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Australian HC Hawkins condemned the attack on Jaffar Express

Detailed News On Page-08

Hamas welcomes Trump's retreat from Gaza plan

Detailed News On Page-08



Indian wells; Alcaraz eases into quarters

Detailed News On Page-06



Uzbek president to visit Pakistan

PM eyes \$2bln trade volume with Uzbekistan

The prime minister, in a meeting with Ambassador of Uzbekistan Alisher Tukhtaev particularly highlighted Pakistan's interest in enhancing cooperation with Uzbekistan in mining and minerals, railways, including the Trans Afghan Railways project, Special Economic Zones, banking, tourism, culture and renewable energy

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive roadmap to enhance bilateral trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan to USD 2 billion, as agreed upon by the leadership of both nations. During a courtesy meeting with the Ambassador of Uzbekistan, Alisher Tukhtaev, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to expanding cooperation with Uzbekistan across various sectors, including mining and minerals, railways (particularly the Trans-Afghan Railway project), Special Economic Zones, banking, tourism, culture, and renewable energy. Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed his warm greetings to Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and expressed his gratitude for the hospitality extended to him and his delegation during their recent visit to Tashkent last month. He expressed satisfaction with

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Briefs

Former law minister passes away

During his time in office, he made significant changes to Pakistan's legal system

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former law minister and prominent lawyer Khalid Anwer passed away on Thursday in Karachi at the age of 87. Born on November 4, 1938, in Delhi, Anwer obtained a BSc (Hons) and LLB degree from the University of the Punjab and later a BA (Hons) degree from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. He began his legal career in 1962 as a high court advocate and legal expert and served as the country's law minister from 1997 to 1999 during Nawaz Sharif's government. He also served as a senator for a term of six years. During his time in office, he made significant changes to Pakistan's legal system.

Imran Khan challenges judges' transfer order

Petition argues that the transfer notification violates judicial independence

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan has filed a petition in Pakistan's Supreme Court, challenging the recent transfer of judges, calling it unconstitutional and unlawful. The petition, submitted under Article 184(3) of the Constitution, argues that the transfer notification violates judicial independence. Imran has requested the court to declare the notification null and void.

Country can't progress until terrorism eliminated

PM Shehbaz says malicious propaganda against the soldiers and martyrs won't be tolerated

STAFF REPORT

Quetta: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the country cannot progress until the menace of terrorism is eliminated from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Addressing a high-level meeting on law and order situation in Quetta, PM Shehbaz paid tribute to Chief of Army Staff Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir and the security forces for successfully recovering 339 Jaffar Express passengers who were taken hostage by the terrorists in Bolan

area of the province. "The terrorists who attacked the train did not even care about the sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan," the premier added. Stressing the need for joint efforts to deal with the terrorism, the premier said Pakistan cannot afford another such accident. Lauding the unmatched sacrifices rendered by the security forces in the backdrop of Jaffar Express hijacking incident, PM Shehbaz said malicious propaganda against the soldiers and martyrs would not be tolerated. The premier reached

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Asad urges govt to revisit FP

Govt, opp trade barbs over train hijacking

House also unanimously passes resolution strongly condemning hijacking of Jaffar Express and all acts of terrorism

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The government and the opposition on Thursday traded barbs over the Jaffar Express train hijacking, with both sides of the aisle blaming each other for the terrorist attack that resulted in over two dozen deaths. In the National Assembly session, while Defence Minister Khawaja Asif underscored that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was propagating over the terror incident, PTI leader Asad Qaiser blamed the government's incompetence for the attack. During the session, in a rare show of unity, the National Assembly unanimously passed a resolution condemning the hijacking of the Jaffar Express. The resolution moved by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary appreciated the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, FC, SSG and law enforcement agencies for their unwavering commitment, bravery and sacrifice in safeguarding

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Bilawal urges PM to form National Action Plan 2

He urges all parties to unite against the terrorism

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto has called on Prime Minister to form National Action Plan 2 to combat rising terrorism. Speaking to National Assembly, Bilawal stressed that national unity was crucial, warning that internal divisions were benefiting the country's enemies. He recalled how Pakistan had successfully crippled terrorism after the APS tragedy by prioritising

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan, Mr. Alisher Tukhtaev called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. – DNA

Putin lauds Pak Army's heroic rescue

Russian President Putin expressed his deepest condolences to President Asif Ali Zardari and PM Shahbaz Sharif

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD/MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed Pakistani armed forces for rescuing hundreds of hostages in the Jaffar Express incident, which is said to be one of the most audacious assaults on Railways in recent years. Amid global condemnation, Russian President Putin expressed his deepest condolences to Islamabad. In his message to President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the Russian President denounced the attack as cruel and cynical and praised the swift and decisive actions of Pakistan's military and law enforcement officers.

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10 terrorists killed in KP

Security sources say suicide bomber blew himself up in a vehicle near the FC camp in Jandola area

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army on Thursday thwarted a terrorist attack on checkpoint and killed 10 militants following a suicide attack near the FC camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district, security sources said. Heavy firing was heard following a loud explosion in Jandola, police officials told the media. According to security sources, terrorists tried to attack Jandola checkpoint, which was repulsed by the security forces. They added that a suicide bomber blew himself

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FO demands action

Terrorists were in contact with ring leaders in Afghanistan

Foreign Office says India has also been involved in terrorism in Pakistan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A day after the successful rescue operation, the Foreign Office said on Thursday that the terrorists involved in the attack on the Jaffar Express were in contact with ring leaders in Afghanistan. "India has been involved in terrorism in Pakistan. In the particular attack on Jaffar express, the terrorists had been in contact with their handlers and ring leaders in Afghanistan," FO spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said during his weekly press briefing. The rescue operation for the Jaffar Express attack has been completed, and intelligence suggests that the terrorists were in contact with their associates in Afghanistan, he mentioned. The statement comes after security forces eliminated all 33 Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists who had hijacked the Jaffar Express which was carrying more than 400 passengers – who were taken hostage. The military has said that all hostages have been freed, but 21 passengers were martyred by the

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No canal from River Indus sans Sindh's nod

Resolution calls for dialogue between Center, province on issue

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday tabled a resolution in the Sindh Assembly (SA) in which it was categorically stated that no canal could be carved out from the River Indus without the consent of the Sindh government. Declaring the carving out of canals, including the Cholistan Canal, a blatant violation of the Water Accord of 1991, the resolution made it clear that nobody would be allowed to deprive Sindh of its

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UAE 'confirms' no official visa ban on Pakistanis

Several incidents, involving fraudulent activities, led to increased restrictions on Pakistani applicants, says MoFA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has confirmed there is no official visa ban on Pakistani nationals, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) notified the National Assembly via a letter on Wednesday. Addressing a query from Dr Nafisa Shah, the ministry conveyed that the UAE Embassy said that their Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security has introduced a new five-year visa policy. This policy requires applicants to provide round-trip tickets, hotel bookings, proof of property ownership (if applicable), and a down payment of AED3,000. The ministry highlighted that several factors have led to increased scrutiny and restrictions on Pakistani applicants. These include incidents of individuals submitting fake degrees, diplomas, and fraudulent employment contracts. Additionally, some Pakistani nationals have overstayed their visas and have been implicated in political and criminal activities. Concerns have also been raised regarding inappropriate use of social media by some members of the community. The Pakistan Embassy in Abu Dhabi has addressed these issues with the

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Chinese national jailed for smuggling Pakistani girls

Court also directed to apprehend other suspects named in the case, allegedly linked to a broader trafficking network

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: A Rawalpindi court has sent a Chinese national to jail on judicial remand over allegations of human trafficking involving young Pakistani women under the pretext of marriage and employment. Senior Civil Judge Waqar Hussain Gondal in Rawalpindi presided over the hearing and ordered the detention of Chinese citizen MA Shagai. He was arrested by the

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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 Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-29
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

Efforts afoot to stabilize economy, says Tariq Fazal

He expressed these views while addressing the participants of an Iftar dinner hosted by Secretary-General of UBG Zafar Bakhtawari and the Bakhtawari family

SAIFULLAH ANSAR/DNA

ISLAMABAD :Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, has stated that the government is taking significant steps to stabilize the national economy and provide relief to the public and business community. He emphasized that economic recovery is essential for national progress, and the government's policies are moving in the right direction to achieve this goal. Resolving traders' issues is a priority, and every possible measure is being taken to facilitate them. He expressed these views while addressing the participants of an Iftar dinner hosted by Secretary-General of UBG Zafar Bakhtawari and the Bakhtawari family in honor of himself. The event witnessed a large gathering from various sectors, including business leaders, members of the District and High Court Bars, PFUJ, National Press Club, ICCI, senior officials, and other distinguished personalities. Prominent attendees included Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Magsi, MNA Malik Abrar, Senator General Abdul Qayyum, MNA Farah Naz Akbar, former Provincial Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir, former Federal Minister Sardar Shahjahan Nasir, ICCI Council Members Zubair Ahmed Malik, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Ejaz Abbasi, Zahid Maq-



bool, Chaudhry Masood, ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, President Talagang Chamber Malik Shabbir Awan, Fad Wahid, and legal experts like Wajid Ayub, Samina Faisal, and Aleem Abbasi Advocate. Additionally, ambassadors and diplomats from "Turkmenistan, Türkiye, Morocco, Nepal, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Libya, Myanmar, Rwanda, Austria, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan also attended the event. Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry highlighted the importance of resolving Islamabad's challenges, stating that as the nation's capital, it is our collective

responsibility to ensure its development. He commended the government's initiatives to provide essential public services, improve infrastructure, and enhance urban development. He also emphasized that maintaining law and order remains a top priority and paid tribute to Pakistan's security forces for their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. I salute our security forces who work tirelessly to eliminate terrorism. Their sacrifices are unforgettable, and the entire nation stands with them," he stated. He also expressed gratitude to the Bakhtawari family for their continued contributions toward economic development, social welfare, and support for the

