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'We are not alone': Zelensky thanks Europe at summit

Detailed News On Page-08

US-Hamas's talks vital for stability

Detailed News On Page-08



BD Mushfiq announces retirement

Detailed News On Page-06



Vows justice 'soon'

COAS Asim slams Afghanistan for harboring terrorists

Gen Munir says use of foreign weapons clear evidence that Afghanistan remained safe haven for militants

DNA

BANNU: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has pledged to bring the planners and facilitators of the deadly Bannu Cantonment attack to justice, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Thursday. The statement comes two days after security forces successfully thwarted a cowardly terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killing all 16 militants who attempted to intrude into the facility, according to the ISPR. However, in the exchange of fire, five soldiers were also martyred while putting up a heroic resistance, the military's media wing said. At least thirteen civilians were martyred, and 32 others were injured as a result of destruction caused by suicide blasts during the clash. In a statement today, the military's media wing said Army Chief General Munir visited Bannu following the foiled terrorist attack on the cantonment by TTP militants on Tuesday. During the visit, the COAS was briefed on ongoing operations and the overall security situation of the area. He also visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Bannu to inquire about the health and well-being of the injured soldiers, acknowledging their resilience and unwavering dedication. The COAS commended the high morale and steadfast resolve of the troops, reaffirming that the Pakistan Army would continue to serve as a bulwark against terrorism to ensure the security and stability of the state. The COAS expressed profound condolences to the families of innocent civilians who lost their lives in this heinous and cowardly terrorist incident. He also assured that while the perpetrators of the incident were neutralised instantly by the valiant soldiers, the planners and facilitators of the dastardly attack would also be brought to justice soon, wherever they may be. He underscored that the barbaric targeting of civilians, including children, women and the elderly exposed the true intentions of TTP terrorists as enemies of Islam.

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Bajwa must be questioned on resettling terrorists

KP government failing to curb terrorism, focused on PTI chief's battle, says defence minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has questioned why former Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa resettled terrorists in Pakistan, saying that he should be asked as former ISI chief Lt Gen (retd) Faiz Hamid is already under arrest. Speaking to the media at Parliament House on Thursday, Asif said that terrorism is a global issue that must be tackled collectively, adding that an inquiry should first be conducted into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) failure to control terrorism. The defence minister held the KP government accountable for the rising terrorism incidents, saying that it was focused on fighting the deposed PTI chief's political battle instead of countering militants. He accused the provincial government of not taking any measures to curb terrorism. Asif asserted that Bajwa, Faiz, and PTI founder Imran Khan were responsible for bringing back terrorists to Pakistan. "Faiz Hamid is already under arrest, but Bajwa must be questioned about why he resettled these militants."

Continued on Page 06



BANNU: General Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, shakes hands with soldiers during his visit to Bannu acknowledging their dedication, and boosting their morale. - DNA

DPM leaves for KSA to attend OIC summit

At the Conference, the Deputy Prime Minister will reaffirm Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has departed for Saudi Arabia to attend the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, which is set to take place in Jeddah. This high-level meeting will discuss joint actions in response to the deteriorating situation in Palestine, resulting from Israeli aggression against Palestinians, the ensuing humanitarian crisis,

Continued on Page 06

Aleem: PIA's privatisation within 3 months

FAISAL SEHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Privatisation and Investment Minister Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday said that the government would complete all the steps to privatise Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) during the next three months. As part of reforms urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Privatisation Commission said in April 2024 that it was putting on the block a stake ranging from 51 per cent to 100pc of the national carrier.

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Rejects Indian claim on AJK

Pakistan urges US to reclaim Afghan weapons

Pakistan urges India to vacate illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir territory

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday rejecting the Indian External Affairs Minister's remarks on Jammu and Kashmir, said that no electoral exercise, pursuant to the Indian Constitution, or the economic activity down the barrel of a gun could substitute Kashmiris' self-determination right and address grievances. "Any electoral exercise, pursuant to Indian Constitution, cannot serve as a substitute to grant of right to self-determination. Similarly, the decades-old grievances of the Kashmiri people cannot be meaningfully addressed through economic activity down the barrel of a gun,"

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Four Afghan terrorists arrested in Balochistan

Captured militants admit to illegal entry, carrying arms, planning terror attacks, say sources

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistani security forces arrested four Afghan terrorists near the Pak-Afghan border in Balochistan, seizing weapons and explosives during

Continued on Page 06

Pakistanis may soon face new Trump travel ban

Move recalls Republican president's first-term ban on travellers from seven majority-Muslim nations

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: A new travel ban by President Donald Trump could bar people from Pakistan and Afghanistan from entering the United States as soon as next week based on a government review of countries' security and vetting risks, three sources familiar with the matter said. The well-informed sources, who requested anonym-

ity, said other countries could also be on the list but did not know which ones. The move harkens back to the Republican president's first-term ban on travellers from seven majority-Muslim nations, a policy that went through several iterations before it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018. Former president Joe Biden, a Democrat who succeeded Trump, repealed the ban in 2021, calling it "a stain on our national conscience". The new ban could affect tens of thousands of Afghans who have been cleared for resettlement in the

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Briefs

LHC judge Ch Aziz resigns

Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz was due to retire in 2033

COURT REPORTER

LAHORE: Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz has submitted his resignation to the President of Pakistan. In his resignation letter, he stated that he assumed his duties as a judge in November 2016 and has resolved over 40,000 cases so far. He further mentioned that due to personal reasons, he is unable to continue his work and requested the acceptance of his resignation. Sources revealed that Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz was due to retire in 2033, but he resigned from his position ahead of time.

Omar Ayub claims opp alliance uniting

Accuses PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto of deceiving the people of Sindh

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub has claimed that all parties within the opposition alliance are getting on the same page. Speaking to the media, Ayub highlighted the opposition's primary objective was to ensure the supremacy of law. He lamented the rising inflation, increasing utility costs and shrinking business activities in the country. He also accused intelligence agencies of failing to curb terrorism, alleging their focus is solely on targeting PTI members. Additionally, he accused PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto of deceiving the people of Sindh by allegedly selling the water of the province.

Junaid Akbar clarifies

PTI not ashamed of establishment contacts

PTI KP president says institutions should work within their constitutional limits

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter's President Junaid Akbar on Thursday admitted that his party has direct and indirect contacts with the establishment and "we are not ashamed of it because they are our institutions". "We are not in conflict with any institution," said Akbar while addressing the media outside Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, where PTI founder Imran Khan has been jailed since August 2023. "All of them should stay within their constitutional limits." He urged that the gap between the people and the institutions should not widen. The politician stated that the former ruling party was not being permitted to conduct political activities, and their workers were being arrested and booked in multiple FIRs. He maintained that his party would not be intimidated by such tactics. To a question, Akbar said that he would not exclude the KP government from responsibility for deteriorating law and order in the province.

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PTI stages walk-out from Senate

"Aon Abbas Buppi holds the same respect in the House as any other member"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate session, chaired by Deputy Chairman Syedal Khan Nasir, witnessed a walkout by PTI members in protest against the arrest of Senator Aon Abbas Buppi. Deputy Chairman Nasir stated that Aon Abbas Buppi holds the same respect in the House as any other member, and the Senate will not operate under any pressure - it will function according to the law. Law Minister and Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar explained that the case against Aon Abbas Buppi falls under wildlife laws, making it a provincial matter.

Continued on Page 06

Prime Minister approves plan for youth training

PM Shehbaz Sharif approves a youth training programme to meet industry needs

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved a significant project aimed at providing training programmes to equip the youth with the skills needed in the market and industries. The project will ensure that the training aligns with the needs of the local industries and the demand for skilled labour in global markets. The Prime Minister will personally oversee the implementation of the project and has also decided to chair monthly review meetings. He directed that continuous communication with local industries and international workforce agencies be maintained to ensure the training provided meets market needs. Additionally, a comprehensive database will be created to track the required skills in local industries. The Prime Minister stated that Pakistan's talented youth are the country's most valuable asset, and through professional training, they will be empowered and gain employment.

Continued on Page 06

IMF may allow cut in FBR target below Rs12.5tr

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund may lower the tax collection target to less than Rs12.5 trillion due to overall slowdown of economic activities and huge shortfall suffered so far in a move that will still require meeting the remaining four months' targets and partially recoup some of the shortfall. Any reduction in the target against the original goal of over Rs12.9 trillion will depend upon the Finance Ministry's ability to cut the expenditures to protect the overarching IMF programme goal to generate Rs1.2 trillion primary

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Drug-Free Peshawar campaign launched

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has launched the third phase of its "Drug-Free Peshawar" campaign under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. The initiative aims to provide free treatment to 2,000 individuals battling drug addiction and implement concrete measures for drug eradication. During a surprise visit to the Khwaja Yunus Social Welfare Organization Center, Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah reviewed the facilities, met with staff and recovering addicts, and assessed the rehabilitation services provided by the government. Speaking on the occasion, the minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to making Peshawar a drug-free city, emphasizing that all necessary steps would be taken to achieve this goal. "This initiative is of great significance for the people and residents of Peshawar," he stated. He further highlighted the provincial government's exceptional performance across various sectors, attributing it to the leadership of Imran Khan. —APP

Attractive vehicle number plates via e-Auction App

LAHORE: Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), in collaboration with the Punjab Excise and Taxation Department, has begun registration for the auction of attractive vehicle number plates through the e-Auction App and Web Portal. Interested individuals can register until March 30 to bid for their preferred vehicle number. The e-Auction system facilitates the transparent auction of motorcycle and motorcar number plates, allowing users to participate from the comfort of their homes. The details of successful bidders are also made available on the app. The facility of tax calculator and vehicle verification has also been provided through the online system. Highlighting the significance of this initiative, PITB Chairman Faisal Yousef stated, "The e-Auction system not only promotes transparency but also plays a crucial role in eliminating corruption and the agent mafia. This digital platform ensures that citizens can conveniently participate in online bidding and secure their desired number without any hassle." —APP

KP forms committee to revive industries

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to support and revive industries, forming a special committee for this purpose. Official sources said on Thursday that the Department of Industries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has established a five-member committee, responsible for drafting a five-year industrial policy. The committee's duties include identifying the challenges faced by industries, proposing strategies to attract investors, and ensuring collaboration among different departments. —APP

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree to enhance Defence cooperation

During the meeting, both sides reviewed the existing level of cooperation between the two brotherly countries and explored various avenues for further collaboration in various areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have agreed to enhance bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation especially in the areas of defence, technology and aviation sectors. The crucial discussion to this end was held during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker, Special Envoy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of FDR Ethiopia to Pakistan, and H.E. Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Federal Minister for Defence and Aviation. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the existing level of cooperation between the two brotherly countries and explored various avenues for further collaboration in various areas. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker conveyed the felicitations of the Government of the FDR Ethiopia to the Defence Minister on Pakistan's election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The Ambassador briefed the Minister about the effective role being played by the Ethiopian Airlines in the Look Africa and Engage Africa policy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He invited the Minister for the Single-Country Exhibition being hosted by the FDR Ethiopia and organized by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Addis Ababa this year in May. On the other side, the Minister assured the Ambassador of his all possible support in further strengthening the



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia Jemal Beker presenting Ethiopia-Pakistan Fraternity Award to Federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif. DNA

bilateral relations of the two countries. Minister Khawaja Asif said the Government of Pakistan is com-

mitted to enhance its relations with the African countries under its Look Africa and Engage Africa Policy. On

the occasion, H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal presented the Ethio-Pakistan Fraternity Award to the Minister in

recognition of his exemplary role to promote the bilateral relations of the two countries

Kundi discusses water projects with Chairman Wapda

The Governor emphasized the crucial role of the banking sector in boosting economic activities and appreciated HBL's efforts in providing financial services in rural areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday met with Chairman Wapda, Lieutenant General (Retd) Sajjad Ghani, to discuss ongoing and proposed water projects in the province. NPPP's parliamentary leader in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Ahmad Karim Kundi, was also present during the meeting. The discussions focused on key projects, including the Chashma Lift Canal, Gomal Zam, Tank Zam, Sheikh Haidar Zam, Mohmand Dam, and Dasu Dam. Governor Kundi emphasized the significance of the Chashma Lift Canal project, saying that its completion would bring an agricultural revolution to the province. He urged the authorities to ensure its time-

ly inauguration, highlighting that it would not only boost agriculture but also improve the livelihoods of millions of farmers. He expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Federal Minister for Water and Power, and especially the Wapda Chairman for their keen interest in the project. The Governor also stressed the urgent need for constructing small dams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying that these projects would enhance water storage capacity, leading to agricultural development and overall public welfare. Chairman Wapda briefed the Governor on the progress of these projects and assured that all efforts were being made to complete them within the stipulated time frame. He highlighted that the water projects would not only help address water

shortages but also contribute to the production of affordable electricity, which is crucial for industrial and agricultural growth. During the meeting, both sides agreed on the necessity of a coordinated strategy to efficiently utilize water resources and address the energy crisis. It was also emphasized that close cooperation between federal and provincial authorities is essential to ensure the timely completion of these vital projects. Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, met with Habib Bank Limited (HBL) Chairman, Sultan Ali Allana, to discuss investment, financial sector improvements, and economic development in the province. The Governor emphasized the crucial role of the banking sector in boosting economic activities and appreciated HBL's efforts in providing financial services in rural areas.

