



Islamabad POST

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United States has 'no business' dictating Iran's foreign policy

Detailed News On Page-07

Polio eradication remains national priority: Mustafa

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Hamilton's first Ferrari race 'a big crash course'

Detailed News On Page-06

Lauds FIA, IB

Human trafficking to end forever with relentless efforts: PM

Premier Shehbaz appreciates officials for nabbing ringleader of human trafficking gang

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday appreciated the authorities and officials of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) for nabbing the ringleader of a notorious gang involved in human trafficking. During a meeting with the authorities and officials of the FIA and IB in the presence of ministers and interior secretary, and broadcast live on national TV channels, the prime minister expressed the hope that with the relentless and worthy efforts undertaken by these agencies, the obnoxious practice of human trafficking would end forever. He noted with appreciation the arrest of Usman Jajja involved in numerous human trafficking cases, saying: "The black business of human trafficking has earned bad name for Pakistan while a number of nationals lost their lives in boats capsized incidents near Italy and Morocco which also created huge embarrassment for the country abroad."

The prime minister said that he called a meeting with all the authorities and officers to convey appreciation on his part and on behalf of the government and the people. The premier directed the agencies to further intensify operations against human traffickers. He also urged the authorities and officers to gird up their loins and raise the country's name by carrying out their official responsibilities with dedication. The prime minister also awarded appreciation shields and cheques to different officials who took part in the operations to bust the gangs. He awarded cash prizes worth Rs1 million each to the officials who were part of the operation against the gang. The Jajja gang leader, Usman, is one of the main characters responsible for the deaths of Pakistanis in the Greece boat accident last year. During the meeting, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry and secretary Interior briefed the prime minister about the performance of the agencies. The FIA and IB director generals also briefed the prime minister about the arrest of gang leaders, operators and facilitators involved in human trafficking.

Pakistan is victim of internal and external terrorism

It is misfortune that incidents of terrorism were increasing in Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq arrives in Gakhar Mandi area of Wazirabad to lay the foundation stone of Sarwar Shahida Memorial Cardiac Center and Research Institute. Talking to media, Ayaz Sadiq said that public health welfare projects are the best source of human service. Cardiac Senior and Research Institute will prove to be the best for the region and beneficial for humanity. Speaker National Assembly said country suffered a lot due to terrorist incidents in KP and Balochistan. He said Pakistan was victim of internal and external terrorism. Ayaz Sadiq said that it is misfortune that incidents of terrorism were increasing in Pakistan. He said, "we will never allow anyone to come inside the borders of Pakistan and kill unarmed Pakistanis". Ayaz Sadiq said that Prime Minister Shehbaz has called for a meeting of leaders of all political parties in Parliament the day after tomorrow. It is regrettable that some elements were spreading misinformation on social media. Speaker National Assembly said those making such conspiracies are the real enemies of Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met FIA and IB officials who nabbed notorious gang leader involved in human trafficking. - DNA

Russia stands with Pakistan against terrorism

She further said Russia stood in solidarity with Islamabad against this global threat

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: The Spokesperson of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova, in a message, expressed solidarity with the Islamabad after March 11 train attack in which many precious lives were lost. In her message she said 'We are shocked by the March 11 terrorist attack on a passenger train in Balochistan, which killed innocent civilians. We strongly condemn this terrorist act and terrorism in all its manifestations. The militants' barbaric actions cannot be justified. The masterminds of this attack must be brought to justice'.

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Iraqi Special Forces complete training in Pakistan

Senior military officials attended the event and congratulated the Iraqi troops on successfully completing their training

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A graduation ceremony was held at the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Pabbi, marking the completion of training for Iraqi Special Forces personnel. Senior military officials attended the event and congratulated the Iraqi troops on successfully completing their training.

Continued on Page 06

Pak to definitely win war Govt rules out 'grand operation' in Balochistan

Entire nation and institutions committed to eradicating menace of terrorism from country, says PM's aide

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Sunday ruled out the need for a grand operation in Balochistan as the province is reeling from a surge in terrorist attacks in recent days. During his interaction with journalists in Faisalabad, Sanaullah said that intelligence-based operations were being conducted in the province on a daily basis. "What is the need for a grand operation [in Balochistan]?" he asked. The PM's aide said that the entire nation and institutions were committed to eradicating the menace of terrorism from the country. His remarks came hours after at least seven people, including three Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers, were martyred and 35 others wounded when the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) targeted the FC convoy in Balochistan's Noshki district earlier today.

Continued on Page 06

Govt to convene NSC meeting

The military leadership will brief lawmakers on the increasing terrorist activities

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In response to the rising wave of terrorism in the country, the government has decided to convene a meeting of the Parliamentary National Security Committee. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has initiated consultations to call the meeting, which is expected to be held on March 19 or 20 under the chairmanship of National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

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Briefs

PTI announces rally in solidarity with Army

The rally is scheduled for Tuesday and will begin at GPO Chowk

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced a rally to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army personnel and victims of the Jaffer Express attack. Akmal Khan Bari, PTI Punjab's vice president, condemned the attack in a video message, calling it "an extreme act of brutality." He added, "This was an attack on Pakistan, and we will never forget it." The rally is scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, and will begin at GPO Chowk in Lahore, concluding at the Punjab Assembly. "We urge the Punjab government not to create any obstacles. This will be a peaceful rally to honour the martyrs of the Jaffer Express tragedy and the brave soldiers who lost their lives," Bari said.

IHC special bench to hear overseas cases

Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro to hear cases

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: In a major relief for overseas Pakistanis facing property and other disputes, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has appointed a special bench to handle their cases. According to an official notification, the acting chief justice of the IHC has designated Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro to hear cases, appeals, and revisions related to overseas Pakistanis. This decision has been made under the Establishment of Special Court (Overseas Pakistanis Property) Act, 2024.

Bus convoy attack

Three soldiers among 7 martyred in Balochistan

Security forces kill three terrorists as they retaliated after IED blast, suicide attack, say sources

DNA

NUSHKI: At least seven people, including three Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers, were martyred and 35 others wounded in an explosion on paramilitary convoy on the Nushki-Dalbandin highway as violence-hit Balochistan records another tragic incident (Sunday). The outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) carried out an IED blast and a suicide attack on the FC convoy on Sunday morning, security sources told Geo News. Three FC soldiers and two citizens were martyred in the suicide attack. In an immediate response, security forces killed three attackers excluding the suicide bomber. Heavy contingents of security forces cordoned off the area and commenced a clearance operation, the sources said. Noting that the injured were immediately shifted to Nushki Hospital soon after the explosion, the police said that two persons succumbed to their wounds, increasing the number of deaths to seven. Several of the wounded were in critical condition, they added. According to the hospital administration, an emergency

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Diplomats pledge support for Pak fight against terrorism

Pakistan Must Unite to Defeat Terrorism: Foreign Affairs Expert Muhammad Mehdi

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In a significant development, the foreign diplomats, politicians, renowned scholars have unanimously set the tone for one voice against all faces of terrorism sabotaging Pakistan's security and sovereignty and resolved to stay united with all pillars of state as well as people to help Pakistan eradicate the menace once for all. Talha Baraki new member of the federal cabinet,

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Unilateral decisions will lead to political 'unrest': Fazl

Says Nawaz Sharif could play an important role in this situation

MEHTAB PIZRADA

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has said his party was planning to protest against the federal government's policies after Eidul Fitr, along with the PTI. Speaking to journalists in Islamabad, Fazl said that a meeting of the JUI-F general assembly had been called to devise a plan to launch a protest campaign against the government's policies and take stock of the country's situation. "After Eid, a decision will be made to hold a protest in the general assembly," he said, referring to the current government and parliament as "puppets". "Why can't they talk about the country's problems?" the senior politician rhetorically asked. "Employees are being sacked from institutions including postal services and PWD [Public Works Department] - if the employees are incompetent, then how are you qualified?" On a possible alliance with the PTI, Fazl admitted that the "real leadership of PTI" was still in jail and that there was no real unity outside. However, he added that bitterness between the two parties had reduced, hinting at an alliance with the party. "A decision will be made in the policy-making meeting on the alliance with the PTI in the anti-government movement," he said. In April last year, the PTI already formed a multi-party opposition alliance named

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan need economic alliance

DNA

SHAKARGARH: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said that Pakistan need economic grand alliance instead of political alliance of the opposition parties. Talking to media in Shakargarh after visiting the family of martyred Akmal Hussain, Federal Minister said that JUI Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman will not move into alliance with PTI as the government will be able to woo him. He said martyred jawans were asset of the country and their sacrifices will not be forgotten. Ahsan Iqbal claimed PTI allowed the terrorists to move in the country. Ahsan Iqbal said, "No one can look at the country with a dirty eye during the presence of our brave soldiers. He said Jaffer Express incident was the worst, brutal act of terrorism, adding that enemies were making a sinister attempt to stop CPEC and the development of Balochistan.

Continued on Page 06

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CEO Edu stresses empowering students with info-tech

DNA

SIALKOT: To rid ourselves of the darkness of ignorance, "we must equip our students and our new generations with knowledge and information technology". These views were expressed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Education Mujahid Hussain Alvi during a visit to Government Girls Elementary School, Bhayri. He visited different classes and asked various questions to the children and also checked the teachers' diaries and lesson plans. The CEO Education appreciated the performance of the school headmistress Sehrish Bukhari and asked all the staff to become exemplary teachers like the headmistress. He paid tribute to the headmistress for installing a water filtration plant in the school with the support of philanthropists. Later, the CEO addressed the school teachers and said that if you perform your teaching duties with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah and following the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), it will give you peace of mind and bring blessings in your affairs. CEO Education urged teachers to be punctual, save the monthly academic performance report of students in files and show this report to their parents after meeting them and teachers should also keep their academic diaries complete at all times. He further said that effective strategies should be adopted to meet the target of new admissions.

Pakistan to definitely win war against terrorism: Kiyani

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Railways, Bilal Azhar Kiyani on Sunday expressed the hope that Pakistan would definitely win war against terrorism and the entire nation was standing with valiant armed forces to completely eradicate the menace of terror from its soil. Talking to media in Jehlum, the minister apprised that terrorists belong to Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) had hijacked Jaffar Express, the train was heading from Quetta, the provincial capital of the southwestern province of Balochistan, to Peshawar, when it was attacked. He said that the security forces had launched a successful military operation and killed 33 terrorists besides rescuing 354 precious lives of the citizens including women and children. At least 26 included 18 armed soldiers had embraced martyrdom by combating successful operation against terrorists, he added. Bilal Kiyani paid glowing tribute and saluted the brave security forces and railways employees for rendering matchless sacrifices to eliminate and fight against terrorism. He reiterated that the moral of armed forces was very high not only to foil any bid of terrorism but protect the lives of the masses and ensure the sovereignty of the country. In 2013, he said that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had launched Zarbe-Azb and Radd ul Fasaad to completely wipe out terrorism from the country and stressed that there was dire need to take such unified measures to ensure the safety and security of the common man.—APP

'Bandala hiking trail' emerges as Pakistan's latest tourism sensation

"The government's efforts have not only improved the trail itself but also brought in new economic opportunities for our people," residents say

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nestled in the heart of Pakistan's majestic mountains, the 'Bandala hiking trail' has emerged as a prized destination for thrill-seekers and nature lovers, its recent makeover propelling it to centre stage in the country's burgeoning tourism landscape. Talking to PTV news channel, PML-N leader & former Director General of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Public Relations Department Raja Azhar Iqbal described that the trail, which was once a rugged and challenging

path has been upgraded and expanded to cater to a wide range of visitors. The transformation is part of a larger effort to promote sustainable tourism in the region and provide economic opportunities for local communities, he added. The trail offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and valleys, as well as opportunities to experience the local culture and wildlife. Visitors can hike, trek, or simply take in the stunning scenery, making it an ideal destination for nature lovers and adventure-seekers. As Pakistan continues to develop

its tourism industry, the Bandala hiking trail is an excellent example of how sustainable tourism can benefit local communities and promote the country's natural beauty, he added. According to Azhar Iqbal, the region is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including several endangered species. The Bandala trail offers a unique opportunity for nature enthusiasts to spot rare species such as the Himalayan brown bear, snow leopard, and Kashmir markhor," he said. To further enhance the region's biodiversity, Azhar Iqbal announced plans to establish a wildlife

park and launch a large-scale tree plantation drive. "The wildlife park will provide a safe habitat for endangered species, while the tree plantation drive will help restore the region's natural beauty and mitigate the effects of climate change," he said. "We envision the Bandala trail as a model for sustainable tourism and conservation, and we are committed to making it a reality." According to officials, the project has not only improved the infrastructure of the trail but also created jobs and stimulated local economic growth. "The response from tourists has been overwhelming," said an official. "We are

seeing a significant increase in the number of visitors, which is not only benefiting the local economy but also helping to promote Pakistan's natural beauty." Locals also have expressed admiration for the government's focus on developing the region's tourism infrastructure, citing the transformative impact it has had on their community. "We are thrilled to see our beloved trail getting the attention it deserves," said a local resident. "The government's efforts have not only improved the trail itself but also brought in new economic opportunities for our people," residents say.