business community. "Their efforts are commendable, not just for Islamabad but for the entire country. May Allah grant them more success," he added. Federal Minister Khalid Magsi highlighted Pakistan's vast resources and talented individuals, emphasizing that with unity, no challenge is insurmountable. He stressed the importance of government measures for economic growth, stating that "the business community is the backbone of our economy, and their prosperity is directly linked to Pakistan's progress." He also acknowledged the sacrifices of Pakistan's security forces in the fight against terrorism. "It is due to their dedication and bravery that Pakistan is moving

towards peace and stability," he remarked. Zafar Bakhtawari expressed his appreciation for Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry's appointment as a Federal Minister, stating that his leadership would benefit Islamabad, which has long been neglected. "Islamabad's markets need an uplift, and I am confident that under your leadership, positive changes will be seen," he said. He also congratulated Wajid Gilani (President of Islamabad High Court Bar), Naeem Gujar (President of Islamabad District Bar), Afzal Butt (President of PFUJ), and Haroon Paracha (Chairman of Islamabad Stock Exchange) on their elections. "I extend my gratitude to all ambassadors, diplomats, business communi-

ty leaders, and distinguished guests for attending this Iftar dinner," he added. Chairman of Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari stated that Pakistan is actively engaged in the fight against terrorism, and in this holy month, we must pray for the success of our security forces. "Thanks to the efforts of the government and the Prime Minister, Pakistan's economy is back on track. Foreign exchange reserves have increased, exports are rising, electricity rates have been reduced, and interest rates have decreased. Have faith in Pakistan—our economy will continue to strengthen," he emphasized.

ICCI commends PM's vision for improved business environment

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has welcomed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directive to all ministries and relevant secretaries to formulate a comprehensive policy action plan based on input from the country's chambers of commerce. ICCI believes this initiative will foster a more favorable environment for business growth and economic prosperity. During his meeting with Presidents of various chambers of commerce, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed that addressing the concerns of the business community remains the top priority for his government. He assured that all possible measures would be taken to facilitate businesses and improve the ease of doing business in the country. The ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry commended the Prime Minister for recognizing the critical role of the business community in driving the nation's economy. They highlighted that the Prime Minister's acknowledgment of their contributions, especially during challenging economic times, is a positive step forward. "We appreciate the government's serious commitment to addressing the concerns of the business community," said ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi. "The inclusion of business leaders in the consultative process, particularly in budget discussions, is a commendable step that will enhance mutual trust and cooperation." They expressed confidence that Prime Minister's deep understanding of business dynamics will help steer the country toward sustainable economic growth and stability.—DNA

AIOU organizes seminar

ISLAMABAD:Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) organized an important seminar yesterday on "The Care Economy and Its Relevance to Pakistani Women's Lives." The event focused on the role of women in the care sector and its economic and social impacts. The keynote speaker, Dr. Shahla Tabasum, Head of the Gender Studies Department at Fatima Jinnah Women University, delivered a detailed discussion on the concept of the care economy. She highlighted unpaid domestic labor, childcare, elderly care, and healthcare services as integral yet unrecognized components of economic structures. Dr. Tabasum emphasized that traditional economic systems fail to acknowledge women's unpaid labor, resulting in the undervaluation of their contributions. She called for policy reforms to formally recognize the care sector and ensure women receive economic benefits for their work. Dr. Tabasum further pointed out that existing office and economic systems are designed primarily for men, overlooking the responsibilities of women. She suggested that workplaces and policies should be reshaped to accommodate family-oriented needs, enabling working women to balance their professional and domestic responsibilities. A more inclusive system should provide flexible workplaces, childcare facilities, and a supportive environment, ensuring equal economic and social opportunities for women. The seminar gathered academics, researchers, students, and social activists, who engaged in discussions on women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and policy-making. Participants unanimously agreed on the need for practical measures at both societal and governmental levels to recognize and strengthen women's role in the care sector. AIOU reaffirmed its commitment to fostering academic discussions on gender and economic justice, aiming to strengthen the principles of equality and economic fairness.

DIG reviews citywide mosque security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq reviewed security arrangements across the district's mosques during prayer, Taraweeh, and Sehri hours. DIG also briefed police officers on duty, emphasizing their role in ensuring public safety. A public relation officer told APP on Thursday that under the special directives of Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq visited various mosques to assess security measures during Ramzan. DIG Tariq met with po-

lice personnel deployed at duty points, commended them for their dedication, and provided guidance on maintaining vigilance. Other senior police officers accompanied him during the visit. DIG Tariq stated that special security arrangements have been put in place for mosques and imambargahs across the federal capital. DIG reiterated that Islamabad Police remain committed to safeguarding citizens and ensuring peace in the city. He further emphasized that all necessary resources are being utilized to maintain law and order, and no one will be allowed to disrupt the security and tranquility of the citizens.

16 held in crackdown on illegal arms, drug trade

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have intensified their crackdown on illegal weapons and drug dealers, arresting 16 suspects in the last 24 hours and registering cases against them. A police spokesperson told APP on Thursday that during the operation, law enforcement recovered six pistols of different calibers, two Kalashnikovs, and a significant quantity of ammunition from the arrested individuals. Additionally, police seized 2,090 grams of heroin, 525 grams of hashish, 1,110 grams of opium, and 739 grams of crystal meth (Ice) from drug dealers.—APP

IFA discards 652kg of food, fines Rs. 748,000

ISLAMABAD:The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) carried out 507 inspections across markets, Ramadan bazaars, and food outlets during the first 10 days of Ramadan (March 2-11), issuing fines totaling Rs. 748,000 and discarding 652 kilograms of unsafe food. Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique said that the food safety teams (FSTs) inspected 507 food establishments, including 166 stalls in Ramadan-specific bazaars. She said that the IFA issued 226 written warnings for hygiene violations and provided 167 verbal instructions to vendors for immediate corrective action. Meanwhile, three businesses were temporarily sealed for repeated non-compliance. A total of 64 fines were imposed, with the highest penalties targeting vendors selling expired or substandard items. Seven food samples were collected for laboratory testing to verify quality. Food Safety Teams (FSTs) remained active 24 hours daily, focusing on sehri and iftar times, she added. Dr. Tahira said that the officials monitored 45 sehri points and 228 iftar points, ensuring proper food handling during peak hours. Deputy Director of Operations Dr. Tahira Siddique emphasized zero tolerance for violations. "Our teams are prioritizing high-risk areas, including street vendors and Ramadan bazaars, to prevent foodborne illnesses," she said. During the inspection drive, the IFA issued 53 new licenses to food vendors meeting safety criteria. Nine public complaints related to overpricing, hygiene, and food quality were resolved. A total of 652 kilograms of food—including spoiled meat, expired dairy products, and unhygienic cooked items—were destroyed. The bulk of discarded items came from unlicensed vendors operating near iftar zones. Fines ranged from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 50,000, depending on the severity of violations. Repeat offenders faced higher penalties or temporary closures. She said Ramadan-specific markets, set up to offer affordable groceries, underwent daily inspections. Over 160 stalls were checked for accurate pricing, weight measurement, and storage conditions. Vendors flouting rules were barred from operating until improvements were made. Dr. Siddique reaffirmed the IFA's mandate: "Safe food is a right, not a privilege. We will escalate action against those endangering public health.—DNA

Output of LCVs, vans and jeeps increases 69.43%

ISLAMABAD:The production of Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs), vans and jeeps in the country has witnessed 69.43 percent increase during the first eight months of the fiscal year 2024-25 against the output of the same period of last fiscal year. As many as 22,503 LCVs, vans and jeeps were manufactured during July-February (2024-25) as compared to the production of 13,281 LCVs, vans and jeeps during July- February (2023-4), according to official data by Pakistan Automobile Manufacturers Association (PAMA). During the period under review, the production of trucks also rose from 1,256 units to 2,470 units, showing an increase of 96.65 percent while the production of buses increased by 45 percent, going up from 300 units to 435 units. However, the production of farm tractors decreased by 30.04 percent from 31,008 units last year to 21,692 units during the period under review. The production of cars increased to 67,135 units during this year from 46,419 units during last year while the production of motorcycles and three-wheelers also surged from 740,210 units to 962,315 units, showing an increase of 30 percent.—APP

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Briefs

Work
and meal
adjustments
for staff

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the 1320 MW Sahiwal Power Plant in Pakistan, the management team has introduced measures to accommodate Muslim staff during Ramadan. These include adjusted work hours and special meal arrangements. "It is a blessed Ramadan for me," said Mr. Umair, an engineer at the plant. "Working hours have been relaxed, and meal arrangements have been in place since the start of the Holy Month." To support employees during fasting, the plant provides buffet-style meals for sehri (the pre-dawn meal) and iftar (the meal to break the fast). The buffet includes traditional Pakistani dishes such as haleem, biryani, and kebabs, alongside Chinese options like dumplings and noodles. The management has also shortened working hours for employees commuting from outside Sahiwal, enabling them to return home for iftar with their families. "The long hours of fasting can be exhausting, and the additional stress of commuting can make it more challenging for employees to fully enjoy their time with loved ones," another technician told Gwadar Pro. The Sahiwal Power Plant, operated by Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy (Limited), is a flagship project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).—APP

IRSA releases
72,422
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 72,422 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 56,742 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1404.5 feet and was 2.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1402 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 19,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1069.5 feet, which was 19.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 12,720 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs, respectively. —APP

Pak, Azerbaijan expand
coop in digital innovation

This high-level meeting followed Prime Minister Pakistan's recent visit to Azerbaijan and focused on enhancing cooperation in technology-driven public services. Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja emphasized that relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan continue to grow, with increasing collaboration in digital transformation and citizen-centric initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Strengthening bilateral ties in the digital sector, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, met with Federal Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, in Islamabad today. This high-level meeting followed Prime Minister Pakistan's recent visit to Azerbaijan and focused on enhancing cooperation in technology-driven public services. Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja emphasized that relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan continue to grow, with increasing collaboration in digital transformation and citizen-centric initiatives. A key topic of discussion was Asaan Khidmat Centres, which are designed to simplify government services and improve accessibility for the public. "The Prime Minister's vision is centered on making public services more efficient and accessible. We are actively working towards a 'One-Stop Shop' model that streamlines service delivery



and supports ease of doing business," said Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja. The Minister also highlighted Pakistan's Smart

Islamabad Project and Citizen Services Portal, which share objectives with Asaan Khidmat Centres by leveraging technology

to enhance public service accessibility. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to furthering collaboration in digital initiatives

and public service modernization, paving the way for more efficient, transparent, and technology-driven governance.

