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OIC secy general calls Islamophobia a threat to human dignity

Detailed News On Page-08

SC judge: Laws exist but lack enforcement

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Djokovic player union begins legal action

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Boycotted by PTI

NA security moot expresses resolve to eliminate terrorism

COAS, DG MO brief parliamentarians on country's security situation. No agenda greater than national security, says COAS Munir

ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: The in-camera meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security on Tuesday resolved to deal with the terrorist groups, with an "iron hand". The high-level national meeting was convened by NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif amid rising incidents of terrorism in the country in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in particular. The meeting was attended by PM Shehbaz, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (DG ISI) Lieutenant General Asim Malik, chief ministers of all four provinces, and other top officials. However, several key figures including Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, NA Opposition Leader Omar Ayub and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members skipped the high-level huddle. The military leadership briefed the lawmakers on the country's overall security situation. NA security moot strongly condemned the recent incidents of terrorism in KP and Balochistan and expressed solidarity with the affected families, read the declaration issued at the conclusion of the crucial session. The huddle stressed the need for consensus and unified political commitment to combat terrorism with full force. Lauding the valour and professionalism of the security forces, the meeting reiterated the country's unwavering resolve to eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The committee stresses strategic and concerted political resolve to counter the menace of terrorism with the full might of the state. "The committee emphasised strategic and unified political commitment to counter the terror threat with the full might of the state," added the statement. In addition to this, the meeting stressed the need for immediate implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and strategy of opera-

tion Azm-e-Istehkam to dismantle terrorist networks, counter their logistic support, and dismantle the nexus between terrorism and crime. The participants of the meeting expressed concern over the use of social media platforms by terrorist groups to spread anti-state propaganda and recruit followers. They called for formulating a mechanism to tackle the digital networks of terrorists. "Reiterating its unwavering support for Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies, the committee acknowledged their sacrifices and commitment to national defence," it added. The entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces, police, Frontier Constabulary (FC) and intelligence agencies in the war against terrorism, read the statement. The meeting reaffirmed the resolve that no institution, individual or group working in collusion with hostile forces will be allowed to harm the peace and stability of the country. The participants of the meeting expressed regret over boycotting some of the opposition members and reaffirmed the resolve to continue the process of consultation. The high-level huddle comes days after last week's harrowing attack by the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants who blew up train tracks and held over 440 passengers hostage in a day-long standoff with security services in a remote mountain pass in the Bolan district. The military, after clearing the train and rescuing hostages, said it killed 33 attackers. Before the operation began, terrorists had martyred 26 passengers, while four security personnel were martyred during the operation. The martyred train passengers included 18 security personnel from the army and the FC, three officials from Pakistan Railways and other departments and five civilians. The closed-door meeting is also to be taken in the context of alarming statistics revealed in the Global Terrorism Index 2025 report which places

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presents shields to the contributors of Gilgit Baltistan Pilot Project of Prime Minister's National Hepatitis-C Elimination Programme. (News on Page 3). - DNA

PM to visit Saudi Arabia today

Premier to discuss matters of mutual interest, ways to boost trade with Saudi leadership

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to depart for Saudi Arabia on a four-day visit from March today 19 to 22 to strengthen the bilateral ties, enhance economic cooperation, and promote investment between the two countries. As per a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), PM Shehbaz is scheduled to meet Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman where the two leaders will discuss and deliberate upon ways to boost trade, enhance partnership

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Wikimedia challenges India content takedown

DNA

NEW DELHI: The Wikimedia Foundation, which runs Wikipedia, has asked India's Supreme Court to quash an order directing the online encyclopedia operator to take down a page describing its legal dispute with a domestic news agency, it emerged on Tuesday. Wikimedia told the court that complying with the directive would have a "chilling effect on free speech". Indian news agency ANI last year sued Wikimedia for defamation in

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Urges peaceful relations

Imran Khan says Afghanistan is not Pakistan's enemy

Chairman did not have authority to make unilateral decisions, says Barrister Gohar

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has reacted to the party's decision to boycott the National Security Committee (NSC) meeting, saying that no PTI member can attend such discussions without his permission. His sister, Aleema Khan, speaking to the media, raised concerns about prison conditions, restricted meetings, and government pressure on Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi. Aleema Khan revealed that according to jail regulations, Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi

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'All state institutions controlled by other powers': ATC judge

The remarks were made by Judge Tahir Abbas Supra during a bail hearing for PTI lawmaker Ali Shah

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) judge said on Tuesday that state institutions in Pakistan

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Briefs

Asif slams PTI leaders

Khawaja Asif accused PTI of prioritising Imran Khan over national security

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has strongly criticised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for refusing to attend the Parliamentary National Security Committee meeting. In a statement on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Khawaja Asif accused PTI of prioritising Imran Khan over national security. He further condemned PTI's stance, stating that while Pakistan face terrorism threats, PTI continues playing politics for personal interests. He labeled this behavior as a betrayal towards the nation. It is noteworthy that PTI boycotted the security meeting, demanding that they be allowed to meet Imran Khan first before attending.

