



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

EU strikes back against US steel, aluminium tariffs

Detailed News On Page-08

Amb Zaidong reaffirms China-Pak cooperation

Detailed News On Page-08



Gill crowned men's Player of the month

Detailed News On Page-06



No train passenger harmed: ISPR

All terrorists involved in attack killed

DG ISPR says all 33 terrorists killed; four FC personnel martyred during operation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Security forces have eliminated all militants and rescued 190 hostages in a clearance operation launched after an unknown number of heavily armed terrorists stormed a Peshawar-bound train in Balochistan's Bolan district. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry confirmed on Wednesday that no passengers were harmed during the clearance operation conducted by security forces after terrorists hijacked the Jaffer Express in Balochistan's Bolan district. "All 33 terrorists have been sent to hell... four frontier corps personnel embraced martyrdom during the clearance operation," the DG ISPR said while speaking to a private news channel. According to security sources, the forces successfully rescued a large number of hostages, including women and children, who had been used as human shields by the terrorists. The clearance operation was carried out with extreme caution and skill, resulting in the saving of many innocent lives, security sources stated. It was also revealed that the number of passengers who had fallen victim to the terrorists' brutality is being determined. Jaffer Express, with over 400 passengers on board in nine bogies, was on its way from Quetta to Peshawar when it came under attack in the Dhadar area of Bolan Pass on Tuesday, according to security sources. Following the attack, the security forces launched an immediate clearance operation, leading to the deaths of all terrorists, security sources reported. Security officials added that

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UN, US, China, EU condemn Jaffer Express attack

China vows firm support to Pakistan in combating terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations condemned the terrorist attack in Balochistan against a Quetta-Peshawar passenger train on Tuesday in which armed militants took a number of hostages, including women and children, and called for their immediate release. "We've just seen the reports; We, of course, condemn any hostage taking, and we call on those who've taken people hostage to release them at once," the UN Secretary-General's Spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric, said in response to a question at the regular noon briefing in New York. "But," he added, "We're going to keep following the situation as it evolves." China on Wednesday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Jaffer Express in Balochistan and vowed to continue its

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ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Bait-ul-Mal, Sen Capt Shaheen Khalid Butt presenting a gift to Ambassador of Turkey Irfan Neziroglu after the distribution of Ramadan Food assistance package among the needy families. - DNA

Pakistan denounces ban on 2 parties in IIOJK

Indian govt's decision shows "sheer disregard of democratic norms and international human rights law," says FO

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday denounced the ban on two Kashmir organisations for a period of five years imposed by the Indian authorities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). India has banned two political groups in the IIOJK it accused of promoting secessionism in the disputed Muslim-majority region, including one headed by

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Section 144 imposed in North Waziristan

Strict action would be taken against those violating Section 144

DNA

NORTH WAZIRISTAN: The district government on Wednesday imposed Section 144 in North Waziristan for one month to maintain law and order situation. According to a notification issued by North Waziristan Deputy Commissioner Yousuf Kareem, the display of arms would be banned in the erstwhile FATA district. Furthermore, the authority letter to possess arms had also been cancelled, with orders to suspend operations of unauthorised

Continued on Page 06

PM meets business leaders

Govt taking every possible step to facilitate businessmen

The prime minister sought suggestions from the business community for system reforms to enhance government tax revenue

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that achieving economic stability was the first step while the journey of national development now began. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with presidents of various chambers of commerce in Pakistan. The prime minister directed all ministries and relevant secretaries to formulate a policy action plan based upon the suggestions of the chambers of commerce after holding consultations with them. The delegations appreciated the government's economic stability measures and expressed gratitude for their inclusion in the consultative process, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister said that everyone should work together for the development of the economy, adding that resolution of the issues of business community was a top priority and the government would fully support them.

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Terrorists cannot undermine country's peace: Nawaz

Security sources confirmed all the terrorists have been killed and 190 hostages rescued

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Nawaz Sharif has expressed his grief over the loss of lives in the recent attacks on the Jaffer Express in Balochistan. He condemned the cowardly acts of terrorism, asserting that such attacks would not undermine Pakistan's peace and security, Express News reported on Wednesday. In a statement shared on social media platform X, Nawaz said, "I am deeply saddened by the loss of

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Palestinian victims of Israel sexual abuse testify at UN

"I was like a punching bag," he said of one particularly harrowing interrogation he endured in January 2024

AGENCIES

NEW YORK: Palestinians who say they suffered brutal beatings and sexual abuse in Israeli detention and at the hands of Israeli settlers testified about their ordeals at the United Nations this week. "I was humiliated and tortured," said Said Abdel Fattah, a 28-year-old nurse detained in November 2023 near Gaza City's Al Shifa hospital where he worked. Ahead of the hearings, Daniel Meron, Israel's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, dismissed them as a waste of time, saying Israel investigated and pro-

secuted any allegations of wrongdoing by its forces. Fattah gave his testimony from Gaza via video-link to a public hearing, speaking through an interpreter. He described being stripped naked in the cold, suffering beatings, threats of rape and other abuse over the next two months as he was shuttled between overcrowded detention facilities. "I was like a punching bag," he said of one particularly harrowing interrogation he endured in January 2024. The interrogator, he said, "kept hitting me on my genitals ... I was bleeding everywhere, I was bleeding from my penis, I was bleeding from my anus. I felt like my soul [left] my body." Fattah spoke on Tuesday during the latest of a series of public hearings hosted by the UN's independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

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Briefs

Major cut in petroleum prices expected

Fuel prices likely to be reduced by up to Rs14 per litre, say oil companies' sources

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The federal government is expected to slash petroleum product prices by up to Rs14 in the upcoming fortnightly review due on March 15, oil companies' sources said. The price of petrol was likely to be reduced by Rs14 per litre, while high-speed diesel (HSD) may see a cut of Rs8 per litre. Likewise, the sources said the kerosene and light diesel oil could be slashed by Rs10 and Rs7 per litre, respectively. However, the final price will be determined based on the fluctuations in the global oil prices over the next three days, they said. On February 28, the federal government reduced the price of petrol by Re0.50 and that of the HSD by Rs5.31 for the next fortnight ending March 15.

PML-N, PPP to hold key huddle on March 15

The meeting of coordination committee would be held at Governor House, Lahore

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A meeting of coordination committee of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been called to address the grievances of PPP regarding the coalition government of Punjab. The development took place in the aftermath of a meeting held between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Bilawal-led PPP delegation a few days ago in Islamabad.

Civilians trial in military courts

Stopping military officer from duty falls under ATA: SC

Justice Hilali questioned whether military courts were constituted under Article 175

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Wednesday observed that the crime of obstructing the a military officer from performing duty falls under the Anti-Terrorism Act' Justice Mandokhail gave the observation during the hearing of intra-court appeal against trial of civilians in military courts by the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court. A seven-member bench headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and including Justice Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. The justice remarked that the second crime in the May 9 mayhem falls under the Official Secrets Act. Justice Hilali remarked that courts are constituted under Article 175. Have military courts formed under Article 175? Justice Mandokhail questioned whether any forum that is not constituted under Article 175 can try civilians? Justice Mazhar remarked that the Army Act is exclusively for members of

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JIT summons Omar, Aleema malicious social media campaign

The federal government formed the JIT under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A Joint investigation team (JIT) has summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Omar Ayub and Aleema Khan for questioning in an inquiry related to alleged negative propaganda on social media, Express News reported on Wednesday citing sources. According to officials, the JIT issued summons to Ayub and Aleema as part of an investigation into digital content deemed to be in violation of Pakistan's

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IMF rejects tax relief on foreign investment projects

SIFC had sought the exemptions during a detailed briefing to the IMF delegation

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected Pakistan's request to grant tax exemptions for foreign investment projects. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) had sought the exemptions during a detailed briefing to the IMF delegation, arguing that tax relief would help attract foreign investors. However, the global lender refused the request, maintaining its stance on fiscal discipline. During the briefing, SIFC officials presented investment opportunities, governance structures, and infrastructure plans. A key focus was the proposed railway project linking Chagai to Gwadar, intended to facilitate the transportation of minerals from the Reko Diq mine to the port city. Pakistani officials urged the IMF to allow tax exemptions for this strategic initiative, citing its importance for economic growth. The feasibility study for the railway line was conducted in

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Moody's lifts Pakistani banks' outlook

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Moody's has revised its outlook on Pakistan's banking sector to positive from stable, citing improved operating conditions and resilient financial performance, it said on Wednesday. The shift aligns with the government's (Caa2 positive) improved outlook, supported by banks' significant exposure to sovereign debt, the rating company added. "We have changed our outlook on Pakistan's banking system to positive from stable to reflect the banks' resilient financial performance as well as improving macroeconomic

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MARCH 2025

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PHC extends protective bail for Khadija

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday extended the protective bail for Khadija Shah until April 15 and barred authorities from arresting her in any registered case. A divisional bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah Khan and Justice Aurangzeb heard the case. The court inquired about reports from the Interior Ministry and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) regarding cases against her. The Assistant Attorney General informed the court that the Interior Ministry's report is still pending, while the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is conducting an inquiry against Khadija Shah in Lahore. NAB's prosecutor stated that no response has been received from the anti-corruption watchdog. The court directed the Interior Ministry and NAB to submit their reports and adjourned the hearing until April 15.—APP

FIA held 2 involved in Libya boat tragedy

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested two human traffickers, including a most wanted suspect listed in the 'Red Book', for their involvement in the 2023 Libya boat tragedy. According to FIA officials, the arrested individuals have been identified as Ataulah and Saeed Usman. The suspects were apprehended from Sargodha and Sialkot. Ataulah, a Red Book-listed human trafficker, was found guilty of deceiving innocent citizens and illegally sending them to Europe via sea. He took Rs. 4.5 million from two individuals, promising to send them to Italy. The victims were transported by boat from Libya to Italy, but the vessel met with an accident, resulting in the death of one victim. Meanwhile, Saeed Usman allegedly extorted Rs 2.6 million from a citizen under the pretense of facilitating his travel to Italy. He initially sent the victim to Libya, but the individual remains missing to this day. This case has already seen the arrest of two other suspects prior to this operation.—APP

Plastic bags use banned in Quetta

QUETTA: Advisor to Chief Minister for Environment, Naseem-ur-Rehman Mullahkhalil said that all possible measures would be taken to enforce complete ban on the use and sale of plastic bags and geared up the ongoing campaign to clean Quetta city of plastic waste. Provincial Advisor for Environment Naseem-ur-Rehman Mullahkhalil while addressing the meeting of the Advisory Committee said that the environmental protection is not the responsibility of any single institution but of every citizen could play their role to curb the use of plastic bags. He said that the department is determined to make the Quetta city a plastic bags free city and has allowed plastic bags manufacturing to reduce plastic pollution through, limited use, recycling and safe disposal.—APP

Ahsan terms quality education, political stability vital for uplift

The minister said today was an era of information technology, artificial intelligence and urged youth to take advantage of the govt's goal oriented IT policies and projects such as Uran Pakistan

DNA

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Ahsan Iqbal here Wednesday said that political stability and research based quality education was imperative for exports-led economic growth on fast track basis. Addressing students and faculty of the Institute of Management Sciences (IMS) here at Hayatabad as chief guest, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that peace and harmony, political stability, continuity of economic policies and strong commitment to implement reforms are key for achieving goals of sustainable economic growth and development. He said that developed nations including China have made rapid progress because of consistency of policies, political stability and implementation of economic reforms on ground. The Federal Minister said that there was no dearth of resources in Pakistan and every goal could be achieved through dedication and professional commitment. Since Independence on August 14, 1947, he said that Pakistan had achieved great progress in different sectors and today's the number of public sector universities has swelled to 250 in the country. Ahsan Iqbal said today was an era of information technology, artificial intelligence and urged



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal addressing during a seminar on "The Role of Youth in Uraan Pakistan" at Institute of Management Sciences. — DNA

youth to take advantage of the Govt's goal oriented IT policies and projects such as Uran Pakistan. He said the Federal Govt was promoting IT sector by giving laptops to students to help them in completion of their education and research work at colleges and universities. Ahsan Iqbal said that politics of negativity and agitation would not work rather we need to equip youth

with ornament of education and IT skills. To compete with the developed nations, he said that we need to work hard with great speed for next 22 years by coping ourselves with digital technologies in order to achieve economic heights and provide jobs opportunities to all. Under Uran Pakistan, he said that focus was being made on increasing exports for enhancing sustainable economic growth,

increasing foreign reserves, value addition and innovation in manufacturing, minerals, agriculture, IT and manpower export. Under E Pakistan, he said the Govt was working on enhancing digital economy by ensuring quality Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), promotion of environment friendly technologies, combating climate change besides encouraging equity and

development. He said climate change has emerged as a major challenge to Pakistan and under Uran Pakistan Govt would help counter this issue with cooperation of relevant stakeholders. Ahsan Iqbal said that Uran Pakistan was a landmark program launched by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif that would change destiny of people. He said the Govt's projects and policies were aimed to increase IT exports significantly. Ahsan Iqbal said that energy shortfall was key challenge that negatively impacted industrial production in the past and addressing the issue of power pilferage was imperative for achieving maximum industrial and agriculture production for economic gains. He said Higher Education Commission (HEC) were directed to equip students with information technology vital for better exports management and entrepreneurship for increasing foreign exchange and generation of jobs opportunities. Later, talking to reporters, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that Govt's successful policies and economic reforms started producing fruitful results in the country where price hike has slashed to below four percent digit while policy rate significantly reduced. Despite difference in political approach and thinking, he said that we all are united for progress and development of Pakistan. He said that 60 percent resources goes from federation to the provinces.