SECP appellate bench upholds Penalty on VIS Credit rating Company

ISLAMABAD: The Appellate Bench of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has dismissed the appeal filed by VIS Credit Rating Company Limited. The Appellate Bench of the SECP has dismissed the appeal filed by VIS Credit Rating Company Limited (formerly JCRV S Rating Company Limited) against the penalty imposed for multiple regulatory violations of Credit Rating Companies Regulations, 2016, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The appeal challenged the SECP's order dated October 16, 2019 passed by Commissioner, SMD under Section 159 of the Securities Act, 2015, which determined the company's non-compliance with several provisions of the said Regulations. These violations included issues related to conflict of interest in rating assignments, failure to conduct internal audit review, inadequate risk management policies and framework, absence of indicative rating, and lapses in maintaining regulatory documentation. After reviewing the arguments of both the parties, the Appellate Bench upheld the SECP's decision, reaffirming the penalty of PKR800,000/- on VIS Credit Rating Company. The Appellate Bench emphasized the importance of strict adherence to regulatory framework to maintain transparency and integrity in the credit rating industry. The Appellate Bench reiterated that a credit rating agency must uphold the highest standards of fairness, efficiency, transparency, and ethics in their operations. The SECP remains committed to enforcing compliance with applicable laws to ensure a fair and efficient financial market. Since credit rating agencies contribute to market transparency, investor confidence, and financial stability, therefore they are considered as a key component of the financial ecosystem and have strict obligation to exercise due diligence in complying with regulatory requirements. —DNA

Ministry plants 67.5m trees, creates 0.2m green jobs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) over the past year, had planted 67.5 million trees under the Green Pakistan Programme, creating 200,000 green jobs and secured \$91.5m for climate projects. According to an official document, available with news agency, the climate finance saw remarkable growth in 2024, securing \$8.1 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and \$83.4 million from the GCF for bio-diversity conservation and land degradation efforts. Similarly, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) backing

the Acumen Climate Action Fund and the Recharge Pakistan project, aimed at enhancing climate resilience. In a year marked by robust international engagement, the ministry signed the SCO Environmental Protection Agreement and the Joint Action Plan for the SCO Green

Belt Programme, reinforcing its commitment to regional cooperation on sustainable development and climate change mitigation. Key bilateral climate agreements were also secured with Belarus, UNICEF, and the International Rescue Committee. The country's

leadership in global climate forums was evident through its active participation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where it played a pivotal role in various committees. It further demonstrated its dedication to gender-re-

sponsive climate policies by hosting the AFPPD meeting. The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to international climate agreements by achieving a 67.5% reduction in Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) phase-out under the Montreal Protocol and banning pre-blended polyols with HCFC-141b. Pakistan also submitted its Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) to the UNFCCC and implemented carbon market trading policies under the Paris Agreement. To align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the ministry revised Pakistan's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC-2021).



Efforts afoot to curb inflation: Afnan

ISLAMABAD: Senator Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan on Thursday said that both the federal and Punjab governments are making concerted efforts to curb inflation and protect consumers, particularly during Ramadan. Speaking in the Senate, he highlighted key government initiatives aimed at providing relief to citizens. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced financial assistance of Rs. 10,000 for four million families during the holy month, ensuring direct support for those in need. He commended Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for launching a Ramadan Relief Package, which includes the establishment of Sahulat Bazaars to regulate prices and prevent profiteering. Authorities are actively monitoring markets to keep prices under control, he added. Addressing concerns over rising prices, particularly of essential commodities such as fruits, he explained that the surge is primarily driven by demand and supply dynamics rather than government inefficiencies. "If a product was priced at Rs. 100 last month and its demand rises while production remains unchanged, the price will naturally increase. This is a simple economic principle—when demand rises and supply remains constant, prices go up," he elaborated. —APP

SCCI urges for single-digit interest rates to boost economic activity

DNA

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fazal Moqem Khan demanded of the government and State Bank to bring down the interest rates to a single digit for economic growth and prosperity. Fazal Moqem in a statement on Thursday said according to government statistics, Pakistan's inflation rate has reached a nine-year low, currently sitting at 1.5% in February 2025 and 2.4% in January 2025 despite that the policy rate remains high at 12%, reflecting a significant 1050 basis points premium above core inflation. He said prices of oil products main-

tained in the global market, and importantly, power division, and the government of Pakistan has also recommended bringing down energy prices, which is a clear indication of the drop in the inflation ratio in the country. SCCI chief stressed concrete steps for economic revival, ease of doing business for promotion of industries and trade, provision of soft loans and reduction in policy rate at the optimal level. Moqem noted high energy prices have increased the cost of doing business and industrial production and that Pakistan's export products are becoming uncompetitive in the global market, stating that running business and indus-

tries at the current interest rate is not only difficult, but made impossible. The chamber president called for a drastic cut in policy rate under the vision of the Special Investment Facilitation Council and ground realities to achieve targets of economic growth and improve country's exports as per the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Moqem said industry estimates predict core inflation to remain between 1-3% in the fourth quarter of FY25, driven by declining prices and easing inflationary pressures. The chamber president urged to adopt business-friendly policies and provide relief to the business community.

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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
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak, US discuss ways to boost bilateral trade, economic ties

Deputy Economic Counselor, American Embassy visits ICCI



DNA
ISLAMABAD: Deputy Economic Counselor of the US Embassy, Robert Newsome, held a productive meeting with Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) here at the Chamber House to explore new avenues for boosting economic relations between Pakistan and the United States. During the meeting, both sides engaged in meaningful discussions on: Enhancing bilateral trade and economic cooperation, strength-

ening business-to-business linkages to promote direct engagement between companies from both nations, Identifying and resolving trade barriers to encourage smoother trade flows. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi welcomed the visit and appreciated the US Embassy's efforts to foster closer economic ties with Pakistan. He highlighted the immense potential for increasing trade and investment between the two countries, particularly in sectors such as pharmaceutical, technology, agriculture, renewable energy, and textiles. "We believe Pakistan and the United

States have complementary strengths that can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships. By facilitating greater interactions through the exchange of business delegations between our business communities, we can unlock significant economic opportunities," said Mr. Qureshi. He also emphasized the importance of regular dialogues between the private sectors of both countries to promote joint ventures, technology transfers, and skill development initiatives. Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Executive Members Amir

Rahim Qureshi, Irfan Chadurhy, ICCI President's special advisor Naeem Siddiqui, former Executive Member Chaudhry Mohammad Ali and Secretary General Ghulam Murtaza also participated in the meeting, paving the way for greater economic cooperation, expand mutual investment and people to people relations between the two countries. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides expressing their commitment to fostering a stronger Pakistan-US economic partnership, built on trust, shared goals, and sustained engagement.

Senate refers two bills to committees for further deliberation

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Thursday referred two bills to the relevant committees for further consideration and discussion. The bills included the Civil Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which seeks to amend the Civil Courts Ordinance, 1962, and the Pakistan Coast Guards (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aimed at modifying the Pakistan Coast Guards Act, 1973. Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar tabled the bills in the house. Both bills had already been passed by the National Assembly.—APP

Sherry calls for debate on terrorism in House

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday called for a detailed briefing by relevant officials and the allocation of specific days for a comprehensive debate on terrorism. Speaking on the Senate floor, she urged the House to address the issue with utmost seriousness and said that terrorism is a collective concern and responsibility. She stressed the need to pass a resolution that not only identifies the root causes of terrorism but also proposes concrete solutions. "We are lawmakers, and we must deliberate on this pressing issue. If necessary, an in-camera briefing can be arranged, but we must not remain mere spectators. People should not question whether we are only here to discuss our privileges and vote on benefits—we must take decisive action," she said. She expressed deep concern over the resurgence of terrorism, calling it a critical issue requiring immediate attention. Referring to the recent terrorist attack in Bannu, she said, "Today, we have prayed for the martyrs, but we must go beyond prayers. We need a briefing, a debate, and a resolution—these three steps are essential." She also urged the House to ensure full attendance during discussions and suggested that the issue be taken up in a joint sitting of Parliament for a more unified approach.—APP

Ahsan emphasizes the crucial role of private sector in growth

Unlike 30 years ago, Pakistan now needs to attract \$10 billion annually. Despite increased exports, the country must adapt to changing global trade patterns

DNA
RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Ahsan Iqbal while speaking at a reception organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), has emphasized the critical role of the private sector in steering Pakistan's economic trajectory. He assured the government is committed to creating a competitive export environment, involving business chambers as expert stakeholders. Also pledged to break away from past mistakes and focus on peaceful and stable development for Pakistan. Iqbal noted that Pakistan is embarking on a new journey of rapid devel-

opment, but faces a challenging global economic landscape. Unlike 30 years ago, Pakistan now needs to attract \$10 billion annually. Despite increased exports, the country must adapt to changing global trade patterns. Earlier, the Federal Minister was warmly welcomed by President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, Usman Shaukat, along with Group Leader Sohail Altaf. Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former Presidents, Anjuman Tajran Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, Sheikh Hafeez, Asif Idrees, and other esteemed members of the Chamber were also present. During the visit, President Usman Shaukat briefed the Federal Minister on the Chamber's ongoing ini-

tatives, particularly the Revive Pakistan project, which aims to restore national confidence, revitalize the economy, and chart a path toward sustainable growth. Key demands highlighted included the promotion of regional trade, the establishment of an Expo Center in Rawalpindi, reduction in business costs, and the development of industrial and economic zones to drive economic progress. He assured that the government is committed to fostering a competitive export environment by involving business chambers as expert stakeholders. Additionally, he pledged to engage with the Ministry of Commerce regarding the establishment of the Expo Center in Rawalpindi and reiterated ongoing efforts to reduce energy costs.

IGP inspects security at sasta bazaars

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP), Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, visited Ramadan Sasta Bazaars on Thursday to review security and traffic arrangements. A police spokesperson told APP that during the visit, IGP Rizvi assessed the deployment of police personnel and traffic officers, ensuring smooth traffic flow and organized parking. He directed traffic officials to maintain order and facilitate the public effectively. IGP Rizvi also inspected the quality of essential commodities, verifying that items were being sold as per the official rate list. He emphasized that citizens should have access to all necessary facilities at these bazaars without inconvenience. IGP Rizvi assured that the administration and police officers were conducting daily checks on price lists and product quality to prevent overcharging or substandard goods. "In line with the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, there will be no compromise on security, traffic management, quality, and fair pricing in Ramadan Sasta Bazaars," IGP Rizvi stated.—APP

Economy hinges on private sector-led growth: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Ahsan Iqbal while speaking at a reception organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), has emphasized the critical role of the private sector in steering Pakistan's economic trajectory. He assured the government is committed to creating a competitive export environment, involving business chambers as expert stakeholders. Also pledged to break away from past mistakes and focus on peaceful and stable development for Pakistan. Iqbal noted that Pakistan is embarking on a new journey of rapid development, but faces a challenging global economic landscape. Unlike 30 years ago, Pakistan now needs to attract \$10 billion annually. Despite increased exports, the country must adapt to changing global trade patterns. Earlier, the Federal Minister was warmly welcomed by President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, Usman Shaukat, along with Group Leader Sohail Altaf. Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi and others.—DNA

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اگر (OGRA) کا
آخری انتباہ

لائسنس کے حصول کے لیے فی الفور اگر (OGRA) کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ ہوں