PAF pays tribute to MM Alam

The legendary PAF pilot shot down five Indian fighter jets piloting his F-86 Sabre jet plane

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has released a special video tribute to commemorate the 12th death anniversary of legendary war hero Air Commodore Mohammad Mahmood Alam (Late). Air Cdre M M Alam achieved the remarkable feat of downing 5 Indian Air Force jets in under one minute during the 1965 war - A record that remains unbeaten till date, said a news release. The legendary PAF pilot shot down five Indian fighter jets piloting his F-86 Sabre jet plane, becoming an "Ace in a Day" on 7th September 1965. In total, he achieved a feat of 09 confirmed kills and 02 probable during a period of 11 days.

COAS meets Bahraini commander

Pakistan, Bahrain vow to strengthen military coop

COAS Asim Munir underscored the significance of enhanced collaboration in addressing shared security challenges and fostering peace and stability in the region



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Commander of the National Guard of the Kingdom of Bahrain General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. As per details, the meeting held discussion on matters of mutual interest, regional security landscape

and avenues for strengthening bilateral military cooperation. COAS Asim Munir underscored the significance of enhanced collaboration in addressing shared security challenges and fostering peace and stability in the region. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and commended their unwavering efforts in combating terrorism.

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Israel breaches ceasefire, Gaza attack kills over 400

Reacting to the most recent massacres, Hamas voiced reprehension over Netanyahu and his "Nazi" administration's resuming their aggression and genocidal war against defenseless civilians in the Gaza Strip

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: The Israeli military has killed at least 412 Palestinians, mostly children and women, throughout the Gaza Strip's entire expanse during a large-scale violation of Tel Aviv's ceasefire agreement with the Gaza-based resistance movement Hamas. Reports said those killed included at least 77 people in Khan Younis in southern Gaza and at least 20 people in Gaza City in the north. At least 500 other Palestinians were also injured during the bloodletting, Palestinian news agency Sama reported on Tuesday. According to the agency, the raids did not spare any part of the already war-battered and mostly devastated coastal sliver, targeting residential structures, schools, and refugee centers. Reporting on the fresh deadly escalation, Qatar's Al Jazeera television network reported that explosions had rang out throughout Gaza's northeastern areas, where the regime's spy aircraft and warplanes have been engaging in extensive overflight. The ceasefire took effect in January in the hope of ending the regime's 15-month-plus

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Bangladesh rebukes US spy chief remarks

AGENCIES

DHAKA: Bangladesh has rebuked Washington's intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard, saying her comments on religious violence in the South Asian country were unfounded and risked fanning sectarian tensions. Gabbard arrived this week for a diplomatic trip to India, whose relations with Bangladesh have soured since a student-led uprising overthrew the latter nation's government last year. New Delhi has repeatedly accused Bangladesh of failing to adequately protect its minority Hindu citizens - charges denied by the caretaker administration now in charge. But Gabbard appeared to give credence to the claims when she was asked about violence in Bangladesh during a Monday

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Call for increased budget allocation for girls in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: Civil society organizations and education advocates have urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government to prioritize girls' secondary education in the upcoming fiscal budget 2025-2026. In a press release issued here on Tuesday, the call is made for an increased allocation of resources in the development budget to address the alarming number of out-of-school girls and ensure effective implementation of Article 25(A) of the Constitution, which mandates free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of five and sixteen. According to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) survey, a staggering 2.9 million girls in KP remain out of school, making up 53% of the total female population in the 5-16 age group. The situation is even more dire in the newly merged tribal districts, where 74.4% of girls do not attend school. In contrast, 1.7 million boys are out of school in the province. The province currently has around 35,000 government schools, catering to 5.5 million students. However, the Education Department estimates that 15,000 additional schools

are required to accommodate out-of-school children. Given the current rate of construction—300 schools per year—it would take 50 years to meet this demand, an unacceptable timeline for ensuring educational rights. Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins and Malala Fund's Education Champion from the Pakistan Education Champions Network, stated: "The existing education system is failing millions of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Without urgent investment and a strategic plan for resource allocation, we will continue to see high dropout rates and gender disparities. The government must take decisive action by increasing the development budget and ensuring transparent and efficient spending." Ms. Bushra Afridi, an active member of the Prime Minister's National Youth Council, also highlighted the need for targeted resource allocation: "The lack of schools and inadequate financial commitment to girls' secondary education is a violation of their fundamental rights. We must ensure that allocated funds are spent efficiently and that every rupee goes toward building a future where girls have equal access to quality education." Civil society organizations, educa-

tion champions, and youth advocates stand united in their call for urgent action. They demand an increase in the development budget for education, ensuring adequate funds for school construction, teacher training, and learning resources for girls. There is also a need for an accelerated school construction plan that reduces the current estimated timeline from 50 years to within a decade. Strengthened parliamentary oversight is essential to ensure that funds are utilized effectively, along with multi-sectoral coordination between the Education, Finance, Planning, and Social Welfare departments to implement solutions for improving girls' secondary education access. Gender-sensitive policies that address barriers preventing girls from attending school, particularly in marginalized communities, must also be implemented. Ensuring that every girl in KP receives a secondary education is not just a policy imperative—it is a moral obligation and a critical step toward sustainable development. Civil society urges the government to take immediate action to address these challenges and fulfill its constitutional commitment to education.



ISLAMABAD: President FPCCI Arif Ikram Sheikh addressing the press conference.

