



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Russia's permission not needed to deploy troops in Ukraine, says Macron

Detailed News On Page-07

Yemen warns US raids won't break nation's resolve

Detailed News On Page-08

Torres helps Barca claim comeback win

Detailed News On Page-06

India 'main sponsor of terror'

India's 'fictitious narrative' can't hide truth: FO

Peace and stability in South Asia remained hostage to India's rigid approach and hegemonic ambitions, says FO

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Monday rubished "misleading and one-sided" remarks made by Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi during a podcast with US computer scientist and podcaster Lex Fridman. During the podcast, PM Modi alleged: "Every attempt to foster peace with Pakistan was met with hostility and betrayal." The Indian premier hoped that "wisdom would prevail on the leadership in Islamabad to improve bilateral ties".

Denouncing Modi's false propaganda, FO spokesperson Shafiqat Ali Khan said: "The remarks are misleading and one-sided. They conveniently omit the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which remains unresolved for the last seven decades despite India's solemn assurances to the United Nations, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people."

He said that India's fictitious narrative of victimhood could not hide its involvement in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil and the state-sanctioned oppression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). "Instead of blaming others, India should reflect on its own record of orchestrating targeted assassinations, subversion and terrorism in foreign territories," the spokesperson added. He asserted that Pakistan has always advocated constructive engagement and result-oriented dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues, including the core dispute of IIOJK. However, peace and stability in South Asia have remained hostage to India's rigid approach and hegemonic ambitions, said the spokesperson. "The anti-Pakistan narrative, emanating from India, vitiates the bilateral environment and impedes the prospects for peace and cooperation. It must stop."

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Ready to resign over Jaffar Express incident: Asif

Asif was reacting to the opposition's demand for his resignation "for a security lapse"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif on Monday said he is ready to step down as defence minister if it resolves the issue [of Jaffar Express attack]. Talking to journalists at the parliament house here he said "I am being held responsible [for the attack]. If my resignation resolves the issue, then I am ready, I have no objection to it." Asif was reacting to the opposition's demand for his resignation "after a security lapse" resulted in the attack on the Jaffar Express. The opposition alliance held a joint press conference a few days ago and called the attack on the train "a terrorist" incident sue to a major security lapse and demanded the resignation of the Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi,

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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Afiniti Information System led by CEO Jerome Kapelus called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Zakir Naik meets Nawaz, CM Maryam

During the meeting at the Sharif family's estate, the scholar and PML-N leaders reportedly discussed various issues

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Renowned Islamic scholar Dr Zakir Naik visited former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz at their residence in Raiwind. During the meeting at the Sharif family's estate, the scholar and PML-N leaders reportedly discussed various issues. However, no official statement has been released regarding the specifics of the conversation. Last week, former Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Hafeez has sparked controversy after meeting Dr. Zakir Naik.

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Afiniti delegation meets PM

PM Shehbaz pledges full support for agri development and growth

PM Shehbaz welcomed Afiniti's interest in further investment in Pakistan's IT sector. He suggested that Afiniti Pakistan establish a world-class call centre in the country for national and international clients

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed the commitment to provide all necessary facilities to develop the agricultural sector and enhance agricultural production. Chairing a review meeting on the matters related to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in Islamabad today, he termed agriculture as the backbone of the national economy. The Prime Minister said young agricultur l researchers from across the country should be engaged for the advancement of the agricultural sector. He also directed to take strict and swift action against companies involved in the business of substandard agricultural seeds. Shehbaz Sharif further instructed the acceleration of measures to boost the production of edible oil in

Continued on Page 06

Govt employees unlikely to get pay, pension raise

There is also no plan to revise employees' allowances or pay scales, says minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In an unexpected move, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday confirmed that there was no proposal under consideration to increase the salaries and pensions of federal government employees in the upcoming fiscal year.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Oil, gas reserves discovered in Waziristan

MPCL informed PSX that new hydrocarbon reserves have been found in the Spin Wam-1 well, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan has made a significant breakthrough in its energy sector with the discovery of a second major oil and gas reserve in the Waziristan Block, according to an official statement. Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MPCL) informed PSX in a letter that new hydrocarbon reserves have been found in the Spin Wam-1 well, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The letter stated that the well is producing light crude oil and natural gas with a flow pressure of 3,431 pounds per square inch (psi). The daily output from the well is estimated at 20.485 million standard cubic feet of gas per day (MMSCFD) and 117 barrels of light crude oil.

Man arrested for online hate campaign

FIA seizes digital evidence in arrest of man accused of promoting hate and terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The FIA Cyber Crime Circle has arrested a suspect accused of running a hate campaign against state institutions following the Jaffar Express attack. The suspect, identified as Haider Saeed, was apprehended in a raid conducted in the capital city's Bani Gala area, Express News reported. According to the FIA spokesperson, Saeed was found sharing derogatory material targeting state institutions during the Jaffar Express attack.

Torkham border

Pak-Afghan jirga agrees to halt disputed construction

Afghan authorities to suspend disputed construction, trade route reopening expected soon

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistan and Afghanistan reached an agreement on Monday for a ceasefire and the reopening of the Torkham trade route for all types of movement. The breakthrough came during a Pak-Afghan jirga held to address border tensions at the Khyber-Torkham crossing. Pakistani jirga member Jawad Hussain told media that both sides agreed to halt hostilities and restore trade and travel at the crucial border crossing. As part of the agreement, the joint jirga decided to temporarily suspend disputed construction by Afghan forces. The Afghan delegation has requested time until this evening to consult their authorities on the matter. Hussain said that the Afghan jirga would brief their officials on halting the construction and that the issue would be deferred until the next meeting of the Joint Chamber of Commerce. The final decision on the disputed construction will be taken during that session, while trade activities at the crossing will resume in the meantime. The date for the next meeting will be decided through mutual consultation. Additionally, officials from

Continued on Page 06

Waqas blames govt for targeting SM activists

Whoever doesn't follow your agenda is picked up and associated with India," Akram

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Sheikh Waqas Akram on Monday blamed the government for linking fake accounts involved in spreading hate against state institutions with the PTI. In a statement, Akram said that the government had made a mockery of the constitution by picking up the young people belonging to the PTI, claiming those who were picked were mere spreading message of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan.

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PIA set to roar for UK after Eid

It comes three months after PIA resumed its Europe operations after four-year hiatus

DNA

LONDON: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) continues to salvage its pride as it is expected to resume direct flights to the United Kingdom after Eidul Fitr. The announcement was made by Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK Dr Mohammad Faisal during an Iftar dinner in London. The dinner was attended by journalists as well as social media influencers. PIA's direct flights to the UK destinations will swim

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PTI confirms participation in NSC in-camera session

PTI confirms participation in National Security Committee, provides 14 names to NA speaker

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The PTI on Monday decided to take part in today's (Tuesday) in-camera meeting of a parliamentary panel on national security to discuss the issue of terror attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid tight security arrangements. Over the last few months, both KP and Balochistan have witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks, mainly targeting the security forces, the police, and other law enforcement agencies. In the last two days, several police stations in KP have come under attack, which were successfully thwarted. Meanwhile, last week, a dramatic showdown unfolded in Balochistan with terrorists who hijacked the Jaffar Express train and took hundreds of passengers hostage. An operation to rescue the passengers lasted two days. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq convened the meeting for 11am at Parliament House on Tuesday in the National Assembly Hall, to be attended by parliamentary leaders from all political parties represented in parliament, along with their representatives.

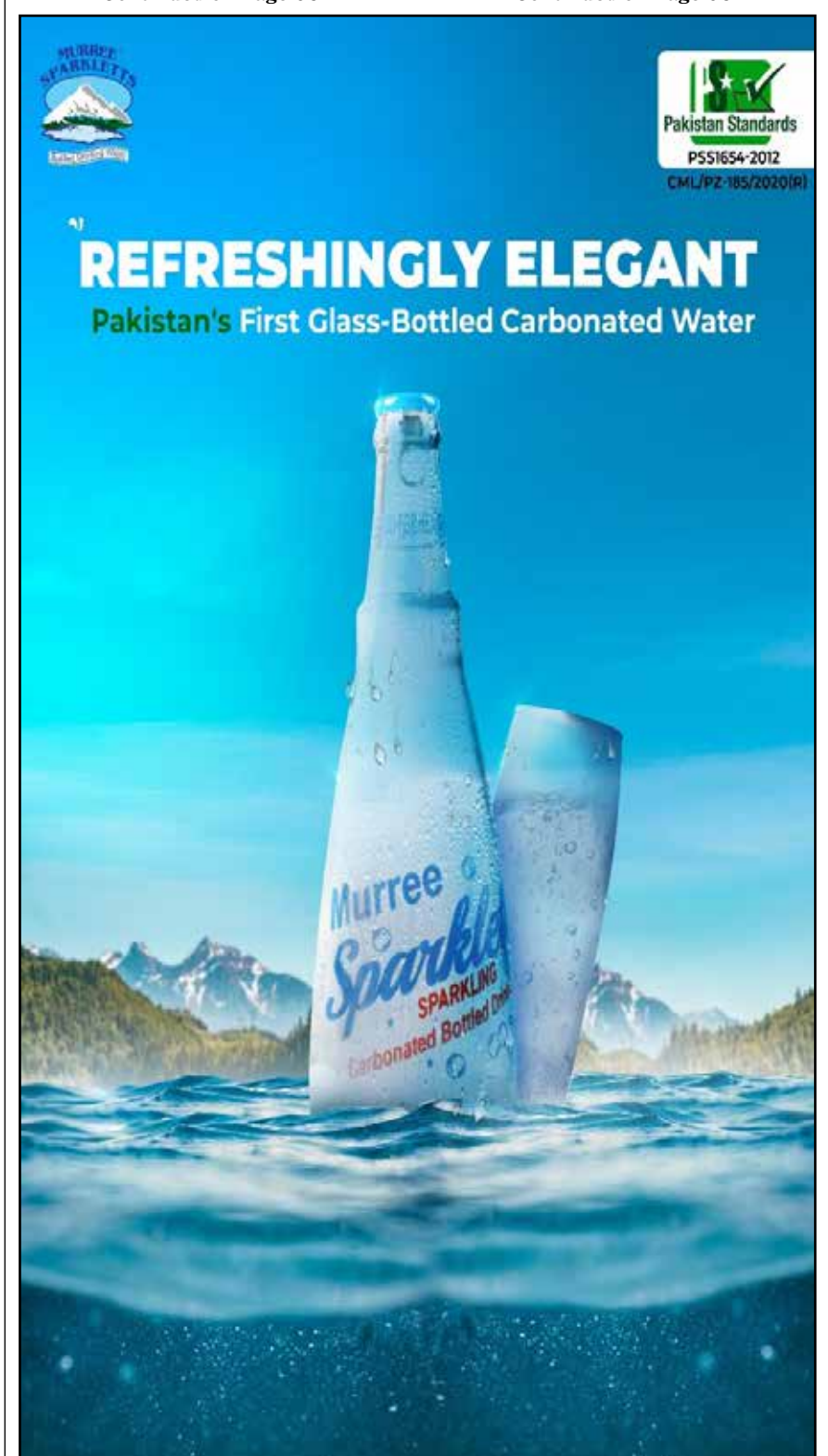
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Govt should refrain from rhetoric in war against terrorism

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif stated on Monday that the federal government should refrain from political rhetoric and instead cooperate in the war against terrorism. In a statement, Saif said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police was bravely confronting terrorists, and in the last three days, the police had thwarted multiple terrorist attacks, adding that in Bannu and Lakki Marwat, the public stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the police to repel terrorist assaults. "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government pays tribute to the brave police and the proud public.

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Pak, Bangladesh vow to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Employment Organization (ILO), a meeting was held between Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and Brigadier General (Retd.) Dr M Sakhawat Hussain, said a press release issued here on Monday. The meeting was attended by Secretary Workers Welfare Fund Zulfiqar Ahmed and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva Bilal Ahmad and senior officials from both sides. Chaudhry Salik Hussain emphasized the deep historical, cultural, and faith-based connections between Pakistan and Bangladesh, highlighting the importance of building on this foundation to foster closer relations. Both sides reiterated the need for enhanced high-level engagements and institutional cooperation to establish mutual trust and collaboration. Key areas of discussion included expanding economic, trade, and investment linkages, fostering people-to-people ties through cultural and academic exchanges, and promoting parliamentary and institutional interactions. Both delegations recognized the potential for collaboration in labor rights, skills development, and workforce mobility as a means of driving economic growth. The meeting also underscored the importance of coordination on key regional and global issues at multilateral forums. Both parties agreed that renewed efforts to strengthen this partnership would contribute to greater regional stability and prosperity.—APP

Gemology, lapidary courses, funded by NEVTTC kicks off

PESHAWAR: The six-month "Gemstone Identification (Gemology)" and three-month "Gemstone Cutting & Polishing (Lapidary)" certification courses have commenced on Monday at the Gems and Jewellery Center of Excellence (GJCoE) UET Peshawar. The course is fully funded by the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) under the Prime Minister Youth Skill Development Programme. A total of 106 young individuals from different walks of life have enrolled in the programme, which aims to provide a combination of practical knowledge and theoretical expertise, preparing them for careers in gemstone and jewelry sectors. The orientation ceremony, held here Monday was attended by the students and faculty members. Prof Dr Khizar Azam, Registrar UET Peshawar was the chief guest at the orientation ceremony. Addressing the students he said, the Prime Minister Youth Skill Development Programme under the umbrella of NAVTTTC is an excellent opportunity for the youth to gain specialized skills that will help them succeed in the gemstone industry. He urged the students to benefit from this opportunity and contribute significantly in Pakistan through growing gemstone sector.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Minister-in-Charge for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar addressing during his visit to Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). President Atif Ikram Sheikh is also present on the occasion.

