



Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 08, 2025

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Trump to go to KSA to reach \$1 trillion deal

Detailed News On Page-01

Pak youth full of creativity, says Jane Marriott

Detailed News On Page-08

ICC manager praises Pakistan's arrangement

Detailed News On Page-06

Counter-terrorism

US-Pakistan cooperation important

"We extend our gratitude to the Government of Pakistan," says State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce

DNA

WASHINGTON: United States-Pakistan cooperation on counter-terrorism remains crucial, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said Thursday after Daesh-K terrorist Sharifullah's arrest. Sharifullah — who the US says also goes by the name Jafar and is a member of the Daesh-K — was detained by Pakistani authorities and extradited to the United States. "We extend our gratitude to the Government of Pakistan for their partnership in bringing Mohammad Sharifullah to justice," Bruce said during her press briefing in Washington. The State Department spokesperson mentioned that the United States and Pakistan have a common interest in fighting terrorism. "...and the arrest of this terrorist also illustrated that US-Pakistan cooperation on counterterrorism remains vitally important," the spokesperson added. Daesh militant Mohammad Sharifullah being escorted by FBI personnel during his transfer to United States. — Screengrab via Geo News

Palestine condemns terror attack in KP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has condemned the terrorist attack that targeted a Pakistani army base in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, northwest of the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which resulted in dozens of casualties and injuries. The Ministry affirms the State

— Screengrab via Geo News
The Daesh operative allegedly helped carry out the 2021 suicide bombing outside Kabul airport during the chaotic US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Sharifullah has confessed to scouting out the route to the airport, where the suicide bomber later detonated his device among packed crowds trying to flee days after the Taliban seized control of Kabul, the

of Palestine's support for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and its people in confronting terrorism, and affirms its confidence in the ability of the Republic, its president, government and people, to confront terrorism and defeat it. The Ministry extends its deepest and most sincere condolences and sympathy to Pakistan and the families of the victims, and wishes a speedy recovery to the wounded.

Justice Department said. The blast at the Abbey Gate killed at least 170 Afghans as well as 13 US troops who were securing the airport's perimeter. Sharifullah has already appeared in a court in Alexandria. He did not enter a plea. His next appearance will be in the same courthouse on Monday, and he will stay in custody until then.

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Dr Aafia Siddiqui case

Judge questions govt over extradition of 'terrorist' to US

Govt seeks immediate dismissal of Aafia Siddiqui's release petition

COUR REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: During the hearing of Dr Aafia Siddiqui's repatriation case, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday discussed Pakistan's recent extradition of an alleged Daesh commander, Mohammad Sharifullah, to the United States. The hearing focused on Dr Aafia's health and return to Pakistan. The additional attorney general (AAG) appeared before the court, while petitioner Dr Fouzia Siddiqui and Dr Aafia's American lawyer attended via video link. During the proceedings, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan questioned the AAG, saying: "You claim that there is no prisoner exchange agreement with the US, yet you handed over a person to them without any agreement. You were also allowed to provide an in-camera briefing regarding Dr Shakil Afridi's extradition."

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Yousaf Raza Gilani acquitted in three corruption cases

Court says no charges against Gilani proven, grants him honourable acquittal

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Federal Anti-Corruption Court has acquitted Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani in three cases related to the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) corruption scandal. The hearing took place at the Federal Anti-Corruption Court in Karachi, where Gilani appeared before the judge in person. During the proceedings, the judge addressed

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan holds to old militancy diplomacy

Journey of Shariullah from Kabul to Virginia

It is also noteworthy that during his presidency, Donald Trump prioritized U.S.-India relations, causing unease in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Against this backdrop, Sharifullah's capture and extradition may serve as a strategic move to counter India's growing influence

SHAMIM SHAHID

THE US President Donald Trump, during his speech to Congress on the night of March 4-5 (Pakistan time), took many by surprise, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and most of the Pakistani public by revealing that a terrorist involved in the deadly attack at Karzai international Airport in Kabul during the withdrawal of allied forces on August 15, 2021, had been captured. He thanked the Pakistani government for its cooperation and applauded the operation. The apprehended terrorist Sharif Ullah, was produced before the court on Thursday while His name has

caused headlines across global media. However, as more details emerge about the events before and after the Kabul airport attack, doubts are surfacing regarding the claims made by Trump and Pakistani officials. It is now their responsibility to provide accurate information about Sharifullah's arrest and extradition. Reports from Afghanistan suggest that Sharifullah is linked to the global terrorist organization ISKP. Following the defeat of ISIS in Syria's proxy war against Iran and the Assad regime in 2014-2015, the group mysteriously emerged in Afghanistan. At the same time, Pakistan launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan, forcing thousands of militants to flee.

Many Pakistani Taliban fighters defected from the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and officially joined ISKP. In fact, the 40-member ISKP Shura had a majority of Pakistani fighters. By 2019, four of ISKP's five top leaders were Pakistani, and even today, many of its members are former Pakistani militants. Historically, many of these militants were once part of Afghan jihadist groups supported financially, technically, and politically by U.S. allies in Peshawar. Later, these groups evolved into the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Though outwardly divided, both factions remain interconnected.

Continued on Page 06

Govt unfurls portfolios of new ministers

Raza Hayat gets defence production; Musadaq Malik climate change; Ali Pervez Petroleum

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Friday announced the portfolios of the newly inducted cabinet members, with Hanif Abbasi appointed as the Federal Minister for Railways and Mustafa Kamal taking charge of the Ministry of Health. According to an official notification, Khawaja Asif will now only retain the portfolio of the Ministry of Defense, while Azam Nazir Tarar has been assigned the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Human Rights. Abdul Aleem Khan has been appointed as the Federal Minister for Communications, while Musdaik Malik will take charge of the Ministry of Climate Change. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has been entrusted with the Ministry of Education, whereas Chaudhry Salik has been given the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis. Furthermore, Rana Tanveer will now solely oversee the Ministry of National Food Security, while Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh has been appointed as the Federal Minister for the Board of Investment. Additionally, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has been assigned the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, while Ali Pervaiz Malik will oversee the Ministry of Petroleum. Khalid Hussain Magshi has been given the Science and Technology portfolio.

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EU leaders extend support to Zelensky

European Union's defence summit in Brussels take place amid fears that Russia may attack an EU country next

CENTRELINE REPORT

BRUSSELS: European leaders on Thursday backed plans to spend more on defence and continue to stand by Ukraine in a world upended by Donald Trump's reversal of US policies. The European Union's defence summit in Brussels took place amid fears that Russia, emboldened by its war in Ukraine, may attack an EU country next and that Europe can no longer rely on the US to come to its aid "Today we have shown that the European Union is rising to the challenge, building the Europe of defence and standing with Ukraine shoulder to shoulder," the chairman of

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Ambassador Jiang Zaidong calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

Amb. Zaidong meets Shehbaz

Shehbaz Sharif reaffirms Pakistan support to China

The Chinese Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for his kind words and good wishes for the Chinese leadership. He briefed the Prime Minister on the latest developments on Pakistan-China bilateral cooperation

ANSAR BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of China, paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister. During the course of the meeting the latter conveyed his warm greetings and good wishes to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. He also congratulated the Chinese leadership and nation, on the successful convening of the "Two Sessions" of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. While expressing his satisfaction over the positive trajectory of Pakistan-China bilateral strategic relations, as manifested by the successful visit of President Asif Ali Zardari to Beijing last month, the Prime Minister thanked China for its longstanding and steadfast support to

Continued on Page 06

PM congratulates Chinese president

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday extended his warm congratulations to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and the Chinese people on the successful convening of the 'Two Sessions' in Beijing. "China is making remarkable progress in achieving its national development goals. We are particularly impressed by China's modernization under President Xi's visionary leadership," the prime minister said in his social media post on X.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Pakistan urges IMF to reduce tax rates

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Facing a downward revision in its annual tax collection target, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has proposed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a reduction in tax rates for the tobacco, real estate, construction, and beverage sectors for the next three months. MEDIA reported on Friday. The FBR projected that the current high tax rates have significantly reduced transaction volumes in these sectors. By lowering the rates, the tax machinery expects to generate over Rs100 billion in additional revenue between April and June of the ongoing fiscal year.

Joint session on March 10

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari Friday summoned the 14th session of the 16th National Assembly on March 11, 2025, at 3 PM at the Parliament House. The session has been convened under Article 54 (1) of the Constitution, as per the powers vested in the President, said a press release issued by the National Assembly Secretariat. The upcoming session is likely to discuss legislative business, questions hours, calling attention notice. President Asif Ali Zardari Friday summoned a joint session of the Parliament on March 10, 2025 (Monday) at 3:00 PM at the Parliament House.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. — Editor

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Call for infrastructure uplift in renewable energy sector

The discussion focused on critical policy reforms, infrastructure development, and financial mechanisms needed to address emerging challenges and accelerate the country's energy transition.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts on Friday at the high-level dialogue marking the inception of the Annual State of Renewable Energy (ASRE) 2025 called for a coordinated policy approach, urging greater alignment between economic and energy policies to unlock Pakistan's full renewable energy potential. Experts call for policy reforms and infrastructure development in renewable energy sector. Experts agreed that a structured transition strategy, investment incentives, and infrastructure modernization will be essential in ensuring a stable, cost-effective, and sustainable renewable energy future for the country. The ASRE 2025 Inception event hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) brought together leading experts from government, industry, and international organizations to discuss the future of Pakistan's renewable energy sector, said a press release. The discussion focused on critical policy reforms, infrastructure development, and financial mechanisms needed to address emerging challenges and accelerate the country's energy transition. The ASRE Report, a flagship initiative of the SDPI, serves as a key resource in Pakistan for understanding market trends, regulatory barriers, and investment opportunities in Pakistan's renewable energy landscape. Published

annually, it provides evidence-based insights and forward-looking policy recommendations to guide national energy planning, ensuring that decision-makers are equipped with the knowledge needed to drive sustainable growth in the sector. Aqeel Jafri, Director Policy/International Cooperation, PPiB, who chaired the panel, outlined government priorities in RE development, stressing the need to increase the share of renewable energy in the grid while promoting Distributed Generation (DG), battery energy storage systems (BESS), and pumped storage hydro projects. He highlighted affordability as a major challenge due to rising electricity costs, emphasizing that planned capacity additions are crucial to avoid further financial burdens. Jafri also pointed out that generation synchronization between the north and south is a key government priority to enhance grid stability and ensure a more efficient and reliable power supply. Engr Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Head of the Energy Unit at SDPI, emphasized that the ASRE Report remains a flagship initiative in Pakistan offering critical insights to policymakers, industry leaders, and investors. He mentioned that Pakistan is going through two key trends in its renewable energy sector. At the utility scale, the progress has remained very limited where the country have not had any financial closure of an RE project since 2021. However, at the decentralized

stage particularly the Solar PV market, Pakistan is the leading success story across the world. It is now one of the biggest Asian market especially for Chinese PV products. He further highlighted that this trend will further continue in coming years and what is needed for the government is to bring these consumers on the government systems through improved regulations. Dr. Khalid, Research Fellow, SDPI, highlighted key concerns, noting that Pakistan's renewable energy sector is struggling at the utility scale due to stagnation caused by already installed capacity. He emphasized the shift from an energy accessibility crisis to an affordability crisis, stressing the need for careful capacity expansion, early retirement of low-utilization power plants, and reassessment of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). He also pointed to transmission limitations, the surge in Non-Performing Market Volume (NPMV), and the need for investment in green hydrogen and RE-linked opportunities. Additionally, he underscored the importance of reorienting subsidies to ensure an inclusive and equitable energy transition. Faran Rana, Associate Program Officer, IRENA, provided insights into global renewable energy financing, stating that in 2023, global energy transition investments exceeded \$2 trillion, yet developing economies like Pakistan received only 10% due to high financing costs and macroeconomic risks.