Randhawa chairs CDA
Board 5th meeting to
discuss projects

ISLAMABAD: The fifth meeting of the CDA Board, chaired by Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, was held on Thursday at the CDA Headquarters. The meeting was attended by CDA Board members and relevant officers. Various agenda items were considered during the meeting. According to the details, during the fifth CDA Board meeting, approval was granted for the bids received in the public auction of commercial plots. The meeting was briefed that in the recent public auction, 17 commercial plots and 15 commercial shops were auctioned. In total, CDA received 23.4 billion rupees from the auction of 32 commercial properties. The briefing further informed that the recent auction received bids approximately 25% higher than the reserve price, with one commercial plot receiving 126% above the reserve price, and another plot receiving 85% above the reserve price, marking a historic achievement for CDA. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the overwhelming response and participation in large number of investors in the auction is a testament to the trust in CDA's business-friendly policies and measures. The CDA Board meeting decided to form a committee to review the leasing of commercial properties under the jurisdiction of DMA. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that a review will be carried out regarding the leasing or renting of commercial properties by DMA at market rates. A committee comprising officers from the Planning Wing, Finance Wing, and DMA has been formed for this purpose. Additionally, the fifth CDA Board meeting discussed the construction of a parking plaza on the parking plot adjacent to Centaurus Mall. The meeting decided that the parking plaza should be designed to maximize parking capacity and should be designed as a commercial area with revenue generation in mind. Moreover, the CDA Board meeting decided to include reputable chartered accountant firms on CDA's panel in accordance with the law, to further improve CDA's financial governance. During the meeting, the plot of the Punjab Employees Social Security Institution in Sector I-10/4 was canceled due to default, and it was decided that the plot would be allotted to the ICT Employees Social Security Institution after fulfilling the legal requirements.—DNA

Ayaz commends
security forces for
successful operation
in Jaffar Express

Reaffirming the government's commitment, he said "The state remains resolute in its mission to defeat those who threaten innocent lives, ensuring peace and security for all

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday lauded the Pakistan army and security forces for their professionalism and bravery in successfully completing the Jaffar Express operation in Balochistan. Praising their swift and efficient actions in rescuing hostages, the Speaker highlighted that the operation was executed with remarkable skill and without major losses, crediting the expertise of security personnel and the decisive leadership of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir. "This was one of the most challenging operations, yet it was carried out with exceptional precision," said Ayaz Sadiq. "Our courageous soldiers and officers displayed unparalleled bravery and dedication." Expressing deep sorrow over the loss of security personnel and train passengers, he offered prayers for the martyrs and extended heartfelt condolences to their families. Condemning the perpetrators, the Speaker said, "Those who target innocent civilians have no connection to Islam or this nation." Reaffirming the government's commitment, he said "The state remains resolute in its mission to defeat those who threaten innocent lives, ensuring peace and security for all.—APP

China-Pakistan
highway
research
unveiled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A joint research on the reuse of bulk industrial solid waste and desert sand towards sustainable development has been initiated between China and Pakistan.

In this connection, an agreement was signed among Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology (XAUAT), Shihezi University (SHZU), Karakoram International University (KIU) and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Highway Science and Technology Co., Ltd. According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Thursday, the core project of this collaboration is "Research and Application of Key Technologies for Solid Waste-Based Green and Low-Carbon Fluidized Solidified Soil". In view of the geographical conditions of Xinjiang, the research aims to develop high-performance cementitious materials based on solid waste and use them to improve desert sand thereby producing green and low-carbon fluidized solidified soil. This will not only help reduce the cost of solid waste disposal and engineering spoil transportation, lowering construction costs, but also realize the commercial utilization of industrial solid waste. Under the agreement, the four parties will integrate their unique resources into the project and promote cooperation in scientific research, talent cultivation and technology transfer in transportation infrastructure construction and maintenance.—APP

UAE condemns
terrorist attack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack on a train in Balochistan, which claimed multiple lives and left several others injured. In an official statement, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the attack in the strongest terms, reaffirming the country's unwavering stance against all forms of violence and terrorism that threaten security, stability, and violate international law. The ministry extended its deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies to the government and people of Pakistan, as well as to the families of the victims. It also wished a swift recovery for those injured in the attack.

Communications ministry
strengthen regional connectivity

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Communications has made remarkable strides in modernizing infrastructure, improving services, and strengthening regional linkages during the past year. Several important initiatives have been rolled out, focusing on key sectors such as transportation, e-governance, and public outreach. The key achievements during the one year of the government included significant reforms and improvements across various sectors. The Ministry implemented amendments to align with the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Act, 2023, fully adopted e-Office, and abolished 40 vacant posts, saving Rs. 36 million annually. The

agreements with Belarus, Russia, China, and other countries were signed to enhance regional connectivity and infrastructure. According to official documents, National Highway Authority (NHA) has made substantial progress with initiatives like the widening of the N-5 highway and securing funding for key road improvements. The NHA also increased toll revenue by Rs. 9 billion and proposed new road projects, including the Karachi-Hyderabad and Kharian-Rawalpindi motorways, with feasibility studies currently in progress. The National Highway & Motorways Police (NH&MP) played a key role in road safety by implementing the Axle Load Control Re-

gime and issuing more than 20,000 driving licenses. The NH&MP also launched safety programs to ensure better protection for road users. The Pakistan Post Office Department (PPOD) exceeded its revenue targets by 30%, modernized its services, and enhanced e-commerce and remittance networks, making significant strides in its operations. The Construction Technology and Training Institute (CTTI) helped train thousands of students and achieved international recognition by securing 3rd place in a global competition, showcasing its role in skill development. These efforts highlight progress in infrastructure, service modernization, and regional cooperation. The

Ministry conducted various public relations and outreach activities to engage citizens and stakeholders. On October 24, 2024, NHA held an inauguration ceremony for the new Hub River Bridge, attended by key ministers. Media campaigns were launched to raise awareness on toll rate revisions, new projects, and infrastructure maintenance. A flood emergency awareness campaign in July 2024 was instrumental in saving lives, additionally, campaigns to promote M-Tag usage on motorways were held throughout 2024, leading to a 98% usage rate on the Sialkot-Lahore Motorway. A new campaign is currently underway to expand M-Tag use nationwide.—DNA

HEC revises mathematics
curricula to meet standards

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has notified revised curricula for Associate, Bachelor, and Master degree programmes in Mathematics, marking a significant step towards aligning higher education with contemporary academic and industry standards. These revisions have been developed by the

National Curriculum Review Committee (NCRC), an esteemed body of senior academics representing leading universities across the country. The NCRC, comprising experts from institutions such as Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan; Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan; Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering & Management Sciences, Quetta; COMSATS University, Islamabad; Forman

Christian College, Lahore; Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences & Technology, Swabi; Government College University, Lahore; Institute of Business Administration, Karachi; International Islamic University, Islamabad; Karakoram International University, Gilgit; Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro; Pakistan Institute of Engineering & Applied Sciences, Islamabad; Quaid-i-Azam University, Islama-

bad; Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur; The University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Muzaffarabad; University of Karachi; University of Management & Technology, Lahore; University of Peshawar; University of Swat; and University of the Punjab, Lahore, worked diligently to develop curricula that integrate both theoretical and applied dimensions of Mathematics. Chaired by Prof. Dr. Khuram Shabbir of Government College University, Lahore, the NCRC sought to modernize degree structures by incorporating emerging subjects and evolving industry requirements. Dr. Amjad Hussain, Director General, Academics Division at HEC, played a pivotal role in ensuring that the revised curricula reflected cutting-edge developments in Mathematics.



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Urine analysis

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Lipid profile
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FBC
Uric Acid
Liver Function Test
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Appeasing Russia

IN 1938, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich brandishing a signed document from Hitler and declaring a “peace for our time”. Less than a year later, World War II began. US President Donald Trump, who has pledged to “end wars” and bring world peace, is at risk of echoing Chamberlain’s experience as he negotiates for peace with Russian President Vladimir Putin. More accurately, we are all at risk, because the consequences will affect everyone. A forced Ukrainian capitulation, which Trump appears to favour, wouldn’t bring stability. It would breed chaos – mass migration, a surge in illegal weapons and seismic geopolitical aftershocks. The worst-case scenario? A Russian-fuelled civil war in Ukraine. I saw this first-hand in 2014 in Donbas and dread its spread across the country – or beyond. The 1953 Korean armistice left the peninsula in a state of tension for decades. A forced settlement in Ukraine could lead to a similar outcome. Putin might seem “more generous than he has to be” to Trump, but he’s still the one who kicked off the war and brutally keeps it going. In the 11 years since seizing Crimea and eastern Ukrainian territory, he has never backed down – not to sanctions, isolation or economic pressure. As US Senator Lindsey Graham warned: “If you give Putin Ukraine, he will not stop.” If European leaders overlooked Churchill’s warning that an appeaser is one who “hopes that if he feeds the crocodile enough, the crocodile will eat him last”, Trump’s unpredictable actions might have pulled their heads out of the sand. Nearly all, including Britain’s Keir Starmer, France’s Emmanuel Macron and Germany’s Olaf Scholz, now recognise Ukraine as essential to national security. When Trump labelled Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a “dictator”, they responded unequivocally: Ukraine is a democracy. After what many saw as Ukraine’s humiliating reception in Washington, Britain embraced Zelensky. King Charles welcomed him at Sandringham House, underscoring the United Kingdom’s unwavering support. In Brussels, 26 of 27 European leaders (excepting Hungary’s Viktor Orban) signed a declaration affirming their commitment to Ukraine’s independence and urging increased defence spending across the European Union. “From all the Ukrainians, from all our nation: great appreciation,” Zelensky said at the meeting. “We are very thankful that we are not alone.” It looked as if Europe had supplanted America as Ukraine’s foremost military ally. But this perception proved short-lived. Back in Kyiv, Zelensky unexpectedly pledged to “make things right” with Trump and pursue negotiations – just as Washington announced a pause in military aid, citing Ukraine’s reluctance to come to the table. Thus, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen’s vision of transforming Ukraine into a “steel porcupine” remains unfulfilled. Ukraine, after so much sacrifice, is weary of being anyone’s porcupine, buffer or outpost. This defiance signals troubling times ahead, not just for Ukraine but European countries. I held little hope of a breakthrough as Ukrainian and American officials met in Saudi Arabia this week to try and halt Europe’s bloodiest war in generations. Zelensky’s chief of staff Andriy Yermak promised: “We are ready to do everything to achieve peace.” Zelensky, also in Jeddah for talks with the crown prince but absent from negotiations, insisted Ukraine’s approach would be “fully constructive”.