Sindh CM approves to abolish many TO, DEO, director posts

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a review meeting of school education emphasised the importance of foundational learning and early childhood care & education (ECCE) and approved the decentralisation of financial and administrative powers to the school level for headmasters as well supported the dissolution of additional or duplicate posts for town officers, District Education Officers (DEOs), and directors stressed the importance of digitizing the education department. This digitisation will involve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes, such as tracking attendance for teachers and students using facial recognition technology.

Moreover, there will be an effort to eliminate unnecessary administrative layers from the taluka to the divisional level. A significant emphasis will be placed on technical education and skill development through initiatives like Middle Tech and Matric Tech, which will also incorporate STREAM Labs in both formal and non-formal sectors. The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships through the Sindh Education Fund (SEF) model and Education Management Organizations (EMOs), aiming to bridge the gap between primary and post-primary schools by enhancing existing schools and adding classrooms with essential facilities. The meeting was attended by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Om-

budsman Sindh Sohail Rajput, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman of the Planning and Development (P&D) Najam Shah, Secretary of School Education Zahid Abbasi, Secretary of Finance Fayaz Jatoi, and others. The Chief Minister was informed that there are 40,990 schools in the province, which include 36,300 primary schools, 2,600 elementary schools, 1,600 secondary schools, and 490 higher secondary schools. Current enrollment across all schools stands at 5.2 million, comprising approximately 3.09 million boys (59pc) and 2.12 million girls (41pc). The education minister reported that the number of out-of-school children is 7.8 million. The CM set a target of bringing one million children to school during the next financial year. He expressed his satisfaction that

the girls enrolment ration in the schools was encouraging. To a question, the CM learnt that the net enrolment rate for primary education is 67 per cent, and for secondary education, it is 22 per cent. He emphasised the need to address the challenges in transitioning from primary to post-primary education by upgrading primary schools. To facilitate this transition, Murad Ali Shah approved initiating second shifts of elementary schools within existing primary schools to help close the gap between primary and post-primary education. In consultation with the education department, the Chief Minister decided to abolish several positions of District Education Officers (DEOs) at the district level, including DEO SEMIS, DEO Academics, DEO Sports, and DEO Quality

Assurance. The number of Taluka Education Officers (TEOs) will also be reduced; instead of four, there will be one TEO per taluka. Moreover, instead of having two DEOs (one for secondary and one for primary), there will be one DEO per district for better unity of command and efficient administration. Similarly, at the divisional level, there will be one Director of School Education instead of two. The CM has decided to transform existing high schools into model schools, establishing four model schools in each taluka to enhance the quality of education. By the 2025-26 academic year, approximately 150 schools will be developed as model institutions, with a total of 600 schools expected to be transformed by the end of the 2028-29 academic year.

KP CM hosts Iftar dinner for orphans

PESHAWAR: In observance of World Orphans Day, a special ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar where-in Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur welcomed over a thousand orphaned children from various orphanages across the region as special guests. The CM arranged an Iftar dinner for the children, personally joining them for the meal. In a heartwarming gesture, he also distributed Eid clothes and cash gifts (Eidi) among the children, individually meeting and interacting with them. The children expressed joy and appreciation for being warmly received by the Chief Minister. The event was attended by members of the provincial cabinet, officials from the Social Welfare Department, and representatives of welfare organizations. Speaking at the occasion, Gandapur emphasized the state's responsibility towards orphaned children, stating, "Orphaned children are the children of the government and the state. It is our duty to care for them. Supporting the underprivileged is one of the hallmarks of a welfare state." He further affirmed the provincial government's commitment to continue supporting vulnerable segments of society. A collective prayer was also offered for the country's progress, prosperity, peace, and for the elevation of martyrs' ranks.—APP

Tax incentives for green construction must for sustainability: Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, the Chairperson of Senate's Standing Committee on Climate Change, stressed the need for integrating construction industry concerns into national climate policies and proposed tax incentives for green construction projects and higher taxes on non-compliant sectors. She was speaking at a high-level consultative webinar, organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Monday, said a press release. In her keynote address, Senator Sherry Rehman highlighted the solid waste crisis in major metropolitan areas and its severe impact on the Indus river, the second most polluted river globally. "The informal sector is already practicing circularity by recycling and reusing materials, but we need formal sector integration into national policies," she stated.—APP

CDA chief emphasizes aesthetic landscaping for Interchanges

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Monday outlined ambitious plans for the landscaping of the Jinnah Square and Tayyip Erdogan Interchange projects. The meeting, attended by Member Environment, Member Engineering, Member Administration, architects, experts, and senior CDA officers, focused on transforming these key infrastructure projects into visually stunning landmarks. Chairman Randhawa, acting on the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, stressed the importance of creating aesthetically pleasing and sustainable designs for both interchanges. He instructed the team to develop unique and attractive landscaping plans, including 3D designs, to enhance the visual appeal of the projects. Highlighting the need for modernization, Randhawa directed the use of elegant LED lighting to ensure proper illumination and beautify the interchanges. He emphasized that effective landscaping, combined with land scaping, would not only enhance the projects' beauty but also attract tourists, showcasing Islamabad's excellent infrastructure and landscapes. The Chairman also called for the landscaping of the Jinnah Square Interchange to reflect Pakistan's struggle for independence and its historical landmarks, adding a cultural and patriotic dimension to the project. He further instructed that the designs for both interchanges be comprehensive, sustainable, and feasible, with a focus on long-term modernization of the underpasses. Randhawa made it clear that there would be no compromise on the quality, standards, or sustainability of the work. He emphasized that the landscaping should be built on modern and sustainable foundations, contributing significantly to enhancing the beauty of Islamabad, which is already renowned as one of the world's most beautiful capitals. The Chairman directed that landscaping work begin only after the approval of suitable designs, which will be finalized after thorough due diligence within the stipulated timelines.—DNA

Commissioner orders closure of non-compliant housing societies

They also discussed the digitalization of land records, the Plus Project, pending transfers, Khayat issues, the performance of e-registration centers, and ongoing cases in revenue courts

SARGODHA: Commissioner Jahanzeb Awan has issued a directive to seal housing societies that fail to submit the required fees. He issued these orders during a performance review meeting with revenue officers from all four districts of the division on Monday. During the meeting, Jahanzeb Awan emphasized the necessity for revenue officers to focus not only on administrative tasks but also on ensuring the full collection of revenue dues. "As the fiscal year approaches its end, it is crucial for the revenue field staff to work diligently to meet targets," he stated. He further directed revenue officers to resolve pending court cases within three months, asserting that no revenue case should remain unresolved for over a year in any revenue court. Such cases, Awan indicated, should be prioritized for resolution. The meeting included detailed briefings from deputy commissioners on several agenda items, including stamp duties, transfer fees, agricultural income taxes, water rates, and the auctioning of government agricultural land and commercial plazas. They also discussed the digitalization of land records, the Plus Project, pending transfers, Khayat issues, the performance of e-registration centers, and ongoing cases in revenue courts. Additionally, the Commissioner Jahanzeb Awan was briefed on the revenue rankings and parcel-based systems across the four districts. Deputy Commissioner Sargodha Capt (Retd) Muhammad Waseem, Additional Commissioner Raye Muhammad Yasir Bhatti, ADC (Revenue) Fahad Mahmood, ACR Khan Muhammad participated in the meeting, and other deputy commissioners and assistants from Khushab, Mianwali, and Bhakkar, who joined via video link.—APP

Qureshi calls enhanced trade cooperation between ICCI, Uzbekistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted a prominent business delegation from Uzbekistan here on Monday, led by Bakhrom Yusupov, Trade and Economic Counsellor at the Embassy of Uzbekistan. The delegation, comprising representatives from Uzbekistan's fruit, vegetables, beverages, and confectionery sectors, engaged in productive B2B meetings with Islamabad's business leaders to explore new trade and investment opportunities.



In his welcome address, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, highlighted the chamber's commitment to promoting trade, investment, and industrial growth. He encouraged Uzbek business leaders to explore partnerships in

Pakistan's industrial zones, invest in joint ventures, and participate in trade expos. Bakhrom Yusupov, Trade and Economic Counsellor at the Embassy of Uzbekistan, commended ICCI's leadership for its proactive efforts in

fostering international business ties. He appreciated ICCI's ongoing initiatives to create a business-friendly environment that supports both local and foreign investors. In his concluding remarks, Abdul Rehman

Siddiqui, Senior Vice President of ICCI, expressed confidence that the discussions would open new avenues for economic cooperation, business ventures, and enduring partnerships. Prominent ICCI leaders present at the event included Chairman Founder Group ICCI Tariq Sadiq, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, former President Mian Shaukat Masood, Executive Members Imran Minhas, Najeeb Ellahi Malik, Tahir Ayub, Malik Aqeel Ahmed, former SVP Khalid Chaudhry, and Senior Advisor to ICCI President Naeem Siddiqui.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Enquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Al-Shifa Trust screened 350,000 Kids in one year

Dr. Najam highlighted that many countries have successfully implemented school-based eye screening programs. These models, which have not only improved academic performance but also reduced vision-related disabilities, should inspire and motivate us to follow suit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust (AST) issued a compelling call for mandatory eye screenings for all children at the time of their school admission. The non-profit stressed the critical need for immediate action to address this pressing issue and ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive. Dr. Najam, General Manager of Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology, said this issue needs immediate attention to address the rising vision problems. Early treatment is crucial to prevent vision loss rather than expensive medical interventions later. Talking to the media, he said that at least 50 to 60 percent of school-going children suffer from different vision problems. However, if identified and treated early, these issues can be prevented from leading to serious eye diseases. He added that many children remain undiagnosed due to a lack of awareness, financial constraints, and limited access to eye care. However, early detection and correction improve concentration and learning ability, significantly enhancing their prospects. He stressed that while many organizations actively provide



eye care services to children, the magnitude of the problem calls for more concerted efforts, especially with the growing number of children due to the population explosion. He said that the pop-

ulation of children in Pakistan is around 100 million, but current initiatives address only a small fraction of them for eye screening. Dr. Najam said that in many far-flung areas, as much as 50 per-

cent of the children suffer from eye problems, which is shocking as delayed intervention can lead to permanent vision loss in some cases. In some of the remote areas, fifty to sixty percent of the

children were diagnosed with eye problems, including hazy vision, congenital cataracts, and myopia. He stated that the Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology's primary goal is to arrange school screening eye camps to assist children suffering from eye diseases and to inform them about preventive measures. He informed that AST initiated its outreach project in 1992. Free eye camps are arranged throughout the country to assist individuals in the areas where the majority lack the means to obtain quality healthcare. He said that from 2013 to 2025, AST has served over 4.2 million eye patients and performed over 54 thousand surgeries. He added that during the financial year 2024-25, the Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology screened over 350,000 children at school screening camps. He emphasized that eye-related issues are rising at a concerning rate; thus, public and private entities must enhance their efforts to address this challenge. Dr. Najam highlighted that many countries have successfully implemented school-based eye screening programs. These models, which have not only improved academic performance but also reduced vision-related disabilities, should inspire and motivate us to follow suit.