ISLAMABAD: A Police personal stand guard to counter any unexpected situation during the Nimaz-e-Juma at Shah Faisal Mosque. – DNA

White Coat ceremony held at PMC

PESHAWAR: Renowned health expert and educationist, Prof. Dr. Najibul Haq, while emphasizing the importance of professional competence and ethical values, urged students to align their personal vision with the institution's vision for meaningful progress in the medical field. He highlighted the role of purpose, commitment and character building in achieving success. He was addressing the White Coat Ceremony at Peshawar Medical College (PMC), held to welcome the new batch of MBBS and BDS students on Friday. The ceremony, attended by students, faculty members, and parents, marked a significant milestone as the students took the professional oath, symbolizing their commitment to ethical medical practice and compassionate patient care. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Hafeez ur Rahman, Dean, PMC, encouraged students to cultivate an attitude of gratitude and uphold the dignity of the medical profession. He stressed the need for dedication and compassion in serving humanity. Other distinguished speakers included Prof. Dr. Ayesha Abdullah, Vice Dean, PMC, Prof. Dr. Mohammed Aman Khan, Principal, PMC and Prof. Dr. Mohammed Raza, Principal, PDC, who shared words of encouragement and inspiration with the students. –APP

Battagram admin step up security steps under NAP

BATTAGRAM: Deputy Commissioner Battagram Asif Ali Khan on Friday stressed the importance of seamless coordination between all relevant agencies to tackle emerging security challenges. He expressed these views while chairing the District Coordination Committee meeting at his office. The meeting reviewed measures to reinforce the district's security framework and ensure the swift implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) in line with provincial government

directives. The DC Battagram directed immediate action against illegal activities under the supervision of the provincial Home Department. Key directives issued during the meeting included the registration of Non-Custom Paid (NCP) vehicles, a crackdown on illegal weapons, intensified anti-smuggling and drug eradication efforts, prevention of electricity theft, closure of unauthorized petrol pumps, removal of encroachments, and strict compliance with seminary registration regulations.

Emphasizing a collective approach to security, the Deputy Commissioner urged all departments to work together in eliminating terrorism and extremism while reinforcing law and order. He also underscored the need for the full implementation of Apex Committee decisions to safeguard public lives and property. Additional Deputy Commissioners (General and Relief), department heads, and representatives from law enforcement and intelligence agencies were present in the meeting. –APP

Driver booked for over speeding on Motorway

ISLAMABAD: A First Information Report (FIR) was registered against a driver for over speeding on the M-11 motorway near Kala Shah Kaku on Thursday. Motorways police spokesperson said the case has been registered at the Feroz-wala police station and the suspect named Muhammad Zafar Iqbal has been handed over to local police. The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) had previously issued warnings to motorists, informing them of serious consequences, including First Information Reports (FIRs), for exceeding speeds of 150 km/h. Generally, the speed limit on motorways is 120 km/h for cars, jeeps and LTV vehicles and 110 km/h for heavy transport vehicles. –APP

Strict security arrangements for joint session

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat has made strict security measures for the joint session of Parliament, scheduled to be held on Monday, March 10, at 3:00 PM. According to the National Assembly Secretariat, special invitations will be issued to journalists for media coverage from the press gallery. It has been clarified that Session-12 press gallery cards will not be valid for this session. Media organizations have been directed to submit the names of two reporters from those already issued accreditation cards through their beat reporters to obtain special invitations. –APP

Ramadan first Jumma observed with religious reverence

ISLAMABAD: Muslims across the country and around the globe observed the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan with great reverence, devotion and prayers. The occasion holds immense spiritual significance as it marks the beginning of a month-long journey of self-purification, worship, and charity. Mosques were filled with worshippers offering special prayers for peace, prosperity, and protection—both for Pakistan and the entire Muslim Ummah. Religious scholars, during their sermons (Khutbas), emphasized the importance of seeking forgiveness, engaging in acts of kindness, and strengthening one's connection with Allah. "Ramadan is a time for self-discipline and self-improvement, and the first Jumma serves as a reminder to set pure intentions for the

coming weeks," said Imam during his Friday sermon to the people gathered for prayer at the picturesque Faisal Mosque at the foothills of Margallas. Thousands faithful gathered at the grand mosque, seeking Allah's mercy and committing themselves to worship and charity. Among them was Ayub, a young devotee, who offered his first Jumma prayer of Ramadan at the Faisal Mosque. "I feel truly blessed to be here today," he said. "This Ramadan, I intend to engage in more acts of charity and worship to seek Allah's rewards." The significance of Jumma in Islam is deeply rooted in history. It is believed to be the day when Prophet Adam (AS) was created and later expelled from Jannah. Several key events in Islamic history, including the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in

Madinah and the decisive Battle of Badr, also took place on a Friday. Due to its importance, the Jumma prayer is considered equivalent to the five daily obligatory prayers, and missing it without a valid reason is regarded as a sin. Women also observed the blessed occasion in their homes, offering prayers and engaging in religious gatherings. Aasia, a newlywed housewife, marked her first Jumma of Ramadan with her in-laws. "It is a special day for me. I prayed alongside my mother-in-law and sister-in-law, and together, we contributed to purchasing food rations for underprivileged families," she said. "May Allah accept our good deeds," she added with a heartfelt prayer. Islamic teachings emphasize that Jumma is a day of forgiveness, with Allah Almighty multiplying the rewards for good deeds performed on this day. –APP

Mobilink Bank wins The Invisible Heirs' campaign award

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance institution, Mobilink Bank, has solidified its standing as a trailblazer in women's financial inclusion and economic empowerment by winning the 'CMO Marketing Campaign' Award at the GSMA Global Mobile (GLOMO) Awards during Mobile World Congress 2025. The award recognizes Mobilink Bank's groundbreaking campaign – The Invisible Heirs, which addresses the systemic denial of women's inheritance rights in Pakistan and empowers them with innovative tools to claim what is lawfully theirs. This marks a historic milestone as Pakistan's first-ever win in the prestigious GLOMO Awards under the CMO Marketing Campaign category, said a news release. The Invisible Heirs campaign aims to tackle gender-based financial inequality in Pakistan. At its core is an inheritance calculator integrated into Mobilink Bank's consumer app – Dost, which allows women to calculate their rightful share of inheritance easily. The campaign also featured a powerful video highlighting women's emotional and societal challenges in securing their inheritance, sparking a nationwide conversation and inspiring action. Aamir Ibrahim, CEO Jazz, Chairman Mobilink Bank and Group Executive Committee Member of VEON, remarked: "This award is a testament to our unwavering commitment to driving meaningful societal change through innovation. The Invisible Heirs campaign not only shines a light on a deeply rooted issue but also provides a tangible solution that empowers women to take control of their financial futures. This recognition underscores VEON's mission to create transformative digital services that uplift communities and foster equality." President and CEO, Mobilink Bank Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, said, "We are thrilled to win the GLOMO Award for 'The Invisible Heirs' campaign, which is a bold step toward dismantling barriers that have long hindered women's financial independence. By equipping women with the tools to claim their rightful inheritance, we are not only changing lives but also reshaping the narrative around gender equality in Pakistan. As a forward-looking, future-ready institution, this recognition inspires us to continue pushing boundaries in fostering long-term emancipation of women through technology-driven solutions." This victory marks another milestone in Mobilink Bank's mission to leverage fintech for financial inclusion and gender equality. Earlier, the Invisible Heirs campaign bagged the 'Digital Nations Video Creativity Award' at GSMA's M360 Asia-Pacific event in 2024. Additionally, Mobilink Bank was recently named among the 'Top 10 Most Inclusive Organizations of the Year' at the GDIEB Awards 2025 while topping the State Bank of Pakistan's Banking on Equality scorecard for two years in a row. –DNA

Beggars swarm irritates people ahead of Iftar in KP

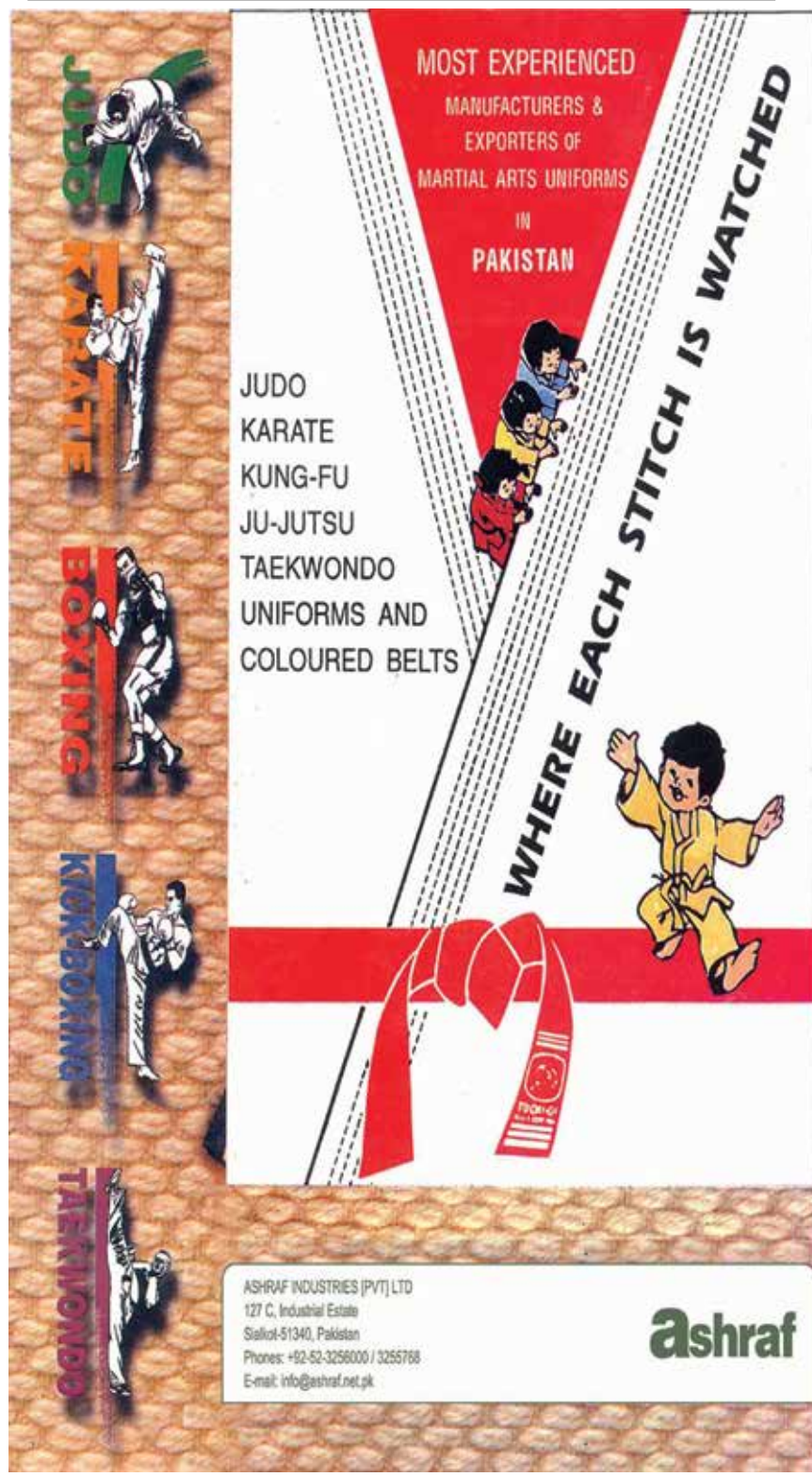
PESHAWAR: The swarm of professional and nonprofessional beggars arrived from different cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Peshawar have started irritating people in the holy month of Ramadan. In spite of begging has been declared illegal under the country's laws, the beggars' influx including male, female, children and persons with disabilities are being witnessed in the jam-packed crossing points, mosques' gates and mostly frequented public places and food outlets in the city and cantonment areas mostly before Iftar, irritating people during shopping. These beggars have occupied key places at Hashtnagri, Gantagar, Farid, Nothia, Tehkal, Gulbahar, Faqirabad, Meena Bazaar,

Karimpura, Shafi Market, Saddar Road, University Town, City Tower, Jawad Tower and Deans Trade Centre. Most professional beggars employ various tricks to exploit human nature and religious sentiments by crying, weeping and chasing people in public places while wearing miserable attire. They stayed at shopping malls, mosques, road signals, bus terminals, railway stations, traffic squares and streets at Peshawar, making shopping difficult ahead of Iftar. The unchecked trained beggars are pestering Iftar shoppers in markets or running after them or behind their cars to collect maximum alms in the name of Zakat, Sadqa and Khairat. Some beggars roaming with exposed wounds

keep on holding and touching customers when they come out of their vehicles, which may expose them to contagious diseases and viral infections including TB, flu and chest related infections. It has been witnessed that some beggars were emotionally blackmailing people by carrying medical prescriptions and disability certificates. 'Alms' seekers can also be seen in city markets asking for charity in the name of construction of mosques while many beggars were resorting to lame-duck excuses like seeking treatment of their ailing family or lost jobs. "Begging has emerged as a major social evil in recent years to the nuisance of Peshawarties," Professor Sundas Amin who

was irritated by beggars for Iftar shopping at Pabbi bazaar Peshawar. Besides bazaars and shopping arcades, he said the shoppers were facing great inconvenience at traffic signals, food restaurants, bus terminals, railways stations, mosques, hospitals, markets and public places due to swarms of beggars in Peshawar. "It is heartbreaking to see young girls' and boys' beggars carrying wipers in hands often start cleaning car windows on traffic signals without permission in order to get money," she said. He said some beggars come with flowers, garlands, caps and rosary to give an impression that they are selling it, but actually they beg for money without an intention of sell-

ing anything. Faraz Khan, a resident of Nowshera said he was busy shopping for Iftar along with his family at Qissa Khwani where a teenage beggar with black colour in hand rushed towards him, asking for money or otherwise his clothes would be made dirty. "In order to save my clothes, I immediately offered him Rs50, which was refused. On several requests, the beggar accepted Rs 100 and started running towards other shoppers by using the same technique that was intolerable in a civilized society. He demanded the KP government to take instantaneous action against swarms of beggars in the city so that people could take a sigh of relief and do Iftar shopping with ease. –APP



