



Islamabad POST

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Carney sworn in as Canada's new Prime Minister

Detailed News On Page-08

'Nuclear-related' anti-Iran sanctions 'illegal', says Russia

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Draper sets up semis with Spain's Alcaraz

Detailed News On Page-06



DG ISPR on Jaffar Express attack

India sponsor of terrorism in Balochistan

Lt Gen Chaudhry reveals 18 personnel from army, FC among 26 martyred passengers

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Friday termed India main sponsor of terrorism in Balochistan, saying the latest attack on Jaffar Express is the continuation of the same policy. Addressing a media briefing flanked by Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, the DG ISPR said: "The latest attack in Balochistan and other terrorist incidents that took place in the past...we understand that the main sponsor of these [attacks] is your eastern neighbor." The outlawed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), during Tuesday's attack on the Jaffar Express, blew up train tracks and held over 440 passengers hostage in a day-long standoff with security services in a remote mountain pass in Bolan district. The military, after clearing the train and rescuing hostages, said it killed 33 attackers. Before the operation began, terrorists had martyred 26 passengers, while four security personnel were martyred during the operation. In today's presser, Lt Gen Chaudhry confirmed that three FC soldiers embraced martyrdom when the terrorists attacked Frontier Corps picket before the train was ambushed. Giving a breakdown of the casualties in the incident, the DG ISPR revealed that 26 martyred train passengers included 18 security personnel from the army and the FC, three officials from Pakistan Railways and other departments and five civilians. He further said that the death toll from the terror attack could rise further as 37 out of the 354 passengers were injured. The military spokesperson said that they had five operation casualties. The DG ISPR said that the terrorists stopped the Jaffar Express via an IED blast in hilly terrain area where accessibility is difficult.

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Pakistan to bring resolution against India, Kabul in UN

'Our next step is to expose India's support for terrorism at the UN'

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to table a resolution against India and Afghanistan in the United Nations for their involvement in terrorism activities. Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Munir Akram stated this while speaking on the program 'Dunya Meher Bokhari Kay Sath'. He stated that Pakistan will bring a resolution against India at the United Nations for exporting terrorism from Afghan soil. "Our next step is to expose India's support for terrorism at the UN," he revealed. Munir Akram further stated that Pakistan would intensify its efforts against India at the international platform. He lamented that when it came to imposing sanctions on India, its allies often intervened. A day earlier, Pakistan urged the Afghan government to take action against those involved in the Jaffar Express attack in Balochistan. In a weekly press briefing,

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ISLAMABAD: Emin Cohodarevic, Ambassador of Bosnia & Herzegovina, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Pak welcome Kyrgyz-Tajik border treaty

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed on Thursday a border agreement seen as key for the stability of Central Asia

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Welcomes the Signing of the Treaty on the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border. Pakistan congratulates the leadership and the brotherly peoples of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on this landmark agreement, which marks the end of a prolonged border dispute. We are confident that this historical development will usher in a new era of cooperation and progress in the region. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed on Thursday a border agreement seen as key for the stability of

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Ambassador meets Shehbaz Pakistan values its relations with Bosnia & Herzegovina: PM

Ambassador of Bosnia & Herzegovina pays a courtesy call on the Prime Minister

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Emin Cohodarevic, Ambassador of Bosnia & Herzegovina, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House, earlier today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister highlighted the warm and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Bosnia & Herzegovina and fondly recalled the visits to Bosnia & Herzegovina by former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. While reaffirming Pakistan's continued support for our Bosnian brothers and sisters, the Prime Minister emphasized that there was immense potential to elevate the existing friendly ties to a mutually beneficial economic partnership. The Prime Minister recalled his most warm and productive meeting with Chairperson of Presidency of Bosnia & Herzegovina, H.E. Željka Cvijanović, in Dubai last month on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit.

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Pak desires to strengthen ties with EU

European Union Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its cooperative partnership with the European Union, particularly through the continuation of the GSP Plus scheme. He was talking to EU Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka, who paid a courtesy call on him in Islamabad on Friday.

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Briefs

SC introduces new e-filing case system

The apex court incentivises out of turn hearing as a reward for cases filed online

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major step towards digitalization and greater efficiency in judicial proceedings, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has introduced new method of e-filing cases at the Institution Desk. "Operational from March 17th, 2025, all advocates and parties to a case are advised to submit both a physical (hard) copy and a scanned (soft) copy of their cases and applications at the Principal Seat and Branch Registries. The scanned version can also be provided via USB or emailed to efiling@sc.gov.pk," it said in a press release.

Gold tops \$3,000 for first time

DNA

LONDON: Gold surpassed \$3,000 for the first time on Friday as US President Donald Trump's trade wars boost the safe-haven asset, while stock markets bounced on hopes US lawmakers will avert a government shutdown. US shares rose in early deals after slumping in recent sessions while Asian equities ended the week on a positive note. European stock markets were also given a lift in afternoon deals after Germany moved closed to approving a massive infrastructure and defence spending programme.

Holiday Notice

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

Despite IHC directives

Jail authorities fail to present Imran in court

IHC directs Adiala jail SP, Islamabad IG to submit their affidavits in this regard

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Despite the Islamabad High Court (IHC) order, the jail authorities failed to produce Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan before the court in personal capacity on Friday. The IHC had directed the authorities in this regard during the hearing of Mashal Yousafzai's petition against the denial of permission to meet the PTI leader, who is incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. Initially during today's hearing, the court remarked that if the Islamabad advocate general (AG) intends to proceed with the video link appearance, they must inform the it. However, if the PTI founder is not presented via video link by 2pm, he must be brought before the court in person at 3pm. After the 2pm deadline expired, the former prime minister was due to be presented in court in person, as per the court orders. However, the Islamabad advocate general (AG) informed the court that bringing the PTI founder from jail was not possible

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JUI-F leader among 4 injured in South Waziristan blast

Abdullah Nadeem, leader of JUI-F, believed to be target of blast, hospitalised with serious injuries, say police

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A blast tore through a mosque on Friday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district, leaving at least four people injured including district emir of Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), police said. Abdullah Nadeem, a leader of the JUI-F, was believed to be the target of the blast and had been hospitalised with serious injuries, said DPO Asif Bahadur, a district police chief in South Waziristan. He added that two children were among the injured.

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LHC seeks report regarding use of X

The court also sought to know how the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) worked

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday sought a report from the Ministry of Interior on the use of X as it heard a petition against the ban on the social media platform. Access to X has been disrupted since February 17, 2024 when former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaqat Chattha accused the chief election commissioner and a top Supreme Court judge of being involved in rigging the

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Negotiations only way forward, says NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

He was talking to newsmen after launching a tree plantation drive in the Parliament House

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday expressed optimism over the possible resumption of negotiations between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), despite the opposition party's earlier decision to call off talks. Speaking to reporters in Islamabad, Ayaz Sadiq said the government had shown willingness to address the PTI's demands during the previous negotiation rounds, but the opposition had chosen to withdraw from the process. "The door for dialogue should remain open," Sadiq said, adding that any future negotiations should not be "person-specific." He refrained from sharing the specifics of what the opposition had requested during the earlier talks. Questioning PTI's narrative, the speaker said, "If this parliament is fake, then by that logic, its parliamentary committees, including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), should also be considered unconstitutional." Earlier in January, PTI officially announced an end to talks with the government, citing a lack of cooperation and the government's refusal to form a judicial commission to investigate the violent incidents of May 9, 2023, as the

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Bilawal Bhutto stresses unity to fight terrorism

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express, adding that the entire nation stood with its brave armed forces while calling for unity against the war on terror. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Sindh Job Portal in Karachi, Chairman Bilawal said that the development of Sindh's youth was his vision. He said that the private sector drives the economy of the entire Sindh province, and it was the government's responsibility to provide employment opportunities to the public. He revealed that "I Work for Sindh Portal" has been created with the use of IT. He invited the youth and job creators of the province to join this platform, promising that through modern technology and

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Gillani for efforts to manage alarming population growth

President Gillani stressed the need to reduce the population growth rate and improve other relevant population indicators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani on Friday called for coordinated efforts with the input of the provincial governments, including the Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, to manage the growing population in the country. He said that the challenge of growing population needed collective efforts, especially the support of the provinces,

to successfully implement the national action plan on population. The president expressed these views while chairing a meeting on population management in the backdrop of the Supreme Court of Pakistan's 2018 suo-moto action and the subsequent recommendations of the Council of Common Interests. Secretary of Ministry of Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, Dr Nadeem Mehbub, Director General Population Wing, Dr Soofia

Yunus, and senior officials of the Ministry of Health attended the meeting. During the meeting, President Gillani stressed the need to reduce the population growth rate and improve other relevant population indicators. He said that all stakeholders, including the provincial governments and the private sector, needed to be taken on board to raise awareness about the challenge of rising population. He also emphasised the need to increase people's access

to family planning services to fulfil their unmet needs. During the meeting, it was informed that a National Action Plan on Population was implemented from 2019 to 2024, and a revised National Action Plan on Population from 2025 to 2030 had been developed in consultation with the provinces. It was further informed that the new plan was awaiting approval and would be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the Federal Task Force on Population.



ISLAMABAD: Construction work at Melody Food Park continues at very slow pace, needs attention of authorities concerned.

Call for steps to transform CDA into financially autonomous organization

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was held under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa in order to review the current financial position, revenue streams, and future strategies to further enhance income sources on a sustainable basis for smooth functioning of CDA in terms of timely completion of different projects. During the meeting, Member Finance gave a detailed briefing regarding CDA's financial status, Member Administration, Member Planning, Member Engineering, and senior officers from CDA's Estate, BCS, Land, DMA and other departments shared their valuable output and gave doable suggestions in order to make CDA financially sound and self-reliant in order to meet its financial needs but will have sufficient funds to initiate new projects related to development of infrastructure, beautification of Islamabad through planting environment friendly plants and trees replacing paper mulberry trees, increase in the number of electric buses thus making Islamabad an environment friendly capital of the world. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that all necessary measures be taken to transform CDA into a financially autonomous organization, enabling the timely completion of ongoing development projects for the progress and development of the federal capital, Islamabad. It was highlighted that the Finance Wing is actively working to achieve the financial targets set for this financial year. Member Finance also presented a comparative analysis of revenue growth across various directorates, including the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) and the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), which was appreciated by the meeting. Emphasis was placed on achieving financial targets with greater dedication and effort. CDA is committed to utilizing its revenue for the beautification of the city, infrastructure improvement, development projects, planting environmentally friendly trees, and gradually increasing the number of electric buses. Chairman CDA instructed the Finance Wing to ensure effective monitoring of revenue generation efforts and achieve the set financial targets for the fiscal year. Additionally, the Estate Management Wing and Building Control Section were directed to enhance timely recoveries in accordance with the law. Chairman CDA also directed the DMA to conduct a comprehensive survey of all commercial properties, prepare data, and take action against those illegally sub-leasing commercial properties. He further instructed that notices and penalties be issued without discrimination for the cancellation of leases for all government and private properties with expired lease agreements, ensuring compliance with legal requirements. To improve the recovery of outstanding dues from defaulters, a Special Recovery Unit was established, with all CDA formations instructed to provide full support. Chairman CDA also directed to cancel the allotments of defaulters on DMA properties in accordance with the law. He emphasized the need to develop a more actionable plan for the timely recovery of outstanding dues to prevent delays in developmental projects across the city. Chairman CDA directed the Resource Wing to work on diversifying revenue streams to further strengthen CDA's financial stability. This meeting reflects CDA's commitment to ensuring financial autonomy and the timely execution of projects for the betterment of Islamabad and its residents.—DNA