Punjabi Culture Festival rescheduled to April 14: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has announced that the Punjabi Culture Festival, scheduled for March 14, has been rescheduled, and not it will take place on April 14. In a video message, she said that the festival is being rescheduled in light of the current situation in the country. Azma Bukhari explained that the decision was made out of respect for the recent train accident in Balochistan and the holy month of Ramadan. However, the festival will now take place on April 14. She expressed hope that those trapped in the train in Jafarabad would safely return to their homes.—APP

Mustafa Kamal visits NEOC

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday visited the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) and received detailed briefing on polio situation in Pakistan. The Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ayesha Raza Farooq, was also present on the occasion. Chairing a high-level review meeting on polio eradication, the minister was briefed on the current status of the polio eradication campaign and the challenges faced.—APP

KP CM lauds provincial cabinet's performance

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Wednesday praised the outstanding performance of the provincial cabinet over the past year, emphasizing significant progress in economic stability and development initiatives. Speaking during the 27th meeting of the provincial cabinet, attended by cabinet members, the Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, and relevant administrative secretaries, the CM highlighted the financial turnaround achieved under his leadership, said an official release. "When we assumed office, the treasury had funds sufficient for only 15 days of salaries. Today, we have a surplus of over Rs 150 billion," Gandapur stated. He credited the government's strategic financial management, noting that no new taxes were imposed, nor were existing rates increased,

yet provincial revenue saw an increase of over 50 percent (pc). Highlighting key achievements, Gandapur mentioned the revival of the Sehat Card scheme, which had been discontinued earlier. Not only was it reinstated, but the rates were also increased by 30pc. He further noted the clearance of Rs 87 billion in pending dues and the establishment of a Rs 30 billion Debt Management Fund to ensure financial sustainability. For industrial development, an 18 billion-rupee project to establish a power transmission line for affordable electricity was initiated. The government also launched a flagship solarization project to convert homes, government buildings, educational institutions, and health centers to solar power. The CM emphasized that since taking office, there has been no delay in salary or pension payments, and the government

has avoided taking new loans. Additionally, Rs 30 billion in new development funds have been allocated to accelerate progress. Key decisions made during the cabinet meeting included the approval of funds for the establishment of the KP Judicial Officers Welfare Fund, allocation for the Judicial Academy in Regi Model Town, and the creation of new positions within the Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat. Funds were also sanctioned for the construction of an auditorium at Abbottabad Public School. Furthermore, financial support was approved for KP athletes participating in the National Games in Karachi, alongside the appointment of a CEO for the Faculty of Paramedics and Allied Health Sciences. CM Gandapur concluded by asserting that the government's strategic initiatives and fiscal discipline have set new benchmarks for progress.—APP

RWU celebrates Int'l Women's Day

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Women University (RWU), in collaboration with SOS Foundation, organized an event to commemorate International Women's Day. Senior parliamentarian Tahira Aurangzeb was the chief guest at the event. Addressing to the audience, the chief guest highlighted the significance of women's education, empowerment, and equal rights. Tahira Aurangzeb reinforced the idea that every day is a Women's Day, she praised Chief Minister Punjab, Ms Maryam Nawaz Sharif, for her remarkable efforts in transforming the province, and highlighted the "Suthra Punjab" initiative. "Just as a woman nurtures her home, Maryam Nawaz is beautifying the Punjab province," she added. Tahira further underscored the crucial role of education in economic and social progress, and encouraged students to pursue education with determination. Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Anila Kamal in her welcoming address emphasized the need to accelerate actions rather than mere discussions on women's rights. She highlighted the "Each One, Teach One" initiative, urging every student of Rawalpindi Women University to educate at least one illiterate individual. "Education is the most powerful tool for women empowerment, and it is our collective responsibility to share our knowledge with others," she said. Prof Dr Anila Kamal further elaborated that RWU is not only providing high-quality education but also fostering leadership skills and social awareness among students. She stressed that advocating for women's rights should go beyond slogans. Underlining the social issues such as domestic violence and child marriages.—APP

CDA chief invites Chinese companies to invest in capital's projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa met with a delegation from the Chinese Embassy on Wednesday at the CDA Headquarters. The delegation, led by Minister Counselor Mr. Yang Guangyun of the Chinese Embassy, included Second Secretary Mr. Xie Yang and Attache Mr. Yang Depang. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa welcomed the Chinese Embassy delegation to the CDA Headquarters. The Chinese delegation appreciated CDA's efforts under the leadership of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa to make Islamabad beautiful and modern. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that Chinese

companies are welcomed to invest in Islamabad. He further mentioned that the digital economy and the IT are the bright future of Pakistan. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa expressed that Pakistan seeks to benefit from China's experience in the fields of big data and digitization. The Chinese delegation showed interest in investing in the establishment of Tier-4 data centers in Pakistan. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa mentioned that CDA is selecting the best location for the establishment of data centers. He emphasized that Islamabad has the potential to become a hub for big data centers. Chairman CDA further stated that the technical expertise and experience of China in establishing data

centers will be fully utilized. The meeting also witnessed a commitment from both CDA and China to collaborate for the development of digital infrastructure in Islamabad. The meeting also discussed the establishment of various tourism and recreational projects. Chairman CDA mentioned that Islamabad has excellent opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry. The Chinese delegation appreciated the inclusion of several recreational projects in Islamabad, such as the electric cable car, Islamabad Eye Ferris Wheel, theme park, and zipline in F-9 Park. The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to enhancing mutual collaboration in the fields of data centers and other sectors.

Crackdown against substandard, adulterated food

PESHAWAR: KP Food Safety & Halal Food Authority (FS&HFA) intensified its crackdown against substandard and adulterated food items during Ramadan. In operations conducted across Mardan, Charsadda, Khyber, and Swat, food safety teams sealed multiple food outlets, confiscated counterfeit spices, and disposed of hazardous food products. According to the spokesperson of the Food Authority, food safety teams carried out a series of inspections in collaboration with district administrations. In Rajar Bazaar of Charsadda, three bakery units were sealed due to poor hygiene standards. Similarly, in Mardan, on the tip of, the food inspection team raided a juice production unit. During the operation, 650 liters of substandard juice were destroyed on the spot, while 550 liters of packed juice were confiscated, leading to the sealing of the unit. Additionally, 15 kilograms of banned China salt were seized in a separate inspection in the same city. In Swat, the authority conducted a successful operation on Airport Road, where officials seized over 900 kilograms of misbranded spices from a warehouse, which was subsequently sealed. The details also unveiled that in Khyber district, the food safety team, in collaboration with the district administration, inspected ghee mills in Bara Bazaar. A storage facility containing misbranded ghee was sealed, and a butcher's shop selling substandard meat was also shut down. Heavy fines were imposed on the violators, and further legal proceedings have been initiated. Director General of the Food Safety Authority Wasif Saeed has reaffirmed commitment of food authority to safeguard public health. "There will be zero tolerance for those endangering citizens' health through adulterated food," he pledged. KP Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru, directed officials to take strict legal action against those involved in food adulteration, emphasizing that no leniency would be shown against violators.—DNA

PAL holds dialogue on role of women in literature

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Wednesday held a dialogue on "Role of Women in Literature" in connection with Women's Day. The event brought together a vibrant gathering of literary enthusiasts, scholars, and university students. The event was headed by writer, poet, and Chairman of PAL Dr Najeeba Arif. Sharing her views on the occasion, writer and novelist Fatima Usman said that writers should use the word gender equality instead of feminism. She said, "There is a dire need to write about women and their issues because they exist in today's society." It's high time to identify and

honor their role in society." Fatima further said that women shouldn't teach their daughters to tolerate domestic violence but to raise their voices against it. Renowned author and poet Tariq Hashmi said that the feminist role was well defined by author and poet Molana Hali in one of his poems, "Chup ki Dad." Molana Hali stressed giving justice to women by giving them their genuine rights. He thanked Chairman PAL for inviting him to this important dialogue, acknowledging her leading role in one of the well-reputed literary organizations. Chairman of the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Dr Najeeba Arif, expressed her gratitude to the distin-

guished guests for their active participation in the dialogue. She emphasized that it was important not only to recognize the role of women in the development of literature but also to examine how women were portrayed in contemporary literature. Speaking about the role of women in society, she highlighted that equality did not mean uniformity. Women should be valued and respected for their individuality, rather than being expected to adopt traditionally male roles to gain social acceptance. Dr Najeeba further stressed that women's work should be acknowledged and fairly compensated. "A housewife takes on multiple roles without any leave, sal-

ary, or benefits. She serves as an elderly caregiver, a childcare provider, a nurse, a cook, a washer, a cleaner, and a social networker. All these responsibilities are crucial in maintaining the family unit and fostering physically, mentally, and psychologically healthy generations. These tasks shall be monetized to provide women with economic empowerment," she asserted. She further said that a woman's rightful share of inheritance should be given to her. She emphasized that a strong society depended on a strong family unit, which in turn relied on the contributions of both men and women. Both should play an active role in sustaining this foundation. "This can

only be achieved when both men and women have access to knowledge and exposure to diverse life experiences," she added. Dr Najeeba also underscored the need to support and respect working mothers. She expressed concern over the stigma that working mothers face, often being perceived as less efficient. She stressed that they should be provided with all necessary support to continue their professional work while raising children, if they wish so. "Well-equipped daycare centers, flexible working hours, and other facilities should be made available to working mothers," she concluded.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

2025 KARATE

2025 BOXING

2025 JUDO

2025 TAEKWONDO

JUDO

KARATE

KUNG-FU

JU-JITSU

TAEKWONDO

UNIFORMS AND COLOURED BELTS

2025 KARATE

2025 BOXING

2025 JUDO

2025 TAEKWONDO

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National Days and Armed Forces Days**MARCH**

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- 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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Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092

**Hospitals**

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

**Departments**

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Gas being given to communities within 5km of gas fields

The National Assembly was informed that 27 brands of bottled drinking water have been declared unsafe for consumption, while 194 brands have been deemed safe

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government is supplying gas to communities within a five-kilometer radius of gas fields in a phased manner, subject to the availability of government funds, Parliamentary Secretary Mian Khan Bugti informed the National Assembly. Addressing the Lower House on Tuesday during the question-hour session, Bugti emphasized that while the policy ensures gas supply to nearby

communities, the process is contingent on financial resources. In response to a query from Member of Parliament Fatehullah Khan, he also highlighted that a nationwide ban on new gas connections remains in place.

Bugti further stated that employment opportunities for residents near gas fields are prioritized, with 80% of jobs allocated to local workers. Additionally, funds generated under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are directed through

the Deputy Commissioner of the respective district to support local development projects. Federal Minister Khalid Hussain Magi reassured lawmakers that they are welcome to visit his office for any further inquiries or clarifications on the matter. Meanwhile, The National Assembly was informed that 27 brands of bottled drinking water have been declared unsafe for consumption, while 194 brands have been deemed safe. During the Question Hour, Parliamentary Secretary Nighat Shakeel Khan

responded to a query from Sehar Kamran, stating that the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) is actively monitoring water quality. She explained that regular testing is conducted to ensure compliance with safety standards. If a brand fails to meet the standards, it receives three warnings before its license is revoked and its production facility is sealed. The Speaker of the National Assembly emphasized the importance of monitoring the quality of various mineral water brands available in

the market and directed a detailed report on the matter to be presented to the House. In response to a question from Shagufta Juman, Nighat Shakeel mentioned that the National Institute of Oceanography operates under the Ministry of Science and Technology. However, the institute currently lacks a dedicated research vessel and relies on collaborations with international organizations for research activities. She stressed the need for increased resource allocation to strengthen its research capabilities.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of flowers flourishing and blooming on cherry trees along the roadside marks the arrival of the spring season in the Federal Capital.