DC reviews cleanliness measures

LAHORE: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Syed Musa Raza on Tuesday reviewed the cleanliness measures during his visit to various areas of Tehsil Raiwind as part of the ongoing Clean Mission. The DC was accompanied by Chief Officer Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) Shahid Abbas Kathia, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Raiwind Zohaib Mumtaz, and other officials. During the visit, cleanliness measures were thoroughly inspected at Jia Baga Road, Sue-e-Asal, Raiwind Bypass, and Basti Ameen Pura. AC Raiwind and Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) officials briefed him on the ongoing sanitation efforts. DC Syed Musa Raza instructed LWMC teams to stay active in the field and ensure the immediate removal of garbage from key points. He emphasized the importance of taking all necessary steps to make the daily cleanliness mission a success, with a special focus on improving sanitation in streets, neighborhoods and alleys. He further ordered the immediate removal of visually polluting elements such as banners, posters, hoardings and flex signs. Additionally, he directed authorities to continue operations to eliminate encroachments, relocate slums and remove cattle from urban areas.—APP

KMU, LRH sign MoU for Pharmacy students training

PESHAWAR: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Khyber Medical University (KMU) Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (IPS) and the Pharmacy Services Department of Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) Medical Teaching Institution, Peshawar. The primary aim of this agreement is to equip pharmacy students with practical skills and align them with modern clinical pharmacy requirements. The MoU was signed by Professor Dr. Sami Siraj, Director of KMU-IPS, and Dr. Azizullah, Pharmacy Manager of LRH, representing their respective institutions. According to the agreement,

pharmacy students will receive hands-on training under the supervision of experienced pharmacists at various departments of Lady Reading Hospital. The training will focus on drug formulation, quality dispensing, and the crucial role of pharmacists in patient treatment. As part of this collaboration, LRH pharmacists will train students in the use of the Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE) system introduced in the public sector, accurate drug dosage administration, reviewing patients' medical history, and evaluating potential drug interactions. This agreement will further strengthen academic and research cooperation

between the two institutions, fostering joint research, workshops, and seminars. Through this partnership, students will gain exposure to real hospital settings, understanding the practical role of pharmacists in clinical pharmacy, medication management, and drug therapy. Additionally, they will be trained in standard drug labeling, safe dispensing practices, and patient awareness techniques, all of which will contribute to improving pharmaceutical practices. Meanwhile, Vice Chancellor of KMU, Professor Dr. Zia U Haq, welcomed the agreement, stating that it will not only enhance the quality of pharmacy education.—APP

PCJCCI for improved SOPs to facilitate Chinese nationals

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) Tuesday called for improved SOPs to ensure safety of Chinese professional working in Pakistan. PCJCCI Vice President Zafar Iqbal stated this in a meeting with Noorul Amin Mengal, Punjab Home Secretary, regarding the security and well-being of Chinese nationals residing and working in Pakistan. He added that Punjab government should make some amendments to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure safer movement and improved facilities for Chinese professionals in the country's industrial zones. According to joint Chamber's spokesperson here, the PCJCCI formally approached Noorul Amin Mengal, Home Secretary, Ms. Uzma Saleem, Additional Secretary Home Department, with concerns regarding the daily movement of Chinese nationals. Elton, a Chinese businessman in Pakistan, discussed the matter, and emphasized the need for dedicated markets, salons, and other essential facilities within industrial zones, allowing Chinese residents to access basic necessities without security concerns. Recognizing the importance of a secure and conducive environment for Chinese professionals and investors, the Punjab government has taken proactive steps to address these concerns. The amended SOPs aim to enhance security measures in areas frequented by Chinese nationals.—APP

Iconic literary figure Dr AB Ashraf laid to rest

MULTAN: Dr Ahmed Bakhtiar, popularly known as Dr AB Ashraf, a towering personality of Urdu language and literature, distinguished educationist, former head of the Urdu Department at Bahauddin Zakariya University, who died in Ankara (Turkey) four days ago after a brief illness, was laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard here on Tuesday. He was 90. His body arrived in Lahore from Ankara, Turkey, today from where it was shifted to Multan. His funeral prayer was offered at a local park of Gulghast, which was led by Khalid Sohal and attended by a large number of people hailing from different walks of life. Among others PPP leader Khalid Hanif Lodhi, ex minister, Hafiz Iqbal Khakwani, former BZU VC, Dr Tariq Ansari, Dr Asad Areeb, Dr Anwar Ahmad, Dr Hameed Raza Siddiqi, Dr Nasrullah Khan Nasir, Dr Asif Jahangir, known broadcaster, Khurshid Malik, Prof Khalid Hameed, Prof Inam.—APP

Pakistan facing major challenge of terrorism

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said on Tuesday that the country is facing a major challenge of terrorism, and the entire nation stands united against it. The recent wave of terrorism was initiated at the behest of enemy nations. An important briefing on terrorism is scheduled for today, but a major political party has refused to participate in it. India is involved in acts of terrorism in Pakistan. Talking to media persons at the Sindh Assembly Media Corner, the Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that national issues concern

the entire nation, and in every difficult situation, unity is essential. According to evidence available with security agencies, India is behind acts of terrorism in Pakistan. He said that on October 18, hundreds of PPP workers were attacked by terrorists. Despite being attacked, the PPP has never been shy of condemning terrorism publicly and has always raised its voice against terrorism. He went on to say that even today, the KPK Chief Minister cannot go to his constituency, and the police force is not in a position to patrol the streets at night. He blamed the PTI government itself for all these failures and acts of incompetence. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party and

the Sindh government will not compromise on the issue of Indus water under any circumstances and will not allow any canal to be constructed on the Indus River. He emphasized that the message is clear: no matter what happens, canals will not be allowed to be built. This is a firm stance from the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party. He stated that all parties in the Sindh Assembly have unanimously passed a resolution against the construction of canals. Journalists will be sent after Eid to observe first-hand the work being done on the canals. He said that there is no country in the world where illegal immigrants are given free rein. Such irresponsible statements come from the misguided members of PTI.