05

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Kurds signal the end of their rebellion in Syria

Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

The UN, the UK and Germany were also early supporters. The EU welcomed the agreement, describing it as paving the way for increased stability and a better future for Syrians. In a statement on its website, the bloc affirmed its readiness to provide Syria with the necessary support to implement the agreement’s provisions, noting that the national dialogue, which began at the end of February, must lead to the fulfillment of the aspirations of all components of Syrian society. Despite this universal support for the agreement, discussions over the details may delay its full implementation. The last paragraph of the agreement instructed “the executive committees” to implement it before the end of 2025, indicating additional steps to be taken to put it fully into effect

IN one of the most significant developments since he came to power on Dec. 8, Syrian Arab Republic President Ahmad Al-Sharaa on Monday signed an agreement with Mazloum Abdi, head of the Syrian Democratic Forces, under which the group accepted Damascus’ authority and agreed to be integrated into the Syrian government’s security and administrative institutions. The agreement officially ended a 28-year armed conflict in northeast Syria, calling for a ceasefire in “all parts of Syrian territory,” which includes the areas under SDF control. This historic agreement, which came after weeks of meetings between the two sides, within the SDF and with its allies, is an important milestone in the new Syrian government’s efforts to extend its authority over the entire country. It was especially significant as it was signed as Damascus was still dealing with unrest on the west coast. Referring to that attempted rebellion, the agreement included the SDF’s commitment to “support the government of Syria in combating remnants of the Assad regime and all other sources of threat to Syria’s security and unity.” The SDF is a predominantly Kurdish coalition of armed groups that was founded in 2015, with US support, and serves as the military wing of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (unofficially known as Rojava). It is strongly opposed by Türkiye, which views it as an extension of the PKK, a group designated as terrorist by Ankara, the EU, the US and other countries. Although the SDF’s exact organic relationship with the PKK is not clear, the group does not hide its sympathy to the PKK, whose leader Abdullah Ocalan’s pictures are displayed proudly in areas under SDF control. Türkiye accuses it of harboring wanted PKK fighters and has engaged in several battles with it for that reason. The timing of the agreement could not be more opportune. The image of the new government in Damascus was damaged by the unchecked violence days earlier in the predominantly Alawite regions of Latakia province. The agreement with the Kurds bolsters the new government’s credentials regarding its treatment of minorities and ends unfounded speculation that the SDF was somehow complicit in that unrest, even though Bashar Assad was its sworn enemy and it did not hide its relief that he was gone. It helped that the PKK’s imprisoned head Oca-

lan had last month called on his movement to lay down its arms and dissolve itself. Ocalan added: “There is no alternative to democracy in the pursuit and realization of a political system.” If his group were to heed his call, it would end 45 years of civil war in Türkiye, which has claimed the lives of an estimated 40,000. Although the SDF initially said that Ocalan’s call did not concern it, his move has created momentum that was difficult to ignore. If the PKK were to disband, it would also deprive the SDF of a model and source of support. Thus, Monday’s agreement was greeted with cheers by local Kurds and by Kurdish leaders in neighboring Iraq. Regional governments and the EU welcomed it as well. The US, the SDF’s main backer, also supported it. On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a press statement that Washington “welcomes the recently announced agreement between the Syrian interim authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces to integrate the northeast into a unified Syria.” He added that the US “reaffirms its support for a political transition that demonstrates credible, nonsectarian governance as the best path to avoid further conflict.” Looking deeper into the agreement with the SDF, it is clear the group has reached a fundamental turning point. Instead of carving out a special status for Kurds, it agreed that the “Kurdish community is an organic constituent within the Syrian state, whereby the state guarantees its right to citizenship and all other constitutional rights.” In another part of the statement, the state guarantees the rights of “representation and participation in the political process and all government agencies” of “all Syrians, irrespective of their religious or ethnic backgrounds.” Significantly, in an apparent reference to Rojava, the agreement calls for “consolidating all civilian and military institutions in northeastern Syria into Syrian state institutions, including border crossings, the airport and oil and gas fields.” It rejected “calls for partition, hate speech and attempts to stir conflict between the constituents of Syrian society.” Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council were among the first to welcome the agreement and praise the government’s efforts to reunify Syria. The UN, the UK and Germany were also early supporters. The EU welcomed the agreement, describing it as paving the

way for increased stability and a better future for Syrians. In a statement on its website, the bloc affirmed its readiness to provide Syria with the necessary support to implement the agreement’s provisions, noting that the national dialogue, which began at the end of February, must lead to the fulfillment of the aspirations of all components of Syrian society. Despite this universal support for the agreement, discussions over the details may delay its full implementation. The last paragraph of the agreement instructed “the executive committees” to implement it before the end of 2025, indicating additional steps to be taken to put it fully into effect. It is no secret that hard-liners in Iran, after their defeat in Syria, have tried to join hands with the SDF against the new government, a move the latter has said it rejected. Remnants of the old regime have also tried but clearly failed, as the agreement explicitly denounces them. Within the SDF and its affiliated institutions, some have taken to social media to minimize the importance of the agreement. An anonymous source was quoted on X by the Rojava Information Center as saying: “It is just a memorandum of understanding. It will not translate to any real change on the ground unless the joint committees agree on everything.” The agreement means, according to this source, that “now at least there are two sides agreeing on taking time to discuss everything in detail before rushing to implement any change.” More significantly, an SDF spokesman was quoted as saying that government forces “will not enter the (northeastern Syria) region aside from potentially at border gates.” He added that there was no change in the situation regarding the Daesh prisons or the fight against Daesh in the region. The spokesman described the deal as “preliminary agreements” that will be worked on by committees. If these statements are accurately reported, they indicate hesitation on the part of some in the SDF or its affiliated civilian bodies. This calls for speedily empanelling the executive committees stipulated in the agreement, but also a fuller engagement with the US on the status of its forces in the SDF-controlled region, as well as the fate of the Daesh prisons and refugee camps. – Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg is the GCC assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation.

Impact of social media on the cultural landscape of Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Anwar Farooq

The biggest social media challenge is the propagation of disinformation and false news, which can fuel social, political and religious conflict. To combat this, more digital literacy initiatives need to be put in place to inform users on how to critically read online material. To restrict harmful content without stifling free speech, collaboration between the government, internet companies and civil society organizations is also essential. The decline of traditional cultural values as a result of the overwhelming effect of globalized material presents another difficulty

THE culture of Pakistan is a rich and colourful picture drawn by the traditions of countless civilizations, faiths and ethnicities that resided in the country over millennia. It is a mixture of indigenous values and remote influences of Persian, Central Asian, South Asian and Islamic ones. Pakistani culture features a number of main elements which are its languages, traditional dance & music, literature, arts and architecture. Cuisine, rich in flavours and diversity is another essential component. Religious and cultural festivals are a true reflection of the nation’s rich social fabric. Pakistanis have a deep-rooted family values, hospitality and community ties, hence its culture is a unique and living example of the history and identity of its peoples. In this modern world, indeed, technology and social media have changed cultures in developed countries by changing methods of communication and social relationships. Social media sites have brought in a global culture, where trends, ideas and customs move fast from one border to another. Social media has also made content creation democratized, as people can make their cultural practices known to the world. Emojis, memes and instant messages have replaced conventional methods of communication as well. While this has facilitated worldwide connectivity, it has not come without challenges such as a reduction in face-to-face interaction and the spread of disinformation. Like the rest of the World, social media has had a profound effect on Pakistani society, changing the fabric of society for both good and bad. Internet and social media users in Pakistan are growing day by day. Pakistan had around 87.35 million internet users as of January 2023 which has now further grown. Social media use is common, with 71.7 million users in January 2023. According to the GSMA Mobile Economy Report 2023, Pakistan’s internet users are estimated to be 110-20 million by 2025. Statista’s