National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01/Bosnia National Day

March 03/Bulgaria National Day

March 06/ Ghana Independence Day

March 12 /Mauritius National Day

March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20/Tunisia Independence Day

March 21/Namibia National Day

March 25/Greece National Day

March 26/Bangladesh National Day

March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants

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

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Emergency

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

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PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092

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

Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Members of the Pakistan Floral Art Society in a group photo with Mrs. Aziz Boolani on the occasion of iftar dinner hosted by CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani.— DNA

India advocates being US “Preferred Partner: Expert

Dr. Pant strongly advocated that India is viewed as a significant partner by the United States. Over the years, the U.S. has never imposed conditions on India concerning any future critical security situations in exchange for benefits provided to them

DNA
ISLAMABAD: India advocates being America's "Preferred Partner" rather than a Regional Net Security Provider: Prof. Harsh V. Pant
Islamabad: Professor Harsh V. Pant, the Vice President at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, specializing in Asian security issues, profoundly deliberated upon India-US ties in the age of Trump as an eminent speaker virtually at the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad. Ms. Humera Iqbal, a Research Analyst at IRS, moderated the event, also attended by senior researchers. Dr. Harsh Pant shared his analytical insights on President Trump's 'America First' model, which brings a remarkable shift in discourse by demanding that the world consider what they can do for the United States. As a strategic partner of the US, India is increasingly viewed through an Asian perspective rather than a South Asian one, given its poten-

tial to play a significant role in the emerging balance of power in the region. Dr. Pant emphasized that the responses from both the US and India to structural changes are crucial driving factors in their relationship, especially in the context of the Indo-Pacific. He highlighted that India seeks to be America's preferred partner, moving beyond its traditional image as a net security provider in the region. Professor Pant emphasized that, while suspicions regarding each other's motivations persist on both sides, the bureaucratic dynamics at institutional and political levels are actively working to build bilateral relations. Over the years, the architecture of Silicon Valley in the US has become a symbol of American Indian within the country. Similarly, the exceptional recognition granted to India by the Bush administration within the global nuclear framework has formed a trust bond between the two nations. Today, India has access to and

participation in the global high-end technological and nuclear order, which is shaping contemporary geopolitics. Dr. Harsh praised the Indian government's diplomacy by pulling along with the Biden administration's policy on Ukraine while effectively managing its relationship with Russia on various critical issues. Discussing the Indo-US relationship during President Trump's second term, Dr. Harsh noted that Prime Minister Modi's recent visit has established a foundation for the framework of their next four years relationship. Regarding the tariff challenge, President Trump aims to fast-track a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by the end of this year, while Prime Minister Modi prefers a broader BTA rather than a piecemeal approach. For India, it is crucial to procure key US products such as oil and gas, which offer significant market potential. Another challenge lies in the defense sector, where the US has offered the

F-35. However, India will carefully select American products and engagements to maintain its strong position in global defense markets and resources. Regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, as President Trump seeks to bring the conflict to an end, India will remain comfortable with its neutral stance. If the US engages directly with Russia, then India may also choose to do so. Harsh Pant emphasized that the biggest uncertainty for India is the China question and how President Trump will address it. Trump has been a key architect of an anti-China policy, which has also shifted the Western discourse on China. India is carefully observing the roadmap Trump will establish for a working relationship with Beijing, as it will have implications for India as well. Given India's limited capabilities in comparison to rising China, Dr. Pant highlighted it poses an immediate challenge. Therefore, maintaining a balance of power in border areas

and maritime spaces India is investing in its defense relations with the United States, both bilaterally and regionally. The aim is to ensure that stability and influence in the region do not favor any single country or entity. He also mentioned that many in India feel confident in managing ties with President Trump, despite his unpredictable nature. The India-U.S. relationship during Trump's presidency is expected to bring some surprises, in contrast to past decades when bilateral relations were largely insulated from disruptions. So far, the United States has afforded India a strategic space, possibly due to the realization that if the Indo-Pacific is to be the focal point of strategic competition, older alliance frameworks may not effectively manage the region. Dr. Pant strongly advocated that India is viewed as a significant partner by the United States. Over the years, the U.S. has never imposed conditions on India concerning any future critical security situations in exchange for benefits provided to them.

CCI congratulates Dr. Fazal on joining cabinet

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by its President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, visited the residence of Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry to congratulate him on his induction into the federal cabinet. The ICCI delegation included Senior Vice President Abdul Rahman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Chairman Founder Group Tariq Sadiq, former Presidents of FPCCI Zubair Ahmed Malik and Abdul Rauf Alam, former President of ICCI Khalid Javed, Senior Vice President Industrial Area Association Mahmood Ahmed Warriach, and executive members Sanaullah Khan, Tahir Ayub, Naveed Satti, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Irfan Chaudhry, along with special advisor to the ICCI President, Naem Siddiqui. On behalf of the business community, President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi extended warm congratulations to Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and expressed confidence that his inclusion in the cabinet would lead to policies that promote economic growth, ease of doing business, and better facilitation for trade and industry. Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, while appreciating the gesture, acknowledged the pivotal role of the business community as the real engine of the economy. He noted that their contributions reflect their strong commitment to national economic development. He also praised the ICCI leadership for their proactive role in resolving business community issues and acting as a bridge between the private sector and the government to create a conducive business environment. The ICCI delegation assured full cooperation and expressed willingness to work closely with the government to address business sector challenges and contribute collectively towards the country's economic development and prosperity.—DNA

Education ministry rounds up years of progressive initiatives

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had achieved significant milestones over the past year in its mission to develop Pakistan as a progressive and prosperous nation by ensuring quality education and skill development for all citizens. According to the official details, with a vision of providing equal educational opportunities, the education ministry has implemented numerous initiatives across various sectors. One of the flagship initiatives, the Prime Minister's School Meal Program, provides free meals to 65,000 students daily, enhancing both their health and academic performance. To improve healthcare access, 100 Mother and Child Health Centers have been established across educational institutions. In a push toward modern education, seven AI and robotics labs have been set up in schools across the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Additionally, in collaboration

with NUML, language training has been provided to 1,000 students, enhancing global communication skills. The Pink Bus Initiative has introduced twenty new buses offering free transportation services for women and girls, ensuring safer and more accessible education. On the technology front, sixteen colleges have been equipped with technology training centers, and fifty digital learning hubs have been established in rural areas. Furthermore, 130 Chromebook labs and 1,000 Chromebooks have been distributed across 104 schools, while 100 schools now feature smart classrooms with LED screens and smart boards. Coding and robotics training has also been introduced to primary students in 150 schools. In the realm of vocational and entrepreneurial training, 19 skill labs have been launched in Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) schools, and 25,000 teachers have been trained in financial literacy. A new entrepreneurship curriculum has been introduced to foster innovation. For early childhood and special education, 100 early childhood education centers have been set up to

ensure quality foundational education, and special education centers have been included in the meal program to support differently-abled students. Sustainability initiatives have seen solar power systems installed in 100 institutions, promoting green energy, while 50 daycare centers have been established in educational institutions to support working women. Through the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), 56,000 youth have been trained in IT and job-oriented trades, and the "She Fixes" initiative aims to empower women in technical fields. A National Job Portal has been launched to connect skilled workers with employers, and international certification programs have been introduced to enhance global employability. Short courses in high-demand fields such as IT and healthcare have also been developed. Reforms in private and religious education include the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for private institutions and the development of a grievance redressal mechanism for complaints.

SSP investigation issues show-cause notices to SHO

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt conducted a surprise to Aabpara Police Station, where he inspected police records, assessed facilities, and issued show-cause notices to the SHO and Moharrar over negligence in duties and improper record maintenance. SSP Investigation checked the station's records, malkhana, and lockup while also meeting with complainants to evaluate the handling of their cases. He found serious lapses in supervision and record-keeping, leading to the issuance of show-cause notices to the officers. SSP Tariq said that the reconciliation committee should be made more effective and police personnel must adopt a courteous attitude while addressing citizens' concerns. He warned that misconduct or unprofessional behavior towards the public would not be tolerated. SSP Tariq emphasized that the welfare of police officers should also be prioritized, and their challenges must be addressed on a priority basis.—APP

AIOU begins dispatch of course books

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has officially started the dispatch of course books for the Spring 2025 semester to hundreds of thousands of students enrolled in Matric, FA, and Associate Degree programs. In this regard, the Director Administration and Coordination, Professor Dr. Syed Muhammad Aamir Shah inaugurated the book dispatch process. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has strictly instructed all university departments to ensure the timely completion of academic activities so that no student faces any delays. For the first time in the university's history, the dispatch of course books has commenced simultaneously with the admissions process. To facilitate students, the university has introduced a "Computerized Tracking System" that allows students to track their books through CMS (Course Management System) and Pakistan Post's e-portal.—APP

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Briefs

Govt to continue efforts for welfare of lawyers

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said that the government would continue playing its role for the welfare of the lawyers. He also announced to issue funds worth Rs.5 million for the development of Multan Bar Association and up gradation of library there. The law minister held meeting with the delegations of district bar associations of Multan and Jhang. The delegation was led by President Multan Bar Association Malik Javed Dogar. During the meeting, -APP

Kitchen Items' prices dip by 0.09pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), decreased by 0.09 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 6, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 320.04 points as compared to 320.32 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 0.87 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.20 per cent and went down to 309.33 points from last week's 309.94 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, went down by 0.19 percent, 0.16 percent, 0.12 percent and 0.03 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 13 (25.49%) items increased, 20 (39.22%) items decreased and 18 (35.29%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included onions (5.59%), tea packet (4.47%), garlic (3.89%), tomatoes (3.60%), pulse gram (3.49%), pulse mash (2.82%), potatoes (2.60%), diesel (2.00%), pulse masoor (1.50%) and petrol (0.24%). The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included bananas (9.79%), sugar (3.15%), LPG (2.64%), eggs (2.52%), lawn (0.55%), mutton (0.33%), wheat flour (0.22%), long cloth and gur (0.17%) each, cigarettes and beef (0.06%) each and rice irri-6/9 (0.01%). Year-on-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included onions (64.92%), tomatoes (57.05%), wheat flour (36.81%), chilies powder (20.00%), electricity charges for q1 (18.92%), tea packet (14.92%), pulse mash (14.68%), pulse masoor (12.33%), diesel (9.91%), rice basmati broken (9.55%), petrol (8.55%) and LPG (2.54)—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students and faculty members from International Maarif Schools visit Senate museum at Parliament house.

Pakistan-China sign 650MW solar module supply accord

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, Pakistan receives over 3,000 hours of sunlight each year, providing outstanding conditions for solar power generation. However, the country has historically depended on thermal and hydroelectric power, which together constitute approximately 50% of its energy mix

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Tongwei Group entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with three Pakistani companies—Perfect Services, Nimir Energy, and Mateen Sons—for the supply of 650 MW of solar modules. This collaboration emphasizes Tongwei's high-efficiency TNC-G12/G12R modules. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, Pakistan receives over 3,000 hours of sunlight each

year, providing outstanding conditions for solar power generation. However, the country has historically depended on thermal and hydroelectric power, which together constitute approximately 50% of its energy mix. This reliance has resulted in energy shortages and raised environmental concerns. Those prominent Pakistani energy companies that signed contracts with Tongwei this time possess extensive experience in the development, investment, and operation of solar

projects. Their decision to partner with Tongwei for the 650 MW solar module supply agreement reflects not only their acknowledgment of Tongwei's leadership in the global solar industry but also their confidence in the quality and technological capabilities of Chinese products. Pakistan's extreme climate conditions—characterized by high solar radiation and significant temperature fluctuations—require exceptional heat resistance and long-term stability in solar mod-

ules. Leveraging its robust research and development capabilities, Tongwei has created tailored solutions specifically designed for the Pakistani market. The TNC-G12/G12R series high-efficiency modules have successfully addressed various technological challenges to adapt to Pakistan's distinctive plateau climate. These modules have undergone rigorous UV120 and UV300 testing, demonstrating outstanding UV resistance and long-term stability in harsh conditions.