Children running outdoors near a newly built house under a blue sky

QUETTA: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with generous support from the Government of Germany through KfW Development Bank, and in collaboration with the Government of Balochistan, has officially handed over the first batch of 40 climate-resilient houses to families affected by the devastating 2022 floods. The handover took place in Hanna Urak, district Quetta, marking a milestone in the province's recovery efforts. The 2022 floods left a trail of destruction across Balochistan, damaging over 250,000 houses and affecting 1.6 million people. In response, UNDP launched its Flood Recovery Programme, offering an integrated and holistic approach to recovery, including sustainable housing solutions, infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood restoration, and institutional strengthening. In partnership with the Government of Germany through KfW Development Bank, UNDP is constructing 800 climate-resilient houses and restoring community infrastructure, benefiting more than 20,000 individuals, including approximately 14,000 women and children in Quetta District. These homes are built using locally sourced, climate-adaptive materials, ensuring long-term disaster and climate resilience. On the occasion, Mr. Sher Shah, Secretary, Planning and Development Department, Government of Balochistan, remarked, "The Government of Balochistan remains committed to a resilient and sustainable recovery for communities impacted by the 2022 floods. This day marks an important milestone as we hand over 40 climate-resilient houses, a testament to our commitment to building stronger, more resilient communities. With the support of UNDP and the German Government through KfW, we continue to advance recovery efforts, ensuring long-term resilience and preparedness for future challenges." Dr. Sebastian Paust, Counsellor and Head of Development Cooperation at the German Embassy in Islamabad, said: "We are pleased to be able to make a contribution from Germany to overcoming the immense flood damage from 2022 and hope that we can help the people affected here in Balochistan to lay the foundations for a dignified and self-determined life. The building back better approach is particularly important to us here, as it will help to prepare for future natural disasters and improve the resilience of the population and infrastructure." Mr. Naveed Shaikh, Director of Planning at the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), commended UNDP and KfW Development Bank for their efforts in addressing the neglected housing sector. "The provision of homes to the communities of Hanna Urak, which were severely affected by the 2022 floods, is a significant step forward."

3 young entrepreneurs reach Stanford university's Design Challenge finals

ISLAMABAD: Three young Hindu entrepreneurs from Sindh, Pakistan named Aakash Kumar, Amar Lal, and Sahil have made history to reach the finals of Stanford University's Center on Longevity Design Challenge. Their project, "Veritas," an online course is designed to equip Pakistani youth with fact-checking skills to combat misinformation on social media. Selected as one of the top eight global finalists from 230 teams across 120 universities in 31 countries, their work tackles a pressing issue in Pakistan, where rising intolerance amplifies the dangers of false narratives. This April, Aakash, Amar, and Sahil will travel to the USA to present their project at Stanford University, spotlighting Pakistan's potential on a global stage.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Secy Defence & RSA Co Chairperson South Africa Dr T. Gamede, called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

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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
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Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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Railway Inquiry.....117
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WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
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PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



"ISLAMABAD: Women entrepreneurs pose for a picture with the Chargé d'Affaires of the US Embassy, Natalie A. Baker, during an Iftar dinner hosted by FPCCI President Atif Ikram. — Online/DNA"

PM calls for concerted efforts to eliminate Hepatitis C from Pakistan

He said the government was hopeful of eliminating the disease 2029 as the Prime Minister's Hepatitis C elimination program will not only save millions of lives but also contribute to boosting the country's economic productivity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday called for coordinated efforts by federal and provincial governments and all stakeholders to eradicate Hepatitis C from Pakistan, vowing to promote and expand the PM's Hepatitis C Elimination Programme countrywide. Speaking at a recognition ceremony here, marking the successful completion of the pilot project of the PM's National Hepatitis C Elimination Programme in Gilgit Baltistan, the prime minister emphasized the importance of the initiative in addressing the widespread impact of the disease in the country. Acknowledging the significant support from the Aga Khan Development Network and the World Health Organization (WHO) in this initiative, he said that the hepatitis unit was initially established at the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) and was later expanded to provide 100% free treatment

facilities. The prime minister expressed regret that when the new government took office in 2018, the program was discontinued. However, he said that shortly after assuming the office of Prime Minister, he resumed the program, which was now operational in Punjab under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. "We see a bright future of Gilgit Baltistan and subsequently other parts of Pakistan," he said expressing the confidence that with the efforts of the incumbent government, Hepatitis C will be completely eradicated from the country very soon. "This aggressive disease is spreading. This is high time to effectively control this disease," he said. The prime minister told the gathering the federal government was in the process of establishing Jinnah Medical Centre in Islamabad which would prove to John Hopkins Hospital of Pakistan in public healthcare. Earlier, he distributed shields among the contributors to the pilot project of Gilgit Baltistan including Minister for Health Services Syed