2023 report estimates social media users to be 85-90 million by 2025. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) forecasts a 10-12% annual growth in mobile internet subscriptions, which may exceed 140 million mobile broadband subscribers by 2025. Social media has been an effective tool for cultural exchange and worldwide representation on the positive front. Social media sites have enabled Pakistanis to share their vibrant cultural heritage, such as music, food, fashion and customs, with the rest of the world. Pakistani television dramas, Sufi music and traditional wear such as shalwar kameez have become internationally recognized, evoking pride in local culture and generating opportunities for cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, social media has given voice to marginalized communities such as women and religious minorities giving them a platform to fight for their rights and defy societal norms. Social media has played a pivotal role in catapulting such movements like “Aurat March” to success, and this has trickled on to polarizing yet critical topics like gender equality, child labor, access to education and healthcare. Such has encouraged a culture of activism and accountability, allowing people to have the power to call for change and resist archaic traditions. The most significant adverse impact is the loss of cultural values and the emergence of cultural homogenization. Western lifestyles and ideals, often fantasized about on social media, have started to dominate local ways of life, especially among young people. This has resulted in a change in attitudes towards family life, relationships and roles within society, at times causing conflicts between generations. The biggest social media challenge is the propagation of disinformation and false news, which can fuel social, political and religious conflict. To combat this, more digital literacy initiatives need to be put in place to inform users on how to critically read online material. To restrict harmful content without stifling free speech,

collaboration between the government, internet companies and civil society organizations is also essential. The decline of traditional cultural values as a result of the overwhelming effect of globalized material presents another difficulty. This trend can be resisted by encouraging the creation and distribution of regional content that reflects Pakistani customs and values. The impact of social media on mental health, particularly in young people, is another significant issue. Anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem are among the issues that can arise from the stress that comes from trying to live up to unrealistic beauty standards and lifestyles that influencers promote. Campaigns to raise awareness of social media’s staged life and promote responsible online conduct can help with this. Higher education institutions and schools can take action by incorporating mental health into their curricula. Additionally, the rise in online harassment and cyberbullying is a growing problem, especially for minorities and women. Enhancing laws and enforcement tools to defend users from abuse online, while establishing safer online environments, is essential. Social media companies also need to step up by setting tougher rules and tools against harassment. In the future, the solution is a balanced strategy that leverages the advantages of social media while solving its problems. Fostering digital entrepreneurship and innovation can generate economic opportunities, especially for women and youth. For instance, developing e-commerce and digital skills can enable people to use social media for business development. In addition, creating a culture of responsible use of social media, where citizens are aware of their online footprint and its contribution to society, is essential. By tackling these issues ahead of time and collectively, Pakistan can leverage the potential of social media to create a more inclusive, educated, and culturally rich society.

Briefs

Terrorists
were in
contact...

FROM PAGE 01
terrorists before the clearance operation had commenced. Also, four FC personnel were also martyred during the attack in the Mushqaf area of the Bolan district. The Foreign Office spokesperson added that intercepted calls confirmed links between the attackers and Afghanistan. "The terrorists have safe havens in Afghanistan, and Pakistan has repeatedly urged the Afghan interim government to prevent groups like the BLA from using its soil for terrorism," he said.

Country can't
progress...

FROM PAGE 01
Quetta to express solidarity with the people and review the law and order situation following the aftermath of the deadly Jaffar Express hijacking incident. The premier's visit comes after security forces eliminated all 33 BLA terrorists who had hijacked the Jaffar Express which was carrying more than 400 passengers — who were taken hostage — on Tuesday.

No canal
from River..

FROM PAGE 01
share in the water resources. The resolution demanded the implementation of the Water Accord of 1991. It was stated in the resolution that new canals could lead to an environmental crisis in Sindh because the water shortage resulting from it would adversely affect crop production, the economy and the routine life of the people. "There will be no compromise on the province's share in the water resources."

Govt, opp
trade barbs..

FROM PAGE 01
the lives of the citizens and protecting the integrity of Pakistan. It recognised that their heroic efforts in neutralising the terrorists involved in the attack on Jaffar Express reflect the resolve and readiness of security forces to defend the nation at all costs.

Chinese
national...

FROM PAGE 01
FIA immigration authorities. The court also directed law enforcement to apprehend other suspects named in the case, allegedly linked to a broader trafficking network. According to FIR filed by a Pakistani woman, she was promised marriage and a job opportunity by the accused. The complaint further stated that a deal worth Rs1 million (\$3,500) was struck with her family, and Rs150,000 (\$520) had already been paid when authorities intervened.

Putin lauds
Pak Army's..

FROM PAGE 01
Putin praised forces for their bravery and professionalism as they saved numerous lives during the operation, which led to the successful recovery of all hostages. Putin also reiterated Moscow's commitment to strengthening its cooperation with Islamabad in ongoing battle against terrorism. "We stand ready to deepen our partnership in addressing all forms of terrorism," he said, extending solidarity with Pakistan in this time of crisis.

10 terrorists
killed in KP

FROM PAGE 01
up in a vehicle near the FC camp. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid tribute to the security forces for repulsing the attack and killing the terrorists. He said that the nation was standing by the security forces to eliminate the terrorism from the country. The latest attack came only a day after security forces killed all 33 attackers who had hijacked the Jaffar Express train in Balochistan's Bolan and held passengers hostages in the mountainous region.



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas celebrating with German Hockey Team after defeating Pakistan in Juniors Hockey Team at Sports Complex in Federal Capital. — Online/DNA

Alcaraz eases into quarters as Sabalenka sinks Kartal

The world number three from Spain defied the difficult windy conditions on Stadium Court to deliver a dominant performance against a player who had won their past two encounters

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK: Two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz overpowered Grigor Dimitrov 6-1, 6-1 on Wednesday to reach the quarter-finals of the ATP Indian Wells Masters. The world number three from Spain defied the difficult windy conditions on Stadium Court to deliver a dominant performance against a player who had won their past two encounters — including in the quarter-finals at the Miami Open last year. He denied Dimitrov's bid to join Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime as the only players to beat Alcaraz in three consecutive meetings. With his 50th ATP Masters 1000 match win, Alcaraz kept alive his bid to join Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the only men to win three straight Indian Wells titles. Having reached the fourth round without dropping a set, Alcaraz produced his most impressive performance of the tournament, appearing supremely untroubled by the swirling winds that had ball kids scampering after blowing trash. He broke Dimitrov to open the match and broke him again to secure the first set. He didn't face a break point until the fifth game of the second set, but he worked his way out of that jam with an ace on Dimitrov's third break chance, then broke the Bulgarian for a 5-1 lead. Alcaraz polished it off in style, giving himself a match point with his sixth ace of the match and sealing the win with a forehand winner. He will play Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo for a place in the semi-finals. Cerundolo beat Aus-

tralian Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-3. Sonay Kartal's eye-catching run at Indian Wells was brought to an abrupt halt by Aryna Sabalenka on Wednesday as the world No. 1 claimed a commanding 6-1, 6-2 victory. The Brit entered the main draw as a "lucky loser" but made it all the way to the fourth round in California, beating 16th-seed Beatriz Haddad Maia along the way. For a brief moment, it seemed as if Kartal could cause another stunning upset as she broke the three-time Grand Slam winner in the first game. The early setback led to Sabalenka receiving a swift code violation as

she was reprimanded for an audible obscenity. But Sabalenka quickly regrouped to blow Kartal away. The Brit had no answer for the quality on show from her opponent across the court as Sabalenka won all six of the following games to take a set lead. Sabalenka refused to let up in the second set, forcing Kartal to sprint around the court in a vain attempt to withstand the barrage. Kartal did show some improvement in taking two games off Sabalenka on serve, but her defiance only delayed the inevitable as the tournament's top seed wrapped up victory in a little over an hour.



The hard-hitting Belarusian, who helped fix a small issue with the net in the first set, will face either Liudmila Samsonova or Jasmine Paolini in the quarterfinals. Meanwhile, Jack Draper clinched the biggest win of his season on Wednesday at the BNP Paribas Open, where he eliminated former champion and World No. 4 Taylor Fritz 7-5, 6-4 to advance to the quarterfinals in Indian Wells for the first time. The British lefty won seven straight games from 4-5 in the first set to 4-0 in the second set to gain firm control of the clash, before he served out at the second time of asking for his third Top 5 win. Draper's success against the home favourite was underpinned by a dominant serving performance, with the 23-year-old winning 91 per cent (32/35) of points behind his first delivery, according to Infosys ATP Stats, to improve to 3-2 in his Lexus ATP Head2Head series against Fritz. "I felt great. It is the best match I have played here so far in the three years I have been here," Draper said. "I was happy with the way I was sharp. I moved great and competed well. There were a few moments here and there which I was brave, which I spoke to my coach about before the match. When you have chances against these types of players. Taylor is such an amazing player, so to come through in the way I did I am very proud of that." With his 79-minute win, Draper advanced to his third ATP Masters 1000 quarter-final. The World No. 14, who would crack the Top 10 for the first time if he reaches his second tour-level final of the season (Doha), lost in the last eight in Montreal in 2022 and in Cincinnati in 2024.

England's Moeen slams Pakistan's pace attack

'I'm like, no. They're good, but they're not the best, Moeen stated

WEB DESK

LONDON: Former England cricketer Moeen Ali has raised doubts about Pakistan's pace attack, questioning their status among the world's elite following their underwhelming performances in the recently concluded 2025 Champions Trophy. His remarks, made during a podcast with fellow England player Adil Rashid, have sparked significant debate within the cricketing community. During the discussion, Moeen acknowledged the talent of Pakistan's seamers—Naseem Shah, Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf—but expressed skepticism about their claim to being the best in world cricket. "There's this perception, especially among people with Pakistani backgrounds, that Pakistan has the best seamers. I'm like, no. They're good, but they're not the best," Moeen stated. He elaborated further, saying, "Naseem Shah, Shaheen, and Haris Rauf are very good, don't get me wrong. We're not saying they're bad, but they're not the best either." Moeen's remarks come at a time when the trio has been widely praised in Pakistan, yet their performances in the 2025 Champions Trophy have raised doubts about their ability to excel at the highest level.