President, PM, Info Secy, PIO greet APNS

Sarmad Ali elected President APNS, Athar Secy General

Centreline magazine once again elected Executive Committee member; Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani was elected as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary of the Society



NAZIR SIYAL/DNA

KARACHI: The Annual Meeting of the APNS General Council held on March 15, 2025 at APNS House, Karachi unanimously elected Sarmad Ali as President, Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Muhammad Athar Kazi as Secretary General, Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary of the Society. The AGM was held under the chairmanship of Mrs. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, President of the Society. The Council unanimous-

ly approved the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2024-2025 as well as the Annual Accounts of the Society for the year 2024. The General Council attended by 107 members from across the country, formed an Election Commission headed by Mr. Mumtaz Ahmed Phulpoto with Syed Irfan Shah and Mr. Ali Bin Younus as members. The Election Commission conducted the election of the Executive Committee for the year 2025-26. Following dailies and magazines were elected unopposed of the Executive Committee of the APNS for the next tenure: Daily

Jasarat, Daily Jiddat, Karachi, Daily Business Recorder, Daily Aghaz, Daily Dawn, Daily Deyanat, Daily Khairain, Daily Times, Daily Jang, Daily Dunya, Daily Tijarat, Daily Pakistan, Lahore, Daily Ausaf, Daily Sahafat, Daily Awam (Quetta), Daily Mashriq (Quetta), Daily Wahdat, Daily Mashriq (Peshawar), Daily Kawish, Daily Aftab (Multan), Daily Business Report, Daily Paigham, Daily City42, Daily Pakistan Observer, Daily Halchal, Daily Sayad on daily seats and Monthly Dastak, Weekly Family, (Nawa-e-Waqt Group), Monthly Naey Ufaq, Monthly Naya Rukh,

Monthly Centre Line, and Fortnightly Ibrat elected on periodical seats. The new Executive Committee elected Mrs. Zahida Abbasi of Daily Nau Sijj, Karachi on woman - publisher seat. Due to sad demise of brother of Mr. Javed Mehr Shamsi, he could not attend the AGM. The President co-opted Daily Kaleem Sukkur as member of the Executive Committee on Sindh Excluding Karachi Dailies Seat. The newly elected Executive Committee appreciated the performance of the Election Commission for conducting the elections. The members at the Annual Council meeting

strongly condemned the continuous ban on the Government advertisements of Daily Dawn and termed it as a policy of arm-twisting and using advertisements as a tool to dictate editorial policy of the newspaper. The AGM noted that the due quantum of advertisement for a newspaper, is not a privilege but a right as the government releases its advertisements for transparency in its functioning and to ensure "People's Right to Know". The payment of the government advertisements is made from the public exchequer hence, the government ads can not be issued or

denied as per the choice of any government. The APNS has always asked for just, fair and transparent distribution of government advertisements. The Council also expressed its concern on the continued stoppage of government advertisements to Daily Sahafat and urged upon the Ministry of Information to withdraw the ban. The AGM in a resolution, expressed its profound concern on the state of print media due to the present economic situation which has caused severe financial crisis for newspapers, many of them are at the verge of collapse. In this situa-

tion, the media expected support from the government to brave the financial crunch. The AGM urged upon the new Federal Government to implement the decision of Mian Shabbaz Sharif approved in his last tenure to increase the government advertisement rates. The members in the AGM, requested the Federal and provincial governments to pay the long outstanding dues of newspaper industry, increase the quantum of advertisements and allocate a separate share of print media in the advertising budget so that the newspaper industry would be able to survive in the present situation.—DNA

Vital to restore Lahore to its original form: Nawaz

LAHORE: PML-N President Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has said that it is important to restore the provincial capital to its original shape as old Lahore is very beautiful. He said this while presiding over a meeting along with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz here on Sunday. The Lahore Authority for Heritage Revival (LAHR) has been established for restoration and conservation of historical heritage. Nawaz Sharif would be patron in chief of the authority. A sub-func-

tional committee has been formed comprising relevant officers. The meeting agreed to identify and remove encroachments from historical places of Lahore. Nawaz Sharif directed the authorities to give alternate place for business and compensation to encroachers. A comprehensive plan was sought for revival of the heritage areas of Lahore and the provincial capital has been divided into six zones for heritage revival. A proposal to start revival of all zone heritage areas at once was

also discussed. The meeting was informed that underground shifting of electricity wires for beautification of the Mall Road is ongoing speedily. Five points in the city has been identified to make underground parking. Proposals and recommendations to restore 'Nila Gumbad' in its real form were also reviewed. A decision was made to restore Circular Road, Baghichian and Badru. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz expressed concern over encroachments on Circular Road and in the sur-

roundings of the historical gates. A direction was given to remove hurdles to display 'Manzar Nama' of Bhati Gate and other gates. The meeting also agreed to restore Shahi Qila, Jahangir Tomb, Noor Jahan Tomb, Shalimar Bagh, Baradari of Kamran Mirza and other gates. A proposal to construct a pedestrian way from Shah Alam Market to Bhati was also discussed. Nawaz Sharif said that work aimed at restoring historical heritage should be completed as national obligation.—APP

IIAE all candidates elected unopposed

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A significant meeting of the Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA), the representative organization of the Islamabad Industrial Area, was held at a local hotel. The meeting saw a large attendance of office bearers, former presidents, executive committee members, and esteemed members. Former President of the Association and senior industrialist Tariq Sadiq chaired the meeting and welcomed all the esteemed members. President of the

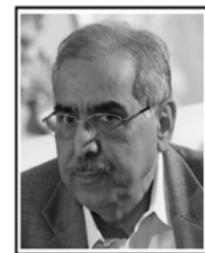
Islamabad Industrial Association, Nasir Qureshi, presented a comprehensive review of the measures taken to address the issues of the industrial community and the overall performance during his tenure. He expressed hope that the newly elected president and his team would work for the further improvement of the industry and assured his full cooperation in this regard. Former President of the Association, Mian Akram Farid, mentioned the problems faced by the city's industries and appealed to all industrialists to make joint efforts

from the platform of the Association. He expressed concern over the deplorable condition of the industrial areas and demanded that the federal government and CDA resolve these issues immediately. At the end of the current office bearers' term, Tariq Sadiq, the chair of the meeting, announced the new office bearers for the year 2025. Mian Razaq was proposed for the presidency, Mirza Muhammad Ali for the senior vice president's position, and Mian Arif for the vice president's position, which were unanimously approved by the members with a majority vote. On this occasion, Tariq Sadiq proposed the names of Mian Arif, Tariq Junaid, Fahad Farid, Arsalan Javed, Umair Khattak, Zahid Chaudhry, and Arif Butt for the new executive committee.

Call to establish National Crypto Council

LAHORE: Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said the establishment of a National Crypto Council (NCC) is need of the hour for Pakistan to capitalize the opportunities offered by digital currencies. He was of the view that by creating a robust regulatory framework, promoting awareness and fostering innovation, Pakistan can position itself as a forward-thinking player in the global digital economy. Talking to reporters here, he added, "It's right time to act now, as the world moves swiftly toward a de-centralized financial future." He stressed the need to align the country with global trends in digital currencies and blockchain technology. As the world rapidly embraces crypto currencies and de-centralized financial systems, Pakistan risks falling behind in this transformative economic shift. The NCC should work as a dedicated regulatory body to provide the framework needed to harness the potential of digital currencies while mitigating associated risks. Mian Kashif Ashfaq said the primary role of the NCC should be to create a comprehensive regulatory environment for crypto currencies. This includes defining legal statuses, taxation policies, and anti-money laundering (AML) measures to ensure transparency and security. By establishing clear guidelines, National Crypto Council should foster trust among investors, businesses, and consumers, encouraging innovation and adoption in the digital finance sector. Moreover, it must play a pivotal role in educating the public and stakeholders about the benefits and risks of crypto currencies. With proper awareness campaigns, Pakistan can combat misinformation and promote responsible usage of digital assets. This would also help in addressing concerns related to fraud, scams, and volatility often associated with crypto currencies, he asserted. Another critical function of the NCC should be to collaborate with international regulatory bodies and organizations to stay updated on global best practices. This would enable Pakistan to integrate seamlessly into the global digital economy, attract foreign investment and foster economic growth. The CEO said the regulatory body should also facilitate the development of blockchain-based solutions for sectors of agriculture, healthcare, and supply chain management, driving efficiency and transparency.—DNA

CONDOLENCE



APNS expresses profound grief over the sad

demise of

Mr. Shahid Mehr Shamsi

Publisher of

Daily Kaleem Sukkur.

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

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Motorway Police.9270601-20
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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak stands firm against terrorism, Dr. Tariq says

He highlighted the precedent set by former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, who included Abdul Malik Baloch in his cabinet, along with other Baloch representatives in federal cabinets.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has strongly condemned the recent terror attacks in Pakistan, reaffirming the government's commitment to eliminate terrorism and protect the country's sovereignty as a top priority. In an exclusive interview with media, Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs urged all political parties to come together and engage in a national dialogue to address the current security is-

suues. He emphasized the importance of stability, which can be achieved through mutual understanding and negotiation among all political parties. He invited all parties to work together to find a solution to the present security issues, putting aside their differences for the sake of national interest and sovereignty. Dr. Tariq has reaffirmed that national security and sovereignty remain the government's top priority. He emphasized the importance of a national dialogue at this critical time, highlighting the need for collective efforts to address the country's challenge

es and ensure the protection of its sovereignty. Regarding the proposal for an in-camera parliamentary meeting to discuss terrorism issues, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry expressed his personal endorsement, stating that such meetings have occurred in the past as well. He emphasized that for the sake of national security, it is essential for lawmakers to come together and engage in confidential discussions. To another question, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs has accused India of involvement in recent terror attacks in Pakistan, alleging that terrorists arrested

in Pakistan possess advanced weapons not readily available in their areas, suggesting external support. Chaudhry claims that India, in collaboration with Afghanistan, is backing these terrorist groups. Responding to another question, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has expressed his intention to meet with Maulana and Achakzai to discuss terrorism and find solutions. He believes that if the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party sits down with these experienced politicians, they will be able to make progress on this critical issue. Fazal Chaudhry has also

urged the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to refrain from creating instability and instead engage in mature discussions to address terrorism for the greater good of the nation. He further emphasized in a reply of question for the importance of equality for the Baloch people, particularly the youth, stating that they will receive equal rights. He highlighted the precedent set by former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, who included Abdul Malik Baloch in his cabinet, along with other Baloch representatives in federal cabinets.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif awarding cheques and shields to the FIA and IB officials who nabbed notorious gang leader involved in human trafficking.

People busy in Eid shopping frenzy as Ramadan reaches halfway mark

ISLAMABAD: As Ramadan reaches its halfway mark, the Muslim nation has plunged into a frenzy of Eid preparations where markets, shopping malls and bazaars across the country are overflowing with people of all ages, racing to complete their grocery shopping and Eid purchases. According to a footage report aired on PTV news, there can be seen overcrowded markets, with shoppers scrambling to get their hands on essential items, such as clothing, shoes and matching jewellery. "The shopping malls are packed, but the sales are amazing. I have already bought so much stuff, and I am not even done yet," said Ali from Multan. "The energy in the markets is electric. Everyone is so excited for Eid. I love this time of year," said another customer from Peshawar. "I have been queuing up for hours to buy some fabric for my sister's Eid day. The lines are so long, but I know it'll be worth it in the end," said a woman from Faisalabad. "I have been to three different markets today, and they are all packed. I just want to get some new clothes for my kids for Eid," said a citizen from Lahore. "I am exhausted from shopping all day. The crowds are overwhelming, but it is all worth it for Eid," said another customer woman from Karachi. "I have been waiting in line for hours to get my kids' clothes stitched. The tailor is overwhelmed with orders," said a woman from Islamabad. "I have been working non-stop for days to meet the demand for stitched clothes. It's a busy time, but it's also a blessing to be able to provide for my family," said the tailor from Rawalpindi. "We are offering a special Eid discount on our clothing range. It's a great opportunity for customers to shop and save," said a spokesperson for a popular clothing brand in Lahore. "I am trying to stick to my budget, but it's hard when there are so many amazing deals and discounts. I keep finding things I 'need' to buy," said a customer from Quetta. "The streets are jam-packed, and the traffic is crazy. But despite the chaos, everyone is so happy and festive.—DNA

ICT admin conducts over 1,650 raids

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad's district administration has intensified market inspections during Ramadan, conducting over 1,200 operations against retailers accused of overpricing essential goods. Meanwhile, the officials report that fines totaling more than Rs 1.5 million, hundreds of arrests, and temporary shop closures in a bid to stabilize prices and protect consumers. In

this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a assessed enforcement efforts since the start of Ramadan. All assistant commissioners and price control magistrates presented reports on inspections, penalties, and detentions. Assistant commissioners carried out 1,289 market inspections across the district, leading to the arrest of 290

retailers accused of overcharging customers. Fines totaling Rs 1.112 million were imposed during these raids, according to official data. Separately, price control magistrates conducted 4,568 inspections, resulting in 711 arrests and fines of Rs 448,500. Authorities temporarily sealed 11 shops found repeatedly violating government-mandated price lists.

