a religious school in Pakistan, attended by key Taliban leaders in the same province. Similar attacks have increased in Pakistan since the Taliban authorities returned to power in Afghanistan in August 2021. Hafiz Gul Bahadur group carried out a similar attack on the same compound last July, detonating an explosive-laden vehicle against the boundary wall, killing eight Pakistan Army soldiers while a retaliatory operation killed 10 terrorists. Last year was the deadliest in a decade for Pakistan, with a surge in attacks that killed more than 1,600 people, according to Islamabad-based analysis group the Center for Research and Security Studies.

Aurangzeb confirms

Pak 'well positioned' for 1st review of IMF bailout

"They are here. We will have two rounds of talks, first technical and then policy level," says minister

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan was "well positioned" for the first review of its \$7 billion International Monetary Fund bailout programme as talks with the global lender began on Tuesday, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told. Islamabad secured the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) last summer to help claw its way out of an economic crisis. The programme has played a key role in stabilising Pakistan's economy and the government has said the country is on course for a long-term recovery. "They are here. We will have two rounds of talks, first technical and then policy level," Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said. The finance ministry released a picture on Tuesday morning showing its officials meeting with IMF representatives. The IMF team usually spends around two weeks reviewing fiscal reforms and policy. A separate IMF team was in Pakistan last week to discuss around \$5 billion in climate financing on top of the EFF.

Continued on Page 06

Mega corruption in maritime sector: Vawda

A defaulter company was given undue concessions, accused Vawda

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Vawda claimed that he brought forward evidence of corruption in the maritime sector. Chairing a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs, Vawda remarked that the Army Chief Asim Munir had set a precedent by holding his institution accountable first. Vawda alleged that the Maritime Secretary played a role in covering up a misappropriation of Rs 60 billion.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif being presented a book on one year performance of the government by Minister for Planning & Development Prof Dr Ahsan Iqbal and Minister for Information & Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar during the Special Meeting of the Cabinet at Jinnah Convention Center. - DNA

India thump Australia to qualify for CT final

India to face South Africa or New Zealand in the final on March 9

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: A combined bowling effort, followed by an anchoring half-century by Virat Kohli, led India to a resounding five-wicket victory over Australia in the first semi-final of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 here at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Tuesday. The victory propelled India into their third consecutive Champions Trophy final and will be joined by South Africa or New Zealand, who are set to lock horns in

Continued on Page 06

Eighty Five passengers offloaded at Karachi Airport

93 Pakistanis deported from various countries

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Immigration authorities at Karachi Airport offloaded 85 passengers traveling to 19 different countries, including China, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia, due to various reasons. Among them, 20 passengers on visit visas to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Türkiye, Thailand, China, Malaysia, and Indonesia were denied boarding. Additionally, 20 passengers, including two blacklisted

Continued on Page 06

'Not issuing certificate'

Barrister Gohar hits out at ECP for not fulfilling duties

Urges it to issue an order regarding reserved seats

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Tuesday that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had failed to perform its functions. Speaking to media men in Islamabad, he said that under the Election Act, a certificate had to be issued within seven days of the submission of documents by a party. "But a year has passed. And the ECP is yet to issue a certificate to the PTI," he said, and added, "What could be more unfortunate than the fact that the parties, which held their elections after the PTI, were issued the certificates." Today, the PTI chairman lamented, the election commission had adjourned the case hearing until April 8. Barrister Gohar said that the Supreme Court (SC) had given a verdict in reserved seats case in favour of the PTI. Speaking to the media, Akbar S. Babar, the petitioner in the PTI's

Continued on Page 06

ECP adjourns PTI intra-party polls case

A three-member bench, headed by Member Sindh Nisar Durrani, heard the case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday adjourned the hearing of the PTI intra-party elections case, until April 8. The case pertains to the legitimacy of PTI's internal elections and their compliance with ECP regulations. A three-member bench, headed by Member Sindh Nisar Durrani, heard

Continued on Page 06

Arab summit delivered strong rebuttal of Trump's Gaza plan

Hamas agreed to "Egypt's proposal to form a 'Community Support Committee' out of its conviction to the importance of a Palestinian framework to alleviate the suffering of Gazans

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Bahrain's king Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa in his opening remarks at the Arab summit in Cairo, said "a lasting and just peace is the lynchpin for the Palestinian people to restore their historically lawful right to self-determination". "We reject any attempts to establish illegal settlements or the forcible transfer of the Palestinian people. "We commend the initiative proposed by Egypt with regard to the Gaza Strip, which will help us cement our brotherly bonds and ability to stand up to our shared challenges." Egypt's President el-Sisi, after welcoming the leaders and officials present at the summit, says "today we are gathered by a painful reality.. our region is faced by painful challenges". "Humanity lost its virtue in Gaza," he said. "The people in Gaza who lost loved ones, those who were widowed or orphaned are looking up to you to restore hope and last and permanent peace." El-Sisi added that the Gaza plan would ensure Palestinians "remain on their land". "Peace cannot be maintained by force," he said.

Continued on Page 06

Hamas rejects 'full demilitarization' of Gaza

AGENCIES

DOHA: The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has rejected Israel's demand for the complete demilitarization of the Gaza Strip. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said disarming was a "red line" for all resistance groups in the besieged territory. The Hamas official made the remarks in a statement on Tuesday, shortly after Israel said its condition to move on to the second stage of the January ceasefire deal is the "full demilitarization" of Gaza. "Any talk about the resistance's weapons is nonsense.

Continued on Page 06



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Punjab CM okays tourist sites' construction, repair

She announced that Taxila will be transformed into a major tourist site, complete with the construction of a five-star hotel. She further stated, "We are fully committed to the promotion of tourism in Punjab, and a dedicated tourist hub will soon be established"

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has given in-principle approval for the construction, repair, and restoration of 170 tourist sites and trails across the province. The CM also approved the establishment of Punjab's first Tourism and Heritage Authority to improve governance in the sector. Chairing a special meeting here on Tuesday, CM Punjab emphasized the importance of enhancing tourism in various cities, including Lahore, Multan, Bahawalpur, Chakwal, and Jhelum. The Changa Manga Forest Park and Lal Suhanra National Park will be developed to promote eco-tourism. Additionally, the Punjab Tourism and Heritage Authority Act 2025 will be presented to further strengthen tourism policies. During the briefing, officials informed the Chief Minister about Punjab's first comprehensive tourism app,

'Magnificent Punjab,' which will soon be launched. The app will provide virtual tours of 170 tourist destinations and allow users to book hotels and access travel services like Food Panda. It will also feature a chatbot for real-time tourist assistance. The chief minister also approved Punjab's largest and most comprehensive tourism plan, which focuses on promoting religious, historical, and eco-tourism. Under this initiative, tourist villages will be developed to give visitors an immersive experience of ancient civilizations. For the first time, tourism trails will be introduced in Punjab, connecting key heritage sites such as District Mall Road, the Walled City of Lahore, Sikh sites, and Mughal monuments along GT Road. Additionally, the Salt Range, Bhati Gate, Taxila Gate, Gujranwala, and Aimanabad will be developed as part of the province's Sikh tourism trails. Various tourist attractions across Punjab will be grouped into tourism

clusters to enhance visitor experiences. The plan also includes the restoration of significant historical sites such as Taxila Museum, Dharmarachi Ka, Jolian, Sarkep, and Giri Fort, all linked to the Gandhara civilization. In Multan, the historic Qila Kahna Qasim Bagh will be revived as a symbol of the Indus Valley civilization. A dedicated pilgrimage trail will be developed in Uch Sharif, while proposals for the restoration of ancient Gurdwaras and churches were also reviewed to promote religious tourism. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif reaffirmed her commitment to making Punjab a global tourism hub, ensuring that all destinations meet international standards. She announced that Taxila will be transformed into a major tourist site, complete with the construction of a five-star hotel. She further stated, "We are fully committed to the promotion of tourism in Punjab, and a dedicated tourist hub will soon be established."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Nepal Ms. Rita Dhital visited ISSI & met with DG Ambassador Sohail Mahmood. They exchanged views covering regional cooperation, SAARC, relations, high-level exchanges, connectivity & trade ties, Buddhist Gandara linkage, P2P contacts, & think-tank collaboration. —DNA

Helicopter takes 1800 kg of medicines to Parachinar

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had delivered a consignment of 1,800 kilograms of medicines to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Parachinar. Advisor on Health KP, Ehtesham Ali on Tuesday said the medicines were transported through government's official helicopter to ensure its timely delivery. The consignment includes antibiotics, antihypertensive drugs, fever and cough medicines for children, essential medical equipment, and laboratory serums. He further mentioned that the Medical Superintendent (MS) of Parachinar had requested the supply three days ago, and until land routes are restored, medicine deliveries will continue via helicopter. The timely supply of medicines expected to improve healthcare services in the region, ensuring that patients receive necessary treatments without disruption, he added.—APP

Another relief convoy dispatched to Kurram

PESHAWAR: Another relief convoy consisting of more than 30 vehicles has been dispatched to Kurram under tight security. According to district administration on Tuesday, the relief convoy was sent off from the Hangu Tor Pul checkpoint, with additional vehicles expected to follow. It is important to note that after the February 17 attack on aid vehicles in Lower Kurram, relief convoys were halted. The business community has stated that no supplies have reached Upper Kurram since the return of a large convoy on February 17. Meanwhile, a protest sit-in in front of the Parachinar Press Club continues for the third consecutive day against road blockades and demands for rights. The protesters have vowed to continue their demonstration until their demands are met. This latest convoy marks a significant effort to resume aid deliveries to the region, ensuring essential supplies reach those in need despite security challenges.—APP

WSSP, NIUIP sign MoU for groundwater mapping in Peshawar

PESHAWAR: The Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) and the National Institute of Urban Infrastructure Planning (NIUIP) at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to conduct a joint study titled "Ground Water Mapping and Aquifer Assessment in Urban Peshawar." The purpose of the MoU is to foster collaboration between WSSP and NIUIP in the field of water and sanitation, benefiting both professionals and the general public in urban Peshawar. The agreement was signed by Director NI-

UIP Dr Rashid Rehan and General Manager Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) WSSP, Syed Zameer-ul-Hassan, during a ceremony held at NIUIP. General Manager Projects WSSP, Dr Mehboob Alam, and Assistant Professor NIUIP, Dr Fayyaz A Khan, signed the agreement as witnesses. The study, which is financially supported by UNICEF, is expected to be completed within a year. Under the agreement the researchers will analyze the spatial variations in the hydraulic properties of the sub-soil and aquifer, assess the availability of groundwater resources, and project future water

demands for both the population and small industries. The study will also evaluate the infiltration capacity of various locations under dry and wet conditions, quantify current groundwater extraction rates, determine the direction of groundwater flow, and identify water-stressed areas within WSSP's operational zones. Additionally, it aims to determine sustainable extraction rates for different areas, map groundwater aquifers, and establish an appropriate groundwater model. The research will also help identify suitable locations for groundwater recharge wells to enhance water sustainability.—DNA

Azma dismisses PTI claim

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that the claim of the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi of not being given food in jail is completely false and baseless. She remarked that someone sitting in Peshawar dreamed that their leader was being deprived of food in jail. Bukhari clarified that the PTI founder is receiving meat, vegetables, lentils and beetroot juice three days a week. Additionally, he is being provided with coffee, boiled eggs and dry fruits. She added that Bushra Bibi is also given whatever food she wishes. Both husband and wife are being provided with their meals as per routine, added Azma. She questioned how a person who wakes up at noon can observe fasting. Two days ago, the party spokesperson also lied about the PTI founder's health. Yesterday, a team of four senior doctors from PIMS conducted a detailed half-hour medical examination and declared him completely healthy. Azma concluded that whenever the "Fitna Party" runs out of any other card, they start playing the victim and sympathy cards.—APP