HEC, NAC meeting to address key challenges in quality education

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) convened a high-level meeting with National Accreditation Councils (NCA) at the HEC Secretariat, Islamabad, to address key challenges in maintaining and enhancing the quality of higher education across the country. The meeting brought together chairpersons, presidents, and representatives from leading accreditation councils, including Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PMDC), National Council for Tibb (NCT), National Council for Homeopathy, Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP), Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council (PN&MC), Allied Health Professional Council, Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Pakistan Council for Architects and Town Planners (PCATP), Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council (PVMC), National Computing Education Ac-

creditation Council (NCEAC), National Accreditation Council for Teachers Education (NACTE), National Business Education Accreditation Council (NBEAC), National Agricultural Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC), and National Technology Council (NTC). The primary objective of the meeting was to foster collaboration among accreditation bodies, streamline accreditation processes, and implement best practices to enhance academic standards. The agenda covered critical areas, including programme accreditation, faculty appointment criteria, standardization of accreditation processes, curriculum development, capacity building, international collaboration, and the role of accreditation in ensuring academic excellence. Chairman HEC, Prof Dr Mukhtar Ahmad emphasized the importance of modernizing accreditation frameworks and aligning them with international best practices. "To ensure quality educa-

tion, we must continuously evolve our accreditation processes by adopting global standards, enhancing capacity, and updating outdated regulations," he stated. He further stressed the need for a more dynamic, transparent, and technology-driven accreditation system that ensures higher education institutions in Pakistan meet both national and international quality benchmarks. "In an era where higher education is rapidly transforming, we cannot afford to rely on outdated accreditation models. We must foster innovation, integrate digital solutions, and establish mechanisms that not only maintain but also enhance the credibility of our academic programmes," he added. Executive Director HEC, Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum being chair of the meeting reiterated the Commission's dedication to supporting accreditation councils, saying, "Accreditation is the backbone of higher education quality assurance. HEC is committed to providing a

platform for collaboration and dialogue to strengthen these processes and address challenges collectively." He also highlighted the role of accreditation in shaping the future of education in Pakistan. He urged accreditation councils to work collaboratively with industries and global accreditation bodies to ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills required to compete in the international job market. He noted that improving accreditation standards would strengthen Pakistan's higher education system, making Pakistani universities globally competitive and producing graduates who are research-oriented, innovative, and capable of driving economic progress. The meeting highlighted several pressing challenges faced by accreditation councils, including limited resources, the need for regulatory updates, gaps in international collaboration, and the necessity of regular curriculum reviews to keep pace with industry advancements.

Toll tax increased after 6 years

ISLAMABAD: The toll tax on motorways and national highways has been increased after six years, with the process being implemented gradually, according to Parliamentary Secretary for Communications, Gul Asghar Khan. Addressing the National Assembly during the question-hour session, he also revealed that the M-9 motorway is being realigned with the M-6 motorway. Responding to a question from Shagufta Juman and other members, Khan stated that the National Highway Authority (NHA) is responsible for maintaining 14,000 kilometers of roads without receiving government funding. Instead, funds are generated through toll collection under the NHA Act. He noted that toll rates are revised every three years, but due to COVID-19, there had been no increase for six years. The recent adjustments are part of a gradual increase in toll rates. Khan further explained that, according to the law, a toll plaza can be established every 60 kilometers. The Speaker of the National Assembly directed the Parliamentary Secretary to present a report on the existence of two toll plazas on the M-9 motorway. Meanwhile, Ejaz Jakhrahi informed the house that a standing committee is also reviewing the issue. In response to questions from Syed Waaseem Ahmed and Agha Rafiullah, he clarified that the M-9 motorway is an expressway and that the Minister of Communications aims to realign the M-6 and M-9 motorways, extending them to the port for improved connectivity.—APP

ICCI lauds security forces swift response to train hijack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leadership has strongly condemned the heinous terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express in Balochistan and praised the security forces for their effective and timely response in rescuing the passengers. In their statements, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Quresh, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice

President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry expressed deep concern over the tragic incident. They commended the bravery and dedication of the security personnel, stating that their courageous efforts ensured the safety of innocent passengers. The ICCI leaders denounced the attack as a cowardly and inhuman act, emphasizing that such elements are enemies of Pakistan's peace, progress, and development. They stressed that those responsible deserve no leniency. They

also extended heartfelt prayers for the swift recovery of those injured in the attack. Despite the challenging terrain, they acknowledged the unwavering morale of the security forces, who effectively countered the terrorists through their prompt action. The ICCI leaders affirmed that any conspiracy aimed at destabilizing the country would be thwarted, emphasizing that the entire nation stands united in solidarity with its security forces to ensure peace and stability.

PLICL BoDs delayed due to CEO appointment: Gul

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The process of appointing new Boards of Directors at Postal Life Insurance Company Limited (PLICL) has been delayed due to the appointment of the company's CEO, Parliamentary Secretary Gul Asghar Khan informed the National Assembly on Tuesday. During the question hour in the National Assembly, in response to a query from MNA Samina Khalid Ghurki, Gul Asghar Khan stated that the reappointment of the Boards of Directors is in progress but has been postponed due to the CEO's appointment. He clarified that the process will resume once the CEO is appointed. The Parliamentary Secretary further informed the House that two billion rupees had been allocated for the payment of policyholders' claims. However, following a request from the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Finance increased this fund to three billion rupees. He also highlighted that the government is implementing comprehensive measures to improve the postal sector across the country.

IIUI students, faculty visit National Assembly

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of students and faculty members from International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) visited the National Assembly on Tuesday to observe the parliamentary proceedings. Upon their arrival, the Speaker of the National Assembly welcomed the visitors, while the members of the assembly greeted them by tapping their desks in appreciation. The visit provided the students with an opportunity to gain insights into the legislative process and witness the functioning of the country's top legislative body firsthand.

Webinar on the unsolved Moving Sofa Problem

ISLAMABAD: The ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), in collaboration with the Imran Pervez Khan Institute (IPKI) and the Union of Iranian Societies of Mathematical Sciences (UISMS), is organizing a thought-provoking webinar as part of its Science Chronicles Webinar Series. The session, titled "The Moving Sofa Problem," will take place on March 13, 2025, at 7:00 PM Pakistan Time (GMT+5) and 5:30 PM Iran Time. The keynote speaker for the event is Dr. Abdullah Naeem Malik, a highly accomplished mathematician with expertise in data-driven modeling, deep learning, and graph data science. A Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Malik earned his PhD in Mathematics from Florida State University and has over a decade of experience in academia. He has trained and mentored hundreds of students, supervised multiple theses, and contributed to groundbreaking research in quantum computing, machine learning, and applied mathematics. Dr. Malik is an advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration and is actively involved in the Azimut Project, which focuses on leveraging mathematics for solving real-world challenges. His research interests span across computational approaches to mathematical problems, robotics, motion planning, and engineering applications. The Moving Sofa Problem is a well-known unsolved problem in geometry and mathematics, originally formulated by Leo Moser in 1966. It seeks to determine the largest possible sofa shape that can be maneuvered around a right-angled hallway turn. This deceptively simple question has puzzled mathematicians for decades, leading to groundbreaking insights in geometry, optimization, and computational mathematics. Dr. Malik's talk will explore the mathematical foundations of the problem and discuss notable solutions, including Gerver's sofa shape, which is the best-known solution so far. He will introduce various approximations and computational approaches and highlight their broader applications in robotics, motion planning, material science, and engineering. The webinar aims to make these complex mathematical concepts accessible to a broad audience, from students to researchers, and will highlight how abstract mathematical problems can have practical implications in technology and real-world problem-solving. The webinar will be conducted via Zoom, allowing global participation. The intended participants can visit the ECO Science Foundation website: www.ecosf.org. This webinar promises to offer deep insights into both the theoretical beauty and real-world significance of the Moving Sofa Problem. It is a unique opportunity for students, researchers, and professionals in mathematics, physics, and engineering to engage with an expert and explore one of the most intriguing unsolved problems in mathematics.—DNA

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Briefs

Sehri fever grips Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD: As the holy month of Ramadan descended upon Pakistan, the city of Rawalpindi transformed into a vibrant hub of activity before the break of dawn. The tradition of Sehri, a pre-dawn meal eaten before fasting begins, brought residents together in a celebration of food, faith, and community. In the quiet hours of the morning, the streets of Rawalpindi came alive with the tantalizing aromas of traditional Sehri delicacies. From steaming plates of nihari and haleem to the sweet, syrupy flavors of falooda and parathas, the city's food vendors and restaurants offered a diverse array of options to satisfy the cravings of Sehri enthusiasts. Sabir Khan a local resident said "I love the energy in Rawalpindi during Sehri, the streets are filled with people, and the smell of food is amazing." He said Sehri is a special time for them, it's when we come together as a family and share a meal before the day's fast begins. "Whether you are a longtime resident or just visiting, experiencing Sehri in Rawalpindi is a unique and unforgettable experience that captures the essence of Ramadan in Pakistan, he stated. Another resident Kiran shared her experience of Sehri in Rawalpindi said Sehri is a time for spiritual reflection and rejuvenation, it's a blessing to be able to share it with our community. Rawalpindi's Sehri tradition is unlike anywhere else, the food, the company, it's all so special adding that Sehri is a time for us to come together, forget our differences, and focus on our faith and community, she said. Ali, owner of shop on Food Street said, "Sehri is a time to serve authentic, slow-cooked dishes like siri paye, a traditional breakfast dish made from cow or goat head and trotters. He told that hundreds of customers visit daily to relish the Sehri experience.—APP

PTA, FIA conduct joint raids against illegal foreign SIMs

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Gilgit, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing, conducted a operation against the illegal sale of international SIM cards. According to a news release the targeted raid took place in Danyore, Gilgit, leading to the recovery of six UK SIM cards and the arrest of two individuals involved in the illicit trade. The PTA has initiated a thorough investigation to dismantle the broader network facilitating the illegal distribution of foreign SIM cards. This operation is part of PTA's ongoing commitment to curbing unauthorized SIM sales, which pose significant security risks. PTA urged the public to report any such illegal activities to help maintain a secure and regulated digital environment. These actions underscore the Authority's dedication to ensuring compliance with telecom regulations and protecting consumers from potential misuse.—APP

ICT admin conducts 3786 inspections

ISLAMABAD, Mar 12 (APP): The Islamabad district administration has intensified its efforts to enforce price controls during Ramadan, with officials conducting 3,786 inspections and imposing fines totalling Rs 377,000 in the first 10 days of the holy month. The spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) confirmed that 605 sellers were arrested for overcharging, while 11 shops were sealed for hoarding or violating government-mandated price lists. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has ordered magistrates to expedite penalties and ensure immediate action against violators. It is pertinent to mention here that eight Assistant Commissioners (ACs) and 26 Magistrates are always present in six Ramadan bazaars and 17 fair

Dgpays affirms commitment to establish global IT hub in Pak

With backing from global tech leaders, Dgpays is set to make Pakistan a key player in its international operations. The Ministry of IT & Telecom will work alongside the company to facilitate the necessary processes and support its operational expansion

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT & Telecom, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, chaired a meeting with senior officials from Dgpays, where the company reaffirmed its commitment to establishing a Global IT Operations Hub in Pakistan. Ahmet Kayhan, head of international operations at Dgpays, shared that the company is proceeding with opportunities to set up an office in Pakistan to support its global operations and enhance its digital infrastructure. The discussion focused on strengthening IT capabilities, expanding digital payment solutions, and fostering technological innovation. Dgpays aims to collaborate with local stakeholders to optimize digital payment gateways and advance fintech solutions. Minister Khawaja emphasized the government's support for initiatives that drive technological progress and digital transformation. With backing from global tech leaders, Dgpays is set to make Pakistan a key player in its international operations. The Ministry of IT & Telecom will work alongside the company to facilitate the necessary processes and support its operational expansion.