On the occasion, the DC instructed officials to prioritize public grievances and ensure immediate action on complaints filed via the district helpline. He emphasized a zero-tolerance policy toward overpricing, urging "strict, indiscriminate enforcement" against violators. Officials were directed to monitor markets daily, particularly for staples like flour, sugar, and cooking oil. The DC reiterated that providing affordable essentials during Ramadan was a "top administrative priority," with teams ordered to submit hourly updates on price trends.—APP

Iftar events sharing on digital platforms bring people closer

ISLAMABAD: As Ramadan's spirit deepens, a new wave of storytelling is sweeping social media where individuals and families are sharing with others their evening Iftar dinner traditions through vlogs. From lavish spreads to homemade delights, vibrant images and videos of Iftar dinners are flooding the digital space, as people share their evening meals and traditions with the world, a report aired by a private news channel revealed. "I love sharing my Iftar experiences with my followers," said a popular food blogger from Lahore. "It's a great way to connect with others who share similar interests and passions. Plus, it is a wonderful way to showcase our rich culinary heritage." For many, Iftar dinner vlogs have become a way to document their Ramadan journey. "I have been vlogging my Iftar dinners for years now," said a social media influencer from Karachi. "It is a great way to reflect on my day, share my thoughts and experiences and connect with my audience." Iftar dinner vlogs are not just about food; they are also about community and connection. "I love watching Iftar dinner vlogs from around the world," said a student from Islamabad. "It is amazing to see how people from different cultures and backgrounds come together to break their fast. It is a truly universal experience," she added. This trend is not limited to the general public, as Iftar dinners have also become a popular phenomenon among celebrities and politicians. Many famous personalities are taking to social media to share their Iftar experiences, giving their fans a glimpse into their personal lives. "I love hosting Iftar dinners for my friends and family," said an actress Aysha Omer. "It is a great way to connect with loved ones and break our fast together." Politician also shared his Iftar experience on social media, saying "Iftar is a time for reflection, gratitude and connection with others. I'm grateful for the opportunity to break my fast with my colleagues and friends." As the trend continues to gain momentum, it is clear that Iftar dinners have become an integral part of Pakistani culture and tradition, transcending social boundaries and bringing people together.—DNA

Communications ministry drives major reforms

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Communications has made remarkable strides in modernizing infrastructure, improving services, and strengthening regional linkages during the past year. Several important initiatives have been rolled out, focusing on key sectors such as transportation, e-governance, and public outreach. The key achievements during the one year of the government included significant reforms and improvements across various sectors. The Ministry implemented amendments to align with the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Act, 2023, fully adopted e-Office, and abolished 40 vacant posts, saving Rs. 36 million annually. The agreements with Belarus, Russia, China, and other countries were signed to enhance regional connectivity and infrastructure. According to official documents, National Highway Authority (NHA) has made substantial progress with initiatives like the widening of the N-5 highway and securing funding for key road improvements. The NHA also increased toll revenue by Rs. 9 billion and proposed new road projects, including the Karachi-Hyderabad and Kharian-Rawalpindi motorways, with feasibility studies currently in progress. The National Highway & Motorways Police (NH&MP) played a key role in road safety by implementing the Axle Load Control Regime and issuing more than 20,000 driving licenses.—APP

Pakistan's Aviation sector gets boost

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's aviation sector is reaching new heights as the Ministry of Aviation unveils major reforms, infrastructure development, and international breakthroughs aimed at enhancing air transport services and aligning with global standards. A key milestone is the lifting of the ban on Pakistani air carriers operating in the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom, opening new revenue streams and enabling direct, cost-effective flights for passengers traveling to Europe, says the one year performance document released by the government of Pakistan at the completion of one year term. This marks a major comeback for Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL), which reported a profit of Rs. 7.6 billion in 2024, doubling its earnings from the previous year. Another highlight is the inauguration of Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) in January 2025, a crucial project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The airport's 12,000-foot runway can accommodate wide-body aircraft, boosting passenger capacity, trade, and regional connectivity, with an expected 10% annual increase in passenger traffic and 30,000 metric tons of cargo handling annually. Additionally, the separation of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA), Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), and Bureau of Air Safety Investigation (BASI) aligns Pakistan with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regulations, strengthening oversight and transparency. In meteorological advancements, the launch of the Hydromet Services of PMD in Pakistan (MHSP) project, funded by the World Bank, is set to revolutionize weather forecasting.

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Rs. 209b disbursed to 31,700 young entrepreneurs

ISLAMABAD: In a significant boost to empower youth and entrepreneurship, the Prime Minister's Youth Program has distributed a staggering 209 billion rupees to 31,700 young business owners through the Prime Minister Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme over the past eight months. This initiative aimed to equip young individuals with the necessary resources to establish and grow their businesses, ultimately leading to gainful employment and economic growth. According to an official data, about 209 billion rupees have been distributed among young entrepreneurs. Under this program, youth were being provided an interest-free loan of 5 lakh rupees under tier one, while under tier 2, interest rate of 5 percent on 5 lakh rupees to 15 lakh rupees is being provided and under Tier 3, loans from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 75 lakh are being provided to the youth at 7% interest rate. Loan facility was being provided to the youth through different 15 banks and aspiring young entrepreneurs can now easily access the Prime Minister's Youth Program benefits with a hassle-free online application process. This milestone achievement demonstrated the government's commitment to fostering a supportive ecosystem for young entrepreneurs, enabling them to contribute to the country's economic development and prosperity.—APP

Death anniversary of actor SM Saleem observed

ISLAMABAD: The 35th death anniversary of renowned actor and broadcaster SM Saleem was observed here on Sunday. SM Saleem was born in Delhi on August 18, 1929. He started his career with All India Radio and after the establishment of Pakistan, he was associated with Radio Pakistan, Lahore and Karachi. Among his memorable dramas from Radio Pakistan, the name of Rustam and Sohrab was at the top. In this drama, the role of Rustam was played by ZA Bukhari and the role of Sohrab was played by SM Saleem. SM Saleem also worked in several dramas for Pakistan Television (PTV) including 'Manto Rama'. In Manto Rama, he played the role of Saadat Hasan Manto. He died on this day in 1990 in Houston, USA.—APP

Briefs

**easypaisa
digital bank
growth of 3.8x**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of easypaisa digital bank (formally Telenor Microfinance Bank Limited), in its meeting dated March 6, 2025, approved the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024.

easypaisa digital bank demonstrated exceptional growth in 2024, solidifying its position as a leading digital financial services provider in Pakistan. The Bank achieved a pre-tax profit (PBT) of PKR 4.7 billion, a remarkable 3.8x increase compared to PKR 1.2 billion in 2023. This significant growth was achieved alongside substantial expansion in business volumes and monthly active user base, while simultaneously investing in cloud services, technology, and operational enhancements.

The Bank's financial performance showcased robust growth across key metrics. Revenue surged by 50.8% YoY to PKR 38.9 billion, driven by a 59.9% increase in net markup income and a 37.6% rise in non-markup income. The registered user base surpassed 50 million, with over 16.1 million monthly active users.

Despite increased operating expenses due to business expansion and regulatory compliance, the bank effectively improved its cost-to-income ratio to 80.91% from 93.10% in 2023. Customer deposits grew by 49.5% to PKR 76.2 billion, maintaining strong CASA and CA ratios of 99.9% and 83.0%. The advances book increased by 53.5% YoY to PKR 28.5 billion, with net advances to deposit (ADR) ratio of 33.5%. Credit impairment cost increased to PKR 2.5 billion, primarily due to the adoption of IFRS 9 and higher digital lending disbursements. The Bank's PAR% and coverage ratio stood at 14.0% and 75.7%.

Gilani for greater coop with Czech Republic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Yousaf Raza Gilani has affirmed Pakistan's commitment to further boosting bilateral cooperation with the Czech Republic in areas of mutual interest. He said that both countries needed to explore greater cooperation in the areas of trade, renewable energy, business and investment, health, parliamentary cooperation, education and people-to-people linkages. The President expressed these views while talking to the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, Ladislav Steinhilber, who called on him, at Awan-e-Sadr. Welcoming the Ambassador, the President said that Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with the Czech Republic, and both countries enjoyed long-standing bilateral ties and held common views at various international fora. He stated that Czech businesses should visit Pakistan to explore investment opportunities, adding that bilateral trade between Pakistan and the Czech Republic needed to be increased to its fullest potential.

ICCI President discusses trade prospects with Azerbaijani team

Ramin Zamanov, a key figure in Azerbaijan's aviation, construction, and hospitality sectors, praised Pakistan's hospitality and natural beauty. He stressed that direct flights between the two countries would be instrumental in boosting trade, tourism, and investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is eager to strengthen business relations with Azerbaijan to promote economic growth and mutual prosperity. This was stated by ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi during a meeting with Azerbaijani entrepreneur Ramin Zamanov at the Chamber House. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi highlighted that ICCI, representing over 10,000 members from industry, trade, and services, is planning a business delegation to Baku to explore investment opportunities. He emphasized the importance of bilateral trade missions and B2B meetings to unlock the full potential of economic cooperation. He also highlighted the immense tourism potential of the two countries, advocating for joint ventures to enhance tourism exchange and business collaboration. Ramin Zamanov, a key figure in Azerbaijan's aviation, construction, and hospitality sectors,



praised Pakistan's hospitality and natural beauty. He stressed that direct flights between the two countries would be instrumental in boosting trade, tourism, and investment. He noted that Azerbaijan offers a favorable investment

climate with key sectors including agriculture, logistics, tourism, environmental technology, IT, e-commerce, and construction. Prominent attendees included Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President

Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Executive Members Chaudhry Mohammad Nadeem, Imran Minhas, Ishaq Sial, Chaudhry Aftab Gujjar, Malik Mohsin Khalid, ICCI President's special advisor Naeem Siddiqui, Legal Advisor to the Azer-

baijan Embassy Sohail Sajjad, and Chairman Land Pakistan Group Naseebullah Chishti. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to strengthen business ties through collaborative efforts and strategic partnerships.

FBR system anomalies create trouble for retailers

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Chain-store Association of Pakistan (CAP), the representative body of organized retail in Pakistan, on Saturday raised serious concerns regarding the persistent technical and enforcement challenges faced by FBR-POS Integrated Tier-1 Retailers. CAP Chairman Asfandyar Farrukh has requested Mr. Rashid Mehmood Langrial, Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), seeking immediate intervention to resolve these critical issues that are disrupting retail operations and posing significant commercial risks. Despite full compliance with the FBR-POS system, integrated retailers are encountering severe technical issues, including forced disconnections due to profile expiry, invoices failing to sync with the FBR portal, unexplained changes in POS

system versions, and a lack of timely communication on system updates. Retailers are further burdened by manual reconciliation of invoices, the absence of bulk download options for POS data, and outdated technical documentation that has not been revised since 2019. Additionally, CAP has highlighted excessive enforcement actions against compliant Tier-1 retailers. Despite compliance, Tier-1 Retailers are facing sudden 'sealing' of their businesses due to a single unverifiable invoice—many of which result from system failures rather than retailer negligence. Such heavy-handedness damages reputations, leads to financial losses, and negatively impacts tax revenue. In addition, Tier-1 Retailers frequently receive notices or calls from field officers to deposit additional taxes before filing sales tax returns, even when due input tax adjustments are in

place. Such demands must be rationalized to prevent undue pressure on compliant businesses. These actions not only damage retailer confidence but also discourage further adoption of the FBR-POS integration system, ultimately undermining documentation efforts. The situation has been exacerbated by SRO 69(1)/2025, which has introduced additional compliance requirements that are impractical due to existing system limitations. Integrated retailers are now expected to verify every invoice despite the inefficiencies within the FBR-POS system, making it virtually unfeasible to comply with the new regulations. "As the official voice of Pakistan's organized retail sector, CAP remains committed to supporting the government's efforts in enhancing tax compliance. However, technical failures and arbitrary enforcement

measures are making it increasingly difficult for compliant retailers to operate smoothly. Integrated Tier-1 retailers already suffer from a top-sided burden of GST, Income Tax, etc. which is rendering them uncompetitive. We seek the FBR's urgent intervention to resolve all these issues and restore retailer confidence in the POS integration system," said Asfandyar Farrukh, Chairman of CAP. Patron in Chief CAP Rana Tariq Mehmood also urged the FBR to revise the Sales Tax Rules 2006 in consultation with the organized retail sector to ensure that compliance measures are both practical and effective. He also requested a meeting with FBR leadership to discuss these pressing concerns and find a workable solution that safeguards both business interests and tax documentation objectives including creating a level-playing field.

Reforms take time as economy transformation starts: APBF

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has said that the government should be committed to transforming the economy of the country, as the process of transforming the economy is already underway in the country, acknowledging that structural reforms in every sector takes time. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood asked the government to take proactive measures to encounter external and domestic challenges, besides stabilizing the economy. In a statement issued here today, the APBF President said that the private sector leadership under the banner of APBF has always stood firm and united against harmful actions to national economy and the people of the country has not accepted any move by mafias, who were responsible for creating chaos through unnecessary and unwarranted proposals, detrimental to national cause. He outlined a comprehensive economic agenda aimed at steering the country towards progress. He emphasized the critical need for a strategic approach to economic development, calling for concerted efforts from both the government and political parties. He observed that industry was expecting to presage easing of all political uncertainty paving the way for economic stability that all stakeholders and associated media pundits insisted would be a key factor in turning the economy around. This in the face of ever-rising electricity rates as pledged to the International Monetary Fund in an attempt to attain full cost recovery (instead of improving the management of the sector as is required). The APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi outlined a comprehensive economic agenda aimed at steering the country towards progress. He emphasized the critical need for a strategic approach to economic development, calling for concerted efforts from both the government and political parties. He mentioned that the government will have to take joint action to combat currency smuggling and narrow the difference in dollar rates between official and open markets. It is the fact that the government has undertaken various initiatives for the betterment of the country. The trade deficit narrowed by 3.6 per cent to \$1.3 billion, demonstrating positive progress and expressed optimism that the government's efforts would lead to an expansion in export potential and the export market.—DNA

Govt launches Rs4.5b Murree uplift project

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Walled City of Lahore Authority Kamran Lashari Sunday disclosed that the Punjab government has initiated a Rs4.5 billion project in Murree aimed at revamping the hill station's infrastructure to attract tourists, which will be completed within a year and a half under the direct supervision of the chief minister. Talking to PTV news channel, Kamran Lashari shared the plan for restoring shops and buildings around the General Post Office (GPO) to Mall Road which will revive their original glory and tradition. "The Rs4.5 billion Murree project will transform the hill station into a world-class tourist destination, showcasing Pakistan's natural beauty and rich cultur-

al heritage," said Kamran Lashari. "The project will focus on sustainable development, ensuring that Murree's natural environment is preserved while providing modern amenities and infrastructure to tourists." "By revitalizing Murree's infrastructure, we aim to boost tourism, create jobs and stimulate economic growth in the region, making it a premier destination for domestic and international tourists." "Present government is also starting the glass train in Murree soon, providing tourists with a unique and unforgettable experience, he said, adding, by revitalizing Murree's infrastructure, we aim to boost tourism, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth in the region." Responding to a query, he

stated that this initiative aims to preserve the historical charm of the area while promoting tourism, he added. The Walled City of Lahore Authority has been working tirelessly to restore and beautify various landmarks and areas within the city, including heritage sites associated with Sufi poets, shrines, gurdwaras and churches in various cities of Punjab, he added. He also announced plans to facilitate visits to Sufi shrines for school and college students in Lahore. "To promote cultural awareness and spiritual education among the youth, we will arrange visits to Sufi shrines, including Data Darbar and others, with affordable ticket prices and guided

tours," said DG Lashari. This initiative aims to provide students with a deeper understanding of Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and the significance of Sufism in the country's history, he added. He added the growing interest of Sikh tourists in visiting Pakistan, particularly Punjab and appreciating the country's hospitality, adding, this trend is expected to continue, with more opportunities emerging for international tourists to explore Punjab's rich cultural heritage. The growth of tourism in Pakistan is not limited to Sikh tourists, as visitors from around the world are drawn to the country's diverse attractions, including its natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural events, he mentioned.—APP