Pakistan reaches Christchurch for T20I series against NZ

The T20I series between Pakistan and New Zealand will officially begin on March 16

CHRISTCHURCH: The Agha Salman-led Pakistan T20I squad arrived in New Zealand on Thursday ahead of the five-match series against the Bracewell-led Blackcaps, set to commence on March 16. The white-ball tour includes five T20 Internationals (T20Is) followed by three One Day Internationals (ODIs), running until April 5. Following their arrival, the national squad will rest today before resuming training at 1 PM local time tomorrow. The touring squad features exciting new talents, including Abdul Samad and Hassan Nawaz, both of whom have received their maiden call-ups to the national team. Meanwhile, New Zealand announced their 15-member squad for the series on Tuesday. The squad features seven players from their recent ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 campaign, with all-rounder Michael Bracewell set to lead the side. Senior spinner Ish Sodhi and pacer

Ben Sears, who missed the Champions Trophy due to injury, have also been included. Pacers Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke will be available for the first three T20Is, while experienced bowler Matt Henry, the tournament's leading wicket-taker, will join the squad for the final two matches. The last T20I series between Pakistan and New Zealand took place in April 2024, when the Blackcaps toured Pakistan. The five-match contest ended in a 2-2 draw after the series opener in Rawalpindi was washed out due to rain. New Zealand squad T20Is against Pakistan: Michael Bracewell (capt), Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Jacob Duffy, Zakary Foulkes (games 4 & 5), Mitchell Hay, Matt Henry (games 4 & 5), Kyle Jamieson (games 1, 2 & 3), Daryl Mitchell, James Neesham, Will O'Rourke (games 1, 2 & 3), Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi Pakistan T20I squad against New Zealand: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousaf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim and Usman Khan. — DNA

Ancelotti relieved as Real Madrid beat Atletico

Real secured the victory 4-2 in a penalty shootout after the tie ended 2-2 in aggregate

WEB DESK

MADRID: Real Madrid fans and players celebrated their hard-fought win against Atletico Madrid on Wednesday to earn a quarter-final berth in the Champions League, but manager Carlo Ancelotti was more relieved than rapturous at what he said was a subpar performance. Real secured the victory 4-2 in a penalty shootout after the tie ended 2-2 in aggregate as the defending champions bid for a record-extending 16th European Cup win. Ancelotti was disappointed that Real conceded a goal inside the first minute that levelled the tie after Real had secured a 2-1 first-leg advantage at home last week. He urged his players to be sharper as they



prepare to face Arsenal for a place in the semis. "I have tried to explain to my players that the priority was not to make the game more complicated than it already was," Ancelotti told a press conference. "We made it more difficult by losing unnecessary balls that constantly found us out of position... If they scored 2-0, then the game could have got out of control... We played better as the game progressed, had our chances, but we need to improve in our focus and concentration," he said. "We always have to look for improvement. The tie was evenly matched and a mistake could have been costly. We wanted to finish the game before penalties, sure, but here we are, still fighting and in contention, as is customary at this club."

Germany Wins Friendship Hockey Series

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Germany's junior hockey team clinched the Pak-German Friendship Hockey Series, securing a 4-0 series victory after defeating Pakistan 4-1 in the last match at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad, on Thursday. The series highlighted the German team's exceptional skill and teamwork. From the opening whistle, the visitors showcased precision and coordination, making it difficult for the Pakistani side to mount a strong challenge. Despite moments of resilience and spirited play from the hosts, Germany's consistency and efficiency proved overwhelming. The visitors completed a clean sweep of the four-match series, having previously defeated Pakistan 2-1, 2-1, and 4-3 in the first three matches held in Lahore. The series, played in both Lahore and Islamabad, marked a significant step in Pakistan's efforts to revive international hockey and provided a valuable learning experience for the Pakistani junior team against a world-class opponent. The final match was attended by Federal Secretary of the Ministry of IPC Zahoore Ahmed, German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas, Director General Pakistan Sports Board Yasir Pirzada, President Pakistan Hockey Federation Tariq Hussain Bugti, Secretary Rana Mujahid, Army Sports Board Secretary Colonel Nabeel Rana, and former hockey legends Shehbaz Ahmed Senior, Khawaja Junaid, and Asif Bajwa, among others. Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Hockey Federation Secretary General Rana Mujahid emphasized that the support of COAS General Asim Munir is playing a key role in reviving hockey in Pakistan, and better results are expected soon.

PM eyes \$2bln trade volume...

FROM PAGE 01
the significant progress made during the visit, particularly the formation of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council and the signing of several key agreements and MOUs in multiple fields. Upon his return, the prime minister said he had directed relevant ministers to ensure the timely implementation of the decisions made by both leaders. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev reaffirmed President Mirziyoyev's strong commitment to strengthening Uzbekistan-Pakistan relations, particularly by translating their excellent political ties into mutually beneficial economic cooperation. He also conveyed that President Mirziyoyev had accepted Prime Minister Shehbaz's invitation for an official visit to Pakistan later this year, with dates to be finalized through diplomatic channels. This growing partnership marks a significant step toward deeper economic, trade, and strategic cooperation between the two nations.

Bilawal urges PM...

FROM PAGE 01
national security over politics. However, he lamented that Pakistan had lost those achievements, allowing terrorism to resurface. Bilawal condemned all forms of terrorism and highlighted PPP's sacrifices, including Benazir Bhutto's assassinations. He criticised PTI for patronizing the release of former prime minister over national security. Calling for political consensus, he urged all parties to unite against the terrorism, stating that the terrorists have no religion or ideology, only a mission to spread fear and hinder Pakistan's progress.

UAE 'confirms'...

FROM PAGE 01
UAE authorities at both ministerial and undersecretary levels. Senior Officers in the Middle East Division of the ministry have been raising the issue with the UAE Embassy in Islamabad. Recommendation letters for the issuance of UAE visas are timely shared by the ministry with the UAE Embassy in Islamabad for smooth visa facilitation.

Briefs

PSX turns bullish, gains 1,009 points

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,009.70 points, a positive change of 0.89 percent, closing at 115,094.24 points as compared to 114,084.54 points on the last trading day. A total of 382,791,629 shares were traded during the day as compared to 299,630,187 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25.407 billion against Rs20.262 billion on the last trading day. As many as 444 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 232 of them recorded gains and 156 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged.—APP

Gold prices up by Rs.2,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.2,800 and was traded at Rs.309,300 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs306,500 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.2,400 to Rs 265,174 from Rs 262,774 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.2,201 to Rs.243,085 from Rs 240,884 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs3,440 and Rs.2,949 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$27 to \$2,942 from \$2,915 whereas that of silver remained constant at \$33.00, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 08 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 08 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.97. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.25 and Rs281.75, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.25 to close at Rs304.43 against the last day's closing of Rs305.68, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.89, whereas an increase of 49 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs362.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs362.31. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went up by 03 and 01 paise to close at Rs 76.25 and Rs 74.66 respectively.—APP

Canada eases sanctions on Syrian Arab Republic, names envoy

OTTAWA: Canada announced plans Wednesday to ease its financial sanctions against Syria and to appoint an ambassador, as the Damascus interim government seeks international support. Canada's special envoy for Syria, Omar Alghabra, said: "Canada can play a meaningful role in enabling Syrians to build an inclusive country that respects all of its citizens. "We also can help prevent Syria from falling into chaos and instability." A statement from Canada's foreign ministry said sanctions would be eased "to allow funds to be sent through certain banks in the country, such as Syria's Central Bank." Canada's ambassador to Lebanon, Stefanie McCollum, will now take on a parallel role as a non-resident ambassador to neighboring Syria. Previously, Canada — along with many other world powers — had strict sanctions in place to punish the now-ousted government of Bashar Assad.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani meeting with ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov on Thursday.

‘Many will die’

UN aid chief warns of fallout as humanitarian relief cut

Fletcher revealed that in February alone, 10 percent of humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers were laid off due to funding gaps, while UN agencies are being forced to scale back life-saving operations across multiple countries

UNITED NATIONS: The global humanitarian system has reached breaking point, with funding cuts forcing life-or-death decisions over which aid programmes to sustain and which to shut down, according to Tom Fletcher, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. Addressing a press conference at at UN Headquarters in New York on Wednesday, he said that the current crisis was the most severe challenge to international humanitarian work since World War II. "We were already overstretched, under resourced and literally under attack, with last year being the deadliest year on record to be a humanitarian worker. But it is far tougher for the 300 million plus people who

we serve," he said. "The pace and scale of the funding cuts are a seismic shock to the sector ... many will die because aid is drying up. Right now, programmes are shutting down, staff are being laid off, and we are being forced to choose which lives to prioritize." Humanitarian crises are unfolding against a backdrop of instability, rising conflicts, climate shocks and economic downturns that have left millions more in need of assistance. However, rather than an increase in support, the UN and its partners are facing deep funding shortfalls, forcing tough decisions. Fletcher revealed that in February alone, 10 percent of humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers were

laid off due to funding gaps, while UN agencies are being forced to scale back life-saving operations across multiple countries. "For the people we serve, these cuts are not abstract budget numbers — they are a matter of survival," he stressed. Fletcher, who also heads the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) — the global consortium of all agencies and organizations engaged in humanitarian work — said he had put forward a 10-point plan that focuses on two core actions: regrouping and renewal. Regrouping will involve prioritising life-saving assistance, streamlining operations, and cutting back programmes that can no longer be sustained under current funding constraints. Renewal will

focus on reforming the humanitarian system to improve efficiency, build new partnerships, and find alternative funding sources. A key element of the plan is a shift toward more local leadership. Fletcher has instructed humanitarian country teams to prioritize funding for local and national organizations, ensuring that those closest to the crises have more control over resources. "We must shift power to our humanitarian leaders in-country and, ultimately, to the people we serve," he emphasized. He acknowledged that many of the upcoming decisions will be painful, as vital programmes will inevitably be cut. He urged humanitarian organizations to be

"ruthless" in eliminating inefficiencies and to focus only on the most critical interventions. Under the plan, UN humanitarian coordinators in crisis-affected countries are required to submit revised strategies by Friday, outlining how they will prioritize urgent life-saving actions while scaling down or discontinuing activities that cannot be maintained. At the same time new funding sources must be found and the humanitarian system will have to reimagine what it does and how. "Our mission remains clear: to save as many lives as we can with the resources we have — not the resources we wish we had," Fletcher said.