ایل پی جی باؤرز کے کاروبار سے منسلک تمام افراد جن میں ایل پی جی مارکیٹنگ کمپنیاں، پروڈیوسرز اور کنٹریکٹ کیئر وغیرہ شامل ہیں کو آخری مرتبہ متنبہ کیا جاتا ہے کہ وہ اپنے ایل پی جی باؤرز کے لائسنس کے حصول کے لیے فوراً اگر (OGRA) کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ ہوں تاکہ کوئی حفاظت کو یقینی بنایا جاسکے۔ مزید برآں ایسے تمام باؤرز جن کے پاس اگر (OGRA) کی رجسٹریشن نہ ہوگی انہیں 30 اپریل 2025 کے بعد کسی بھی ایل پی جی پروڈیوسر ریفرنڈم میں شمول کر لینی پورٹ اور باؤرز ایاز سے گیس لوڈ کرنے اور ملک میں ترسیل کرنے کی اجازت نہیں ہوگی۔ ایسے تمام قانون کی پاسداری نہ کرنے والے باؤرز کے خلاف صوبائی اور وفاقی انتظامیہ کی مدد سے سخت کارروائی عمل میں لائی جائے گی جس میں بھاری جرمانے، باؤزر کی قبضگی اور قوانین کے مطابق سخت کارروائی شامل ہے۔ اس سلسلے میں اگر (OGRA) کے تمام رجسٹرڈ آفیسرز شمول کر لیں، لاہور، پشاور، کوئٹہ، ملتان اور سکھر میں بھی درخواست جمع کروائی جاسکتی ہے۔

سہیل احمد طارق
سیکرٹری ایگزیکٹو ڈائریکٹر انفراسٹرکچر، ٹرانسپورٹ اور ٹرانزپورٹ: فون: 051-9108812

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Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

PID(I)6096-D/24

Briefs

Expert emphasizes need for moderation in eating habits

ISLAMABAD: Experts on Thursday underscored the significance of public awareness on healthy eating habits during Ramadan, highlighting the risks associated with traditional and rich special foods, which can lead to an increased risk of lifestyle diseases, such as heart problems, high cholesterol and obesity, if consumed without moderation. Executive Director of Capital Development Hospital, Naem Taj in his exclusive conversation with a private news channel emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns to educate people about healthy eating habits during Ramadan. According to health expert, the holy month of Ramadan is an ideal time to adopt healthy eating habits and promote a healthy lifestyle. He warned that unhealthy eating habits during Ramadan can lead to an increased risk of lifestyle diseases, such as heart problems, high cholesterol and obesity. Taj also urged the government to launch public awareness campaigns to promote healthy eating habits and prevent lifestyle diseases. Health expert also recommend eating nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, during Ramadan to maintain a balanced diet. Dr also advise individuals to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and avoiding sugary drinks. He emphasized that a balanced diet during Ramadan can help prevent dehydration, digestive problems, and other health issues associated with fasting. Health expert also stressed the importance of avoiding overeating and consuming high-calorie foods during Ramadan, and instead opting for light and nutritious meals. Additionally, expert advised individuals to limit their intake of fried foods, sugary drinks, and processed snacks, and to focus on whole, unprocessed foods instead. By adopting healthy eating habits during Ramadan, individuals can reduce their risk of developing lifestyle diseases and maintain their overall health and well-being, he concluded.—APP

NPO to organize webinar

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar titled "Industrial Plant Management" on March 13 (Thursday). Industrial Plant Management course helps professionals learn how to help factories and industrial plants running smoothly. The course develops the competencies and skills in planning, using resources effectively, managing people, and handling workplace issues to ensure successful production, said an NPO document issued here. The workshop provides information about maintenance management, manufacturing operations, 5S (Japanese concept), barriers to improvements, deadly waste and hazard/work permit.—APP

Devcom-Pak confers awards to volunteers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Devcom-Pakistan, a leading organization dedicated to sustainable development and climate action, conferred the National Women Empowerment Awards 2025 on Thursday, recognizing individuals and corporate sector who have made voluntary contributions towards women's development and empowerment. The awards ceremony was organized to mark International Women's Day 2025, celebrating the achievements of remarkable women and men advocating for gender equality and social upliftment. Prominent figures from diverse sectors, including social activism, education, health, business, and environmental conservation, were honored for their selfless dedication to promoting women's

Health internship program: A vision for learning and growth

Over the course of seven days, interns were provided with an immersive, hands-on experience across various healthcare facilities, including AFIRM (Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine), AFIMH (Armed Forces Institute of Mental Health), AFID (Armed Forces Institute of Dentistry), and AFIP (Armed Forces Institute of Pathology)

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Military Lands and Cantonments (ML&C) Department successfully concluded its second internship program, focusing on the healthcare sector. This initiative, conducted on the directions of Director General ML&C, Maj Gen Irfan Ahmed Malik, HI (M) aimed to integrate fresh perspectives into the system while providing young minds with firsthand exposure to the workings of government institutions. The program was graced by the presence of the Secretary of Defence Lt Gen (R) Muhammad Ali, HI(M) as the chief guest, marking the significance of this milestone in ML&C's ongoing commitment to fostering youth engagement and institutional development.

Over the course of seven days, interns were provided with an immersive, hands-on experience across various healthcare facilities, including AFIRM (Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine), AFIMH (Armed Forces Institute of Mental Health), AFID (Armed Forces Institute of Dentistry), and AFIP (Armed Forces Institute of Pathology). They also visited dispensaries which also included the state of art CCMC (Chaklala



Cantonment Medical Centre) and the Cantonment General Hospital Rwp (CGH), where they observed medical operations, patient care, and administrative functions in real-time. This direct exposure not only enriched their understanding of the healthcare system but also

allowed them to assess areas of improvement from an outsider's perspective. A key highlight of the internship was the valuable feedback and recommendations provided by the interns, which will serve as an insightful resource for the department's ongoing enhancement efforts.

Their fresh ideas and observations reflect the multi-generational synthesis that the internship program aims to cultivate—bridging the knowledge of experienced professionals with the innovative thinking of young minds. The ML&C Health Internship Program, 2025 stands as a testament

to the department's dedication to mentorship, institutional growth, and excellence. By opening its doors to aspiring professionals, ML&C is not only strengthening its own system but also shaping the future of Pakistan's governance and public service.

Chinese-invested solar project accelerates energy transition in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: CHINT Solar, a clean energy solution provider based in China, is leveraging its advanced photovoltaic technology and high-quality products to successfully contribute to the construction of multiple rooftop solar projects in Pakistan. These initiatives offer clean and reliable energy solutions for local residents and businesses, further accelerating Pakistan's energy transition and promoting sustainable development. According to the company, its four partners in Pakistan, which include clothing manufacturing plant, hotel, and hospital, have a combined annual power generation capacity of over 3,000 MWh. This capacity can reduce carbon emissions by more than 3,000 tons. Notably, the Naveena Denim project, with a capacity of 1.2 MW, generates 1,611 MWh of electricity annually, resulting in a reduction of 1,546.56 tons of carbon emissions. Qaiser Bhatti, a staff member at Capital Hotel, one of CHINT Solar's partners in Pakistan, noted that prior to the installation of the solar system, the hotel's monthly electricity bill ranged from 2.1 to 2.2 million PKR. Now, the cost has decreased to less than half of its previous amount, significantly enhancing the hotel's operational efficiency. All projects utilize CHINT's flagship ASTRO N5 series, which incorporates the company's independently developed N-type TOPCon 4.0 battery technology. This cutting-edge technology provides enhanced performance in terms of power output, temperature coefficient, low-light efficiency, and resistance to LID (Light Induced Degradation) and LETID (Light and Elevated Temperature Induced Degradation). These features ensure long-term and stable energy generation, with a lifespan of approximately 30 years. Pakistan is facing a rapidly increasing demand for energy; however, the country has long grappled with power shortages due to its limited traditional energy resources and underdeveloped power infrastructure. This issue is especially acute in remote areas, where electricity supply is either unstable or entirely unavailable, significantly affecting local livelihoods and hindering economic growth. At the same time, Pakistan is abundant in solar resources, receiving over 3,000 hours of sunshine annually, which makes it an ideal location for photovoltaic energy development. In recent years, the Pakistani government has actively promoted renewable energy projects, particularly rooftop solar installations, to alleviate power shortages and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. CHINT, leveraging its robust technological expertise and extensive global project experience, has swiftly responded to this demand. By offering high-efficiency and reliable photovoltaic solutions for various rooftop projects in Pakistan, CHINT not only delivers clean energy but also generates local job opportunities, thereby fostering the growth of the green economy.

M-Tag enforcement eases traffic flow

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways Authority (NHA) latest push for M-Tag enforcement has started yielding significant results, easing traffic congestion on motorways across the country. Following the imposition of a 25pc additional toll on vehicles without M-Tags, the adoption rate for the electronic toll system has surged from 55pc in January to 65pc in February 2025. Official data reveals a significant decline in the number of non-M-Tag vehicles, which fell from 45pc in January to 35pc in February. This shift is part of NHA's ongoing push to transition to a fully digital toll collection system, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of travel across the country, according to an NHA spokesperson. A senior NHA official stated that the M-Tag system has improved traffic flow and reduced congestion at toll plazas. "We're seeing clear progress in modernizing the toll collection process, and it's making a noticeable difference," the official said. To speed up this transition, the Motorways Police imposed an additional toll charge on vehicles without M-Tags starting February 1, 2025. The decision followed a notification issued on January 31, which stated that vehicles without an M-Tag or with low balances would have to pay an extra 25% toll charge. The minimum extra charge is Rs 50. M-Tags are prepaid stickers affixed to vehicles that enable fast, cashless transactions at toll plazas. This system allows motorists to bypass long queues, use designated fast-track lanes, and enjoy a seamless travel experience.—DNA

AIU extends admission deadline to March 25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has approved an extension in the admission deadline for Matric, FA, Associate Degree, B.Ed, BS, BBA, Postgraduate Diploma programs, and Certificate courses until March 25 with late fee charges to facilitate students and ensure their academic continuity. Earlier, the last date for admissions was February 10 which was extended to March 5. However, due to the engagements of Ramadan and other reasons many students were unable to take admission on time. In response to numerous requests from students, the Vice Chancellor has once again decided to extend the admission period to ensure that no one is deprived of educational opportunities. Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood emphasized that education is a fundamental right of every individual and AIU is committed to keeping its educational doors open to all. In line with this mission, the university continues to provide maximum facilities to students so that they can pursue their education without obstacles. Students are advised to submit their admission applications before the given deadline to fully avail this opportunity.—APP

President Trump's appreciation as major boost

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State Khel Das Kohistani Thursday thanked President Donald Trump for acknowledging Pakistan's efforts in combating terrorism, terming the appreciation a "major boost" that significantly boosts morale for Pakistan's government and armed forces. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, the minister expressed his pride and gratitude, stating that it is an honor for Pakistan to receive appreciation and tributes from other nations, recognizing the country's efforts and sacrifices. Minister emphasized that the government's priority is to establish bilateral relations with other countries based on mutual respect and benefit, with a particular focus on increasing foreign direct investments to stimulate economic growth and development in Pakistan.