Wheat production is at risk; imports may be necessary

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 Wednesday that urgent wheat imports may be needed to save the country from a food security crisis. He stressed that along with imports, a government-led operation should be launched against hoarders and profiteers across the country. Without such intervention, the situation will only deteriorate. Mian Zahid Hussain said that farmers in many areas are growing other crops instead of wheat in

the absence of a support price, which is decreasing the area under wheat cultivation and affecting production. Addressing the business community, the veteran business leader underscored that wheat production has also been hampered in many areas due to scant rainfall. If immediate steps are not taken to address this alarming situation, a grave food crisis may loom large. The business leader pointed out that Pakistan, once a wheat-exporting country, has been forced to rely on wheat imports for many years. The root causes include unnecessary government intervention in the wheat market, profiteering, water scarcity, climate change, substandard agricultural chemicals, expensive fertilizers, poor-quality seeds, and unavailability of loans to farmers, all of which are wreaking havoc on all

crops, including wheat. He said that the smuggling of wheat and artificial shortages are also adding to the problems, while the needs of the growing population are also increasing continuously. In addition, due to the lack of education and training, farmers are farming in old-fashioned ways, which leads to increased water loss. At the same time, production is low, he observed. Mian Zahid Hussain said that urgent imports are fundamental to averting a crisis, keeping prices stable, and maintaining the food security situation. In addition, it is necessary to provide wheat on a subsidy to the poorest people so that their financial problems can be reduced. He said that last year, due to a good harvest, the market prices of wheat stabilised, and the problems

of the common consumer had been reduced to a considerable extent, but now the situation is changing. Wheat production is expected to be 11 percent lower this year than last year. Last year, it was 31.4 million metric tons, while this year, it is expected to be 27.9 million metric tons. In these circumstances, the government should consider purchasing wheat on a large scale from local farmers. Suppose the Punjab government does not purchase wheat this year as it did last year. In that case, the food security situation may worsen. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the central and provincial governments should take immediate steps to save the country from economic and political instability and to ensure the supply of wheat across the country.

Chicken cost amplify by Rs 152 per kg in twin cities

ISLAMABAD: The price of chicken increased by Rs 152 per kg compared to the cost of the last two months from last days of December 2024 to the current month of March 11, before the holy month of Ramadan. According to the market survey conducted by APP here Wednesday, the price of poultry chicken increased to Rs 485 per Kg in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The last month until December 30, 2024 chicken was sold at Rs 333 per kg, which was less than the previous month's price hike in poultry prices in the retail market. The poultry consumables, chicken and eggs prices have been reduced for the past few weeks, and are once again out of reach of the public. The prices of poultry items have increased by 30 percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last two months, which has created huge volatility in the market. According to the market survey, during the past two months in the twin cities, 32 percent increase was witnessed in the price of chicken, while a 25 percent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the last eight weeks. According to the survey, the price of live chicken in the twin cities was between Rs 470 per 480 kg from the last week of February 2025. Similarly, chicken meat is sold at Rs 770 to 780 per kg in the market of both cities. During this time, it was also found that poultry eggs used to be sold at Rs 300 to Rs 310 per dozen in the market of both cities. Meanwhile, talking to APP, the former Chairman Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Chaudhry, Muhammad Ashraf said the increase in the current prices of poultry is due to demand and supply issues. PPA ex-Chairman said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis. He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the current crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis. Chaudhry Ashraf said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are very expensive, in which soybean is important.—DNA

ANF recovers over 61 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations across the country recovered over 61 kg drugs worth more than Rs 4.5 million and arrested 10 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday. He informed that 500 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near the bus stand on GT Road, Rawalpindi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 2,382 kg ice hidden in the trolley bag of a passenger going to Saudi Arabia was recovered at Islamabad International Airport. In the third operation, 312 grams hashish was recovered from the shoes of a passenger going to Dubai at Islamabad International Airport. 100 capsules filled with heroin were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going with a woman to Jeddah at Lahore Airport. 94 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel sent to the Maldives through a courier office in Karachi. A total of 36 kg hashish was recovered from a car and a motorcycle checked near the railway gate in Gujrat and 3 accused were arrested. 15.6 kg hashish was recovered from an abandoned motorcycle near the bus stop on GT Road, Peshawar.—APP

Gillani pays tribute to security forces

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousof Raza Gillani on Wednesday paid glowing tribute to the security forces for eliminating the terrorists involved in the attack on the Jaffar Express. In a statement, he lauded the bravery and unwavering commitment of the troops who, disregarding their own safety, successfully thwarted the nefarious designs of the terrorists. "Our courageous soldiers have once again demonstrated unparalleled valor. Their sacrifices will never be in vain," Gillani said. He said that the entire nation salutes the bravery and sacrifices of its security personnel, emphasizing that the armed forces and law enforcement agencies combating terrorism are the pride of the nation. "Pakistan's enemies will be defeated on every front," he asserted, adding that the role of the security forces in ensuring peace and stability across the country is highly commendable.—APP

AIOU organizes seminar on Nurturing Children's Development

ISLAMABAD: In observance of the holy month of Ramzan, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) successfully hosted a seminar titled "Nurturing Children's development during Ramadan: Based on the Nurturing framework". Organized by the department of Early Childhood Education & Elementary Teacher Education, the event was specially designed for university-employed parents, equipping them with practical strategies to ensure the healthy upbringing and development of their children during this sacred month. Dr. Jehan Ara Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education & Elementary Teacher Education served as the resource person, delivering an insightful session on childcare, health, and development. She emphasized the importance of balanced nutrition, a positive environment, physical activities, and mental well-being for children's overall growth. During the

seminar, key challenges faced by children during Ramadan, such as imbalanced diets, fatigue, disrupted sleep patterns, and reduced academic focus, were discussed. Dr. Jehan Ara provided practical solutions, recommending that children should get 9 to 12 hours of sleep, follow a structured daily routine, and be provided with nutrient-rich meals to support their physical and cognitive well-being. Highlighting the risk of dehydration due to fasting, she advised parents to ensure sufficient water and fluid intake post-Iftar. She also stressed the importance of limiting screen time to promote healthy sleep cycles and encouraged parents to have their children spend time in natural sunlight to prevent Vitamin D deficiency. The seminar served as a valuable resource for parents, offering expert guidance on nurturing their children's health and well-being throughout Ramadan. AIOU remains committed to fostering initiatives that support the holistic development of children and their families.—APP

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AI & sovereignty

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is no longer simply a technological innovation – it has become the defining fault line in global geopolitics, illuminating a widening chasm between nations prepared for the future and those falling dangerously behind. The escalating semiconductor restrictions by the Donald Trump administration, pressuring allies like Japan and the Netherlands while contemplating stricter limits on Nvidia's AI chips, underscore the intensity of the US-China rivalry. However, China's AI ambitions remain undeterred, exemplified by Alibaba's staggering 380 billion yuan (US\$48.3 billion) AI infrastructure investment – the largest private computing initiative China has ever seen. Despite restrictive US export controls, Nvidia's chips, such as the H20 model designed to comply with American restrictions, continue to witness surging demand in China, driven partly by state-backed adoption and cost-efficient AI models from firms like DeepSeek. Shenzhen, Guangdong province and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province are aggressively advancing AI and robotics, reinforcing China's innovation race. Yet as history repeatedly shows – from the telegraph to the internet – early technological leaders not only dominate economically but also rewrite the rules of global influence. This clash is far more than an economic rivalry – it is reshaping global geopolitics, shifting the axis of power in ways reminiscent of past industrial revolutions. The competition for AI supremacy represents a battle for strategic autonomy, economic security and geopolitical dominance. With US tech giants expecting to spend more than US\$300 billion for AI infrastructure this year, alongside the ambitious US\$500 billion Stargate Project, the stakes have never been higher. Meanwhile, China's Alibaba, Tencent and Baidu collectively invested 50 billion yuan in AI infrastructure in the first half of 2024 – more than double their previous year's investment, highlighting the fast pace of China's ambitions. At its core, this is a contest of intellectual and human capital. While the US reportedly leads in hosting 27 per cent of the world's top AI scientists, nearly 38 per cent of leading researchers in the US are of Chinese origin. Elon Musk's xAI team, where about a third of founding members reportedly have Chinese heritage, further underscores the fierce global talent contest. This dynamic exposes a paradox: while nations fiercely guard their technological borders, the intellectual bridges between them are stronger than ever. Yet as these titans clash, much of the world finds itself stranded at the margins. Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa grapple with severe constraints such as scarce funding, inadequate infrastructure and talent outflow. This leaves them economically disadvantaged and strategically vulnerable, perpetually dependent on foreign technologies to process and interpret vast amounts of data critical for national decisions. Even middle-power countries are precariously positioned. Their primary challenge is not only catching up with AI leaders but also avoiding becoming marginalised within the larger US-China AI contest. Donald Trump unveils US\$100 billion investment plan by Taiwanese chip giant TSMC Asian tech giant, notably Taiwan's Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company – which recently announced a US\$100 billion investment in the US – along with Korean companies Samsung and LG, are increasingly looking towards Washington. While this trend is driven by geopolitical tensions, it is complicated by the unpredictability surrounding initiatives such as Trump's push to repeal the US Chips and Science Act.

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Collapsing empire

ON March 3rd, Timothy Ash of elite British state-connected 'defence' think tank Chatham House made a series of startling proclamations in an interview with Bloomberg. His topline message was stark – "NATO is dead." He spoke following the very public February 28th Oval Office fallout between Volodymyr Zelensky and Donald Trump. The impact of that debacle reverberates today, with most US aid and intelligence sharing with Kiev now paused, pending the Ukrainian leader's sign-off on a White House-endorsed minerals for security agreements deal. Branding the catastrophic summit an "ambush", Ash declared that Trump and his deputy J.D. Vance had "laid out very clearly" that the military alliance was to all intents and purposes moribund, with no hope of recovery. He noted other comments made by the US President at the Oval Office meeting indicated a clearly reticence by Washington to intervene militarily to protect the Baltic states should they end up at war with Russia, in seeming breach of NATO's Article 5: "It should be crystal clear now to European leaders that NATO is dead, we can't rely on US security guarantees, they've come and spelled it out to us...NATO is more or less dead already...Even raising doubts about whether America would stand behind some NATO states says it all...We cannot rely on the Americans any more. We have to move on, we have to think about our own national interests, our own security, we have a very difficult transition period." Ash's analysis is evidently echoed by European leaders. A day later, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined a 800 billion plan to "rearm" the bloc. Many member state chiefs reportedly "largely endorse" the plan, which calls for Europe to "become more sovereign, more responsible for its own defence and better equipped to act and deal autonomously with immediate and future challenges and threats." Nonetheless, polls indicate European citizens oppose increased defence spending, and contractors warn this grand scheme will "take time" to realise. If NATO truly is dead, it represents yet another long-overdue nail in the Empire's coffin. It is also yet further confirmation that the US-dominated unipolar order, which has wrought untold death, destruction and misery over the past quarter century, is no more, and never to return. Residents of the Global South can breathe a collective sigh of relief – meanwhile, in a bitter irony, the same Western states that aided and abetted Washington's unchallenged hegemony now find themselves defenceless. The unipolar world was forged in an incendiary baptism of airstrikes and atrocity propaganda in Yugoslavia, March - June 1999. For 78 straight days, NATO relentlessly blitzed civilian, government, and industrial infrastructure throughout the country, killing untold innocent people – including children – and violently disrupting daily life for millions. While the US oversaw the ruinous campaign, both publicly and privately, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was an ardent advocate of even greater belligerence against non-military targets, despite the grave concerns and warnings of government legal advisors. Then again, NATO's assault was in itself completely illegal, conducted without UN Security Council approval. Such an intervention would've been unthinkable during the prior decade. Throughout the 1990s, Washington carefully constructed the chimera of a world united behind US leadership by ensuring UN backing for all its overt imperial actions across the globe.

Trump inflicts wounds on the US economy

Qamar Bashir



China has the advantage in this situation because Americans heavily rely on Chinese goods, while China relies less on U.S. imports. This trade standoff is reminiscent of the first Trump administration, during which U.S. farmers suffered the most. Beijing seems to be taking its time to negotiate, opting to engage from a stance of strength. But unlike China, Canada has reacted angrily to Trump's uncalculated tirade of tariffs. The Canadian Prime Minister and Ontario Prime Minister both angrily reacted to Trump...