At US request, India arrests crypto administrator

WASHINGTON: Indian authorities arrested at Washington's request a cryptocurrency exchange administrator accused of money laundering conspiracy and violating sanctions, India's top crime fighting bureau said on Wednesday. The United States, Germany and Finland took down the online infrastructure used by the Russian cryptocurrency exchange Garantex, the US Justice Department said last week, adding that two administrators of the exchange were charged. One of those administrators was Aleksey Besciokov, a Russian resident and Lithuanian national who was charged with money laundering and also faced accusations of violating sanctions and operating an unlicensed money-transmitting business, the Justice Department said on Friday. Besciokov was arrested in the southern Indian state of Kerala, India's Central Bureau of Investigation said, adding he was wanted by US authorities. The CBI said that at Washington's request, India's foreign ministry had a provisional arrest warrant issued. It added Besciokov was planning to flee India. It was not immediately clear why he was in India. Washington is expected to pursue Besciokov's extradition. His representative could not immediately be reached. "I can confirm Aleksey Besciokov, one of the administrators of Garantex, was arrested in India at the request of the United States," a US Justice Department spokesperson told CNN. The exchange has processed at least \$96 billion in cryptocurrency transactions since April 2019, the US Justice Department said last week. Garantex was sanctioned by the US in April 2022. Blockchain research company TRM Labs said in a blog post last week that the takedown of Garantex "marks a major milestone in the fight against illicit finance" but cautioned that sanctioned exchanges often attempt to evade restrictions by creating new entities.—APP

Egypt lauds Trump's decision not to displace Gazans

DUBAI: Egypt said on Thursday it appreciated US President Donald Trump's remarks on not demanding that residents of Gaza leave the enclave, according to a statement from the foreign ministry. "Nobody is expelling any Palestinians from Gaza," Trump said on Wednesday, in response to a question during a meeting in the White House with Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin. "This position reflects an understanding of the need to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the importance of finding fair, sustainable solutions to the Palestinian issue," the Egyptian foreign ministry added. Trump had proposed a US takeover of Gaza, where Israel's military assault in the last 17 months has killed tens of thousands, after earlier suggesting that Palestinians in the enclave should be permanently displaced. Palestinian militant group Hamas carried out a cross-border raid into southern Israel on October 7, 2023.—APP

Pak urges to underpin national mechanisms promoting gender parity

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called on the international community to take "urgent measures" to support national mechanisms that promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls so that they have equal opportunities to thrive, lead, and shape the world. The call was made by Umm-e-Laila Azhar, chairperson of the National Commission on Status of Women, during a ministerial roundtable dedicated to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls that took place on Wednesday on the sidelines of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). She said that national mechanisms could be strengthened through political commitment, international solidarity, adequate financing for development, enactment of laws and policies for women workers in the Informal Economy. "Despite progress, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring adequate financial and institutional resources to fully implement gender equality commitments, especially in developing countries." In this regard, Ms. Azhar said that the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action remains a "transformative blueprint" for achieving these goals. "As we move forward, it is crucial that we recommit ourselves, mobilize resources, and accelerate progress to fully realize its vision," the Pakistani delegate said. In Pakistan, she said, significant strides have taken place towards strengthening national mechanisms for gender equality, ensuring that policies and institutions are responsive to the needs of women and girls, including National & Provincial Commissions, Provincial Women Development Departments, Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Women Police Stations, 95 specialized courts to provide speedy justice, Human Rights Cells in Courts, Women Virtual Police Stations as well as a Women's Bank. "Our National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women continue to play a central role in advocating for gender-sensitive legislation and policy reforms," the Pakistani delegate said, adding, "Legal frameworks have been strengthened through the enactment of laws addressing gender-based violence, workplace harassment, and domestic abuse, reinforcing the rights and protection of women." Economic empowerment remains a key government priority, Ms. Azhar said, referring to the Benazir Income Support Programme and the Prime Minister's Youth Programme providing social protection, financial inclusion, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, particularly those from marginalized communities. Pakistan, he added, stands ready to work with the international community to accelerate progress, strengthen national mechanisms for gender equality and empowerment of women.—DNA

UK watchdog rejects calls to redefine terrorism, backs new offense

LONDON: Britain should not redefine terrorism in the wake of last summer's murders at a Taylor Swift-themed dance event but the government should consider a new law to tackle those bent on mass killings, the UK's terrorism watchdog said. Axel Radukabana, 18, stabbed to death three young girls and wounded 10 others last July in the northern English town of Southport, an act of violence Prime Minister Keir Starmer called one of the most harrowing moments in Britain's history. However, his crime was not classed as terrorism as there was no evidence that he was inspired by any particular political or religious ideology, a necessary requirement, something which drew criticism from government opponents as he was also convicted of possessing the deadly poison ricin and an Al-Qaeda training manual. After Radukabana's jailing, Starmer himself said terrorism had changed, with some individuals fixated on extreme violence, seemingly for its own sake, and police and security services have warned of a growth in the number of would-be terrorists whose motivation was hard to determine. Classing an action as terrorism allows the authorities to use extra powers and gives judges the ability to impose harsher sentences.—APP

Israeli airstrike targets Palestinian Islamic Jihad HQs in Damascus

DAMASCUS: Israeli aircraft struck a building in Damascus on Thursday, Syria's state news agency SANA reported. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, confirmed the attack, stating that two missiles hit the building, killing at least one person. The airstrike took place in an area where Palestinian leaders are known to reside. According to two Syrian security sources, the target of the Israeli strike was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad organization headquarters. One of the sources identified the victim as a Palestinian person. However, the Israeli military did not immediately comment on the attack, though an Israeli army radio military correspondent confirmed that an Israeli aircraft had targeted the Islamic Jihad headquarters in Damascus.—APP

Turkiye says forces killed 24 Kurdish militants in Syria, Iraq in week

ANKARA: Turkish forces killed 24 Kurdish militants in northern Iraq and Syria over the past week, the defense ministry said on Thursday, continuing attacks in the region after a disarmament call from the PKK leader and a separate accord between US-backed Kurds and Damascus. Speaking at a briefing in Ankara, a defense ministry source said the deal between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Damascus did not change Turkey's commitment to counter-terrorism in Syria, and that it still demands that the YPG militia, which spearheads the SDF, disband and disarm. Turkey views the SDF, which controls much of north-east Syria, as a terrorist group linked with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. It has carried out several cross-border offensives against the group.—APP

Financial reform plan can unlock foreign support for Lebanon, IMF says

BEIRUT: A unified financial reform plan will allow Lebanon to overcome its economic issues and unlock foreign funding, the head of the IMF's mission to the country said on Wednesday. Ernesto Ramirez Rigo was speaking in a meeting with President Joseph Aoun, who said that Lebanon was "committed to moving forward with implementing reforms." Negotiations between Lebanon and the IMF aim to pave the way for essential reforms to put the country on the path to financial recovery. It follows worsening financial and economic crises that Lebanon has been grappling with since 2019 due to economic mismanagement, rampant corruption and accumulated debt. Presidential media adviser Najat Charafeddine told : "The IMF delegation emphasized that Lebanon's proposed plan must be approved by

all relevant parties in order to pass in parliament. Implementing reforms will enable Lebanon to receive aid, including grants, particularly from countries with close ties, the delegation said. "Achieving the plan will serve as an IMF seal of approval that will unlock assistance," Lebanese officials were told. The delegation also highlighted "the necessity of Lebanon returning to the fundamentals, particularly in restructuring banks and revisiting banking secrecy laws, which have yet to see the light of day due to disagreements." Over the past two days, specialized technical meetings have continued between experts from the IMF and a World Bank delegation, along with directors of departments and specialized experts at the Lebanese Ministry of Finance. The talks aimed "to reach conclusions on proposed

issues to promote transparency in public finances and more comprehensive reforms," a Ministry of Finance statement said. The IMF delegation met Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Finance Minister Yassine Jaber to discuss the details of the economic plan and required reforms. Jaber said he discussed "the priorities, namely the appointment of the governor of Banque du Liban, who will play a crucial role in working with the IMF. "Preparations for reforms are ongoing to enable Lebanon to implement its financial plan," he added, highlighting support for amending Lebanon's Monetary and Credit Law. Jaber said: "The issue of frozen deposits in banks will be addressed in stages, and as minister of finance, I have no authority over the banking sector." Ous-

mane Dione, World Bank VP for the Middle East and North Africa, who met Jaber in Beirut in late February, had previously called on the Lebanese government to implement reforms. This would "ensure credibility and transparency, reassure investors and improve the business environment," he said. The IMF delegation will meet a technical committee at the Association of Banks on Thursday. According to media reports, the meeting will focus on "the performance of the exchange market and the Banque du Liban's interventions, the banking restrictions on transfers and the authorization of certain outgoing transfers. "This is seen as an attempt to monitor Lebanon's cash economy, which has flourished since the country's financial collapse." Meanwhile, diplomatic pres-

sure exerted by Lebanon on the five-member committee overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel led to the release of four captives held by the latter on Tuesday evening. A joint statement issued by the US and French embassies in Lebanon and UNIFIL on Tuesday said: "The ceasefire implementation mechanism committee will continue to hold regular meetings to ensure full implementation of the cessation of hostilities." Israeli Channel 12 quoted an Israeli politician as saying: "Discussions with Lebanon are part of a broader and comprehensive plan. Israel aims to achieve normalization with Lebanon. "The prime minister's policy has already transformed the Middle East, and we wish to maintain this momentum and reach normalization with Lebanon.—Agencies

Briefs

Australia
condemns
train attack

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins has condemned the attack on Jaffar Express: In his X message the high commissioner said, "The Australian Government condemns the attack and hijacking of the Jaffar Express Train in Balochistan province in Pakistan. "We offer our deepest sympathies to all those affected. Australia stands with Pakistan at this difficult time", High Commissioner Neil Hawkins further said.