Pakistan to boost exports to \$60b in 5 years: Jam

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Monday that a comprehensive plan has been devised to increase Pakistan's exports to \$60 billion within the next five years. The Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, highlighted that the Ministry of Commerce, along with other government departments, is working to enhance exports and reduce the trade deficit. A significant achievement in this regard is the restoration of rice exports to Bangladesh, with plans to increase the volume from 60,000 tons to 200,000 tons. During the National Assembly's question hour, in response to a query from Sahar Kamran, Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the existing trade deficit and emphasized efforts to boost exports to address this gap. He pointed out key challenges, including limited value addition, lack of technology, restricted market access, and underutilization of trade agreements such as GSP Plus and access to U.S. markets. He noted that while Pakistan has struggled to achieve surplus exports in recent years, steps are being taken to bridge the gap between imports and exports. The Minister stated that the Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with the Ministry of Industries and Production, has been working to reduce business costs and promote manufacturing, trade diplomacy, and value addition. He added that tariff reforms and policy adjustments are being implemented to support exporters. Responding to a question from Syed Rafiullah, the Minister reiterated that increasing exports and reducing the trade deficit is a collective effort involving multiple government agencies. The Ministry of Energy is working on lowering production costs, the Ministry of Power is addressing power allocation and pricing structures, while the Ministries of National Food Security, Science and Technology, and Ports and Shipping are focusing on their respective domains to facilitate trade. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has been tasked with addressing tax-related barriers to exports. He emphasized that reducing inflation and policy rates would further support export growth. The Minister also highlighted positive trends in textile.—APP

IPC determined to ensure effective coordination between govts

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) plays a pivotal role in facilitating coordination between the Federal Government and provinces in Pakistan. The IPC fosters cooperation and collaboration in key areas, including Economic Development, Cultural Exchange and Administrative Affairs. IPC Ministry also promotes uniformity of approach in policymaking and implementation in all fields of common interest, and provision of a platform for discussion on policy issues received from the provinces, and therefore, playing a pivotal role in strengthening the federation. A number of departments/organizations have been assigned to IPC Ministry which includes, Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council (PVMC), National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), National Internship Programme (NIP), Department of Tourist Services (DTS), Federal Land Commission (FLC), and Gun & Country Club (GCC). Currently the Ministry is working on establishing the Arshad Nadeem/Shehbaz Sharif High Performance Sports Academy here at the Pakistan Sports Complex. The academy's goal is to provide international-level services, facilities, and staff to support elite athletes and ensure a strong performance at the 2028 Olympics. The Ministry also completed the Synthetic Hockey Turf at Wah Cantt project, aimed at providing infrastructure for talent development and coaching, enabling the organization of international, national, and regional competitions. Similarly the Quaid-e-Azam Inter Provincial Games, 2024 were successfully held from December 13-19, 2024, with around 3000 participants from all provinces and regions. The event aimed to promote national harmony and engage youth in sports for healthier activities and entertainment. A summary on a quota for sportspersons in departmental recruitment and promotion was submitted for approval in October 2024, aiming to provide livelihood and incentives for sportspersons. A new draft National Sports Policy (2025-29) is also under consideration to improve Pakistan's sports regime, focusing on 16 key areas such as anti-doping, gender inclusivity, and youth engagement. PSB which comes under IPC also supported Pakistan's participation in multiple international games, including the BRICS Sports Games, Children of Asia Games, and the 33rd Olympic Games, winning multiple medals. PSB organized the Quaid-e-Azam Inter Provincial Games with 3000 participants and hired foreign coaches to train athletes. Out of a final grant of Rs 1,161.270 million, Rs 1,153.919 million was utilized in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, with expenditures across various categories like employees' expenses (99% utilization) and physical assets (100% utilization). The budget for FY 2024-2025 is Rs. 1,207.500 million, and expenditures are ongoing. The PVMC which comes under IPC focuses on standardizing veterinary education and qualifications, regulating the practice of veterinarians, and strengthening the livestock sector. It also aims for international accreditation of veterinary institutions, facilitates online registration for veterinary practitioners, and offers faculty training programs. PVMC has accredited three veterinary institutions and registered 2200 students, 196 faculty members, and 1133 practitioners. It also issued 45 Letters of Good Professional Standing for international licensing. PVMC received a government grant of Rs 25.2 million and generated Rs 17.9 million from own resources, totaling Rs 43.1 million. Meanwhile the expenditures were Rs 53.6 million, resulting in a shortfall of Rs 10.5 million. PYMC also activated a toll free number (0800-55440), which is being published in the newspapers for the wide range public information throughout the country. An alert has also been published in the newspapers for parent/students to take admission in accredited veterinary institutions.—DNA

AIOU completes PhD & MPhil admission process

For further information, students can visit the official university website or contact the relevant departments

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has successfully completed the admission process for its Spring 2025 semester, including entry tests and interviews for MS/MPhil and PhD programs. The University has released the merit lists, and successful candidates are required to submit their first-semester fees by March 21 to confirm their admissions, said a press release on Monday. The merit lists are available on the university's official website, where applicants can verify their selection. Additionally, all successful candidates have been notified via SMS and email to ensure timely submission of fees. A total of 276 students have qualified for MS/MPhil admissions, including 89 students from the Faculty of Education, 123 from the Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, 51 from the Faculty of Sciences, and 14 from the Faculty of Arabic & Islamic Studies. For PhD programs, 61 students have been selected, including 35 from the Faculty of Education, 5 from the Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, 9 from the Faculty of Sciences, and 12 from the Faculty of Arabic & Islamic Studies. The university administration has advised all successful candidates to submit their fees within the given deadline to secure their admission. For further information, students can visit the official university website or contact the relevant departments.—DNA

Royal Public School providing quality education: Principal Ijaz

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Royal Public School has been providing quality education for quality education and excellent achievements, providing quality education for the past 10 years and is considered one of the most important educational institutions in the area thanks to its outstanding



academic performance. In the field of education, school students have achieved wonderful results from nursery to matriculation, complimentary certificates, certificates and trophies were distributed among the children. The teachers here not only focus on the completion of the curriculum, but also play an important role in the mental and moral training of children.

CDA Chairman, KPMG delegation discuss Gandhara Citizen Club

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa met with a high-level delegation from KPMG, a global consultancy firm, here on Monday aimed at boosting Islamabad's infrastructure and tourism sector. The meeting, attended by CDA board members and senior officers, focused on the operationalization of the Gandhara Citizen Club and the construction of five-star hotels in the federal capital. During the discussions, Chairman Randhawa emphasized the need to expedite efforts to make the Gandhara Citizen Club operational while improving its governance and legal framework. KPMG, which is providing consultancy services for the project, was directed to submit a comprehensive report at the earliest to facilitate legal approvals from relevant forums. It was revealed that the draft regulations for the club have already been prepared. Chairman Randhawa highlighted that the revenue generated from the Gandhara Citizen Club would be utilized for the development of F-9 Park and public welfare initiatives. He also stressed the importance of accelerating uplift work at F-9 Park, a key recreational space for Islamabad residents. In a move to promote the hotel industry and tourism in Islamabad, the CDA chairman instructed KPMG to prepare a feasibility report for the construction of five-star hotels in the city.—DNA

Port Qasim's development discussed

The meeting concluded with a commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at strengthening Pakistan's maritime sector

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Monday held a meeting with Chairman Port Qasim Authority (PQA), Rear Admiral (R) Syed Moazzam Ilyas, to discuss key issues and explore avenues for enhancing the efficiency and capacity of Port Qasim. During the meeting, the minister emphasized the strategic importance of Port Qasim in boosting the country's maritime trade and industrial growth, said a press release. He directed the PQA to focus on infrastructure upgrades, operational efficiency, and streamlining port procedures to facilitate local and international investors. The Chairman PQA briefed the minister on ongoing projects, highlighting the port's potential to accommodate increasing trade volumes. He also outlined challenges related to port expansion, environmental sustainability, and logistics. Both sides deliberated on measures to address these issues, ensuring that Port Qasim continues to play a pivotal role in Pakistan's economic development. Junaid Anwar Chaudhry assured the ministry's full support in overcoming operational bottlenecks and enhancing port governance. He stressed the need for adopting modern technology and best global practices to transform Port Qasim into a regional maritime hub. The meeting concluded with a commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at strengthening Pakistan's maritime sector and enhancing the efficiency of port operations.—APP

MARCH 2025

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Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



Briefs

Renowned actor Abid Ali remembered

ISLAMABAD: Birth anniversary of renowned TV and film actor Abid Ali was observed on Monday. Born on March 17, 1952 in Quetta, Abid Ali started his career from Radio Pakistan Quetta and later moved to Lahore for his TV and film career. He worked in hundreds of television dramas and movies. He was honoured with the Pride of Performance award in 1985. Abid Ali passed away on September 5, 2019 at the age of 67.—APP

Efforts afoot to stabilize energy prices

ISLAMABAD: Federal Petroleum Minister Ali Pervez Malik on Monday said that the government is taking decisive steps to stabilize energy prices and provide relief to the public as summer approaches. Talking to a private news channel, he said, "Despite global economic pressures, Pakistan's petrol and diesel prices are the lowest in the region compared to India and Bangladesh. We are committed to protecting the public from rising international energy costs." He assured that every rupee collected through the Petroleum Development Levy (PDL) would be used to improve the country's energy supply. On the government's engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said that the recent visit of the IMF delegation was successful, and a Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) is expected in the coming days. "We are working closely with them to align our policies while ensuring public relief" he added. Addressing concerns over the Rs. 600 billion revenue shortfall, he expressed confidence that economic reforms and rising tax revenue from inflation would bridge the gap. Minister also mentioned plans to deregulate petroleum prices to foster competition among oil companies and lower consumer costs. "I've already met with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and refineries. I will soon engage with petroleum dealers to address their concerns," he added.—APP

IRSA releases 71,487 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 71,487 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 69,145 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1403.8 feet and was 1.8 feet higher than its dead level of 1402 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 17,800 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1050 feet, which was at its dead level of 1050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 22,013 cusecs and 22,155 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 26,565, 23,868, 18,721, and 6280 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,300 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera.—APP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday that power generation from oil, gas, and coal is being discouraged worldwide, while green energy is being encouraged. However, the urgency of the situation in Pakistan cannot be overstated as

PRGMEA urges FBR to act against EFS misuse

PRGMEA former chairman Ijaz Khokhar urged the Federal Board of Revenue to take strict action against companies that misused the EFS facility instead of penalizing the entire export sector. He emphasized that SME exporters are already struggling and that delaying these amendments would help prevent further damage

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) has strongly opposed the recent amendments to the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS), warning they will harm the apparel sector, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). PRGMEA former chairman Ijaz Khokhar urged the Federal Board of Revenue to take strict action against companies that misused the EFS facility instead of penalizing the entire export sector. He emphasized that SME exporters are already struggling and that delaying these amendments would help prevent further damage. "A major concern is the reduced utilization period for imported raw materials, now capped at nine months, with extensions requiring board committee approval." The former chairman argued that apparel production involves multiple steps, including designing, sourcing, manufacturing, and shipping. Such a restrictive time frame will make it difficult for exporters to meet commitments. "Another issue is the requirement of a bank guarantee for enhanced face value, which disproportionately affects SMEs. Many lack the financial resources to secure such guarantees, potentially barring them from essential export facilitation benefits, he said, adding this policy limits their ability to expand into international markets. The amendments introduced through SRO 301(I)/2025 will weaken Pakistan's competitiveness in apparel exports, he said. Ijaz Khokhar highlighted that the industry is already struggling with rising production costs, energy shortages, and logistical challenges. Additional regulatory burdens will only worsen these issues, threatening jobs and reducing export potential. He noted that global buyers are highly sensitive to delivery time-



lines, and bureaucratic delays could result in lost orders. "The new amendments impose unrealistic restrictions on raw material utilization and require bank guarantees SMEs cannot afford. These policies will negatively impact Pakistan's export growth and textile sector," Khokhar stated. He also expressed concerns over increased compliance burdens and policy uncertainty, which could weaken Pakistan's position against regional competitors like Bangladesh and Vietnam. He stressed that exporters need a streamlined, transparent system to facilitate trade rather than complex regulations that create delays and additional costs. Exporters are already navigating economic

challenges, including fluctuating currency rates and increasing freight costs. Introducing more hurdles will only make it harder for them to sustain operations. Another major concern is the potential reduction in export-related incentives. PRGMEA leader warned that the amendments may lead to cuts in duty drawbacks and sales tax exemptions, which are essential for maintaining profitability. Delays in refund processing already strain garment manufacturers, and further disruptions could impact their cash flow. Small exporters rely heavily on timely refunds to reinvest in production and fulfill new orders. The narrowing of eligibility criteria for ac-

cessing EFS benefits is another challenge. Restricting these benefits will disproportionately affect SME exporters, who already face difficulties in securing financing and expanding operations. Ensuring equal access to these benefits is essential for fostering growth and job creation in the sector. The apparel industry leader urged the authorities to consider the broader economic impact before implementing changes that could force smaller players out of the market. Ijaz Khokhar also stressed the need for consistency in export policies. Frequent and unclear policy changes create confusion and increase operational risks, particularly for SMEs with limited resources to adapt. Exporters require clear, stable regulations to plan their operations effectively. The government must provide long-term policy assurances to instill confidence among investors and exporters. He called for PRGMEA and the PHMA to be included in the Committee for the Review of the Export Facilitation Scheme. As these two organizations jointly contribute \$8.69 billion in exports, their participation is crucial to ensuring that policies align with industry realities. Involving industry stakeholders in policy decisions is vital to creating fair and growth-oriented regulations. Ijaz Khokhar urged the government to reconsider the amendments to the EFS, ensuring they support rather than hinder exporters. He called on policymakers to collaborate with industry representatives to develop a facilitation framework that fosters growth and strengthens Pakistan's position in the global market. A well-structured EFS can significantly contribute to increasing exports, generating employment, and improving Pakistan's economic stability. However, if policies continue to burden exporters, the country risks losing its competitive edge in the global textile and apparel industry.