Mock emergency drill held at PMC

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Medical College (PMC) on Tuesday conducted a mock emergency evacuation drill and firefighting training to orient students about safety practices. The students were also given information about handling and use of firefighting equipment to meet any eventuality during emergency conditions. Executive Director Prof. Dr. Saeed Anwar emphasized PMC's commitment to ensure best safety conditions in the college. Security Director, Hassan Afridi presented detailed explanation of security protocols outlining the necessary steps to ensure a swift and effective response meet emergencies. Participants also engaged in using fire extinguishers practically.—APP

Kundi assures support for Honey Industry uplift

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday pledged to discuss the issues of Honey Industry with the federal government and emphasized the need for comprehensive measures to boost honey production and international market access. He said this during a meeting with the delegation from the All Pakistan Beekeepers, Exporters, and Honey Traders Association. The delegation, led by Association President Saleem Khan, included other office bearers and discussed the challenges and growth opportunities of the province's honey industry. The delegation highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's significant honey production and its global reputation for quality and unique characteristics. They raised concerns about marketing difficulties, price fluctuations, and the need for government support. Additionally,

the delegation requested assistance from the Governor regarding registration with the Saudi Food Authority and participation in international trade exhibitions through the Trade Development Authority. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi acknowledged the concerns of the honey industry representatives and assured them of his full support. He expressed optimism that federal authorities would take necessary steps to enhance the industry, including participation in global exhibitions, training beekeepers in modern techniques, and improving the certification process for honey exports. The Governor also stressed the importance of aligning honey testing standards with global requirements to increase exports and strengthen the local economy. He concluded by saying that improving honey quality standards and government-backed initiatives could significantly boost Pakistan's honey production and exports, ultimately benefiting the country's economy. Meanwhile, President of Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council, Ruksana Rajput, met with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House. The discussion focused on the upcoming Pak-Afghan Wheelchair Cricket Series and the promotion of cricket in the province. Rajput highlighted that this is the first time an international wheelchair cricket team is visiting Pakistan, marking a major achievement for disabled athletes. The series will take place from April 27 in Peshawar and Abbottabad, providing new opportunities for disabled players and inspiring youth to engage in sports. The meeting also addressed the rehabilitation of sports grounds, modern facilities for young athletes, and increased opportunities for disabled individuals. Governor Kundi praised the initiative and assured full support for promoting sports in the province, emphasizing the role of such events in fostering resilience and healthy activities among youth.

Six fugitives arrested from UAE

The agency reaffirmed its commitment to bringing fugitives to justice, stating that all available resources were being utilized to apprehend criminals evading the law, said spokesperson

LAHORE: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Tuesday successfully arrested six fugitives from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), wanted in cases of terrorism, murder, attempted murder, robbery and fraud. A spokesperson for the FIA said that the arrests were made through major operations led by FIA's NCB Interpol. The arrested individuals were identified as — Sufyan Ali, Akasha Iqbal, Zohaib Shehzad, Abdul Latif, Muhammad Jaleel and Muhammad Ramiz Ashraf and were wanted by Punjab Police for various criminal cases. The accused Sufyan Ali was wanted in terrorism and attempted murder case registered at Wazirabad city police station in 2022, Sialkot, while Zohaib Shahzad was involved in a robbery case at Satrah police station. Fugitive Abdul Latif was wanted by airport police station Rahim Yar Khan in a murder case whereas Muhammad Jaleel, a fugitive for nine years, was wanted by Dera Ghazi Khan police in a robbery case. Muhammad Ramiz was wanted by Sadiqabad police station, Rawalpindi, in an attempted murder case. Akasha Iqbal facing charges of fraud, registered in 2023 at civil lines police station, Sialkot. The FIA confirmed that red notices were issued through NCB Interpol to facilitate the arrests. The fugitives were now being transferred from UAE to Lahore Airport, where they will be handed over to Punjab police. FIA officials emphasized that these arrests were made possible through close coordination between Interpol Islamabad and Interpol Abu Dhabi. They reiterated that NCB Interpol, equipped with modern technology, operates 24/7 to track and apprehend fugitives globally. The agency reaffirmed its commitment to bringing fugitives to justice, stating that all available resources were being utilized to apprehend criminals evading the law, said spokesperson.—DNA

KP-RETP signs agreements with agribusiness mobilization partners

These projects are set for completion by June 2029, marking a significant step toward empowering rural communities and fostering sustainable agribusiness development in the region

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Economic Transformation Project (KP-RETP) has signed contract agreements with Agribusiness Mobilization Partners (BMPs) at Project Management Unit (PMU) Peshawar to drive economic growth and strengthen the rural economy across the province. KP-RETP is a flagship initiative of the Government of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, launched in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the European Union (EU). The project aims at contributing to poverty reduction and enhance food and nutrition security for 785,000 rural households in the province. As part of this initiative, KP-RETP has formalized agreements with BMPs to implement agricultural business activities. These partners will play a pivotal role in

strengthening Professional Farmers' Organizations (PFOs), Public-Private-Producers Partnerships (4Ps), and Farm Services Centres (FSCs) across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They will work in coordination with the project's Regional Coordination Units to expand and support farmers' agribusiness. Whereas, two contracts have been signed with a consulting firm Rural Empowerment and Institutional Development (REPID) amounting

PKR 95,722,243 for the Central Agribusiness Cluster and PKR 134,631,000 for the Southern Agribusiness Cluster. Additionally, two contracts have been signed with the consulting firm Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in Joint Venture with Initiative for Development and Empowerment Axis, amounting to PKR 109,581,829 for the Northern Agribusiness Cluster and PKR 62,584,494 for the Chitral Agribusiness Cluster. Fur-

thermore, a contract valued at PKR 129,896,956 has been signed with the consulting firm SMART Researchers in Joint Venture with Farmers Integrated Development Association for the Eastern Agribusiness Cluster. These projects are set for completion by June 2029, marking a significant step toward empowering rural communities and fostering sustainable agribusiness development in the region.

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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. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
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PYMP's skill development bridging skills gap

The successful implementation of this far-reaching initiative is spearheaded by the esteemed National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), 70 new state-of-the-art labs and workshops will be established in Madrassas across the country, introducing skill development activities to a wider audience

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking effort to cultivate a skilled and productive workforce, the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has rolled out admissions in the Skills Development Programme. The Skills Development Programme is designed to equip young Pakistanis with in-demand skills, enhancing their employability and driving economic growth. Its primary objective is to equip Pakistani youth with cutting-edge, in-demand skills that enhance

their employability and drive economic growth. According to an official data, this ambitious initiative has partnered with 600 esteemed training providers, including renowned universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. The successful implementation of this far-reaching initiative is spearheaded by the esteemed National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), 70 new state-of-the-art labs and

workshops will be established in Madrassas across the country, introducing skill development activities to a wider audience. This initiative is part of a larger program aimed at empowering youth from less developed areas, with a target of enrolling 50,000 young individuals in skill-level programs. Offering an extensive array of over 100 highly sought-after skills, this programme caters to diverse interests and industry needs including emerging technologies

which will focus on artificial intelligence, mechatronics, programming, and data analytics. The program will also cater to the creative industries, offering training in graphic designing, e-commerce, and culinary arts. Furthermore, the program will hands-on training in technical trades, including PLC, CNC machining, welding, electric technology, and cybersecurity. By bridging the gap between education and industry requirements,

this programme aims to create a talented pool of professionals who can contribute meaningfully to the country's development. The PMYP's Skills Development Programme embodies the government's commitment to empowering Pakistan's youth. As Pakistan continues on its path to progress, the Skills Development Programme under the PMYP is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's future workforce.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain meeting with Ambassador of Tajikistan to enhance cooperation, trade and connectivity

Railways generates Rs 7m from land leasing

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has auctioned approximately 6,678 acres of land for various purposes through a competitive bidding process, leasing it to government entities and private individuals to generate revenue for the department. "The department has earned a total revenue of Rs. 7,575 million from leased land over the last two financial years," an official from the Ministry of Railways told APP. The official explained that Pakistan Railways leases out its land through an open auction process in accordance with the Railway Property and Land Rules, 2023, which were duly approved by the federal cabinet. The department provides land to government institutions for public welfare projects, subject to payment of lease charges and ground rent as per the approved policy. "Proactive efforts are underway to lease the remaining available land through advertisements across all operational divisions as well as through the Real Estate Development and Marketing Company (REDAMCO)," he added. As of December 2024, Pakistan Railways has operated 1,450 freight trains since July 2024, generating Rs. 15.214 billion in revenue from freight operations. The department recorded its highest-ever revenue of Rs. 88.8 billion during the fiscal year 2023-24 by implementing measures to optimize revenue generation and reduce costs. The official said that both passenger and freight trains are being operated at optimal capacity, reducing operational expenses and boosting earnings. Furthermore, the department has shifted from long-term to short-term land leasing to remain competitive and maximize revenue. Pakistan Railways has made significant progress in train punctuality, improving from 79% in the previous year to 82% in FY 2023-24. The department has also expanded its online booking services through its website and mobile applications (Android and iOS) under the RABTA system, leading to increased customer engagement. To enhance passenger convenience, the department has installed Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) for faster ticket purchases, set up information counters, introduced real-time departure boards under the RABTA system for up-to-date travel information, and launched premium dining cars on select routes. Pakistan Railways has entered into public-private partnerships (PPPs) to outsource the commercial management of various passenger trains to private operators, aiming to improve service quality and efficiency.—APP

PFA destroys 3,500 litres of adulterated milk

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Rawalpindi officials during Sehri time on Tuesday morning destroyed some 3,500 litres of adulterated milk. According to a PFA spokesman, the food authority teams set checkpoints at the entrance and exit points of the city and inspected vehicles supplying milk to different local outlets. About 185,000 litres of milk were checked, and on screening of samples some 3,500 litres were found adulterated with water, which were wasted on the spot, the spokesman said. A total fine of Rs 155,000 was imposed on the drivers of three trucks carrying adulterated milk, he added. The spokesman said that the PFA's special teams were working during Sehri and Iftar time, and urged the citizens to contact the helpline 1223 in case of any complaint.—APP

Pollen season begins, expected to peak in mid-March

ISLAMABAD: The pollen season has started in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, with concentrations expected to peak between the second and third week of March 2025, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The pollen spread increases with the onset of spring and typically reaches its highest levels during the full bloom of flowers, ending by mid-April. Paper Mulberry remains the dominant pollen type in Islamabad, accounting for 97% of the total pollen concentration. Other allergens include Acacia, Eucalyptus, Pines, Grasses, Cannabis, Dandelion, and Alternaria. Peak pollen concentrations can reach up to 45,000 particles per cubic meter, posing serious risks for asthma and respiratory patients. The PMD has installed surveillance devices in Islamabad's sectors H-8, E-8, F-10, and G-6 to monitor airborne pollen levels. The department will release daily pollen count updates on its website (www.pmd.gov.pk) and through electronic and print media during the pollen season. Individuals suffering from pollen allergies are advised to take precautionary measures and regularly check updates to manage their health conditions.