Japan views Pakistan as an indispensable country

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: At an international seminar organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Professor Masayuki Masuda, Division head at the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), stated that Pakistan has played a vital role in regional stability and is seen as committed to promoting peace amidst growing challenges. He suggested that Pakistan and Japan, having both experienced significant human and economic losses due to conflicts and wars, were uniquely positioned to collaborate on promoting peace. Prof. Masuda also stressed that Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept aimed

to foster regional peace and prosperity, which aligns with Pakistan's connectivity interests. He called for increased cooperation in areas such as telecom, AI, and climate change, which would benefit both nations. Speaking on the

occasion, NIDS Senior Fellow Masahiro Kurita clarified that Japan's growing cooperation with India, even within the QUAD framework, was primarily focused on political and economic cooperation, and should not impact

Pakistan's security concerns. He acknowledged that perceptions of Pakistan were influenced by its deepening relationship with China, but emphasized Pakistan's balanced approach, demonstrating its commitment to fostering broad international ties for enhanced connectivity. Amb. Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, stated that Pakistan-Japan cooperation was a factor of stability at a time when great power competition was intensifying. He emphasized upon the shared values and interests which bound the two countries in cordial and cooperative ties, and called for building on this foundation to further enhance

multifaceted cooperation. He also advocated increased political dialogue, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact to foster yet greater understanding of each other's perspectives. Amb. Farukh Amil, Chairman IPO and former Ambassador to Japan, affirmed Pakistan's long-standing desire to strengthen development partnerships with Japan. He also emphasized Japan's technological leadership and the critical importance of collaboration in technology and innovation for Pakistan's future economic and security progress while praising Japan's unconditional humanitarian aid during natural disasters.



FRIA concerned over rising losses of DISCOs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has raised its serious concern over power distribution companies' huge losses of billions of rupees in the first half of the fiscal year due to inefficiencies, which need to be taken care of seriously. FRIA Chairman Shahbaz Aslam said that the primary challenge remained the losses caused by power distribution companies due to theft, inefficiency, and under-recovery of bills. These companies also caused Rs52 billion in losses due to under-recoveries, which was Rs97 billion less than the comparative period. The FRIA Chairman said that it is good that the government is working to resolve issues in appointing independent Boards of Directors for DISCOs to further reduce losses. Shahbaz Aslam suggested that the circular debt actually increased by Rs463bn in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, averaging Rs66bn monthly, compared to Rs408bn in the same period last year. However, after accounting for stock payments worth Rs137bn from June 2023 to January 2024, the net increase in circular debt was Rs325bn. The payables to power producers, which stood at Rs1.434tr at the beginning of FY2023, jumped to Rs1.77tr by the end of January 2023 and remained almost unchanged at Rs1.760tr by the end of January 2024 — a minuscule difference of Rs8bn. The stock of permanent debt guaranteed by the government of Pakistan remained unchanged at Rs765bn during the period. The increase in circular debt can be attributed to poor recoveries by distribution companies, high system losses, pending generation costs, non-payments by K-Electric, and interest charges, despite the government's efforts to recover about Rs116bn from consumers in the previous year. The business leader said that the cumulative losses due to under-recoveries and inefficiency amounted to Rs158 billion. These were partially offset by gains from monthly and quarterly tariff adjustments and prior-year recoveries. The government collected an additional Rs67 billion from quarterly and monthly fuel adjustments and another Rs140 billion through other price adjustments, according to the report. Experts added that discoms alone contributed Rs82 billion of the Rs158 billion losses, with an increase of Rs28 billion from last year.—APP

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Ramadan under siege in Gaza

AS Ramadan reaches its midpoint, the people of Gaza are enduring one of the most severe living crises in their history. The continued closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing has led to a dire shortage of essential food supplies and skyrocketing prices, leaving thousands of families unable to meet even their most basic daily needs. In the past, iftar tables in Gaza were filled with meat, chicken, and fresh vegetables. Today, however, falafel has become the main dish, as buying meat has become an unattainable dream for most families due to its disappearance from markets. Under a makeshift canopy in the bustling Sheikh Radwan market, Abu Ahmed Salim, a man in his fifties, waits patiently in line at a falafel cart. With a sigh, he says, "We used to buy a kilo of meat during Ramadan, but now, we can barely afford a falafel sandwich. A kilo of meat costs 100 shekels—where can we get that kind of money? Falafel is our last option." Umm Khaled Al-Astal, a mother of five, confirms that her family has not had meat on their iftar table for weeks. "We had hoped Ramadan would be different, but things have only gotten worse. Even chicken is unavailable, and whatever remains is outrageously expensive. Falafel is all we can find—we eat it for both iftar and suhoor." Gaza's markets have come to a near standstill. Many essential goods have vanished, while the prices of what remains have surged to unprecedented levels. The price of a kilo of sugar has reached 15 shekels, rice 20 shekels, and vegetable oils have doubled in price, making even the most basic meals a financial burden. Mohammed Abdel Rahman, who owns a grocery store in Gaza's Al-Zawiya market, describes the grim situation: "People come to ask about prices and leave without buying anything. A carton of eggs now costs 80 shekels—who can afford that? The siege has destroyed trade and stripped people of their most basic rights." Even falafel vendors, despite seeing a surge in demand, are struggling to keep up. The shortage of ingredients and rising production costs are taking a toll. Abu Samer, who runs a falafel shop in the Al-Rimal neighborhood, explains: "Falafel has become the meal of both the rich and the poor. But even we are struggling—oil is expensive, tahini is expensive, and the price of legumes has gone up. If this continues, there may come a day when even falafel disappears!" With the border crossings still closed, life in Gaza feels like an unending nightmare. Humanitarian organizations are warning of a looming food disaster, while families are left wondering, "What will we eat tomorrow?" Abu Mahmoud Nasr, a man in his sixties, sums up the hardship in a few words: "The siege has taken everything from us—food, work, life itself. The question is no longer about what to eat, but whether we'll find anything to eat at all." As the food crisis continues to deepen, Gaza's iftar tables stand as a painful reminder of a people living under siege.



US re-industrialisation

INCREDIBLY, the world witnessed a striking split-screen last week: US President Donald Trump addressed a joint session of Congress while Chinese Premier Li Qiang delivered his annual work report at the "two sessions" parliamentary meetings. One speech was met with heckling from the opposition and support from the speaker's own party members, while the other received only the latter. Despite the stark contrast between the speeches from the two countries' leadership, there seems to be a degree of wishful thinking in both countries' internal discourse on their economic plans. I refer to the discussions around America's re-industrialisation and yuan internationalisation. These discussions are not new, and the lingering of these talking points speaks more of their weaknesses rather than strengths. These two fairy tales have not faded away, morphing instead into nightmares haunted by the same villain: a broken, unbalanced global trading system made worse by misvalued currencies. The renminbi will not become a major currency soon for a simple reason: you cannot buy much with it outside China. Much has been made about Saudi Arabia accepting yuan payments for its oil, with some proclaiming it the beginning of the end for US dollar hegemony. Yet what exactly does Saudi Arabia do with the yuan it earns? Analysing this development, S&P Global noted in a report last year: "As the renminbi is not broadly used in international trade and finance, there are relatively few outlets to spend these proceeds." The kingdom, which exports more to China than it imports from it, could use some of the proceeds to pay for the goods it buys. But what's left over will almost certainly be converted into US dollars to buy dollar-denominated assets, because for the non-Chinese, there are little to no viable yuan-denominated assets to buy outside China. What about inside China? Can a Saudi prince freely purchase say, prime real estate overlooking The Bund in Shanghai? Probably not. Foreigners in Shanghai must first work and pay taxes in the city for at least a year to be allowed to buy real estate – and there are similar restrictions across China, not just for property and but also for other assets. Chinese citizens also face restrictions in moving large amounts of yuan out of the country. Accordingly, economists describe China as having a closed capital account. China does this to protect the yuan's value and prevent its rise, which could affect exports and the domestic market. This cuts to the core of the yuan internationalisation myth: if foreigners cannot invest in yuan-generating assets, why and how would they accumulate the currency? While China runs a trade deficit with Saudi Arabia, it runs a surplus with the rest of the world. This means more goods and services flow from China than to it, and more payments from these goods and services flow to China than from it. This makes yuan accumulation by foreign countries nearly impossible without taking out yuan debt, yet that would only work in the short term. The idea that the yuan can become a major trading currency without first becoming a major reserve currency misunderstands the essential roles of and relationship between reserve and trading currencies. The dollar is primarily used for trade because it is the dominant reserve currency, not the other way around. Countries readily settle trade in US dollars because they have direct and open access to US capital markets, which are the deepest and most liquid globally.

US tariff policies: A historical perspective

Qamar Bashir



The 21st century initially embraced globalization and free trade, with agreements like NAFTA (1994) and China's WTO entry (2001) under Presidents Clinton and Bush expanding trade with Canada, Mexico, China, and the European Union. These agreements led to a surge in U.S. exports, particularly in technology (Apple, Intel, Microsoft), aerospace (Boeing), and agriculture (soybeans, corn, wheat). However, they also contributed to manufacturing job losses, as companies moved production to countries with lower labor costs. Domestic steel, textiles, and small manufacturing...

SINCE its inception, the United States has oscillated between protectionist tariffs and free trade policies, shaping its economic and industrial landscape. Initially, tariffs were a primary revenue source for the federal government and a tool to protect fledgling industries from foreign competition. Over time, shifting economic priorities, political ideologies, and evolving global trade relations influenced U.S. tariff policies, each shift bringing both advantages and drawbacks. Protectionist tariffs have historically strengthened domestic industries but also led to trade disputes and higher consumer costs, while free trade policies have fostered global economic integration but often resulted in job losses in vulnerable sectors. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the U.S. relied on high tariffs to shield its developing industries from European competitors. The Tariff of 1816 and the Tariff of Abominations (1828) promoted Northern manufacturing by making foreign imports more expensive. However, these same policies harmed Southern agricultural exporters, who relied on overseas markets for cotton and tobacco sales. The Morrill Tariff (1861), introduced during the Civil War, reinforced protectionism, helping Northern industries but exacerbating regional tensions. During this period, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany were America's key trading partners. The UK, dependent on U.S. cotton for its textile industry, suffered the most from these tariffs. European manufacturers faced steep restrictions on their goods entering the U.S. market, leading to retaliatory tariffs that restricted American agricultural exports. This resulted in economic polarization, with industrialists in the North benefiting from tariff protections while Southern farmers and exporters suffered from declining international demand. Industries such as steel (Carnegie Steel), railroads (Union Pacific, Central Pacific), and manufacturing (Singer Sewing Machines, Colt Firearms, McCormick Harvesting Machines) thrived under these protectionist policies. However, Southern agriculture and the shipping industry struggled due to the loss of foreign markets. While tariffs fostered domestic industrial growth, they also deepened economic disparities and intensified sectional tensions that contributed to the Civil War. The early 20th century saw fluctuations between free trade and protectionism, reflecting changing economic conditions. The Underwood Tariff (1913) under President Woodrow Wilson lowered tariffs significantly, improving trade relations with the UK, Germany, and France but reducing government revenue. However, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff (1922) reversed this trend, reinstating protectionist measures to support U.S. industries like steel, chemicals, and automobiles. While these tariffs strengthened domestic produc-

tion, they provoked retaliatory tariffs from European nations, limiting U.S. exports and creating economic inefficiencies. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff (1930) under President Herbert Hoover significantly worsened the Great Depression by imposing some of the highest tariffs in U.S. history. This move triggered retaliatory measures from America's key trading partners, collapsing global trade and accelerating the economic downturn. The U.S. economy shrank as agricultural and industrial exports plummeted, exacerbating the financial struggles of businesses and workers. In response to the failures of extreme protectionism, the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (1934) under Franklin D. Roosevelt marked a decisive shift toward free trade. This act allowed the U.S. government to negotiate mutual tariff reductions with other countries, laying the groundwork for global economic cooperation. After World War II, this approach culminated in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, 1947), promoting trade liberalization worldwide. Industries such as automobiles (Ford, General Motors), consumer goods (General Electric, RCA), and aircraft manufacturing (Boeing, Lockheed Martin) flourished due to expanding export markets and international cooperation. However, textiles and small-scale manufacturing struggled to compete with lower-cost imports, leading to job losses in some traditional American industries. The impact on GDP was significant. While protectionist policies like Smoot-Hawley led to economic contraction, the shift toward free trade agreements fueled post-war prosperity, with U.S. GDP growing at an annual rate of 4%–5% in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as globalization accelerated, certain domestic industries faced intense foreign competition, leading to deindustrialization in some sectors. The 21st century initially embraced globalization and free trade, with agreements like NAFTA (1994) and China's WTO entry (2001) under Presidents Clinton and Bush expanding trade with Canada, Mexico, China, and the European Union. These agreements led to a surge in U.S. exports, particularly in technology (Apple, Intel, Microsoft), aerospace (Boeing), and agriculture (soybeans, corn, wheat). However, they also contributed to manufacturing job losses, as companies moved production to countries with lower labor costs. Domestic steel, textiles, and small manufacturing industries suffered as cheaper imports flooded the U.S. market, fueling political and economic discontent. Under President Trump (2017–2021), the U.S. imposed tariffs on Chinese imports, steel, aluminum, and European goods, triggering a trade war aimed at protecting domestic industries. While these tariffs boosted U.S. steel and semiconductor production,

they also raised costs for businesses dependent on foreign materials, such as automotive (General Motors, Ford), construction, and consumer electronics (Apple, Dell, HP). China retaliated with tariffs on American agricultural products, significantly impacting soybean and pork producers. The Biden administration (2021–2025) maintained most of these tariffs while focusing on domestic supply chains, semiconductor manufacturing (Intel, TSMC in Arizona), and renewable energy, benefiting defense and steel industries while hurting retail and agriculture due to higher import costs. The impact on GDP was mixed. While globalization drove U.S. economic growth in the 1990s and early 2000s, with GDP expanding at 2%–3% annually, the U.S.-China trade war under Trump slowed investment and disrupted supply chains, causing GDP growth to drop to around 2% in 2019. Under Biden, continued tariffs contributed to inflation but also encouraged domestic industrial investment in semiconductors and clean energy. In recent weeks, global stock markets have suffered sharp declines, largely due to escalating trade tensions and the impact of new tariffs. Major indices like the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 have experienced substantial losses, reflecting investor fears of an economic slowdown and the potential onset of a global recession. The energy sector has been particularly affected, with natural gas prices rising due to geopolitical instability and increased demand, leading to higher operational costs for industries reliant on energy. However, there is potential for market recovery if specific conditions are met. A reduction in energy prices could lower production costs for businesses, improving corporate earnings and boosting investor confidence. Additionally, if protectionist trade policies successfully revitalize domestic manufacturing, the economy could see long-term benefits, reducing reliance on foreign imports and strengthening key industries. This could help stabilize financial markets and support economic growth. While the short-term outlook remains uncertain, strategic policy adjustments—such as lowering energy prices, improving supply chain efficiency, and negotiating trade agreements that balance protectionism with economic openness—could pave the way for a more stable and prosperous market environment. If domestic industries adapt successfully, the U.S. economy may regain momentum, mitigating the negative effects of tariffs and restoring confidence in global markets.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