ANF recovers over 588 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations across the country managed to recover over 588 kg drugs worth more than Rs 160 million and arrested 10 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Monday. He informed that 2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Nazimabad, Karachi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 1,172 kg ice hidden in the trolley bag of a passenger going to Doha was recovered at Islamabad International Airport. 460 kg ketamine was recovered from a container imported from Germany near Kolachi Road, Karachi. 51.6 kg hashish and 4.8 kg opium were recovered from a truck and motorcycle near GT Road, Gujranwala and 3 suspects were arrested during the operation. 60 kg hashish hidden in a vehicle was seized near M-1 Motorway Islamabad and 2 accused were rounded up. 6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused netted near Charsadda Road in North Bypass Peshawar area. 1.9 kg ice was recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near M-1 Motorway Islamabad. In another operation near M-1 Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad, 600 grams hashish was recovered from the shoes of an accused travelling in a passenger bus. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

ICT admin launches preemptive strike against dengue

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to prevent a repeat of previous dengue surges, the district administration held an emergency session to outline steps for containing mosquito-borne diseases. In this regard, the Islamabad district administration has rolled out a proactive strategy to curb dengue outbreaks ahead of the monsoon season, following a high-level meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon. According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, the health officials and local authorities have finalized plans to launch a rigorous anti-dengue campaign immediately after Eid, focusing on surveillance, larvae control, and public awareness. All assistant commissioners, health department representatives, and relevant officers attended the meeting, which centered on launching a coordinated response after Eid holidays. In the meeting, the officials took key decisions include reactivating round-the-clock surveillance teams to monitor dengue hotspots, particularly in high-risk zones. These teams will conduct door-to-door inspections, identify stagnant water sites, and destroy mosquito breeding grounds. Meanwhile, the health workers have already been directed to report suspected cases promptly and initiate rapid testing. On the occasion, DC Irfan Memon emphasized that the campaign's success hinges on public cooperation. "Our teams are ready to act, but residents must ensure their homes and neighborhoods remain clean," he stated. Authorities plan to issue guidelines on eliminating standing water in pots, tires, and open containers—common breeding sites for dengue-carrying mosquitoes. A dedicated task force has also been formed to oversee larvae control operations, with a focus on parks, construction sites, and underdeveloped areas. Fogging drives will resume post-Eid, alongside awareness campaigns via social media, leaflets, and community announcements. The district administration has also warned of legal action against property owners or businesses found violating sanitation protocols. Fines and penalties may be imposed for negligence in maintaining clean premises. Last year's anti-dengue efforts saw a significant drop in cases due to early interventions, and officials aim to replicate this model. Hospitals have been instructed to allocate isolation beds and stockpile testing kits, ensuring readiness for any spike in infections. With monsoon rains expected next month, Islamabad's administration is leaving nothing to chance. By combining preemptive measures, public engagement, and strict enforcement, the city hopes to shield its residents from another health crisis. As DC Memon put it: "prevention is our strongest weapon—let's use it wisely."—APP

Pakistan moving toward affordable power supply

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is rapidly working to transform its energy sector, focusing on reducing reliance on expensive imported fuels and shifting to more sustainable sources like coal, wind, solar, and hydropower. By adopting the National Electricity Policy, the country aims to secure a cost-effective, reliable, and environmentally friendly energy future for all its citizens. According to official documents, as of February 2024, the Power Division has made significant strides in meeting the nation's energy needs. The government is focusing on increasing energy production through coal and renewable sources, while also modernizing the power grid and improving service delivery. Key projects like the Integrated Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP) aim to optimize energy production by prioritizing local and hydro resources. The government is also working to build a competitive electricity market and improve infrastructure to enhance long-term energy sustainability. Key achievements during the one year of the government included completion of major transmission projects, including new 500kV lines at Balloki, Islamabad West, and Matiari-Moro-RY Khan, to improve energy distribution. The 660MW Jamshoro coal-fired power plant is set to begin operations in 2025, while the Suki Kinari Hydropower Project and the Dasu Hydropower Project are boosting clean energy production. The country is also testing Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM), while a significant reform effort is underway to privatize electric distribution companies (DISCOs) and improve efficiency. The termination of power purchase agreements with five IPPs, saving Rs. 411 billion. To assist consumers, the government introduced the Bijli Sahulat Package, providing flat rates during the winter months, along with subsidies for low-income households, Uniform Tariff Policy: Rs. 342 billion in subsidies to ensure fair pricing.—DNA

Green energy being promoted worldwide

green energy, a global trend, is being discouraged in our country, and the progress made in this sector is being reversed, which is alarming. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the masses are made to pay for the wrong policy of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and other power sector failures. Talking to the business community, Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government is discouraging power generation from solar energy instead of promoting it, which is why billions of rupees invested in this sector are wasted. He said that abrupt and fundamental changes in solar power policy, such as reducing the price

of electricity purchased from solar consumers, send investors a negative message. The business leader said that sudden changes in essential policies, such as the reduction in the price of electricity purchased from solar consumers, affect the investment climate, which is why nobody wants to invest in Pakistan. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government should do something about the failed policy of IPPs, consider tackling inefficiency and corruption in the power sector, and stop harassing solar consumers. He noted that provincial governments are busy attracting the public to use solar energy, while

the central government opposes it. Mian Zahid Hussain said that hundreds of thousands of people, worried about the sharp increase in electricity prices, installed solar systems. Seeing the benefits, industrialists also started relying on solar energy to reduce their business costs. He observed that this indicates solar energy's potential to transform our energy landscape, which is unacceptable to the power bureaucracy. Due to this increase in the trend in Pakistan, the production of electricity from solar power increased to four thousand megawatts; however, the power bureaucracy did not like this situation, and they started conspiring against it.

Naqvi praises KP police

Security has since been heightened across the province, with law enforcement agencies remaining on high alert to counter any further threats

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Police for their swift and courageous response in thwarting coordinated terrorist attacks on three police stations. The incidents, carried out by Khawarji terrorists, were successfully repelled due to the valor and quick action of the police officers. In a statement issued on Monday, Minister Naqvi commended the bravery of the KP Police, acknowledging their critical role in safeguarding the region against the persistent threat of terrorism. "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have once again demonstrated their unwavering commitment to protecting the lives of citizens and upholding the rule of law. Their swift action and courage in confronting the terrorists have foiled malicious plans and saved countless lives," Naqvi stated. According to officials, the attacks took place late Sunday night when heavily armed terrorists attempted to storm three separate police stations in different parts of the province. However, the alert police forces engaged the assailants in intense gun battles, successfully repelling the attacks and preventing significant damage. Minister Naqvi highlighted the sacrifices and resilience of the KP Police, describing them as the vanguard in Pakistan's fight against terrorism. "The KP Police have always stood on the frontlines, facing the enemy with valor and determination. Their actions are a testament to their unwavering resolve in the battle against terrorism," he remarked. He further expressed solidarity with the police force and reiterated the federal government's support in strengthening their capabilities. "The entire nation stands behind our brave police officers. We will continue to work together to defeat the nefarious plans of Khawarji terrorists and ensure peace and stability in the region." The minister concluded his statement by saluting the police personnel and extending prayers for their safety and success in future operations. Security has since been heightened across the province, with law enforcement agencies remaining on high alert to counter any further threats.



Allure of US exceptionalism

AMERICANS visiting Toronto are sometimes disappointed that their trip across an international border doesn't feel like they've escaped to another country. Whether they're navigating the crawl of traffic in the downtown core of Canada's most populous city or its bland suburbs, the occasional maple leaf flag and French signage are often the only giveaways. That's why United States President Donald Trump might have thought his aggressive brand of politics would naturally carry across the border, drive a final nail into the coffin of Liberal Party leadership and get a substantial portion of the population to respond positively to his threat to make Canada America's 51st state. Trump's constant belittlement of then Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau after the US election did little to slow the former Liberal leader's political demise and may have even hastened it. But what was initially perceived as political theatre has morphed into genuine concern about Trump's determination to follow through with grave threats against Washington's closest allies. Against the background of his willingness to twist history by portraying Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as an aggressor, the realisation has apparently sunk in among Canadians that Trump might not rule out dealing with Ottawa as Russian President Vladimir Putin has dealt with Kyiv. Polling suggests that Trump's attacks on Canada have revived the prospects for the Liberals, which, until just a few weeks ago, was facing a bruising loss to the opposition Conservative Party in the next federal election. According to Canadian polling firm Pollara, Mark Carney began his tenure as Canada's prime minister last week "with a big brand advantage" over Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre when it comes to dealing with Trump. When Pollara asked "Who do you trust to deal with Donald Trump?", 47 per cent of the more than 1,500 adult Canadians said they trusted Carney, compared with 33 per cent for Poilievre. It's easy to attribute the Liberals' renewed strength to the punishing tariffs that Trump is threatening to impose, which undermine the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that his own negotiators signed during his first term, as well as the statehood threat. Facing this, Canadians would want to have at the helm someone with years of experience as an economic technocrat, who led both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. But there's more to the issue that Trump - never one to spend much time on cultural nuance - hasn't taken into account. Canada's cultural and ideological ties with Britain and Europe are just as strong as those with its giant neighbour to the south and go beyond the fact that Canada remains part of the British Commonwealth. Compared to Americans, one might conclude, Canadians are generally not big fans of swaggering entrepreneurialism. Access to healthcare, government funding for university tuition and labour union bargaining power may all spark heated debate in Canada, but are generally more robust in the country than they are south of the border, and align more closely with Europe and the UK.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 277

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



An urgent call to break siege

GAZA, O nation of two billion, continues to pay the price for carrying the trust of the nation; hunger has returned to gnaw at the intestines of its children." With these words, Palestinian journalist Raji Al-Hams directed an urgent appeal to the Arab and Islamic nations via his account on the platform "X" to take immediate action and break the siege on Gaza Strip during the holy month of Ramadan. Al-Hams called in his post for youth, activists, scholars, leaders, sheikhs, and all influencers to raise their voices high and break the siege imposed on Gaza Strip, following Israel's closure of crossings and the prevention of essential humanitarian aid from entering for survival. He said, "In this month of goodness and blessings, the reality is difficult after two weeks of complete closure of crossings and the prevention of food supplies; twenty-one thousand trucks were supposed to reach Gaza Strip. People rely on what they purchase daily in the absence of energy and the lack of refrigerators for preservation and cooling." He added, "Raise your voices and support your brothers in this month, and remember the pain of your brothers at your iftar tables, remember their poor, their destitute, and their hungry." In reality, the bread crisis in Gaza Strip has resurfaced amid the continued closure of crossings and the loss of any energy sources necessary to operate bakeries. Bakery owners have resorted to using firewood as a substitute for the fuel lost in the Strip due to the ongoing closure of crossings and the occupation's refusal to allow its entry. One bakery owner in Gaza Strip said, "We operate the bakery on firewood to assist citizens with the basic necessities they suffer from amid the lack of electricity and fuel." He continued, "There are no basic life essentials necessary for preparing food or bread." From the midst of the burning stove fueled by wood, he tells us, "The bakery helps people prepare bread in addition to pastries and sweets, which alleviates the difficulty of lighting wood in their homes, which is available only with great difficulty." He added, "The needs are not always available to us; the firewood is very scarce because everyone is now using it in their homes and tents." Citizen Suhail Hassouna said, "We are forced to walk long distances daily to obtain a loaf of bread, which is often difficult to find due to the scarcity of bread in the market and the severe congestion in front of the remaining operational bakeries due to the closure of crossings and the occupation's prevention of the entry of gas and fuel necessary for their operation. Our people's main concern has become obtaining bread during Ramadan, which should be a time for worship instead of seeking food." He continued, "Often, I am forced to pay four or five times the price of a loaf from the bakery in the black market in front of the bakeries, to avoid the congestion and to ensure that I can get one to feed my children and family. Today, I went to get bread and was surprised to find the last two bakeries in downtown Khan Yunis closed." There are signs of a real famine in Gaza Strip due to the siege imposed by Israeli occupation forces, preventing the entry of food and fuel to the Strip.

Bow your head: Before the state or the Almighty Allah?