China's AI boom bigger than just DeepSeek: Xu Shan

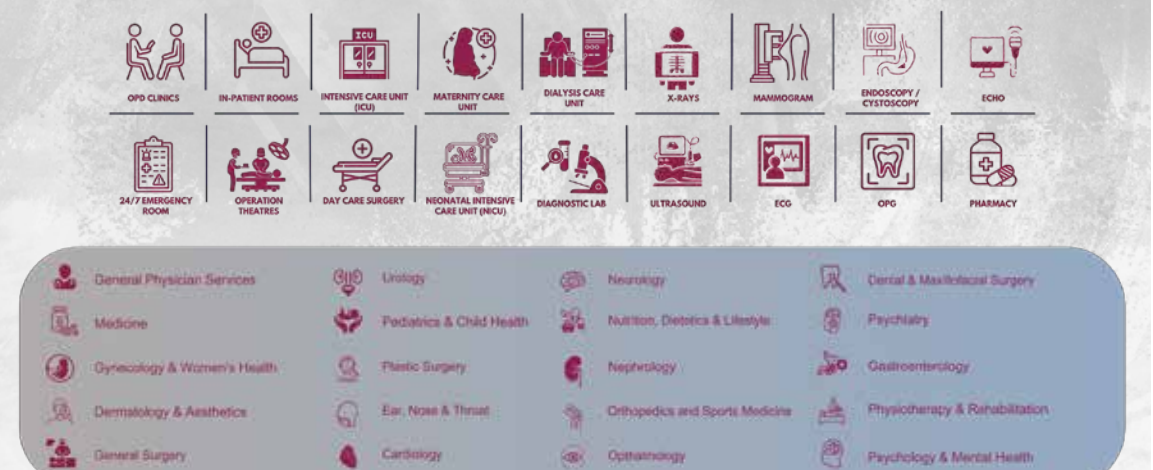
ISLAMABAD: "China's accomplishment in artificial intelligence stems from a synergistic interplay of domestic innovation ecosystems and proactive global collaboration," Xu Shan, Deputy Director of International Cooperation and Technical Service Department, CICT AI Institute, told China Economic Net. In the newly released 2025 Government Work Report, expected development planning in the AI field was released. "The country will establish a mechanism to increase funding for industries of the future and foster industries such as biomanufacturing, quantum technology, embodied artificial intelligence, and 6G technology." By now, China's artificial intelligence+ action has cultivated numerous smart terminals and smart manufacturing equipment such as intelligent networked new energy vehicles, AI mobile phones and computers, and smart robots, as well as various measures will be further deepened and implemented to strengthen

the artificial intelligence industry chain, thus promote the new quality productive forces. Data shows that by the end of September 2024, the scale of China's core artificial intelligence industry has been close to 600 billion yuan, with more than 4,500 related companies. According to official forecasts, AI industry in the country will usher in a new wave of explosive growth in the future, with the growth rate leading the world. From 2025 to 2035, the scale of China's AI industry is expected to grow to 1729.5 billion yuan, with a compound annual growth rate of 15.6%. So why is there such a boom in artificial intelligence in China? "China's AI ecosystem leverages vertical integration across foundational research, application development, and market deployment, supported by a mature industrial infrastructure," Xu emphasized. "Government-backed clusters like 'Shanghai to make itself highland for industrial innovation in AI'.—DNA



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Whats Germany's Merz needs

FRIEDRICH Merz is due to take office as chancellor at a moment of geopolitical and economic reckoning for Germany. With Washington growing more unpredictable and Germany's industrial base stagnating, Merz faces a stark reality: Germany cannot afford to decouple from China, nor can it ignore the risks of economic overexposure. Rather than choosing between confrontation and capitulation, Merz is likely to pursue a third path – one that recalibrates Sino-German ties to safeguard national security while ensuring Germany's industry remains competitive in an era of global uncertainty. Merz's political philosophy is rooted in economic pragmatism. His background, spanning corporate law, boardroom negotiations and business management, has shaped his belief that Germany's global economic position is best secured through a free-market approach. His policy agenda reflects this view: lower taxes, fewer regulations and pro-business reforms designed to make German industry more competitive on the global stage. A central pillar of this strategy is ensuring that Germany remains a leading player in global supply chains. China plays a crucial role in this regard. With bilateral trade reaching 246.3 billion (US\$258.2 billion) in 2024, China remains one of Germany's most important economic partners. Any move to isolate Beijing would disrupt production networks, weaken exports and further strain Germany's stagnating economy. It explains why, despite his campaign rhetoric, Merz's actual approach to China is likely to be far more measured. While he has publicly warned German businesses against over-reliance on China and described Beijing as part of an "axis of autocracies", these statements should be understood within the broader context of election posturing. His record suggests that his focus will be on mitigating risks without severing economic ties: an approach that is supposed to ensure German businesses can compete effectively without exposing themselves to unnecessary vulnerabilities. Rather than adhere to an "us versus them" narrative, Merz envisions a relationship with China that is built on economic pragmatism. He is unlikely to advocate for decoupling but will instead seek to establish clear, mutually beneficial rules of engagement. This calibrated approach may find a receptive partner in Beijing. When asked about the impact of the German election on bilateral relations, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated that Beijing is prepared to work with the new German government to "consolidate and grow the China-Germany comprehensive strategic partnership". This signals an openness to recalibrating ties to accommodate both economic realities and shifting geopolitical dynamics. However, Merz's government could go even further by easing restrictions on Chinese investment. While security concerns surrounding critical infrastructure and technology transfers remain valid, an overly restrictive investment climate risks undermining Germany's attractiveness as a global business hub. Striking the right balance between foreign investment and national security will thus be key.



What could force Trump to stop?

GEORGE Saravelos, global head of foreign exchange research at Deutsche Bank, does not mince words. Commenting on President Donald Trump's decisions to press ahead with tariffs on the United States' largest trading partners and suspend military aid to Ukraine, Saravelos said: "Two pillars of America's role in the world are being fundamentally challenged: the US' security backdrop for Europe and the respect of rules-based free trade." In fact, Saravelos believes the loss of the US dollar's status as a safe-haven currency "needs to be acknowledged as a possibility". This is debatable, given the unassailability of the greenback's position in global finance. Yet Saravelos puts his finger on the worrying level of complacency in markets as Trump unleashes the biggest trade war since the 1930s. To be sure, the imposition of 25 per cent tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico – carmakers were exempted from the levies for one month while Canadian energy products face a 10 per cent charge – and an extra 10 per cent on Chinese goods has unnerved markets. The benchmark S&P 500 equity index has dropped 4.9 per cent since hitting a record high on February 19. Yet this still leaves the gauge slightly above the level it stood at when Trump won the presidential election on November 5. Since then, the risks to the US and global economy, to say nothing about the transatlantic alliance, have increased dramatically. So why the absence of panic in stock markets? There are several reasons. The most important one is that Trump's "flood the zone" strategy – causing so much disruption and chaos that it is difficult to assess the consequences of any one policy – has paid off. Even when it comes to markets, which depend heavily on confidence and predictability, there are starkly divergent views about the outlook. Many investors believe inflation is the biggest risk, mainly because the hard economic data – especially on America's resilient labour market – is still quite strong, contributing to the stickiness of prices. Trump's trade, immigration and fiscal policies are expected to drive inflation higher, making it difficult for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates further. More recently, however, a sharp economic slowdown has emerged as the main concern, especially in bond markets. The 10-year US Treasury yield has fallen from 4.8 per cent in January to 4.3 per cent. Survey data points to steep falls in consumer confidence partly due to uncertainty over tariffs. Manufacturing activity almost contracted last month. The aggressive government efficiency drive led by Elon Musk, Trump's disrupter-in-chief, is fanning fears about a steep downturn. According to data from TorstenSlok of Apollo, a quarter of the jobs added in the last two years were government jobs. The prospect of mass lay-offs in the federal bureaucracy – job cuts, including contractors, could reach 1 million – increases the risk of a recession. A third scenario gaining more attention in recent weeks is stagflation, the combination of higher inflation and a sharp deceleration in economic activity. US consumers' long-term inflation expectations have risen to their highest level since 1995, survey data from the University of Michigan shows.

Revolutionizing real estate investment in Pakistan: Proptech, REIT & beyond!

Muhammad Faiz Kidwai



Though Pakistan's land and property sector is riddled with corruption, the real estate investment experience REITs offer is much different. Small and medium level investors can play on high-value properties with REITs...

REAL estate is one of Pakistan's most lucrative and appealing business having vast potential for growth, high returns & ever increasing demand. Dominated by the residential sector, the real estate market is projected to reach a market volume of US\$2.41 trillion by 2029, per Statista Market Insights. Notably, the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) is expected to increase by 3.82% from 2025 to 2029. This sector offers investors, entrepreneurs, and real estate professionals attractive opportunities. However, the industry has seen scandals, fraud, and exploitation. Unfortunately, it has also experienced speculation, market volatility, property scandals, and corrupt practices like betting perpetrated by a closed clique who views the sector as a farcical currency market. The dark history is underscored by the recent statement of the country's finance minister Mr Muhammad Aurangzeb, who referred to the real estate sector as 'the plots and files business.' This term highlights the culture of buying and selling "plot files," documents representing promissory pieces of land rather than the actual plot itself. This method allows housing society owners to potentially profit as the files are sold at inflated prices before the plot is or at all physically available to sellers. To make money quickly, investors buy and sell properties without considering the project's long-term viability and sustainability. Likewise, small investors pay for their savings gracelessly, while experienced speculators and large players make money. This has led to market volatility, price bubbles, and heavy investor losses. So, small investors usually experience significant financial losses whenever the market fluctuates, yet experienced speculators and large players profit from such events. Moreover, Pakistan has consistently maintained a dismal record regarding land and property scandals arising from corruption and inefficiency. To grasp this issue, let us examine a few notable scandals.

The Evacuee Property Scandal represents a dark chapter in Pakistan's history. Following the partition of India and Pakistan, millions of Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India, leaving behind their properties and assets. However, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has been allegedly involved in various land-grabbing cases. Land grabbing refers to the unlawful acquisition of land. Forced evictions and fraudulent documentation exacerbate these issues, further destabilizing the sector. Time and again, impoverished and vulnerable communities have been forcibly displaced from their homes and land to accommodate luxury developments and infrastructure projects. Similarly, corrupt officials & all beneficiary participants have fabricated false documentation, including property deeds and ownership records, to facilitate land grabbing. Thus, Pakistan has been plagued by land grabbing and corruption for decades, hindering its economic development and perpetuating social injustice. Certain factors and players facilitate corruption and malpractice, including collusion and nepotism. For example, influential people have engaged in nepotism to obtain land and property below market prices by receiving favorable treatment from the authorities. Such malpractices are possible because of the system's lack of trust, the power of economically irresponsible commercial media, and a weak judicial system. Likewise, collusion between influential individuals, government officials, and weak legal frameworks has also contributed to these malpractices.

The consequences of land grabbing and corruption are serious. These include the displacement of communities, the loss of public revenue, and the diminishing of trust. Land grabbing impacts communities in several ways. A significant number of the people are forcefully evicted from their ancestral lands, leaving them with their livelihood and cultural identity destroyed. Likewise, it has environmental consequences since fertile agricultural or forest land is being converted to commercial development. Although the list of corrupt practices in real estate is long but one more important area to mention is where NOCs are issued for a specific project for a limited number of inventories while what's sold is multiple times more. There are many examples where a NOC is obtained on a relatively small piece of land while the selling is done in unbelievable proportions. Despite being extensively publicized and marketed locally and internationally, projects with malicious intentions continue unchecked. The pervasive presence of vested interests at all levels discourages intervention. Regrettably, Overseas Pakistanis are disproportionately affected by these malicious projects. Compounding the issue, Pakistani embassies in these locations often remain silent, leaving victims without recourse. Government officials, media & judiciary have largely ignored these irregularities, and investors have little choice. It has also enabled scammers to phish with confidence. Lack of centralized and foolproof land registers and digital databases are critical factors plaguing the system further. Without a systematized digital database, it has also been challenging for investors to verify property ownership, contributing to rampant land grabbing and fraud. The undue power and influence of 'Patwaris' (Junior Revenue Officers) in holding land records facilitates corruption. Despite the digitization of land records in some parts of the country, corrupt elements have outsmarted the system in many ways.

Pakistan's economy has also been facing the issue of real-estate tax evasion for a long time. It has been estimated that real-estate tax evasion costs the economy Rs. 500 Billion or more, which shows the gravity of the issue. The economy is constrained from the widespread use of black money

in real-estate. Notably, legitimate money can turn into black money due to external pressures. To illustrate, when people are compelled to underreport their income or assets, often to evade taxes or due to systemic pressures, their legal earnings become black money because they are not properly declared. The Solution: A multi-dimensional approach is required to transform Pakistan's real estate into a sustainable and effective business sector. Regulatory reforms, technological solutions, and modern practices must be introduced hand in hand. Proptech is the application of technology to improve the real estate industry's efficiencies, transparency, and customer experience. Real-time data and insights from Proptech platforms allow buyers, sellers, and investors to make such decisions with the information available. The term 'Proptech' involves a range of technology initiatives, including digitization of real estate, Project Information Management, etc. The strategic use of Proptech in a situation riddled with corrupt practices can enhance the credibility of a property, making it more attractive to potential buyers, investors, and users. Interestingly, it facilitates potential customers by offering an interactive experience whereby they can access their properties remotely. They can view the property's layout, features and conditions, reducing the risks of misrepresentation and fraud.