Mustafa Kamal, Minister of State Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, NADRA Chairman, WHO Representative in Pakistan and others. Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, speaking on the occasion, highlighted that Pakistan had the highest spread of Hepatitis C, calling it a matter of great concern. He said the success of hepatitis programme manifested the model of public-private partnership and also the coordination between federal and provincial governments. He said the government was hopeful of eliminating the disease 2029 as the Prime Minister's Hepatitis C elimination program will not only save millions of lives but also contribute to boosting the country's economic productivity. Minister for National Health Syed Mustafa Kamal, lauding the prime minister's vision of eliminating Hepatitis C from the country, assured him of his full support to successfully eliminate the disease

from the country by 2030. Highlighting the significance of preventive healthcare, he said the treatment of 10 million cases was difficult. World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Pakistan Dr Lou Dapeng said the Organization will continue to stand side by side with Pakistan in supporting its programme to completely eliminate the disease. He thanked the GB and AJK governments and their health departments for their swift action and excellent leadership in the pilot program. He said that screening of 14000 people across two union councils was a commendable achievement and assured of WHO's technical and operational support. Member Task Force of PM's Hepatitis C Elimination Programme, Dr Saeed Akhtar informed that Rs 68 billion were committed for the programme which will be completed in two phases. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar and Minister of State Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath were also present on the occasion.

Junaid Romina discuss maritime affairs

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Tuesday held a meeting with Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam at Kohsar Block, Ministry of Maritime Affairs. Romina Khurshid Alam congratulated Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on assuming his new portfolio and expressed confidence in his leadership to advance the maritime sector with sustainable and climate-resilient policies, said a press release. During the meeting, both dignitaries discussed key areas of collaboration between the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Climate Change Division, focusing on environmental sustainability in Pakistan's maritime sector. They emphasized the importance of green initiatives, coastal ecosystem preservation, and climate adaptation strategies for ports and fisheries. The minister reaffirmed his commitment for integrating climate-friendly policies into maritime affairs. He highlighted ongoing initiatives such as the promotion of sustainable blue economy practices, mangrove conservation projects, and efforts to reduce marine pollution. He also stressed the need for technological advancements in port operations to minimize carbon emissions. Romina Khurshid Alam acknowledged the ministry's efforts and assured full cooperation in implementing eco-friendly policies to mitigate the impact of climate change on Pakistan's coastal regions. She reiterated the government's resolve to enhance climate resilience in all sectors, including maritime affairs, to ensure sustainable economic growth. Both officials agreed to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination for the development of policies that align with Pakistan's international climate commitments. They also discussed joint initiatives in marine biodiversity conservation, plastic waste reduction in coastal areas, and the promotion of clean energy solutions in port operations. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment for advancing climate-resilient maritime policies and fostering sustainable development in Pakistan's coastal and maritime sectors.—DNA

Police strengthens security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A late-night meeting was chaired by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, where key tasks were assigned to officers regarding city security and crime prevention. A police spokesperson told APP on Tuesday that Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police and Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) attended the meeting, which focused on strengthening security in marketplaces and ensuring smooth traffic flow ahead of Eid. During the meeting, IG Rizvi instructed the DIG Islamabad to develop a comprehensive security and traffic management plan for shopping areas.

He emphasized the need for enhanced patrolling around markets to prevent any untoward incidents. He stressed that all officers must remain actively engaged in the field, while citizens will be provided with security advisories regarding home safety during Eid. Additionally, the DIG Islamabad was tasked with formulating a security plan for Eid congregations and public parks. The Chief Traffic Officer was directed to devise a detailed traffic plan for parking and vehicle movement in commercial areas. To facilitate citizens, regular traffic updates will be issued. IG Rizvi underscored that every possible effort should be made to ensure public convenience during Eid preparations.

RDA inflows rise to \$9.768 b in Feb 2025

ISLAMABAD: The inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) has risen to US \$9.768 billion by the end of February 2025 as compared to US \$9.564 billion by January (2025) end. The data showed that the inflows of remittances during February were recorded at US\$ 204 million as compared to US\$ 222 million in January and US\$ 203 million in December 2024, according to the latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). These accounts provide innovative banking solutions to millions of Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs), including Non-Resident Pakistan Origin Card (POC) holders, seeking to undertake banking, payment, and investment activities in Pakistan. According to the data, almost 797,350 accounts registered under the programme by the end of February 2025. By the end of February, overseas Pakistanis have invested US \$459 million in Naya Pakistan Certificates, US \$860 million in Naya Pakistan Islamic Certificates, and US \$59 million in Roshan Equity Investment—APP

Pak's earns \$2.177b from IT services' export

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$2.177 billion by exporting different Information Technology (IT) services in various countries during the first seven months of the current fiscal year 2024-25. This shows a growth of 26.53 percent as compared with the US \$ 1.720 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2023-24, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the computer services grew by 32.72 percent as it surged from US \$1.397 billion last year to US \$1.855 billion during July-January 2024-25. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 35.51 percent, from US \$476.017 million to US \$645.036 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services also witnessed an increase of 4.39 percent, from US \$3.338 million to US \$3.485 million. The export and imports of computer software services decreased by 4.27 percent, from \$359.618 million to \$344.260 million whereas the exports of other computer services witnessed a growth of 54.52 percent from US \$557.415 million to US \$861.326 million. Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review also increased by 736.66 percent growing from US \$2.097 million to US \$17.551 million. Among the information services, the exports of news agency services up by 1197.51 percent, from US \$1.269 million to US \$16.475 million whereas the exports of other information services also rose by 29.96 percent, from US \$0.828 million to US \$1.076 million.—APP