IBCC revolutionizes customer support

ISLAMABAD: The Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) has taken a significant step toward enhancing public service by launching a 24/7 Customer Care Desk (CCD). This state-of-the-art ticketing system replaces traditional email and phone support, ensuring uninterrupted assistance for applicants at any time of the day. With the new CCD platform, applicants can now submit their queries and concerns round the clock and attach supporting documents for quicker resolution. This initiative streamlines the application process, making it more efficient and transparent. Recognizing the importance of proactive public service, Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director of IBCC, is personally overseeing the monitoring of complaints to ensure their timely resolution. This hands-on approach underscores IBCC's dedication to enhancing customer support, ensuring transparency, and improving user satisfaction. "The launch of the 24/7 Customer Care Desk reflects IBCC's commitment to digital transformation and efficient public service. At IBCC we are dedicated to making the application process smoother and more accessible for everyone," said Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah. With this initiative, IBCC continues to modernize its services, reinforcing its mission to facilitate students and stakeholders with efficiency and reliability.—APP

AIOU sets today as last date for its admissions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Admissions of the Allama Iqbal Open University for the Semester (Spring 2025) are open for Matric, FA, I.Com, Associate Degree Programs, BS Programs, BBA, B.Ed., Postgraduate Diploma Programs, and Certificate Courses, today (Wednesday, March 5) is the last chance for

students seeking admission in these academic programs. No decision has been made regarding any further extension. For convenience of the students, admission forms and prospectuses for all programs are available on the university's website. Additionally, admission forms for Matric, FA, Associate Degree, and B.Ed. programs can also be obtained from the university's regional campuses/contact offices across the country. Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood emphasized that education is the right of every individual, and his desire is that no one should miss this opportunity. Therefore, aspiring students are encouraged to complete their enrollment today and take a step toward a bright future.

IBCC revolutionizes customer support

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IIUI signs MoU to enhance educational leadership

ISLAMABAD: The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) and the Institute of Learning for a Better Tomorrow (ILFABET) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen educational leadership, capacity building, and academic collaboration. Held at the Faculty of Education, IIUI, the ceremony was attended by faculty members, representatives from the Office of Linkages, and ILFABET officials, including its Founder and CEO, Ms. Sumbal Naveed.

The agreement focuses on joint training programs, research collaborations, and professional development opportunities for students and faculty. Speaking at the event, Professor Dr. Manzoor Khan Afridi, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Ms. Sumbal Naveed emphasized the role of academic partnerships in bridging the gap between academia and industry. They highlighted the importance of mentorship, networking, and research exposure in promoting professional growth. The MoU was officially signed by Dr. Afridi on behalf of the IIUI President and Ms. Sumbal Naveed for ILFABET. The event concluded with a networking session among faculty members and representatives from both institutions.—APP

IG conducts surprise visit to check security arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General (IG) of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi conducted a surprise late-night visit to various areas of the city, inspecting security arrangements at mosques and Imambargahs during Sehri and prayer timings. A public relations officer told APP that IG Rizvi personally reviewed the deployment of police personnel and assessed security measures in place at religious sites. During the inspection, IG Rizvi sought explanations from three officers who were absent from duty. Additionally, he issued show-cause notices to the Station House Officers (SHOs) of Aabpara and Shalimar for negligence. IG Rizvi emphasized that all DIGs, SSPs, and SPs must remain visibly present in the field to ensure the highest level of security. "Mosque security duties hold immense importance," he stated, adding that no senior police officer should remain at home during these critical hours. IG Rizvi further warned that negligence in duty would not be tolerated and urged police personnel to perform their responsibilities with dedication, considering it a service to the community.—APP

TENDER FOR SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF 300TR X 2 AIR COOLED SCREW TYPE ELECTRIC CHILLERS WITH ANCILLARIES AT KARACHI EXPO CENTRE

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), an authority established for promotion of trade and business, under the Ministry of Commerce, invites sealed bids from firms registered with Pakistan Engineering Council having valid certificate of category C2, Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and which are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue and qualified in all respects, for supply and installation of 300TR x 2 air cooled screw type electric chillers with ancillaries at Karachi Expo Centre.

2. Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, method of procurement, procedure for submission of bids, bid security, bid validity, opening of bid, evaluation criteria, clarification / rejection of bids, performance guarantee etc. are available for the interested bidders at EPADS website of PPR. The bidding documents fees of Rs.10,000/- through pay order in favour of "Account Officer, TDAP, Karachi Expo Centre" may be submitted along with two separate envelopes by mentioning Technical Bid and Financial Bid at the time of Technical Bid Submission.

3. Two Stage - Two Envelope Procedure as per PPR rule 36(d) would be used for Open Competitive Bidding for each work. Sealed Bid proposal should accompany a bid security PKR 5.2 Million amount in the shape of pay order in favour of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.

4. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must be uploaded on EPADS website and also submitted at the office of the Assistant Manager (Expo), Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), 8th Floor, Block-A, FTC Building, Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi on or before 11:00 AM on 19th March, 2025. Bids will be opened the same day at 11:30 AM. This advertisement is also available on EPADS & TDAP websites.

5. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to annul the bidding process at any time, however, reasons for rejection or annulling bid process will be communicated to the concerned bidder (s) in accordance with the Procurement Rules.

Assistant Manager, (Expo Centre)

Tel: 021-99244411

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
Block-A, 8th Floor, Finance & Trade Centre, Shahrah-e-Faisal,
Karachi-75350



Briefs

Exports increase by 8.17% to \$22.022 b

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country increased by 8.17 percent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Exports during July-February (2024-25) were recorded at \$22.022 billion against \$20.359 billion during July-February (2023-24), according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data. On the other hand, imports into the country went up by 7.40 percent by growing from \$35.199 million last year to \$37.802 million during the first eight months of the current year. Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the months under review was recorded at \$15.780 billion against the deficit of \$14.480 billion last year, showing an increase of 6.33 percent. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports in February 2025 decreased by 5.57 percent to \$2.439 billion from \$2.583 billion in February 2024. On the other hand, the imports went up by 10.03 percent by going up from \$4.306 to \$4.738 percent, according to PBS data. On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country came down by 17.35 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.951 billion during January 2025. The imports also witnessed a decrease of 9.89 percent when compared to the imports of \$5.258 billion in January 2025, PBS reported.—APP

Solid steps to check accidents on highways

DNA

Islamabad: In a high-level review meeting of the National Highway Authority (NHA) chaired by Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan further stringent measures were decided to prevent accidents on Motorways and National Highways. Federal Minister emphasized that efforts must be made to curb accidents caused by the negligence of the drivers on Motorways. He stressed that Emergency Services Centers should be established every 30 kilometers and that measures would also be taken for helicopter and air ambulance services along Motorways and Highways. Abdul Aleem Khan stated that the Government is ready to pay any price to save human lives and every step will be taken in this regard. Abdul Aleem Khan instructed that Rescue Services 1122 stations be connected to Motorways to ensure the swift provision of emergency medical aid in the shortest time possible. During the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan was also presented with a report on the recent bus accident on M-2 in which the bus driver acknowledged his negligence and error.

Pak-Japan parliamentary dialogue exploring avenues of coop

Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and recalled his previous meeting with the Chairman of the Senate last month as a privilege. He emphasized his mutual commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Pak-Japan Parliamentary Group, convened by Senator Nadeem Ahmed Bhutto and organized by Ms. Misbah Khar, Secretary of the group, was held today at Parliament House to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries. Senator Bhutto, along with senior officials from the Senate Secretariat, warmly welcomed His Excellency Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan. Senator Bhutto emphasized the importance of Pakistan-Japan relations and highlighted the mutual benefits with strong bilateral ties between the two countries. During the dialogue, he noted Pakistan's beautiful landscapes, particularly in the northern regions, and suggested that Pakistan could capitalize on this to boost its tourism sector. He also mentioned Pakistan's travel advisory and Japan's strong ties with the World Bank and the economic sector, which have supported Pakistan. Currently, the bilateral economic trade stands at \$1.72 billion, and Senator Bhutto stressed the need to further enhance it. He pointed out that platforms such as JICA and FISC can facilitate foreign investments, and Pakistan seeks Japan's assistance through these channels. Pakistan has been a reliable partner of Japan in various sectors, and Senator Bhutto expressed a desire for increased investment from Japanese companies. He cited the 2023 Tokyo Investment Board, which saw participation from



over 127 major investment groups, as an example of successful initiatives. He reiterated that Pakistan is keen to pursue more opportunities to boost trade and enhance bilateral relations. Regarding the skills sector, Senator Bhutto highlighted the signing of a memorandum on technical internship programs and special skill work programs. He also acknowledged the significant contributions of the approximately 25,000-strong Pakistani

diaspora in Japan. His Excellency Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and recalled his previous meeting with the Chairman of the Senate last month as a privilege. He emphasized his mutual commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Pakistan. The Ambassador underscored that diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan have existed for over 73 years, and Japan has provided economic cooperation to Pakistan for more than

70 years. He assured that Japan would continue to expand this assistance. The Ambassador also highlighted the role of over 80 Japanese companies operating in Pakistan, contributing to both economic and social development. He mentioned that around 1,000 Japanese tourists visit Pakistan annually, and as security concerns stabilize, this number is expected to rise. Additionally, he pointed out the 2025 Osaka Conference as a significant

opportunity for Pakistan. The Ambassador also commended the mutual cooperation and parliamentary exchanges between the two countries and expressed eagerness for more dialogue following Japan's upcoming elections. Both sides expressed optimism for continued bilateral dialogue and cooperation, with plans for further engagement in the next meeting, which will involve broader participation from the Parliamentary Group.

Ahsan calls for technology-based economy

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday underlined the need to develop a technology-based economy and address the challenges faced by the country through innovations in various fields. "All departments of engineering, industry and education must implement reforms and harness the dynamism of the engineering population to foster innovations that provide solutions to the problems confronting the nation," he said while addressing a ceremony in connection with World Engineering Day. To achieve the desired goals of national development, he said that it was imperative to rapidly adopt market and environmental changes occurring globally, adding that "continuous innovation is the only way forward." He pointed out that it was unfortunate that Pakistan ranked 91st in the innovation index out of 133 countries, despite having brilliant minds, atomic power and the capability to manufacture 5th-generation airplanes. Under a recent initiative, the minister mentioned that the government allocated a budget of Rs 6 billion to five universities of engineering and technology (UETs) from all provinces to develop world-class laboratories for innovation, aiming to transform Pakistan's UETs into a global brand. Ahsan Iqbal urged engineers, vice-chancellors and university faculty to ensure their laboratories operate around the clock, as is the practice in top facilities in developed countries. "We must conquer the frontiers of knowledge and become knowledge givers, not seekers," he said. He also highlighted the importance of achieving a 90 percent literacy rate, ensuring the universal primary enrollment and effectively addressing issues like children's stunted growth to become a successful nation. The minister expressed confidence that Pakistan could achieve a one-trillion-dollar economy status under the Uraan Pakistan initiative, with gradual growth driven by exports. "We must become a technology-driven economy, making advancements in diverse fields such as manufacturing, agriculture, mining, information technology, and the blue economy," he added. He highlighted that the government was fully prepared to embrace digital transformation to meet the demands of Industrial Revolutions 4 and 5. To this end, he said, it has laid the foundation by establishing the National Center for Excellence in Big Data and Cloud Computing, as well as National Centers for Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Applied Mathematics, Satellite Technology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). "And now, the PML-N government is going to establish National Centers for Quantum Computing, Nanotechnology and New Manufacturing to achieve the goals of national development and prosperity," he remarked.—DNA

Cabinet expansion aims to boost governance: Talal

The government remains committed to strengthening governance and maintaining stability for Pakistan's economic progress, he added

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Talal Chaudhry on Tuesday said that the recent expansion of the federal cabinet was necessary to improve governance and efficiency. Talking to the private news channel, he explained that several ministers were handling multiple portfolios, which was affecting the government's performance. "The decision was taken to ensure better results. The names of the new cabinet members will be finalized soon," he said. He also acknowledged that coalition governments come with certain challenges, as allied parties expect representation. He emphasized that now the cabinet is reflecting a national outlook, with representation from all provinces. He further stated that the country is witnessing political and economic stability, which has been possible due to the vision of Prime Minister and a strong coordination between state institutions and the government. The government remains committed to strengthening governance and maintaining stability for Pakistan's economic progress, he added.—APP