From Kulbhushan to Jaffar Express

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Beyond direct acts of terrorism, India has also weaponized water against Pakistan. As an upper riparian state, India has frequently violated the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 by constructing dams and altering water flows, thereby impacting Pakistan's agricultural sector. Projects like the Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric plants on the Jhelum and Chenab...

PAKISTAN and India share a complex and troubled history, shaped by deep-seated animosities and unresolved conflicts. While geographical proximity makes them neighbors, India's attitude towards Pakistan since Partition in 1947 has been anything but like intolerable enemy. From direct military confrontations to covert operations aimed at destabilizing Pakistan, India has consistently demonstrated hostility. Despite numerous peace overtures by Pakistan, India has maintained an aggressive stance, engaging in activities that range from waterborne terrorism to extremism in sports, and direct involvement in terrorist incidents within Pakistan. One of the most glaring examples of Indian subversion was the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian spy who was caught in Balochistan in 2016. A serving officer of the Indian Navy, Jadhav was operating under a false identity and admitted to orchestrating terrorist activities in Pakistan. His confession before Pakistani authorities provided undeniable evidence of India's involvement in fomenting unrest in Balochistan and Karachi. The Indian government, instead of disowning him, rushed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to defend him, further exposing their deep engagement in espionage and terrorism against Pakistan. Similarly, the case of Indian Air Force pilot Abhinandan Varthaman in 2019 highlighted India's reckless aggression. Following the Pulwama attack, India launched an airstrike in Balakot on February 26, 2019, claiming to have targeted terrorist camps—a claim that was widely debunked. The very next day, Pakistan's Air Force successfully intercepted Indian fighter jets violating Pakistani airspace, leading to the capture of Abhinandan. This incident not only exposed India's false narratives but also showcased Pakistan's military preparedness. The fact that Abhinandan was returned as a goodwill gesture did not soften India's hostility, proving once again that peace initiatives are often met with suspicion and aggression. India's involvement in supporting separatist elements in Balochistan is another area where its anti-Pakistan agen-

da is evident. Pakistani security agencies have repeatedly provided evidence of Indian funding and training of Baloch insurgents. In 2020, Pakistan's Foreign Minister presented a dossier containing irrefutable evidence of India's state-sponsored terrorism, including financing anti-Pakistan groups such as BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) and BRA (Baloch Republican Army). These groups have been responsible for attacks on security forces and vital infrastructure, including the Chinese consulate in Karachi and the Gwadar Port, which is a key component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Another recent example is the sabotage of the Jaafar Express, a passenger train targeted by terrorists in Balochistan. Investigations pointed towards Indian-backed elements attempting to create chaos within Pakistan. The international community, including the United Nations, has condemned the kidnapping and terrorism linked to the Jaafar Express attack in clear terms, yet decisive actions against those directly and indirectly responsible remain pending. This reflects the broader issue of global inaction when it comes to India's subversive activities in Pakistan. The reality is simple: unless the dead dog is pulled out of the well, the water will not be clean, no matter how many buckets are taken out. Half-hearted responses and mere condemnations will not curb Indian-backed terrorism; it requires firm, actionable measures to dismantle the networks orchestrating such attacks. Beyond direct acts of terrorism, India has also weaponized water against Pakistan. As an upper riparian state, India has frequently violated the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 by constructing dams and altering water flows, thereby impacting Pakistan's agricultural sector. Projects like the Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric plants on the Jhelum and Chenab rivers have raised serious concerns about India's attempts to control Pakistan's water resources. This form of water aggression threatens Pakistan's economy and food security, making it an existential issue. Even in the realm of sports, India has displayed hostility towards

Pakistan. A glaring example of India's politically motivated stance in sports is its refusal to play matches in Pakistan during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Despite Pakistan being the official host of the tournament, India has insisted on playing its matches at a neutral venue, which has reportedly been agreed upon as Dubai. This move comes despite the fact that top cricketing nations, including England, Australia, and New Zealand, have recently played in Pakistan without security concerns. India's decision is clearly a political maneuver rather than a genuine concern for security. A similar scenario unfolded during the 2023 Asia Cup when India refused to play in Pakistan, resulting in a hybrid model where its matches were held in Sri Lanka. By constantly avoiding playing in Pakistan, India is not only undermining the integrity of international sports but also attempting to isolate Pakistan on the global stage. These actions highlight that even in the sphere of sports, where politics should ideally take a backseat, India continues its antagonistic approach. Given this historical and contemporary reality, Pakistan must abandon any illusions about India's intentions. It is naive to expect goodwill or fair treatment from a country that has persistently sought to undermine Pakistan at every opportunity. While diplomatic channels and regional cooperation must remain open, Pakistan's policymakers must adopt a pragmatic approach, reinforcing national security and strengthening alliances that counterbalance Indian aggression. A strong and self-reliant Pakistan, capable of thwarting enemy designs, is the best way to counter Indian hostility. Strengthening internal stability, bolstering defense capabilities, and continuing to expose India's malicious activities on international platforms should remain key priorities. The sooner we recognize that India is not just an unfriendly neighbor but a long-term adversary with expansionist ambitions, the better prepared we will be to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty and national interests.

Briefs

Pakistan is victim of internal...

FROM PAGE 01
He said there is a need to make a National Action Plan. He said under Nawaz Sharif government in 2017, national reserves had reached 25 billion dollars. He said now again PML-N has made Pakistan stable in one year as international rating agencies were endorsing it. He said overseas Pakistanis sent 35 billion dollars to the country last year. He lamented a group was celebrating the US travel ban on Pakistanis, adding that such people belong to the group that spreads negative propaganda about Pakistan on social media.

Three soldiers...

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has been declared at Mir Gul Khan Naseer Teaching Hospital to handle the situation. Furthermore, as per the police, the injured were being shifted to Quetta via helicopter. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the blast in Nushki and expressed sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the blast. The premier prayed that may Allah Almighty elevate the rank of those martyred in the blast and offered heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Shehbaz also prayed for the early recovery of injured persons and directed that the injured be provided with the best possible treatment.

Unilateral decisions...

FROM PAGE 01
Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), comprising the Sunni Ittehad Council, Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Balochistan National Party, Jamaat-i-Islami, and Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen. After talks between the government and the opposition collapsed in January, the PTI made another push to establish a joint front against the federal government and roped in Abbasi to become part of its anti-government movement. On the ruling PML-N, Fazl said its supreme and ex-premier Nawaz Sharif could "play an important role in the current political situation of the country". "If Nawaz Sharif thinks that the government has worked in one province, where has the country gone," he said, adding that President Asif Ali Zardari was the only person who had "the ability to buy the provincial assembly and the President's House".

Govt rules out 'grand...

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Earlier this week, the terrorists attacked the Jaffar Express, blew up train tracks and held around 440 passengers hostage in a day-long standoff with security services in a remote mountain pass. 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. Giving a breakdown of the casualties in the incident, DG ISPR Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Friday 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.

Pakistan need...

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Federal Minister claimed PML-N defeated the worst form of terrorism in 2013. He said before 2018, there was complete peace in the country. Ahsan Iqbal said the leniency of the PTI government gave an opportunity to terrorism to flourish. He claimed PTI put politics above the interests of the country. Ahsan Iqbal claimed when the interests of the country are in question, there is no politics of any kind in front of them. He urged the nation to face the challenges with complete unity and solidarity.

NZ clinch 9-wicket victory over Pakistan in first T20I

New Zealand lead the five-match T20I series 1-0

SPORTS DESK

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand beat Pakistan by nine wickets in the first T20I of the five-match series on Sunday at Hagley Oval, courtesy of a dominant performance by the openers. Chasing 91, Tim Seifert and Finn Allen displayed exceptional batting from the start, putting on a 53-run stand inside the powerplay, showcasing their brilliance with the bat. Seifert was heading toward yet another half-century in the T20I format but fell short, dismissed for 44 off 29 deliveries by Abrar Ahmed, leaving the score at 53-1 in 5.5 overs. Tim Robinson then joined Allen and eased the pressure, helping chase down the target in the 11th over, giving New Zealand a 1-0 lead in the series. Finn Allen scored an unbeaten 29, while Robinson made 18 runs.

For Pakistan, spinner Abrar Ahmed was the only bowler to take a wicket, while the other bowlers failed to make an impact. After being asked to bat first, the Men in Green struggled against a disciplined New Zealand bowling attack and were bundled out for 91, with Kyle Jamieson leading the charge by picking up crucial wickets. Pakistan's innings got off to a disastrous start, with just one run on the board before



they lost three quick wickets. Jamieson dismissed Mohammad Harris for a duck, while Irfan Khan managed only a single run. Debutant Hasan Nawaz also fell cheaply, out for a second-ball duck to Jacob Duffy, putting Pakistan under early pressure. Vice-captain Shadab Khan failed to stabilize the innings, scoring just three runs off six deliveries before becoming Jamieson's

third victim. At 11-4 in 4.4 overs, Pakistan was reeling. Skipper Agha Salman and Khushdil Shah put up some resistance with a 46-run stand for the fifth wicket, attempting to steady the innings. However, their efforts weren't enough, as Ish Sodhi dismissed Agha for 18 runs off 20 balls, leaving Pakistan at 57-5 in 11.1 overs. Khushdil, who looked aggressive, was the

only batter to provide some fireworks, scoring 32 runs, including three sixes. However, his innings was cut short in the 13th over when Duffy struck again, reducing Pakistan to 64-6. Pakistan kept losing wickets cheaply as another debutant, Abdul Samad, became Sodhi's second victim, dismissed for seven off 12 deliveries, leaving the team reeling at 80-7 in 15.3 overs. Zakary Foulkes dealt Pakistan their eighth blow by dismissing Jahandad Khan, who managed 17 runs, increasing the pressure with the team struggling at 85-8. Shaheen Afridi struggled to add runs before being dismissed by Duffy for just one, leaving the team at 89-9 in 18.1 overs. Abrar Ahmed was the last to fall as Pakistan wrapped up their first innings, falling just nine runs short of 100. Jacob Duffy stole the spotlight with four wickets, followed by Kyle Jamieson with three, Ish Sodhi with two, and Zakary Foulkes with one. Pakistan playing XI: Salman Ali Agha (c), Hasan Nawaz, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Shadab Khan, Abdul Samad, Khushdil Shah, Jahandad Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Abrar Ahmed. New Zealand playing XI: Tim Seifert, Finn Allen, Tim Robinson, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell, Mitch Hay (wk), Michael Bracewell (c), Zac Foulkes, Kyle Jamieson, Ish Sodhi, Jacob Duffy.

Hamilton's first Ferrari race 'a big crash course'

LONDON: Lewis Hamilton said his first race for Ferrari was "a big crash course" after he finished 10th in a chaotic Australian Grand Prix. The seven-time champion led the race briefly but an incorrect strategy call as rain hit late in the race led to him dropping down the field. Hamilton said: "It felt like I was in the deep, deep end." The 40-year-old added that he "didn't have any confidence in the car and was nearly in the wall most of the time". McLaren's Lando Norris won in Melbourne from Red Bull's Max Verstappen with Hamilton's former Mercedes team-mate George Russell in third. It was a chaotic start to the season at Albert Park for a race that started wet, dried up and ended wet again, and featured three safety cars, an aborted start and a series of crashes.