THERE was a significant plunge on Wall Street on Monday, driven by investor nervousness over the economic impact of President Trump's trade policies. Stocks in Japan, Australia, South Korea, and China all followed suit, tracking losses from the U.S. Wall Street suffered major declines as fears over the trade war escalated. The S&P 500, which tracks the largest American companies, dropped by 2%, while the Dow Jones slipped just over 2%. The tech-heavy NASDAQ took the hardest hit, plunging by 4%. These losses were sparked by concerns that tariffs would lead to higher prices for consumers and complicate the Federal Reserve's efforts to control inflation and reduce borrowing costs. Investor sentiment was further shaken by President Trump's comments in a Sunday Fox News interview, where he refused to rule out the possibility of a U.S. recession. Instead, he described the economy as being in a "period of transition" and stated that bringing wealth back to America was a significant undertaking that would take time. His remarks failed to reassure investors, triggering an 800-point drop in the Dow, a six-month low for the S&P 500, and steep declines in major tech stocks. Technology companies, which had been a source of optimism in the stock market, also suffered significant losses. Tesla's stock dropped by 15%, Nvidia fell by 5%, while Alphabet (Google) and Meta (Facebook) both lost over 4%. These sharp declines indicate growing concerns about the stability of the technology sector amid ongoing trade uncertainties. Kathleen Brooks, a research director at XTB, noted that President Trump claimed he does not closely monitor the stock market, but he may be paying more attention now after Monday's dramatic sell-off. He is scheduled to meet with top U.S. CEOs in a business roundtable discussion, which was likely requested by business leaders concerned about the stock market downturn and increasing recession risks. The situation is expected to become even more volatile as April 2 approaches, the date when the full suite of tariffs is set to be imposed. White House officials have urged the public to remain

calm, arguing that the current market fluctuations are based on emotions rather than economic fundamentals. However, Trump's policies are raising serious concerns about the future of the U.S. economy. One of the biggest fears is that the U.S. is trying to isolate itself in an increasingly interconnected global economy. Supply chains are deeply globalized, and while America is a powerful economic force, it still relies on international trade and strong global economic conditions. Disrupting these relationships with tariffs could have long-term negative effects. There are already signs that the U.S. economy was naturally slowing down after years of growth. Now, the added pressure from tariffs and trade disruptions is amplifying recession fears. Trump's aggressive economic approach includes not only broad-based tariffs but also efforts to cut government spending. However, government spending has played a significant role in driving economic growth in recent years. Reducing its role while simultaneously implementing tariffs may be an overly aggressive strategy that could push the economy into a downturn. Trump's tariff policy includes China and Canada, which could significantly impact the US economy. The stocks that tumbled this week are going to take a second hit once the Chinese tariff takes effect, which includes 15% levies on key U.S. agricultural products such as chicken, wheat, corn, soybeans, pork, beef, and fruit. China has the advantage in this situation because Americans heavily rely on Chinese goods, while China relies less on U.S. imports. This trade standoff is reminiscent of the first Trump administration, during which U.S. farmers suffered the most. Beijing seems to be taking its time to negotiate, opting to engage from a stance of strength. But unlike China, Canada has reacted angrily to Trump's uncalculated tirade of tariffs. The Canadian Prime Minister and Ontario Prime Minister both angrily reacted to Trump and hurled counter and practical threats to Trump while sparing the American people. In their fiery speeches both Canadian leaders said that Canada is though unwillingly and with great regard to the American people who will suffer from Canadian Tariffs, levied unprecedented

25% surcharge on electricity exports for the 1.5 million American homes and businesses that Ontario powers—homes and businesses in Minnesota, Michigan, and New York. This surcharge will cost families and businesses in these states up to \$400,000 every single day. On average, this will add around \$100 per month to the bills of hardworking Americans. They further threatened that they would not hesitate to increase this charge if necessary. If the United States escalates, they will not hesitate to shut the electricity off completely. They reiterated that their number one job is to protect the people of Canada; they would fight like they have never fought before to protect Canada. They took a swipe on Trump and said his unprudent policies are resulting to losses worth trillions in value. Companies are second-guessing investments in the American economy. American workers' jobs are at risk and the costs for hardworking American families will only go up. As a result of these tariffs, markets are down, and inflation is set to rise dramatically across the United States. Thousands of American jobs are now at risk, particularly in industries that rely on Canadian materials or consumers. The U.S. government's actions will increase costs for American families on essential items like groceries, gas, cars, and homes. Additionally, these tariffs threaten American national security by restricting access to critical minerals, energy, building materials, and fertilizers from Canada. With Anti-American sentiment in Canada is at an all-time high, economists and security experts argue that the move does not make economic or strategic sense, as it weakens the U.S.'s position globally while strengthening adversaries like Russia and China. Trump's policies serve as a classic example of how a leader, driven by false assumptions, can make uncalculated sweeping decisions that not only negatively impact key partners but also have lasting consequences for the stability, economy, and security of North America and the rest of the world.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Detroit, Michigan

Bars across the borders

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Criminalizing migration involves a three-step process. First, a specific act—such as unauthorized border crossing—is legally defined as criminal. Second, individuals who engage in these acts are labeled as criminals, reinforcing negative stereotypes. Finally, punitive measures such as detention, deportation, and prolonged legal battles are imposed. These measures not only target migrants themselves but also extend to communities and organizations that...

MIGRATION has long been a defining feature of human civilization, shaped by economic, political, and environmental factors. However, in recent decades, states across the Global North and South have increasingly adopted stringent policies aimed at restricting migration. These measures include stricter visa regimes, militarized borders, and the systematic erosion of asylum protections. Such policies have not only failed to deter migration but have also exacerbated border-related fatalities and humanitarian crises. The criminalization of migration is a deliberate strategy rooted in anti-immigrant sentiments, reinforcing narratives of disorderly and uncontrolled mobility. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the treatment of migrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, who face systemic exclusion and stigmatization. The criminalization of migration is not a recent development; rather, it has deep historical roots. In the early 20th century, colonial legacies and racial exclusion laws shaped migration control policies. Notably, migration restrictions in countries such as the United States and European states were designed to privilege certain racial and ethnic groups while excluding others. Historical parallels can be drawn between contemporary migration control mechanisms and past systems of forced displacement, including the transatlantic slave trade. The construction of illegality where certain groups are labeled as "illegal" migrants is a political tool used to marginalize specific populations while reinforcing state sovereignty over mobility. The systematic labeling of migrants as criminals is an extension of exclusionary practices seen throughout history. Xenophobic and racist attitudes have shaped policies that seek to privilege some migrants while criminalizing others. This global apartheid system ensures that mobility remains highly controlled, often in service of economic exploitation. Migrants from the Global South, in particular, are subject to restrictive mobility regimes, whereas skilled professionals from the Global North encounter fewer barriers. The 21st century has witnessed an escalation in migration control strategies, driven by political narratives that associate migration with security threats. Governments have increasingly framed migration as a crisis requiring strict enforcement measures. This securitization of migration has led to an expansion of law enforcement powers, where unauthorized entry or overstaying a visa is treated as a criminal offense rather than an administrative violation. Additionally, those who provide humanitarian assistance to migrants, including NGOs and individuals, have also been targeted under these criminalization policies. The consequences of these policies are dire. Border deaths have ris-

en dramatically as migrants are forced to take increasingly dangerous routes to avoid detection. The U.S.-Mexico border and the Mediterranean Sea have become particularly deadly corridors, with thousands of migrants perishing annually. Despite the risks, migration persists, demonstrating that criminalization strategies are ineffective in stopping human mobility. Instead, such policies push migrants into exploitative underground networks, increasing their vulnerability to human smuggling and trafficking. Criminalizing migration involves a three-step process. First, a specific act—such as unauthorized border crossing—is legally defined as criminal. Second, individuals who engage in these acts are labeled as criminals, reinforcing negative stereotypes. Finally, punitive measures such as detention, deportation, and prolonged legal battles are imposed. These measures not only target migrants themselves but also extend to communities and organizations that provide them with support. Migration criminalization also manifests through policy shifts that restrict access to legal pathways. Governments have curtailed asylum rights, implemented restrictive visa policies, and expanded detention facilities. These measures disproportionately affect migrants from marginalized backgrounds, further entrenching global inequalities. The widespread use of detention centers exemplifies how migrants are subjected to carceral control, often under harsh and inhumane conditions. The criminalization of migration has profound social and personal implications. By framing migrants as criminals, states justify policies that strip individuals of fundamental rights, including access to healthcare, education, and employment. Many undocumented migrants live in constant fear of deportation, leading to economic precarity and social marginalization. This environment fosters conditions where migrants are vulnerable to exploitation, including labor abuses and human trafficking. Moreover, the stigma associated with being labeled "illegal" extends beyond legal consequences. Migrants are often scapegoated for economic downturns and crime, despite evidence that migration contributes positively to host economies. The portrayal of migrants as a security threat fuels xenophobic sentiments and justifies restrictive policies. This cycle of criminalization perpetuates systemic discrimination and erodes social cohesion. While migrants are frequently depicted as passive victims of state policies, research indicates that they actively navigate and shape their experiences. Migrants develop networks, engage in political activism, and exercise agency even in hostile environments. For example, migrant-led organizations advocate for policy changes and provide support to undocumented individuals. Religious and cultural practices

also serve as sources of resilience, enabling migrants to maintain a sense of identity and belonging. However, it is essential to recognize the complexity of migrant agency. Not all actions taken by migrants necessarily challenge oppressive systems; in some cases, they may inadvertently reinforce existing power structures. For instance, participation in exploitative labor markets can sustain economic systems that depend on cheap, undocumented labor. Understanding the nuanced ways in which migrants navigate criminalization requires a holistic approach that considers both agency and structural constraints. The failure of criminalization policies to deter migration necessitates a re-evaluation of existing frameworks. A more humane and effective approach to migration management should prioritize human rights, legal pathways, and economic integration. Key policy recommendations include:

- Expanding Legal Migration Pathways: Providing more opportunities for legal migration can reduce the reliance on dangerous and irregular routes. This includes increasing work visas, family reunification programs, and humanitarian protections.
- Ending the Detention of Migrants: Alternatives to detention, such as community-based support programs, have been shown to be more effective and humane. Ending the mass incarceration of migrants is crucial to upholding human rights.
- Challenging Xenophobic Narratives: Public discourse around migration must shift away from fear-based narratives. Promoting accurate information about migration's benefits can counteract misinformation and reduce anti-immigrant sentiment.
- Strengthening International Cooperation: Addressing migration requires a coordinated effort between countries of origin, transit, and destination. Policies should focus on addressing root causes, such as economic disparities and conflict, rather than punitive border controls. The criminalization of migration reflects broader trends of exclusion and securitization that disproportionately affect marginalized populations. By framing migration as a criminal act, states justify harsh enforcement measures that have failed to deter movement while exacerbating human suffering. A historical perspective reveals that these practices are not new but are rooted in long-standing systems of racial and economic exclusion. Moving forward, policy reforms should prioritize human rights and address the structural causes of migration rather than resorting to punitive measures. Recognizing the agency of migrants and shifting public discourse towards more inclusive narratives are essential steps in creating a fair and just migration system.

Briefs

All terrorists involved in attack killed

FROM PAGE 01 further details regarding the operation will be shared soon. Security sources also confirmed that the terrorists responsible for the cowardly attack on the Jaffar Express were in contact with their mastermind in Afghanistan. It all started after armed gunmen forced the train to a halt in a remote, mountainous area of the province on Tuesday afternoon, with the assault immediately claimed by the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a terrorist group behind rising violence in the province. The attackers bombed the railway track before storming aboard the train, said the security forces. Sources indicated that the railway tracks had been destroyed with explosives, causing the train to stop, after which firing began, resulting in the death of the driver and several passengers.

UN, US, China, EU condemn...

FROM PAGE 01 firm support to Pakistan in combating terrorism, maintaining solidarity, social stability and protecting the safety of civilians. "We noted the reports and strongly condemn this terrorist attack," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said during her regular briefing in response to a question regarding a terrorist attack on a train carrying over 450 passengers in Balochistan province. She said that China firmly opposes terrorism in any form and added: "We will continue to firmly support Pakistan in combating terrorism, maintaining solidarity and social stability and protecting the safety of civilians."

IMF rejects tax relief on foreign...

FROM PAGE 01 collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Railways. Officials revealed that potential investor nations have demanded state guarantees before committing funds. However, under the ongoing loan programme, the Pakistani government cannot offer such guarantees for every investment. Previously, the IMF has agreed to the government's proposal to reduce electricity prices, with a final decision expected next month. Sources indicated that electricity base tariffs could be reduced by Re1 to Rs2 per unit, with both the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and the Ministry of Energy now authorised to adjust rates.