PSX turns around to bullish trends

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 756.91 points, a positive change of 0.68 percent, closing at 112,743.80 points as compared to 111,986.89 points on the last trading day. A total of 206,851,125 shares were traded during the day as compared to 208,881,544 shares the previous trading day, where as the price of shares stood at Rs11.337 billion against Rs11.881 billion on the last trading day. As many as 429 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 221 of them recorded gains and 150 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 58 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 12,563,739 shares at Rs.1.40 per share, Citi Pharma Limited with 12,282,173 shares at Rs.92.93 per share.—APP

HEC notifies another curricula in four disciplines

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has notified another four curricula in the disciplines of Political Science, Islamic Studies, Remote Sensing & GIS and Architecture revised through National Curriculum Review Committees (NCRCs). According to the official details, the updated curricula aim to enhance academic standards, align with industry needs, and incorporate evolving market trends into relevant fields of study. NCRCs are comprised of eminent professors, senior faculty and distinguished schol-

ars from academia, representation from accreditation councils, R&D organizations and industry experts from relevant disciplines. The revised curricula focus on the academic standards such as nomenclature of the degree programme, eligibility criteria, programme learning outcomes, schemes of studies, course learning outcomes, degree award requirements and options for electives to accommodate the in-demand specializations in line with international standards, indigenous needs and market demand.—APP

Power minister, Kyrgyz envoy discuss energy cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Avazbek Atakhanov on Tuesday called on Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari. During the meeting, discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations, emphasising energy cooperation between the two countries. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to expanding collaboration in key sectors, especially in the power sector, said a press release. Federal Minister Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari acknowledged the excellent brotherly relations between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan and expressed the desire to further enhance cooperation across various fields. He also highlighted the strong educational ties between the two nations, noting that a significant number of Pakistani students are pursuing higher education in Kyrgyzstan, reflecting the strength of its

academic institutions. The Minister briefed the Ambassador on the ongoing reforms being undertaken by the Government of Pakistan in the power sector, aimed at improving efficiency and sustainability. He extended an invitation to Kyrgyz investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's energy sector and participate in various projects.

He also emphasized the potential for joint ventures in renewable energy. The Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan appreciated Pakistan's reform efforts in the energy sector and expressed his country's willingness to collaborate in areas of mutual interest. He noted that enhanced cooperation in power infrastructure and energy con-

nectivity would contribute to regional stability and economic growth. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening bilateral cooperation for mutual benefit and agreed to continue discussions on future projects that would strengthen economic and strategic ties between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan.



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'De-risking' from Trump

EUROPE is urgently banding together in response to Trump's administration in America. Last week, Germany's likely next leader, Friedrich Merz, fresh from election victory, declared it his "absolute priority" "to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA". If that were not dramatic enough, the presumptive leader of Europe's largest economy also talked about the prospect of establishing "an independent European defence capability much more quickly" at the Nato summit in June, suggesting the possibility of major upheaval. Crucially, Merz has displayed an intention to work closely with French President Emmanuel Macron, the chief advocate of European strategic autonomy. The unprecedented statements came shortly before the shocking shouting match between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, which only reinforced deepening fault lines in transatlantic relations. In response, top European leaders, along with Canada's, held a special summit on Sunday where they pledged to back Ukraine and ramp up defence spending. In contrast, America's transatlantic allies have been relatively subdued in their criticism of the White House and are expecting to be "first-in-line" in any major defence and trade deals. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have held cordial talks with Trump, underscoring the depth of affection and strategic ties. The US has also exempted frontline allies such as Taiwan from its freeze on foreign aid and is reportedly set to allocate up to US\$5 billion in defence aid to the Philippines. 'We all will die': What would the end of USAID mean for Asia's most vulnerable? Still, the Trump administration's brazen flirtation with rival superpowers such as Russia, public berating of a wartime ally like Ukraine and transactionalist foreign policy is pushing America's European and Asian allies to strengthen ties with one another. US allies should be contemplating ways to "de-risk" and engage in collective bargaining with Trump. It's hard to overstate how disruptive the second Trump administration is, even compared to its first iteration. Shockingly, Washington stood by Moscow last week against a European-backed UN resolution supporting Ukraine's sovereignty in a condemnation of Russia's unprovoked invasion. Just weeks earlier, the post-war transatlantic alliance lay in doubt after top US officials signalled strategic disengagement and, worse, an ideological hostility to Europe's liberal values. At the Munich Security Conference, US Vice-President J.D. Vance not only prodded European allies to increase their defence spending but launched an attack on European values. As if that weren't damaging enough, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth essentially threw Ukraine under the bus by forward-deploying major concessions to Russia ahead of any formal negotiations. Trump left little doubt as to his lack of commitment to Ukraine and broader European allies by speaking glowingly of his Russian counterpart after their first officially confirmed phone call in years. Soon after, top US and Russian officials met to discuss the Ukraine conflict in Saudi Arabia, without bothering to invite Ukrainian officials. The brazen exclusion of key stakeholders prompted a tit-for-tat, with Ukrainian President Zelensky implying Trump was a hapless victim of Russian disinformation, and Trump calling Zelensky a "dictator".



The Israeli agenda for Gaza

THE popular discourse on the fate of Gaza's ceasefire has been dominated by the rhetoric of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with most analysts failing to successfully read the situation in between the lines. These are mainly distractions from the bigger picture. While some are now fixated on the American threats to "own" Gaza and ethnically cleanse it, with others fearing "Israel" seeks to press play on its genocidal assault once again, both of which are valid concerns, something much more sinister is being conjured up behind the scenes. As I have explained in greater detail in previous pieces, most of Donald Trump's proposals for Gaza are more of a sick orientalist fantasy than substantive threats. To "own Gaza" would mean to invade it and totally defeat its Resistance, which would cost thousands of US soldiers their lives and end up costing Washington hundreds of billions of dollars; also likely resulting in failure. Therefore, an invasion is extremely unlikely, would require scrupulous planning, and we just haven't seen any movement on the logistical side that suggests there is even a coherent plan to carry this out. However, the threats of ethnic cleansing, which are implicit in the American President's calls to "clean out" the population of the Gaza Strip, are somewhat connected to reality. The method that the Zionist entity will try to carry this out through is gradual rather than sudden, unless it seeks to invade the Egyptian Sinai and seize a strip of territory to relocate the people into, which could speed things up. When we look at the Israeli and American leaderships, it is a fundamental mistake to assume that they are somehow at loggerheads on the desired end goal for the region. Although there may be a divergence of interests between the allies on short term issues, these are minor when looking at the bigger picture. As an entry point into this analysis, we must start from the position of assuming that the United States - as the most powerful actor with the most leverage - is working to ensure a future that favours their Israeli ally, but does so in a manner that works to bring about American dominance. The goal of this West Bank invasion is to collectively punish the entire populations from which resistance groups have emerged. The Israeli military is destroying homes, streets, imposing curfews, depriving civilians of water and electricity, it is murdering civilians with airstrikes, closing in populations with tanks and gates, while mass arresting anyone who rears their heads in opposition to their terror. This has been done with the aim to scare the people of the territory into submission. Meanwhile, the United States recently made the decision to de-fund the Palestinian Authority's Security Forces in the West Bank. It is also clear that the Trump campaign was bankrolled by "Israel's" richest billionaire, Miriam Adelson, to the tune of 100 million dollars, which Haaretz news reported was granted in return for the President accepting an Israeli annexation of the West Bank. Initially, it appeared as if the Palestinian Authority (PA) would still have been allowed to remain in power inside the territory under such a scenario, which would have likely amounted to an annexation of Area C and parts of Area B, while leaving the PA to rule over the major population centers in Area A/B.

The EU: Crisis of identity and values

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The EU also faced a value divide between its "old" and "new" Member States, particularly those from Central and Eastern Europe that joined in 2004. Surveys, such as the 2018 Pew survey and the 2022 World Values Survey, highlighted significant differences in attitudes toward European identity, religion, national identity, and moral issues between Western and Eastern Europeans. Eastern Europeans tended to emphasize Christian heritage, national pride, and traditional family values, while Western Europeans were more secular and accepting of multiculturalism and moral revolutions, such as same-sex marriage and abortion

THE creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 was driven by a combination of external and internal threats, primarily the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions and the need to integrate Germany into Europe to prevent a resurgence of its hegemonic tendencies. The EEC was established under the security umbrella of NATO, with the United States providing a unilateral security guarantee to Western Europe. The founding fathers of the EEC, such as Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Robert Schuman, Joseph Bech, and Walter Hallstein, were pro-integration elites who shared Christian values and believed in a common European identity rooted in these values. The Treaty of Rome, which established the EEC, aimed to unleash Europe's economic potential through the creation of a Common Market, while the Franco-German partnership was intended to provide leadership and stability. The Treaty also included mechanisms to ensure socioeconomic cohesion, such as the European Social Fund and later structural and cohesion funds, to support regions and sectors vulnerable to the effects of market competition. The integration process was designed to replace power politics with rule-based negotiation and coalition-building within the institutional framework of the EEC. This was intended to mitigate the natural core-periphery divisions that arise in unregulated markets. The pro-integration elite consensus on fundamental and instrumental values underpinned this process. However, by the turn of the 21st century, the European Union (EU) faced significant challenges due to structural changes that led to political polarization within Western European societies. The rise of both left-wing and right-wing populism was a response to the negative effects of globalization, including deindustrialization, job insecurity, and mass immigration. Right-wing populism, in particular, emphasized the loss of national identity and cultural cohesion, while left-wing populism focused on multiculturalism and identity politics. Both forms of populism were skeptical of the EU, viewing it as a stronghold of economic liberalism and, for the right, cultural and moral relativism. The EU also faced a value divide between its "old" and "new" Member States, particularly

those from Central and Eastern Europe that joined in 2004. Surveys, such as the 2018 Pew survey and the 2022 World Values Survey, highlighted significant differences in attitudes toward European identity, religion, national identity, and moral issues between Western and Eastern Europeans. Eastern Europeans tended to emphasize Christian heritage, national pride, and traditional family values, while Western Europeans were more secular and accepting of multiculturalism and moral revolutions, such as same-sex marriage and abortion. This value divide was rooted in the unique historical experiences of Central and Eastern Europe, where nations had struggled for sovereignty and identity in the face of external threats and Western indifference. The region's collective memory of ethnic purges and forced resettlements during and after World War II contributed to a strong attachment to national identity and a skepticism toward multiculturalism and post-sovereignty narratives. The value divide within the EU was further exacerbated by the immigration crisis of 2015 and the rise of identity politics in the West. Eastern European Member States, along with growing segments of Western European societies, resisted the EU's push for multiculturalism and questioned the legitimacy of liberal democracy. This resistance was particularly evident in the backlash against Germany's "Willkommenskultur" (welcome culture) and the EU's handling of the migration crisis. The EU's response to these challenges has been to deepen integration and enforce a uniform interpretation of "common European values" as outlined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). However, the meaning of these values such as human dignity, democracy, rule of law, and equality has become increasingly contested. For example, the right to abortion is seen as a human right by some and as the arbitrary taking of human life by others. Similarly, the rule of law can be interpreted as the application of legal texts according to their ordinary meaning or as a dynamic interpretation based on changing societal circumstances. The EU has increasingly used legal and institutional mechanisms to enforce its interpretation of these values, often at the expense of Member State sovereignty. The European Commission

and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) have expanded their powers to intervene in Member States' internal affairs, particularly in areas related to the rule of law, fundamental rights, and social policies. This has led to accusations of "moral imperialism" by the EU, particularly from Central and Eastern European Member States, which view these actions as an attempt to impose Western liberal values on their more traditional societies. The EU's approach to enforcing common values has been further institutionalized through mechanisms such as the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation, which allows the EU to withhold funds from Member States deemed to be in violation of the rule of law. This has been criticized as a tool for political pressure, particularly against Poland and Hungary, which have been accused of undermining liberal democracy. The CJEU has upheld the legality of these measures, further entrenching the EU's role as a moral arbiter. The prospect of further EU enlargement, particularly to the Western Balkans and Ukraine, has been used as a pretext for deeper federalization and the elimination of national vetoes in key policy areas. Proposals for reform, such as the 2023 French-German report "Sailing on High Seas," advocate for stronger budgetary conditionality and the removal of unanimity requirements in the Council, further centralizing power in the hands of the EU institutions and the more influential Member States. The EU's integration project, which began with the establishment of the EEC in 1957, has evolved into a complex and contested process. While the original goal was to create a peaceful and prosperous Europe based on shared values, the EU now faces deep internal divisions over the meaning of those values and the extent to which they should be enforced. The rise of populism, the value divide between Western and Eastern Europe, and the EU's increasing use of legal and institutional mechanisms to enforce its interpretation of common values have all contributed to a crisis of legitimacy for the European project. The challenge for the EU moving forward will be to reconcile these divisions and find a way to integrate diverse societies without undermining their national identities and values.