PBIF welcomes 32% growth in remittances

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that the need and importance of remittances increases during difficult economic conditions. He said it is encouraging that remittances have increased to a record level, significantly supporting the country's economy. Mian Zahid Hussain said more facilities should be given to Pakistanis living abroad to increase remittances. These facilities could include easier and more affordable ways to send money back home and support for skill development programs. While interacting with the business community, the veteran business leader said that in February 2025, the volume of remittances reached \$3.1 billion, 32 percent more than February 2024 and a record. He confidently predicted that the total volume of remittances will reach \$35 to \$36 billion by the end of the current fiscal year, a significant increase from the previous year's \$30.3 billion.—APP

Enrollment drive 2025 launched for govt schools

SARGODHA: The Enrollment Drive 2025 for government schools across Sargodha division has been launched officially. The drive was formally inaugurated by Commissioner Sargodha Division Jahanzeb Awan, who, along with Deputy Commissioner Sargodha (ret'd) Muhammad Waseem, enrolled two children in a government school, symbolizing the start of the campaign. The commissioner said that this drive to make sure free and compulsory education for all children aged 5 to 16 years, as mandated under Article 25-A of the constitution of Pakistan and the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act 2014. To encourage enrollment, the commissioner also distributed free uniforms, school bags, and textbooks among students. The Enrollment Drive 2025 aims to promote quality and inclusive education in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the Chief Executive Officer Education Kalsoom Mansha the campaign would be conducted in two phases, with specific enrollment targets set for each district. The Provincial Education Unit would monitor progress to ensure effective implementation, she said. The CEO Kalsoom Mansha said the Education officers, school heads, and teachers would play a pivotal role in achieving the campaign's objectives.—APP

Scholarship, laptops, e-bike s approved for mines workers' kids

LAHORE: The 60th meeting of the Mines Welfare Board was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Mines and Minerals Department Pervez Iqbal, which approved 100 per cent scholarships for mine workers' children pursuing professional degree programmes. The meeting was attended by Mines Labour Welfare Commissioner Punjab, Riaz Ahmed Chaudhry, board members, and other officials. Significant decisions were made for the welfare of mine workers and their families, focusing on education, health, and housing facilities. In the meeting it was decided that students securing more than 85% marks in Matric and Intermediate exams will be provided with laptops and e-bikes. It was also decided to install RO plants in all MLW schools to ensure a continuous supply of clean drinking water, along with transport facilities for students. Furthermore, a "Best Teacher Award" will be introduced for science and arts teachers in every school. The Women's College Khewra and Model High School will receive 15 computers and furniture as part of the initiative. In the health sector, significant steps were also taken, including the installation of MLW dispensaries and water filtration plants in Lundi Syedan (Rajanpur District) and Basti Rohani (Dera Ghazi Khan District) at a total cost of 36.5 million rupees. To enhance medical facilities, it was decided to outsource the hiring of doctors, nurses, paramedics and other staff in Mines Labour Welfare Hospitals. Moreover, a relief package of Rs 9.5 million was approved for 53 disabled mine workers to ensure their well-being. Important decisions were also made regarding housing and welfare initiatives for mine workers. The construction of four labour barracks in Khushab and Mianwali districts was approved. Additionally, a pilot project will be launched to establish daycare centers for mine workers' children and provide meal services for employees. It was further decided to hire consultants to develop more effective policies and welfare plans for mine workers. Expressing his satisfaction over these approvals, Minister for Minerals Sher Ali Gorchani said that, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, scholarships, e-bikes, and laptops will be provided to mine workers' children. He added that these development projects will significantly improve their standard of living. He also emphasised that practical measures are being taken to enhance the quality of life for mineral workers and ensure their well-being. These decisions mark a major milestone in mine workers' welfare, leading to significant improvements in their educational, medical, and housing facilities.—DNA

Over 310,000 applications for Maryam Ki Dastak

LAHORE: The 'Maryam Ki Dastak' initiative, developed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) for the Government of Punjab, has significantly enhanced public access to government services. To date, over 369,000 online applications have been received as part of the initiative. During a high-level meeting chaired by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf held at Arfa Software Technology Park (ASTP), it was revealed that more than 310,000 requests have been successfully processed, while an additional 59,000 applications are expected to be completed in the coming days. The initiative has also witnessed remarkable participation, with over thousands of individuals registered as Dastak Facilitators, ensuring efficient service delivery to citizens. In this regard, PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf highlighted that 'Maryam Ki Dastak' is operational in 40 districts of Punjab, offering over 70 essential services at citizens' doorsteps. These include the issuance of Domiciles, Birth Certificates, Copy of FIR, Copy of Registry, Fard for Record and various other public services, eliminating the need for visits to government offices. Citizens can conveniently avail these services through the 'Dastak Doorstep Delivery App' or by calling helpline 1202. Chairman Faisal Yousaf also emphasized that 'Maryam Ki Dastak' is not only making public services more accessible and efficient but also setting a new benchmark for good governance.—APP

SECP issues to introduce an ADR mechanism

ISLAMABAD: The Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) issued a concept paper to introduce an alternate dispute resolution mechanism for Islamic finance contracts. Under strategic action plan 2024-26 to develop Islamic finance in the non-bank financial sector, the SECP intends to introduce an alternate dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism for Islamic finance contracts to promote the concept of out-of-court settlement which shall include mediation, arbitration, and neutral evaluation, said a release issued here on Friday. The primary objective is to propose a specialised ADR mechanism that aligns

with Shariah principles and rules, providing a Shariah-compliant, efficient, and effective means of resolving disputes, thereby enhancing stakeholder confidence in the Islamic finance sector. Islamic finance, a significant part of Pakistan's financial system, is a driving force behind economic growth and ethical investments. However, this growth necessitates the development of effective dispute resolution mechanisms. Contracts like Musharakah, Mudaraba, Murabaha, Ijarah, Wakala, and Istisna are unique in their alignment with Islamic jurisprudence. Traditional litigation may not always align with Islamic

principles, necessitating the need for ADR mechanisms tailored specifically for such contracts. The foundational framework for Islamic finance contracts is Maqasid al-Shariah, which aims to promote human well-being and uphold security. The Enforcement of Shariah Act, 1991, established the supremacy of Shariah within Pakistan's legal framework, declaring it as the supreme law and overriding all other laws, customs, and usages. Accordingly, a concept paper has been issued to seek feedback and comments on the proposal for introduction of an ADR mechanism for Islamic finance contracts in Pakistan.—APP

Kitchen Items' prices up by 0.22pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 0.22 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 13, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 320.75 points as compared to 320.04 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 0.22 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items

for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed increase of 0.10 per cent and went up to 309.65 points from last week's 309.33 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, went up by 0.17 percent, 0.18 percent, 0.22 percent and 0.25 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 12 (23.53%) items increased, 15 (29.41%) items decreased and 24 (47.06%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included onions (16.71%), potatoes (6.59%), garlic (5.29%),

pulse gram (1.91%), eggs (1.55%), tea lipton (1.13%), pulse mash (0.49%) and tea prepared (0.39%). The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (36.43%), chicken (6.40%), bananas (6.05%), sugar (5.69%), LPG (1.44%), georgette & gur (1.32%) each, bread (1.13%), beef (0.57%), pulse moong (0.28%) and cigarettes (0.27%). Year-on-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease onions (72.32%), tomatoes (51.96%), wheat flour (36.20%), chillies powder (20.00%), electricity charges for Q1 (18.92%), tea lipton (15.89%), pulse mash (14.98%), diesel masoor (12.38%), diesel (9.91%), petrol (8.55%).—APP

Commander Bahrain NG calls on CNS Admiral Naveed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard (NG), General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, Commander Bahrain National Guard was received by Naval Chief, said a news release of Pakistan Navy. The dignitary was also introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters. During the meeting, both leaders discussed matters of mutual interest, regional maritime security situation, and avenues

for enhanced cooperation in defence, training, and security. Admiral Naveed Ashraf highlighted Pakistan Navy's initiatives for ensuring maritime security and



regional stability through Regional Maritime Security Patrols. General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa appreciated and acknowledged Pakistan Navy's contributions and unwavering commitment to collaborative maritime security efforts in the region. Both leaders pledged to further strengthen and diversify the scope of existing bilateral defence relationship. Pakistan and Bahrain share longstanding brotherly relations, with close naval cooperation, particularly in training and maritime security. The visit of the Commander Bahrain National Guard is expected to further enhance bilateral collaboration between the two countries.

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MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Business linkages between Pakistan, Ireland mulled

Deputy Head of Mission, Ireland, Visits Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI)

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Declan Johnston, Deputy Head of Mission, Ireland, visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), where he engaged in discussions with RCCI President Usman Shaukat, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Former President Raja Amer Iqbal, Executive Committee Members, and distinguished RCCI members.

The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral trade, investment opportunities, and sector-specific collaborations, with a special emphasis on facilitating RCCI



members in exploring business prospects in Ireland. Both sides expressed a strong commitment to strengthening economic ties and identifying new avenues for mutual growth. President Usman Shaukat highlighted RCCI's role in promoting international trade and underscored the need for enhanced business linkages between Pakistan and Ireland. Declan Johnston reaffirmed Ireland's interest in expanding trade relations and encouraged Pakistani businesses to explore investment opportunities in Irish markets. The visit marks a significant step toward fostering deeper economic engagement and unlocking potential trade and investment collaborations between the two nations.

Cabinet division striving to ensure effective governance

ISLAMABAD: Cabinet Division of Pakistan has been striving to ensure effective governance and administrative coordination across the federal government. It focuses on providing timely support to key decision-making processes, promoting transparency, and fostering efficiency in the implementation of government policies. The Cabinet Division plays an important role in the development of national strategies, maintaining inter-ministerial communication, and facilitating the execution of key initiatives. In 2024, several key developments took place across various government bodies in Pakistan. NEPRA aligned infrastructure with the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) to reduce dependence on imported fuels. The NSDR established via the Seed (Amendment) Act, while the STZA notified 11 Special Technology Zones, with regulatory frameworks in progress. The FAB made strides in spectrum allocation and ICT technology surveys. PTA strengthened telecom infrastructure and launched DIRBS to combat counterfeit mobile devices. OGRA initiated energy security policies and refinery upgrades. NAPHDA launched low-cost housing schemes under the Mera Pakistan Mera Ghar program. PPRA ensured compliance in public procurement, improving bidding transparency. The CCRA approved its organizational framework, and PTDC revitalized tourism governance through digital initiatives. NAP started digitizing historical archives, and the APO ensured effective property management. The Civil Awards Wing of the Cabinet Division reinforced the framework for national awards and celebrations, maintaining national pride and integrity. In 2024, various government bodies in Pakistan achieved significant milestones. NEPRA approved 700MW renewable energy projects and launched the NEPRA ASAAN app. The NSDR finalized the National Seed Policy and streamlined variety evaluation. The STZA established 17 tech zones and secured over PKR 50 billion in investments. FAB approved 5G spectrum and resolved over 1,000 interference cases. PTA enabled 94% local handset manufacturing and launched national roaming. OGRA supervised \$5 billion in refinery upgrades and improved the oil supply chain. NAPHDA financed 31,391 housing units, generating an economic impact of Rs 3,637 billion. PPRA implemented a digital procurement system for greater transparency. The CCRA drafted the National Cannabis Policy and prepared its operational framework. PTDC promoted tourism with the "Salam Pakistan" brand and participated in global travel shows. NAP digitized 500,000 historical records and launched the "Strengthening & Modernizing, NAP" project. The APO deposited Rs 10.260 billion into the Federal Consolidated Fund. The Cabinet Division achieved 100% e-office implementation, improving operational efficiency, while the Civil Awards Wing conferred 460 Pakistan Civil Awards and organized key national events. The Federal Government has established Pakistan Tourism Development Endowment Fund (PTDEF) with an amount of Rs 1 billion. An amount of Rs 250 million contributed by Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Rs 100 million by the Government of the Punjab. In 2024, NEPRA introduced a mobile app to streamline consumer complaint resolution. The NSDR planned to upgrade local seed companies and develop multinational-level organizations within five years. The STZA hosted innovation summits and outreach programs to foster growth, while FAB conducted public outreach for spectrum use optimization. PTA launched gender inclusion and ICT accessibility initiatives, and OGRA carried out fuel safety campaigns. NAPHDA digitalized housing complaint management, PPRA held procurement training workshops, and PTDC organized tourism expos and promotional campaigns. Additionally, the Civil Awards Wing of the Cabinet Division broadcast national events like the Civil Awards and Independence Day Flag Hoisting Ceremony live on PTV, ensuring wide public and student participation. Stakeholders have praised the Cabinet Division of Pakistan for improving transparency, digitalization, and efficient governance, ensuring smoother implementation of policies. However, there is ongoing feedback for further enhancing inter-ministerial coordination and streamlining decision-making processes.—DNA