China-Pakistan two-way bus service resumes

Passengers can purchase tickets directly at Kashgar Passenger Station or book online through the WeChat mini-program 'Kashgar Passenger Travel', according to the Chinese transportation organization

ISLAMABAD: The regular international bus service between Kashgar, China, and Gilgit, Pakistan, officially resumed and entered the trial operation phase. This bus service is operated by Kashgar Xinlu Passenger Co., Ltd. and Pakistan's Northern Areas Transportation Company (NATCO). The bus departs from Kashgar and heads southward, passing through the Khunjerab Pass and Pakistan's Sost Port before reaching its final destination, Gilgit. The total journey covers a distance of 698 kilometers. According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday, the resumption of this service not only reduces the travel distance between the two regions but also acts as a vital link for trade, cultural exchange, and tourism development between China and Pakistan. According to the Kashgar Passenger

Station, departures from Kashgar are scheduled every Sunday, Wednesday, and Thursday at 3:00 PM (Beijing Time). The bus makes a stop at Tashkurgan County Passenger Station before exiting China via the Khunjerab Pass the following day. For the return journey, buses depart from Gilgit every Monday, Tuesday, and Friday at 6:00 AM (Pakistan Time). They also stop at Tashkurgan County before continuing to Kashgar the following day. The fare per passenger is RMB 455 per ticket. Currently, the route is serviced by ten buses, each with capacities ranging from 25 to 48 seats. Passengers can purchase tickets directly at Kashgar Passenger Station or book online through the WeChat mini-program 'Kashgar Passenger Travel', according to the Chinese transportation organization.—APP

Sanaullah hails Trump's appreciation

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah Friday welcomed Donald Trump's appreciation for Pakistan's Armed Forces as a crucial acknowledgment of their sacrifices and a matter of pride for Pakistan and an opportunity to boost cooperation against global terrorism. In a candid conversation with a private news channel, he underscored that the United States has consistently urged Pakistan to "do more" in the fight against terrorism, but in a significant departure, the US has finally acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan's efforts, marking a notable shift in stance. He specifically appreciated the invaluable sacrifices and relentless efforts of Pakistan's intelligence agencies and armed forces in the fight against terrorism, acknowledging their critical role in ensuring regional and global security. He emphasized the crucial role of Pakistan's agencies and armed forces in combating terrorism, stating that it would be a matter of pride for Pakistan if Donald Trump acknowledges their efforts. Responding to a query, Rana Sanaullah stressed that the federal government is always ready to cooperate with the provincial government, emphasizing that countering terrorism is a collective responsibility that requires a unified effort.—APP

CDNS accomplish Rs 980b savings target

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has accomplished a target of Rs 980 billion in fresh bonds and achieved 59.39 percent of the annual target for the ongoing second half of the current fiscal year, from July 1 to March 6, 2025. The senior official of CDNS told APP on Friday that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the country's saving culture. Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs170 billion in investments in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country. Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 per cent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30.—APP

Two sessions-Chinese private sector expands

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Private Sector has decided to expand overseas ventures, said Lu Qingguo, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and chairman of Chenguang Biotech Group Company. The company is establishing overseas grain and specialty agricultural product production bases. It also cultivates a mutually beneficial relationship with local communities. As the world's largest producer of paprika oleoresin, capsaicin, and lutein, Lu Qingguo's

company took the lead in global scaling as early as 2010, setting up two factories in India. In 2015, Chenguang turned its attention to Zambia, acquiring over 100,000 acres of land to cultivate chilies and marigolds while establishing on-site processing facilities to deepen its industrial integration. From India to Africa, Chenguang has steadily advanced its global footprint. Take Africa as an example - both marigold and chili harvesting require manual labor. With Africa's abundant workforce, labor-intensive agricultural production is ideally suited for the region. Africa's ad-

vantages in land availability, sunlight, thermal resources, and water supply, combined with low raw material costs, significantly enhance the global competitiveness of Chinese enterprises," Lu Qingguo explained. "Further, Chinese enterprises overseas create employment opportunities for local farmers, increase their income, and genuinely improve their livelihoods." Agriculture serves as a pillar of Zambia's national economy, with the country boasting vast land resources and the Zambezi River, the largest water system in southern Africa.

Inflation has come down, now poverty should be reduced

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that inflation has come down due to the government's strict economic policies. However, he said, the masses have yet to benefit from the reduction in inflation, for which some steps are necessary. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the authorities need to make serious efforts to reduce poverty so that the distressed people can receive some relief. Talking to the business

community, the veteran business leader said that a two percent reduction in interest rates is necessary to improve the economic situation. He said that the State Bank of Pakistan is expected to announce the interest rate on Monday. The business community believes that the central bank will cut interest rates for the seventh time because inflation continuously decreases. The business leader said that the State Bank started reducing the interest rate in June 2024, which was 22 percent at the time.

During the Monetary Policy Committee meeting in January, the State Bank reduced the policy rate by 150 basis points, which brought the interest rate down to 12 percent. However, he said the business community calls it insufficient and de-

mands a further reduction. Mian Zahid Hussain said that some economists are indicating the possibility of a 50 to 100 basis points cut in the interest rate this time. At the same time, some believe that the central bank will maintain the interest rate, which will increase disappointment in the business community. He said that the inflation rate in February was 1.5 percent, which is why the central bank should not act unnecessarily cautiously but boldly decide to restore business activities. The central bank predicted in January that the inflation rate would further slow down. Still, a slight increase is possible in the coming months. Some economists believe that the increase in inflation is not expected before May, while others

believe that inflation will increase by six to eight percent by December. Mian Zahid Hussain added that inflation would remain in single digits at present, so the central bank should cut interest rates by at least two percent. An IMF delegation in Pakistan is concerned about the decline in revenue. He observed that increasing tax revenues may increase inflation if the international organization emphasizes increasing tax revenues. If the IMF emphasizes an extraordinary increase in the tax target for the new fiscal year. In that case, the government will have to increase tax rates, which may increase inflation. Still, if revenues are increased by increasing the tax base, inflation may decrease instead of increase.

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US tariffs: Beijing rolls out plans

BEIJING rolled out countermeasures in response to the additional 10 percent tariff the United States arbitrarily imposed on Chinese goods that day. Apart from putting some US companies on its unreliable entity list, citing national sovereignty, security and development concerns, Beijing has taken aim at a variety of US agricultural produce this time. Its previous retaliatory tariffs were mainly restricted to certain US industrial products. Starting from Monday next week, China will impose an additional 15 percent tariff on chicken, wheat, corn and cotton originating from the US; and another 10 percent tariff on US sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, aquatic products, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. It has also launched an anti-circumvention investigation into imported fiber optic products originating from the US. China is also suing the US for its latest tariff increase under the World Trade Organization dispute settlement mechanism, as the unilateral tariff measures are not only unjust but seriously violate WTO rules and undermine the basis for bilateral economic and trade cooperation. China is the largest market for US agricultural exports, accounting for about 20 percent of the total, followed by Mexico and Canada. In contrast, thanks to its diversification strategy in recent years, China has promoted robust agricultural trade relations with other major agricultural exporters including Brazil, the European Union, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Russia and Ukraine. The Trump administration should be spurred by Beijing's latest move to reflect on the fact that what it has done with regard to China-related economic and trade issues over the past month or so has already prompted the Chinese side to doubt its good faith in saying Sino-US relations stand at a new beginning. By targeting US agricultural imports, Beijing intends to awaken the Trump administration to the historically proven truth there are no winners in trade wars. The countermeasures both Canada and Mexico have taken in response to the US' tariff attacks on them are also expected to serve to drive home that message to the administration. The US' coercive and bullying moves should also prompt the two countries to realize that snuffing out others' candles does not bring light to oneself, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. The two countries have previously proposed to the Trump administration that they should target China together with the US in exchange for the US administration showing them tariff lenience. "The Chinese people never accept bullying. Pressure, coercion and threats are not the right way to deal with China", said Lin. "Exerting extreme pressure on China is the wrong target and the wrong calculation." Weaponizing tariffs or bending rules is not dealmaking, it is extortion and blackmail. Such practices epitomize the bullying that characterizes "America First".



Trump bullish but America divided

PRESIDENT Donald Trump declared on Tuesday that "America is back" at the start of his first speech to a joint session of Congress in his second term. He proclaimed: "America's momentum is back. Our spirit is back. Our pride is back. Our confidence is back," before adding that the American dream is "unstoppable." The country is split down the middle about his policies and that was visually obvious during the speech to Congress. The Department of Government Efficiency and its leader Elon Musk are under attack by Democrats and government employees who have lost their jobs. The relationship between the US and its neighbors is tense due to the president's tariffs against Canada and Mexico, while China is threatening a trade war. There are fears over the long-term damage being to America's relations with its neighbors and to global trade. The relationship with America's allies in Europe, America's closest allies and NATO partners, is rife with tension over the war in Ukraine, how best to end it and how to deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In his speech, the president presented a different picture on all these issues and events on the ground show that his strategy is winning so far. The president invited Musk to his congressional speech and praised him for the accomplishments of the Department of Government Efficiency, which has been tasked with overhauling the federal government. Musk and his team have been making drastic cuts to federal agencies, leading to job cuts, the elimination of agencies like the US Agency for International Development and funding freezes, fueling protests and an outcry by Democrats. Several of the federal employees who have lost their jobs were in the gallery as guests of the Democrats. While the president boasted about his success in securing the border, his tariff battle with America's neighbors is capturing the headlines. The tariffs have caused a crisis in America's relationship with Canada and Mexico and are threatening to upend global trade, while affecting the livelihoods of everyday Americans. But Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick announced that the crisis with the two neighbors may be resolved this week and Trump will "probably" announce a deal that will reduce the tariffs, following lengthy phone calls between their representatives and the commerce secretary. The dispute between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his European allies also seems on its way to being resolved. The president softened his tone after he received an "important letter" and expression of regret by Zelensky over the Oval Office argument with the American president and Vice President J.D. Vance. The US president did not back down from his intention to "reclaim" the Panama Canal or shy away from a new expansionist foreign policy. As proof that Trump's strategy seems to be working, it emerged that a consortium of companies including American investment firm BlackRock was set to buy shares from the Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison Holdings that would give it control of the ports at either end of the canal.

Europe Revolted Against USA

Qamar Bashir



President Macron took a similarly firm stance, reminding Trump that European leaders had collectively decided to stand with Ukraine during a G7 summit. He rejected Trump's criticism of Europe's contributions to Ukraine, pointing out that European nations had provided \$128 billion in aid. Macron praised Ukraine's resilience in defending not just its sovereignty but also the broader security of Europe. In a pointed response to Trump's transactional approach—demanding Ukrainian rare earth minerals in exchange for U.S. aid—Macron argued that such conditions undermined Ukraine's...