Qamar Bashir



Historically, oppressive rulers have sought to position themselves as supreme entities, enforcing allegiance through fear. This contradicts the Islamic principle that leaders are only legitimate if they govern with justice and protect the rights of their people. A recognizes that authority is a trust given by the people and should be exercised with humility, fairness, and a commitment to service rather than domination. Had this foundational principle been upheld in Pakistan, the Baloch issue would never have escalated into a crisis

UNLIKE many countries that are making progress by leaps and bounds, Pakistan, unfortunately, finds itself on a regressive path. This is not only disheartening for its citizens but also deeply disappointing for overseas Pakistanis, whose hearts and souls remain tied to their homeland despite living abroad. The recent news emerging from Pakistan is alarming, particularly the horrifying incident where an entire train was looted, its passengers abducted and killed while traveling through Bolan, Balochistan. This event starkly contradicts the claims of our law enforcement agencies that they have "broken the back of terrorists and criminals." Instead, separatist and secessionist groups are gaining strength, their narratives taking deeper root both inside Pakistan and abroad, turning our security forces into mere objects of ridicule. It has long been acknowledged that while the reins of government, parliament, and judiciary are theoretically in civilian hands, real power rests with the establishment. Yet, whenever failures emerge, the blame is swiftly unloaded onto civilian governments. Now, following this recent wave of terrorist attacks, the establishment has conveniently placed the burden of responsibility on the PPP-led government in Balochistan. This was expected, as such tactics have been used since the inception of Pakistan. Meanwhile, our law enforcement agencies take pride in their dominance over the agricultural sector through corporate farming, monopolizing the housing market, assuming anti-smuggling and anti-drug trafficking duties, manipulating exchange rates, controlling elections, conquering the judiciary, parliament, media, and businesses—all enforced through the power of the gun. Yet, when it comes to their core responsibility—law enforcement, counterterrorism, and national security—they have delegated these duties to civilian puppets, washing their hands of accountability. Instead of fulfilling their constitutional duty to safeguard Pakistan's borders and internal security, the state's powerful institutions are more focused on diverting scarce water resources from civilian farmers in Sindh to the Cholistan desert—an effort primarily aimed at irrigating land for their corporate agricultural projects under military ownership. This is the defining irony of Pakistan's trajectory: civilians have been deemed incapable of navigating the civilian affairs and while our security institutions,

which failed to protect the nation's frontiers, continue expanding their grip over non-military domains. Pakistan has lost four wars, permanently ceded occupied Kashmir to India, and now appears to lack the will or capacity to defend even the Pakistani side of Kashmir. A new narrative has now been injected into the national discourse—one that demands all citizens to bow their heads before the mighty state. Those who refuse to comply are branded as threats, facing the heavy arm of the state until they submit. Yet, the true role of the state is not to instill fear in its citizens but to serve and protect them, ensuring justice, security, and societal well-being. A welfare state functions as a guardian of public interests, providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and social security while upholding fundamental rights. Laws should be designed to protect citizens, not control them. However, when a state begins to demand absolute loyalty and unquestioned obedience, it ceases to be a servant of the people and transforms into an authoritarian force that suppresses dissent and compromises personal freedoms. From a religious and philosophical perspective, particularly in Islam, submission belongs solely to Allah, the ultimate source of justice and morality. No earthly authority, including the state, has the right to demand obedience that contradicts divine principles. Historically, oppressive rulers have sought to position themselves as supreme entities, enforcing allegiance through fear. This contradicts the Islamic principle that leaders are only legitimate if they govern with justice and protect the rights of their people. A recognizes that authority is a trust given by the people and should be exercised with humility, fairness, and a commitment to service rather than domination. Had this foundational principle been upheld in Pakistan, the Baloch issue would never have escalated into a crisis. The land of Balochistan has historically belonged to the Baloch people for centuries, even during the rule of the Mughals and the British. The natural resources, wealth, and opportunities above and beneath this land rightfully belong to its people. Yet, instead of treating the Baloch with dignity, respect, and as equal citizens, successive governments and military interventions have only deepened their alienation. The Baloch people do not demand extravagant wealth—they demand basic rights: water, infrastructure, educa-

tion, economic opportunities, and most importantly, respect and honor. A state that attempts to subjugate its citizens through brute force and propaganda fails to learn from history. The same approach failed in Bangladesh, has failed in occupied Kashmir, and will never succeed in Balochistan. To correct course, the state must begin by withdrawing excessive military presence in Balochistan and handing over governance to genuine Baloch leaders at the grassroots level. Using brute force to silence dissent will not bring peace; only justice and empowerment can. The security establishment must recognize that its duty is to serve, not to rule, and that its authority comes under the higher sovereignty of Allah, not unchecked worldly power. The transformation of the state must begin by shifting away from coercion toward governance that listens to its people rather than suppressing them. The people of Balochistan, tired of oppression, are looking for leadership that has the courage, determination, and integrity to stand tall against state brutality. They seek leaders who will not bow before oppressive power structures and who will champion the cause of transforming the state into a true servant of the people. In an unprecedented turn, Imran Khan has emerged as the only leader in Pakistan's history who has demonstrated unwavering resolve to bow only before Almighty Allah—not before the forces that seek to impose their will on the nation. His struggle has set an example for all those seeking emancipation from state tyranny. This is a critical moment for Pakistan. The state must retreat from interfering in civilian affairs, reset the National Assembly based on the true election results (Form-45), drop all politically motivated cases against opposition leaders, and release Imran Khan. He has, against all odds, earned the respect of the Baloch people as a fearless, upright, and loyal leader. If Pakistan is to heal and move forward, it must reintegrate Balochistan into the national fold through justice, inclusion, and genuine leadership rather than through guns and coercion. This is the only path forward—one that allows the country and its citizens to finally take a much-needed sigh of relief.

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

Backsliding of liberal institutions in America

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Democratic backsliding is not always accompanied by the outright dismantling of institutions; instead, it often involves their subtle manipulation. In the U.S., the Republican Party has engaged in tactics that undermine democratic principles while maintaining a façade of constitutional legitimacy. These include gerrymandering, voter suppression and judicial appointments designed to entrench partisan advantages

DEMOCRACIES rarely collapse through abrupt coups or military interventions in the contemporary world. Instead, the decline of democratic governance is often a gradual process marked by the weakening of democratic institutions, the erosion of civil liberties and the rise of hybrid regimes that blend democratic and authoritarian elements. In such cases, democratic structures remain formally intact, yet elections lose their credibility, opposition parties face systemic disadvantages and the rule of law becomes compromised. Scholars have warned that the United States, long considered a bastion of democracy, has exhibited symptoms of democratic backsliding in recent years, following trends observed in other nations that have experienced democratic decay. This essay examines the structural conditions that have facilitated democratic backsliding in the U.S., the role of political polarization, the impact of institutional weaknesses and the potential pathways for restoring democratic integrity. The erosion of democratic norms in the United States did not begin with the rise of former President Donald Trump, although his tenure accelerated existing trends. Political conflict has been intensifying since the late 20th century, as partisan divisions have deepened and governing institutions have become increasingly gridlocked. The shift from consensus-driven policymaking to zero-sum political competition can be traced to the 1980s, when party leaders prioritized ideological purity over legislative compromise. The Republican Party's takeover of Congress in 1994, fueled by a strategy of obstruction and confrontation, marked a turning point in partisan escalation. By the early 2000s, ideological polarization had become more entrenched, with the Republican Party, in particular, rewarding candidates who embraced extremist positions. The rise of the Tea Party movement further exacerbated this trend, as grassroots activists mobilized around anti-government sentiment, economic nationalism and cultural conservatism. Wealthy donors and interest groups, such as the Koch network, played a significant role in reshaping the Republican Party by supporting candidates who prioritized deregulation, tax cuts and a rollback of social protections. The convergence of these forces created an environment in which political competition was no longer about governance but about ideological dominance and partisan survival. A certain degree of polarization is natural in democratic societies, as it allows voters to choose between distinct policy agendas. However, excessive polarization can be detrimental when it leads political factions to view their opponents as existen-

tial threats rather than legitimate competitors. Comparative political scholars have identified a dangerous threshold at which polarization transforms into a form of democratic erosion, often aligning with deeper societal cleavages such as race, religion and economic inequality. In the U.S., the historical legacy of racial exclusion has exacerbated partisan divisions, with political competition increasingly revolving around identity-based conflicts. Over the past few decades, partisan identities have hardened, making bipartisan cooperation nearly impossible. Political psychologists have observed that individuals who strongly identify with either party are more likely to view their opponents as morally corrupt and untrustworthy. This form of social polarization generates heightened emotional responses, such as fear, anger and resentment, which further radicalize political discourse. The consequences of this dynamic became evident in the lead-up to the 2020 election, as disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories and allegations of electoral fraud fueled public distrust in democratic processes. Democratic backsliding is not always accompanied by the outright dismantling of institutions; instead, it often involves their subtle manipulation. In the U.S., the Republican Party has engaged in tactics that undermine democratic principles while maintaining a façade of constitutional legitimacy. These include gerrymandering, voter suppression and judicial appointments designed to entrench partisan advantages. For instance, the refusal to consider President Obama's Supreme Court nominee in 2016, followed by the rushed confirmation of a conservative justice in 2020, highlighted the extent to which institutional norms had been subordinated to partisan interests. One of the most alarming aspects of recent democratic decline in the U.S. is the growing acceptance of political violence. Surveys conducted in early 2020 revealed that a majority of Republican voters believed that the "traditional American way of life" was under existential threat, with a significant portion expressing support for extralegal measures to preserve it. This rhetoric culminated in the January 6th, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, an event that starkly illustrated the fragility of American democracy. Rather than unequivocally condemning the insurrection, numerous Republican lawmakers downplayed its significance, reinforcing narratives of electoral fraud and illegitimacy. Despite these challenges, certain aspects of the American political system have demonstrated resilience in the face of democratic erosion. The decentralized nature of election administration, for example, has served as a safeguard against large-scale electoral manipulation. State and local officials, irrespective of partisan affiliation, played

a crucial role in ensuring the integrity of the 2020 election. Moreover, the judiciary, while increasingly politicized, has not entirely abandoned its role as a check on executive overreach. Courts at various levels dismissed numerous baseless lawsuits seeking to overturn election results, reaffirming the rule of law. Another underappreciated component of democratic resilience is the administrative state. Bureaucratic institutions, often maligned as inefficient or unaccountable, provide stability and continuity, even amid political turmoil. The public service sector has functioned as a bulwark against authoritarian tendencies by maintaining essential governance functions and resisting efforts to politicize its operations. However, public confidence in government institutions remains low, a vulnerability that can be exploited by populist leaders seeking to delegitimize democratic norms. Restoring democratic integrity in the U.S. will require systemic reforms and a renewed commitment to democratic principles by political elites and civil society. Some proposed reforms include abolishing the Electoral College, restructuring congressional representation and instituting campaign finance reforms to limit the influence of wealthy donors. While these structural changes face significant obstacles, more immediate steps can be taken to protect democratic institutions. These include strengthening voting rights protections, enhancing transparency in electoral processes and fostering bipartisan initiatives aimed at depolarizing political discourse. Ultimately, the survival of democracy depends not only on institutional reforms but also on the political culture that sustains it. Efforts to rebuild trust in democratic institutions must address the underlying social and economic grievances that fuel polarization. Civic education, media literacy programs and initiatives promoting cross-party dialogue can play a vital role in mitigating extremist tendencies and fostering a more constructive political environment. The United States is at a critical juncture, where the future of its democratic system hangs in the balance. The historical precedents suggest that democratic institutions can withstand periods of political turmoil, the current trajectory of polarization and institutional manipulation poses significant risks. Recognizing the warning signs of democratic backsliding is the first step toward addressing the challenges ahead. Through institutional reforms, civic engagement and a commitment to democratic principles, the U.S. can reverse its course and reaffirm its status as a functioning democracy. The stakes are high and the coming years will determine whether the nation can withstand the forces that threaten to undermine its democratic foundation.

Briefs

India's
'fictitious
narrative'
can't hide...

FROM PAGE 01
Last week, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry termed India the main sponsor of terrorism in Balochistan, saying the latest attack on Jaffar Express was the continuation of the same policy. Addressing a media briefing flanked by Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, the DG ISPR said: "The latest attack in Balochistan and other terrorist incidents that took place in the past... we understand that the main sponsor of these [attacks] is your eastern neighbor." The outlawed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), during the attack on the Jaffar Express, blew up train tracks and held over 440 passengers hostage in a day-long standoff with security services in a remote mountain pass in Bolan district.

PTI confirms
participation
in NSC...

FROM PAGE 01
"The session will meet under his chairmanship and entail a comprehensive briefing on the country's security situation to the committee members," according to a press release issued by the National Assembly Secretariat. It added that the military leadership would also brief the committee members on the current security situation. Furthermore, cabinet members would also participate in the meeting. A statement from the National Assembly spokesperson said there were tight security arrangements for the meeting and law enforcement agencies were also put on alert. It added that the media would not be allowed access to the parliament building and no one would be allowed inside without a special invitation.

PM Shehbaz
pledges full
support...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan to save valuable foreign exchange spent on its imports. He directed the activation of research work in the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council at the earliest. He said promotion of farm mechanization across the country should be ensured in collaboration with provincial governments, private sector, and other stakeholders. Regarding fruit and vegetable production, the Prime Minister stressed youth training for value addition and the provision of easy agricultural loans.

Govt
employees...

FROM PAGE 01
In a written response submitted to the National Assembly, the finance minister said: "There is also no plan to revise employees' allowances or pay scales." However, he noted that the government is reviewing the ceiling and limits for hiring and housing allowances. Aurangzeb made the remarks while responding to a question by the MNA Malik Mohammad Aamir Dogar. Moreover, the Ministry of Commerce presented details of the trade deficit over the past five years in the National Assembly. According to official documents, Pakistan recorded a trade deficit of \$154 billion between 2019 and 2024.

PIA set to
roar for...

FROM PAGE 01
The skies three months after the national flag carrier resumed its Europe operations after four-year hiatus. As for PIA's UK travel, it will restart flights from London and Manchester to Pakistan in the first phase. Efforts are being made to restore services from Birmingham in the near future. Dr Faisal confirmed that a special ceremony would be held to mark the re-launch, with media representatives invited to witness the event.