Moscow
wants to fight
on: Zelensky

KYIV: Ukraine/Moscow: President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday the fact there was no "meaningful" response from Moscow to a 30-day ceasefire proposal from the United States meant the Kremlin wants to keep fighting in Ukraine. "Regrettably, for more than a year already, the world has yet to hear a meaningful response from Russia to the proposals made. This once again demonstrates that Russia seeks to prolong the war and postpone peace for as long as possible. We hope that US pressure will be sufficient to compel Russia to end the war," Zelensky said in a statement on social media. Earlier a top Kremlin aide on Thursday criticized the US-Ukrainian proposal for a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, saying it would just be a "breather" for the Ukrainian military. "It would be nothing more than a temporary breather for the Ukrainian military," Yuri Ushakov told state media after speaking by phone to US national security advisor Mike Waltz. He said President Vladimir Putin would "probably make more specific and substantive assessments" on Thursday. Ushakov also said that Russia was aiming for a "long-term peaceful solution" that would secure Russia's "legitimate interests". - Agencies

PHC bars
arrest of
Azam Swati

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has ordered authorities not to arrest PTI leader Azam Swati in any registered cases until April 15. A two-member bench, comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Aurangzeb, heard Swati's petition seeking details of cases filed against him. Justice Asadullah questioned whether the government would not provide further details, to which the Assistant Attorney General responded that they had already been shared, but the petitioner had approached the court again. The court remarked that since a notice had been issued, the government should have submitted a report. The court granted additional time for authorities to present the case details in the next hearing.

Syrian leader signs constitutional
declaration, hailing 'new history'

A new committee to draft a permanent constitution will be formed, but it is unclear if it will be more inclusive of Syria's political, religious, and ethnic groups

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria's interim president on Thursday signed a temporary constitution that leaves the country under Islamist rule for five years during a transitional phase. The country's interim rulers have struggled to exert their authority across much of the country since the Islamist former insurgent group, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, or HTS, led a lightning insurgency that overthrew former leader Bashar Assad in December. Former HTS leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa is now the country's interim president — a decision that was announced after a meeting of the armed groups that took part in the offensive against Assad. At the same meeting, the groups agreed to repeal the country's old constitution and said a new one would be drafted. While many were happy to see an end to the Assad family's dictatorial rule of over 50 years in the war-torn country, religious and ethnic minorities have been skeptical of the new Islamist leaders and reluctant to allow Damascus under its new authorities to assert control of their areas. Abdulhamid Al-Awak, one of the seven members of the committee Al-Sharaa tasked to draft the temporary constitution, told a press conference Thursday that it will maintain some provisions from the previous one.

Canada eases sanctions,
names envoy

OTTAWA: Canada announced plans Wednesday to ease its financial sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic and to appoint an ambassador, as the Damascus interim government seeks international support. Canada's special envoy for Syria, Omar Alghabra, said: "Canada can play a meaningful role in enabling Syrians to build an inclusive country that respects all of its citizens. "We also can help prevent Syria from falling into chaos and instability." A statement from Canada's foreign ministry said sanctions would be eased "to allow funds to be sent through certain banks in the country, such as Syria's Central Bank." Canada's ambassador to Lebanon, Stefanie McCollum, will now take on a parallel role as a non-resident ambassador to neighboring Syria. Previously, Canada — along with many other world powers — had strict sanctions in place to punish the now-ousted government of Bashar Assad. - Agencies

Pakistan-Bahrain discuss
regional security, mily coop

General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa commended the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, met Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, in Rawalpindi on Thursday to discuss re-

gional security dynamics and mutual defense collaboration. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the evolving regional security environment and emphasized the need to enhance bilateral military cooperation. They underscored the importance of broadening the scope of existing defense engagements between Pakistan and Bahrain. General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa commended the pro-

fessionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon his arrival at the Joint Staff Headquarters, he was presented with a 'Guard of Honour' by a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent. Meanwhile, Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff highlighted that both the countries enjoy long lasting religious and historic relationships which are manifested through unprecedented brotherly relations. He also reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral ties in military to military cooperation and the training domain.

The visiting dignitary praised the exceptional progress made by Pakistan Air Force over the years, especially through indigenization. Commander of the Bahrain National Guard expressed a keen desire for enhanced Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between the two countries. Further emphasizing the importance of collaboration, the visiting dignitary showed a strong interest in the PAF's multi-domain capabilities in order to improve operational readiness of Bahrain Air Force through shared knowledge and technology. Commander Bahrain National Guard expressed interest in assistance from the Pakistan Air Force in establishing Basic to Tactical Level training setups in emerging warfare domains, specifically focusing on Space, Cyber and Electronic Warfare operations. The dignitary also expressed an earnest desire to procure equipment from the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park.

ECC reduces buyback rate
for solar consumers to Rs10

ECC approves amendments to existing net-metering regulations to reduce financial burden on grid consumers

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In a major policy shift, the cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has revised the buyback tariff of solar rooftop consumers to Rs10 per unit from Rs27 per unit. The development came as the ECC met under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, and approved a set of amendments to the existing net-metering regulations aimed at reducing the growing financial burden on grid consumers, according to an official statement issued by the Finance Division on Thursday.

The decision comes in light of a significant increase in the number of solar net-metering consumers, with associated financial implications for grid consumers, it added. "As part of the approved changes, the ECC has revised the buyback rate from the National Average Power Purchase Price (NAPP) to Rs10 per unit."

It was clarified, however, that the revised framework will not apply to existing net-metered consumers "who

have a valid license, concurrence, or agreement under the Nepra (Alternative & Renewable Energy) Distributed Generation and Net Metering Regulations, 2015". "Any such agreements will remain effective until the expiration of the license or agreement, whichever occurs first. This ensures that the rights and obligations of these consumers, including agreed-upon rates, will continue as per the existing terms," read the statement.

Furthermore, the committee approved the proposal, subject to the ratification of cabinet, to allow the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) to revise this buyback rate periodically, ensuring that the framework remains flexible and aligned with evolving market conditions. Additionally, the ECC also approved an update to the settlement mechanism. Under the new structure, imported and exported units will be treated separately for billing purposes.

The exported units will be purchased at the revised buyback rate of Rs10 per unit, while the imported units

will be billed at the applicable peak/off-peak rates, inclusive of taxes and surcharges, during the monthly billing cycle. The ECC also authorised the Power Division to issue proposed guidelines, subject to cabinet's ratification, to Nepra for incorporation into the applicable regulatory framework, ensuring clarity and consistency in the implementation of these amendments. The decision follows extensive discussions on the growing impact of solar net-metering on the national power grid. The Power Division highlighted the pressing need for regulatory adjustments, citing a record decline in solar panel prices that has led to a sharp increase in the number of solar net-metering consumers, the statement said. As of December 2024, solar net-metering consumers had transferred a burden of Rs159 billion to grid consumers, a figure expected to rise to Rs4,240 billion by 2034 without timely amendments. The ECC was informed that the number of solar net-metering consumers surged significantly, reaching 283,000 by December 2024, up from 226,440 in October 2024.

 Hamas welcomes
Trump's pullback
from Gaza plan

DOHA: Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem has welcomed United States President Donald Trump's apparent retreat from his proposed permanent displacement of more than two million Palestinians from Gaza. The statement by the Hamas official came after Trump said on Wednesday that "nobody is expelling any Palestinians from Gaza" in response to a question during a meeting in the White House with Ireland's Taoiseach Micheal Martin. "If US President Trump's statements represent a retreat from any idea of displacing the people of the Gaza Strip, they are welcomed," Qassem said in the statement. "We call for this position to be reinforced by obligating the Israeli occupation to implement all the terms of the ceasefire agreements," he added. Trump sent shockwaves throughout the Middle East and beyond last month when he proposed a US takeover of Gaza and suggested that the war-torn territory's Palestinian population be permanently displaced to live in neighbouring countries. Egypt, which neighbours Gaza and Israel, also said it appreciated Trump's Wednesday remarks. "This position reflects an understanding of the need to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the importance of finding fair, sustainable solutions to the Palestinian issue," the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday. Trump's apparent reversal came after Arab foreign ministers met in Qatar on Wednesday with the US's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff to discuss reconstruction for Gaza. Foreign ministers from Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization were present at the meeting, according to a statement from Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - Agencies

Is trial of civilians' mily trial
in accordance Constitution?

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Thursday posed another question during hearing of intra-court appeal; whether the trial of civilians in military courts is in accordance with the 1973 Constitution? Justice Mandokhail sought an answer from counsel for Defense Ministry Khawaja Haris while referring to the 1962 Constitution and FB Ali case. A seven-member constitutional bench headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and including JusticeMandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice MusaratHilali, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan is hearing the appeal. Justice Mandokhail observed that if we agree to the assumption that under the 1962 Constitution, a civilian can be tried in a military court; but we have to see what is the provision in the 1973 Constitution regarding military trial of a civilian. "Is this court martial in accordance with Article 175(3) and Arti-

cle 10A?" Advocate Haris submitted that it is up to the parliament to decide on whom the law is to be applied and how it is to be applied. Justice Mandokhail replied that in his opinion, the Constitution of Pakistan is supreme because parliament is also subject to the Constitution. Khawaja Haris said that instead of a single clause, the Constitution should be looked at in its entirety. It is the job of parliament, not the judiciary, to determine the criteria for the application of a law. Justice Mandokhail asked him whether parliament could add more provisions to the Army Act [for trial of civilians]. Khawaja Haris replied that this question is not before the court. The [original] decision should not have mentioned Article 8(5) of the Constitution, he stated. The court observed that Article 8(3) provides for waiver of fundamental rights. The question is whether this waiver is only for the armed forces or can its jurisdiction be extended to civilians also. Khawaja Haris said that Article 8(3) of the Constitution is not only for members of the armed forces; civilians can also be brought under it.

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