AIOU's admissions to be continued till March 25

For further details and guidance, students are encouraged to visit the university's website

ISLAMABAD: Admissions for the Spring Semester 2025 at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) are now open. The last date to apply for Matric, FA, Associate Degree, B.Ed, BS, BBA, Postgraduate Diploma Programs, and Certificate Courses is March 25, said a press release on Friday. The university administration has made it clear that there will be no further extension in the deadline. Therefore, both new applicants and continuing students must ensure timely registration/enrollment. On this occasion, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood emphasized that the university's mission is to provide quality education opportunities to everyone, ensuring that no student is deprived of educational facilities. He urged students to take advantage of this golden opportunity by securing admission as soon as possible to continue their educational journey. The university is taking all possible measures to facilitate students. Admission forms and prospectuses for all programs are available on the university's official website. For further details and guidance, students are encouraged to visit the university's website.—DNA

China & Pakistan to take joint scientific expeditions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Northwest University (NWU) and Karakoram International University (KIU) are planning to conduct joint scientific expeditions in Pamir-Hindu Kush-Karakoram region with the support from China-Pakistan Joint Research Center on Earth Sciences (CPJRC). Based on the newly signed cooperative agreement between the two universities, they will undertake joint research, talent cultivation and teacher training mainly in geological disaster prevention and control and cultural heritage conservation, China Economic Net reported on Friday. They also discussed creating more opportunities for Pakistani students to get academic degrees and postdoctoral studies

at NWU. "Due to complex geological conditions, frequent disasters and unique cultural heritage in the region where KIU is located, there is a strong need for external cooperation in geological disaster and cultural heritage preservation," said Engr. Prof. Dr. Attaullah Shah, KIU Vice Chancellor. According to Sun Qingwei, NWU President, NWU has the advantage in subjects of natural disaster prevention and control, ecological environmental protection, etc., complementary to unique strengths of KIU. Earth science cooperation between China and Pakistan keeps updating. In February, CPJRC and KIU just signed a DoU to jointly establish the Karakoram Observation and Research Station (KORS) on Natural Hazards.

OGRA enforcement strengthened

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has carried out promotions and appointments of officers and staff to strengthen its professional capabilities and field enforcement. This enhancement aims to ensure the seamless supply and distribution of oil, gas, and LPG to consumers and the public, as well as the effective implementation of official price lists and safety measures for public convenience. The promoted officers include representatives from the technical, legal, finance, IT, and general cadres. OGRA officers, including Jahanzaib Anwar, Aziz Ullah Kakar, Hammad Pirzada, Haseeb Akhtar, and Salman Ahmad, have been appointed as Regional Heads in Peshawar, Multan, Lahore, Sukkur, and Quetta, respectively. Furthermore, experienced and senior OGRA officers have been designated as Regional Heads in Karachi, Lahore, Sukkur, Quetta, Multan, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Peshawar. OGRA remains dedicated to enhancing coordination with provincial and district administrations nationwide, ensuring the effective enforcement of safety measures through mutual cooperation. Committed to public safety, OGRA will continue implementing positive initiatives and making impactful decisions in the future.

Police conducts grand search & combing operation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police conducted a grand search and combing operation late at night in various areas of Noon Police Station under the Industrial Area Zone to curb criminal activities. A police spokesperson told APP on Friday that a heavy contingent of police, under the supervision of SDPO Noon, participated in the operation. Lady police officers and other officials were also involved in the search operation. He said that during the operation, 81 suspects were checked, along with inspections of 33 houses, shops, inns, hotels, and motels. Additionally, 53 motorcycles and 13 vehicles were examined. A total of 17 suspicious individuals were taken into custody for further investigation. He said that the search operation aimed to eliminate crime in the area. The Inspector General of Islamabad Police has directed grand search operations across the district to ensure law and order. He urged the public to cooperate with the police during security checks and report any suspicious activities. "Ensuring the safety of citizens is our top priority," he added.—APP

National unity essential says, Rana

He stated that certain elements are opposed to Pakistan's progress, evident in their social media campaigns that have raised concerns

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's aide on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Friday appealed to all political parties and the nation to unite against terrorism, stressing the government's commitment to rooting out terrorism. Talking to a private news channel, he expressed his condolences to the nation over the recent terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express. Rana Sanaullah emphasized the need for unity among all political parties to combat the menace of terrorism, saying, "We must put aside our differences and stand together against this common threat." He stated that certain elements are opposed to Pakistan's progress, evident in their social media campaigns that have raised concerns. These elements are being exposed and are struggling to accept mega projects like CPEC, he mentioned. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to rooting out terrorism, adding, this attack is the latest in a series of incidents that have raised concerns about the security situation in Balochistan. Sanaullah held Afghanistan and India responsible for their lack of condemnation regarding the recent terrorist attack on the train his disappointment and condemnation of their attitude, stating that while the whole world grieved over the loss of innocent lives, these two nations remained silent.—DNA

ANF recovers 927 kg drugs in 8 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations recovered over 927 kg drugs worth more than Rs 188 million and arrested 8 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He informed that 1,490 kg ice hidden in the luggage of a passenger going to Riyadh was recovered at Karachi International Airport. 500 kg opium and 50 kg ice were recovered from Mashkhal area of Washik in Balochistan. 291.6 kg hashish and 64.4 kg opium were recovered near Samanabad in Faisalabad and two suspects were arrested during the operation. 9,950 kg hashish, 1.5 kg ice and 1.2 kg opium were recovered from a house in Shahpur Kanjran in Lahore during an operation and a woman was also arrested. 3 kg ice was recovered from a car intercepted near Balili Road in Quetta and a suspect was arrested. In another operation near Shahpur Kanjran Lahore, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a drug dealer. 1.2 kg hashish, 2 grams cocaine and 150 grams ice were recovered from a Nigerian checked near a hospital on GT Road Rawalpindi. 12 grams cocaine and 300 grams ice were recovered from a Nigerian woman rounded up near G-10 Islamabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are underway.—APP

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Briefs

IRSA
releases
73,501
cusecs
water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 73,501 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 62,560 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tabela 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 20,400 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1060.3 feet, which was 10.3 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 16,659 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 14,230, 24,429, 19,172, and 7020 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,300 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera.

NUST climbs
in QS Sub-
ject Rank-
ings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) has achieved another milestone in global rankings, securing the 127th position in Engineering and Technology in the QS Subject Rankings 2025. This marks a 17-position jump from last year, reinforcing NUST's reputation as a premier institution for quality higher education and research. For the first time, NUST has ranked among the top 200 universities worldwide in four subjects including Computer Science, Mathematics, Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering. In addition, the university has improved its standing in 11 subject areas, while maintaining its previous ranking in five others. NUST has also made remarkable strides in Natural Sciences, moving 72 places up to #322 globally, and in Social Sciences and Management, where it has advanced 39 positions to #361. These improvements reflect NUST's growing impact in diverse academic fields. Furthermore, with the inclusion of Architecture/Built Environment in the rankings for the first time, NUST now has at least one subject ranked in all five broad disciplines, underscoring its academic excellence across multiple domains. This latest achievement highlights NUST's commitment to excellence in higher education and research, strengthening its global standing as a leading university in emerging and diverse academic areas.

Lawmakers urge political
unity to tackle national crises

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in the National Assembly on Friday called the urgent need for all political parties to unite and develop a comprehensive strategy to address the country's prevailing challenges particularly the terrorism and economic instability. Participating in the debate on a motion expressing gratitude for the President's address to the joint session of Parliament, senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Aftab Sheikh stressed that lasting peace could not be achieved without economic stability. "If we believe we can establish peace without improving the economy, we are deceiving ourselves," he said, urging immediate attention to the country's economic challenges in order to steer Pakistan out of its current difficulties. Referring to a

NUML, NITB to strengthen
academia-industry collaboration

This partnership reflects NUML's commitment to equipping students with the necessary skills to excel in the rapidly evolving digital landscape while supporting government-led IT initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the National Information Technology Board (NITB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster collaboration between academia and the IT industry. The signing ceremony, held at NUML, was attended by Director General NUML Brig Shahzad Munir and CEO NITB Babar Majid Bhatti, along with senior officials from both institutions. Speaking at the ceremony, Brig Shahzad Munir and Babar Majid Bhatti hailed the MoU as a significant step towards digital transformation and economic growth. They emphasized that this partnership is just the beginning of a long-term collaboration that will bring mutual benefits. Both reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the effective execution and implementation of the agreement. To oversee the implementation process, NUML has also established a Steering Committee, which will play a pivotal role in



planning, executing, and monitoring various initiatives under the MoU. The primary objective of this partnership is to bridge the gap between academia and the IT industry by promoting re-

search, development, and knowledge-sharing. Through this collaboration, both institutions aim to enhance technological readiness and support Pakistan's digital transformation efforts. The

MoU will facilitate joint research projects, allowing faculty and students to work on real-world IT challenges while contributing to the country's innovation ecosystem. Additionally, the agreement

will create opportunities for professional training and skill development in the IT sector. NUML students will have access to unpaid internships within NITB projects, providing them with hands-on experience and industry exposure. The collaboration will also involve the organization of joint workshops, seminars, and conferences, fostering a culture of continuous learning and engagement with IT professionals. A key component of the MoU is the establishment of an Ideation Hub, which will serve as a platform for innovation and creativity in the IT sector. This hub will encourage students, researchers, and industry experts to collaborate on cutting-edge solutions, driving technological advancements and economic growth. This partnership reflects NUML's commitment to equipping students with the necessary skills to excel in the rapidly evolving digital landscape while supporting government-led IT initiatives. Through this collaboration, both institutions aim to contribute to Pakistan's technological advancement and economic development.