Humans without humanity: A crisis of our times

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Modernity has altered our priorities. We turn to social media more frequently than we turn to the Holy books that once guided our moral compass. Our virtual lives flourish while our spiritual well-being diminishes. This is reminiscent of the warning in the Quran: "And the Messenger will say, 'O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur'an'" (Surah Al-Furqan 25:30)

WE are the creation of the 21st century, a generation that has witnessed great technological advancements and societal shifts. Yet, in our pursuit of progress, we seem to have lost touch with the essence of humanity. We have seen many humans, but seldom do we witness true humanity. We exist in an era where luxury and excess are celebrated, where the rich possess more rooms than they have children, while the poor have more children than they have rooms. The stark contrast between abundance and deprivation has never been more pronounced. In the past, societies thrived on the principles of collective welfare. Islam emphasizes social justice, as stated in the Quran: "And those in whose wealth there is a recognized right. For the needy who asks and for those who are deprived" (Surah Al-Ma'arij 70:24-25). The concept of Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, was established to bridge the economic divide and ensure that wealth circulates fairly. We live in times where technology bridges distances across continents, yet creates chasms between those seated in the same room. The smartphone, an invention meant to connect us, has become the very tool that distances us from those nearest to us. In the past, social interactions were personal and heartfelt, strengthened by physical presence and direct communication. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized human connection and sincerity, stating, "A smile is charity" (Sahih Muslim). This highlights the importance of genuine interaction over virtual connections that lack warmth and empathy. Modernity has altered our priorities. We turn to social media more frequently than we turn to the Holy books that once guided our moral compass. Our virtual lives flourish while our spiritual well-being diminishes. This is reminiscent of the warning in the Quran: "And the Messenger will say, 'O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur'an'" (Surah Al-Furqan 25:30). In the

past, communities gathered in mosques and homes to recite and reflect on the Quran, instilling strong moral values in individuals. If we revive such practices, we can realign ourselves with spiritual fulfillment. The world witnesses a paradox where a single mother can raise ten children with boundless love and sacrifice, yet those very children find it burdensome to care for a single mother in her twilight years. The Quran commands kindness towards parents: "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination" (Surah Luqman 31:14). In the past, societies valued elders and cared for them within the family unit. The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught, "He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our elders" (Sunan Abu Dawood). We live in times where affluence and scarcity exist side by side in cruel irony. The wealthy walk miles to digest their lavish meals while the impoverished walk miles in search of a morsel to silence their hunger. During the time of Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab, he personally ensured the welfare of the needy, walking through the streets at night to identify those suffering from hunger. He established a welfare system based on the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who said, "The best of you are those who feed others and return greetings of peace" (Sunan Abu Dawood). We see an industry thriving on the commodification of the human body, where women are paid to bare themselves for the gratification of others, while many elsewhere struggle to find enough clothing to cover their nakedness. Islam upholds modesty and dignity, as mentioned in the Quran: "Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty... And say to the believing women that they should lower their

gaze and guard their modesty..." (Surah An-Nur 24:30-31). Historically, Islamic societies upheld these values, promoting respect and honor for both men and women. Our contacts list in our devices grows with each passing day, yet our relationships remain impoverished. We are surrounded by people, yet we experience a loneliness more profound than ever before. Possessions multiply in our lives, but our appreciation for them dwindles. We accumulate wealth and belongings but seem to forget the simple joys that once gave life its meaning. The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught that true wealth lies not in possessions but in contentment: "Richness is not having many possessions, but richness is being content with oneself" (Sahih al-Bukhari). We have mastered the art of earning a good living, yet we remain inept at living a good life. The pursuit of material success consumes us, leaving us bereft of the wisdom and fulfillment that come from leading a meaningful existence. The Quran reminds us: "And do not forget your share of the world, and do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters" (Surah Al-Qasas 28:77). Our ancestors found balance by integrating spirituality with worldly pursuits, creating societies that thrived in both faith and prosperity. In this age of information, we have become well-versed in the price of everything, yet we remain ignorant of the true value of anything. Ours is a world where abundance has not led to contentment, where knowledge has not fostered wisdom, and where convenience has not brought fulfillment. The human condition cries out for balance, for a return to sincerity, for a rekindling of the values that once defined us. If we are to truly live, rather than merely exist, we must seek to restore that which has been lost. Only then can we claim to have witnessed not just humans, but humanity itself.

Briefs

PM vows to boost country's...

FROM PAGE 01
The prime minister said all the macroeconomic indicators were on the high scale and asked the members to work hard with dedication and commitment as these were prerequisite for making Pakistan one trillion economy till the year 2035. He also thanked leadership of all the coalition partners in the government including PPP, MQM, BAP and IPP for their support in the most difficult times. "We are the bearers of May 28 achievement and not of May 9," he said, questioning that a political party who was running a provincial government had written letters to IMF pressing against any agreement with the government. The prime minister highlighting government's efforts towards economic stability, expressed the confidence that Rs400 billion tax cases pending for adjudication in various courts would be decided expeditiously as the one by Sindh High Court which provided relief to the government with Rs23 billion.

PM directs to increase Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01
Azerbaijan, said that the government was taking priority measures to fully capitalize on the vast trade and investment potential between Pakistan and Central Asian states. The participants of the meeting were told that during the joint business forum held in Baku during the prime minister's visit was participated by 83 Pakistani and 101 Azerbaijani companies. During the visit, 13 MoUs and agreements were signed between Pakistan and Azerbaijan to promote bilateral cooperation. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Jam Kamal Khan, Abdul Aleem Khan, Dr. Musadik Malik, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi, and relevant senior officials.

Pak 'well positioned' for 1st...

FROM PAGE 01
The IMF review mission and the government would discuss the performance of various sectors of the economy in the first half (July-Dec) period, evaluating any requirement for making adjustments in the macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the whole financial year 2024-25. The crucial part would be formulating the broad parameters for the major contours of the next budget for 2025-26. If both sides cannot evolve a broader consensus on staff-level agreement, it might linger on till approval of the budget for 2025-26 from Parliament.

Mega corruption...

FROM PAGE 01
"I have compiled and studied evidence over the past eight months," he said, adding that he had reviewed 728 pages related to the matter. The senator revealed that the Maritime Secretary had canceled the process for a Rs 60 billion land transaction. "We have successfully prevented this corruption. I am well aware of the background from 2005 to 2015 and know how long this case has remained unheard," he stated.

Eighty Five passengers..

FROM PAGE 01
Individuals, were offloaded while traveling to Congo, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Libya, Iraq, Cyprus, and Saudi Arabia on business and work visas. Three students heading to Azerbaijan and Cyprus were also barred from flying. Four passengers holding residence visas for Bahrain, Dubai, Oman, and Cambodia, including one blacklisted traveler, were also offloaded. Furthermore, 37 Umrah pilgrims were removed from flights due to a lack of advance hotel bookings and insufficient funds for expenses in Saudi Arabia.



ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins distributes hockey sticks among the players of Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy Lahore. Olympian Khawaja Junaid, Mehmood Ahmad and others are also seen in the picture. - DNA

PCB announces Pak squad for New Zealand white-ball series

The white-ball tour starts on March 16 and runs until April 5

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday unveiled the national squad for the upcoming white-ball series against New Zealand, set to commence later this month. The series will feature five T20 Internationals (T20Is) followed by three One Day Internationals (ODIs), running from March 16 to April 5. Salman Ali Agha has been appointed as the captain of Pakistan's T20 team for the five-match T20 International series against New Zealand, scheduled from March 16 to March 26. Shadab Khan will serve as the vice-captain. Mohammad Rizwan will continue as the ODI captain, while Agha Salman will serve as his deputy for the three-match ODI series, which will take place from March 29 to April 5. The decision to appoint Agha Salman and Shadab Khan as T20 captain and vice-captain, respectively, has been made with an eye on two major upcoming tournaments: the ACC Men's T20 Asia Cup 2025 (September 2025) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup (February-March 2026). Salman previously led Pakistan in the T20I series against Zimbabwe last year, securing a 2-1 victory. As part of their preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, Pakistan will play at least five T20I matches in the ACC Asia Cup 2025. Additionally, they will face West Indies (away, July), Afghanistan (home, August), Ireland



(home, September), South Africa (home, September-October), Sri Lanka (home, November) and Australia (home, January 2026) in three-match T20I series. Mohammad Rizwan will continue to lead the ODI team as Pakistan prepares for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, scheduled to take place in October-November 2027 across Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Aqib Javed will remain the interim head coach for the New Zealand tour. His initial tenure was set to last until the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, but he has been asked to extend his role while the search

for a permanent head coach is underway. Meanwhile, Mohammad Yousuf has been appointed as the batting coach. Pakistan's ODI squad against New Zealand: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Imam-ul-Haq, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Suyfan Moqim and Tayyab Tahir.

Pakistan's T20I squad against New Zealand: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousaf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Suyfan Moqim and Usman Khan.
NOTE: A wicketkeeper/batter will be added to the ODI squad following the T20Is Player Support Staff: Naveed Akram Cheema (team manager), Aqib Javed (interim head coach), Azhar Mahmood (assistant coach), Mohammad Yousuf (batting coach), Mohammad Masroor (fielding coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), DrikusSaiman (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Butt (analyst), IrtizaKomal (security manager), Dr Waheed Ali Rafai (team doctor), Syed Naem Ahmad (media and digital manager) and Sergio Basil Mullins (masseur).
Pakistan's tour of New Zealand schedule:
• 16 Mar – first T20I, Hagley Oval, Christchurch
• Mar – second T20I, University Oval, Dunedin
• Mar – third T20I, Eden Park, Auckland
• Mar – fourth T20I, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui
• 26 Mar – fifth T20I, Sky Stadium, Wellington
• Mar – first ODI, McLean Park, Napier
• 2 Apr – second ODI, Seddon Park, Hamilton
• 5 Apr – third ODI, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui.

Ferrari win case to delay Cardile's start

An Aston Martin statement said: "This is a matter between Enrico and Ferrari and their legal representatives in Italy, and the parties continue to be engaged in the process"

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Ferrari have won a court case in Italy that blocks their former technical director Enrico Cardile from starting work at Aston Martin until 18 July. Cardile left Ferrari for a new role as chief technical officer at Aston Martin in July and the two teams have been in dispute about his start date ever since. A statement by Ferrari said Cardile was "already violating the non-compete commitment with Ferrari". The team said the ruling was made by a judge in a court in Modena "a few weeks ago". The statement said that the purpose of the relevant clause in Cardile's contract was "precisely to prevent other F1 teams from gaining an unjustified competitive advantage by hiring Cardile earlier than allowed, causing irreparable harm to Ferrari". An Aston Martin statement said: "This is a matter between Enrico and Ferrari and their legal representatives in Italy, and the parties continue to be engaged in the process. "As such we won't be making any further comment. We will make an announcement in due course." Ferrari's legal victory means Cardile will not be available to start work at Aston Martin until long into the development phase of the team's 2026 car. F1 is introducing new chassis and engine regulations together in 2026 in one of the biggest rule changes in the sport's history.