DURING his visit to the White House, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky faced a stark contrast in treatment compared to the dignified receptions given to French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. While Zelensky was reportedly dismissed with little regard, Macron and Starmer were received with full diplomatic protocol, reflecting the shifting dynamics of U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump. Despite the respectful treatment, both European leaders remained firm in their stance, pushing back against Trump's evolving position on the Russia-Ukraine war—once a strong supporter of Ukraine, now advocating for an abrupt end to the conflict on terms favorable to Russia. During his recent visit to the White House, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky faced notably different treatment compared to the dignified receptions accorded to French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. While Zelensky was reportedly dismissed with little regard, Macron and Starmer received full diplomatic honors, reflecting shifting dynamics in U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump. Despite the courteous treatment, both European leaders firmly opposed Trump's evolving stance on the Russia-Ukraine war—transitioning from strong support for Ukraine to advocating for an abrupt end to the conflict on terms favorable to Russia. In separate joint press conferences with Trump, Macron and Starmer unequivocally stated that Europe would not accept a peace deal dictated by Putin without clear guarantees and accountability for Russian aggression. They emphasized that any ceasefire must align with Ukraine's terms, ensuring lasting security rather than rewarding aggression. Both leaders reaffirmed Europe's commitment to supporting Ukraine, even if it necessitated military involvement, signaling readiness to act independently of the U.S. if required. Prime Minister Starmer underscored the UK's unwavering commitment to NATO and advocated for a strategic approach to military funding. He emphasized that any peace deal must be fair, enforceable, and not embolden future aggression. Declaring the UK's preparedness to back a peace agreement with military and economic measures, he stated that Britain was ready to deploy forces if necessary. He also highlighted the UK's increased

defense spending as a step toward strengthening European security. Starmer described Russia's war on Ukraine as a moment of global peril and cautioned against a rushed peace agreement that could set dangerous precedents. He stressed that peace must be built on strength, ensuring that Putin cannot simply regroup and strike again. In a subtle challenge to Trump's approach, he affirmed that European unity was essential for long-term peace, regardless of U.S. involvement. Acknowledging shifting U.S. policies, he diplomatically framed it as adapting to a "new era" and supported Trump's call for greater European responsibility in NATO, stating that the UK was fully committed to strengthening its defense posture. President Macron took a similarly firm stance, reminding Trump that European leaders had collectively decided to stand with Ukraine during a G7 summit. He rejected Trump's criticism of Europe's contributions to Ukraine, pointing out that European nations had provided \$128 billion in aid. Macron praised Ukraine's resilience in defending not just its sovereignty but also the broader security of Europe. In a pointed response to Trump's transactional approach—demanding Ukrainian rare earth minerals in exchange for U.S. aid—Macron argued that such conditions undermined Ukraine's sovereignty. He warned that a peace deal without concrete guarantees would be meaningless and emphasized that lasting peace must be defended, not just declared. Macron also stressed that Europe was prepared to send troops to Ukraine once a lasting peace agreement was reached and signed by both Ukraine and Russia. He made it clear that European security was directly tied to Ukraine's stability, stating that while the U.S. was geographically distant, Europe could not afford complacency given its proximity to the conflict. He reinforced the message that Europe was ready to take full responsibility for its security, with or without U.S. support. In his address to the French nation following his visit to Washington, President Macron emphasized the urgency of bolstering European defense capabilities in response to Russian aggression and the uncertain trajectory of U.S. foreign policy under President Trump. He declared, "The future of Europe does not have to be decided in Washington or Moscow," underscoring the need for European autonomy in defense matters. Macron proposed extending France's nu-

clear deterrent to protect other European Union nations, reflecting a commitment to safeguard the continent against potential threats. He cautioned that "Russia has become a threat for France and Europe," highlighting the importance of self-reliance in defense. Addressing the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Macron insisted that any truce must be "solid for themselves and for all of us," ensuring it does not reward aggression. He emphasized the necessity of substantial guarantees for Ukraine's and Europe's security, stating that "peace cannot be concluded at any price." Macron also advocated for a fair distribution of aid responsibilities, noting that Europe has already contributed significantly to Ukraine's defense. He called for a balanced sharing of security burdens between Europe and the United States, reflecting a commitment to a unified and robust response to ongoing geopolitical challenges. Ultimately, both leaders presented a unified European vision: peace must be durable, just, and backed by strength. They rejected any agreement that would leave Ukraine vulnerable and asserted Europe's readiness to confront Russian aggression if necessary. Their firm stance sent a clear message—Europe will not be sidelined in decisions that affect its future. The United States' recent foreign policy shift toward a more self-serving and transactional approach has raised concerns among European nations. This change, characterized by prioritizing short-term business interests, risks undermining longstanding alliances and could lead to significant geopolitical consequences. European countries have substantial investments in the U.S., totaling approximately \$3.46 trillion. Should these nations perceive the U.S. as an unreliable partner, they might redirect their investments to other regions, diminishing America's global economic influence. This transactional stance could erode the international standing the U.S. has built over centuries, isolating it from key allies. Recent tensions with Greenland, Canada, Mexico, Panama, the Middle East, and now Europe—stemming from a 180-degree shift in U.S. policy on Ukraine compared to the previous administration—exemplify this trend. The current U.S. policies, driven by a "Make America Great Again" zeal, may lead to a decline in international influence. It is imperative for the U.S. to reassess its approach to halt this downward trajectory in global geopolitics.

Presidential address to parliament

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Following the Presidential address, the Parliament holds a general debate on the contents of the speech, as stipulated by Rule 60 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007. This debate allows members to express their views on the government's policies and raise concerns about various issues. Discussion serves as an essential mechanism...

THE commencement of the parliamentary year in Pakistan is marked by the Presidential address to the both Houses of the Parliament assembled together, a practice rooted in constitutional provisions and parliamentary tradition. This significant event is mandated by Article 56(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan, which requires the President to address a joint session at the commencement of the first session after each general election and the first session of each parliamentary year. The address sets the legislative agenda, highlights the government's achievements, and outlines policy priorities, providing a broad framework for the parliamentary year ahead. President Asif Ali Zardari will address the joint session of Parliament on March 10, officially inaugurating the new parliamentary year. This address comes at a critical juncture in Pakistan's political and economic landscape, as the country grapples with governance challenges, economic recovery, and international diplomacy. His speech is expected to outline the government's strategy for the upcoming year, touching upon key areas such as economic policies, security concerns, foreign relations, and legislative priorities. The session will be closely watched by both lawmakers and the public, as it sets the tone for parliamentary proceedings in the coming months. President Asif Ali Zardari is going to achieve a historic milestone by addressing the joint session of Parliament for the eighth time, the highest number in Pakistan's parliamentary history. General Zia-ul-Haq and Ghulam Ishaq Khan each addressed the joint session five times, while Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari did so three times. Justice (R) Mohammed Rafiq Tarar addressed Parliament twice, Mamnoon Hussain four times, and Dr. Arif ur Rehman Alvi five times. Waseem Sajid, who briefly served as Acting President, addressed the joint session once. Notably, General Pervez Musharraf, despite holding the presidency from 2001 to 2008, addressed the joint session only once on January 17, 2004. The tradition of the Presidential address in Pakistan traces back to the British parliamentary system, where the monarch delivers the Speech from the Throne to open the parliamentary session. The inaugural Presidential address to the National Assembly of Pakistan was delivered on March 25, 1956, by Major General

Iskander Mirza, the country's first President, following the promulgation of the 1956 Constitution. This practice was reinstated with the adoption of the 1973 Constitution, which remains the cornerstone of Pakistan's parliamentary democracy. The address holds symbolic importance as it reinforces the unity of the executive and legislative branches and reaffirms the President's role as a constitutional figurehead. The joint session of Parliament, comprising both the National Assembly and the Senate, serves as a platform for the President to convey the government's vision and legislative priorities. The address typically covers a wide range of issues, including economic performance, foreign policy, security challenges, and social development. It provides a comprehensive overview of the government's policies and future plans, enabling lawmakers and the public to gauge the administration's direction. Additionally, the address reflects the broader political landscape, indicating the government's focus areas and its approach toward governance. Following the Presidential address, the Parliament holds a general debate on the contents of the speech, as stipulated by Rule 60 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007. This debate allows members to express their views on the government's policies and raise concerns about various issues. The discussion serves as an essential mechanism for parliamentary oversight, enabling legislators to hold the government accountable and suggest improvements to its policies. The duration of the debate may vary, depending on the complexity of the issues and the level of interest among members. The purpose of this debate is to ensure that the government remains answerable to Parliament and that the policies announced in the address are critically examined. The opposition often uses this opportunity to highlight governance shortcomings, propose alternative policy directions, and hold the ruling party accountable for its promises. This practice strengthens democratic governance by fostering transparency and encouraging policy refinements based on parliamentary discussions. It is noteworthy that every political party in Pakistan, while in opposition, has disrupted this parliamentary process by protesting during the Presidential address. This trend has become a defining feature of joint sessions, where

opposition members use the occasion to voice their dissent against the government's policies. Despite being a constitutional requirement, the Presidential address has often been overshadowed by political confrontations. The opposition frequently sees this occasion as an opportunity to highlight the government's failures, stage symbolic protests, and walk out in defiance. This recurring pattern underscores the broader issue of political polarization in Pakistan, where parliamentary proceedings are frequently disrupted due to ideological and political differences. Such protests, while a legitimate part of democratic expression, also hinder the smooth functioning of parliamentary processes and divert attention from substantive policy discussions. The Presidential address also serves as a barometer of the political climate, reflecting the state of government-opposition relations. A smooth session indicates a co-operative atmosphere, while disruptions signal heightened political tensions. Given the current political situation, it remains to be seen how the opposition will respond to President Asif Ali Zardari's upcoming address on March 10. If the past is any indication, opposition members may seize the opportunity to challenge government policies and voice their concerns on critical national issues. However, if conducted smoothly, the session could serve as a means of fostering consensus on key policy matters. In conclusion, the beginning of the parliamentary year in Pakistan with the Presidential address to the joint session of Parliament is a constitutionally mandated tradition that reinforces the principles of democratic governance. It provides a platform for the government to outline its vision, allows lawmakers to scrutinize policies, and facilitates constructive dialogue between the executive and legislative branches. While the session often witnesses political confrontations, it remains an essential element of Pakistan's parliamentary democracy, symbolizing the nation's commitment to transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The upcoming address by President Asif Ali Zardari on March 10 will be a key event in shaping Pakistan's parliamentary and political discourse for the year ahead. Whether the session proceeds smoothly or is marked by opposition protests, it will reflect the state of democracy in the country and the challenges that lie ahead.

Briefs

Judge questions govt over...

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Justice Khan further remarked that two declarations had been submitted, and despite the court seeking a response from the government, an unsatisfactory reply was provided. "Now the government wants to dispose of Aafia Siddiqui's petition. AAG, are you saying you want to get rid of this case?" he questioned. The judge also noted that the prime minister had written the required letter and the necessary visa had been provided. "The whole world will know what the Government of Pakistan has done. What great achievements have you made? The Attorney General's Office was instructed to provide recommendations to the government and update the court, yet now you are asking for the case to be dismissed."

Yousaf Raza Gilani acquitted in three...

FROM PAGE 01
Gilani, saying that a verdict had been reached in three cases against him. Gilani responded affirmatively, acknowledging the decision. At one point, the court asked Gilani which prison he would prefer — Karachi, Multan, or Islamabad. In response, the Senate chairman said that he had no fear of jail, adding: "Prison is nothing new for us. If you wish, you may even sentence me to death." His remarks prompted a smile from the presiding judge. The court further inquired why he did not prefer house arrest, to which Gilani replied that his ancestral home was in Multan, his family resided in Lahore, and his Senate office was in Islamabad. When the judge pointed out that the trial was being conducted in Karachi, Gilani remarked: "Then people will say my party has a government in Sindh." Announcing the verdict, the court declared that no charges against Gilani had been proven, granting him an honourable acquittal. The judge further noted that those who had testified against him were now facing charges themselves. Following the completion of the trial in three cases, the court acquitted Gilani and 40 other accused individuals from the TDAP corruption case.

PM congratulates Chinese president

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He emphasized that as "iron brothers" and all weather strategic cooperative partners, Pakistan and China will continue to work together closely to further strengthen bilateral cooperation to realize the shared objectives of peace and development.

EU leaders extend support...

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the meeting Antonio Costa told reporters. EU leaders hailed the European Commission's proposals this week to give them fiscal flexibility on defence spending, and to jointly borrow up to 150 billion euros (\$160 billion) to lend to EU governments to spend on their militaries. In a joint statement agreed by all 27 member states, the leaders called on their ministers to examine these proposals in detail urgently. "Europe must take up this challenge, this arms race. And it must win it," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said at a special defence summit in Brussels. "Europe as a whole is truly capable of winning any military, financial, economic confrontation with Russia - we are simply stronger," Tusk said. French President Emmanuel Macron, who on Wednesday had told French voters that Russia was a threat to France and Europe, said all this was just a first step. "Whatever happens in Ukraine, we need to build autonomous defence capacities in Europe," he said after the EU summit.

'Brilliant tournament'

ICC manager praises Pakistan's arrangement

This tournament will demonstrate positive image of Pakistan, its people and security institutions: Musker

DNA

DUBAI: International Cricket Council (ICC) Safety and Security Manager Dave Musker praised the arrangements made by the Pakistani authorities for the Champions Trophy 2025, whose country's leg was concluded after hosting the second semi-final match between South Africa and New Zealand. Sharing his views on the eight-team tournament, Musker thanked Pakistani police, Rangers and army for ensuring foolproof security arrangements for the teams and ICC staff. The security institutions provided full cooperation throughout the tournament, he expressed his thoughts before the second semi-final played at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium. He admitted that some teams had shown reservations about traveling to Pakistan before the commencement of the marquee event. "This has been a brilliant tournament," said the ICC manager, adding that it will demonstrate a very positive image of Pakistan, its people and its security institutions globally. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) successfully hosted the ICC's tournament, which kicked off on February 19, featur-



ing a total of 15 matches in the renovated home stadiums and in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under a hybrid model agreed upon with India. Just months before the commencement of the tournament, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) refused to send its national men's team to Pakistan, citing security concerns. The BCCI's refusal drew a stern reaction from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), resulting in a long standoff between the two cricketing bodies. Therefore, the final match of the tournament will be played on a neutral venue, Dubai, between India and New Zealand on March 9, which would mark the conclusion of the ICC event, hosted by Pakistan for the first time in nearly three decades. However, the Men in Green, who were also defending champions of the title, failed to leave a mark as they were eliminated without even advancing to semi-finals following back-to-back defeats in the group matches. Pakistan, who were in Group A alongside India, New Zealand, and Bangladesh, ended their journey with disappointing figures as they stayed on last on the points table following two defeats and their last match against Bangladesh was washed out.