Media urged to play
catalytic role in driving
population management

Through responsible journalism, we can advocate for solutions to Pakistan's pressing population challenges and contribute to a more sustainable future," he concluded

ISLAMABAD: The media has a vital role to play in advancing the population management agenda in Pakistan, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by rapid population growth—a major hurdle to national progress and development. This was the central theme of the National Media Coalition Meeting on Harnessing Media for Positive Social Change, organized by the Population Council with the support of UNFPA. Journalists from leading media outlets across Pakistan participated, emphasizing the media's power to shape public discourse, and policy action. In his welcome remarks, Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director, Population Council, stressed the urgency of tackling Pakistan's rapid population growth, which threatens economic stability, resource distribution, and the country's ability to meet its development goals. He highlighted the increasing strain on public services such as healthcare, education, and employment, underscoring the need for collective action. "The media has the power to inform, educate, and influence public perception, ultimately driving policies that promote sustainable population growth. By shedding light on key issues, journalists can mobilize action and help address the challenges posed by an expanding population," he stated. Ikram ul Ahad, Deputy Manager Communication, Population Council, spoke about the global impact of media in shaping social change. "Media has played a transformative role worldwide by influencing policy discourse, challenging misconceptions, and amplifying critical issues. In Pakistan, its dynamic presence offers a unique opportunity to advocate for evidence-based policymaking, raise awareness about population growth, and promote family planning initiatives," he noted. Ali Mazhar Choudhary, Director Communication, Population Council, led a session on effectively mainstreaming the population agenda through media. Coalition members worked on a strategic plan to advance the narrative of sustainable population growth, identifying key focus areas for media coverage. These included the links between rapid population growth and climate change, women's empowerment, female education, the integration of population welfare indicators in the NFC Award, political will, the role of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in family planning, and incorporating family planning services into social protection networks. In his closing remarks, Dr. Ghulam Farid Khan, Programme Analyst at UNFPA, commended the coalition's efforts in equipping media professionals with the tools to hold policymakers accountable. "The media plays a pivotal role in fostering transparency and accountability by exposing gaps in service delivery, resource allocation, and policy execution. Through responsible journalism, we can advocate for solutions to Pakistan's pressing population challenges and contribute to a more sustainable future," he concluded.—DNA

Interior ministry highlights
reforms in annual report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Interior has unveiled its annual performance report, showcasing significant strides in enhancing security, streamlining public services, and strengthening community engagement across Pakistan. A key highlight is the establishment of the National Crisis Information Management Cell (NCIMC), which acts as the central nerve for coordinating security efforts related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), foreign dignitaries, sectarianism, and terrorism. Additionally, the Ministry launched the "Balochistan Cell" to improve communication between federal agencies and the Balochistan government. Public service reforms also took center stage. The Directorate General of Immigration and Passport expanded services by setting up new offices and counters, introducing an overseas complaint cell, and implementing policy reforms under the Passport Rules 2021 and Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951. NADRA processed over 200,000 international

applications and resolved 99% of complaints while launching new registration centers and mobile services to improve accessibility. In law enforcement, Pakistan Rangers played a crucial role in preventing electricity theft, combating smuggling, and providing security for international cricket teams. The National Police Bureau introduced a Sex Offender Register under the Anti-Rape Act 2021 and conducted specialized training for women officers. Civil Defence trained over 13,000 participants in bomb disposal, fire safety, and emergency response. The Ministry also prioritized community engagement through awareness sessions and social media outreach, receiving positive feedback for improved visa issuance, arms licenses, and police character certificate processes. Despite these achievements, the Ministry acknowledged ongoing challenges in scaling operations and adopting advanced technologies, pledging targeted interventions to address these gaps.—APP

Ahsan for practicing true
teachings of Islam to combat
Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday said Islam was a religion of peace, harmony and brotherhood, which always rejected extremism in all its forms.

"Today, we must promote the true teachings of Islam and focus on building the character of Muslims, especially the youth through education, which played a vital role in spreading Islam's message worldwide," he said during his address at a seminar.

The event was organized by the National Rahmatul-Hil-Alameen Wa Khatam an-Nabiyyin Authority in connection with the United Nations International Day to Combat Islamophobia, under the theme, "Combating Islamophobia Through Character Building." Ahsan Iqbal pointed out that Islam was not spread through force or warfare, but rather through the exemplary conduct and character of Muslim traders, whose actions attracted people from diverse cultures to the greatness of Islam. Today, he said it was unfortunate that despite constituting approximately 2.5 billion people nearly a quarter of the world's population, Muslims stood vulnerable in front of a population of 10 billion people due to a failure to fully embody the true spirit of Islam. The minister stressed the importance of instilling a lifelong pursuit of knowledge in the younger generation, aligning this pursuit with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the life of Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The minister highlighted the importance of gaining power through contemporary education, promoting the culture of tolerance and ensuring rule of law and justice, so that no one could dare to cast an evil eye on them or commit any blasphemy against their religion and sacred personalities. "Islam does not permit anyone to dictate the faith and beliefs of others, nor does it allow the taking of innocent lives," he remarked, addressing the destructive tendencies of extremism and terrorism, which starkly contrast with the core teachings of Islam. The minister urged the Chairman of the National Rahmatul-Hil-Alameen Wa Khatam an-Nabiyyin Authority, as well as educational institutions and relevant stakeholders.—DNA

SMEs facing
significant
challenges:
Nasir

ISLAMABAD: Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of Pakistan's economy, contributing 40% to GDP and 30% to exports, yet they continue to battle major challenges, says Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

In a discussion with visiting business leaders, Qureshi highlighted critical roadblocks—limited financing, outdated technology, and lack of skilled human resources—stressing the need for targeted solutions to boost productivity and competitiveness.

He urged the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SME-DA) to focus on youth employment and accelerating economic growth. "ICCI is dedicated to working alongside government bodies to build a business-friendly ecosystem," he added. To fuel innovation, Qureshi announced ICCI's plan to launch a cutting-edge Research and Development Centre in collaboration with top universities. This initiative, alongside ICCI's MoUs with regional universities, aims to close the academia-industry gap and empower youth to become job creators, not just job seekers. "By championing start-ups, driving innovation, and tackling SME challenges, we can unlock economic growth and generate countless job opportunities," Qureshi concluded.—DNA

Rupee sheds
16 paise
against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday depreciated by 16 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.21 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.05. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.50 and Rs282.00, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 0.81 to close at Rs303.62 against the last day's closing of Rs304.43, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.88, whereas a decrease of 59 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs362.23 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs362.82.—APP

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Political reach of the super-rich

JAMES Ashley wrote a 2023 book on Elon Musk, with a summary describing the world's richest and most hyperactive man as a "tough yet vulnerable man child, prone to Jekyll-and-Hyde mood swings, with an exceedingly high tolerance for risk, a craving for drama and success, an epic sense of mission, and an insane intensity". Ashley's insights were forged out of an exploration of Tesla, Twitter (now X), Starlink and Musk's prodigiously chaotic not-so-private life (six reported partners, 14 children and counting), but they apply equally to his past three months as US President Donald Trump's political muse, vested with perhaps more power than any private figure in US history. While Musk is far from the first business figure tantalised by the challenge of translating financial wealth into political power (think the Carnegies and Rockefellers, dubbed "robber barons" in 1920s America, or Britain's press barons: the Northcliffes, Beaverbrooks and Rothermeres), his prodigious ascent under the benefaction of Trump has raised broader questions about the unprecedented empowerment of the US "political donor class" – and whether this jeopardises the proper functioning of democracy itself. Open Secrets, which tracks US political funding and donations, says private finance amounting to US\$1.45 billion went to Trump and the Republican Party for last year's elections, with nearly US\$2 billion going to Kamala Harris and the Democrats. Musk was among the largest donors (at over US\$290 million, according to the Federal Election Commission) but there were plenty more super-rich Americans who joined the fray – 150 of the world's wealthiest families contributed an estimated US\$2 billion. Commentators galore are concerned that government policy (not just in the US, but in other democracies) is being disproportionately shaped by the wealthy, and that rising wealth inequality has made this a direct threat to democratic institutions. They look not only at Musk (who of course has no formal government position) but at the billionaires and multimillionaires filling so many of Trump's cabinet positions. A UK group called Patriotic Millionaires polled more than 2,900 millionaires across G20 countries in November and December last year, and found that two-thirds said the super-rich "interfered inappropriately" in the US elections and in shaping public opinion. And these are all millionaires themselves. These questions about the alarming erosion of democratic institutions will take time to resolve. The more immediate question is how long Musk's bizarre explosion of activity can last, and whether he is set to become a modern-day Icarus who, so inflamed by his hubris, will see his wings melt and come crashing spectacularly to earth. Parallels between Musk and Icarus are well worn. There is reportedly an old Tesla joke warning staff to beware getting too close to Musk lest they get burned. The parallel also fits well with Musk's curious and long-standing obsession with settling on Mars. But thus far, he has continued to fly steadily higher, and still his wings are intact. Or are they? As of March 14, his net worth has fallen by more than US\$100 billion this year, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. For most mortals, such a crash would have been fatal.



Australia and challenging China

WARMONGERS from the Rupert Murdoch press and defence-funded "think" tanks such as the Australian Strategic Policy Institute were predictably up in arms. Chinese naval drills, conducted in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand last month, were denounced as "unprecedented", and an unwarranted act of "intimidation" and "provocation". The consensus is that it's a wake-up call for Australia to reinforce its defences, from developing more advanced drones to better radars and other forward detection systems. It's probably right that Canberra needs to boost domestic defences. Apparently, those in charge of defending their country were asleep at the wheel, as, according to some reports, it was commercial pilots who alerted the authorities of the Chinese naval presence. However, Australia did admit the Chinese alerted them a couple of hours ahead of time. Perhaps Canberra should be angrier with its military than Beijing. You do wonder, though, whether China wasn't responding, tit-for-tat, to a joint naval exercise conducted between Japan, Australia and New Zealand back in September, in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea, not to mention countless other so-called freedom of navigation exercises by navies of the Western alliance! When the allied navies keep sailing up and down someone's coastlines, that too may be perceived as "intimidation" and "provocation". It's surprising there hasn't been, amid all the anger and hysteria, much discussion about the need for more submarines to protect the Australian homeland. After all, public discourse about defence has been all about Aukus all the time in the past few years. The silence has indeed been deafening. But it was punctured at the other side of the world, in Washington. In written and oral statements addressed to the US Senate armed services committee nomination hearings last week, Elbridge Colby, Donald Trump's nominee for undersecretary of defence for policy – the No 3 at the Pentagon – said the US Navy should reserve some of those Aukus submarines for itself. "[Aukus] is a great idea, but I have been very sceptical in practice," he said. "If we can produce the attack submarines in sufficient number and sufficient speed, then great. But if we can't, [supplying Australia] becomes a very difficult problem." He was referring to the more conventional nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarines, whose construction is suffering a long backlog in the US even for its own use. Between three to five of those have been promised to Australia over the next decade as a stopgap for the far more advanced eight subs usually advertised under Aukus and which won't become available until well into the 2050s and '60s. There is now a very good chance that few or none of those Virginia-class subs will be going down under any time soon, if at all. And with the cancelled contract for 12 French-made diesel-driven attack subs, Australia is likely to end up having to defend the homeland with its ageing Collins-class submarines – the same ones that were supposed to be replaced in the first place! The cancelled French deal caused a diplomatic break-up with Paris until Canberra agreed to pay hundreds of millions of dollars as a penalty.