Hamilton, who had qualified eighth, said: "I'm grateful I got through it, came out of it with a little bit of something, at least one point. "Obviously I didn't go off or spin. Lacking pace, for sure, but I do believe the car has more performance than we were able to extract this



weekend." He said that the team left it too late to stop for treaded tyres when the rain came with 13 laps to go - he stopped three laps after Norris and one after Verstappen. Hamilton said: "The last sector (of the lap), everyone was going off but I was managing to hold on, so I was just passing people, and once we got to the start line, it was dry. "So I was like: 'This is fine for me, I've just got to hold this out, I've only got a few laps to go.' "But then it pelted down just in the last two laps or something, it was coming down, and that's the moment we probably

should have come in. "In that moment, I was like, 'oh my God, I'm third'. I was leading for a second. But I mean, yeah, I don't know if we have anywhere near the pace as the McLarens had today. But I do think in the actual car, there is a lot more performance, I just don't think we unlocked it this week." Team principal Frederic Vasseur admitted Ferrari had made the "wrong decision" and they would review the matter before next weekend's second race of the season in China. "It was the first time we have to communicate between the pit wall and car,

we can do a better job, it was not a clean one at all. "We will have to learn a lot for next weekend and improve the communication. And learn what Lewis is expecting from the communication. Let's learn from today and be much better next week." Ferrari had a difficult weekend. Charles Leclerc, who made the same strategy decisions, started a place ahead of the Briton and finished two places in front after overtaking Hamilton at the final restart. Vasseur said he believed Ferrari had not optimised their car for the track at Albert Park and that their real position in the field was right behind McLaren, as they had been up to the final part of qualifying. "The conditions today are not representative of the performance," Vasseur said. "Friday to Q2 is more representative. "As soon as you overheat the tyres you have a big drop. The real picture of the performance is more what we saw on Friday and Saturday but even then McLaren is one step ahead. "If you don't adapt the car to the weekend to the tyres, to the track temp, you are out of the range of performance. - Agencies

Kylian Mbappe double secures Real Madrid 2-1

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe fired Real Madrid back to the top of La Liga as he scored twice in a comeback victory at Villarreal. Juan Foyth opened the scoring for the hosts but two Mbappe strikes in six first-half minutes earned the points for Madrid. It puts Los Blancos three points clear of previous leaders Barcelona, who visit third-placed Atletico Madrid on Sunday night. Villarreal remain fifth in La Liga, five points off the Champions League qualification places after back-to-back league defeats. They started the stronger, with top scorer Ayoze Perez twice denied by Thibaut Courtois in the opening seven minutes. After Courtois tipped a low curling Perez effort behind, Villarreal scored from the resulting corner when captain Foyth slammed home amid a goalmouth scramble. This sparked Madrid and Mbappe into life and they equalised 10 minutes later. Mbappe played a through ball to Brahim Diaz and, when his shot was saved by Diego Conde, the Frenchman was on hand to score the rebound. After netting, Mbappe ran straight back to the centre-circle without celebrating. He meant business and showed it again on 23 minutes. Following a cutback from the byline, Mbappe was given too much space on the edge of the Villarreal box and used it to curl a shot unstopably past Conde. It moves Mbappe to 20 league goals this season, just one behind La Liga top scorer Robert Lewandowski. Having endured a tough start to life in Madrid, Mbappe has firmly found his feet and will be essential to Real's push for both La Liga and Champions League success. He took centre stage here, with usual attacking partner Vinicius Junior starting on the bench following a below-par showing against Atletico in midweek. Villarreal did push Madrid hard in a fixture which ended 4-4 last season and proved entertaining again here. Courtois had to go full stretch shortly before half-time to keep out a long-range effort from Nicholas Pepe and again to deny Alex Baena after the break. After the game, Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti expressed his fury at the lack of rest following their Champions League marathon against Atletico on Wednesday. Madrid played three days after beating their city rivals on penalties following 120 minutes of action at Wanda Metropolitano. - Agencies

Karachi bids farewell to PSL 10 trophy

PSL 10 trophy tour wraps up in Karachi, visiting Bahria Town, Frere Hall & Kakri Ground

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The two-day tour of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) trophy in the City of Lights concluded with stops at various iconic locations before its journey to Lahore. The trophy was displayed at Lyari's Kakri Ground, where Islamabad United's fast bowler Rumman Raees brought it onto the field. Raees also participated in a football match, adding to the excitement of the event. The vibrant atmosphere was further enhanced by Lyari's famous Leva dance performance. Following its visit to Lyari, the PSL trophy was taken to Adventure Land in Bahria Town, where it was displayed for fans. The venue was adorned with PSL team flags, creating a festive environment. Cricket enthusiasts gathered in large numbers to take pictures with the coveted trophy. A day earlier, the trophy had been showcased at Korangi's go-karting track and the historic Frere Hall. Similar to Adventure Land, the go-karting track was adorned with PSL team flags, attracting significant fan engagement. After wrapping up its Karachi tour, the PSL trophy will now head to Lahore, where it will continue its journey for the next two days, making appearances at various key locations in the city.

Khushdil Shah backs Pakistan batting approach despite defeat

'When we came here, the conditions changed for our players,' says Khushdil

WEB DESK

CHRISTCHURCH: Pakistan all-rounder Khushdil Shah defended the current batting approach of the national men's team after their gruelling nine-wicket defeat against New Zealand in the first T20I here at the Hagley Oval on Sunday. Khushdil, who played his first T20I since October 2023, remained the top-scorer for Pakistan with a 30-ball 32 as the visitors were bowled out for a paltry 91 in 18.4 overs. The touring side, after being put into bat first, were put under a lot of pressure by the home side's pacers Jacob Duffy and Kyle Jamieson, who had reduced them to 1/3 in 2.2 overs. The green shirts were soon slipped to 11/4 in 4.4 overs as returning all-rounder and vice-captain Shadab Khan fell after scoring just three. Skipper Salman Ali Agha and Khushdil then briefly anchored the innings as they put together 46 runs for the fifth wicket. The fifth-wicket stand culminated with the captain's dismissal in the 12th over, while Khushdil followed suit in the next. Their back-to-back dismissals

sparked another collapse, which resulted in the visitors getting bowled out for a below-par 91 in 18.4 overs. In response, the home side made the light work of the run chase and comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just one wicket and 59 balls to spare. The returning all-rounder, while addressing the post-match press conference called for backing the current lot of players and cited the change in conditions while defending the team's "batting approach with 'intent'". "It was being discussed that we need to play with intent and play positively to fulfil the demand of modern-day cricket," said Khushdil Shah.



Prayer and fasting are not merely rituals



TANVEER HUSSAIN

ALLAMA Iqbal, in his renowned poem Jawab-e-Shikwa, said: "Rahir-asm-e-azan, rooh-e-Balinalarahi." Islam is not merely a religion of rituals; it is a complete code of life. It provides us with a comprehensive system of rights and responsibilities. Daily acts of worship are meant to teach us how to live, but unfortunately, we often perform them as mere rituals, without reflecting their impact in our lives.

The core issue is that we have failed to grasp the essence of Islam. For instance, prayer (Salah) teaches us discipline, punctuality, and community values. Going to the mosque helps us understand each other's problems. Similarly, fasting (Sawm) allows one to experience the pain of hunger and thirst, making one empathize with the poor. In simple terms, worship serves as training for practical life. However, while this training continues, its impact is not visible in society. Consider this: if a person spends millions to earn a medical or engineering degree but fails to apply his knowledge professionally, it means his education lacked substance. Likewise, if Islamic teachings do not reflect in our daily lives, it means our worship is devoid of spirit—it has become mere ritual. Islam teaches kindness, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, and fulfilling promises. It empha-

sizes sacrifice and selflessness. Yet, these values seem absent from our society. Dishonesty has become so prevalent that trusting someone is difficult. In Ramadan, the holy month of blessings, hoarding and profiteering reach their peak. Footpaths meant for pedestrians are occupied by illegal stalls. Fraud and deception have ruined countless lives. Kidnappings are common, the safety of women is compromised, daylight robberies occur frequently, and hospitals and educational institutions have turned into businesses. Public institutions enjoy the highest privileges in the region, yet justice remains elusive. Finding quality products in markets is rare. Whether it's car repairs or house construction, finding an honest worker is a challenge. The responsibility for this state of affairs lies with both the public and religious scholars. People are not taught the true concept of lawful

earnings. No one explains the principles of honest trade, the prohibition of hoarding and adulteration, or the sinfulness of illicit wealth. The Quran extensively discusses economic matters—inheritance, the prohibition of interest, business ethics, the importance of charity (Zakat), documentation of financial transactions, HaqMehar, financial responsibilities, honesty, and truthful testimony. Yet, instead of teaching these essential aspects, religious leaders are busy engaging people in sectarian differences. In religious schools (madrassas), rather than focusing on the Quran and Hadith, students are taught books based on sectarian ideologies. Islam prohibits blocking public paths, yet rallies and protests disrupt roads and markets, causing inconvenience to the public. The excessive use of loudspeakers has made life miserable. The West has already witnessed the failure of separating religion from daily life.

Unfortunately, the same mistake is being repeated here. Islam has been reduced to a set of rituals and recitations. The Quran, which is meant for action, has been turned into a book for blessings only. Mosques focus more on supplications and mystical formulas rather than teaching people how to lead their lives according to Islam. Scholars who charge hefty fees for their lectures often fail to mention Islam's core teachings. Their speeches revolve around sectarian disputes, accusations of blasphemy, baseless allegations, and supernatural stories. The louder one shouts, the more slogans he raises, the more he challenges opponents—the higher his ratings go. Sadly, this is what the public wants to hear. But how long will this continue? Someone must take responsibility for introducing people to the true teachings of Islam. More than anything, our society needs action—not just slogans and claims.

Diplomats pledge support for Pak fight...

FROM PAGE 01

Consul General of Turkey Durmas Bastag, Consul General of Iran Mehr Mowahid Far, Acting Consul General of China Mr. Cao, Political Officer of China Mr. Fan, Political Officer of Japan Mochi Zuki, DG Khana Farhang of Iran Masoudi, Cultural Counselor of France Mr. Fabrice, Head of Punjab Affairs of the British High Commission Mr. Ben Warrington, Vice Chairman LDA Mian Marghoob Ahmed, Malik Riaz Member of Punjab Assembly, Dr. Amjad Magsi President Professors and Lecturers Association of Punjab University etc. attended the iftar on behalf of Muhammad Mehdi foreign affairs expert on his residence. On this occasion, the participants raised their voices of unity and solidarity against terrorism in Pakistan. The participants have said in clear words that they stand by Pakistan in the war against extremism and terrorism.

On this occasion, the participants appreciated the efforts of the Pakistani army, parliamentarians and civil society in the efforts to eradicate terrorism and said that the international community will provide all possible support to Pakistan at this critical stage. The host of the event, Foreign Affairs Expert Muhammad Mehdi, said that to win the war against terrorism, it is necessary to have mental harmony, unity and clarity of purpose among all institutions and people. He said that mutual consultation of all political forces strengthens unity and this unity destroys the ambitions of terrorists. He further said that all stakeholders should rise above their personal interests and unite against terrorism so that we can pass on peace and stability to our future generations.

Govt to convene NSC meeting

FROM PAGE 01

According to sources, the top military leadership and intelligence officials will participate in the closed-door session, where the entire House will be converted into the Security Committee. Federal ministers and leaders of all parliamentary parties will also be invited. During the session, the military leadership will brief lawmakers on the increasing terrorist activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, addressing their concerns and discussing future strategies. Additionally, the committee will review Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's proposal for a "National Action Plan 2.0" and discuss expanding counter-terrorism operations. The implementation of the existing National Action Plan will also be assessed.

Russia stands with Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01

She further said Russia stood in solidarity with Islamabad against this global threat reaffirming commitment to strengthening constructive counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan in both bilateral and multilateral formats.

Iraqi Special Forces complete...

FROM PAGE 01

Military cooperation between Pakistan and Iraq dates back to 1955, and upon the request of the Iraqi military, the Pakistan Army decided to train Iraqi Special Forces. The Iraqi soldiers arrived in Pakistan on December 19, 2024, and have now completed their training program. Pakistan Army will continue to train more Iraqi Special Forces personnel at NCTC, which is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and globally recognised for counterterrorism training.

Briefs

Jordan's trade surplus with US reached \$1.23b

AMMAN: Jordan recorded a trade surplus of 877 million dinars (\$1.23 billion) with the US in 2024, according to foreign trade data released by the Department of Statistics on Saturday. The data, reported by the Jordan News Agency (Petra), highlighted significant growth in national exports to the US, which reached JD2.208 billion last year, up from JD1.958 billion in 2023 – an increase of 12.8 percent. Meanwhile, the kingdom's imports from the US market also saw a rise, reaching JD1.331 billion in 2024, compared to JD1.161 billion the previous year, marking an increase of 14.6 percent. As a result, the total volume of trade between the two countries grew to JD3.539 billion, up from JD3.119 billion in 2023. National exports to the US accounted for 25.7 percent of Jordan's total exports last year. Speaking to Petra, Samer Judeh, chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan, attributed this growth to the success of Jordanian products in penetrating the US market, benefiting from the Jordan-US Free Trade Agreement, which was fully implemented in 2010. He noted that the agreement has contributed to an 800 percent increase in bilateral trade since its inception. Judeh emphasized that enhancing exports and supporting national industries remain key priorities under Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision. —APP

Top US, Russian diplomats discuss next steps on Ukraine

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke on Saturday to discuss the next stage in talks on ending Moscow's war against Ukraine. According to State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce, the top diplomats "agreed to continue working toward restoring communication between the United States and Russia." The statement gave no details on when the next round of US-Russia talks, which are being hosted by Saudi Arabia, would begin. Rubio also updated Lavrov on military activity in the Middle East, where US forces carried out deadly strikes Saturday against Houthi rebel targets in Yemen, the statement said. Despite recent tensions between President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, Kyiv has agreed in principle to a US-brokered 30-day unconditional ceasefire if Moscow halts its attacks in eastern Ukraine. Russia's President Vladimir Putin has not however agreed to any truce, instead setting conditions that were beyond what was called for in the US agreement with Ukraine. —APP