Aqib Javed opens up on Babar, Rizwan, Shaheen's exclusion

Javed also addressed Usama Mir's exclusion despite his strong PSL performance

LAHORE: Pakistan's interim head coach, Aqib Javed, addressed the exclusion of star batter Babar Azam and wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan from the T20I squad for the upcoming New Zealand tour on Tuesday, emphasising the need for a shift in strategy. During a media conference following the announcement of the national team's white-ball squad for the tour, Javed also shed light on Shaheen Afridi's potential absence from both the ODI and T20I squads. "It can never be a permanent decision just because a cross has been placed here," Aqib stated. "Right now, we feel the need to introduce a younger group of players and change our style of play and mindset. Many teams have separated their T20I squads by 80-90%. However, I understand that one or two players from the existing setup will still be needed," he added. He further elaborated on the squad composition, saying, "If you look at this squad, once Saim and Fakhar return fully fit, it will form a really strong unit. The goal is to keep a core group of 24-25 players together so that they don't fall out of the system before the Asia Cup and World Cup, ensuring they

approach these tournaments with a set mindset." Left-arm pacer Shaheen Afridi was part of Pakistan's Champions Trophy squad but struggled to perform, conceding crucial runs in his spells during matches against New Zealand and India. "You see, at times in ODI cricket, we assess how effective a player is based on the team's demands and requirements. If a player doesn't fulfill those, it becomes a concern," Aqib explained. "But on the other hand, if you look at players like Haris or Shaheen, I still believe they are good bowlers in T20 cricket and can deliver better results for the team. Now, it's not as if Shaheen will play only T20 cricket for the rest of his life and nothing else. - DNA



Watson terms GT 2006 high watermark of his career

I could not represent my country in Pakistan but was lucky to play franchise cricket in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in the year 2019 and these were most memorable weeks of my life

LAHORE: Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson has said that lifting the ICC Champions Trophy 2006 is the high watermark of his cricket career and left lasting imprints on his game. Reminiscing on his journey as a cricketer and coach with the ICC Media Zone on Monday, Watson credits Champions Trophy as the stage which helped him achieve great deal of success as far as personal and team milestones were concerned, adding that Champions Trophy 2002 was his first tournament in the baggy green. Shane Watson was player of the match (POTM) for Australia in both the Champions Trophy finals 2006 in India and South Africa 2009 while his contribution to the 2009 semi-final was also excellent. He shared the journey to glory in the Champions Trophy 2006 and 2009 in detail and described this tournament was close to his heart. As the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Pakistan enters the last week of action, he believes the love for cricket echoes throughout Pakistan and he witnessed people's immense passion for cricket for the past

two weeks though their country did not fare well this year. "I could not represent my country in Pakistan but was lucky to play franchise cricket in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in the year 2019 and these were most memorable weeks of my life with Quetta Gladiators," Shane Watson added. Watson said that the group stages provided some excellent cricket but it's the knock-out matches that really count, and this week is going to be brilliant, adding that Pakistan will be ready for the off the field to watch some spectacular cricketing action in the Champions Trophy. "I was always a confident person, all athletes are, but it was in 2006 that I really knew I had the skill to perform for my country and help them win and that is a different confidence, it is a different feeling," he reminisced. "When I started, I was just trying to contribute here and there because the team was so strong. We had Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Ricky Ponting, Brett Lee, the list just goes on. Most of those guys were still there in 2006 and delivering in that team,

opening the batting with Adam Gilchrist and scoring an unbeaten 57 in the final, just proved to me I belonged," Watson said, adding it was the start of me being at my best as a fast-bowling all-rounder and to have that opportunity to bat with Adam and bowl the overs that I did was immense. Recalling the presence of the greats in Australian setup in 2006, he said "I was brought into an all-time great team at the absolute peak of their powers and a lot of them were some of the best players that have ever played the game, so I was intimidated by their skill. I knew I had a lot of work to do before I could get my skills to a point where I felt I could come close to matching them and being where my team needed me, not just contribute a little bit. 2006 was that year". Recalling the Champions Trophy 2009 as a standout tournament for him, he shared he didn't get off to a good start, and neither did the team. The team scraped to a couple of wins but things just clicked for us in that semi-final against England. They set us 258 to win and Ricky and I just knocked them off. I scored 136 not out and

it was one of my favorite innings - not just because of how I did but also the occasion and batting with one of my heroes growing up. Ricky was a great leader and he backed me all the way from the age of 19," he shared. In the final, he played New Zealand and I had this magical moment, where I hit a six to complete my century and also win the tournament. They are the moments you dream of. He said that he had a couple of really nice trophies from those days but his personal favorite was the watch he got for being man-of-the-match in the final, adding "it is one of the most special things I have in my house". It brings back so many special memories. I have a painting of the 2015 World Cup celebrations, of me and Steve Smith in the middle when we hit the winning runs, but that watch is amazing - they are probably one of my two most prized possessions. One of the greatest white-ball all-rounders for Australia said the last two weeks have reminded us how special this tournament is and I hope that, in the years to come, those who have featured in it look back on it as fondly as I do now.

Arab summit delivered..

FROM PAGE 01

"We will also be providing security training to security officials in Gaza." The UN secretary-general has called for the resumption of "serious" ceasefire negotiations, the release of captives and detainees, and the removal of all obstacles affecting the delivery of lifesaving aid into Gaza. "Humanitarian aid is not negotiable, it must flow without impediment," Antonio Guterres said. "The response must be adequately funded and civilians, including humanitarians, must be protected." The Palestinian president says the call to transfer the population of Gaza from their homeland is "categorically rejected".

Hamas rejects 'full..

FROM PAGE 01

The resistance's weapons are a red line for Hamas and all resistance factions," Zuhri said. Speaking at a press conference earlier in the day, Israeli foreign minister Gideon Sa'ar demanded a total demilitarization of Gaza and the return of captives as a condition to proceed to the second stage of the ceasefire deal. "We don't have an agreement on phase two," Sa'ar said during a press briefing. "We demand total demilitarization of Gaza, (and) Hamas and Islamic Jihad out and give us our hostages." If Hamas agreed to these demands, "we can implement (the deal) tomorrow," he added.

Barrister Gohar hits...

FROM PAGE 01

intra-party case, said that despite the fact that the PTI claimed to be working for the promotion of democracy in the country, still it was involved in illegal activities. "We had demanded that the bank accounts of the party be frozen." The petitioner said it was unfortunate that despite the Lahore High Court's (LHC) order that the case's hearing must continue, the hearing had once again been deferred today. He claimed that the PTI lawyers were not sure about the arguments they gave in the ECP.

ECP adjourns..

FROM PAGE 01

the case, with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Akbar S. Babar, and others appearing before the commission. During the hearing, an ECP member from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa raised questions about who is managing PTI's internal affairs, noting that the media has repeatedly mentioned Salman Akram Raja, sparking concerns about his role in the party. PTI's intra-party elections have also faced criticism for alleged controversy and a lack of transparency, fueling debates over the party's internal management. Barrister Gohar stated that the party is currently managing its affairs under indoor management and emphasized that the issue would be resolved once the ECP provides the necessary certification.

India thump Australia...

FROM PAGE 01

the second semi-final in Lahore on Wednesday. India got off to a shaky start to the pursuit as top-ranked ODI batter Shubman Gill (eight) was cleaned up by Ben Dwarshuis in the fifth over with 30 runs on the board. Skipper Rohit Sharma, who was the core aggressor of the opening stand, followed suit just 16 balls later as he was trapped lbw by youngster Cooper Connolly, who had dropped him in the second over. Rohit smashed three fours and a six on his way to a 29-ball 28. Following the back-to-back blows, veteran Kohli and Iyer put together an important third-wicket partnership, which yielded 91 runs until the latter was castled by Adam Zampa. Iyer scored 45 off 62 deliveries with the help of three boundaries. Kohli was then involved in crucial partnerships with Axar Patel (27) and KL Rahul before finally perishing in the 43rd over.

Briefs

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.76 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.66. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280 and Rs281.50, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.63 to close at Rs293.49 against the last day's closing of Rs290.86, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.87, whereas an increase of Rs3.03 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs355.20 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs352.17. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paise each to close at Rs 76.17 and Rs74.59 respectively.—APP

Gold price increases by Rs.4,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.4,800 and was sold at Rs 306,300 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 301,500 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.45 to Rs.3,315 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.3,772 to Rs.240,727 from Rs. 236,955. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.45 to Rs.3,315 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.39 to Rs.2,842. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$47 to \$2,916 from \$2,869 whereas the prices of silver in international market increased by \$0.39 to \$31.80, the Association reported.—APP

India launches project for hydrogen-fueled vehicles

NEW DELHI: The Indian government launched on Tuesday the first of its pilot projects to operate hydrogen-powered buses and trucks across the country under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. Introduced in 2023, with an allocated fund of \$2.4 billion, the green hydrogen mission aims to promote the production and use of green hydrogen, which is seen as a critical part of India's strategy to reduce carbon emissions and achieve its climate goals.

It seeks to make India a global hub for the production of green hydrogen, which all over the world is emerging as a future alternative to fossil fuels.

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy said in a statement that it had approved five pilot projects, comprising a total of 37 buses and trucks and nine hydrogen refueling stations.

The vehicles will operate on 10 different routes across the country, connecting major cities and regions, including greater Noida, Delhi, and Agra — home to India's top monument and tourist site, the Taj Mahal — in the north, parts of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh states in eastern India along the Bay of Bengal coast, several cities in Gujarat state and the financial hub of Mumbai along the western coast, and Kochi in the southwest. "The vehicles that will be deployed for the trial include 15 hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles and 22 hydrogen internal combustion engine-based vehicles," the ministry said. "The total financial support for selected projects made available will be around Rs. 208 crore (\$24 million) from the government of India. These pilot projects are likely to be commissioned in the next 18-24 months, paving the way to the scaleup of such technologies in India." The first three such trucks were deployed in New Delhi on Tuesday by TATA Motors and Indian Oil Corp. — two of the eight private and state companies selected by the government for the project.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Frederico Silva visiting the "Hall of Fame" at Pakistan Literature Academy in Federal Capital.