The evolving nature of poverty

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The research also highlights disparities based on racial and ethnic backgrounds, with historical and systemic inequalities contributing to persistent poverty among marginalized communities. Effective poverty reduction requires targeted policy interventions that address both immediate economic hardships and long-term structural inequalities. Social safety net programs, including food assistance, housing subsidies and direct cash transfers, have proven to be instrumental in reducing poverty

POVERTY remains a pervasive social and economic issue affecting millions of individuals across the globe. Understanding its measurement, causes and consequences is essential for devising effective policies to alleviate its impacts. The study by McGranahan and Schanzenbach (2024) provides an extensive analysis of poverty in the United States, highlighting significant developments in poverty measurement, economic influences and the role of public policies in addressing socio-economic disparities. The study critically explores the dimensions of poverty measurement, the economic and social factors contributing to poverty and the effectiveness of various policy responses aimed at mitigating poverty's adverse effects. A fundamental aspect of confronting poverty is its accurate measurement. Traditionally, the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) has been used to determine eligibility for social benefits such as Medicaid and free school meals. However, as McGranahan and Schanzenbach (2024) illustrate that OPM has significant limitations, including its reliance on outdated income thresholds that fail to account for contemporary economic realities. The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), introduced as an improvement, considers a broader set of economic conditions, including in-kind benefits, tax credits, and regional cost-of-living variations. The distinction between OPM and SPM is crucial because it affects the interpretation of poverty trends and the effectiveness of government interventions. While the OPM suggests stagnation in poverty reduction, the SPM indicates significant progress, particularly due to targeted social safety nets. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty levels under the SPM declined due to emergency relief measures, whereas the OPM failed to capture these benefits, demonstrating the necessity of

a more holistic measurement framework. Poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a range of economic and social factors. Among the most significant contributors are employment conditions, wage stagnation, and economic downturns. McGranahan and Schanzenbach (2024) emphasize the strong correlation between macroeconomic fluctuations and poverty levels. Periods of economic recession typically lead to increased poverty rates due to job losses and wage reductions, whereas economic expansions facilitate poverty alleviation through improved employment opportunities. Additionally, demographic factors such as age, gender and family structure play crucial roles in poverty dynamics. Children and older adults are disproportionately affected with policy interventions such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Social Security playing pivotal roles in moderating their economic hardships. The research also highlights disparities based on racial and ethnic backgrounds, with historical and systemic inequalities contributing to persistent poverty among marginalized communities. Effective poverty reduction requires targeted policy interventions that address both immediate economic hardships and long-term structural inequalities. Social safety net programs, including food assistance, housing subsidies and direct cash transfers, have proven to be instrumental in reducing poverty. The expansion of refundable tax credits, such as the Child Tax Credit (CTC), has particularly benefited low-income families by supplementing their earnings. However, the study notes that policy effectiveness varies depending on implementation and political climate. The temporary expansions in welfare support during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the potential for rapid poverty reduction but also underscored the volatility of policy-driven solutions. When emergency relief

measures expired, poverty rates rebounded, highlighting the necessity of permanent policy reforms that ensure sustained economic security for vulnerable populations. While existing programs provide crucial support, significant gaps remain in addressing poverty comprehensively. McGranahan and Schanzenbach (2024) argue for a reassessment of poverty thresholds and eligibility criteria to reflect contemporary economic conditions more accurately. Furthermore, increasing accessibility to quality education and healthcare can serve as long-term strategies to break the cycle of poverty by enhancing human capital and economic mobility. Labor market policies also play a crucial role in poverty alleviation. Policies that promote fair wages, workplace protections and access to employment benefits can mitigate income disparities and reduce reliance on social assistance programs. Strengthening workforce-training programs and investing in economic development initiatives in impoverished regions can create sustainable pathways out of poverty. Confronting poverty requires a multidimensional approach encompassing accurate measurement, an understanding of socio-economic determinants, and the implementation of effective public policies. The research by McGranahan and Schanzenbach (2024) highlight the importance of refining poverty measurement tools to better reflect economic realities and assess the impact of social safety nets. Addressing structural inequalities through policy reforms in taxation, labor markets, and social programs is essential for achieving meaningful poverty reduction. A sustained commitment to comprehensive and inclusive economic policies can ensure that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed, ultimately fostering a society where economic security is accessible to all.

The 2Cs: Maryam Nawaz's governance model

Afnan Wasif & Hussain Bajwa

Infrastructure gets her attention too. She's building 600 roads, five expressways, and three motorways. The Suthra Punjab program rolls out a province-wide solid waste system, cleaning both cities and villages. In Gulberg, her sustainable development pilot project cuts costs with uniform green belts and cyclist lanes. She released Rs400 million in early 2025 for ongoing projects, demanding transparency and real-time monitoring via dashboards. Deadlines matter to her—competence demands it. Nigahban Package ensures no one goes hungry. She personally tracks commodity prices daily, proving she's not just a leader—she's a doer. Meetings with global...

MARYAM Nawaz Sharif, Punjab's first female Chief Minister, governs with a striking blend of Caring and Competence—two pillars that define her leadership. She doesn't just talk about progress; she delivers it. Her administration tackles Punjab's challenges head-on, rolling out welfare and development projects that touch millions of lives. From housing to healthcare, education to economic empowerment, her initiatives reflect a deep commitment to the people and a sharp ability to get things done. Let's dive into how the "2Cs" shape her transformative model of governance. Maryam Nawaz puts people first. Her welfare programs prove it. Take the Apni Chhat Apna Ghar scheme. Launched in August 2024, this housing initiative offers interest-free loans of Rs1.5 million to landowners in urban and rural areas. Borrowers pay just Rs14,000 monthly over seven years—no payment required for the first three months. By January 2025, she approved Rs62 billion to extend loans to 40,000 individuals, with over 4,200 houses nearing completion. She even pushed to raise the loan ceiling to Rs2 million. This isn't just policy—it's a lifeline for families dreaming of a roof over their heads. Her care extends to the vulnerable. In January 2025, she launched the Zahra Homes/Maskan Ravi project, handing over keys to 100 families. She also announced free three-marla plots for the needy, ensuring the underprivileged aren't left behind. For Ramadan 2025, she pledged Rs10,000 to 3.3 million families, delivered straight to their doorsteps. The Himmat Card supports disabled individuals with financial aid and vocational training, while free medicine delivery and the Maryam Ki Dastak App bring healthcare to people's homes. These moves scream compassion—Maryam Nawaz listens, then acts. Caring alone doesn't cut it—competence seals the deal. Maryam Nawaz executes with precision. Look at her Green Tractor Scheme. Approved in September 2024, it provides 9,500 tractors with a Rs1 million subsidy each to farmers owning up to 50 acres. She aims to scale it to 30,000 tractors, boosting agriculture in a province that feeds Pakistan. Her Kisan Card Program rents out machinery to small farmers, leveling the playing field. She tackles climate change too, ordering emergency measures in January 2025 to boost cotton and sugarcane production. Competence shines through in her deadlines—

road repairs must finish by June 2025, and health center upgrades hit 75% completion by early this year. Her Asaan Karobar Scheme empowers entrepreneurs. Launched in January 2025, it allocates free plots in industrial zones and offers interest-free loans from Rs1 million to Rs30 million. Over 185,000 applications poured in, with 71,000 each for the Rs5 million and Rs30 million categories. She simplified the process—no complex conditions, just results. The Punjab Easy Business Card Scheme adds Rs48 billion in interest-free loans for startups, repayable over three years. She monitors disbursements herself, ensuring no delays. Inflation dropped from 38% to below 4% under her watch, and flour prices in Punjab hit a national low. That's competence in action. Maryam Nawaz doesn't stop at economics—she redefines healthcare and education. Her Children's Heart Surgery Programme targets 12,000 pending operations, inviting global surgeons to Punjab. The Dialysis Program Card, rolled out in 2025, offers free care to kidney patients. She's upgrading 1,236 basic health units—54 are done, 1,164 nearly there. New Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics bring top-tier medical services to rural areas. Under the supervision of Rana Sikandar Hayat, the magnificent Honhaar Scholarship that funds 30,000+ students' tuition for four to five years, with Phase 2 registration ending in February, 2025. The CM Punjab Laptop Program 2025 aims to distribute 110,000 laptops to students, prioritizing merit and minority inclusion. Infrastructure gets her attention too. She's building 600 roads, five expressways, and three motorways. The Suthra Punjab program rolls out a province-wide solid waste system, cleaning both cities and villages. In Gulberg, her sustainable development pilot project cuts costs with uniform green belts and cyclist lanes. She released Rs400 million in early 2025 for ongoing projects, demanding transparency and real-time monitoring via dashboards. Deadlines matter to her—competence demands it. Nigahban Package ensures no one goes hungry. She personally tracks commodity prices daily, proving she's not just a leader—she's a doer. Meetings with global partners, like her remarkable official visit to China, show her competence on the world stage, securing developmental, economic and technical support for Punjab's growth. Maryam Nawaz's 2Cs don't just govern—they inspire. Her Maryam Nawaz Community Health Inspector Program hires 20,000 inspectors to bolster

healthcare. The Garment City and Model Rehri Bazaar create jobs and dignity for workers. She champions special education, launching Pakistan's first government autism school in Lahore, set to finish in a year. Ten autism units already operate, and 9,206 assistive devices—like hearing aids and wheelchairs—reach students. She upgrades 35 special education schools and plans a sports gala for them. Caring meets competence here, making the marginalized feel seen. General Asim Munir amplifies her vision. His support anchors Punjab's progress. The Green Pakistan Initiative, launched in Cholistan on February 15, 2025, proves it. Maryam and Munir inaugurated the Green Agri Mall, Smart Agri Farm, and Agri Research Centre. These projects irrigate barren lands and empower farmers. High-yield seeds and modern machinery now reach rural hands. Munir calls Punjab Pakistan's agricultural "powerhouse." He's right. The initiative blends care for farmers with competent innovation. It's a game-changer for food security and economic growth. Recreation binds this model of governance together. The Horse and Cattle Show 2025, themed "May Punjab Prosper Forever," closed spectacularly on February 24. Maryam hosted it. COAS Asim Munir joined as guest of honor. Torch parades, folk songs, and fireworks lit up the sky. It wasn't just fun—it was unity. Families cheered. Communities connected. This event, paired with sports scholarships and e-bike schemes, keeps Punjab's youth engaged. Maryam knows a happy province is a strong one. She invests in joy, not just infrastructure. Critics might question the pace, but results silence them. Maryam Nawaz's governance fuses heart and skill. She cares deeply—housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, healing the sick. She delivers smartly—slashing inflation, modernizing agriculture, empowering youth. Her 2Cs lift Punjab from promises to progress. She's rewriting what leadership means. Punjab thrives because she dares to care and knows how to succeed. That's the Maryam Nawaz model—bold, human, and unstoppable. — Afnan Wasif: The author is an MAIR Candidate at School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He tweets @afnanwasif — Hussain Bajwa: The author is a Strategic Studies Graduate from the National Defence University, Islamabad. He is President MSF, Islamabad. He tweets @hussainbajwa40

Briefs

India
sponsor of
terrorism...

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, a media warfare led by India media began in support of the terrorists, said the DG ISPR. Lt Gen Chaudhry said the incident of Jaffar Express is continuity of the India policy to sponsor terrorism in Pakistan. "The incident of Jaffar Express is continuity of the same policy, the same sponsorship from where it was engineered and from it was being pushed..." he remarked. Slamming the Indian media, the DG ISPR said that fake videos were created by using artificial intelligence (AI) to spread malicious propaganda regarding Jaffar Express attack on the social media platforms. "Indian media spread propaganda by using the fake videos to exaggerate the situation," he said.

Bilawal
Bhutto...

FROM PAGE 01
collaboration with the private sector, employment opportunities will be provided to the youth. He stated that the Jaffar Express incident was highly condemnable while lauding the security forces for successfully completing the operation. "The security forces acted swiftly and bravely to counter the terrorists, and the entire nation will succeed in the war against terrorism," he added. Bilawal Bhutto praised Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah for briefing the public by presenting one-year report of the Sindh government.

Jail
authorities..

FROM PAGE 01
due to security concerns and that presenting him via video link was also not feasible. The court directed the Adiala jail superintendent and Islamabad AG to submit their affidavits in this regard. The court also formed a commission to send law clerk Sakina Bangash to visit Adiala Jail and confirm from the PTI founder whether Yousafzai was his lawyer or not. The commission that includes the law clerk has been directed to meet Khan tomorrow (Saturday), and the jail superintendent has been instructed to make arrangements for the meeting.