Torres double helps Barca
claim late 4-2 comeback win

Barca have 60 points and a game in hand after last week's postponement of their home game

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Barcelona's Ferran Torres scored twice to help secure a late 4-2 comeback win at Atletico Madrid in a pulsating LaLiga clash on Sunday that took the Catalans back to the top of the table. Barca have 60 points and a game in hand after last week's postponement of their home game with Osasuna. They are level on points with Real Madrid, who won 2-1 at Villarreal on Saturday. "I am happy and proud of this team," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick told a press conference. "They never give up... It's a great three points and we are happy to be top." Atletico remain third on 56 points from 28 games. The hosts took the lead on the stroke of halftime through Julian Alvarez after Antoine Griezmann broke quickly and found Giuliano Simeone, who curled a precise pass for the Argentine to score his 11th league goal of the season. Diego Simeone's side doubled their lead in the 70th minute through substitute Alexander Sorloth's brilliant close-range finish after he was set up by Conor Gallagher. However, Barcelona responded almost immediately when Robert Lewandowski latched on to Inigo Martinez's cross to take the Poland striker's tally to a league-leading 22 goals this season. The visitors equalised in the 78th minute when Torres headed home a delightful ball into the box from substitute Raphinha. Lamine Yamal added a third in stoppage time when his long-range strike found the back of Jan Oblak's net, before Torres put the icing on the cake with his second of the night. "It was very important to get the three points today," said Yamal. "At the end of the anger, of the impotence of seeing that we weren't comfort-



able, we showed our best side, we gave the best we had. "It was clear to me that if I scored it would be in important games. Since the ball was on the other side of the pitch I could see Gallagher was moving away from me and as soon

as it came to me I saw the opportunity and I saw the shot." The teams will meet again in the Copa del Rey semi-finals after the first leg ended in a thrilling 4-4 draw, with the return taking place at the Metropolitan on April 2.

Karachi Whites, Lahore Blues
maintain winning momentum

Karachi Whites, Lahore Blues maintain winning momentum in National T20 Cup



DNA

FAISALABAD: Karachi Whites and Lahore Blues continued their winning momentum in the ongoing National T20 Cup 2024-25 by defeating their respective opponents on Sunday night. In Group B, Lahore Blues and Karachi Whites secured victories, while in Group C, Abbottabad

and Faisalabad emerged triumphant. Lahore Blues cruised to a comfortable win over Bahawalpur, chasing a modest 98-run target in just 9.4 overs. Imran Butt anchored the chase with an unbeaten 48 off 32 balls, smashing eight fours. His opening partner, Umar Siddiq, played an explosive 41-run knock off just 16 balls, laced with three fours and four sixes, as the duo

put up a fiery 72-run stand. Earlier, Player of the Match Qasim Akram and Mohammad Salman Mirza wreaked havoc with the ball, sharing six wickets for just 24 runs. Qasim delivered a sensational spell, conceding only six runs in four overs while picking up three wickets, while Salman returned figures of 3-18 in 3.2 overs, dismantling Bahawalpur's batting lineup. Karachi Whites

registered their second win of the tournament, defeating Dera Murad Jamali by six wickets. Player of the Match Saqib Khan led Karachi's bowling attack with impressive figures of 3-23 in four overs, restricting DM Jamali to 132-7 in 20 overs. In response, Karachi Whites comfortably chased the target in 17.3 overs. Khurram Manzoor top-scored with 42 off 32 balls, striking seven fours and a six. Shan Masood added a blistering 38 off 19 balls, smashing four sixes and two fours. Debutant Haroon Arshad contributed an unbeaten 21, finding the boundary twice to seal Karachi's victory. Scores in brief:

Match 6 - Lahore Region Blues beat Bahawalpur Region by nine wickets at Iqbal Stadium, Faisalabad Bahawalpur - 97 all out, 18.2 overs (Muhammad Imran 22; Qasim Akram 3-6, Mohammad Salman Mirza 3-18) Lahore Blues - 98-1, 9.4 overs (Imran Butt 48 not out, Umar Siddiq 41; Salahuddin 1-17) Player of the Match - Qasim Akram (Lahore Blues).

Shah reprimanded
over ICC CoC breach

Khushdil accepted the offence, eliminating the need for a formal hearing

WEB DESK

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday, penalised Pakistan all-rounder Khushdil Shah for a Level 2 breach of the ICC Code of Conduct. According to the apex cricketing body, Khushdil has been fined 50 per cent of his match fee for the offence. The returning all-rounder violated Article 2.12 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator during an International Match)." The incident occurred in the eighth over of Pakistan's innings when Khushdil Shah thudded into the back of New Zealand bowler Zakary Foulkes, an act classified by the ICC as "inappropriate physical contact with a high degree of force" and was deemed "reckless, negligent and avoidable." The all-rounder admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by match referee Jeff Crowe, eliminating the need for a formal hearing. However, three demerit points have been added to Khushdil's disciplinary record. This was his first offence in the 24-month period. Notably, if four or more demerit points get accumulated in a player's disciplinary record within a 24-month period, they are converted into suspension points. Two suspension points result in a ban from either one Test, two ODIs or two T20Is, subjected to whichever comes first for the player. The sanction added more to Pakistan's woes, who suffered a nine-wicket thrashing in the series opener in Christchurch on Sunday. Put into bat first, the touring side could amass a meagre 91 before getting bowled out in the penultimate over. Leading the way for the green shirts was Khushdil Shah, who top-scored with a 30-ball 32. In response, New Zealand comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just one wicket and 59 balls to spare, to script a triumphant start to the five-match series.

Former Australian
cricketer mocks
Muhammad Rizwan

Hogg conducted a mock interview with a content creator impersonating Rizwan

SYDNEY: Former Australian cricketer Brad Hogg has sparked debate among cricket fans after mimicking Pakistan's wicket-keeper-batsman Muhammad Rizwan's English in a viral video. In the clip circulating on social media, Hogg conducted a mock interview with a content creator impersonating Rizwan. The mimicry highlighted Rizwan's distinctive speaking style and English proficiency. During the exchange, Hogg asked, "What do you think about Virat Kohli?" The impersonator humorously responded, "I and Virat are alike. He drinks water, I drink water. He eats food, I eat food. We are both the same; there is no difference." Hogg also referenced Rizwan's well-known phrases, including his popular response, "Ya win hai, learn," when asked about team strategy. Towards the end of the video, Hogg jokingly complimented Rizwan's English, to which impersonator replied, "Yes, everyone in Pakistan says my English is very good." The video has divided cricket fans, with some finding it amusing, while others have criticized it as disrespectful. Rizwan, known for his humility and composed nature, has previously been at the center of discussions regarding his interview style. It is worth mentioning that under Rizwan's captaincy, Pakistan faced a series of setbacks at home in 2025. Team lost the home tri-nation ODI series final against NZ suffered an early exit from Champions Trophy after defeats to both Black Caps and arch-rivals India. - Agencies

Broad warns ECB against
appointing Stokes as captain

ECB Director Rob Key hinted that Stokes was among the leading candidates for the captaincy

LONDON: Former England pacer Stuart Broad has cautioned the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) against considering all-rounder Ben Stokes for the role of ODI captain. This discussion follows Jos Buttler's resignation after England's dismal campaign in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. England endured a disastrous tournament, failing to register a single victory in Group B. They suffered defeats against Afghanistan, South Africa, and Australia, resulting in an early exit before the semi-finals. In response, ECB Managing Director Rob Key hinted that Stokes was among the leading candidates for the captaincy. "Ben Stokes is one of the best captains I've ever seen, so it would be stupid not to look at him. It's just the knock-on effect of what that means," Key stated. "You look at every single option and think: What is the best thing to do? How is that going to impact other things?" he added. Stokes, who reversed his ODI retirement to play in the 2023 World Cup, had shown interest in participating in the Champions Trophy. However, a hamstring injury during England's tour of New Zealand last year ruled him out of contention. Notably, he has not played a 50-over match since that World Cup campaign. Despite his credentials, Broad has strongly op-



posed the idea of Stokes taking over the ODI captaincy, calling it a "decision of desperation." "I would be lost for words if England appointed him," Broad said. "Firstly, there's the schedule. He's skipping the IPL to focus on Test cricket and manage his body for major assignments ahead. How many overs has Stokes successfully bowled in the last three years while battling knee injuries? Not many. And now you're going to add the workload of bowling eight to ten overs per match in the 50-over format? The mathematics of that make no sense," he added. Stokes is already set for a demanding year in Test cricket, with England hosting India for a five-match series before heading to Australia for the Ashes. - Agencies

Mitchell Owen picked by Peshawar Zalmi for PSL 10

Owen scored a 39-ball century to lead Hurricanes to their maiden BBL title earlier this year

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Australia's emerging middle-order batter Mitchell Owen has been roped in by former champions Peshawar Zalmi for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10, scheduled to commence on April 11. Owen, who rose to fame after leading Hobart Hurricanes to their maiden Big Bash League (BBL) title by scoring the joint-fastest century in the final against Sydney Thunder earlier this month, had registered for PSL 2025 draft but went unpicked.

However, the 23-year-old has now been drafted to Zalmi in the Supplementary category. "Supplementary draft pick. All-Rounder Mitchell Owen joins the Zalmi squad for [PSL 10]," the franchise announced on social media platforms by sharing an animated poster of the Australian batter. The development came just days after South Africa all-rounder Corbin Bosch, who was picked in the diamond category by Zalmi, breached his PSL contract to join Mumbai Indians' squad for the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL). The 30-year-old is likely to replace injured Lizaad Wil-

liams in the former champions squad for the upcoming edition of the IPL, slated to run from March 22 to May 25. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), as a result,

served a legal notice to the South African all-rounder and has been asked to justify his actions of withdrawing from his professional and contractual commitments. "South

Africa's Corbin Bosch has been served a legal notice by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) alleging breach of the all-rounder's contractual obligations to the PCB," the cricket board said in a statement. "The 30-year-old Bosch was picked by Peshawar Zalmi in the Diamond category during the tenth edition of HBL PSL Player Draft, held in Lahore on 13 January. The legal notice was served through his agent, and the player has been asked to justify his actions of withdrawing from his professional and contractual commitments. "The PCB management has also outlined the repercus-

sions of his departure from the league and expects his response within the stipulated time frame. The PCB will not make any further comments on the matter." Peshawar Zalmi squad for PSL 10: Babar Azam, Saif Ayub and Tom Kohler-Cadmore (all platinum), Mohammad Haris and Mohammad Ali (both diamond), Hussain Talat, Nahid Rana and Abdul Samad (all gold), Arif Yaqoob, Mehran Mumtaz, Sufiyan Muqeem and Najibullah Zadran (all silver), Ali Raza and Maaz Sadaqat (both emerging), Mitchell Owen, Ahmed Daniyal and Alzarri Joseph (all supplementary).

Pak-Afghan
jirga agrees
to halt
disputed...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan's Frontier Corps (FC) and Afghan authorities are set to meet today. The reopening of the Torkham trade route is expected following their discussions. The border crossing was shut on February 21 after tensions escalated when Afghan forces began construction inside Pakistani territory.

Waqas
blames govt
for targeting
SM activists

FROM PAGE 01
"Whoever doesn't follow your agenda is picked up and associated with India. These people are Pakistanis. They are the future of Pakistan. The government should be serious in tackling the issue of rising terrorism instead of targeting us," he added. He further said that the PTI was meeting fellow opposition parties to make a grand alliance which will hold public protests after Eid.

Zakir Naik
meets
Nawaz, CM
Maryam

FROM PAGE 01
Hafeez shared pictures from their meeting on social media, prompting widespread criticism. Hafeez posted, "Pleasure meeting with Zakir Naik," alongside images of them together, including one at a restaurant. The post was met with strong reactions online, with many questioning his decision to meet Naik. One social media user wrote "This is one of the reasons why the Indian cricket team and the Indian government do not want to come to Pakistan." And they say India doesn't play in Pakistan. When you welcome and cherish a designated terrorist then India will play in Pakistan? Well done @ JayShah not sending Indian team to Pakistan. Most of the criticism came from Indian nationals. Dr. Naik is currently wanted by Indian authorities on charges of alleged money laundering and inciting extremism.

Govt should
refrain from
rhetoric in
war against..

FROM PAGE 01
The people and the police are united in the fight against terrorism, and without public cooperation, the elimination of miscreants is not possible," he added. He emphasised that the federal government should avoid political rhetoric and instead support the fight against terrorism. "Terrorism is not a provincial but a national issue. The federal government has remained a silent spectator in the war against terrorism and has withheld the province's funds instead of aiding in the fight," he asserted. Barrister Saif stated that economically weakening the province was tantamount to promoting terrorism. "After the merger of FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population increased, but its share in the NFC Award had not been adjusted accordingly," he added. The provincial information adviser further said that under the AIP program, the federal government owed Rs700 billion, but so far, only 132 billion rupees had been released while Rs2 trillion in net hydel profits arrears had not been paid to the province.

Ready
to resign
over Jaffar
Express
incident: Asif

FROM PAGE 01
Defense Minister Khawaja Asif and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar. It may be noted that while speaking in the National Assembly, Asif had criticized the PTI founder for not condemning the attack. Reacting to his speech, PTI leader Asad Qaiser said that the minister was blaming the PTI for his incompetence.