Moody's lifts Pakistani banks'...

FROM PAGE 01 conditions from very weak levels a year ago," according to the Moody's statement. "The positive outlook on the sector also mirrors the Government of Pakistan's (Caa2 positive) positive outlook, with Pakistani banks having significant exposure to the sovereign through their large holdings of government securities, which account for around half of total banking assets. "However, Pakistan's long-term debt sustainability remains a key risk, with its still very weak fiscal position, high liquidity and external vulnerability risks," according to the report.

Terrorists cannot...

FROM PAGE 01 precious lives in the terrorist attack on Jaffar Express." He added, "These cowardly acts cannot sabotage Pakistan's peace and security." Nawaz extended his condolences to the families of the victims, saying, "In this time of sorrow, my sympathies are with the families of the martyrs. May Allah raise their ranks and grant speedy recovery to the injured." Security sources confirmed that the operation against the militants responsible for the attack has entered its final stages, with all the terrorists reportedly killed.

Donnarumma helps PSG knock Liverpool out of UCL

Ligue 1 leaders PSG will meet either Aston Villa or Club Brugge in the quarters

SPORTS DESK

LIVERPOOL: Paris St Germain beat Liverpool 4-1 in a penalty shootout to advance to the Champions League quarter-finals after winning a rip-roaring last-16 second-leg match at Anfield 1-0 on Tuesday thanks to a goal from livewire Ousmane Dembele. After the tie had finished 1-1 on aggregate, PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma saved spot kicks from Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones, while the visitors, who have never won the Champions League, converted all of their efforts. Ligue 1 leaders PSG will meet either Aston Villa or Club Brugge in the quarters, with Villa taking a 3-1 lead into Wednesday's second leg. Dembele stunned the Anfield crowd with his 12th-minute goal against the run of play. IbrahimaKonate slid in to block Bradley Barcola's effort but pushed the ball away from goalkeeper Alisson in the process, and Dembele needed only to knock it into an empty net. The goal was the earliest Premier League-leading Liverpool had conceded at Anfield in the Champions League since September 2017 against Sevilla. Arne Slot's team played considerably better than a week earlier - when they needed a last-gasp goal from substitute Harvey Elliott after the Parisians had dominated - and Reds talisman Mohamed Salah had a shot



blocked on the goal line by Nuno Mendes in the game's first few minutes. Donnarumma was forced into making an early diving save to keep out a shot from Konate, but both sides spurned chances in a nervy game that had fans on the edge of their seats. Six-times European champions Liverpool parked themselves in PSG's territory for much of the second half of normal time and had a goal from Dominik Szoboszlai chalked off for offside in the build-up early in the second period. They kept Donnarumma busy in the dying

minutes, with the keeper parrying away ball after ball fired into the box, but it was Dembele who unleashed what looked like the winner in extra time before Alisson made a dramatic diving save to push the ball wide with his fingertips. PSG were rock solid under pressure in the shootout, with Vitinha, Goncalo Ramos, Dembele and Desire Doue all finding the net. Liverpool got off to a good start with Salah slamming his effort home, but Nunez and Jones both had tame efforts comfortably stopped by Donnarumma, with Slot wrapping a disconsolate Nunez in a hug afterwards. The Liverpool boss was magnanimous in defeat and even had words of praise for his beaten side. "I think it was the best game of football I've ever been involved in," he said. "We ran out of luck maybe after last week. After 90 minutes we played the perfect game except for not scoring." History was not on the Parisians' side on Tuesday, as they became just the fourth of 28 teams to progress after losing the first leg at home in a Champions League knockout tie. "Both of the teams deserve to go to the next phase," said PSG boss Luis Enrique. "They played better than us here, but I think my team at Anfield, in a special stadium showed great personality and character. "We tried to play our best, but it was difficult as they're so intense. Both teams deserve to qualify." The thousands of travelling fans, many of them shirtless despite the chilly temperature, were not daunted by their team's odds, as they danced and sang until the final whistle. Liverpool have little time to rest ahead of Sunday's League Cup final against Newcastle United. "It's part of football," Reds captain Virgil van Dijk said of Tuesday's defeat. "I said to the guys, 'Obviously, you can be disappointed because we're out of the competition, but chin up and get ready for the next challenge, a beautiful one on the weekend'."

Barcelona dispatch Benfica 3-1 to reach UCL quarters

Barca will meet the winner of the tie between Lille and Borussia Dortmund



BARCELONA: Raphinha scored twice and Lamine Yamal netted with a stunning strike in a rampant first half as Barcelona dismantled Benfica 3-1 in their Champions League last-16 second leg on Tuesday, advancing to the quarter-finals

with a 4-1 aggregate victory. Barca will meet the winner of the tie between Lille and Borussia Dortmund, who play on Wednesday after the first leg in Germany ended in a 1-1 draw. It was an inspired evening for teenager Yamal, who

was virtually unplayable running up and down the right channel, creating most of Barca's scoring chances. The 17-year-old Spain winger worked his magic with a spectacular solo run to gift Raphinha the opener in the 11th min-

ute, leaving two opponents on the ground before crossing for the Brazil forward to poke the ball into the net with a close-range volley. Benfica hit back through a Nicolas Otamendi header from a corner two minutes later, but Barca kept piling on the pressure with Yamal proving a nightmare for Benfica left back Samuel Dahl, who was powerless to stop the Spanish teenager. Yamal teed up chances for Robert Lewandowski and Dani Olmo and missed with a low strike from the edge of the box, before he finally put the home side back in front in the 28th minute. He cut inside and beat a disorientated Dahl before unleashing a swerving left-footed shot into keeper Anatoly Trubin's top-right corner. At 17 years and 241 days, Yamal became the youngest player to both score and assist in the same Champions League game, surpassing BreeEmbo's previous record with Basel against Ludogorets in 2014 by 22 days. - Agencies

United 'bid farewell' to bowling coach

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Three-time Pakistan Super League (PSL) champions Islamabad United on Wednesday, announced parting ways with bowling coach Azhar Mahmood ahead of the 10th edition, scheduled to run from April 11 to May 18. According to the details, the franchise parted ways with Mahmood due to his association with the Pakistan men's cricket team. The former bowling all-rounder has been replaced by Ian Buttler, who played eight Tests, 26 ODIs and 19 T20Is for New Zealand from 2002 to 2013. "Islamabad United, the most successful franchise in Pakistan Super League (PSL) history, is pleased to announce Ian Butler as the team's bowling coach for Pakistan Super League 10," United said in a statement. "At the same time, the franchise bids farewell to Azhar Mahmood, who is currently working with the Pakistan national team. Azhar played a key role in Islamabad United's success both as a player and a coach, winning Pakistan Super League 1 in 2016 as a player and as an assistant coach in 2024," the statement added. Reacting to his appointment, Ian Butler shared excitement about the prospect of his first coaching experience in Pakistan and eyes to leading Islamabad United to another Pakistan Super League title by working with their bowling group. "I'm really excited to be part of Islamabad United for Pakistan Super League 10. This will be my first experience coaching in Pakistan, and I've heard great things about the passion for cricket here. "Islamabad United has a fantastic legacy in the Pakistan Super League, and I'm looking forward to working with the talented bowling group to help the team push for another title. The former also acknowledged Mahmood's services for the franchise and expressed his hope of building on his work. "I'd also like to acknowledge Azhar Mahmood, who has done a fantastic job with this team, and I hope to continue building on that."

German hockey team holds practice session in Islamabad

Hockey enthusiasts and local players were also present in the stadium, admiring the German team's skill and technique

ISLAMABAD: Germany's junior hockey team conducted an intense practice session at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium in Islamabad, focusing on refining their skills and finalizing preparations for their upcoming match. During the session, German players worked on fitness drills, passing, and goal-scoring exercises, while the coaching staff focused on strategic planning. Hockey enthusiasts and local players were also present in the stadium, admiring the German team's skill and technique. Sources indicate that Germany's tour of Pakistan is seen as a positive step for the development of hockey in the country, providing local players with an opportunity to witness and learn from international-level hockey. Hockey experts believe that such international tours can help revive the sport in Pakistan and pave the way for more foreign teams to visit in the future. Final Match Tomorrow! The last match of the series will be played tomorrow at 3 PM at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad. Come and support your country and the national game of Pakistan! - DNA

Arthur breaks silence on Pak coaching drama

WEB DESK

LONDON: Former Pakistan head coach Mickey Arthur has weighed in on the ongoing debate sparked by current head coach Aqib Javed's comments about the coaching system and former red-ball coach Jason Gillespie's sharp response. The dispute began when Javed, during a press conference following the announcement of Pakistan's white-ball squad for the upcoming tour of New Zealand, criticised the instability in the team's coaching structure. "We have changed nearly 16 coaches and 26 selectors in the last two years," Javed stated.

Shubman Gill crowned men's Player of the Month

Gill edged out Steve Smith and Glenn Phillips for the prestigious honor

WEB DESK

DUBAI: India's top-order star, Shubman Gill, has been named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February 2025, edging out Australia's stand-in captain Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips for the prestigious honor. Currently ranked as the No. 1 ODI batter, after surpassing Pakistan's Babar Azam, Gill showcased remarkable form throughout the month. In five ODI matches, he amassed 406 runs at an average of 101.50 and a strike rate of 94.19. His standout performances came during India's 3-0 series whitewash against England, where he registered three consecutive fifty-plus scores. He began with a fluent 87 in Nagpur, followed by a composed 60 in Cuttack, before sealing the

series in style with a commanding 112 off 102 balls in Ahmedabad, which featured 14 fours and three sixes. His match-winning century earned him the Player of the Match award, while his overall contributions saw him claim the Player of the Series accolade. Gill carried his exceptional form into the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, playing a crucial role in India's dominant start. He struck an unbeaten 101 to steer India's chase against Bangladesh in their tournament opener in Dubai, followed by a gritty 46 against Pakistan, helping India secure victories in both matches. This marks Gill's third ICC Men's Player of the Month award, having previously won in January and September 2023. Additionally, he was a key member of the Indian squad that lifted the ICC Champions Trophy last week. At just 25 years old, Gill has already built an impressive ODI record, playing 55 matches and scoring 2,775 runs at an average of 59.04 and a strike rate of 99.56, including eight centuries and 15 half-centuries.

Darwin poised to host int'l cricket after 17-year

South Africa is set to tour Australia for three T20Is and three ODIs

WEB DESK

JOHANNESBURG: Darwin is set to host international cricket for the first time in 17 years, with Cricket Australia tentatively scheduling two T20Is against South Africa in August. Officials are expected to confirm dates for the winter series later this month, with South Africa set to tour Australia for three T20Is and three ODIs. Under the proposed schedule, Darwin would host the first two T20Is before the series moves to Cairns for a T20I and an ODI, followed by the final two ODIs in Mackay. While the schedule is yet to be finalized, and matches at TIO Stadium depend on final agreements, the return of international cricket would be a major milestone for Darwin. The city last hosted senior international cricket in 2008, staging two ODIs against Bangladesh. Local officials remain optimistic about securing the fixtures. "From the moment I arrived in 2023, I made it clear that we are committed to bringing international cricket back to the Northern Territory," NT Cricket CEO

Gavin Dovey said. "The last time we hosted international cricket was in 2008, which is far too long. "The game has evolved significantly since then. Just look at the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy or cricket's return to the Olympics in LA 2028 as examples of its expanding global impact," he added.

If confirmed, these matches would mark the first men's T20Is ever played in the Northern Territory. Since Darwin last hosted an international fixture, Australia has staged 536 men's and women's international matches across all formats at 27 different venues. Darwin has made significant

strides in enhancing its late-winter cricket calendar, particularly through the growth of the Top End T20 league, which now features multiple BBL franchises and overseas teams. The August window is increasingly being considered for international cricket, with a two-Test series against Bangladesh scheduled for this period in 2026. Northern Queensland is expected to host at least one of those Tests, but Darwin is emerging as a potential venue for another. Hosting white-ball cricket in August could also ease scheduling congestion during the Australian summer and prevent conflicts with the BBL. "We have an exceptional winter cricket window that offers substantial benefits for both Australian cricket and the Northern Territory," he said. "Cricket Australia is eager to take advantage of this opportunity. "The NT Government also acknowledges the economic and social value of hosting a global sport like cricket. Bringing international cricket stars here can inspire the community. Hopefully, we can turn this into reality. It would be fantastic to kick off the international cricket summer right here in Darwin," he concluded.