UN rights chief voices concern over situation in IIOJK

Volker Turk called on the international community to intensify efforts to defend fundamental freedoms and the institutions founded to promote them

UNITED NATIONS: UN human rights chief Volker Turk has voiced over the situation in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir as he called on the international community to intensify efforts to defend fundamental freedoms and the institutions founded to promote them. "I am concerned by the use of restrictive laws and harassment against human rights defenders and independent journalists resulting in arbitrary detention and a diminished civic space, including in Kashmir," Turk told the Human Rights Council, which is meeting in Geneva. He also called for stepped-up efforts to address violence and displacement in the Indian state of Manipur, based on dialogue, peacebuilding and human rights. Turk's remarks about Kashmir, drew a protest from India's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Arindam Bagchi, who called them "unfounded and baseless." "As India was mentioned by name, let me begin by emphasizing that the world's largest democracy continues to be a healthy, vibrant and pluralistic society. Unfounded and baseless comments in the update contrast jarringly with ground re-

alities," the Indian envoy claimed. Presenting his global update covering more than 30 countries, the High Commissioner noted that there were some 20 conflicts described as "outrageous" the fact that legal safeguards for non-combatants were being repeatedly ignored around the world. "Civilians are deliberately attacked. Sexual violence and famine are used as weapons of war," Turk said. "Humanitarian access is denied, while weapons flow across borders and circumvent international sanctions. And humanitarian workers are targeted." In 2024, he added, a record 356 humanitarian workers were killed while providing aid to people in some of the world's most appalling crises. "Our world is going through a period of turbulence and unpredictability, reflected in growing conflict and divided societies," the High Commissioner said. "We cannot allow the fundamental global consensus around international norms and institutions, built painstakingly over decades, to crumble before our eyes." In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the UN rights chief emphasized that the fragile ceasefire holds in Gaza "and be-

comes the basis for peace". He also stressed that aid deliveries into Gaza should resume immediately, just as Israel announced a halt to aid flowing into the shattered enclave, having proposed extending the first phase of the ceasefire which ended at the weekend and which would allow Israeli troops to stay in Gaza. UN aid chief Tom Fletcher responded with alarm to the Israeli decision, insisting that the ceasefire "must hold". In an online appeal, he added: "International humanitarian law is clear: We must be allowed access to deliver vital lifesaving aid. We can't roll back the progress of the past 42 days. We need to get aid in and the hostages out." Back in the Human Rights Council, Turk said that the Gaza had been "razed" by constant Israeli bombardment, and, "Any solution to the cycles of violence must be rooted in human rights, including the right to self-determination, the rule of law and accountability. All hostages must be freed; all those detained arbitrarily must be released; and humanitarian aid into Gaza must resume immediately." Reflecting deep concerns by humani-

tarian officials and the human rights community about Israeli military raids on Palestinian settlements in the West Bank, the UN High Commissioner insisted that Israel's "unilateral actions and threats of annexation in the West Bank, in violation of international law, must stop". Turk also condemned the use of "military weapons and tactics, including tanks and airstrikes, against Palestinians". Equally worrying was "the destruction and emptying of refugee camps, the expansion of illegal settlements, the severe restrictions on movement and the displacement of tens of thousands of people". On Afghanistan, the High Commissioner said, "women and girls are subject to State-sponsored gender apartheid that is unparalleled in today's world, noting they are denied the most basic and fundamental freedoms essential to normal life, including movement, education and work. "I am deeply concerned for the long-term future of a country that is self-harming on a national scale." Turk added. In Sudan, the High Commissioner once again condemned devastating

bomb attacks launched in heavily built-up areas with total impunity, by the parties to the conflict. All the while, the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe deepens, threatening regional stability, he maintained: "Civilians are paying an unbearable price, in a naked struggle for power and resources. All countries must use their influence to apply pressure on the parties and their allies, to stop the war, embark on an inclusive dialogue, and transition to a civilian-led Government." Turning to Ukraine, whose future material support from the United States appeared unclear following televised disagreements between Presidents Trump and Zelensky at a White House meeting on Friday, Turk opposed any peace deal that excluded Ukraine. "Three years since the full-scale Russian invasion, people continue to suffer appallingly...Any discussions about ending the war must include Ukrainians and fully respect their human rights. Sustainable peace must be based on the United Nations Charter and international law."—DNA

Ad campaign launched to dissuade Iraqis from entering UK illegally

LONDON: An advert campaign will be launched in Iraq to dissuade people from traveling illegally to the UK, the BBC reported on Tuesday. Thousands of migrants have made the dangerous journey across the English Channel since 2018, with 592 doing so on Sunday alone, according to the UK Home Office. Many of the trips are facilitated by criminal gangs, and the crossings can often lead to accidents and fatalities. The new campaign will be aimed primarily at people in semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, and will be spread via social media, apps and websites. The Home Office previously launched similar adverts in Albania and Vietnam. One advert featured an image of an upturned dinghy, alongside quotes from people who had previously risked the crossing, including "the boat was too crowded" and "people disappeared into the sea." Another advert quoted a female migrant as saying: "I was promised a well-paid job. Instead I was a slave." Home Office Minister Dame Angela Eagle said: "Ruthless criminal gangs spread dangerous lies on social media to exploit people for money, and we are exposing them using the real stories of their victims." UK Border Security Commander Martin Hewitt said during a trip to Iraq last week: "Our international campaign is sending a clear message to prospective migrants that these criminals cannot be trusted.—APP

Food prices in Gaza soar as Israel blocks aid

UNITED NATIONS: Israel's move to prevent all aid from entering Gaza after Hamas reportedly refused to accept a plan to continue with phase one of the fragile ceasefire has had an immediate impact, including a 100-fold increase in the price of flour and vegetables, compounding the suffering of the Palestinian people in the holy month of Ramadan, according to the UN. The UN aid coordination office, OCHA said on Monday that the Kerem Shalom, Erez and Zikim crossing closures means that vital humanitarian assistance, including thousands of tents, can't be delivered to civilians in need. Phase one of the ceasefire mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the US expired on Saturday, with Hamas calling on Israel to move on to the next agreed phase — but Israel is calling instead for a continuation of phase one through the end of this month in line with a proposal from the top US envoy to the region. January's ceasefire deal has seen the release of 33 Israeli hostages who've been held captive since the 7 October, with 1,900 Palestinian prisoners exchanged. "The ceasefire has provided the opportunity to distribute food, to distribute water, as well as shelter assistance and medical aid, allowing nearly everyone in Gaza to receive food parcels, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, told reporters in New York at the regular noon briefing. "Our humanitarian partners tell us that following the closure of the crossings into Gaza yesterday, flour and vegetable prices increased more than 100-fold. Partners are currently assessing the stocks that are currently available," he added. The UN children's agency, UNICEF, warned that the stoppage of aid deliveries into Gaza will quickly lead to devastating consequences for children and families who are simply struggling to survive. "The aid restrictions announced yesterday will severely compromise lifesaving operations for civilians," said Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East. "It is imperative that the ceasefire — a critical lifeline for children — remains in place, and that aid is allowed to flow freely so we can continue to scale up the humanitarian response." The agency said that between 19 January and last Friday, almost 1,000 UNICEF trucks had crossed into the enclave carrying clean water, medical supplies, vaccines, therapeutic food and other materials. Since the start of the ceasefire on 19 January, UNICEF and partners have provided warm clothing to 150,000 children in Gaza and increased daily water distribution for nearly half a million people living in more remote areas, Spokesman Dujarric said.—Agencies

Pre-launch of "reputation management and crisis communication" at NSU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The pre-launch of the highly anticipated book "Reputation Management and Crisis Communication: A Study of the Corporate Sector" by Imran Ghaznavi was held at National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad. The event was chaired by Prof. Dr. Zafar Uddin Ahmed, a renowned American scholar and Professor of Marketing and International Business at King Fahd University, Saudi Arabia. The gathering was graced by Vice-Chancellor NSU Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, faculty members, distinguished guests, and students. A lively and insightful Q&A session was held, during which Prof. Dr. Zafar



encouraged Pakistani scholars to actively contribute to global knowledge by writing books in their respective fields. He emphasized the importance of producing high-quality content that can benefit international academia and industry alike. Prof. Dr. Zafar lauded Imran Ghaznavi's in-depth expertise in reputation management and crisis communication, recognizing the book as a significant contribution to the field. He also extended an invitation to Imran Ghaznavi to launch the book at an international conference in Bangkok later this year, where 250 global scholars will be in attendance. The event marked a significant milestone in fostering academic excellence and promoting research-driven insights in corporate reputation management

Philippine fighter jet goes missing

MANILA: A Philippine air force fighter jet with two pilots on board has gone missing during a night combat assault in support of ground forces who were battling insurgents in a southern province, and an extensive search is underway, officials said Tuesday. The FA-50 jet lost communication during the tactical mission with other air force aircraft around midnight Monday before reaching a target area. The other aircraft were able to return safely to an air base in central Cebu province, the air force said without providing other details for security reasons. A Philippine military official told The Associated Press that the incident happened in a southern Philippine province, where an anti-insurgency mission against communist guerrillas was underway. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the sensitive situation publicly. "We are hopeful of locating them and the aircraft soon and ask you to join us in prayer during this critical time," air force spokesperson Col. Ma. Consuelo Castillo said. It was not immediately clear if the rest of the FA-50s would be grounded following the incident.—APP

Japan's worst wildfire in half century spreads

TOKYO: Firefighters were Tuesday battling Japan's worst wildfire in half a century, which has left one dead and forced the evacuation of nearly 4,000 local residents. White smoke billowed from a forested area around the northern city of Ofunato, aerial TV footage showed, five days after the blaze began after record low rainfall. The fire also follows Japan's hottest summer on record last year, as climate change pushes up temperatures worldwide. As of Tuesday morning, the wildfire had engulfed around 2,600 hectares (6,400 acres), the fire and disaster management agency said — over seven times the area of New York's Central Park. That makes it Japan's largest wildfire since 1975 when 2,700 hectares burnt in Kushiro on northern Hokkaido island. It is estimated to have damaged at least 80 buildings by Sunday, although details were still being assessed, the agency said. Military and fire department helicopters are trying to douse the Ofunato fire, but it is still spreading, a city official told reporters. "There is little concern that the fire will reach the (more densely populated) city area," the official said, adding that authorities were "doing our best" to put it out. Around 2,000 firefighters — most deployed from other parts of the country, including Tokyo — are working from the air and ground in the area in Iwate region, which was hard-hit by a deadly tsunami in 2011.—APP

Arab summit draft communique adopts Egyptian plan for Gaza

DUBAI: An Arab summit draft communique on Tuesday adopted an Egyptian plan for Gaza's future and called on the international community and financial institutions to provide support for the plan quickly. Organized by Egypt, the summit aims to respond to US President Donald Trump's proposals to take control of Gaza and resettle Palestinians, as well as to address the Israeli Prime Minister's stance on ending the ceasefire and resuming hostilities in Gaza. The summit set to take place this evening will focus on creating a unified Arab response that protects Palestinian rights and makes Gaza habitable again. Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah will head the Kingdom's delegation participating in the Arab Summit. Egypt has yet to release the full proposal but some details have emerged Tuesday ahead of the summit. The Arab counter-proposal consists of three phases to be implemented over five years to fully rebuild Gaza.—Agencies

Briefs

PAC summons finance secy over absence

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has directed the finance secretary to appear before the committee today (Tuesday) or tomorrow. During a session chaired by Junaid Akbar, the PAC reviewed audit paras related to the Economic Affairs Division and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Senior Finance Ministry officials cited engagements with the IMF team as the reason for the secretary's absence. However, Chairman Junaid Akbar rejected this explanation, insisting that the secretary must attend the meeting without delay. Committee member Omar Ayub criticised the Economic Affairs Division's approach, stating that the budgeting process needs to be managed more effectively. The PAC has scheduled further discussions on audit paras related to the Finance Ministry on March 18. Additionally, the committee questioned the Auditor General of Pakistan about recurring inaccuracies in budget estimates. The Auditor General highlighted inadequate budget preparation by institutions as a major issue.

UNSC renews sanctions against Al-Shabaab

DNA

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council Tuesday renewed its sanctions against al-Shabaab terror group in Somalia until 13 December 2025, with Pakistan voicing concern over the presence of Da'esh's affiliate terrorist elements in the African country. The 15-member Council took that action by unanimously adopting a resolution, submitted by Britain, authorizing member states to intercept vessels transporting banned items to and from Somalia, including illegal arms imports and charcoal exports. "Al-Shabaab's ability to radicalize, recruit, raise funds via extortion and piracy and procure weapons must be disrupted," Ambassador Usman Iqbal Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the Security Council, while explaining his vote in favour of the resolution. He said that continued humanitarian assistance and support for economic development of Somalia was vital to addressing the root causes of terrorism. "Fighting the scourge of terrorism would require a united regional and global effort," he emphasized. Under the terms of the resolution, the Council, acting under Chapter VII (Enforcement) of the UN - decided that "all States shall, for the purposes of preventing Al-Shabaab and other actors intent on undermining peace and security in Somalia and the region from obtaining weapons and ammunition."