Briefs

Gold prices
up by Rs.1,100
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,100 and was traded at Rs.314,800 on Monday as compared to its sale at Rs.313,700 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.943 to Rs.269,890 from Rs.268,947 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.865 to Rs.247,408 from Rs.246,543 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,530 and Rs.3,026 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$2,997 from \$2,984 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$33.85, the Association reported.—APP

PSX
witnesses
bullish trend,
gains 663
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 663.42 points, a positive change of 0.57 percent, closing at 116,199.59 points as compared to 115,536.17 points on the last trading day. A total of 507,512,741 shares were traded during the day as compared to 360,456,374 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.34.105 billion against Rs.21.039 billion on the last trading day. As many as 448 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 179 of them recorded gains and 211 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 58 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Pak Elektron with 48,322,821 shares at Rs.45.54 per share, Bank of PunjabXD with 46,581,767 shares at Rs.11.67 per share and Pak International Bulk with 36,374,070 shares at Rs.10.18 per share. PIA Holding Company witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.85.69 per share closing at Rs.942.61 whereas runner-up was Mari Energies Limited with Rs.44.32 rise in its share price to close at Rs.649.98. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.152.99 per share price, closing at Rs.23,260.01, whereas the runner-up was Colgate Palmolive (Pakistan) Limited with Rs.35.39 decline in its per share price to Rs.1,441.87.—APP

Israeli
airstrike kills
three in Gaza,
medics say

CAIRO: An Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinian men in the Gaza Strip, medics said on Monday, and there was no sign of progress at renewed ceasefire talks. Medics said the three men were killed near Bureij camp in the center of the devastated Palestinian enclave by a missile fired from a drone. Israel's military said one strike hit three militants in central Gaza as they were planting explosives, while another targeted several militants in Rafah. In Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, medics said three people were wounded in another airstrike. Rafah residents have reported frequent fire by Israeli forces deployed in areas adjacent to the border inside the city boundaries. The persistent bloodshed underscores the fragility of a three-stage ceasefire agreement between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. Israel wants to extend the ceasefire's first phase, a proposal backed by US envoy Steve Witkoff. Hamas says it will resume freeing hostages only under the second phase that was due to begin on March 2. "Hamas has complied fully with the agreement, while the occupation (Israel) didn't comply with some clauses. It (Israel) seeks to foil the agreement and impose new conditions," Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif Al-Qanouna said in Monday.—APP

Prominent dignitaries attend Iftar
hosted by Movenpick in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An exclusive Iftar dinner hosted by Movenpick Management brought together several high-profile dignitaries, business leaders, and government officials in the capital. The event served as a platform for fostering discussions on economic growth, invest-

ment opportunities, and business collaborations in Pakistan. Among the distinguished attendees were Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Federal Ministers Hanif Abbasi and Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, and President of The Centaurus Group, Sardar Rashid Ilyas Khan. Also present were CEO of The Centaurus, Sardar Yasir Ilyas, President of

the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaikat, and Chairman of REIT, Zahid Latif Khan. A large number of ambassadors and high commissioners from various countries attended the event. The Charge d Affaires of the US Embassy Nathalie Beker was also in attendance. Mr. Nicolas Verdun, the General

Manager of the MOVENPICK greeted the guests upon arrival. The gathering not only provided a festive and spiritual atmosphere during the holy month of Ramadan but also offered an excellent opportunity for networking and strengthening ties between the business community and policymakers. The discussions revolved around investment prospects, real

estate development, and economic initiatives, particularly in the commercial and hospitality sectors. The evening concluded with a group photograph capturing the presence of these influential figures, highlighting their collective commitment to Pakistan's economic progress and business-friendly environment.

French-British blueprint
doesn't foresee deploying
a 'mass' of soldiers in
Ukraine: Macron

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has fleshed out some possible missions that could be undertaken by a military support force for Ukraine that Paris and London are working to put together with other nations, in a so-called "coalition of the willing" that could deploy after any ceasefire with Russia. Speaking to French media ahead of an online summit that the UK hosted, Macron said the French-British blueprint doesn't aim to deploy a "mass" of soldiers in Ukraine and instead envisages stationing troop contingents in key locations. Macron's office said Sunday that it couldn't provide a recording of the French leader's exchange with reporters from regional French newspapers on Friday night. But according to La Dépêche du Midi and Le Parisien, the French president spoke of participating nations each deploying several thousand troops to "key points" in Ukraine. Their missions could include providing training and supporting Ukrainian defenses, to demonstrate long-term support for Kyiv, the reports quoted Macron as saying. Macron added that the proposed contingents from countries that are members of the NATO alliance would serve as "a guarantee of security" for Ukraine and that "several European nations, and also non-European, have expressed their willingness to join such an effort when it is confirmed," La Dépêche reported. Le Parisien cited Macron as saying that Moscow's agreement wasn't needed for such deployment. "Ukraine is sovereign. If it asks for Allied forces to be on its territory, it's not up to Russia to accept or not," he said. Following Saturday's two-hour virtual meeting, Starmer challenged Russian President Vladimir Putin to sign up to a ceasefire in its war against Ukraine if he is serious about peace, and said allies will keep increasing the pressure on the Kremlin, including by moving planning for a peacekeeping force to an "operational phase." Around 30 leaders were involved in the call, including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and leaders from Australia, Canada and New Zealand, as well as officials from NATO and the European Union. It was the second such meeting in two weeks, meant to help Ukraine face a change of approach by the US following the return of President Donald Trump, as well as gauging support for any future possible peacekeeping mission. Many more countries were involved this time than the previous meeting on March 2. According to Starmer, military planners will convene again in the UK on Thursday to progress practical plans to support Ukraine's future security.—Agencies

Serbian
officials
deny attack
on peaceful
protesters

BELGRADE: Serbian officials denied Sunday that security forces used a military-grade sonic weapon to disperse and scare protesters at a huge anti-government rally in the capital. Opposition officials and Serbian rights groups claimed the widely banned acoustic weapon that emits a targeted beam to temporarily incapacitate people was used during the protest Saturday. They say they will file charges with the European Court of Human Rights and domestic courts against those who ordered the attack. Serbia has not denied that it has the acoustic device in its arsenal. At least 100,000 people descended on Belgrade on Saturday for a mass rally seen as a culmination of months-long protests against Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic and his government. The rally was part of a nationwide anti-corruption movement that erupted after a concrete canopy collapsed at a train station in Serbia's north in November, killing 15 people. Almost daily demonstrations that started in response to the tragedy have shaken Vucic's decade-long firm grip on power in Serbia where many blame the crash on rampant government corruption, negligence.—APP

Threatened by US,
Canada hugs France,
Britain close

MONTEAL: With Canada's economy and even sovereignty under unprecedented threat from its southern neighbor the United States, its new leader has embarked on a trans-Atlantic trip to strengthen ties with traditional friends France and Britain. Just days into his mandate, Prime Minister Mark Carney faces threats on three fronts: A trade war with the Washington, US President Donald Trump's threats to annex his country, and looming domestic elections. But, despite the tension at home, he is expecting warm welcomes on three days of visits to Paris, London and Iqaluit in Canada's northernmost territory, Nunavut. "Canada was built upon a union of peoples — indigenous, French, and British," Carney said, in a statement released before he set off from Ottawa on Sunday, two days after he was sworn in, replacing 10-year veteran prime minister Justin Trudeau as leader of the G7, NATO and Commonwealth power. "My visit to France and the United Kingdom will strengthen trade, commercial, and defense ties with two of our strongest and most reliable partners, and my visit to Nunavut will be an opportunity to bolster Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security, and our plan to unlock the North's full economic potential." Carney did not say why Canada might be in need of "reliable partners," but he didn't need to — Trump's imposition of an escalating raft of import tariffs on Canadian goods has threatened to trigger a recession, and his scorn for Canadian sovereignty sent jitters through the former ally. Opinion polls show a large majority of Canadian voters reject Trump's argument that their country would be better off as the "51st state of the United States," but the trade war is a threat to the economy of the vast country of 41 million people, which has long enjoyed a close US partnership. On Monday, 60-year-old Carney will be in Paris for a working dinner with French President Emmanuel Macron and discuss how to, according to the Canadian leader's office, "build stronger economic, commercial, and defense ties." According to the Elysee, the two leaders "will discuss Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, international crises, and projects at the heart" of the "strategic partnership" between Paris and Ottawa. Canada, France and Britain are among the NATO members that have maintained strong support for Ukraine's beleaguered government and military since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022, even as Trump's US administration has bullied Kyiv to make concessions to Moscow. London and Paris are putting together plans for a coalition security force in Ukraine and looking for allies. France is Canada's 11th-largest trading partner and Britain its third at a time when Trump's tariffs and Canadian retaliatory measures are threatening trade with its huge southern neighbor — destination of three-quarters of Canada's exports. But Canada also has a "Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement" with the European Union, which includes France, and is a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which now also includes Britain. After Paris, Carney heads for London, where he once worked as governor of the Bank of England, for talks with Prime Minister Keir Starmer and King Charles III, the monarch who is head of state in both Britain and Canada. In his first speech as prime minister, Carney said: "Security is a priority for this government, reinforcing our security, as is diversifying our trading and commercial relationships, of course, with both Europe and the United Kingdom." On his return leg, Carney will touch down in Iqaluit, in Nunavut, the Canadian territory closest to the Danish autonomous country of Greenland — another Trump target for annexation — to "reaffirm Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty." —APP

WHO says
80% of
Afghanistan
operations
risk shutdown
by June

KABUL: The World Health Organization said Monday 80 percent of services that it supports in Afghanistan could shut down by June due to a funding shortage. "Without urgent intervention, over 220 more facilities could close by June 2025, leaving an additional 1.8 million Afghans without access to primary health care," it said in a statement. The UN health agency said that 167 such operations have already closed due to a lack of financial support. "The consequences will be measured in lives lost," said WHO's Afghanistan chief Edwin Ceniza Salvador. "This is not just about funding. It is a humanitarian emergency that threatens to undo years of progress in strengthening Afghanistan's health system," Salvador added. WHO said the cash shortfall was tied to a shift in "development aid priorities". It has been sounding the alarm since President Donald Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the United States from the agency. This pullout and the end of Washington's contributions put at risk the global measles surveillance network, which until now has been entirely funded by Washington. Afghanistan saw more than 16,000 suspected measles cases and 111 deaths in January and February, according to WHO.—APP

Syria's
new rulers
seek aid
boost at EU
conference

BRUSSELS: The interim government in Damascus will take part on Monday in an annual international conference to gather aid pledges for Syria, facing dire humanitarian problems and an uncertain political transition after the fall of Bashar Assad. The conference has been hosted by the European Union in Brussels since 2017 — but took place without the government of Assad, who was shunned for his brutal actions in a civil war that began in 2011. After Assad's overthrow in December, EU officials hope to use the conference as a fresh start, despite concerns about deadly violence this month that pitted the new, Islamist rulers against Assad loyalists. "This is a time of dire needs and challenges for Syria, as tragically evidenced by the recent wave of violence in coastal areas," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. But she said it was also "a time of hope," citing an agreement struck on March 10 to integrate the Kurdish-led and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which control much of Syria's northeast, into new state institutions.—APP

Bangladesh's
Yunus to visit
China this
month

DHAKA: Bangladeshi leader Muhammad Yunus will travel to Beijing on a diplomatic goodwill visit this month as frosty relations with neighboring India spur his caretaker administration to court new friends. The Nobel Peace laureate took charge of Bangladesh last August after the ouster of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India after a student-led uprising. India was the biggest benefactor of Hasina's government and her ouster sent cross-border relations into a tailspin. That has prompted the caretaker government helmed by Yunus to seek greater ties with Beijing. New Delhi's chief rival for power and influence in the Asian subcontinent. "Bangladesh aims to elevate this bilateral relationship to new heights," Yunus's media secretary Shafiqul Alam told reporters on Sunday in a briefing on next week's visit. "They will discuss a wide range of issues concerning both countries." Yunus is slated to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping during the March 26-29 visit. He will also receive an honorary doctorate from Peking University and meet several Chinese firms to explore investment opportunities.—APP

New Gwadar Airport to
unleash full potential: CIDCA

DNA

BEIJING: China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) Spokesman, Li Ming said on Monday that with the economic and social development of Gwadar and its surrounding areas, as well as the continuous deepening of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the New International Airport in Gwadar will surely unleash its full potential and become an air bridge between Gwadar and countries in the region, giving wings to China-Pakistan friendship. "We have full confidence in the prospects of Gwadar New

International Airport," he said in response to a question at a press briefing here at CIDCA office. He highlighted that New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) is an important symbol of the further deepening of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and a key facility for Gwadar Port to build a regional connectivity hub. Li Ming said that China assistance to build the airport is based on the strong will of the Pakistani government and people, and based on scientific and rigorous feasibility studies to improve the well-being of local people and regional development interests. "At the same time, we have dedicated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to

ensure that every dollar of aid is spent wisely," he added. He said that at present, the airport has been handed over to the Pakistani side and officially put into operation. The development of routes and passenger flow of large airports take some time and cannot be accomplished in an action. The relevant departments of Pakistan are working out practical operational plans and development strategies for the New Gwadar International Airport, improving the road network connecting the new airport with other parts of Pakistan in an orderly manner, and stepping up communication with regional countries on the opening of air routes

connecting the new airport, he added. The New Gwadar International Airport officially opened in January this year is now fully operational, managing both domestic and international flights, despite misinformation campaigns attempting to undermine its success. The airport offers enhanced connectivity with international destinations providing direct access to regions like the UAE, Europe, the Far East, Central Asia, and Africa. These connections will boost trade, tourism, and logistics, benefiting local businesses and fostering international partnerships. Gwadar strategic location on the Arabian Sea makes it a vi-

tal link in global trade routes. The operational airport will support the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by facilitating smoother transportation of goods and services. Additionally, it is expected to attract foreign investors and strengthen Pakistan position in the global market. Spanning 4,300 acres, Gwadar International Airport is Pakistan largest airport. Equipped with modern facilities, it has the capacity to handle both domestic and international flights. The airport is designed to accommodate wide-body aircraft, making it a key addition to Pakistan's aviation infrastructure.