Stopping mily officer from duty...

FROM PAGE 01 the Pakistani Armed Forces. Counsel for Defense Ministry Khawaja Harris submitted that the Constitution of Pakistan provides that the Army Act is for the discipline and performance of duties of the armed forces. "Let me tell you that there was no anti-terrorism crime committed on May 9." He said that Article 8 ensures that the armed forces can perform their duties without any obstruction. Justice Mandokhail remarked that the question of fundamental rights has arisen in the FB Ali case. "Even if we agree with the decision, we can give our opinion separately."

JIT summons Omar...

FROM PAGE 01 cyber laws. Aleema Khan has been directed to appear today, 12 March, while Omar Ayub has been called in for questioning tomorrow, 13 March. The federal government formed the JIT under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016. The team is led by Islamabad's inspector general of police. Sources claim investigators have gathered evidence related to the accusations before issuing the summons. Further details on the nature of the alleged propaganda and the possible legal repercussions remain unclear. Neither Omar Ayub nor Aleema Khan have publicly commented on the matter.

Govt taking every possible...

FROM PAGE 01 Despite difficult economic conditions, he said the Pakistani business community continued industrial and commercial activities. "The government is taking every possible measure to facilitate the business community. Through FBR digitalization and other reforms, the business community is being provided with facilities. The faceless clearance system has significantly reduced container clearance times at ports," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying.

Palestinian victims of Israel...

FROM PAGE 01 This week's hearings, harshly criticised by Israel, are specifically focused on allegations of "sexual and reproductive violence" committed by Israeli security forces and settlers. "It's important," COI member Chris Sidoti, who hosted the meeting, told AFP. Victims of such abuse are "entitled to be heard", he said. Experts and advocates who testified on Tuesday spoke of a "systematic" trend of sexual violence against Palestinians in detention, but also at checkpoints and other settings since Hamas's October 7, 2023 attacks inside Israel sparked the conflict in Gaza.

Pakistan denounces...

FROM PAGE 01 the occupied territory's leading religious cleric. An order issued late on Tuesday by India's home ministry declared the Awami Action Committee (AAC) an unlawful association under the country's stringent anti-terror laws, banning it for five years. It said the party's activities were "prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty and security" of India and accused its members of "supporting terrorist activities and anti-India propaganda for fuelling secessionism". A separate ministry notification announced the five-year ban of the Jammu and Kashmir Itihadul Muslimeen (JKMIR).

Section 144 imposed in North Waziristan

FROM PAGE 01 Wifi devices and deactivation of SIMs. The deputy commissioner warned that strict action would be taken against those violating the Section 144.

Briefs

Portugal gov't loses no-confidence vote

LISBON: Portugal could be heading to its third general election in three years after the centre-right government of Prime Minister Luis Montenegro lost a vote of no-confidence on Tuesday evening. The censure vote was called over conflict-of-interest accusations against Montenegro involving a family business, and a last minute attempt to avoid the vote by agreeing on a parliamentary inquiry failed. The Socialist Party (PS), the main opposition party, and the far-right Chega party both voted to bring down the government, and the country's president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa must now decide whether to dissolve the assembly and call new elections. Montenegro, 52, who has been in office for less than a year, told the start of a parliamentary debate on a vote of no-confidence that "I have committed no crime". Parliament had debated the censure for more than three hours, with the PS insisting that Montenegro cooperate with a special parliamentary inquiry into the business affairs of his family.—APP

PSX loses 93 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 93.12 points on Wednesday, a negative change of 0.08 percent, closing at 114,084.54 points as compared to 114,177.66 points on the last trading day. A total of 299,630,187 shares were traded during the day as compared to 318,518,329 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs20.262 billion against Rs22.883 billion on the last trading day. As many as 432 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 159 of them recorded gains and 213 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 60 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Sui South Gas with 18,257,617 shares at Rs36.84 per share, At-Tahir Limited with 14,884,025 shares at Rs38.91 per share and Bank of Punjab with 14,382,419 shares at Rs13.09 per share. PIA Holding Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs55.05 per share closing at Rs864.25 whereas runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs53.60 rise in its share price to close at Rs23,339.60.—APP

Gold price ups by Rs.500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.500 and was traded at Rs.306,500 on Wednesday as compared to its sale at Rs306,000 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.429 to Rs 262,774 from Rs 262,345 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.393 to Rs.240,884 from Rs 240,491 respectively. The prices of per tola went up by Rs.52 to Rs3,440 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs45 to Rs.2,949 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to \$2,915 from \$2,910 whereas that of silver increased by \$0.50 to \$33.00, the Association reported.—APP

Motorbikes sale increases 30%

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed an increase of 30 percent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year. During the months under review, as many as 962,315 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 740,210 units during July-February (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA)—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Presidents of Chambers of Commerce across Pakistan on Wednesday. — DNA

China's domestic demand to be unlocked amid policy shifts

"From an academic perspective, I see coordination among three key initiatives in the government work report: boosting consumption, improving livelihoods, and enhancing investment efficiency," said Professor Lu Ming, Director of the Shanghai Institute for National Economy and a CPPCC member. He characterizes these as "different manifestations of the same issue."

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BEIJING: "Consumption" appeared 32 times in China's 2025 government work report, highlighting Beijing's determination to boost domestic demand as the cornerstone of economic growth this year. This renewed emphasis reflects both concerns over economic headwinds in an uncertain global landscape and confidence in the market's untapped potential. Prioritizing consumption, the report places a strong emphasis on "vigorously boosting consumption" and outlines comprehensive measures to position domestic demand as the "main engine and anchor of economic growth." This marks a strategic shift in China's economic policy, acknowledging the constraints of the traditional growth model that relies on investment and export, according

to a CEN report. "From an academic perspective, I see coordination among three key initiatives in the government work report: boosting consumption, improving livelihoods, and enhancing investment efficiency," said Professor Lu Ming, Director of the Shanghai Institute for National Economy and a CPPCC member. He characterizes these as "different manifestations of the same issue." A nuanced outlook at first glance, China's consumption data may appear concerning, but a deeper analysis reveals structural imbalances rather than simply weak demand. The simultaneous rise in household savings alongside expansionary fiscal and monetary policies signals more than just cautious consumer sentiment. "China's situation differs from other economies," explains Professor Lu. "While some households face slower income

growth, many sectors see strong demand but struggle with supply constraints—whether in terms of quantity, quality, or variety." This dichotomy is particularly evident among young consumers. The post-90s and post-2000s generations are frugal with daily necessities, leveraging platform economies for cost savings, yet they willingly spend on experiences that highlight individuality—such as travel, concerts, and music festivals. Building momentum Several positive forces are underpinning consumption growth: Targeted policy interventions are delivering results. Trade-in programs for automobiles and home appliances fueled significant spending in 2024, with over 6.8 million automobile trade-ins generating 920 billion yuan in consumption. Service sectors present structural opportunities. Segments such as healthcare, ed-

ucation, elder-care, childcare, and cultural services suffer from supply shortages, particularly in populous regions and areas with large migrant populations. The private sector is gaining more opportunities. The work report pledges to "support and encourage private investment," aiming to channel capital into infrastructure and public welfare projects. Lu highlights China's film industry as an example of unmet demand: "The market for cultural IP merchandise linked to hit films like 'Ne Zha' shows enormous potential. The current Zha scarcity phenomenon isn't a sign of consumption downgrading, but rather a supply shortage in response to strong demand." The road ahead China's strategy blends demand-side stimulus with supply-side reforms. The government plans to issue 300 billion yuan in ultra-long special treasury bonds to support trade-in programs, en-

hance income distribution mechanisms, and refine duty-free policies to stimulate spending. On the supply side, the work report calls for "reducing restrictive measures" to enable broader participation in service provision and foster more diverse consumption scenarios. This could involve more flexible urban management of street vendors, outdoor performances, and public space utilization. "If structural issues such as limited education slots, healthcare access, and quality services are addressed, China's consumption potential can be fully unlocked," says Professor Chen Zengjing, Vice Dean of School of Mathematics, Shandong University and a CPPCC member. Despite current headwinds, China's consumer market remains resilient. With targeted policies and structural reforms in motion, momentum is building for sustainable long-term growth.

Syria's Shibani expected at Brussels donor summit

DAMASCUS: Syria's foreign minister Asaad Al-Shibani is set to attend a donor summit for his country in Brussels on March 17, a European official told Reuters on Wednesday, the first time Syria will be formally represented at the yearly conference. The official said that Syria's interim president Ahmed Al-Sharaa was not expected to be at the donor meeting, after a Syrian source and two diplomats had told Reuters he was expected there. The yearly conference, hosted by the European Union, aims to "mobilize international support for an inclusive, peaceful transition" and will be the first time it is held following the ouster of Bashar Assad from power in December.

Turkiye's operations against Kurdish militants in northern Syria continue

ANKARA: Operations by Turkiye's armed forces against Kurdish militants in northern Syria are continuing, including on Tuesday, a Turkish Defense Ministry official said on Wednesday, following a deal between the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the new government in Damascus. The official did not provide details on the location of the operations. Ankara views the SDF, which controls much of northeast Syria, as terrorists linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, and has carried out several cross-border incursions against them.—APP

Syrians flee sectarian killing into Lebanon

MASOUDIYEH, Lebanon: Fearing for their lives, Syrian men, women and children waded through a river to safety in Lebanon on Tuesday, among hundreds of people who have fled to the neighboring country to escape sectarian killing targeting their Alawite community. A woman who made the crossing on Sunday said she'd seen the bodies of seven slain people in her village. Another said she'd spent three days trapped at home by heavy gunfire. A man said militants had threatened to kill all the people in his village because they are members of the minority Alawite community. Days after the killing began in Syria's coastal region, the steady stream of refugees continued: Reuters reporters saw more than 50 cross the knee-high waters of the Nahr El Kabir River into Lebanon during a half-hour period on Tuesday, carrying children and whatever possessions they could gather.—APP

Polish PM Tusk heads to Turkiye for talks on Ukraine peace

WARSAW: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he was going to Turkiye on Wednesday to discuss the latest developments on Ukraine and how Warsaw and Ankara help ensure lasting peace in the region. "We will talk about the role of Poland, the role of Turkiye, when it comes to stabilization in the region.—APP

UBG President demands to cut POL prices by Rs 20 per liter

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Zubair Tufail, President of the representative body of traders and industrialists, United Business Group (UBG), has demanded a reduction of Rs. 20 per liter in the prices of diesel and petrol. Zubair Tufail stated that the price of petrol has significantly decreased in the international market and has fallen below \$66 per barrel. In this situation, the government should provide complete relief to the public and reduce petroleum prices by at least Rs. 20 per liter. He further said that industries are playing multiple roles in supporting the economy, such as creating employment opportunities, hiring workers, bringing in foreign exchange, and supporting the local community. However, the government is not taking any steps to provide relief to the industrial sector, while a significant reduction in petroleum prices is necessary. Additionally,

electricity prices should also be reduced. Zubair Tufail mentioned that during the holy month of Ramadan, citizens' lives in Karachi have been made difficult, as K-Electric has increased the duration of load-shedding in many areas of the city to 14 hours due to rising temperatures. Nepra, the government, and K-Electric are collectively burdening citizens with higher electricity bills. Unfortunately, Pakistan's progress and development have been hindered. Whenever the country moves towards development, obstacles are created. It is essential to address key issues such as petrol, electricity, gas, and others, especially for small and medium-sized businesses that are already facing various challenges. Zubair Tufail urged the government to resolve the city's long-standing issues on a war footing and significantly reduce petrol and diesel prices to provide relief to both the public and businesses across the country.