The digitization of documents has the potential to revolutionize Pakistan's real estate sector by significantly reducing the risk of fraud. A successful example of this transformation is the Sangar Housing Scheme in Gwadar, Balochistan. Digitized in 1996, this project on 2700 acres of land was Pakistan's first-ever attempt at digitization, showcasing the power of what today is known as "Proptech". It also serves as a shining example of the age-old adage: 'where there's a will, there's a way'. Sangar, has for over the past three decades been withstanding corrupt environment, political pressures, and social influences; yet consistently maintained trust & credibility because of use of technology. The achievement demonstrates almost 3 decades of continuity in leadership, determination & resolve by the numerous Deputy Commissioners (DCs)/Project Directors; who ensured the system remains on track. Digitization enables the creation of a consolidated database, streamlining real estate transactions and increasing investor confidence. To fully harness the potential of digitization, Pakistan needs to prioritize the digitization of land records. This will require a concerted effort from the government, regulatory authorities, and all stakeholders in the real estate sector. By working together we can create a more transparent, efficient, and secure real estate sector, driving economic growth, trust and development. Automation and digitalization can streamline processes and decrease paperwork while improving the customer experience. The platform provides personalized services, virtual tours, and online transactions, making it easier for customers to interact with the real estate market. In order to further ease out real estate market there has been many alternate options to conventional development and one of them is real estate investment trust (REIT). It reached out investors to make more secure investments by buying and selling shares. They are mutual funds that invest in properties and real estate and generate income from such investments for their unit holders. Moreover, they are regulated so that all investors can be assured of complete transparency, accountability, and protection. Investing in these funds enables investors to diversify their portfolios, reducing the risk and enhancing the potential returns. Thus, REITs can invest in all sorts of commercially viable and sustainable projects where tangible

benefits can come for the investors. Though Pakistan's land and property sector is riddled with corruption, the real estate investment experience REITs offer is much different. Small and medium level investors can play on high-value properties with REITs at minimal risk. They are effective by pooling the funds of multiple investors into a diversified portfolio of properties to mitigate risk and enhance potential returns. Furthermore, they generate regular income streams by distributing a large portion of their income to shareholders. Additionally, REITs are regulated strictly to maintain transparency and accountability. As professionals manage them, there is less risk of poor management. So, all levels of investors can quickly buy and sell shares of REITs. Use of technology in REIT can also support:

- REITs' property management capability, improving efficiency and reducing cost by implementing a digitalized property management system.

- Providing data insights for REITs will facilitate data-driven decision-making and optimize the portfolio's investment performance.

- transparency and improved investor's experience in REITs through user-friendly investment and portfolio management platforms.

REITs and Proptech can also resolve the issue of tax evasion and black money to a certain extent. As regulated investment vehicles, investors channel their funds through REITs through documented financial transactions, reducing the potential of black money in real estate. Furthermore, REITs require investments through legal banking channels, making it harder to use undeclared income. As regulated entities, REITs are subject to favorable tax regulations that also ensure proper reporting, so the possibility of concealing earning is reduced significantly.

REITs can include almost all sectors beyond traditional residential and commercial properties. These include hospitality, tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare, education, renewable energy, and specialized REITs. Some interesting examples of REITs from across the globe include Farmland Partners REIT, Apple Hospitality REIT, Tower REIT, GLP REIT, and Renewable Energy REIT. Apple Hospitality REIT is a company that invests in real estate and is traded on the stock market. It owns a large and diverse collection of upscale hotels across the United States. The company's portfolio includes 220 hotels with about 29,700 rooms in 85 different cities across 37 states and Washington, D.C. Similarly, Farmland Partners REIT (USA) is a publicly traded company that owns and manages farmland across the United States. It earns income by leasing farmland and selling crops. As an internally managed real estate investment trust (REIT), it focuses on acquiring and operating high-quality farmland across North America. Its stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange. These examples demonstrate that REITs have a strong potential to address the current malpractices faced by various sectors of Pakistan.

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is making remarkable efforts to promote REITs in Pakistan by providing practical solutions to RMCs and developers to start REIT projects. The government has also given REIT tax concessions to attract investors. Therefore, SECP and the government are taking positive measures to make Pakistan's real estate sector more efficient, transparent, and investor-friendly to grow, innovate, and propel economic development. These measures will enhance its credibility and attract local and international investors, which will, in the long run, lead to growth and development.

– The writer is the Architect, REIT Specialist & Social Impact Entrepreneur.

Why Europe is not taken seriously on the world stage

Khaled Abou Zahr

The UK has an estimated 225 warheads, yet it relies solely on a sea-based nuclear deterrent. It has four Vanguard-class submarines that can each carry up to 12 nuclear warheads. Just like France, the UK consistently has at least one submarine at sea. It is also looking to transition to a new class of submarines in the 2030s. The Lancaster House Treaties, signed in 2010...

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky each visited the White House for discussions with US President Donald Trump last week. European security and the war in Ukraine were at the top of the agenda. While Starmer and Macron's visits were marked with strained smiles, Zelensky's visit was heated. As a Middle Easterner, I cannot help but link them all together. Whether the cards were badly played or not, the main outcome of these visits has been an increased conversation surrounding putting forward a French-UK nuclear umbrella to protect Europe and to replace the US. This is a European reaction to what they consider to be America's abandonment of the old continent. Trump has set out a clear path to US protection: it can no longer be granted, it will have to be deserved. In short, there will be no free ride. It is blunt and tough, but clear and fair.

It has been entertaining to see Europe's reaction to this new US rule, especially as it has been very similar to its reaction to the UK's Brexit. London and Paris bickered through that bad breakup but are now once again cozying up as if it never happened. And this probably should be the lesson to learn. The overreaction of Europe to Brexit should not be repeated in the situation between Europe and the US. To misquote a play, Europe should not once again act as a "woman scorned." It is not a bad thing for Europe to seek to mutualize and strengthen its defense and security. Funnily enough, this is exactly what Trump has been requesting since his first presidency, especially when it comes to military budgets. Beyond the rhetoric, there is a core difference in what losing to Russia would

mean for the US and Europe. Washington sees it the same way as its exit from Afghanistan or any other theater, while Europe sees it as the beginning of its invasion and war. Who is right? And can Europe be protected by the UK and France's nuclear umbrella instead of America's?

France's nuclear arsenal is estimated at about 290 warheads, with approximately 280 operational. Since the time of Charles de Gaulle, it has maintained a "strict sufficiency" policy in terms of its sovereign deterrence. If we go into a little more detail, its capabilities are divided between four Triomphant-class submarines, each capable of carrying 16 ballistic missiles. At least one of these submarines is always on patrol to provide a continuous maritime deterrence. However, the bulk is the 40 nuclear-capable Rafale jets. France is actively modernizing its forces, upgrading submarines while researching a new air-launched missile. The UK has an estimated 225 warheads, yet it relies solely on a sea-based nuclear deterrent. It has four Vanguard-class submarines that can each carry up to 12 nuclear warheads. Just like France, the UK consistently has at least one submarine at sea. It is also looking to transition to a new class of submarines in the 2030s. The Lancaster House Treaties, signed in 2010, deepened the military collaboration between the UK and France. They established close defense and security cooperation between the two countries. Nuclear collaboration is a part of these treaties and includes cooperation on nuclear warhead testing and aircraft carriers. This is undoubtedly the point from which any collaboration could be extended. And while European defense comes to mind, this framework allows Paris and London to maintain their national sovereignty and has not

mutualized it. This joint nuclear deterrence is modest but still credible, even when compared to Russia, which has an arsenal of some 5,580 warheads. It is also close to China's stockpile of about 500, although Beijing's is growing. Even under the UK and France's umbrella, Europe has a much less clear-cut deterrent without the support of America's 5,044 warheads. Yet, with nuclear power, it is more about the will to act than the numbers that create the deterrence. So, when and how would this capability be used? How clear can they make it to any aggressor that any attack on European soil would lead to strong military action? And how credible would it be to the aggressor? Any European enemy will look to play on its disunity. It will look to divide. Hence, it will convey messages that powerful countries will be spared from any attack. It will look to minimize the threat of its aggression. It will look to play one country off against the other. Europe's first test will be to bypass bureaucracy. Indeed, integrating France's nuclear power into a broader European framework would require immense policy shifts and a new legal framework. Moreover, the UK's nuclear weapons are integrated within NATO. This all complicates any unilateral European initiative and is a true test of Europe's resolve. In short, if the will is there, there is a way. And so, here lies the European dilemma. It has united against the US, or more precisely against Trump. In reality, if Europe believes, as all its leaders now state, that it needs to build up its own defense, then it should have done so before the war in Ukraine reached this stage. This is why Europe is not taken seriously. It is indeed acting like a woman scorned, but unfortunately its wrath is far from "hell hath no fury."

Briefs

COAS Asim slams Afghanistan...

FROM PAGE 01
Emphasising the pivotal role of the local community, the army chief reiterated that national unity is imperative in the fight against terrorism and assured that the armed forces would spare no effort in ensuring the safety and security of the people of Pakistan. While addressing the troops, Gen Munir lauded their heroic actions, recognising their swift and decisive response in neutralising the attackers and thwarting their nefarious designs. He further stated that the fight against TTP and their facilitators, acting on the behest of hostile elements, would continue until its logical conclusion.

Bajwa must be questioned..

FROM PAGE 01
The scourge of terrorism continues to plague Pakistan making it the world's second-most terrorism-affected country in 2024, as per a Global Terrorism Index 2025 report. Pakistan — placed at the second spot from its previously fourth position — witnessed an alarming 45% increase in terrorism-related deaths with the total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 — one of the steepest surges globally. Commenting on Khan's reported letter to former US President Donald Trump, Asif remarked that Pakistan's internal letter-writing politics has now gone international. He predicted that this letter, like previous ones, would meet the same fate.

Prime Minister approves...

FROM PAGE 01
Efforts are being made to provide Pakistani youth with international-standard training, aiming to promote the export of skilled labour. Earlier, a review meeting on the National Youth Employment Plan, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, outlined the plan to provide training and employment opportunities for the youth in the next four years. The meeting revealed that 2.4 million to 6 million young people would receive professional training annually, helping them secure jobs. The programme will focus on the skills required by the market and the international workforce demand.

IMF may allow cut in FBR...

FROM PAGE 01
budget surplus in this fiscal year, according to the government sources dealing with the IMF team. The IMF also asked the energy ministry to share its projections of the circular debt for the next fiscal year 2025-26. The Power Division assured the IMF that in this fiscal year circular debt will remain below the agreed threshold of Rs2.429 trillion. The IMF and Pakistani authorities met on Wednesday for the third consecutive day to discuss the performance of the energy sector, progress on publications of various social and economic surveys by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The discussions were also held on the budget numbers and external financing requirements.

PTI not ashamed..

FROM PAGE 01
However, the situation was precarious due to the country's foreign policy, especially its Afghanistan policy, he claimed. Both Gandapur and Gohar have previously engaged in back-channel discussions and are now reportedly making renewed efforts to establish communication with the powers that be. The News reported quoting sources. However, within the PTI, there is growing recognition that this dual approach of seeking dialogue while attacking the establishment cannot work.



ISLAMABAD: Colleagues of Muslim High school No 2 Session 1983-84 arranged a get-together. They remained together for some time and refreshed memories of school days. — DNA

Liverpool's Elliott nabs last-gasp winner against PSG

Elliott netted in the 87th minute after Nunez's layoff

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Liverpool substitute Harvey Elliott scored a last-gasp winner 47 seconds after coming on to earn a fortunate 1-0 win against Paris St Germain who outplayed their visitors during Wednesday's Champions League last-16 first leg match. Elliott slotted home in the 87th minute after the run of play after a layoff from fellow substitute Darwin Nunez for a scarcely-deserved victory in Paris after goalkeeper Alisson had kept Liverpool in the game with a string of magnificent saves. Liverpool's goal was their first shot on target and second attempt compared to PSG's 28. "To go away with a win from here was probably a bit more than we deserved," acknowledged Slot. Luis Enrique's PSG, who had won 18 and drawn two of their last 20 games, were left to rue missed chances as they contemplate a tough return leg at Anfield next Tuesday. "We're going to show the team we are, we're going to show our character. We're going to win there," said their midfielder Vitiinha. "With the game we played, the win was more than de-



served. We had plenty of chances ... we just couldn't score." The aggregate winner will face either Aston Villa or Club Brugge in the Champions League last eight. PSG got off to a strong start with Liverpool's attempt at a high press not lasting long. The hosts had the first clear chance in the 16th minute when Joao Neves skied his attempt over

the bar from Dembele's cutback after the France forward had outpaced two defenders. Alarm bells were ringing for Liverpool and they again escaped punishment in the 20th when Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's superb curl effort was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. Bradley Barcola went down after a challenge from Ibrahim Konate,

prompting another video check for a potential red card, but the visitors stayed with 11 men. With Liverpool in survival mode, Alisson parried Neves' 25-metre strike before denying Dembele. The ball went into the path of Barcola, whose first strike was blocked before his second flew over. The Brazilian keeper's firm hand was there again to stop

Kvaratskhelia and he made saves left, right and centre early in a one-sided second half. "Without him, I don't know where we'd be," said goalscorer Elliott. Slot sent Curtis Jones and Nunez on for Luis Diaz and Diogo Jota hoping to shift the momentum but PSG stayed a notch above. Alisson, again, stretched to tip away Desire Doue's missile 10 minutes from time and he also played a key role in the buildup to the goal. With the clock ticking down, Nunez showed his strength to win Alisson's long ball and played perfectly into the path of Elliott, who calmly slid the ball past Gianluigi Donnarumma. "You could see they (PSG) had become a bit tired at the end," added Elliott. "It was down to me to put the opportunity away and fortunately it went in." Alisson, who was named man of the match, said it was the performance of his life. "We had to be ready to suffer ... It was a tough night for us with a happy end," he said. "We worked hard. We gave away so many chances ... And then at the end Harvey coming in and scoring the goal. It's unbelievable. A great story. A great night for us."