At least 26 dead in massive US storm

NEWYORK: Violent tornadoes ripped through parts of the US, wiping out schools and toppling semi-tractor-trailers in several states, part of a monster storm that has killed at least 26 people as more severe weather was expected late Saturday. The number of fatalities increased after the Kansas Highway Patrol reported eight people died in a highway pileup caused by a dust storm in Sherman County Friday. At least 50 vehicles were involved. Missouri recorded more fatalities than any other state as it withstood scattered twisters overnight that killed at least 12 people, authorities said. The deaths included a man who was killed after a tornado ripped apart his home. "It was unrecognizable as a home. Just a debris field," said Coroner Jim Akers of Butler County, describing the scene that confronted rescuers. "The floor was upside down. We were walking on walls." —APP

Iran will not start war but will respond decisively to threats

TEHRAN: The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned that while the Islamic Republic will never seek to initiate a war, it remains determined to deliver a resolute response to any threats or acts of aggression by the enemies. Major General Hossein Salami made the statement on Sunday after Washington accused Tehran of assisting Yemen's military forces in their recent anti-Israeli operations and called for a halt on Iran's alleged support for the Ansarullah resistance movement. "Iran will never be the initiator of war, but in the event of a threat, the response will be firm, decisive and conclusive," Salami said. "The president of the United States has once again attributed the operations carried out by the Yemen's Ansarullah to Iran and has warned the Iranian people to stop their support for the resistance group." Stressing that the Yemenis are an independent and free nation in their land and pursue independent policies, the IRGC chief said, "Iran openly and clearly accepts responsibility for any actions it takes, when and where they occur." Salami underlined that, "We are not a nation that operates under the cloak of secrecy; rather, we are a legitimate and globally recognized entity. When we undertake any military action

or lend our support, we will declare it openly and unequivocally." Earlier on Saturday, US President Donald Trump announced on X that he had ordered the United States military to launch "decisive and powerful military action" against Yemen's Ansarullah movement. Nonetheless, the American aggression just targeted Yemeni civilians in the capital Sana'a and several other locations. The extensive attacks left at least 18 non-combatants dead and wounded close to 20 others. Yemen's Armed Forces began striking strategic and sensitive Israeli sites in November 2023 after the regime launched a US-backed genocidal war on the Gaza Strip and ratcheted up its restrictions on the entry of direly needed food, medicine, and other key supplies into the coastal sliver. The Yemeni strikes, alongside the targeting of Israeli-owned and -bound ships and vessels in the Red Sea and Arabian Sea, delivered a crushing blow to the regime's economy.

In a ceremony commemorating the sacrifices of the martyrs of East Azerbaijan Province in its capital city of Tabriz on Saturday evening, the IRGC's chief commander also warned that the Islamic Republic would give a "devastating" response to any threats. Salami emphasized that the Iranian nation is fully de-

Iran says US has 'no authority' to dictate its foreign policy

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday that Washington had "no authority" to dictate its foreign policy after US President Donald Trump urged Tehran to end support for Yemen's Houthi forces. "The United States Government has no authority, or business, dictating Iranian foreign policy," Araghchi said in a post on X, while urging the US to stop the "killing of Yemeni people". Trump on Saturday said Washington had launched "decisive and powerful military action" to end the threat posed to Red Sea shipping by Yemen's Houthi rebels, and demanded Tehran's support "must end immediately". The rebels, who have controlled much of Yemen for more than a decade, are part of the "axis of resistance" of pro-Iran groups staunchly opposed to Israel and the United States. The Houthis have attacked Israel and Red Sea shipping throughout the Gaza war. Iran's top diplomat said that the time when Washington could dictate Tehran's foreign policy ended in 1979, when the Islamic revolution ousted the Western-backed shah. The US strikes against Yemen's Houthis are the first since Trump's return to the White House in January. Houthi forces said at least 21 people had been killed, including children. —APP

termined to defend its interests, values, identity, and legitimacy. "We will stand firmly against any threat, and if any threat is carried out, we will respond in the most severe manner—a decisive, crushing, and destructive response," he stated. "The enemy is repeating its past mistakes and fails to learn from the lessons of Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, and Afghanistan. It continues on the same erroneous path, which will ultimately lead to

its defeat," he added. Salami highlighted that the enemy "deceptively" speaks of direct negotiations while simultaneously issuing threats. "This clearly shows that they do not truly understand the Iranian nation, while the Iranian nation, in turn, deeply recognizes its enemy and will never be deceived by their superficial words," he noted. Salami further asserted that it was the United States that tore up the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement and turned toward aggressive and violent measures such as pressure, sanctions, and threats. Salami was referring to Trump's decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw Washington from the JCPOA and impose a series of illegal sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Highlighting the importance of learning from past experiences, he said, "if we do not learn from bitter experiences, we will be forced to repeat them." Last week, Trump claimed in an interview with Fox News that he had sent a letter to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, warning Iran to open talks on a nuclear deal or be handled militarily. On Wednesday, Araghchi said the letter had been delivered to him via Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates. On the same day, Ayatollah Khamenei said Trump's proposal for negotiations is "a deception" that is only meant to create the impression that Iran refuses to negotiate. He said Iran negotiated with the US for several years in the past, but "this same person (Trump) threw off the table and tore apart the concluded, finalized, and signed negotiations." —Agencies

Mushahid calls for Palestine & Kashmir solution via UN resolutions

Senator Mushahid Hussain also welcomed the election of President Trump as a plus for world peace, as President Trump is neither a warmonger nor an exponent of any new Cold War

DNA

GENEVA: Participating as Special Guest in the conference of International Parliament for Tolerance & Peace (ITPT), hosted by former Speaker of Arab Parliament, Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Jaswan of the United Arab Emirates, Senator Mushahid Hussain Said prerequisite for Tolerance and Peace was resolving longstanding conflicts like Palestine and Kashmir on the basis of United Nations resolutions seeking their right of self-determination. He also called for lifting of blockade to provide uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance and enforcement of ceasefire in current conflict situations in Gaza and the Sudan, where he urged for a civilian-led and civilian-owned peace process to initiate end to the Civil War which has resulted in food insecurity for majority



of Sudan's population as well as a third of its population is now homeless or displaced, resulting in a serious refugee crisis. Senator Mushahid Hussain also welcomed the election of President Trump as a plus for world peace, as President Trump is neither a warmonger nor an exponent of any new Cold War. He welcomed President Trump's efforts for peace in Ukraine as well

as his initiative for diplomatic negotiations with Iran on the nuclear issue, adding all these issues can only be resolved through direct talks, not use or threat of force. Senator Mushahid Hussain also acclaimed the role of UAE for promoting peace and terming under the enlightened leadership of President Mohammed bin Zayed, who is a close friend of Pakistan, adding over 100 na-

tionalties reside in harmony and security in the UAE. He concluded his speech by recalling that 2025 is the 70th Anniversary of the Bandung Conference in 1955, hosted by Indonesia, which for the first time brought together Asian & African countries on one platform, an initiative in which Pakistan was a founding member. He said the seeds of the resurgence of Global South were laid at Bandung and the world is witnessing an historic shift in the global balance of economic and political power, from the West to the East. Parliamentarians and political and opinion leaders from 40 countries from four continents (Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe) took part in this conference, where keynote speeches were delivered by the Speaker of Tajikistan Parliament, Mohammed Zakirzade, and Secretary General of Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), Martin Chungong.

Pak, China ink MoU to boost E-commerce collaboration

BEIJING: In a move to strengthen Pakistan-China cooperation in the fields of Information Technology (IT) and E-commerce, the Guangzhou Tianhe Software and Information Industry Association, China and E-commerce Gateway Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The agreement, signed recently, aims to jointly promote ITCN Asia 2025, a premier IT and E-commerce trade fair in Pakistan, scheduled to take place in Lahore and Karachi from May 9-11 this year. The MOU signing ceremony was witnessed by Mr. Muhammad Imran, Acting Consul General & Trade & Investment Counsellor, who highlighted the significance of the partnership. "The strategic partnership underscores a shared commitment to enhancing Pakistan-China cooperation in Information Technology and E-commerce, further strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations," said Mr. Imran. Known as the "Silicon Valley of Guangzhou", Tianhe District is home to some of the country's most innovative tech firms and startups. Guangzhou Tianhe Software and Information Industry Association plays a pivotal role in fostering technological innovation, promoting cross-border collaborations and supporting the growth of the digital economy in the region. E-commerce Gateway Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd., on the other hand, is a Pakistani organization dedicated to advancing the country's e-commerce and IT sectors. The company has been instrumental in organizing high-profile trade fairs and exhibitions, including ITCN Asia, which has become a cornerstone event for the IT and e-commerce industry in Pakistan. Gwadar Port reported. —DNA

Expert warns climate change harms children growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A leading expert on maternal & infant health, Professor Zulfiqar Bhutta, Saturday warned about the destructive effects of climate change on children's health, citing exacerbated malnutrition, stunted growth and shorter heights due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures. He said we must take immediate action to mitigate the effects of climate change on child development. This requires a multi-faceted approach that involves policymakers, healthcare professionals, and communities working together to address the root causes of climate change and support the most vulnerable among us, our children. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, Professor Bhutta explained that the impact of climate change on child development is a pressing concern that cannot be ignored. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and increased frequency of extreme weather events are all taking a devastating toll on the health and well-being of children worldwide, he added. I am particularly alarmed by the effects of climate change on child growth and development, he said, adding, malnutrition, stunted growth and shorter heights are just a few of the alarming consequences we are witnessing, particularly in vulnerable communities, he highlighted. Children in low-income and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, with limited access to healthcare, nutrition, and other essential resources, Dr Zulfiqar added. "Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the harsh effects of climate change. Exposure to extreme heat, poor air quality and limited access to nutritious food and clean water can have severe consequences for both mother and child, including low birth weight, preterm birth, and impaired fetal development," he replied in a question.

Macron says will announce plans to 'mobilize civilians'

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday ruled out bringing back mandatory military service but said he wanted to mobilize society in the face of Russian aggression and would make an announcement in the coming weeks. Speaking to regional newspapers in comments recorded Friday and published Saturday, Macron said the return of compulsory military service was "not a realistic option." He said France no longer had the "logistics" to reintroduce conscription, which ended in 2001. "We are going to look at ways to mobilize civilians," Macron told the regional press, adding that he wanted to consolidate the "mobilization of society in the face of crises." European countries including France have been debating reinstating compulsory military service to boost their defenses in the face of Russian aggression. Fears about the strength of NATO have surged further after US President Donald Trump said Europe must take care of its own security. According to a recent poll, 61 percent of French people are in favor of re-establishing some form of compulsory military service. During his presidential campaign in 2017, Macron had promised to introduce a month-long compulsory service, but the idea received a cool response from the army. —APP

PN launches second Hangor-Class Submarine in China

The launching ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials from Pakistan and China, including representatives from Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group Company Ltd and China Shipbuilding & Offshore International Company Ltd

ISLAMABAD: The launching ceremony of the second Hangor Class submarine, PNS/M SHUSHUK (Desig), was held at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group Company Ltd, Shuangliu Base, Wuhan, China. Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. While addressing the ceremony, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted the importance of maritime security in prevailing geo-strategic environment of the region, as well as Pakistan Navy's commitment to safeguarding national interests and ensuring a safe and conducive maritime environment for all. He emphasized that Hangor Class submarines, equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, will play a pivotal role in maintaining the balance of power and maritime order in the region. Acknowledging the tireless efforts of China Shipbuilding & Offshore International Company Ltd (CSOC), he expressed satisfaction with the project's progress and underscored that the Hangor Class Submarine Project will add a new dimension to time-tested Pakistan-China friendship. The Government of Pakistan signed an agreement with CSOC to acquire eight Hangor Class submarines during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pakistan. Under this contract, four submarines will be built in China, while the remaining four will be constructed in Pakistan at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works Ltd (KS&EW) under the Transfer of Technology (ToT) program. These submarines will be fitted with cutting-edge weapons and sensors, enabling them to engage targets at standoff ranges. The launching ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials from Pakistan and China, including representatives from Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group Company Ltd and China Shipbuilding & Offshore International Company Ltd. —DNA

Israeli air strike kills nine in Gaza

Israel's assault on Gaza has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians since October 7, 2023, according to Gaza health officials, reduced much of the territory to rubble and led to accusations of genocide and war crimes that Israel denies.