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Briefs

Secretary Info, PIO greet newly-elected office-bearers of NPC

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Information and Broadcasting Ambreen Jan and Principal Information Officer (PIO) Mubashir Hasan on Tuesday congratulated the newly-elected office-bearers of the National Press Club, Islamabad. The Information Secretary and PIO congratulated Azhar Jatoi on being elected as President, Nayyar Ali as Secretary, and Waqar Abbasi as Secretary Finance of the NPC. Terming National Press Club an effective platform for the journalistic community in Pakistan, Ambreen Jan said it was constantly striving for freedom of the press and the rights of journalists. She expressed the hope that the newly-elected leadership of NPC will utilize its capabilities and take effective steps for the welfare of journalists and the development of the media. PIO Mubashir Hasan said in view of the challenges of the modern era, the promotion of independent, responsible and fact-based journalism was the need of the hour. He hoped that the National Press Club will maintain its glorious traditions in this regard. The Secretary and PIO assured that Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was committed to continuing all possible cooperation with the National Press Club and the journalistic community. They also hoped that the new leadership of NPC will play key role in making National Press Club more active and effective.—APP

HEC announces interim placement program

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has launched Phase-II, Batch-VI of the Interim Placement of Fresh PhDs (IPFP) program. This initiative aims to provide recent PhD graduates with academic experience and mentorship opportunities before they formally enter the academic job market. The program will place fresh PhDs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and postgraduate government colleges for a one-year tenure. Selected candidates will receive a fixed remuneration package of Rs. 150,000 per month for 12 months. As per eligibility criteria, applicants must meet specific requirements to qualify for the program. They must be Pakistani or AJK nationals under the age of 40 at the time of application. A PhD degree from an HEC-recognized university, either Pakistani or foreign, completed within the last two years is mandatory. Additionally, applicants should have at least two research publications in HEC-recognized or indexed journals. They must also be unemployed at the time of application, with those working in temporary or contractual positions required to resign if selected. The IPFP program follows a structured process to ensure proper placement and training. HEC will circulate a list of successful candidates to HEIs, allowing institutions to select candidates based on their needs.—APP

Prof Rifaat Hussain's legacy to inspire generations of scholars

Highlighting the illustrious academic career and exemplary devotion of the deceased academic, Amb Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, underscored that the nation needed more intellectual icons like Prof. Riffat Hussain to keep inspiring future generations of students. He also called for celebrating the lives of such self-effacing heroes who serve the cause of nation building selflessly and honestly

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Eminent speakers at a condolence reference hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies, (IRS) to honor Professor Syed Riffat Hussain stated that the indelible legacy of the distinguished scholar, academic, diplomat and journalist, who passed away recently will live on to inspire the youth of Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, lauded diplomatic skills and journalistic prowess of Riffat Hussain in projecting Pakistan's narrative during challenging times. Amb Jilani, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, highlighted Dr. Hussain's pivotal role in shaping generations of young minds and commended his contribution towards building NUST and IRS as centers of excellence in his capacity as the Dean and Member BOG respectively. Highlighting the illustrious academic career



and exemplary devotion of the deceased academic, Amb Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, underscored that the nation needed more intellectual icons like Prof. Riffat Hussain to keep inspiring future generations of students. He also called for celebrating the lives of such self-effacing heroes who serve the cause of nation

building selflessly and honestly. Amb Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, former Amb to the United States, China and India, lauded Dr. Hussain as an exceptional professor and researcher, who left an indelible intellectual legacy in multiple disciplines. Amb Zamir Akram, former permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, emphasized

that Dr. Riffat Hussain's services to the nation during difficult times would always be remembered, Amb Sohail Mehmood, DG ISSI, noted that he lived a full life, building exceptional academic expertise upon unwavering dedication and integrity. Prof. Nazir Hussain, former Dean of Social Sciences at QAU, read a condolence letter

from the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) Sri Lanka, highlighting Prof. Riffat's pivotal contribution as Executive Director RCSS. The memorial was attended by a large number of diplomats, intelligentsia, academics, journalists, researchers, and students keen to pay tribute to an exceptional academic.