Amir names Pak potential candidate for T20I captaincy

Mohammad Amir acknowledged Agha Salman's contributions to the ODI and Test teams

LAHORE: Former Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir has voiced his dissatisfaction with the appointment of Salman Ali Agha as the new T20I captain, suggesting Mohammad Harris as a better candidate for the role. During a recent interview, Amir acknowledged Agha's contributions to the ODI and Test teams but argued that Harris, with his leadership experience, would have been a more suitable choice. He highlighted Harris' captaincy stints with Pakistan Shaheens and in the Champions Cup, asserting that he has been groomed for the role. "Harris is captaining everywhere. He led the Pakistan Shaheens, and he also captained in the Champions Cup," Amir said. "Agha Salman is a very good cricketer, but if you wanted to bring in a new captain for ODIs and Tests, you should have chosen Mohammad Harris because he has been groomed everywhere as a captain," he added. Harris' aggressive playing style aligns with modern T20 cricket, and at 23, he is eight years younger than Salman Ali Agha, making him a long-term option for leadership. It is pertinent to mention that Harris has received a comeback call-up for the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand, set to begin this month. The squad for the white-ball tour was announced a few days ago. The white-ball series will consist of five T20 Internationals (T20Is), followed by three One Day Internationals (ODIs), running from March 16 to April 5.

Former England legend slams ICC

LONDON: Former England cricketer and renowned commentator David Lloyd has voiced his frustration over the scheduling mishaps in a recent ICC tournament. He described the entire arrangement as "farfetched" and "embarrassing." The controversy intensified when South Africa's squad found itself caught in a chaotic travel ordeal between Dubai and Lahore. With the semifinal venues confirmed less than 48 hours before the first match, the Proteas were forced to fly from Dubai to Lahore and back again, adding unnecessary strain on the team. While none of the players explicitly blamed the exhausting commute for their semifinal loss, the situation was far from ideal. Lloyd, known for his candid views on ICC tournament management, did not hold back in his criticism. — Agencies

'They should choose their words wisely,' Babar's father

'If someone responds, they may not be able to tolerate it,' Azam Siddique said

DNA

LAHORE: Azam Siddique, the father of Pakistan's star batter Babar Azam, has stepped forward in support of his son amid growing scrutiny over his recent performances. The former captain is facing one of the toughest periods of his career, as his recent form comes under heavy scrutiny from fans and pundits alike. Following Pakistan's disappointing Champions Trophy campaign, the opening batter was dropped from the squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand — a decision strongly opposed by his father, Azam Siddique. In response to the mounting criticism, Siddique took to social media to defend his son, expressing unwavering faith in Babar's ability to stage a comeback. Posting on Instagram, he wrote: "The boss is always right. Despite being part of the ICC's T20 Team of the Year, he was dropped. It's fine; he will perform in the National T20 and PSL. Insha Allah, he will make a comeback." While Babar was named in the ICC's T20I Team of the Year, critics argue that his playing style no longer aligns with the demands of modern-day T20 cricket. Sid-



dique also issued a strong message to Babar's detractors, urging them to be mindful of their words. "They are very big former players, but they should choose their words wisely. If someone responds, they may not be able to tolerate it. You are the past, and that door will never open," he asserted. Among those who have openly criticized Babar Azam are former Pakistan cricketing legends Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Hafeez. Akhtar went as far as labeling Babar a "fraud," while Hafeez questioned his ability to perform in challenging conditions across SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand, and Australia) countries.

Raphinha earns 10-man Barcelona gutsy 1-0 win

Barcelona's teenage defender Cubarsi was given a straight red card for a last-man foul

WEB DESK

BARCELONA: Raphinha struck a second-half winner to give Barcelona a lion-hearted 1-0 victory at Benfica on Wednesday as they overcame a red card for Pau Cubarsi early in the game to steal an advantage in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie. Barcelona's teenage defender Cubarsi was given a straight red card for a last-man foul on Vangelis Pavlidis in the 22nd minute, but the visitors hung on with goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny putting in a brilliant performance. The Polish veteran pulled off a string of brilliant saves to keep Barca in the game and his effort was rewarded in the 61st minute when Raphinha pounced on a poor defensive pass across the Benfica box. He then

capitalised on the mistake, firing a low strike that deflected off a defender before going in just inside the left post. The star of the show, however, was Szczesny, who came out of retirement to play for Barca after Germany international Marc-Andre terStegen sustained a torn knee ligament in September. "Szczesny saved us many times today, he is outstanding," Barcelona

midfielder Pedri told Spanish TV station Movistar Plus. "You have to give a lot of credit for the team's effort after going a man down so early in the game. On other days it was harder for us but today we hung on and defended really well." Szczesny's brilliant night

he fired a low strike that the 34-year-old keeper kept out with a one-handed save. The Polish keeper ended up making eight saves, five of those in the second half when Benfica piled on the pressure with over 60% of possession and 15 goal attempts. Barca had only a couple, with Raphinha netting with their only shot on target in the second half. Szczesny's magic included a stunning reflex save to deny Fredrik Aursnes from close range early on after the break and an excellent stop to palm away Renato Sanches's bullet strike from the edge of the box four minutes into added time. "It's a bad result, we had good chances today, especially when they got the red card... It's a very disappointing result," Aursnes told Benfica TV. "We created a lot of chances, but unfortunately we didn't manage to score and paid a heavy price for that..."

PTI stages walkout from Senate

FROM PAGE 01
He assured that they would speak to the provincial government for the Senator's case. The deputy chairman directed the law minister to present a detailed report on the matter by the end of the day, stressing the need for smooth House proceedings. He urged both opposition and government members to coordinate and share their suggestions. A heated exchange also took place between Senator Manzoor Kakar and the Deputy Chairman.

Pakistan urges US to reclaim...

FROM PAGE 01
Foreign Office spokesperson Shafiq Ali Khan said at his weekly press briefing here. He said that the Indian EAM's remarks misrepresented the ground realities and contravened the international law as Jammu and Kashmir was an internationally-recognized disputed territory. As per the UN Security Council resolutions, the final status of the dispute was to be determined through a free and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices.

Four Afghan terrorists arrested...

FROM PAGE 01
a successful operation, sources said on Thursday. The militants, the security sources mentioned, confessed to planning major terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The operation took place on March 5 in Toba Kakari, where security forces captured the four militants and also recovered arms and ammunition. Recovered weapons included Kalashnikovs, hand grenades, and other firearms, according to security officials.

Pakistanis may soon face new...

FROM PAGE 01
US as refugees or on Special Immigrant Visas because they are at risk of Taliban retribution for working for the US during a 20-year war in their home country. Trump issued an executive order on January 20 requiring intensified security vetting of any foreigners seeking admission to the US to detect national security threats. That order directed several cabinet members to submit by March 12 a list of countries from which travel should be partly or fully suspended because their "vetting and screening information is so deficient".

DPM leaves for KSA to attend OIC..

FROM PAGE 01
and the illegal and immoral proposals of displacement of Palestinians from their ancestral homeland. At the Conference, the Deputy Prime Minister will reaffirm Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their just cause. He will advocate for the full withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem and denounce the unacceptable proposal for further displacing Palestinians.

Aleem: PIA's...

FROM PAGE 01
The government's failed first attempt to privatise PIA cost the national exchequer \$4.3 million, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Privatisation was informed on February 26. The lack of interest shown by the buyers during the first round of privatisation was due to multiple reasons, including the 18pc general sales tax on the purchase of new aircraft and the national carrier's liabilities, the committee was informed. In the press release issued by the privatisation ministry, the minister said that a new roadmap was being provided to make PIA's privatisation more attractive, adding, "It is expected that all stages of this privatisation process will be completed within the next three months."

Briefs

Jordanian border forces clash with smugglers

DUBAI: Jordanian border forces clashed on Thursday with armed smuggling groups attempting to cross the northern border from Syria into Jordan, the Jordan Armed forces said in a statement. The clashes resulted in the death of four smugglers, while the remaining individuals retreated into Syrian territory. According to the statement, the smugglers had attempted to exploit poor weather conditions and dense fog to cross the border, but Jordanian forces "applied engagement rules to prevent their infiltration." Large quantities of narcotics and weapons were seized and transferred to the relevant authorities, the armed forces said. The amount of the seized drugs was not disclosed. In January, Jordan and Syria agreed to form a joint security committee to secure their border, combat arms and drug smuggling and work to prevent the resurgence of Daesh militants. Western anti-narcotics officials say the addictive, amphetamine-type stimulant known as captagon has for years been mass-produced in Syria and that Jordan is a transit route to the oil-producing Gulf states. Jordan's army has conducted several pre-emptive airstrikes in Syria since 2023 that Jordanian officials say targeted militias accused of links to the drug trade, as well as the militias' facilities.—APP

Russia says Macron address detached from reality

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday criticized French President Emmanuel Macron for an address this week in which he mulled extending France's nuclear umbrella to European partners. In a speech to the French nation on Wednesday, Macron called Russia a "threat to France and Europe" and said the French were "legitimately worried" about the United States shifting its position on the Ukraine conflict under US President Donald Trump. "Every day, he makes some absolutely... contradictory statements" which are "detached from reality," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said of Macron. Zakharova compared him to Ole Lukoj, a mythical creature in a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale who holds umbrellas over sleeping children. "I listened to all this, looked at him and realized who he reminds me of — the nuclear Ole Lukoj," she said. Macron said he would launch a debate on extending France's nuclear deterrent to other European nations, following a phone conversation with Friedrich Merz, likely to be Germany's next chancellor, on extending that umbrella of protection.—APP

Rupee gains 05 paise against dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 05 paise against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs279.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.86. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.1 and Rs281.6, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs3.73 to close at Rs302.07 against the last day's closing of Rs298.34, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.88, whereas an increase of Rs2.34 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs361.03 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs358.69.



ISLAMABAD: Laborers filling the dig on newly constructed Recep Tayyip Erdogan Interchange, which occur only after first rain of its inauguration.