JUI-F
leader...

FROM PAGE 01
It was not immediately clear who was behind the explosion. Attacks have been escalating in Pakistan's border regions with Afghanistan in recent months. Last month, a suicide bomber killed six worshippers Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani – son of Maulana Samiul Haq and chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) during Friday prayer at the Darul Uloom Haqqani in Nowshera district.

Pak desires
to streng...

FROM PAGE 01
The prime minister said the GSP Plus scheme has benefited both sides since its inception. He said Pakistan and the EU enjoy cordial and friendly ties and expressed satisfaction at the positive momentum in these relations. In addition to discussing various facets of Pakistan-EU ties, including human rights, the prime minister welcomed the convening of the first ever Pakistan-EU High Level Business Forum in Islamabad to be held in May and assured the EU ambassador of Pakistan's full support and facilitation in making this event successful.

LHC seeks
report...

FROM PAGE 01
February 8 general elections. Rights bodies and journalists' organisations have condemned the muzzling of social media, while internet service providers have also lamented losses due to disruptions. The United States had also called on Pakistan to lift restrictions on social media platforms.

International hockey revived
in Pakistan after 21 years

In a special effort to revive international hockey in Pakistan, Prime Minister Youth Program Chairman Rana Mashhood along with Olympian Khawaja Junaid and others have played key role in revival of international hockey in Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a historic moment for Pakistani hockey, an international hockey team visited Pakistan after 21 years, as the Germany Junior Hockey Team played a match against the Pakistan Junior Hockey Team. This visit is part of a broader effort to revive international hockey in Pakistan, a sport that once brought the nation immense pride. Over the past two years, significant strides have been made to bring back in-

ternational hockey through the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYAP). Leading this initiative, PMYAP Chairman Rana Mashhood, alongside Olympian Khawaja Junaid, Focal Person PMYAP Pakistan Pervaiz Sandila, Focal Person PMYAP Europe Junaid Chatta, Sohail Akram Janjua, Mahmood Ahmed, and Yousuf Anjum, played a crucial role in inviting international clubs to Pakistan and arranging matches in Lahore and Islamabad. The highly anticipated match between Germany's junior hockey team and Pakistan's junior team was a thrilling spectacle for hockey enthusiasts.

Both teams demonstrated exceptional skills and sportsmanship, offering fans a captivating display of hockey. However, the German team outperformed Pakistan, securing a 4-1 victory. The event attracted diplomats and dignitaries from various countries, further emphasizing the significance of this sporting revival. Among the notable attendees were the High Commissioners of Malaysia and Brunei as well as the Deputy Head of Mission of the Romanian Embassy, who were prominent figures in the audience. From Pakistan's sports administration, Secretary of the

Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination Zahoor Ahmed and Director General of Pakistan Sports Board Yasir Pirzada also witnessed the match. They commended the young players for their impressive skills and reiterated their commitment to the development and international promotion of hockey in Pakistan. This match marks a significant milestone in the revival of international hockey in Pakistan. It also reflects the country's growing efforts to restore its position as a competitive force in the sport and attract more international teams for future tournaments.

Jack Draper sets up Indian Wells
semis with Carlos Alcaraz

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK: Jack Draper beat big-serving American Ben Shelton 6-4 7-5 on a cold and blustery evening in Indian Wells to set up a tantalising semi-final against two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz. Britain's Draper reached his first Grand Slam semi-final at September's US Open but had never before made it to the last four at a Masters 1000 event. If the 23-year-old beats four-time major champion Alcaraz on Saturday he will be guaranteed a place in the world's top 10 for the first time. "I'm always proud of myself," said Draper, who is yet to drop a set in the tournament. "Unfortunately in tennis you're in a sport where there is always the next match and you have to prove yourself every time. "I'm never content with anything. I always want to have more wins and more opportunities to play top players." Draper has played Alcaraz four times, with his sole win coming on grass at Queen's last year. Spanish world number three Alcaraz beat Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-3 7-6 (7-4) to record his

16th successive match win in California. Draper won the first set against Shelton for a serving performance every bit as commanding as the one he produced in his fourth-round win over Taylor Fritz. He conceded just three points on serve, and one break was enough to secure the first set. However, the partisan crowd did not take too long to find its voice, with Shelton's huge ground strokes helping him win the first three games of the second set. A frustrated Draper was given a warning for unsportsmanlike conduct after hitting a ball high

into the stands in the third game, but he refocused to force the set back on serve. The match turned decisively in his favour when Shelton double-faulted to give Draper a chance to serve for a semi-final spot. He went 0-30 down but reeled off the next four points to secure victory. "I felt like maybe the conditions suited me a little bit more," Draper told BBC Sport. "His serve would be bouncing very high if it were lively, but I felt it was a challenge for both of us dealing with the wind and the dead conditions."

LAHORE: Former Pakistan all-rounder Imad Wasim commented on his struggling knock in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 blockbuster clash against arch-rivals India at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York. At one of the most discussed surfaces of the mega event, 2007 champions India batted first and set Pakistan a modest 120-run target on the tricky pitch. The green shirts, while chasing 120, got off to a decent start but eventually lost the match by six runs. Imad, who reversed his international retirement to represent the national team in the global event, walked out to bat at number five when Pakistan were 73/3 in 12.2 overs, needing 47 runs off 46 deliveries. The left-handed batter struggled against a disciplined Indian bowling attack and could score 15 runs off 23 deliveries in a losing cause. The all-rounder recalled his scratchy knock against eventual champions and recounted the criticism he faced afterwards. "When I scored 15 runs off 23 balls (against India), after that, the amount of bashing I got, I felt like I'd never done anything in my life. – DNA

Imad comments
on scratchy knock
against India

FROM PAGE 01
primary reasons for the breakdown. At the time, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan confirmed that party founder Imran Khan had directed the negotiation team to halt the dialogue after the government declined to establish a three-member judicial commission. Despite the setback, Ayaz Sadiq maintained on Friday that he remains hopeful of restarting the dialogue process between the two sides.

Negotiations
only way
forward...

Pakistan
to bring
resolution...

FROM PAGE 01
Foreign Office Spokesperson Shafiq Ali Khan stated that the attack on the passenger train was part of a terrorist plan originating from outside the country. He emphasized that the Taliban-led Afghan government should cooperate with Pakistan against terrorism. On Tuesday, a group of terrorists attacked the Jaffar Express near Sibi in Balochistan and held over 400 passengers hostage.

Pakistan
values its
relations...

FROM PAGE 01
Amb. Cohodarevic conveyed the best wishes and warm regards of his country's political leadership to the Prime Minister. He reaffirmed Bosnia & Herzegovina's strong desire to further enhance cooperation between the two countries and briefed the Prime Minister about the ongoing efforts, initiatives and proposals in this regard.

Pak welcome
Kyrgyz-Tajik
border treaty

FROM PAGE 01
Central Asia, a move that follows three decades of conflict between the two former Soviet republics over water resources and land. The deal – signed in Bishek by Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rakhmon – is a sign of how relations between the two allies of Russia have improved since their last clash in autumn 2022.

Mbappe returns to
France squad for
Nations League

The Real Madrid forward to lead France in the knockout match, confirms Deschamps

WEB DESK

PARIS: Captain Kylian Mbappe returned to the France squad named Thursday for this month's UEFA Nations League quarter-final against Croatia, as Paris Saint-Germain teenager Desire Doue earned a first call-up. Mbappe, 26, was left out of the last two France squads by coach Didier Deschamps for the Nations League group stage in October and November. The Real Madrid superstar was initially dropped because of fitness concerns, before later being left out amidst headlines about his private life. Deschamps said at the time that his decision to do without Mbappe was "for the best" due to the noise surrounding the striker. Kylian Mbappe has been in fine form for Real in the months since and has scored 28 goals in all competitions this season for the club he joined last year. "I have chatted with him and I confirm what I already said a few weeks ago, that he will be the captain".

ICC announces schedule for
Women's WC Qualifier

The qualifying event to run from April 9 to 19 in Lahore

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday, unveiled the highly-anticipated schedule of the Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025, slated to be played in Pakistan from April 9 to 19. The sixth edition of the tournament, comprised of four full members – Pakistan, Bangladesh, West Indies and Ireland – and associate members Scotland and Thailand will be played across two venues in Lahore – Gaddafi Stadium and Lahore Cricket Club Association (LCCA) Ground. The Qualifier, comprised of 15 matches, will kick off with the curtain-raiser between hosts Pakistan and Ireland on April 9, while West Indies will take on Scotland at the LCCA on the same day. The top two teams by the end of the league-stage matches will qualify for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and will join Australia, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka and hosts India, who qualified for the World Cup by finishing in the top six of the 10-team ICC Women's Championship (2022-25). "We are pleased to announce the match schedule for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025," said ICC CEO Geoff Allardice in a statement. "The six competing teams are just one step away from the Women's Cricket World Cup and I am sure they will all be eagerly looking forward to the competition. "On behalf of the ICC, I would like to wish the teams all the best for the tournament in Lahore as part of the build-up to the Cricket World Cup later this year." ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025 match schedule (day matches begin at 09h30 and day/night matches at 14h00 local time)

Wednesday, 9 April
Pakistan vs Ireland – Gaddafi Stadium (Day)
West Indies vs Scotland – LCCA (Day)
Thursday, 10 April
Thailand vs Bangladesh – LCCA (Day)
Friday, 11 April
Pakistan vs Scotland – LCCA (Day)



ISLAMABAD: To recognize the talent of Muhammad Riaz, a football player from Hangu, KP, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presenting a cheque of Rs. 2.5 million to him. – DNA

Briefs

Ukraine
drones hit
Russian
energy sites

KYIV: Ukrainian drones attacked energy facilities and a missile storage facility in Russia overnight, a security source in Kyiv said Friday, while a Russian aerial attack wounded several in Ukraine. The Ukrainian and Russian drone barrages were less intensive compared to previous days and came after US-Ukraine talks in Jeddah proposed a 30-day ceasefire that the Kremlin on Friday said it was 'cautiously optimistic' about. The source said drones dispatched by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) had hit gas compressor systems in the western Russian regions of Tambov and Saratov. It added that a Ukrainian drone also hit a warehouse storing missiles used for S-300 and S-400 Russian air defense systems. "The SBU conducted another successful special operation on enemy territory, which caused significant losses to the Russian budget, reduced its ability to finance the war against Ukraine and the military potential of the Russian army," the source said in written comments. The mayor of Moscow meanwhile said Russian air defense systems had shot down four Ukrainian drones that were heading toward the capital. The Russian defense ministry said Ukraine had launched 28 drones overnight against over 300 in the early hours of Tuesday, when three people were killed. The governor of the southern Krasnodar region said a Ukrainian attack had sparked a fire at an oil refinery in the Black Sea resort town of Tupapse.