Chinese fertilizer firm to export \$7m Potassium Sulphate from Gwadar Port

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Chinese fertilizer company, AGVEN, is gearing up to make significant strides in the international market by exporting Potassium Sulphate Fertilizer from Pakistan's Gwadar Port. Following government approval, the firm will establish production facilities in the Gwadar North Free Zone. In an official letter to the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on Monday, the company stated, "As an immediate outcome of the approval from the government, we will be able to export Potassium Sulphate worth USD 7 Million in

2025 from our current production alone. According to Gwadar Pro, in the future with higher export approval and expansion in production of Potassium Sulphate in the Gwadar Free Zone, export can potentially reach around USD 80 Mn in the next 2-3 years." The company also expressed its appreciation for the SIFC's support and guidance in securing export permissions, noting that this development could encourage other export-oriented industries to view the Gwadar Free Zone as an attractive investment destination in the future. The company has setup the first manufacturing facility inside the Gwadar North Freezone at

a cost of around USD 5 million. This is now fully operational and producing Potassium Sulphate fertilizer for domestic use in Pakistan and for export abroad from the Gwadar Port. The letter further noted that the SIFC has played a crucial role in promoting exports from the Gwadar Free Zone. The recent approval by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to allow Potassium Sulphate exports is a groundbreaking move, expected to boost exports from the zone and attract more businesses to invest. "SIFC's efforts in facilitating exemptions from the Export Policy Order for the Gwadar Free Zone

mark a significant step forward. This will encourage export-oriented businesses to explore the opportunities available in the Gwadar Free Zone and utilize Gwadar Port," the letter added. The company has established a plant with an annual production capacity of 20,000 tons. According to the National Fertilizer Development Center, Pakistan's annual Potassium Sulphate consumption is around 50,000 tons, while the total installed production capacity in the country, including AGVEN's facility, stands at 65,000 tons. This development underscores Gwadar's growing potential as a hub for industrial and trade activities.

Govt striving to resolve journalists' problems: Tarar

He hoped that the new leadership will play a positive role in the welfare and well-being of journalists, freedom of the press and promotion of national interest

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said the government was fully committed to addressing the problems being faced by journalist community. "The government will continue to provide all possible support to enhance journalists professional capacity and promote press freedom," Attaullah Tarar said in a congratulatory message to newly-elected office-bearers of National Press Club, Islamabad. The minister for information congratulated Azhar Jatoi on being elected as President, Nayyar Ali as Secretary, and Waqar Abbasi as Finance Secretary of the NPC. Attaullah Tarar also congratulated other newly-elected office bearers and expressed his best wishes for them. The minister reiterated that government fully believed in freedom of the press and freedom of expression. The journalistic community was an important pillar of the country and the Press Club was a strong voice of journalists, Attaullah maintained. "The Press Club is an institution playing a prominent role for the rights of media persons, freedom of expression and professional development of journalists," Attaullah Tarar remarked. The minister opined that victory of the newly-elected office-bearers of NPC was a testament to the fact that the journalistic community had expressed full confidence in them. He hoped that the new leadership will play a positive role in the welfare and well-being of journalists, freedom of the press and promotion of national interest.—DNA

Gender equality share objective, say senators

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Senator Nasima Ehsan and Senator Zamir Ghumro representing Pakistan at IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians has said that gender equality is a shared objective of both Pakistan and Mexico and Pakistan's constitution protects and promotes women rights. It is a Constitutional obligation to provide women with equal rights. Senator Ghumro observed that it is time to take affirmative actions in order to bring parity and gender equality. In her address, Senator Naseema Ehsan termed it an honour to address the gathering. She said that gender equality is important for growth and prosperity of any nation. She said that Pakistan has made huge progress in mainstreaming women role in politics. Our Constitution gives equal rights to women. She said that reserved seats in National Assembly and provincial assemblies is step in the right direction enabling women to play active role in legislation and policy making. She also mentioned that Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was the first female Prime Minister of the Muslim world. Currently, she said, Mohtarma Maryam Nawaz, CM Punjab is leading a province. These, she said, are the leading examples of women leadership. She also highlighted various challenges being faced by the women. She said that steps have been taken in Pakistan to overcome all those challenges.

IRSA releases 72,139 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 72,139 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 70,397 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarela Dam was 1402.9 feet and was 0.9 feet higher than its dead level of 1402 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 18,400 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 26,056 cusecs and 26,198 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 14,454, 26,430, 17,984, and 6280 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,800 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera.—APP

Pakistani furniture captivates crowds at China expo

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 53rd International Famous Furniture Fair (Dongguan), a premier global event for the home furnishing industry showcased over 1,200 top-tier brands from around the world. Among the exhibitors, Nuer Pakistan, a Pakistani furniture enterprise, made its debut with a display of traditional craftsmanship that has drawn the attention of bustling crowds. Their collection features intricately designed rosewood tables and chairs with copper inlays, fruit baskets and decorative copper artifacts in the shapes of deer, horses and swans, as well as copper vases and onyx vessels. "The exhibition has served as a cultural bridge, introducing Chinese buyers and designers to Pakistan's rich her-

itage of furniture-making," said Shahbaz, a representative from Nuer Pakistan. Expressing his delight at the overwhelming response, Shahbaz remarked, "The foot traffic at the expo has been incredible. We are very hopeful because we have had some good discussions about orders." Spanning more than 1 million square meters, the fair is a melting pot of global design, home furnishings, materials and art. It brings together resources from across the furniture supply chain, including design, customization, outdoor decor and artistic aesthetics. For Pakistani businessmen, the event is not only a platform to learn from the best but also an opportunity to explore potential collaborations and partnerships. Pakistan's furniture industry, while rich in tradition and craftsmanship, faces challenges in modern-

ization and scalability. According to industry reports, Pakistan's furniture industry is worth around \$1 billion, with exports accounting for only a small fraction of this value. In contrast, China dominates as the world's largest furniture producer and exporter, with furniture and parts exports reaching \$67.884 billion in 2024. Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday, Shahbaz highlighted the potential for growth through collaboration. "In China, there are numerous opportunities for every kind of business, including furniture. Pakistan lacks advanced technology and machinery, but we have cheap labor and abundant wood resources. Here, we can learn new ways to improve our modernization and meet international standards in the furniture industry," he said.