Briefs

US raids won't break nation's resolve

SANA'A: Yemen's Ansarullah popular resistance movement has reasserted the country's unyielding determination to resist and confront foreign aggression aimed at forcing the Arab country to stop its pro-Palestinian operations. "Sana'a was not broken by 200,000 raids, and its steadfastness will not be broken by a million raids," Abdulrahman al-Ahnouni, director of the Yemeni General Corporation for Radio and Television said. The official was referring to the Arab Peninsula nation's coming under numerous incessant aerial assaults by a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition, which invaded the country in 2015, as well as ongoing American, British, and Israeli attacks against the Yemeni people. He made the remarks as the United States claimed to carry out major airstrikes across Yemen on Sunday night, hours after the Ansarullah resistance movement warned that the Yemeni Armed Forces will target the American aircraft carrier, and warships in the region. "The Yemeni people will not abandon Gaza, even if we are all martyred," he told Palestine's Shehab news agency, pointing to the Palestinian territory that has endured more than 15 months of a heavily-US-backed Israeli war of genocide. - Agencies

KBA moves SC against judge transfers

COURT REPORTER
ISLAMABAD: The Karachi Bar Association has petitioned the Supreme Court against the transfer of judges in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Filed by advocate Faisal Siddiqui, the petition names the President, the federal government, and the Supreme Court Registrar as respondents, along with registrars of the Lahore, Islamabad, Sindh, and Balochistan high courts, as well as both transferred and affected judges. Invoking Article 184(3) of the Constitution, the petition calls for the annulment of the new seniority list and the appointment of the acting IHC chief justice. It argues that the President lacks unchecked authority to transfer judges, a move that threatens judicial independence. Furthermore, the petition deems the transfer notification unconstitutional and demands that the affected judges retake their oath.

Murad, Hammad declared absconders

DNA
ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court on Monday declared three PTI leaders absconders in case related to attack on judicial complex. ATC Judge Tahira Abbas Sipra have declared Murad Saeed, Hammad Azhar and Farrukh Habib absconders for skipping hearings continuously. He has also issued arrest warrants for Raja Basharat and others who were absent during today's hearing. The anti-terrorism court later adjourned the hearing till April 7 after marking the attendance of the suspects who attended the hearing.

Air Chief vows to cement family coop with South Africa

Dr Thobekile Gamede commended the professionalism and accomplishments of Pakistan Air Force, highlighting its success in the domains of indigenization and cutting-edge technological advancements



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A high-level defence delegation from the Republic of South Africa, led by Dr Thobekile Gamede, Acting Secretary of Defence, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. The visit marked a significant step

towards strengthening the enduring military ties between the two countries, focusing on areas of mutual interest and exploring new avenues of cooperation in the aviation industry. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff shared insight into various ongoing modernization projects of Pakistan Air Force's operational construct, force goals and plans for the force structure with a keen focus on future warfare. He emphasized the crucial

role of the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park in bolstering self-reliance and driving regional defence innovations. The Air Chief also reiterated PAF's commitment to collaborating with the South African Air Force in military to military cooperation and the training domain. Dr Thobekile Gamede commended the professionalism and accomplishments of Pakistan Air Force, highlighting its success

in the domains of indigenization and cutting-edge technological advancements. She expressed a strong desire to rebuild South African Air Force, seeking assistance from PAF for its modernization and servicing of critical equipment. The dignitary also conveyed an earnest interest in bolstering the existing cooperation between the Air Forces of both countries. This includes a specific request for increased collaborative efforts to revamp training setups, ranging from basic to tactical levels, across multiple warfare domains. The South African Acting Secretary of Defence was notably impressed by the PAF's Multi-Domain capabilities showcased during Exercise Indus Shield, which was attended by a South African Air Force delegation as observers. She highlighted that the successful execution of this exercise underscored the professional prowess and versatility of Pakistan Air Force in diverse operational environments. The South African delegation also articulated intentions to re-equip their Air Force and establish an industrial setup aligned with the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park being spearheaded by PAF. The delegation also visited National ISR & Integrated Air Operations Centre and PAF Cyber Command, where they were given a detailed briefing on PAF's operational capabilities. This visit of Acting Secretary of Defence South Africa to Air Headquarters, Islamabad is a testament to the strong commitment of both nations to further enhance their military partnership through continued dialogue and collaboration.

Israeli airstrike kills three in Gaza

CAIRO: An Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinian men in the Gaza Strip, medics said on Monday, and there was no sign of progress at renewed ceasefire talks. Medics said the three men were killed near Bureij camp in the center of the devastated Palestinian enclave by a missile fired from a drone. Israel's military said one strike hit three militants in central Gaza as they were planting explosives, while another targeted several militants in Rafah. In Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, medics said three people were wounded in another airstrike. Rafah residents have reported frequent fire by Israeli forces deployed in areas adjacent to the border inside the city boundaries. The persistent bloodshed underscores the fragility of a three-stage ceasefire agreement between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. Israel wants to extend the ceasefire's first phase, a proposal backed by US envoy Steve Witkoff. Hamas says it will resume freeing hostages only under the second phase that was due to begin on March 2. - Agencies

Public hails Palestinian draft budget

RAMALLAH: As part of ongoing efforts to advance its reform agenda, and in a significant step towards promoting transparency and public participation, the Palestinian Government continues to welcome feedback from citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) on the draft Public Budget Law for 2025 before its final approval. The draft budget for 2025 has been made publicly available on the Ministry of Justice's digital legislation platform, providing an accessible platform for all concerned parties, including citizens, CSOs, and private sector institutions, to review the proposed law and submit their invaluable input, comments, and feedback, ensuring broad accessibility and public participation. This landmark initiative follows an intensive consultative workshop organized by the Ministry of Finance, which brought together key CSOs to review budget priorities and align them with national priorities and reform efforts. - Agencies

NHPP to address population growth, health infrastructure

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb briefed on development of National Health and Population Policy (NHPP) 2025-34

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today attended a meeting to review the ongoing development of the National Health and Population Policy (NHPP) for the period 2025-34. The meeting by senior officers from the Ministry of Finance as well as a three-member NHPP team, led by Dr. Sameen Siddiqi, Professor at Aga Khan University and NHPP Team Lead, along with Health Systems Specialist Dr. Tayyeb-Masud and Public Health Expert and Coordinator NHPP Dr. Noor ul Huda Shah. During the meeting, the NHPP team provided an update on the formulation of the policy, which is set to guide the country's health and population strategies for the next decade. The team emphasized that the policy is being developed with a focus on evidence-based decision-making and prioritizing critical health issues, all within the context of the fiscal constraints result-

ing from Pakistan's current macroeconomic situation. The NHPP team outlined the broader goals of the policy, which include reorganizing and restructuring the existing health infrastructure, addressing the challenges posed by high population growth, integrating health and population strategies, and leveraging political capital to increase public sector financing for the health sector. These efforts are aimed at creating a health system that works efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of a growing population, particularly the most vulnerable sectors of society. In addition, the team presented a series of proposals and recommendations designed to help achieve the goals of the NHPP. These proposals focused on strengthening health systems, improving resource allocation, and ensuring that critical health services reach all segments of the population, particularly those most in need. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb commended the team for their hard work and the progress made thus far on the NHPP.

IHC merges petitions, forms larger bench on Imran's meeting

Plea laments operational difficulties, uncertainty faced by prison administration due to multiple cases

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday issued directives for the constitution of a larger bench and merging various pleas pertaining to meeting rights of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan who's incarcerated in Adiala jail. The development came as IHC's Acting Chief Justice Justice Sarfraz Dogar heard a petition filed by Adiala jail Superintendent Abdul Ghafoor Anjum who complained of multiple pending pleas concerning Khan's visitation rights and conflicting judgements by the courts on the said issue. "In the interest of judicial consistency, it is imperative that all related cases listed [...] be consolidated before a single or larger bench to ensure uniform adjudication and effective enforcement of judicial directives," read the jail official's petition while citing operational difficulties and uncertainty faced by the prison administration. The former prime minister, facing a plethora of legal cases, has been behind bars in Adiala jail since September 2023.

However, his incarceration has not been without controversy as the former ruling party has time again complained of mistreatment by the authorities as well as alleged hindrances in arranging meetings between Khan, his lawyers and others. Last week, the IHC had ordered Adiala officials to produce the ex-PM before the court in a personal capacity in relation to a plea filed by Mashal Yousafzai against alleged denial of permission to meet the PTI founder. The court, initially, had sought Khan's virtual appearance via video link by 2pm. However, upon expiry of the deadline, the politician was due to be presented in court in person as per the court orders. However, the Islamabad advocate general (AG) informed the court that bringing the PTI founder from jail was not possible due to security concerns and that presenting him via video link was also not feasible. The court directed the Adiala jail superintendent and Islamabad AG to submit their affidavits in this regard. Meanwhile, in his plea filed in the IHC, Adiala jail Superintendent Anjum highlighted that Khan was being accommodated as per the relevant SOPs agreed in March 2024.

Fighting erupts along Lebanon-Syria border

The Lebanese and Syrian armies said they are communicating with each other to ease tensions


WEB DESK

BEIRUT: Fighting erupted along the border between Lebanon and Syria overnight into Monday, Syrian state media reported, after three Syrian soldiers were killed in earlier clashes. The violence came a month after dayslong fighting between the Syrian military and armed Lebanese Shia groups closely allied with the ousted Bashar Assad government in Syria's Al-Qasr area. Lebanon has been seeking international support to boost funding for its military as it gradually deploys troops along its porous northern and eastern borders with Syria and along its southern border with Israel. The Lebanese and Syrian armies said they are communicating with each other to ease tensions. Lebanese troops have been deployed in

large numbers in the area. Families in the border areas fled toward Hermel in Syria amid the overnight clashes and shelling. Syria's interim government accused militants from the Lebanese Hezbollah group of crossing northeastern Lebanon into Syria on Saturday, kidnapping three soldiers and killing them on Lebanese soil. Hezbollah in a statement denied any involvement. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said the Shia groups were involved. The circumstances of the incident remain unclear. Syrian state media, citing an unnamed Defense Ministry official, said the Syrian army shelled "Hezbollah gatherings that killed the Syrian soldiers" along the border. Though the clashes largely calmed before sunrise, Lebanese media reported low-level fighting at dawn after an attack on a Syrian military vehicle.

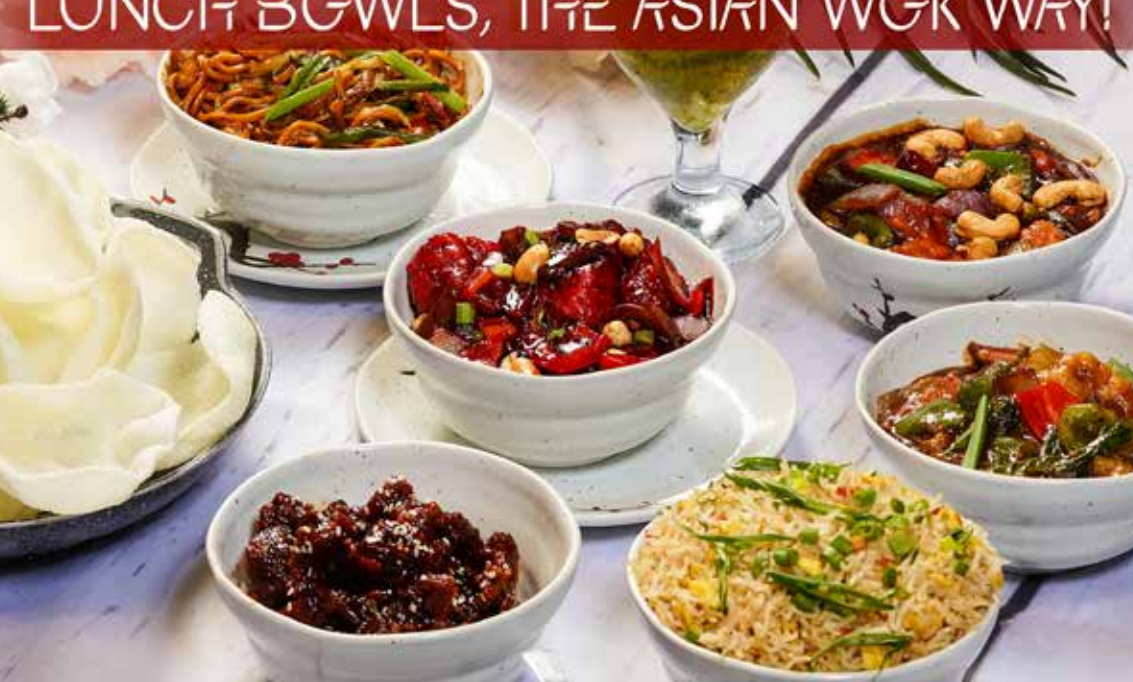


ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Sweden Alexandra Cannell Berg Von Linde called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters. - DNA



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