Pak pushes for defeating terrorism by settling disputes

"We must address the root causes of terrorism that include poverty, injustice and prolonged unresolved conflicts, foreign occupation and denial of the right to self determination and oppression," Jamal, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to UN, said

UNITED NATIONS: Highlighting its leading role in the global fight against terrorism, Pakistan underscored the need for addressing the root causes of this menace at a UN meeting held Wednesday to review the progress in counter-terrorism efforts. "Pakistan has remained at the forefront of global counter terrorism efforts and been a principal target of terrorist attacks from terrorist groups such as the TTP, Daesh and Majeed Brigade," Pakistani delegate Mohammad Jawad Ajmal told the annual ambassadorial-level briefing organized by UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). "We must

address the root causes of terrorism that include poverty, injustice and prolonged unresolved conflicts, foreign occupation and denial of the right to self determination and oppression," Jamal, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to UN, said. Briefing member states, Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), highlighted the devastating impact of terrorism worldwide, saying the potential for a Da'esh core resurgence and the capabilities demonstrated by ISIL-Khorasan are matters of considerable concern. "The continued threat

posed by al-Qaeda and its affiliates in the Sahel, Somalia and the Arabian Peninsula requires sustained attention," Voronkov said. "The misuse of emerging technologies and increasing rates of youth radicalization further compound the global threat, demanding continuous strategic re-evaluation and adaptable responses." In his remarks, Jamal, the Pakistani delegate, said that UNOCT operations address the challenges from terrorist groups at each stage, be it indoctrination, recruitment, threat mitigation, physical actions that include kinetic operations, cross border actions, state cooperation

to eliminate safe havens, end terror financing and recruitment. "It is also important to prevent violations of human rights and international law especially in situations of foreign occupation and the denial of the right to self-determination," he said. There was also a need to prevent hate speech and disinformation, including xenophobia such as Islamophobia that contributes to extremism, the Pakistani delegate said. Attention must also be given to new and emerging forms of terrorism, including violent nationalist, extreme right wing, far right, xenophobic, Islamophobic, anti-Muslim groups and ideologies

across the globe. "Necessary changes are needed in the UN's Counter-terrorism architecture and sanctions regimes to ensure they are adequately equipped to respond to the current challenges through a fair, just and comprehensive mechanism. Pakistan also supports the Office of the Ombudsman, and for providing them with adequate resources," he said. The Pakistani delegate also called for regulating new technologies including Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), crypto currencies and dark web to prevent online terrorist recruitment, terror financing, incitement to violence, radicalization and disinformation.—Agencies

Syria leftover explosives kill and injure over 180 children

BEIRUT: Landmines and unexploded ordnance in Syria have killed or injured at least 188 children since president Bashar Assad's overthrow in December, the Save the Children charity said Thursday. Of that figure, more than 60 children were killed, the UK-based group said, warning the toll could rise as more families return to the war-ravaged country. Since Assad was toppled on December 8, "landmines and explosive remnants of war have caused at least 628 casualties, more than two-thirds of the total number of casualties for all of 2023," Save the Children said. The United Nations last week said about 1.2 million people had returned home to Syria in the past three months, including over 885,000 who were internally displaced. "Much of Syria is pockmarked by mines and explosive remnants of war after 13 years of conflict," said Bujar Hoxha, the charity's Syria director. "At least 188 children have been killed or injured in about three months — that's an average of two children a day," he added. The group called on the transitional authorities and international donors to speed up the process of clearing mines and unexploded ordnance in Syria. A report by non-governmental organization Humanity and Inclusion last month had warned of the dangers posed by unexploded munitions left over from the devastating civil war that erupted in 2011.—APP

UN Security Council warns against Sudan rival govt

BRUSSELS: The UN Security Council has voiced "grave concern" over a charter signed by Sudan's paramilitary forces, warning it could deepen the country's war and worsen the humanitarian crisis. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, at war with Sudan's army since April 2023, signed the charter last month with its allies to establish a "government of peace and unity" in RSF-held areas. "The members of the Security Council expressed grave concern over the signing of a charter to establish a parallel governing authority in Sudan," council members said in a statement late on Wednesday. They warned such a move would "risk exacerbating the ongoing conflict in Sudan, fragmenting the country, and worsening an already dire humanitarian situation." They also urged warring factions to immediately cease hostilities and engage in "political dialogue and diplomatic efforts toward a durable ceasefire." For nearly two years, the army and RSF have been locked in fighting that has killed tens of thousands of people, uprooted more than 12 million and created what the International Rescue Committee calls the "biggest humanitarian crisis ever recorded.—APP

PKK must disarm 'immediately': Turkiye defense ministry source

ISTANBUL: Outlawed Kurdish group PKK and all groups allied with it must disarm "immediately," a Turkish defense ministry source said on Thursday, apparently referring to Kurdish forces in Syria. "The PKK and all groups affiliated with it must end all terrorist activities, dissolve and immediately and unconditionally lay down their weapons," the source said. Last week, PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan urged his militant group to dissolve and his fighters to lay down their arms in a historic call. The 75-year-old founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party has been jailed since 1999. The PKK, which has engaged in a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state in which tens of thousands of people have died, declared a ceasefire on Saturday and said it would comply with Ocalan's call.—DNA

ICGEB announces Research Grants 2025

ISLAMABAD: The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) has invited applications for its Research Grants 2025 under the Collaborative Research Programme (CRP), aimed at supporting cutting-edge scientific projects in its member states, including Pakistan. The initiative seeks to promote collaborative research in basic life sciences, human healthcare, industrial and agricultural biotechnology, and bio-energy, fostering international scientific partnerships and capacity building. According to ICGEB, the programme offers grants ranging between 25,000 to 50,000 per year for up to three years, covering expenses for laboratory equipment, consumables, training, and travel. The grant aims to strengthen scientific cooperation, particularly in developing countries, while addressing global challenges like climate change, public health, and sustainable development. A special category, Early Career Return Grants, will fund young scientists who have spent at least two years abroad and recently returned to their home country to establish an independent research laboratory. This initiative aims to encourage the brain gain phenomenon by supporting young researchers. The ICGEB Research Grants offer a unique opportunity for Pakistani researchers to collaborate on global scientific challenges, particularly in areas of biotechnology, healthcare, and renewable energy. Young researchers returning from abroad can play a crucial role in strengthening the country's research landscape. ICGEB encourages women scientists to apply, while proposals focusing on socio-economic impact and sustainable development will be given priority.—APP

Gold prices decrease by Rs3,000 per tola

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs3,000 and was sold at Rs304,000 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 307,000 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs2,571 to Rs260,630 from Rs263,203 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down by Rs2,359 to Rs238,919 from Rs241,278. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,369 and Rs2,888 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$28 to \$2,893 from \$2,921 whereas the prices of silver in international market remained constant at \$32.32, the Association reported.

Digital inclusion must give women agency, not just access

ISLAMABAD: In today's digital world, technological access is a key driver of economic and social progress. Yet, millions of women, particularly in developing economies, remain excluded. Speaking at MWC 2025 in Barcelona during a session titled "When Women are Connected", Amir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz, challenged the audience to rethink digital equity. He stressed that recognizing the gender digital divide is just the beginning, but real change requires intent, commitment, and the ability to execute. He was joined by a panel featuring Fawzia Ali-Kimanthi, Chief Consumer Business Officer at Safaricom; Jamie Zimmerman, Deputy Director of Digital Connectivity at the Gates Foundation; and Claire Sibthorpe, Head of Digital Inclusion at GSMA, who moderated the discussion. Amir emphasized that digital inclusion must go beyond access and enable women with agency and advancement in the digital economy. He noted that in many cultures, men act as gatekeepers, and it is crucial to empower women through digital safety and financial independence rather than reinforcing existing barriers. While mobile technology can be a catalyst for women's financial and social empowerment, true transformation requires affordable digital tools, financial security, and digital literacy. Amir urged policymakers and tech leaders to build security-first platforms tailored for women, ensuring that digital access translates into meaningful participation. Globally, 327 million fewer women than men have access to smartphones and mobile internet, according to the OECD. In Pakistan, barriers such as high device costs, limited financial access, safety concerns, and patriarchal restrictions continue to hinder women's digital participation, as reported by the PTA and Global Gender Gap Report 2024. To address these challenges, Amir proposed targeted interventions, including subsidized smartphones and connectivity plans, financial literacy programs, and economic opportunities for women in digital spaces. He stressed that financial inclusion is not just about transactions but about transformation, ensuring that digital tools help women gain control rather than lose it. Jazz is actively working to increase women's digital participation through initiatives such as JazzCash's financial inclusion programs, digital literacy efforts for girls, and support for women-led startups. Amir reiterated that enabling women to access health, financial, and other life-enhancing services through mobile broadband is central to Jazz's mission. He concluded with a call to action for industry leaders to move beyond access and focus on ownership. When women have digital and financial control, they reshape the economy on their terms.—DNA

Hundreds of US diplomats join letter to Rubio to protest dismantling of USAID

The US Supreme Court declined on Wednesday to let the administration withhold payments to foreign aid organizations for work they already performed for the government, upholding a district judge's order that had called on the administration to promptly release payments to contractors.

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of diplomats at the State Department and US Agency for International Development have written to Secretary of State Marco Rubio protesting the dismantling of USAID, saying its dismantling undermines US leadership and security and leaves power vacuums for China and Russia to fill. In a cable expected to be filed with the department's internal "dissent channel," which allows diplomats to raise concerns about policy anonymously, the diplomats said the Trump administration's January 20 freeze on almost all foreign aid also endangers American diplomats and forces overseas while putting at risk the lives of millions abroad that depend on US assistance. More than 700 people have

signed onto the letter, a US official speaking on the condition of anonymity said. "The decision to freeze and terminate foreign aid contracts and assistance awards without any meaningful review jeopardizes our partnerships with key allies, erodes trust, and creates openings for adversaries to expand their influence," said the cable, a copy of which was seen by Reuters. The Republican president, pursuing what he has called an "America First" agenda, ordered a 90-day pause on all foreign aid on his January 20 return to office. The order halted USAID operations around the world, jeopardizing delivery of life-saving food and medical aid, and throwing global humanitarian relief efforts into chaos. "The freeze on life-saving aid has already caused irreparable harm and suffering

to millions of people around the world," the letter said, adding that despite statements on waivers being issued for life-saving programs, the funding remained shut. The president tasked billionaire and adviser Elon Musk with dismantling USAID as part of an unprecedented push to shrink the federal government over what both say is wasteful spending and abuse of funds. "Foreign assistance is not charity. Instead, it is a strategic tool that stabilizes regions, prevents conflict, and advances US interests," the letter said. A State Department spokesperson, when asked about the cable, said: "We do not comment on leaked internal communication." In fiscal year 2023, the United States disbursed \$72 billion of aid worldwide, on everything from women's health

in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/AIDS treatment. "The freeze on life-saving aid has already caused irreparable harm and suffering to millions of people around the world," the letter said. Musk's energy security and anti-corruption work. Upon evaluating 6,200 multi-year awards, the administration decided to eliminate nearly 5,800 of them worth \$54 billion in value, a 92 percent reduction, according to a State Department spokesperson. USAID fired or put on administrative leave thousands of staff and contractors. The cable said the government's failure to pay outstanding invoices to contractors and implementing partners has severe economic repercussions. "The resulting financial strain not only under-

mines confidence in the US government as a reliable partner, it also weakens domestic economic growth at a time of mounting global competition," the cable said. Organizations and companies that contract with USAID last month sued the administration, calling the dismantling of the agency unlawful and saying funding had been cut off for existing contracts, including hundreds of millions of dollars for work that is already done. The US Supreme Court declined on Wednesday to let the administration withhold payments to foreign aid organizations for work they already performed for the government, upholding a district judge's order that had called on the administration to promptly release payments to contractors.—DNA

Briefs

Former naval chief Sirohey passes away

CJSC and the Services Chiefs, express heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of Admiral (Retired) Iftikhar Sirohey

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former chief of naval staff of Admiral retired Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey passed away in Islamabad. Pakistan Navy spokesperson said Sirohey was commissioned in the navy in 1955, adding that he also participated in wars fought against India in 1965 and 1971. He served as the Pakistan Navy chief from 1986 to 1988 and chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee from 1988 to 1991. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf has expressed condolence over the death of Sirohey. He also paid tribute to him for his services.

District bar representatives call on CJP

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the district bar associations of Multan and Jhang called on the Chief Justice of Pakistan. According to the Supreme Court statement, the chief justice welcomed the delegation, which apprised him of their concerns. The representatives highlighted the lack of coordination between the High Court and district bars in Punjab. The chief justice underscored that high courts are independent institutions and that interference in their affairs would be wrong. He suggested that the matter could be discussed with the Lahore High Court chief justice. The statement further noted that the chief justice shed light on the representation of bar councils in the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan. He also briefed the delegation on the upcoming meeting of the commission. Also, the Chief Justice informed the delegation about ongoing training programmes under the Federal Judicial Academy, stating that details of these initiatives were available on the academy's website. The delegation was also briefed on the Access to Justice Development Fund. The Chief Justice encouraged bar members to seek assistance under the fund's provisions. During the meeting, the delegation extended an invitation to the Chief Justice to visit district bar associations. Highlighting his commitment to engaging with the legal community, he stated that he prioritises visits to remote and deprived areas. He assured the delegation that he would visit their bar association at an appropriate time.

US 'destroying' world order, Ukraine's envoy

LONDON: The US is "destroying" the established world order, Ukraine's ambassador to the UK has said. Criticising the new Trump administration's way of handling foreign policy, Valerii Zaluzhnyi said the White House had "questioned the unity of the whole Western world". His comments come amid an apparent cooling of tensions between Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and his US counterpart Donald Trump, after a public falling-out between the two in the Oval Office on Friday. Kyiv has made attempts to mend relations with Washington in recent days, after the US paused its military aid to Ukraine and intelligence sharing in a bid to bring Zelensky to the negotiating table. But Mr Zaluzhnyi's remarks at a conference at Chatham House in London on Thursday suggest there remains discontent over the US's actions. He told an audience: "We see that it is not just the axis of evil and Russia trying to revise the world order, but the US is finally destroying this order."