Jordan's king hosts Ramadan iftar for Palestinian President, guests

LONDON: King Abdullah of Jordan hosted a Ramadan iftar at Al-Husseiniya Palace in Amman on Tuesday, the guests at which included Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and religious and political figures from Jerusalem, including representatives of several faiths and the Islamic Waqf. Abbas commended the king for Jordan's support of the rights of Palestinians, including their right to an independent state, and the country's rejection of plans to displace Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip. Mohammed Azzam Al-Khatib, director of the Jerusalem Waqf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs department, which is responsible for administering the mosque, said Jordanian support has enabled the Waqf to carry out several charitable projects to help Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem. Jordan is the custodian of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It administered the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank for nearly 20 years before the Israeli occupation began in June 1967. Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem described Jordan's guardianship of holy Islamic and Christian sites in the city as "a great political and historical responsibility." He said the Christian presence in Jerusalem faces growing challenges from extremist Israeli groups that want to seize church property. He also warned of the rise of "Christian Zionism," which he said distorts the teachings of Christ to use them as a tool for political ends, the Petra news agency reported. William Hanna Shomali, the auxiliary bishop of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and Mohammed Hussein, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, also thanked King Abdullah for supporting Palestinian causes. Other guests at the iftar included Ayman Safadi, Jordan's minister of foreign affairs, Hussein Al-Sheikh, the secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee, and other senior officials and ministers from Jordan and Palestine.—DNA



Far-right Romania politician loses appeal

Three men aged 43, 48 and 50 have been indicted for allegedly committing "acts of violence" during the protests, prosecutors said Tuesday. Georgescu, who previously expressed admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, denies any links to Moscow.

BUCHAREST: Romanian far-right politician Calin Georgescu on Tuesday lost an appeal against a decision barring him from standing in the country's presidential election re-run, spelling the end of his meteoric rise, as hundreds of his supporters protested outside the court. The fierce EU and NATO critic shot to prominence last November, when he unexpectedly topped a first round of presidential voting before the constitutional court annulled the election after claims of Russian interference and a "massive" social media promotion of Georgescu. Romania's electoral bureau on Sunday rejected Georgescu's candidacy for the May re-run based on the top court's annulment of last year's ballot, sparking violent clashes in the EU and NATO member bordering war-torn

Ukraine. Georgescu had filed an appeal challenging that decision as "blatantly unlawful". But the constitutional court on Tuesday unanimously rejected the appeal, it said in a statement, without immediately giving details about its reasoning. The ruling cannot be appealed further in Romania. Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu welcomed the decision, posting on Facebook that it "closes an extremely tense and dangerous episode that Romania has experienced in recent months." "I consider my mission accomplished," Georgescu said in a video published on Facebook after his appeal was rejected, calling on Romanians "to show democratically and peacefully that our choice matters until the last moment". While America is becoming great again, Europe

and Romania have become petty, corrupt, and under dictatorship," Georgescu, who recently has presented himself as "ultra pro" US President Donald Trump, posted on X. Senior members of the US administration, including Trump adviser Elon Musk, had thrown their weight behind Georgescu, who polls predicted could have won around 40 percent of votes in the May re-run. Outside the constitutional court, several hundred Georgescu supporters shouted "thieves" after news of its decision spread. "This is no longer a democracy. What are we living in? A dictatorship," Marius Vasile, a 51-year-old pensioner, told AFP earlier. "We want to elect whom we want... It's him (Georgescu) we want. We don't want anyone else," said Marinela Simona Cheosa, a 45-year-old engineer waving a Ro-

manian flag. Analysts widely predict George Simion, leader of far-right party AUR and a vocal Georgescu supporter since the annulled vote, will run for president from the far-right camp. Simion, in an interview late Tuesday, said he did not intend to run for president but would meet Georgescu and others to discuss it. The deadline for submitting candidacies is the weekend. Simion on X accused the court of "mocking the Romanian people" and "attacking our democracy and our essential rights and freedoms". Romanian institutions, including the court, have failed "to set the criteria for such an exceptional measure (to ban Georgescu) and to properly justify it publicly," Marius Ghincea, a political scientist at ETH Zurich, told AFP. Georgescu "is popular because he embodies the general resentment against the

establishment and all the governance failures it represents," Ghincea added. Georgescu, a 62-year-old former senior government official, unexpectedly won the first round of a presidential election as an independent candidate. In a shock move — rare in the EU — Romania's constitutional court annulled the ballot shortly before the second round in December. On Sunday, after the electoral bureau banned Georgescu, hundreds rallied against the decision, with clashes between protesters and law enforcement officers leaving 13 injured. Three men aged 43, 48 and 50 have been indicted for allegedly committing "acts of violence" during the protests, prosecutors said Tuesday. Georgescu, who previously expressed admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, denies any links to Moscow.—Agencies

Briefs

PTI stands firmly with security forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister Zartaj Gul has said that terrorists have no religion. Talking to media in Islamabad on Wednesday, she said that PTI is standing firmly with the security forces. The PTI leader strongly condemned the terrorists' attack on Jaffar Express in Balochistan. She said that there is a need to take a united stand against this monster of terrorism. The former minister said that President, prime minister and the entire cabinet are product of Form-47 and they reached the power through fake mandate. The PTI leader was of the view that the issue of water and new canals should be resolved through consensus. She added that PTI equally respects the sisters of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi. "The PTI also follows the guidelines given by Aleema Khan," she said. The PTI leader said that Pakistan's most significant leader is currently in jail, enduring the hardships of imprisonment. She said that Imran Khan will not make any deal to secure his release from jail.

No power can destabilize country, says Abbasi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi vehemently denounced the heinous terrorist attack on Jaffar Express in the Bolan Pass area of Balochistan, assuring the nation that no external or internal power can succeed in destabilizing Pakistan. In an exclusive interview with a Private news channel, minister asserted that it was not merely a security issue, but a blatant attempt by foreign powers to destabilize and undermine the sovereignty of the country. Railway minister denounced the brazen assault on Jaffar Express in Balochistan, implicating foreign powers and local militant outfits like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) in a nefarious plot to undermine Pakistan's stability. Abbasi further revealed that the railway scanners were also malfunctioning, compromising security protocols in place.

Bushra Bibi's interim bail extended

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Islamabad has extended the interim bail of former first lady Bushra Bibi in two cases related to the November 26 protests. ATC Judge Abul Hasanat Muhammad Zulqarnain presided over the hearing. Bushra Bibi's legal team, represented by Anserkiyani and Shamsakiyani advocates, appeared before the court.

Diplomats commend RCCI for fostering strong links with diplomatic community

RCCI President Usman Shaukat expressed his appreciation for the attendees and emphasized that the annual Iftar Dinner is a longstanding tradition aimed at uniting esteemed members of the diplomatic corps with key figures from the business sector



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hosted a Grand Iftar Dinner to honor ambassadors, high commissioners, diplomats, and commercial counsellors. The prestigious event served as a platform to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties between Pakistan and the international community. Among the distinguished guests were Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Islamabad, along with am-

bassadors from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Malaysia, Romania, Myanmar, Nepal, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Brunei, Zimbabwe, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Portugal as well as Charge d'Affaires from Indonesia, Cyprus, and Finland. Other notable attendees included Mr. Charles J. Perego and Brooke de Montluzon, Economic Counselors at the US Embassy, along with representatives from Portugal, Azerbaijan, Syria, and high commissioners from Sri Lanka and Rwanda. RCCI President Usman Shaukat, accompanied by Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President

Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, and Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on International Affairs, warmly welcomed the esteemed guests and expressed gratitude for their presence. Federal Minister for Climate Change, Musaddiq Malik, CEO of DRAP Dr. Obaidullah, Patron-in-Chief of Sweet Homes Zamarud Khan, former RCCI presidents, executive committee members, district officials, trade association representatives, and a large number of traders were also in attendance. Dean of Ambassadors commended RCCI's role in

fostering strong relationships with the diplomatic community and enhancing trade collaborations. In his welcome address, RCCI President Usman Shaukat expressed his appreciation for the attendees and emphasized that the annual Iftar Dinner is a longstanding tradition aimed at uniting esteemed members of the diplomatic corps with key figures from the business sector. The event successfully reinforced RCCI's commitment to strengthening economic diplomacy and fostering meaningful connections between Pakistan and global partners.

Russia tight-lipped on deal as US arms to Ukraine resume

Sources claims Kremlin wary, as Poland reports that US military aid flow to Ukraine is already back up to speed

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has remained tight-lipped regarding Ukraine's acceptance of a United States ceasefire deal. The Kremlin said on Wednesday that Russia was waiting for a briefing from the United States following the talks with Ukrainian officials before it would comment on its stance on the proposed ceasefire. However, there are signals suggesting that Moscow is wary, while US military aid to Kyiv has quickly resumed. Kremlin

spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that it's important not to "get ahead" of the question of responding to the ceasefire proposal, and suggested that a phone call between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump to discuss the matter has not been ruled out. "We assume that Secretary of State Rubio and Advisor [Michael] Walz through various channels in the coming days will inform us on the negotiations that took place and the understandings reached," he added. Moscow officials, however, have signalled that Russia is wary. "Russia

is advancing [on the battlefield], so it will be different with Russia," Senator Konstantin Kosachev noted in a post on the messaging app Telegram. "Any agreements should be on our terms, not American." A senior Russian source told Reuters that Russia would need to hash out the terms of any ceasefire and get guarantees of some description. "It is difficult for Putin to agree to this in its current form," the source said. "Putin has a strong position because Russia is advancing." In response to Ukraine's agreement with the

ceasefire proposal, the US agreed to resume military aid and intelligence sharing with Kyiv, which were suspended last week following a spat between Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Poland, which acts as a logistics hub for the delivery of military aid to its eastern neighbour, said on Wednesday morning that the flow of weapons was already back to previous levels. "I confirm that arms deliveries via Jasionka [logistics hub] have returned to previous levels," Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski told reporters. The news was welcomed by Kyiv's European allies, who are now seeking to up the pressure on Russia to respond to the ceasefire proposal.

EU strikes back against US steel and aluminium tariffs

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced a response to new US tariffs on steel and aluminium imports, unveiling a package of countermeasures aimed at US exports. Early Wednesday morning, the EU executive launched a set of proportionate countermeasures on US imports into the EU, targeting a variety of American products, ranging from boats to bourbon to Harley-Davidson motorbikes. The move comes in response to what the EU deems as unjustified and disruptive tariffs imposed by Washington, which took effect at midnight. "We deeply regret this measure. Tariffs are taxes. They are bad for business, and even worse for consumers. These tariffs are disrupting supply chains. They bring uncertainty for the economy," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "Jobs are at stake.

Amb. Zaidong reaffirms China-Pak coop at seminar

ISSI hosts Seminar on "China in Spring: China's Opportunities, Shared by the World" in collaboration with China Media Group

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with China Media Group (CMG) organised a seminar titled "China in Spring: China's Opportunities, Shared by the World." The event highlighted China's recently concluded Two Sessions, which set the course for the country's governance, economic growth, and global engagement. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood welcomed dignitaries to the ISSI-CMG seminar, acknowledging the presence of Ambassador Jiang Zaidong. He highlighted the significance of China's "Two Sessions," particularly in shaping economic policies, advancing high-

tech industries, and setting a 5% GDP growth target for 2025. He noted Foreign Minister Wang Yi's reaffirmation of China's commitment to global stability, emphasizing China's proactive global role through initiatives like the BRI, GDI, GSI, GCI. Stressing the strength of Pakistan-China strategic ties, he underscored CPEC's transformative role and new initiatives to enhance trade, job creation, and regional connectivity. While recognizing security challenges and evolving regional dynamics, he reaffirmed the resilience and unwavering commitment of both nations to overcoming challenges. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the role of media and think-tanks in fostering informed discourse, dispelling misconceptions, and strengthening mutual understanding in an evolving geopolitical landscape.

Pakistan, Oman discuss trade, investment, agree on coop

He expressed Oman's interest in strengthening its economic partnership with Pakistan and expanding trade and investment opportunities in key sectors. Both sides discussed strategies to enhance bilateral trade and investment

DNA

MUSCAT: A high-level meeting between Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Oman's Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais Al



Yousif, was held at the Ministry in Muscat to explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade, strengthening investment ties, and promoting regional connectivity. During the discussions, Jam Kamal Khan emphasized Pakistan's industrial expertise and commercial strength, stating, "Oman can benefit from Pakistan's expertise, know-how, and industrial and commercial prowess to achieve the economic diversification goals set under Vision 2040 of the Sultanate." He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to fostering deeper economic cooperation with Oman. Qais Al Yousif acknowledged Pakistan's strategic significance in regional trade, highlighting that "historical ties and geographical proximity render Pakistan the most effective trade route to the Central Asian Republics (CARs)" said a release issued here on Wednesday. He expressed Oman's interest in strengthening its economic partnership with Pakistan and expanding trade and investment opportunities in key sectors. Both sides discussed strategies to enhance bilateral trade and investment, agreeing on the need to improve direct transportation linkages and utilize Pakistan as a trade route to CARs. The Pakistani delegation highlighted the potential of Gwadar and Karachi ports as vital hubs for regional trade, offering Oman greater access to emerging markets.

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