Kante snatches a point for Al-Ittihad

Al-Qadsiah, who would have moved into second place with a victory, remain in third, level on points with Al-Hilal. And they should have won, because the visitors were second-best for the majority of the game in Dammam

DNA

QATAR: DAI-Ittihad rescued a point with a 1-1 draw in their Saudi Pro League clash at Al-Qadsiah on Thursday, thanks to a 96th-minute strike from N'Golo Kante that canceled out Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's opening goal, which came just five minutes earlier. The late equalizer from the former Chelsea and Leicester City midfielder moved Al-Ittihad seven points clear at the top of the table but Al-Hilal have a chance to close the gap to four when they travel to Al-Fayha on Friday. The league leaders have drawn their last three games. Al-Qadsiah, who would have moved into second place with a victory, remain in third, level on points with Al-Hilal. And they should have won, because the visitors were second-best for the majority of the game in Dammam. The hosts dominated the first half to the extent that the visitors from Jeddah would surely have been relieved if they had found themselves only a goal down at the break, yet somehow they were still level at the end of the half. Al-Qadsiah's forwards certainly had their chances but were unable to make them count. Mexican marksman Julian Quinones has been in fine form in the

league but could not find a way past Predrag Rajkovic in goal, or the woodwork. It was not only the forwards who missed good chances; defender Mohammed Abu Al-Shamat had a shot cleared off the line. The home side were almost made to pay for their misses when Karim Benzema found Fawaz Al-Sagour unmarked in the area, only for the ball to bounce off his knee with the goal at his mercy. As chances came and went there was always a possibility that Al-Ittihad might snatch a goal. Houssein Aouar, for example, was on target early in the second half with a shot from outside the area, forcing a save from Koen Casteels. Still Al-Qadsiah continued to push forward until finally, in the first minute of added time, they got their just rewards. Nahitan Nandez sent in a low cross into the center of the area from the right and Aubameyang was waiting to guide the ball into the bottom corner of the net with a first-time shot. That looked to be that but while Al-Ittihad might not be at their best right now, their fighting spirit is still very much in evidence. They grabbed their late equalizer when Benzema crossed from the left and found Kante, unmarked inside the six-yard box, who stabbed home to gift his team what had looked to be an unlikely point.

Shehbaz Sharif reaffirms Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan on all its core issues. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's consistent and unflinching support to China on its core issues and said that the leadership and peoples of both countries remain determined in their shared resolve to further strengthen the Pakistan-China "All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" and elevate it to new heights. Progress on security and counter-terrorism cooperation between both countries was also discussed. The Prime Minister noted with great pleasure that this year marked the tenth anniversary of President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Pakistan in 2015. In this regard, the Prime Minister issued directions to ensure that this memorable occasion be celebrated in a befitting manner. He also renewed his most cordial invitation to President Xi Jinping to undertake a State visit to Pakistan, at his earliest convenience. During the meeting, the Prime Minister emphasized upon the need for both sides to continue working together closely, to ensure timely implementation and completion of various initiatives and projects under CPCPC. The Chinese Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for his kind words and good wishes for the Chinese leadership. He briefed the Prime Minister on the latest developments on Pakistan-China bilateral cooperation. While praising the Government's achievements in improving the macro-economic situation in the country, the Ambassador affirmed that China would continue to extend its full support and cooperation to Pakistan in the latter efforts for national development.

DNA

LAHORE: A high-level delegation from Pakistan and the German Hockey Federation met with International Hockey Federation (FIH) President Tayyab Ikram in Lahore yesterday to discuss ambitious plans for revitalizing hockey worldwide, holding events in Germany and in Pakistan and strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and other nations. The German delegation, led by CEO and High Performance Director Martin Schultz, engaged in comprehensive discussions with Ikram and Pakistan hockey officials, including Olympian Khawaja Junaid, who serves as Focal Person for Sports in the Prime Minister's Youth Program. Key topics addressed on a separate note was the discussion between Ikram and Martin was the extensive involvement of nations in global calendar and holding of events in Germany. "Organizing hockey events in Germany, and coordinating international tournament schedules within the global hockey calendar came in to discussion among German and FIH officials," revealed an official. Whereas on the other hand meeting of Ikram and Junaid dis-

cussed strategies to convince more foreign teams to visit Pakistan for bilateral series as well as finding ways to hold international events in Pakistan. "The FIH president expresses deep admiration for Pakistan's rich hockey history and emphasizes our commitment to supporting the development of hockey in the country," said Ikram during the talks. The meeting explored various collaboration opportunities in coaching,



US-Pakistan cooperation important

FROM PAGE 01

President Donald Trump triumphantly announced his arrest Tuesday in an address to Congress, calling him "the top terrorist responsible for that atrocity", while thanking Pakistan for apprehending him. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Trump for acknowledging the country's role in counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan, and promised to "continue to partner closely with the United States" in a post on X. Daesh-K militants gave Sharifullah a cellphone and a SIM card and told him to check the route to the airport, according to the Justice Department's affidavit in the case. When he gave it the all-clear, they told him to leave the area, it said. "Later that same day, Sharifullah learned of the attack at HKIA described above and recognised the alleged bomber as an [Daesh]-K operative he had known while incarcerated," the affidavit said.

Jason Gillespie calls Aaqib Javed 'clown'

The former coach made these remarks in response to the statement of Javed, in which he mentioned: "We changed 16 coaches in the last 2.5 years and 26 selectors, if you do this to any team around the world, their performance will be like this too"

ISLAMABAD: Jason Gillespie, Pakistan's former coach, called interim head coach Aaqib Javed "a clown," accusing him of undermining him behind the scenes. Gillespie, in an Instagram Story on Wednesday, said that he was undermined before his resignation from the post of Pakistan coach in December. The former coach made these remarks in response to the statement of Javed, in which he mentioned: "We changed 16 coaches in the last 2.5 years and 26 selectors, if you do this to any team around the world, their performance will be like this too." Gillespie implied that Javed was responsible for his and Gary Kirsten's removal as coaches. "This is hilarious. Aaqib was clearly undermining Gary and I behind the scenes, campaigning to be the coach in all formats. He is a clown," he wrote in his social media post. Meanwhile, Javed made this comment in relation to the recent "poor performance" of the Pakistani team in the Champions Trophy 2025. It is important to note that Gillespie resigned ahead of the South Africa Test series. His decision came after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) decided against renewing red-ball assistant coach Tim Nielsen's contract, prompting the latter to take early retirement. Earlier in December, Australian coach disclosed that a lack of clarity over High-Performance Coach Tim Nielsen's position played a crucial role in his resignation. "I was completely unaware of the decision not to retain Tim Nielsen," Gillespie stated, adding: "This situation, along with past incidents, made me question whether I was truly needed. Not informing the head coach about such a major decision compelled me to think this way." Following his resignation, Javed was named as interim red-ball head coach by the PCB. — DNA

Babar father defends his son

The decision by the PCB follows the team's disappointing performance in the Champions Trophy

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Babar Azam's father has stepped up in support of his son after the former Pakistan captain was dropped from the national squad for the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand. The decision by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) follows the team's disappointing performance in the Champions Trophy, from which the host team was knocked out during the group stage. In a post on Instagram, Babar's father highlighted his son's achievements, pointing out that he was named in the ICC T20I Team of the Year and awarded the team's cap, yet was still dropped. He expressed confidence that Babar would make a strong comeback by performing well in the upcoming National T20 and Pakistan Super League (PSL). He also urged former cricketers to be mindful of their words when commenting on the matter, warning that they might not be able to handle a re-



sponse if someone were to reply to their remarks. Calling them a part of the past, he said they should not expect the doors to reopen for them. Addressing criticism about his outspoken support for Babar, he firmly stated that as his son's first and last coach, mentor, and spokesperson, he had every right to speak. He added that those who did not have such a bond should remain patient. Furthermore, he called on cricket fans to review the past performances of those making constant noise and criticism before taking their opinions seriously. He urged them to visit the PCB website to check the records, saying that wise people would understand the message.

Pakistan and German officials discuss global events, hockey development with FIH President

DNA

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training programs, and competitive events. Ikram also welcomed the German federation initiative of sending its junior team to Pakistan. FIH President Ikram welcomed the German delegates and praised their willingness to cooperate with Pakistan hockey authorities. "International cooperation is essential for promoting hockey globally," Ikram stated, highlighting the significance of such partnerships for the sport's

development. Olympian Khawaja Junaid assured the delegation of full support from Pakistan's Prime Minister, emphasizing that hockey revival remains a government priority. "The recent visits of German and Dutch clubs, along with the current tour of Germany's National Junior team to Pakistan, are initiatives of the Prime Minister's Youth Program in collaboration with the Pakistan Hockey Federation," Junaid explained. The Pakistani representative stressed the importance of international teams visiting Pakistan to secure the future of hockey in the country. All officials present agreed to intensify efforts to conduct more bilateral hockey series and international events in Pakistan. The meeting is widely regarded as a positive step toward strengthening hockey ties between Pakistan and other nations, potentially leading to enhanced collaboration in player development, technical expertise exchange, and competitive opportunities for both nations involved. This development comes at a crucial time for Pakistan hockey, which has been working to reclaim its former glory on the international stage through strategic partnerships and development initiatives.

Journey of Shariullah from Kabul...

FROM PAGE 01

When Afghan ex-president Ashraf Ghani became took charge of affairs as President in 2014, Pakistani Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah escaped to Afghanistan. He, along with Afghan Taliban forces, weakened Afghan state control along the Durand Line. Meanwhile, ISKP militants who had relocated from Syria and Iraq began terrorizing Afghanistan's eastern provinces—Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan, Laghman, and Logar. By 2019, ISKP had virtually established its own state within these Afghan regions. Even the Afghan Taliban struggled to contain ISKP's growing influence. A joint operation by Afghan and U.S. coalition forces against ISKP began in early 2019 and lasted until July of that year, during these operations, nearly 3,000 ISIS fighters were captured in Nangarhar alone. Among them were 2,700 women and children, mostly from Pakistan's tribal areas, including Orakzai, Waziristan, and Bajaur. As pressure mounted, ISKP leaders sought refuge elsewhere. The group's head, Aslam Farooqi, was arrested in Kandahar and later transferred to a high-security prison in Kabul. However, when the Taliban took over on August 15, 2021, they opened prison gates across the country, allowing detained militants to escape. According to former Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh, Sharif Ullah was initially arrested in 2019 and freed when the Taliban stormed Afghan jails in August 2021. Though he was initially an insignificant fighter, he later gained notoriety as ISKP strengthened its presence in Nangarhar. Sharif Ullah operated under multiple aliases, including Qari Muhammad, Qari Sharif Ghazni, Jafar Muhammad, Jafar Sharif, Sharif al-Khilaji. His brother, Naequeullah al-Khorasani, also an ISKP member, was killed in a joint Afghan-U.S. operation in Nangarhar in 2019. After the Taliban returned to power, they attempted to re-arrest ISKP fighters. Sharifullah, along with other militants, fled Afghanistan and reportedly took refuge in Mastung, Balochistan, in September 2021. Trump's announcement has also puzzled former CIA officials, who insist that the Kabul airport bombing was orchestrated by Al-Qaeda and the Haqqani Network. Meanwhile, Pakistani authorities claim they arrested Sharifullah in 2023. Both the Taliban's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, and Amrullah Saleh question the timing and nature of Sharifullah's capture and extradition, raising concerns that ISKP is being politically manipulated by both the U.S. and Pakistan. Former TTP spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan has also made similar claims, reinforcing suspicions that the war initiated in the 1970s on Afghan soil is far from over. Instead, it is evolving into a new phase—one that will likely center on the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions, home to politically, religiously, and economically divided Pashtun communities. It is also noteworthy that during his presidency, Donald Trump prioritized U.S.-India relations, causing unease in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Against this backdrop, Sharifullah's capture and extradition may serve as a strategic move to counter India's growing influence.