Trump threatens encourage Israel to evade ceasefire deal

"Release all of the hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies ..., or it is OVER for you," Trump said

NEWS DESK

Direct US-Hamas's talks important for regional stability

DOHA: US President Donald Trump has threatened that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and members of the Hamas resistance group will be killed if they do not immediately release the remaining Israeli captives held in the besieged territory. Trump issued the warning in a social media post on Wednesday after meeting eight freed captives at the White House. "Release all of the hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies ..., or it is OVER for you," he said. The US president also reiterated Washington's full military assistance to Israel, which is worth billions of dollars, saying, "I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job, not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don't do as I say." He further warned that there would be "hell to pay" if the Israeli captives are not released immediately. "This is your last warning! For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance," he added. "Also, to the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold Hostages. If you do, you are DEAD!" The Hamas Movement has affirmed that US president Donald Trump's threats against it will only complicate the situation concern-

ing the ceasefire agreement and encourage the Israeli occupation government to be more intransigent in its position. "There is an agreement that has been signed, with Washington as a mediator, which includes the release of all prisoners in three stages. Hamas has fulfilled its part in the first stage, while Israel is evading the second stage," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qasem said in a statement on Thursday. "If Trump is serious about having Israeli prisoners released, he should pressure Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu to begin negotiating on the second stage of the Gaza agreement," spokesman Qasem added. The spokesman warned that the Israeli government might take advantage of Trump's threats to tighten its siege on the Gaza Strip and starve its population. On Wednesday, Trump issued what he called a "last warning" to Hamas to release the Israeli captives being held in Gaza, saying there would be "hell to pay" if the captives were not released. "I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job, not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don't do as I say," Trump threatened in a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform, apparently referring to a shipment of heavy bombs he sent to Israel. "Also, to the people of Gaza: A beautiful future awaits, but not if you hold hostages. If you do, you are dead," he added.

ing the ceasefire agreement and encourage the Israeli occupation government to be more intransigent in its position. "There is an agreement that has been signed, with Washington as a mediator, which includes the release of all prisoners in three stages. Hamas has fulfilled its part in the first stage, while Israel is evading the second stage," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qasem said in a statement on Thursday. "If Trump is serious about having Israeli prisoners released, he should pressure Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu to begin negotiating on the second stage of the Gaza agreement," spokesman Qasem added. The spokesman warned that the Israeli government might take advantage of Trump's threats to tighten its siege on the Gaza Strip and starve its population. On Wednesday, Trump issued what he called a "last warning" to Hamas to release the Israeli captives being held in Gaza, saying there would be "hell to pay" if the captives were not released. "I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job, not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don't do as I say," Trump threatened in a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform, apparently referring to a shipment of heavy bombs he sent to Israel. "Also, to the people of Gaza: A beautiful future awaits, but not if you hold hostages. If you do, you are dead," he added.

UK lifts sanctions against 24 Syrian entities

LONDON: Britain on Thursday removed 24 Syrian entities from its sanctions list and unfroze their assets, including the Central Bank of Syria, other banks and petroleum companies. The West is rethinking its approach to Syria after insurgent forces led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham ousted Bashar Assad as president in December. Last month, European Union countries suspended a range of sanctions against Syria. Britain's foreign office did not give further details on the lifting of the sanctions and did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A Syrian government media official did not immediately respond to a request for comment. - Agencies

Asad Qasim elected as senator from Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Asad Qasim has been elected as a senator from Balochistan on a general seat. The Election Commission of Pakistan has issued a notification confirming Asad Qasim's success. Asad Qasim secured the seat as an independent candidate, as the seat was left vacant by his father, former senator Muhammad Qasim Roonjho. Muhammad Qasim Roonjho, a member of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M), had resigned from his seat after voting in favor of the 26th Constitutional Amendment. BNP-M chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal had instructed Qasim Roonjho to resign for violating the party's policy. It is to be noted here that the Parliament passed the 26th Amendment on midnight of 20 and 21 under which the term for the Chief Justice of Pakistan has been fixed at three years. A 12-member parliamentary committee will select the new Chief Justice from a panel of the three most senior judges. The committee, comprising eight members from the National Assembly and four from the Senate, will propose the name to the Prime Minister, who will then forward it to the President for final approval.

ECP rejects JUI-F 's plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ECP has rejected the JUI-F candidate's plea challenging the repolling in PB-45. The ECP delivered its verdict regarding the Balochistan Assembly constituency PB-45 Quetta-VIII, turning down the JUI-F candidate's request to annul the election results and the repolling process. The commission further directed the plaintiff to file the matter with the election tribunal. Ali Madad Jattak, the candidate from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), secured the Balochistan Assembly seat by defeating JUI-F's Mir Usman Pirikani. Previously, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) staged a strike in Quetta and various parts of Balochistan, protesting alleged rigging during the by-polls for the provincial assembly seat. According to details, JUI-F workers blocked some roads and highways including Quetta-Karachi highway in Khuzdar near Koshak. The party workers also blocked the national highway near Police station Sona Khan in Quetta. In district Nushki, a main highway adjoining Quetta-Taftan has also been blocked. The strike was originally planned for Tuesday but has been postponed to Wednesday due to the suspension of mobile phone services in Quetta by the provincial government. Earlier on Supreme Court's order, the repolling in 15 polling stations of Balochistan Assembly constituency PB-45 Quetta-VIII was held on January 5 in which candidate of PPP Ali Madad Jattak retained his Balochistan Assembly seat by defeating JUI-F candidate Mir Usman Pirikani.

Pak becomes 'world's 2nd-most terrorism-affected country'

Pakistan's deteriorating security situation linked to Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, reveals report

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The scourge of terrorism continues to plague Pakistan making it the world's second-most terrorism-affected country in 2024, as per a Global Terrorism Index 2025 report. Pakistan - placed at the second spot from its previously fourth position - witnessed an alarming 45% increase in terrorism-related deaths with the total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 - one of the steepest surges globally. Meanwhile, the number of terror attacks more than doubled from 517 in 2023 to 1,099 in 2024, which also marked the first year that attacks exceeded the 1,000 mark since the inception of the Index. The worrisome statistics come a day after forces successfully thwarted a cowardly terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killing all 16 militants who attempted to intrude into the facility.

Fin Min Senator Aurangzeb assures APTMA support for growth



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, has reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to resolving critical issues related to taxation, energy, and financing, as part of its efforts to ensure the long-term viability and future growth of Pakistan's industrial sector. He made this statement during a meeting held today at the Finance Division with the leadership of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA). The meeting was attended by senior officials, including the Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the Secretary of the Commerce Division, and other senior officers from the Finance Division and FBR. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team welcomed the APTMA office-bearers and expressed the government's strong commitment to providing all possible support to the textile sector. The Finance Minister assured the delegation that the government recognizes the critical role of the textile industry in

Pakistan's economy and remains dedicated to addressing its concerns. He emphasized that addressing the core challenges faced by the industry is key to creating a conducive environment for industrial development, fostering economic stability, and supporting the nation's overall growth trajectory. Earlier, the APTMA delegation, led by Chairman Kamran Arshad, provided a detailed presentation on several pressing issues facing the textile sector related to energy, taxation and financing. The presentation also touched on various recommendations and proposals for the long-term viability and growth of the sector. The Finance Minister assured the APTMA leadership that the government would give a thorough and thoughtful analysis of their recommendations, incorporating viable suggestions into the federal budget. He reiterated the importance of the consultative process and emphasized that any anomalies in the current framework would be addressed. The APTMA delegation expressed their appreciation for the expedited disbursement of tax refunds and requested further support for the clearance of outstanding dues. The Finance Minister reaffirmed that the government values this consultative approach and would continue to engage with key sectors to ensure their concerns are addressed effectively in the upcoming budget.

Army Act provisions cannot be declared unconstitutional: SCB

The Rawalpindi Conspiracy case was tried and decided by a special tribunal, not a military tribunal

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Bench, in its written submissions before the constitutional bench hearing intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military court, stated that the provisions of the Army Act cannot be declared unconstitutional. In its submission on Thursday, the Supreme Court Bar Association stated that civilians should not be tried in military courts. The provisions of the Army Act have been upheld in various judicial decisions. Therefore, they cannot be declared unconstitutional. A seven-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Ameenuddin Khan, is hearing the intra-court appeal.

The bench includes Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarrat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. Hamid Khan, the counsel representing the Lahore Bar Association and the Lahore High Court Bar Association, began his arguments by referencing the tenure of former Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and claimed that PTI founder Imran Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court premises. Justice Mandokhail interrupted him and asked him to address whether civilians can be tried in military courts or not. Advocate Khan responded that the Army Act came into force in May 1952, at a time when the Government of India Act was in effect in Pakistan. The first constitution was introduced in 1956 which gave, for the first time, fundamental rights to the citizens. The first amendment to the Army Act was done in 1967. The first case under the law was registered in 1951 which is known as "Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case."

Man accused of aiding Kabul bombing charged in US court

WASHINGTON: A man accused of helping to plan the Kabul airport bombing during the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 appeared in court on Wednesday. The US Department of Justice (DoJ) said it had charged Mohammad Sharifullah with providing support and resources to a foreign terrorist organisation, which resulted in death. He faces a maximum penalty of life in prison. US officials accused Sharifullah of being a member of IS-K, a group that took credit for the attack and that has been proscribed as a terror organisation by governments around the world. At least 170 Afghans died alongside 13 US service members in the attack, which resulted in intense criticism for then-US President Joe Biden. Current US President Donald Trump, who often blamed Biden and Former Vice-President Kamala Harris for the service members' deaths, announced Sharifullah's arrest in his address to Congress on Tuesday. "He is right now on his way here to face the swift sword of American justice," Trump told his audience. - Agencies

'We are not alone': Zelensky thanks EU at summit

France President Macron calls for defence spending surge to confront "new era"

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: Volodymyr Zelensky thanked EU leaders Thursday for standing by Ukraine's side, as the bloc kicked off crisis talks on confronting US President Donald Trump's pivot away from Kyiv and its transatlantic partners. Thursday's summit brings all 27 EU leaders together for the first time since last week's explosive meeting between Trump and Zelensky. Since then, Washington has suspended the military aid and intelligence sharing that has helped Kyiv fight off Russia's invasion. "We are very thankful that we are not alone. And these are not just words," the Ukrainian president told reporters as the talks kicked off, standing alongside EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa. With America's long-term commitment to Europe's security now in doubt, the bloc is under pressure to rise to the moment. Already this week, Germany's likely next leader pledged a historical U-turn on defence. "This is a watershed moment for Europe," said von der Leyen, who has laid out a plan aimed at mobilising 800 billion euros to "re-arm Europe" faced with the threat from Russia. "Europe faces a clear and present danger, and therefore Europe has to be able to protect itself," the commission chief told reporters.

"It's also watershed moment for Ukraine," she added. "We have to put Ukraine in a position to protect itself and to push for lasting and just peace." Leaders are expected to give a green light Thursday to the commission's defence plans, based largely on freeing states to spend much more - something the bloc's two economic powerhouses look set to do. In a sombre national address on the summit's eve, France's President Emmanuel Macron called for a defence spending surge to confront a "new era" and said he would discuss extending France's nuclear deterrent to European partners. "Who can believe that this Russia of today will stop at Ukraine?" Macron asked. "I want to believe that the United States will stay by our side, but we have to be prepared for that not to be the case." Germany's chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz, who conferred with EU chiefs in Brussels ahead of the talks, has declared

himself ready for "the worst-case scenario" and embraced radical reforms to pump up German defence spending. Zelensky's visit to Brussels comes as he scrambles to reengage Washington after the White House blow-up - declaring himself ready to work towards a peace deal under Trump's "strong leadership" and to finalise an accord on US access to Ukrainian mineral resources. But Germany's outgoing leader Olaf Scholz reiterated European warnings against any "dictated peace" in Ukraine. A future settlement must guarantee Kyiv's "sovereignty and independence", he said. Trump's outreach to Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the three-year war - sidelining both Kyiv and its European partners - has thrown Europe into crisis mode as it contemplates the possibility of a more lasting withdrawal of US security support. It has also helped draw Britain back into the European fold, five years after leaving the EU. Now Prime Minister Keir Starmer is working in tandem with Macron to rebuild bridges between Trump and Zelensky. Starmer and other European leaders made a show of embracing Zelensky at weekend talks in London that brought in NATO's secretary general and non-EU partners such as Turkey. EU chiefs will be briefing the British leader on the Brussels talks Friday.