A fuel tank containing up to 20,000 tons of oil products was on fire at the refinery, officials said. Kyiv said Russia had attacked Ukraine with 27 drones overnight, a fraction of the number it usually sends over, with some recent barrages comprised of more than 100 drones.—APP

PSX stays
turns bullish,
gains 441
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 441.93 points, a positive change of 0.38 percent, closing at 115,536.17 points as compared to 115,094.24 points on the last trading day. A total of 360,456,374 shares were traded during the day as compared to 382,791,629 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs21.039 billion against Rs25.407 billion on the last trading day. As many as 435 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 195 of them recorded gains and 169 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 71 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Pak International Bulk with 42,700,806 shares at Rs9.92 per share, Bank of Punjab with 36,140,223 shares at Rs13.09 per share and Fauji Foods Limited with 25,615,139 shares at Rs16.06 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs195.80 per share closing at Rs23,413.00 whereas runner-up was Mari Energies Limited with Rs28.04 rise in its share price to close at Rs605.66.—APP

Gold prices up
by Rs.4,700
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.4,700 and was traded at Rs.314,000 on Friday as compared to its sale at Rs309,300 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.4,030 to Rs 269,204 from Rs 265,174 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.3,694 to Rs.246,779 from Rs 243,085 respectively. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.90 to Rs.3,530 whereas that of and ten gram silver went up by Rs.77 to Rs.3,026 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$46 to \$2,988 from \$2,942 whereas that of silver went up by Rs.0.86 to Rs33.86, the Association reported.—APP

Pak, Oman agree to
strengthen trade ties

Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan stated, "Our current trade statistics do not reflect the true depth of our relationship. By simply removing logistical and communication hurdles, we can easily increase the current trade volume to two to three times its existing level."

DNA

MUSCAT: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Friday met with Mr. Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in Muscat.

The meeting was followed by an Iftar dinner hosted by the Chairman in honor of the visiting minister, said a release issued here.

Parallel to the meeting, a B2B networking session was organized by the Embassy of Pakistan in collaboration with OCCI, bringing together Pakistani business delegates and Omani businessmen to explore trade opportunities.

The meeting, which lasted over an hour, focused on enhancing bilateral trade between Pakistan and Oman. Chairman Faisal Al Rawas assured full support from OCCI and its regional branches, emphasizing his desire to see Omani markets filled with Pakistani products. Both sides agreed to activate the Joint Business Council between OCCI and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to facilitate deeper economic cooperation. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan stated, "Our current trade statistics do not reflect the



true depth of our relationship. By simply removing logistical and communication hurdles, we can easily increase the current trade volume to two to three times its existing level. The key to achieving this lies with the chambers of commerce of both countries. There is a need to enhance connectivity between

OCCI and various chambers of commerce and industries in Pakistan." Chairman OCCI agreed with the minister's views and assured that platforms like Joint Business Councils would be actively utilized to strengthen trade ties. The OCCI chairman also stressed the need for stronger business-to-business

linkages and invited well-established Pakistani brands and businesses to set up operations in Oman, highlighting the country's welcoming investment climate. Following the meeting, both dignitaries engaged with business representatives participating in the B2B networking session. They spent around two hours

interacting with the delegates, discussing their products, and appreciating the range and quality of Pakistani goods. The visit marks a significant step in expanding trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Oman, further strengthening economic ties between the two nations.

Urgent call to address
escalating trade crisis
with Afghanistan

KARACHI: President of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Junaid Makda, urgently calls on the Government of Pakistan to take immediate action to resolve the worsening trade crisis with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries (CIS). Makda emphasized that rising trade barriers, increasing transportation costs, and the ongoing Torkham Border closure are severely damaging cross-border business and causing significant losses to Pakistan's economy. Makda reiterated concerns raised during the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) meeting in December 2024. He explained that SROs No. 1397(I)/2023, 1380(I)/2023, 1401(I)/2023, and 1402(I)/2023, issued in October 2023, triggered a sharp decline in trade and strained relations with neighboring countries. Although the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government recently reduced the Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) from 2% to 1%, it is still applied to both forward and reverse transit trade with Afghanistan—discouraging legitimate business and violating international commitments. "Reducing IDC to 1% is a small relief, but transit trade should not be taxed at all," Makda stated. "This tax, combined with the border closure, is pushing traders to use Iranian ports instead of Pakistani routes, causing long-term harm to our trade network." Despite PAJCCI's ongoing efforts, the situation has worsened. Transportation costs have spiked following the National Logistics Cell's (NLC) intervention; however, under the TIR Convention, NLC is actively contributing to trade facilitation, which is a positive aspect. Meanwhile, the Torkham Border has been closed since February 21, 2025, due to a dispute over Afghan border post construction. This closure has completely halted trade, stranding over 5,000 trucks carrying goods, including perishable items, resulting in significant financial losses. The prolonged closure has also diverted business to competing routes like Chabahar and Bandar Abbas. PAJCCI Senior Vice President Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and Vice President Pervez Lala expressed deep concern for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). "Long delays and uncertainty are destroying trader confidence and scaring away investors," Sarhadi cautioned. "The government must take action now, or Pakistan risks losing its position as a key trade hub." Makda highlighted that under international protocols, Pakistan has a responsibility to facilitate trade for landlocked countries like Afghanistan. Failing to meet these obligations not only damages Pakistan's global reputation—DNA

China, Russia, Iran
calls for stopping illegal
unilateral sanctions

BEIJING: China, Russia and Iran jointly called for putting an end to all illegal unilateral sanctions, after senior diplomats from the three countries gathered in Beijing on Friday for talks on Tehran's nuclear issues. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu chaired the meeting, which was also attended by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov Sergey Alexeevich and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, CGTN reported. The parties concerned should strive to eliminate the root causes of the current situation and reject both the pressure of sanctions and the threat of force, Ma said at a press briefing following the meeting. According to Ma, the three countries all stressed the importance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. The three nations called on all relevant parties to refrain from actions that could escalate the situation and to work together to foster a favorable atmosphere and conditions for diplomatic efforts. Ma also told reporters that China will uphold an objective and impartial stance, actively promote peace and dialogue, and continue to play a constructive role in advancing a political solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Iran signed the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with six world powers in July 2015, agreeing to restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.—APP

Kyrgyz-Tajik border
treaty ending long-
running border
dispute hailed

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Anton Guterres warmly welcomed the presidential signing of a treaty on Thursday by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan demarcating their shared frontier, seeking to end a long-running border conflict that has seen dozens killed in skirmishes in recent years. The two sides clashed repeatedly over the border around the Kyrgyz town of Batken in 2021 and 2022, culminating in a six-day conflict in September 2022. The presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Sadyr Japarov and Emomal Rahmon, respectively, signed the agreement at a meeting in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital, earlier on Thursday morning, according to media reports. Closed since 2021, two checkpoints on the nearly 1,000-km-long Tajik-Kyrgyz border have now resumed operation, and flights from Bishkek to Dushanbe and Khujand will begin on Friday. The UN chief "congratulates the two countries on this historic achievement and commends their leadership, determination and political will to bring the decades-long negotiation process to a successful conclusion," his Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

"The Secretary-General looks forward to sustained constructive engagement between the two countries to strengthen mutual trust, good-neighbourly relations and a peaceful future for their peoples and the region as a whole," Dujarric said. Previous flare ups at the border had reportedly displaced thousands of people.—APP

Iraq
repatriates
more
families from
Daesh-linked
Al-Hol camp

BAGHDAD: Iraq has repatriated more than 150 additional families from Al-Hol camp in the neighboring Syrian Arab Republic, an Iraqi security official said on Thursday, the latest such transfer from the camp where many have alleged terrorist links. Kurdish-run camps and prisons in northeastern Syria still hold about 56,000 people from dozens of countries, many of them the family members of Daesh suspects, more than five years after the terrorists' territorial defeat in Syria. While many Western countries refuse to take back their nationals, Baghdad has taken the lead by accelerating repatriations and urging others to follow suit.—APP

Driving ban puts brakes on
young women in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan: Mekhri feels "a sense of freedom and self-confidence" when she's behind the wheel of a car – despite being forced to drive illegally because of an unwritten rule preventing women getting a license. In Turkmenistan, the reclusive Central Asian state where she lives, young women are effectively banned from driving. "I know the rules of the road. I drive calmly, don't overtake anyone and know how to park," the 19-year-old said. Like other women interviewed by media in Turkmenistan – ranked by rights groups as one of the most closed and repressive countries in the world – she withheld her surname. There is no legislation specifically outlawing women under 30 from obtaining a driving license. But it is one of many informal prohibitions that is universally followed, so women that do drive must do so without this precious permit, which is indeed against the law. "When my daughter wanted to enroll at the driving school, we were told that she could take lessons but that she would probably not pass the test," said Guzel, Mekhri's 57-year-old mother. So instead of paying for lessons, Guzel assumed the role of instructor and now takes Mekhri outside the capital, Ashgabat, to practice. "Where there are few cars, police officers and cameras, I let my daughter take the wheel and I teach her," Guzel, who started driving when she was 40, said. Among the other transport-related diktats imposed by father-and-son duo Gurbanguly and Serdar Berdimukhamedov – who have ruled the country one after the other since 2006 – are a ban on black cars. Owners have been forced to paint the vehicles white, the favorite color of Gurbanguly, whose official titles are "Hero-Protector" and "leader of the Turkmen nation." Many young women share Mekhri's frustration. "I wanted to take my test at 18. At the driving school, the instructor immediately warned the many girls there: 'You've come for nothing. You won't be able to take it,'" said Maisa, a 26-year-old saleswoman. "But up to the exam, driving schools take both boys and girls, because they pay," she said. Gouliya, 19, said her parents had wanted to buy her a car when she went to university so she could be more independent, do the family shopping and take her grandmother to hospital and the chemist's. "But because of the difficulties that girls like me face getting a driver's license, my mother said she would have to postpone the decision," she said.—APP

Mahmoud Khalil. Columbia targeted him,
then the US government abducted him

MARYAM ALWAN

OVER the last three days, Mahmoud Khalil, a recent graduate of the School of International and Public Affairs, has been kidnapped from his university housing and subjected to political imprisonment despite his permanent residency status. His face was used in a mugshot-like social media graphic posted by the White House X account as a means of threatening every "terrorist sympathizer" college student with the same fate. At the same time, his name has been dragged and muddied by several major right-wing outlets. One need only look at the New York Post's recent headline: "Who is Mahmoud Khalil, the Columbia University agitator detained by ICE for deportation?" As someone who has known

Mahmoud for over a year and a half, let me tell you who he really is. He is a Palestinian, a husband, a father-to-be, a dear friend, and a man abducted by the U.S. government for opposing genocide. But Columbia, too, is complicit in what happened to him. At around the one-year anniversary of the onset of the genocide, I wrote a personal piece about the visceral reaction I had to listening to the names and ages of Palestinians in Gaza killed by Israel. The vigil was held for nearly a whole month. As time passed, the group of students sitting under the sun all day often dwindled down to almost exclusively us: Palestinian students. It bothered me that reporters would seemingly flock the minute there was a sensational protest headline, but nobody seemed to pay attention to the pain of Palestinians. Not even Spectator bothered to report on it. I felt compelled to document my feelings when



reading out the names of people whose fate I could have easily shared had I not been born in the United States. My writing includes the following excerpts: "It took thirty minutes to read three double-sided pages out of a heavy and incomplete stack, to feel the weight of each corpse on my tongue. The blood drained from my face when we reached someone with the last name 'Alwan.' My throat tightened and I couldn't look down. I was certain I would see a pool of crimson at my feet."