JIT grills PTI leaders, summons them again on March 11

ISLAMABAD: A Joint Investigation Team (JIT) on Friday, constituted by the federal government to probe "malicious campaigns on social media", grilled Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members over allegations of spreading anti-state propaganda on social media. The JIT — led by Islamabad Inspector General of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi — had issued notices to 15 members of the former ruling party, but sources informed Geo News that only three party members appeared before the body. Apart from the three leaders, two members of the party's finance department also appeared before the investigation team. — DNA

Briefs

KSrelief distributes 1,361 food Baskets in Romania

BUCHAREST: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) distributed 1,361 food baskets in Bucharest and Constanta, Romania, benefiting 6,805 individuals as part of the "Etaam" Ramadan Food Basket Project for the year 1446 AH (2025). In its fourth phase, the "Etaam" project aims to distribute 390,109 food baskets across 27 countries during Ramadan, benefiting 2,304,104 individuals, with a total cost exceeding SAR 67.06 million. This initiative is part of Saudi Arabia's ongoing humanitarian and relief efforts—through KSrelief—to support vulnerable communities worldwide and alleviate the suffering of those in need.—APP

PSX continues with bullish trend

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 685.52 points, a positive change of 0.60 percent, closing at 114,398.70 points as compared to 113,713.18 points on the last trading day. A total of 404,365,056 shares were traded during the day as compared to 373,093,763 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs27.842 billion against Rs26.249 billion on the last trading day. As many as 433 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 219 of them recorded gains and 151 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 63 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Fauji Cement with 57,215,949 shares at Rs45.99 per share, Sui South Gas with 23,758,961 shares at Rs35.50 per share and Maple Leaf with 22,469,287 shares at Rs56.63 per share.—APP

Gold price increases by Rs3,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs3,000 and was sold at Rs307,000 on Friday against its sale at Rs 304,000 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of karat gold also increased by Rs2,571 to Rs 263,203 from Rs260,630 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs2,359 to Rs241,278 from Rs238,919. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.31 to Rs.3,400 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.26 to Rs2,914. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$28 to \$2,921 from \$2,893 whereas the prices of silver in international market increased by \$0.30, to \$32.65, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 15 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday depreciated by 15 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.96 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.81. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.25 and Rs281.75, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.17 to close at Rs303.24 against the last day's closing of Rs302.07, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 81 paisa and closed at Rs1.89, whereas an increase of 19 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs361.22 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs361.03. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 04 paisa each to close at Rs 76.22 and Rs74.63, respectively.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Türkiye Irfan Naziroglu, Dean of Africa Group Mohammad Karmoune Ambassador of Morocco, Ambassadors of Jordan, Malaysia, TRNC and others cutting ribbon to inaugurate the solo exhibition at a local hotel. — **Online**

Chinese FM highlights China's diplomatic vision

Wang outlined three strategic priorities for Global South nations: strengthening themselves through expanded cooperation mechanisms like BRICS, standing united to increase their representation in global governance, and prioritizing development, according to CEN

DNA

BEIJING: "The world today is marked by sweeping winds and surging clouds. The dynamism of these changes originates from the South," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated at a press conference on the sidelines of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing. According to the Foreign Minister, the Global South now accounts for over 40 percent of global GDP and contributes up to 80 percent of global growth, making it "a key force for maintaining world peace, driving world develop-

ment, and improving global governance." Wang outlined three strategic priorities for Global South nations: strengthening themselves through expanded cooperation mechanisms like BRICS, standing united to increase their representation in global governance, and prioritizing development, according to CEN. Emphasizing China's enduring connection to these nations, Wang affirmed, "No matter how the world changes, our heart will always be with the Global South, and our root will grow deeper in the Global South." As a cornerstone of China's Global South engagement, Wang highlighted the "all-weather"

strategic partnership with African nations, describing China-Africa relations as being "at their best in history." "Africa is a fertile land of hope of the 21st century. There will be no global modernization without African modernization," Wang emphasized, advocating that "countries should support Africa in exploring a new development path of self-reliance and self-strengthening." As the United Nations marks its 80th anniversary this year, Wang reaffirmed China's support for the UN's central role in global governance despite rising unilateralism and power politics. "The more complex the problems, the greater the need to ac-

centuate the important status of the U.N.; the more pressing the challenges, the greater the need to uphold the due authority of the U.N.," Wang stated. He outlined four principles for effective global governance: sovereign equality, fairness and justice, multilateralism, and respect for international law. Wang specifically cautioned that "international affairs must not be monopolized by a small number of countries." Stating that China is a founder and beneficiary of the post-WWII international order, Wang pledged that "we have no intention to start all over again, nor do we support any country's attempt to overturn the current order". Framing

these priorities within China's broader diplomatic vision, Wang emphasized the country's commitment to providing stability amid global turbulence. "We are living in a changing and turbulent world, where certainty is becoming a scarce resource," he noted. "China's diplomacy will stand firm on the right side of history and on the side of human progress. We will provide certainty to this uncertain world." Wang elaborated on President Xi Jinping's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, noting this approach "will ensure that the world belongs to every country, and that everyone will have a bright future"

Australians told 'prepare for worst' as tropical cyclone nears

GOLD COAST, Australia: Violent winds toppled power lines Friday as a tropical cyclone inched toward Australia's eastern coast, swelling rivers, sparking evacuation orders and leaving 80,000 homes without electricity. Tropical Cyclone Alfred was 125 kilometers east of Brisbane by Friday afternoon, crawling toward the densely populated coastline at "walking speed," government forecasts said. Some four million people were in the firing line along a 400-kilometer (250-mile) stretch of coastline straddling the state border of Queensland and New South Wales. It is a region rarely troubled by typhoons — it has been more than 50 years since a tropical cyclone made landfall in that stretch of coast. No deaths have been reported, but police said one man was missing after his four-wheel drive vehicle was swept from a bridge into fast-running river water south of the cyclone. "The male driver was able to exit the vehicle and secure himself to a tree branch," New South Wales police said in a statement. But later, "the man was swept from the tree and seen to go beneath the water where he has not been sighted since." Heavy rains associated with the cyclone had already prompted flood warnings in the area. Around 80,000 homes were left in the dark across the two states as winds uprooted trees and brought down power lines, officials and utility companies said, as repair crews raced to restore electricity. Queensland Premier David Crisafulli said the storm already "packed a punch," warning conditions would get worse as it approached land on Saturday morning. AFP images showed a white yacht blown into the rocks after snapping its moorings at Point Danger on the Gold Coast. Two people made "a lucky escape" after a large gum tree crashed through the roof of a house in rural Currumbin Valley, the Queensland Ambulance Service said. Emergency response officials said they had issued evacuation orders for some 10,000 people in the flood-prone northern rivers region of New South Wales. There was particular concern for the town of Lismore, which was engulfed by record 14-meter (45-foot) floodwaters after heavy rains in 2022. Many residents have spent the past three days fortifying their homes with sandbags, tying down loose furniture and stocking up on food and water. "A lot of people are feeling a bit anxious, for sure, because we don't know what's going to happen," said Paul Farrow from Coolangatta, a coastal suburb better known for its sun-splashed beaches. "Yeah, we could all lose our houses. Who knows," the 62-year-old told AFP.—APP

Women spearhead maternal health revolution in Bangladesh

BISWAMBHARPUR: Young Bangladeshi mother Mafia Akhter's decision to give birth at home and without a doctor left her grieving over her firstborn's lifeless body and vowing never to repeat the ordeal. "My first baby died," the 25-year-old told AFP. "I told myself that if I didn't go to the clinic it could happen again, and that I wouldn't be able to bear it." She gave birth again last month at a medical center in a village hemmed in by rice paddy and rivers, far from the nearest hospital and without the oversight of an obstetrician. But this time her child survived — something she credits to Nargis Akhter, one of the thousands of Bangladeshi women working as "skilled birth attendants" to help mothers through delivery. "Giving birth is the most important and critical moment for a woman," Nargis — no relation to her patient — told AFP. "I am lucky and proud to be able to be with them at that moment." Nargis was speaking to AFP after her routine postnatal consultation with Mafia, who was cradling her young daughter during her return to the spartan village health center where she gave birth. Skilled birth attendants have been a fixture of Bangladesh's maternal health policy for two decades — APP

'Israel again weaponizing starvation in besieged Gaza'

UNITED NATIONS: Israel has resumed weaponizing starvation in war-shattered Gaza by breaking from the ceasefire agreement and blocking humanitarian aid, a group of UN human rights experts warned Friday. The warning came in joint statement from more than 30 UN experts, who said Israel's blockade of aid deliveries to G is a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Stressing that Israel is once again weaponizing aid, they called it's move a war crime and a crime against humanity under international law. The experts noted that as the occupying power, Israel, is obliged to ensure provision of sufficient food, medical supplies and other relief services. Israel halted aid deliveries to Gaza, demanding Hamas accept its terms for extending the ceasefire agreement's first phase. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would "open the gates of hell" in Gaza if all captives were not returned. Gaza has already been devastated by the war that followed the attacks. Hamas rejected the demand, saying that no more captives would be released until the second phase is negotiated "Apart from the cruelty of these statements on the second day of the holy month of Ramadan, these moves are patently unlawful under international law," the experts said. "As the occupying power, Israel is always obliged to ensure sufficient food, medical supplies and other relief services. "Israel is once again weaponizing aid. These are serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws, and war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute," they added. Meanwhile, Pakistan has strongly condemned Israel's decision to block the entry of critical humanitarian aid into Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan. The Foreign Ministry spokesman issued a statement saying that this latest action is part of Israel's systematic campaign to deny much needed humanitarian aid to millions of Palestinians in dire need, and called the decision another flagrant violation of international law that threatens the ceasefire agreement. South Africa also denounced Israel for blocking the entry of food into the besieged Gaza Strip, saying the regime is using starvation as a weapon of war against the people of Gaza. The South African Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the international community on Wednesday to hold Israel accountable for preventing food from entering Gaza. On March 2, Israel announced it was blocking aid deliveries until Hamas accepted its terms for an extension of the ceasefire agreement. Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase of the ceasefire until mid-April. Hamas is against this. The Palestinian resistance movement has insisted on a transition to the deal's second phase, which would allow for a permanent end to the Israeli campaign of genocide. In December 2023, South Africa brought a case before the ICJ (International Court of Justice) that argued the actions of the Israeli regime during the war in Gaza breached the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention. Since then, several nations have added their political weight to the proceedings, including Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Libya, Mexico, Spain and Turkey. In conclusion, the UN experts said, "We urge nations across the world to recall their own obligations under international law and to act to end this brutal and endless assault on the Palestinian people and their rights, lest the whole world be swept up in this storm of lawlessness and injustice.—APP

Call for decisive steps to resolve multi-dimensional crisis in Yemen

Ambassador Akram also strongly condemned the arbitrary detention of UN personnel, staff of international and national NGOs, and members of diplomatic missions by the Houthis, saying their safety and security must be guaranteed

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has underscored the need for reinvigorating political dialogue in Yemen and to take "decisive steps" to address the multidimensional crisis the impoverished Arab country is facing in a bid to usher in peace and stability in the region. "The international community must act with urgency to prevent further deterioration of the crisis and to pave the way for a future of stability and hope for Yemen," Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the UN Security Council on Thursday. "We reaffirm our full support for the UN-led peace process and stress the need for an inclusive, comprehensive and sustainable resolution

of the conflict," he said in a debate on the situation in Yemen. In this regard, regional initiatives, particularly those led by Saudi Arabia and Oman, remain critical in advancing these negotiations, the Pakistani envoy added. The crisis in Yemen, which worsened in 2014 after Houthi rebels (known officially as AnsarAllah) seized the capital, Sanaa, has been marked by complex political and military tensions. More than 17 million people — half the country's population — remain dependent on humanitarian assistance and protection. Describing the humanitarian situation in Yemen as "tragic," Ambassador Akram, said, "As we observe the holy month of Ramzan, millions in Yemen continue to endure extreme hardship." Currently, he said, 19.5 million people require urgent humanitarian assistance, including 17.1 million facing acute food insecurity. 4.5 million individuals are internally displaced, and 12 million children lack access to basic necessities such as food, water, shelter and healthcare. "In this situation," the Pakistani envoy regretted "deeply" the sudden cutoff of funding for humanitarian operation in Yemen. Pakistan, he said, denounced the Houthi attacks on commercial and merchant vessels, but noted from a UN report that no new incidents of at-

tacks on shipping have been recorded in the past month. This development, he pointed out, coincided with the ceasefire in Gaza. "This underscores the urgent need to fully implement and preserve the Gaza ceasefire agreement in all its phases — a permanent ceasefire will not only serve the cause of peace in Palestine with Israel, but also contribute to regional stability, including Yemen." Ambassador Akram also strongly condemned the arbitrary detention of UN personnel, staff of international and national NGOs, and members of diplomatic missions by the Houthis, saying their safety and security must be guaranteed. "We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained individuals. This will also ensure the

uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance to those in need." In conclusion, the Pakistani envoy reaffirmed, Pakistan's commitment to supporting a Yemen-led and Yemen-owned political process, facilitated by the United Nations. Briefing the 15-member Council, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen Hans Grundberg warned that after several years of fragile truce, there was a "palpable" fear of a return to all-out war in Yemen. "The current trajectory is deeply concerning," he told the Council, updating them on the latest political developments in the country, where Houthi rebels — formally known as Ansar Allah — have been battling Government forces backed.—Agencies

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Iraq authorities 'working to find academic kidnapped in Baghdad'

BAGHDAD: Iraq's national security adviser said that authorities were actively searching for Elizabeth Tsurkov, an Israeli-Russian academic kidnapped nearly two years ago in Baghdad. Tsurkov, a doctoral student at Princeton University and fellow at the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, has been missing in Iraq since March 2023. Israeli authorities said later she had been kidnapped, blaming a pro-Iranian group for her disappearance. National Security Adviser Qassem Al-Araji said "Iraqi authorities are working under the prime minister's direction" to solve the issue. "The security services are mobilized to locate her and find the group that kidnapped her," he said, adding there had been no claims of responsibility for her abduction or demands for her release. "We have to operate discreetly and through intermediaries" to locate her, he said. Tsurkov, who had likely entered Iraq on her Russian passport, had traveled to the country as part of her doctoral studies.