CAIRO: At least nine Palestinians including three local journalists were killed on Saturday in an Israeli air strike on Gaza's northern Beit Lahiya town, the local health ministry said, as Hamas leaders held ceasefire talks with mediators in Cairo. Several were critically injured as the strike hit a car, with casualties inside and outside the vehicle, health officials told media. Witnesses and fellow journalists said the people in the car were on a mission for a charity called Al-Khair Foundation in Beit Lahiya, and they were accompanied by journalists and photographers when the strike hit them. At least three local journalists were among the dead, according to Palestinian media. Israeli military initially claimed it had struck two "terrorists" operating a drone

that posed a threat to its forces and several people who collected the drone equipment. In another statement it named six men that it claimed were members of Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad who it said had been killed in the incident. Some of the fighters had operated "under the cover of journalists", it claimed. The incident underscores the fragility of the January 19 ceasefire agreement that halted large-scale fighting in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian health officials say dozens of people have been killed by Israeli fire despite the truce. Salama Marouf, the head of the Gaza government media office, denied the army's allegations. "The team was made of civilians and worked in an area near a

shelter on a mission sponsored by a charity. They were not in a prohibited area and didn't pose any danger of any kind to the occupation army," Marouf said in a statement. Later on Saturday, Gaza medics said another Israeli air strike in the town of Juhr Eldeek in the central Gaza Strip killed two Palestinians. The Israeli military said it was unaware of the incident. Hamas accused Israel in a statement of attempting to renege on the ceasefire agreement, putting the number of Palestinians killed since January 19 at 150. It urged mediators to compel Israel to move ahead with the implementation of the phased ceasefire deal, blaming Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the impasse. Responding to

some of the incidents reported by Gaza medics, the Israeli military said its forces have intervened to thwart threats by "terrorists" approaching its forces or planting bombs on the ground near where forces operate. Since a first phase of the ceasefire expired on March 2, Israel has rejected opening the second phase of talks, which would require it to negotiate over a permanent end to Israeli aggression in Gaza, the main demand of Hamas. The incidents coincided with a visit by Hamas' exiled Gaza chief, Khalil Al-Hayya, to Cairo for further ceasefire talks aimed at resolving disputes with Israel that could risk a resumption of fighting. On Friday, Hamas said it had agreed to free an American-Israeli dual national if

Israel begins the next phase of ceasefire talks towards a permanent end to Israeli aggression in Gaza, an offer Israel dismissed as "psychological warfare". Hamas said it had made the offer to release New Jersey native Edan Alexander, a 21-year-old soldier in the Israeli army, after receiving a proposal from mediators for negotiations on the second phase. Israel says it wants to extend the ceasefire's first phase, a proposal backed by US envoy Steve Witkoff. Hamas said it will resume freeing hostages only under the second phase. Israel's assault on Gaza has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians since October 7, 2023, according to Gaza health officials, reduced much of the territory to rubble and led to accusations of genocide and war crimes that Israel denies. —Agencies

Jordanian food companies have 'remarkable opportunity' at London exhibition

LONDON: Jordanian companies in the food sector will have a "remarkable opportunity" when they take part for the first time in the International Food and Drink Event, which begins on Monday at the ExCeL International Exhibition Centre in London, an official said Saturday. The three-day exhibition will feature 1,500 exhibitors from around the world and is expected to attract about 30,000 global buyers and distributors from more than 105 countries. Ahmed Khudari, chairman of the Jordan Exporters Association, highlighted the significance of the kingdom's debut at the show, calling it a key step in promoting Jordanian food exports and expanding their presence in international markets. "This first participation comes within the association's strategy to promote Jordanian exports of food products and expand their presence in global markets," he said. Khudari added that IFE 2025 offered a major opportunity for Jordanian companies to showcase their products and increase their global visibility, particularly in the UK. "The IFE 2025 is a remarkable opportunity for Jordanian companies to showcase the quality of their products to the world and contribute to promoting Jordanian exports globally, particularly in Britain, which is witnessing a growing demand for international foods, especially from Arab countries," he said. The exhibition will serve as a platform for Jordanian businesses to display a variety of products, including desserts, baked goods, spices, nuts and other food items. Khudari highlighted the advantages of the British market – particularly the presence of a large Arab community – which he described as a "great opportunity for Jordanian companies to expand their businesses and strengthen their presence in this vital destination," taking advantage of the free trade agreement signed between Jordan and the United Kingdom in 2021.

Briefs

Toll in North Macedonia blaze rises to 59

LONDON: A fire tore through a nightclub in North Macedonia early Sunday, killing 59 people, apparently after on-stage fireworks set the place ablaze, authorities said, announcing arrest warrants for four people. They said 155 injured people had been taken to hospitals across the country, 18 of them in critical condition. Some of the serious cases were to be taken to other European countries for treatment. The blaze started in the Club Kocani around 3am, as the place was packed with more than 1,000 mostly young fans attending a concert by a popular hip-hop duo called DNK. "Initially we didn't believe there was a fire. Then there was huge panic in the crowd and a stampede to get out," one young woman who was at the concert told local media outside a hospital in the capital Skopje. Fire crews and paramedics responded quickly and "tried to resuscitate people [...] but it wasn't enough", said the woman, who was waiting outside for one her friends, who was being treated for burns to his hand. The fire was probably caused by the use of pyrotechnic devices "used for light effects at the concert", said Interior Minister Pance-Toskovski, who visited the scene with Prime Minister Hristijan-Mickoski. "Sparks caught the ceiling, which was made of easily flammable material, after which the fire rapidly spread across the whole discotheque, creating thick smoke," Toskovski said. - Agencies

Trump, Putin to discuss Ukraine this week

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are expected to speak this week, officials said on Sunday, as Washington and Kyiv's European allies press Moscow to accept a ceasefire in the three-year war. The United States this week proposed a halt in fighting in the war after talks in Saudi Arabia, with Kyiv accepting the proposal. Putin however has given no clear answer, instead listing a string of conditions and raising "serious questions" over the proposition. Trump's envoy for the conflict, Steve Witkoff, who met for several hours with Putin days ago, told CNN in a televised interview that he thinks "the two presidents are going to have a really good and positive discussion this week." Earlier, Moscow said that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov and that the pair had discussed "concrete aspects of the implementation of understandings" at a US-Russia summit in Saudi Arabia last month. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday accused the Kremlin of not wanting to end the war and warned that Moscow wanted to first "improve their situation on the battlefield" before agreeing to any ceasefire. - Agencies

Peshawar imposes ban on toy guns

PESHAWAR: Peshawar has imposed a ban on toy guns and firecrackers under Section 144 due to security concerns, local media reported on Sunday. According to Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar Sarmad Saleem Akram, the decision has been made in the interest of maintaining peace and order. He added that any violation of the ban would result in legal action under Section 188. In addition, the district administration has decided to take strict action against those selling toy guns during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations. The district administration emphasised that the ban is a measure to safeguard national security and to eliminate the growing culture of toy weapons in the region.

Celebrating culture and spirituality at Serena Hotels Ramadan qawwali night

Abida Parveen's performance of renowned kalams such as Mai Nara-e-Mastana, Man Kuntu Maula, Tu Nay Dewana banaya, Dama Dam Mast Qalandar and many more resonated deeply with the audience, who enjoyed the spiritual ambiance to the fullest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, under its Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, hosted a mesmerizing Qawwali Night during the holy month of Ramadan. The soulful evening featured the legendary Abida Parveen, whose powerful performance of famous Sufi kalams captivated the audience, creating a deep sense of spiritual reflection and cultural appreciation. The event brought together a distinguished gathering, including government officials, members of the Armed Forces, diplomats, heads of international agencies, corporate executives, and media personnel. Guests were captivated by the heartfelt performance, which honored the rich tradition of Sufi music and its timeless messages of love, unity, and devotion. Abida Parveen's performance of renowned kalams such as Mai Nara-e-Mastana, Man Kuntu Maula, Tu Nay Dewana banaya, Dama Dam Mast Qalandar and many more resonated deeply with the audience, who enjoyed the spiritual ambiance to the fullest. Following the musical experience, attendees were treated to an exquisite Sehri, thoughtfully curated to reflect the essence of Ramadan's traditions. The evening showed Serena Hotels dedication to bringing different cultures together and encouraging meaningful conversations through the arts. Serena Hotels continues to create memorable experiences that highlight cultural diversity and support artistic expression and togetherness. The Qawwali Night with Abida Parveen was yet another evidence to this vision, leaving an unforgettable mark on the attendees of the event.



Punjab establishes authority to preserve Lahore's heritage

The meeting focused removing and identifying encroachments from historical sites

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Lahore Authority for Heritage Revival (LAHR) has been established to restore and preserve historical heritage. This was decided in a meeting chaired by PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Nawaz Sharif will be the Patron-in-Chief of the Steering Committee of "Lahr." A sub-functional committee of "Lahr" consisting of concerned officers has also been established. The meeting agreed on identifying and removing encroachments from Lahore's historical sites. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif instructed to provide alternative space for businesses and pay compensation to the victims of encroachments. A comprehensive plan was also sought for the restoration of Lahore's heritage areas. The city has been divided into six zones for the restoration of Lahore's heritage areas. The meeting also agreed on the proposal to start work simultaneously for the restoration of all zones and heritage areas. The meeting was told that underground shifting of electricity wires for the attractiveness of Mall Road is underway at a fast pace and five locations in the city have been identified for underground parking. - Agencies

IMF sees progress in Pakistan review, climate loan talks

"Discussions have made considerable progress in several areas," says Washington-based global lender

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have yet to finalise a staff-level agreement, though IMF officials acknowledged substantial progress in negotiations under the 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF). While Pakistani authorities expressed optimism about reaching a broader agreement, frequent shifts in policy decisions created hurdles, ultimately preventing the conclusion of the staff-level agreement at this stage. "As the statement from the IMF reads, programme implementation has been strong. We have made good progress in our discussions while the Mission was here and will continue with result-oriented consultations in the coming weeks," said Minister for Finance Mohammad Aurangzeb in a brief reply when asked about the reasons behind the inability to reach a staff-level agreement with the IMF on Saturday. The frequent shifting of goalposts created differences in reaching a consensus. At one point, when consensus seemed achievable, it was claimed that the political leadership might not accept the harsh conditions. Ultimately, the IMF chose to return to Washington, DC, without finalising a staff-level agreement. The primary reasons for the impasse included the inability of author-

ities to achieve a primary surplus of Rs2.4 trillion for the current fiscal year, persistent losses in the power sector, unresolved issues related to state-owned enterprises (SOEs), delays in privatisation deadlines, and challenges in curtailing expenditures. As a result, the IMF announced the continuation of discussions. Sources revealed that an agreement was reached with the IMF to increase the number of Point of Sale (POS) machines by installing several thousand more within the current fiscal year. Additionally, it was agreed to implement video surveillance of manufactured goods, though the main objectives of this measure were not fully clarified. Another top negotiator told The News that significant progress had been made in discussions, but finalising a staff-level agreement is a time-consuming process. In a statement titled "Pakistan: End-of-Mission Statement on the First Review for the 37-month Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and on discussions for an Arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF)," the Washington-based global lender stated that an IMF team, led by Nathan Porter, visited Islamabad and Karachi from February 24 to March 14, 2025, to hold discussions on the first review of Pakistan's economic programme supported by the EFF and on a possible new arrangement under the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).

'Polio eradication remains national priority'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal said on Sunday that polio eradication remained a national priority, adding that achieving a polio-free Pakistan required a "modern, integrated strategy that addresses all challenges". Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic, with the disease mostly affecting children under five, and sometimes causing lifelong paralysis. Despite global efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges such as security issues, vaccine hesitancy, and misinformation have slowed progress. During his visit to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for Polio today to assess the ongoing polio eradication efforts, the federal minister said, "Polio eradication remains a national priority."

Taliban moves British couple to high-security prison

KABUL: An elderly British couple, Peter and Barbie Reynolds, who were arrested by Taliban authorities in Afghanistan last month, have been separated and transferred to a high-security prison. The couple, both in their 70s, were detained alongside their American friend, Faye Hall, while traveling to their home in Bamyan province. Their daughter, Sarah Entwistle, described the move to a heavily guarded prison as a "shocking escalation." She expressed particular concern for her father, Peter, who is set to turn 80 in April, and has reportedly been "beaten and shackled," causing him immense pain. According to information from a reliable source, Peter is suffering from a chest infection. - Agencies

US President Donald Trump launches large-scale strikes on Yemen, 31 killed

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON/ADEN: US President Donald Trump launched large-scale military strikes against Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis on Saturday over the group's attacks against Red Sea shipping, killing at least 24 people at the start of a campaign expected to last many days. Trump also warned Iran, the Houthis' main backer, that it needed to immediately halt support for the group. He said if Iran threatened the United States, "America will hold you fully accountable and, we won't be nice about it!" The unfolding strikes - which one US official told Reuters might continue for weeks - represent the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since Trump took office in January. It came as the United States ramps up sanctions pressure on Tehran while trying to bring it to the negotiating table over its nuclear program. "To all Houthi terrorists, YOUR TIME IS UP, AND YOUR ATTACKS MUST STOP, STARTING TODAY. IF THEY DON'T, HELL WILL RAIN DOWN UPON YOU LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE!" Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. At least 31 were killed and 101 others injured in the US strikes, mostly from women and children, Anees Al-Asbahi, spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry said in an updated toll on Sunday. The Houthis' political bureau described the attacks as a "war crime." "Our Yemeni armed forces are fully prepared to respond to escalation with escalation," it said in a statement. Residents in Sanaa said the strikes hit a

Yemen vows 'professional and painful' response

SANAA: Yemen's Supreme Political Council has condemned the deadly US aggression against the country in support of Israel, pledging that the nation will punish the criminal regime in a "painful" manner. It made the announcement on Sunday, a day after the United States carried out large-scale military strikes on the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and the provinces of Sa'ada, Dhahar, Hajjah, and al-Bayda. At least 31 people, mostly women and children, were killed in the aerial and naval attacks ordered by US President Donald Trump. The council said that targeting civilians proves the US's failure in confrontation, adding that the aggression will not deter Yemenis from supporting Gaza but will instead escalate tensions. "The punishment of the aggressors against Yemen will be carried out professionally and painfully, by the will of God," it warned. The council also noted that the airstrikes on Yemen mark a return to the militarization of the Red Sea, posing a real threat to international navigation in the region. The US, along with the Zionist entity, will fail and retreat in disgrace and defeat, just as they did during their genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, it noted. - Agencies

building in a Houthi stronghold. "The explosions were violent and shook the neighborhood like an earthquake. They terrified our women and children," one of the residents, who gave his name as Abdullah Yahia, told Reuters. Another strike on a power station in the town of Dahyan in Saada led to a power cut, Al-Masirah TV reported early on Sunday. Dahyan is where Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, the enigmatic leader of the Houthis, often meets his visitors. Strikes also targeted Houthi military sites in Yemen's southwestern city of Taiz, two witnesses in the area said on Sunday. A Saudi official source cited by Al Arabiya News Channel dismissed claims being circulated on social media platforms of the kingdom providing logistical support for the operation in Yemen. Lebanese militant group Hezbollah condemned the large-scale military strikes by the US against Yemen, according to a statement. The Houthis, an armed movement that took control of most of Yemen over the past decade, have launched scores of attacks on ships off its coast since November 2023, disrupting global commerce and setting the US military on a costly campaign to intercept missiles and drones that have burned through stocks of US air defenses. A Pentagon spokesperson said the Houthis have attacked US warships 174 times and commercial vessels 145 times since 2023. The Houthis say the attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians over Israel's war in Gaza with Hamas militants. Iran's other allies, Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon, have been severely weakened by Israel since the start of the Gaza conflict. Syria's Bashar Assad, who was closely aligned with Tehran, was overthrown by rebels in December.