"I was sitting next to Mahmoud Khalil. The speakers said his first or last name, once, three times, ten times—and then I lost count. He didn't seem to notice the flood of crimson that I saw staining his white Adidas shoes and dripping down the steps. Then, when he took the microphone, his own name rolled off his tongue and he did not flinch. Eventually, I stopped reacting to the sound of mine, too." "I quickly learned that every recognizable name was common. I heard the name of every Palestinian on the steps multiple times, and then I heard the names of some of their loved ones who really were on that list." Mahmoud never flinched. Now, as his name has been picked from a different kind of list—a deportation list created by Columbia affiliates—I wonder if he is still as fearless as he was during the time that I knew him. Mahmoud had comforted me

during countless panic attacks, from those induced by pro-Israel protesters aggressively yelling that we were terrorists, to those caused by the increasingly normalized scenes of police violence on our campus. He always made me feel safer when I spotted his smiling face amid a sea of masks and keffiyehs. The comfort of his crinkling eyes inspired me to rip off my own mask in front of a crowd of students at the Sundial in November 2023. If I had to describe his demeanor in simple terms, it would be that of a teddy bear. In fact, I imagine him laughing while reading this characterization. The University was familiar with his perpetual kindness, too. Mahmoud sacrificed himself to negotiate for divestment with the administration. But they punished him for having the bravery to face a hostile environment head-on. On April 30, 2024, he was suspended in

a failed intimidation tactic. They revoked his suspension within the span of a day, endangering him before he got his green card. In an interview with BBC following this scare, Mahmoud downplayed the risk of losing his visa because of his empathy for the victims in Gaza: "But for Mahmoud, the ends justify the means. He says as a Palestinian, he is one of 'the lucky ones' and it's 'nothing compared to what people in Gaza are facing.'" Never once did he mention that he was born as a Palestinian refugee in Syria, and was forced to flee again due to war. Like all my friends, Mahmoud would always remind me to take care of myself and to stop inundating myself with updates about the atrocities in Gaza. Never did I think that I would one day have to scour the news about him instead. When I Google his name, I see myself standing to the left of him at a press conference.

Indians
welcome
spring with
Holi, the world's
most colorful
festival

NEW DELHI: Millions of Indians celebrated on Friday the festival of colors, Holi, which marks the end of winter. Symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, Holi is observed on the last full moon in the lunar month of Phalgun with bonfires, sweets, dancing to traditional music, and splashing others with colorful powders. One of India's biggest festivals, it is also among the major homecoming seasons, when people head to their native towns to reunite with family members. "We start our morning by visiting other people's houses and we meet people who we have not interacted with for a year. We apply colors on each other and then we sit together and eat. We play music and dance," said Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma, lecturer at Kurukshetra University in the northern state of Haryana. "Holi is a festival to connect with the people and it's a time when we embrace each other forgetting our differences and disputes." Holi derives its name from Holika, the demon sister of the evil King Hiranyakashipu in Indian mythology, who tried to forbid his son from worshipping the Hindu deity Vishnu and wanted to kill him with her help.—APP

RSF shelling
kills 5 children
in Darfur

PORT SUDAN: Shelling from Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces killed five children in the besieged North Darfur state capital of Al-Fasher, a medical source said on Thursday. The attack on Wednesday was first reported by the Sudanese army, which has been locked in a war with the RSF since April of 2023. "The militia targeted civilians in the city's neighborhoods with artillery shelling, killing five children under the age of six and wounding four women," the army said in a statement. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a medical source confirmed the toll. Al-Fasher, under siege by the RSF since last May, is the only one of five state capitals in the vast Darfur region that is not under paramilitary control. Fighting in the city has intensified in recent months, as the RSF tries to consolidate its hold on Darfur after army victories in central Sudan. The army and allied militias have successfully repelled the RSF's attacks on Al-Fasher. However, the paramilitary forces have repeatedly shelled nearby famine-hit displacement camps in what local activists say is retaliation. Since Sudan's war began, it has claimed tens of thousands of lives, uprooted more than 12 million people, and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises. In North Darfur alone, nearly 1.7 million people are displaced. Around 2 million people face extreme food insecurity, and 320,000 are already suffering famine conditions, according to UN estimates. Famine has hit three displacement camps around Al-Fasher – Zamzam, Abu Shouk and Al-Salam – and is expected to spread to five more areas, including Al-Fasher itself, by May. On Wednesday, the African Union said the announcement of a parallel government in Sudan risked cleaving the country.—APP

Briefs

Carney sworn in as Canada's Prime Minister

OTTAWA: Mark Carney has been sworn in as Canada's prime minister, succeeding Justin Trudeau, as the country faces questions about its sovereignty from US President Donald Trump and a trade war with Canada's largest trading partner, the United States. Carney, a former central banker who has never held public office in Canada, is stepping in to confront the challenges facing the country, including leading the Liberal Party into an election to be held later this year. Carney was sworn in after Trudeau stepped down earlier Friday after nearly a decade in power. Trudeau announced his resignation in January as polls showed his Liberal Party would likely face defeat in an upcoming election. But the party's fortunes have since improved amid growing Canadian antipathy toward Trump and his policies. In a farewell message posted on X on Friday, Trudeau said: "Thank you, Canada - for trusting in me, for challenging me, and for granting me the privilege to serve the best country, and the best people, on earth." The former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England was elected Liberal Party leader in a landslide on March 9. During his decades-long career in finance, Carney steered governments through major global crises and periods of upheaval - experience he's hoping to now leverage as he prepares to take over from Trudeau. - Agencies

Suicide bombers identified in Haqqania, Bannu Attacks

SHAMIM SHAHID
PESHAWAR: The suicide bombers involved in the DarulUloomHaqqania and Bannu blasts have been identified, according to IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hamid. In an interview in Peshawar, Zulfiqar Hamid stated that investigations into the DarulUloomHaqqania and Bannu blasts are ongoing. CCTV footage of both incidents has been obtained, and the suicide bombers have been identified through body parts. IG KP further mentioned that the vehicles used in the Bannu incident have been tracked. He also stated that foreign weapons were used in the attack, and efforts are underway to track the origin and how the weapons arrived. He added that over 100 suspects involved in causing unrest in Kurram have been arrested. Terrorism has now emerged as a factor in the Kurram incidents, and a separate strategy has been devised for Kurram. He expressed hope that no further incidents will occur. IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also said that they will succeed in establishing lasting peace in Kurram in the near future. He mentioned that the Safe City Project has been approved and will be completed in a few months.

Hamas agrees to free Israeli-American captive

NEWS DESK
DOHA: Hamas said on Friday it has accepted a proposal from mediators to release one living American-Israeli hostage and the bodies of four dual-nationals who had died in captivity. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office cast doubt on the offer, accusing Hamas of trying to manipulate talks underway in Qatar on the next stage of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire. The militant group in the Gaza Strip did not immediately specify when the release of soldier Edan Alexander and the four bodies would occur - or what it expected to get in return.

Uzbek products exhibition in capital attracts huge interest

One of the key figures present at the exhibition was Sardar Yasir Ilyas, the CEO of Centaurus, who visited all the stalls and praised the high quality of the products displayed. Speaking to the media, he described the Uzbek trade fair as a resounding success and expressed optimism that such initiatives would further cement trade relations between entrepreneurs from both countries



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas CEO The Centaurus, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Nasir Qureshi, Ambassador of Uzbekistan Alisher Tukhtaev and others cutting ribbon to open Uzbekistan products fair in Islamabad. - DNA

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Pakistan successfully organized a trade mission in collaboration with the Plant Quarantine and Protection Agency and the Association of Exporters of Uzbekistan. The trade fair generated immense interest among both the general public and key business stakeholders in Pakistan, with many expressing a strong desire to enhance trade ties with Uzbek companies. The exhibition showcased a diverse range of Uzbek products, primarily focusing on fresh and dried fruits, vegetables, food, and processed products. The event provided a significant platform for Pakistani entrepreneurs to engage directly with Uzbek exporters and explore potential business collaborations. The positive response and enthusiastic participation from Pakistani businesses indicated a strong inclination towards fostering long-term trade relations between the two nations. Adding to the event's significance, diplomats from various countries attended the exhibition and lauded the initiative taken by the Uzbek Embassy. They emphasized the importance of such trade fairs in strengthening economic cooperation and opening new avenues for investment and trade expansion. One of the key figures present at the exhibition was Sardar Yasir Ilyas, the CEO of Centaurus, who visited all the stalls and praised the high quality of the products displayed. Speaking to



the media, he described the Uzbek trade fair as a resounding success and expressed optimism that such initiatives would further cement trade relations between entrepreneurs from both countries. Dean of the African Group and Ambassador of Morocco, Mohamed Karmoune, also attended the exhibition and was highly impressed by the quality and cost-effectiveness of the products on display. He remarked that such trade collaborations would not only benefit the two nations but also create opportunities for broader regional economic engagement. Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev, accompanied the dignitaries to various stalls, personally briefing them about the products and their potential for export. Ambassador of Uzbekistan in his speech said it was his great pleasure to warmly welcome all of you to the Food Fest Uzbekistan 2025



here in the beautiful city of Islamabad. He added, in these holy days of Ramadan, the Food Fest Uzbekistan aims to bring our two brotherly nations, Uzbekistan and Pakistan, even closer. Uzbekistan's food industry is not just about flavor - it is about history, culture, and the stories that have been passed down through generations. From the famous plov to the mouthwatering samsa, from the delectable lagman to the sweet and fragrant chak-chak, Uzbekistan's cuisine is a reflection of its warm hospitality, rich traditions, and the spirit of togetherness that binds its people. Ambassador Alisher said, this festival is a journey - a journey into the heart of Uzbek culture, where each product tells a story. These stories are of nomadic traditions, of ancient cities like Samarkand and Bukhara, of grand feasts, and of simple family



meals shared around a table. Each bite is a connection to the past, and a celebration of the present. The exhibition provided a valuable opportunity for Uzbek exporters to establish connections with potential Pakistani buyers, including supermarket chains and large-scale importing enterprises. With the success of this event, industry experts anticipate long-term trade agreements and substantial orders from Pakistani businesses keen on importing high-quality Uzbek products. The Embassy of Uzbekistan also extended invitations to Pakistani entrepreneurs engaged in agriculture and food trade to participate in the event. This initiative aimed to encourage business discussions and forge stronger partnerships between Uzbek and Pakistani enterprises, fostering mutual economic growth and prosperity.

Pak-EU discuss enhancing trade and investment ties

EU Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka Calls on Finance and Revenue Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, today held a meeting with Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, who called on the Minister at the Finance Division. The meeting focused on a range of matters of mutual interest, particularly on strengthening business and investment ties between the European Union (EU) and Pakistan. During the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb and Ambassador Kionka discussed opportunities for European businesses in Pakistan, emphasizing the need to create an enabling investment climate to harness the growing appetite for expansion. Dr. Kionka shared that the EU had already mapped over 300 European companies operating in Pakistan, with the belief that many more are present. Dr. Kionka extended an invitation to Senator Aurangzeb to attend a business and investment forum, which the EU Mission in Pakistan is planning to host in Islamabad in mid-May 2025. The forum aims to foster collaboration and discuss how Pakistan can continue to attract European business investment. She emphasized that European companies were increasingly viewing Pakistan as a hub for potential business opportunities, especially in light of the

upcoming forum. Senator Aurangzeb thanked Dr. Kionka for taking the initiative to host the forum and assured her of his full support. He expressed his intention to attend and speak at the event in person, underscoring the government's commitment to supporting EU businesses in Pakistan and facilitating their operations, including ensuring the timely repatriation of dividends and profits. The Minister also welcomed the idea of creating a proactive and unified business platform for European companies, noting his recent positive engagement with a group of French and Dutch companies operating in Pakistan. Furthermore, Senator Aurangzeb expressed appreciation for the EU's support for Pakistan, particularly the importance of the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP Plus) facility. He highlighted that GSP Plus has been a critical enabler of Pakistan's efforts to drive export-led growth. The Minister also emphasized the need for a more proactive approach in reaching out to European capitals for constructive engagement on key issues, including the continuation of the GSP Plus facility, which is vital for Pakistan's trade relations with the EU in the coming years. In closing, both leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to enhancing the economic and trade ties between Pakistan and the European Union, and to creating a thriving and mutually beneficial business environment for both sides.



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