An Iraqi security source told AFP that the last trip was not Tsurkov's first visit to Iraq.—APP

Charity kitchen brings hope to displaced Palestinians

TULKARM: At a makeshift kitchen inside a city office building, volunteers rub paprika, oil and salt on slabs of chicken before arraying them on trays and slipping them into an oven. Once the meat is done, it is divided into portions and tucked into plastic foam containers along with piles of yellow rice scooped from large steel pots. The unpaid chefs at the Yasser Arafat Charity Kitchen in Tulkarm hope their labors will bring joy to displaced Palestinians trying to mark Ramadan. An Israeli military raid launched in the West Bank weeks ago has uprooted more than 40,000 people. Israel says it was meant to stamp out militancy in the occupied region, which has experienced a surge of violence since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023.—APP

Bangladesh police use tear gas to disperse Islamist march

DHAKA: Police in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka used tear gas and sound grenades on Friday to disperse hundreds of members of the banned militant group Hizb-ut-Tahrir seeking to march to demand the country's secular democracy be replaced by an Islamic caliphate. Hundreds of activists chanting "Khilafat, Khilafat" gathered for the 'March for Khilafat' procession at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque after Friday prayers, defying police barricades. Police were unable to control the crowd and had to use tear gas and sound grenades to disperse them, witnesses said. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police had warned banned organizations on Thursday against holding public meetings and rallies. Hizb-ut-Tahrir, banned in Bangladesh since October 2009 for posing a threat to national security, has frequently organized protests and marches in defiance of a government ban on public gatherings. The London-based Hizb-ut-Tahrir seeks to unite Muslims in a pan-Islamic state but says its means are peaceful. The Muslim-majority country of 170 million people is one of the world's largest and poorest democracies. It has been grappling with political unrest since an interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, took over following protests that drove then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina out of the country. —APP

Briefs

Weak-sounding pope releases audio message

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis recorded and released an audio message on Thursday thanking those who have been praying for his recovery, his voice breathless as he nears three weeks in hospital with pneumonia. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers for my health from the Square, I accompany you from here," Francis said in a message broadcast in St Peter's Square. "May God bless you and the Virgin protect you. Thank you," he said, taking laboured breaths as he spoke in his native Spanish, with some words fading away into nothing. It was the first time the world has heard Francis's voice since the 88-year-old was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on February 14. Pilgrims have been gathering in St Peter's Square every evening to pray for the pope's recovery. The hundreds of people there on Thursday applauded when they heard his message. The Vatican said earlier Thursday that the Argentine, head of the worldwide Catholic Church since 2013, is in a "stable" condition. There had been no repeat of Monday's respiratory failure, it said, and the pope's blood work "remained stable". — Agencies

NA makes strict security arrangements

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat has made strict security measures for the joint session of Parliament, scheduled to be held on Monday, March 10, at 3:00 PM. According to the National Assembly Secretariat, special invitations will be issued to journalists for media coverage from the press gallery. It has been clarified that Session-12 press gallery cards will not be valid for this session. Media organizations have been directed to submit the names of two reporters from those already issued accreditation cards through their beat reporter to obtain special invitations. To receive the invitation, journalists must send a picture of their previous National Assembly session card to the designated mobile numbers. — APP

Trump to go to Saudi Arabia to reach \$1 trillion deal

Saudis willing to invest \$1 trillion over four years in American companies, says president

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he likely would make his first trip abroad to Saudi Arabia to seal an agreement for Riyadh to invest upwards of \$1 trillion in the US economy, including purchases of military equipment. Talking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump said he would probably travel there in the next month and a half. He noted that the first overseas trip of his first term was to Riyadh in 2017 to announce Saudi investments estimated then to be worth \$350 billion. "This time, they've gotten richer, we've all gotten older," said Trump. He said that, at his behest, the Saudis were willing to invest \$1 trillion over four years in American companies including purchases of US military equipment. "And they've agreed to do that, so I'm going to be going there, and I have a great relationship with them, and they've been very nice," Trump said. Saudi Arabia has been taking a more prominent role in US foreign policy. Trump's Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff

Trump signs order establishing 'Strategic Bitcoin Reserve'

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday establishing a "Strategic Bitcoin Reserve," forcefully endorsing a currency once shunned as a tool for money launderers. The government stockpile, which backers liken to a "digital Fort Knox," will be composed of digital currency seized in US criminal proceedings, said David Sacks, the White House's crypto "czar," emphasizing in a social media post that Thursday's move made good on a Trump campaign promise. The use of

told reporters the Saudis will host a US-Ukraine meeting next week to discuss a ceasefire in the Ukraine war. In February, Trump met with officials of the PGA Tour and the Saudi-owned LIV

these assets "means it will not cost taxpayers a dime," Sacks said in a post on X. "The purpose of the Stockpile is responsible stewardship of the government's digital assets under the Treasury Department." The policy also allows the secretaries of Commerce and Treasury to develop "budget-neutral strategies" for adding to the reserve, he said. Bitcoin prices fell as much as five percent following the announcement, apparently out of disappointment the program involves no immediate bitcoin purchases. The move comes on the eve of a White

Golf to resolve a rift between the two. Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and Middle East adviser during his first term, started a private equity firm that received \$2 billion in Saudi investment

House summit Friday with major crypto figures, who were significant donors to Trump's successful campaign to regain the presidency. Cryptocurrency supporters organized heavily in the 2024 election in response to the skepticism of Joe Biden's administration to digital currency, also helping to propel Republicans to victory in key Senate races. For believers, cryptocurrencies represent a financial revolution that reduces dependence on centralized authorities while offering individuals freedom from traditional banking systems. — Agencies

after Trump left office. Trump has also recently presided over a string of announcements about companies investing heavily in the US economy including Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing and Apple.

World War II bomb found on tracks to Paris train station

PARIS: Traffic at the Paris Gare du Nord train station was halted on Friday after a World War II bomb was found on tracks leading to France's busiest terminal, officials said. The unexploded bomb was found "in the middle of the tracks" overnight during maintenance work carried out in the area of Saint Denis suburb, the national SNCF rail company said. The bomb "dated to the Second World War," the RER B suburban train wrote in a post on X. All traffic to the train station, which hosts Eurostar trains as well as high-speed and local services, was closed as Paris police worked to disable the device. The Gare du Nord train station lies in the north of Paris and is the country's busiest rail terminal, serving an estimated 700,000 people each day, according to the SNCF. — DNA

Over 70 killed in Syria

DNA

MORE than 70 people were killed and dozens more wounded in Syria in fighting between government security forces and militants loyal to deposed ruler Bashar al-Assad, a rights monitor said Friday. "More than 70 killed and dozens wounded and captured in bloody clashes and ambushes on the Syrian coast between members of the Ministry of Defence and Interior and militants from the defunct regime's army," the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Stock market shows upward trend

DNA

KARACHI: The stock market extended its upward momentum on Friday, buoyed by expectations of a policy rate cut, progress on circular debt restructuring, and continued positive investor sentiment. Market participants engaged in buying activity across key sectors, particularly in cement and energy stocks, as optimism grew ahead of the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) monetary policy announcement on March 10. The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) also showed a decline, reinforcing expectations that March's inflation figures will be lower, further supporting sentiment. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index gained 685.52 points, or 0.6%, closing at 114,398.69. The benchmark index touched an intraday high of 114,721.58, while the lowest level was recorded at 114,169.19. "One factor driving the market is the news of circular debt resolution, which has led to a rise in PSO and other related stocks.

Palestinian embassy honours Pak siblings for Gaza support

Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Zaid expressed profound gratitude to the siblings for their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Palestine hosted a special reception to honor two young Pakistani siblings, Ubaydah Al Fiddah Hafiah (11) and Ghulam Bishar Hafi (13), for their steadfast advocacy for the children of Gaza. Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Zaid expressed profound gratitude to the siblings for their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause. In an official letter of appreciation, he praised their courageous efforts, calling them a symbol of justice and humanity. "I find myself at a loss for words, overwhelmed by the depth of your courage, the purity of your love, and the boundless compassion you have shown," Dr. Zaid wrote, emphasizing that their message was a powerful reminder that "humanity is still alive in its purest form." He lauded the impact of their sacrifice, noting that "though small in action, it is immeasurable in meaning," and described their advocacy as an "unbreakable bond that transcends distance and time" between the people of Pakistan and Palestine. The ambassador further commended their ability to turn "pain into power, grief into hope, and silence into a voice that echoes across borders." He acknowledged the depth of their advocacy, stating that their words, "written with hands so young yet hearts so vast," held profound significance. Dr. Zaid also recognized their non-violent approach, praising their commitment to justice through love and truth rather than violence. "Your blood has mingled with the cries of the innocent," he wrote, adding that their actions served as "a beacon of humanity amidst the darkest times." In his concluding remarks, the ambassador assured the siblings that their message of sacrifice would never fade. "From the depths of my heart, I thank you. I honor you. And I promise that your message will continue to inspire millions," he stated. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani, US Acting Ambassador Natalie A. Baker, High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins and Ambassador of Morocco Muhammad Karmoune posing for a picture on the occasion of Iftar dinner hosted by Aziz Boolani. — DNA

Pak youth full of creativity, says Jane Marriott

British High Commission celebrates young climate storytellers

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Young Pakistanis from across the country, aged between 13 and 24 were invited to submit pieces of art that represented what climate change means to them, how it is impacting their communities and the steps they are taking to address it. The competition, organised in collaboration with the British Council, had a strong response receiving over 550 entries. To mark the occasion, the British High Commission hosted an award ceremony, bringing together the winners, climate experts, and key stakeholders. The event featured an exhibition of the winning entries and offered opportunities to discuss youth-led climate action. British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "I've been blown away by the exceptional quality of entries to this competition, creatively bringing to life the threat from and solutions to climate change. Pakistan's young people are full of creativity and energy, and this competition has shown how powerful their voices can be in shaping the climate conversation. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who took part." 20-year-old Roha Arshad, winner in the Climate and Innovation category, said: "It's easy to hope that some mira-

cle technology will come around and save our planet. But it's down to us. It's our responsibility to think about our own actions. And use the miracle we already have: nature. That's what my video is all about. Using what's around us to heal the planet." The winners, Khadija Chaudary, Rahma Mudassir, Gulshan Fatima, Hayder Ali, Amam Zia and Roha Arshad are between 13 and 22 years old. Their paintings, drawings, videos, stories and articles were recognised across 3 categories: climate and innovation, climate and gender, and climate in my community. They were celebrated for their creative storytelling on climate challenges and solutions. Commonwealth Day will be celebrated across 56 member countries on 10 March, reflecting shared values of unity, peace, and sustainability. This year's theme, "Together We Thrive", highlights the importance of strong, connected communities working together to address global challenges. Climate change is a key priority for the UK. The UK has helped 1.5 million people improve their resilience to extreme climate events, and aims to support a further 3 million people over the next 4 years.



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