China retaliates against US tariffs, but wants talk

"We advise the US to put away its bullying face and return to the right track of dialogue and co-operation before it is too late," foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian added

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: "China will fight to the bitter end of any trade war," the foreign ministry spokesperson in Beijing declared, after China announced tit-for-tat tariffs on agricultural imports from the US. This came within minutes of a new 10% US levy on Chinese imports that came into effect on Tuesday - which adds to existing tariffs both from Trump's first term and those announced last month. But China's latest retaliatory measures are an opening swing, not a direct punch. It shows some strength, and it has the potential to sting parts of the United States, but also leaves room to negotiate or escalate if necessary. "We advise the US to put away its bullying face and return to the right track of dialogue and co-operation before it is too late," foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian added. This is the second round of tariffs the two countries have imposed on each other since February. But this time China is hitting Donald Trump where it has the potential to hurt - by targeting farmers, who are some of his core supporters. Almost 78% of farming-dependent counties in the US endorsed Mr Trump in 2024. China is one of their biggest customers for produce such as chicken, beef, pork and soybeans and now all those products will face a 10-15% tax which will come into effect on 10 March. "The tariffs are broadly negative for US agricultural markets. It is going to have a bearish influence on prices. There are enough corn and soybean supplies in the world for China to make a switch, it is more of an issue for the US, because 30% of US soybeans still go to China," Ole Houe, of Ikon commodities, told Reuters news agency. Beijing may hope that this will apply some pressure on the Trump administration ahead of any potential negotiations. The latest announcements raise the prospect of an all-out



trade war between the world's top two economies and in various ministry statements, China is making two things very clear. Firstly, it is prepared to continue to fight. "Pressure, coercion and threats are not the right way to deal with the Chinese side," said Mr Lin. But secondly, it is also willing to talk. Beijing is not ramping up the rhetoric or the tariffs in the same way it did in 2018, during the last Trump administration. Back then it imposed a tariff of 25% on US soybeans. "China's tariffs impact a limited number of US products, and remain below the 20% level. This is by design. China's government is signalling that they do not want to escalate, they want to de-escalate," according to Even Pay, an analyst with Trivium China. The prospect of talks was raised last month. The White House said there would be a call between President Xi and Donald Trump. That never happened. So will these talks take place and who will make the first move? China is unlikely to want to go first. It will not want to be seen kowtowing to Washington. And in contrast to Canada and Mexico,

Beijing has not announced new measures to target the flow of fentanyl. It simply repeated past statements that fentanyl is a "US problem" and that China has the strictest drug policies in the world. On Tuesday, the State Council released a White Paper entitled "Controlling Fentanyl-related substances - China's contribution." It outlines the measures Beijing says it has already made to crack down on Fentanyl-related crimes and the precursor chemicals used to make the drug. It adds that it is "diligently fulfilling international drug control obligations". So, while China hasn't picked up the phone to Washington, this document forms part of the country's message which appears to be saying - we are already doing what we can on fentanyl. Despite stating that China "will not yield", these latest tariffs are bound to sting. The cumulative 20% tax on all Chinese goods comes on top of a slew of tariffs Trump imposed in his first term on tens of billions of dollars of Chinese imports. And China's population is already concerned about a sluggish economy. Thousands of delegates are gathering in the capital this week to take part in an annual parliamentary session, most of which will focus on the economy. House prices are still falling, and youth unemployment remains stubbornly high. A potential trade war with the US could prompt more money worries for businesses and consumers across the country at a time when the Communist Party wants people to spend to help the economy to grow. But Beijing will also see an opportunity as Donald Trump sows uncertainty among his international allies. It can partly place the blame for any further economic woes at Washington's door and state that it's the fault of the US for starting a trade war. The state media outlet Xinhua has in recent days released a series of parodies poking fun at a United States that is prepared to tax its allies and neighbours. The skits portray Washington as a bully echoing the words coming from the leaders of Canada and Mexico.

Iran court sentences ex-ministers

TEHRAN: An Iranian court has sentenced two former ministers to prison over a multi-billion-dollar corruption case involving imported tea, the judiciary said Tuesday. The case, known in Iran as the Dehsh Tea Scandal, was opened in 2023 and implicated more than 60 people, involving a total of \$3.7 billion, the Iran newspaper reported in May, citing the country's chief justice. Forty-two defendants were sentenced in the case, including former agriculture minister Javad Sadatinejad and former industry minister Reza Fatemi Amin, said Mizan Online, the judiciary's news outlet. Sadatinejad received a one-year sentence, while Fatemi Amin was handed two years for their roles in the scandal, Mizan reported. The pair, who served under late president Ebrahim Raisi, were convicted of complicity in disrupting the country's economic system, with the sentences deemed "final and binding". The court also sentenced Akbar Rahimi-Darabad, the chief executive of Dehsh Tea company, to 66 years in prison for various crimes, including disrupting Iran's economy, smuggling foreign currency and bribery. Rahimi-Darabad was ordered to repay over \$2.38 billion in smuggled funds and a fine of \$1.5 billion. Under Iranian law, jail sentences run concurrently, meaning Rahimi-Darabad would serve 25 years for the longest of his convictions. In April 2023, lawmakers impeached Fatemi Amin over soaring car prices. That same month, Sadatinejad was sacked from his position. In May 2024, he was sentenced to three years on another corruption case involving animal feed imports. - Agencies

Sindh govt cracks down on 5000 'ghost teachers'

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh Education Department claimed to have discovered about 5,000 ghost teachers who have been drawing salaries without performing their teaching duties. According to reports, Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah issued directives to remove these ghost employees from the payroll. Moreover, the Education Minister of Sindh has given the green light for disciplinary action against these teachers. The department has also announced plans to recruit new teachers from the merit list, replacing the ghost teachers. Earlier last year, the education department directed all district education officers (DEOs) to immediately halt the salaries of over 1000 absent teachers. According to a report submitted by the Scrutiny Committee to the provincial education secretary, 1000 teachers across Sindh were found absent from duty in October 2025. The committee was formed to look into the matter of ghost teachers following a number of complaints in Sindh province.

Anger over Vance 'random country' remark

LONDON: The US vice-president has sparked a row with comments he made about the potential involvement of international forces to police a peace deal in Ukraine. UK opposition politicians accused JD Vance of disrespecting British forces, after he told Fox News a US stake in Ukraine's economy was a "better security guarantee than 20,000 troops from some random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years". The UK and France have said they would be willing to put troops on the ground in Ukraine as part of a peace deal. Vance has since insisted he did not "even mention the UK or France," adding both had "fought bravely alongside the US over the last 20 years, and beyond". However, he did not specify which country or countries he was referring to. In a post on social media, he added: "But let's be direct: there are many countries who are volunteering (privately or publicly) support who have neither the battlefield experience nor the military equipment to do anything meaningful." So far only the UK and France have publicly committed troops towards policing any potential peace deal in Ukraine, although Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has previously said a "number of countries" have agreed to commit troops. Earlier, Vance's original comments had drawn criticism from UK opposition politicians. - Agencies

Civilians' military trial Punishment must be served regardless of court: SC judge

AGP says a total of 39 people have been released, while 66 remain imprisoned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Mandokhail on Tuesday remarked that punishment must be served regardless of where the trial takes place. A seven-member constitutional bench led by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan heard intra-court appeals regarding the military trial of civilians, during which civil society lawyer Faisal Siddiqui continued his arguments. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar inquired about the number of people released from military courts. Siddiqui said 105 suspects were tried, of whom 20 had been freed. However, Attorney General of Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan intervened and informed the court that an additional 19 had also been released, bringing the total to 39, while 66 suspects remained in prison. Justice Mandokhail commented that regardless of who committed a crime, justice must be served. In response, Siddiqui argued that the difference was significant, as one trial is conducted independently while the other falls under military jurisdiction. Following Siddiqui's completion of arguments, former Supreme Court Bar Association ofice-bearers' lawyer Abid Zuberi is set to present his case

next. The case hearing has been adjourned until tomorrow. The top court, in its unanimous verdict by a five-member bench, on October 23, 2023, declared civilians' trials in military courts null and void after it admitted the petitions challenging the trial of civilians involved in the May 9 riots. However, on December 13, 2023, a six-member bench of the apex court - with Justice Hilali differing with the majority - suspended its October 23 order on petitions challenging the earlier verdict. But after a hiatus, the constitutional bench in December last year had conditionally allowed military courts to pronounce reserved verdicts of 85 civilians who were still in custody for their alleged involvement in the May 9, 2023, riots. In its order, the constitutional bench had said judgments of military courts would be conditional to the top court verdict on the cases pending before it. Subsequently, the military courts sentenced 85 PTI activists to two to 10 years of "rigorous imprisonment" for their involvement in the May 9 protests, marking the conclusion of trials for those held in military custody over the attacks on army installations and monuments. Later in January, the military accepted mercy pleas of 19 out of the 67 convicts sentenced in the May 9 riots case on "humanitarian grounds", the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Trump pauses all US military aid to Ukraine

Move comes after Trump upended US policy on Ukraine and Russia upon taking office in January

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has paused military aid to Ukraine following his clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week, a White House official said, deepening the fissure that has opened between the two one-time allies. The move comes after Trump upended US policy on Ukraine and Russia upon taking office in January, adopting a more conciliatory stance towards Moscow - and after an explosive confrontation with Zelensky at the White House on Friday in which Trump criticised him for being insufficiently grateful for Washington's backing in the war with Russia. "President Trump has been clear that he is focused on peace. We need our partners to be committed to

that goal as well. We are pausing and reviewing our aid to ensure that it is contributing to a solution," said the official on Monday, speaking on the condition of anonymity. The White House had no immediate comment on the scope and amount of aid affected or how long the pause would last. The Pentagon could not provide further details. Zelensky's office did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment nor did the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington. On Monday, Trump again said Zelensky should be more appreciative of American support after earlier responding angrily to an Associated Press report quoting Zelensky as saying the end of the war is "very, very far away." "This is the worst statement that could have been made by Zelensky, and America will not put up with it for much longer!" Trump wrote on Truth Social, using an alternative spelling of the Ukrainian leader's name. Since Russia's invasion three years ago, the US Congress has approved \$175 billion in total assistance for Ukraine, according to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. The Trump administration inherited \$3.85 billion worth of Congressionally-approved authority to dip into US arms stocks for Ukraine, but given the growing row between Washington and Kyiv, it was already unlikely for that assistance to be used. Monday's move goes beyond the no-new aid stance Trump had taken since assuming office - and appears to halt deliveries of military equipment approved by Biden including munitions, missiles and other systems. - Agencies

Dar urges collective efforts for national development

"It is matter of streamlining the things, the prime minister is working day and night, trying to explore all these areas," he said adding that it is not too far away when Pakistan will get the right place in the comity of nation

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday emphasized the importance of collaboration from all institutions and individuals in the country's development, stating that the government was committed to advancing the country's economy through focused efforts. He highlighted that Pakistan had great resilience and was blessed with huge reserves of mines & mineral, granite, hydrocarbon, stones and other re-

sources worth at least US\$ 10 trillion. Addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of the office building foundation, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), he recalled that in 2013, Pakistan was declared globally macroeconomic unstable country and it was projected to default between six to seven months. The world institutions were projecting that at least 12-15 years were needed to get out of quagmire. However, he said it took only three years to stabilize the country's economy as Pakistan completed its first IMF programme 2013-16, all macro economic indicators were showing positive trend, foreign reserves made new high record, overall inflation eased to 3.9%, and stock market also went high. "It is matter of streamlining the things, the prime minister is working day and night, trying to explore all these areas," he said adding that it is not too far away when Pakistan will get the right place in the comity of nation.



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