SSP visits to police khidmat markaz F-6

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, Muhammad Shoaib Khan, conducted a surprise visit to the Police Khidmat Markaz in F-6 on Tuesday to review the facilities provided to citizens. An official told APP that SSP Shoaib inspected the security arrangements and checked records to ensure smooth service delivery. He directed senior police officers to implement effective security measures and provide maximum facilities to the public. SSP Shoaib stated that trained staff at the Khidmat Markaz are dedicated to assisting both Pakistani citizens and foreign nationals. He further instructed the in-charge to enhance citizen services and ensure a hassle-free experience for visitors.—APP

Turkiye's Çanakkale Victory, Martyrs day observed at NUML

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Turkish Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) today hosted a commemorative event celebrating Türkiye's 110th Çanakkale Victory and the official adoption of the Turkish National Anthem. The event was graced by the presence of H.E. Irfan Neziro lu, Ambassador of the Turkish Embassy in Pakistan, who served as the Chief Guest. Also in attendance were DG NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, the Education Attache and senior embassy officials, underscoring the strong ties between the two nations. At the outset, Ambassador Irfan Neziro lu and Rector NUML, Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M) (ret'd), engaged in a bilateral discussion focused on enhancing academic and research collaborations. This high-level dialogue reaffirmed the commitment



to deepening people-to-people connections and bolstering educational exchanges. The Rector expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of Türkiye and Düzce University for facilitating these academic initiatives, which are set to provide students with access to world-class learning environments and promote long-

term academic cooperation. The event featured a welcoming address by Dr. Jameel Asghar Jami, Dean of the Faculty of Languages, followed by a captivating documentary showcasing the heroic legacy of Çanakkale's victory. Performances by both students and faculty of the Turkish Department added a dynamic cul-

tural element to the celebration. In his speech, Ambassador Neziro lu also paid tribute to the historic contributions of renowned poet Allama Iqbal and highlighted the enduring bond between Pakistan and Türkiye. He reiterated that, regardless of any challenges, Türkiye will steadfastly support Pakistan on every international platform. Looking ahead, the Ambassador confirmed plans to expand the student exchange programs under the existing Memorandum of Understanding, stating, "In the near future, we will welcome many more NUMLians to our Turkish universities." He urged the students to recognize their pivotal role in shaping not only the future of Pakistan but also the destiny of Türkiye and the broader Ummah, concluding with the powerful affirmation, "Together we stand strong." Pro-Rector Academics, Dr Safer Awan, extended his gratitude to the Ambassador and his team for honouring the occasion.

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China's AI revolution

THE ripples from DeepSeek continue to spread in China, where the government has embraced the tech start-up's unexpected success by speeding up the development and use of artificial intelligence (AI). The rise of DeepSeek, developed by home-grown tech talent, is evidence that Beijing's strategy of pouring resources into training the next generation of innovators over the past decade has worked out. Apparently encouraged by the AI company's swift ascent, President Xi Jinping said on the sidelines of the annual session of the National People's Congress earlier this month that the country's education system needed changes to better foster science and innovation talent. Late last year, the State Council, China's cabinet, said it would create more world-class doctoral programmes in key areas such as medicine, engineering and emerging fields. But in addition to training experts at universities, the government wants to nurture an AI-savvy generation from the earliest years of school. The Beijing municipal government announced a week ago that it would introduce AI courses to primary and secondary school pupils starting in September. All of these measures are meant to produce the talent pool required for China to compete in its tech rivalry with the United States. However, apart from focusing on advancing the technology, Beijing should find ways to use it to promote income equality and youth employment. For thousands of years, the civil service exam was the main avenue for social mobility in China. Those who could memorise ancient texts and write eloquent essays for the imperial examination were rewarded with government jobs that allowed them to move up the social ladder. China's modern education system still places a high value on memorisation and academic achievements. The country's rigorous university entrance examination, or gaokao, also requires memorisation and writing. The test is a critical factor in deciding a young person's career prospects. That leaves rural youth – who have little access to prestigious schools or tutoring – in a disadvantaged position. While a few rural young people with unimpressive exam results have gone on to become successful entrepreneurs, most end up working in cities as migrant workers. But many mundane jobs in factories, restaurants, call centres and even construction sites are likely to be replaced by AI and machines, making it even harder for migrant workers to earn a living and improve their quality of life. China is shifting its education system to emphasise vocational training. While this is largely meant to train the talent pool to achieve technological advancement, policymakers should also find ways to narrow the country's income and opportunity gaps – especially between rural and urban dwellers, as well as those who do well academically and those who do not. China is at a crossroads. The conventional belief is that many people will lose their jobs due to AI. Without some foresight by policymakers, workers could be left behind in the digital revolution because many jobs will be done by AI. However, with the right policies, those who live in the countryside and do not perform well in school could acquire practical AI skills. They could also receive training on how to maintain and repair electronic devices that use AI. With the help of the technology, young people from less privileged backgrounds might be able to learn new tasks to help them earn a living, such as writing social media posts for marketing and creating videos to promote their local products.



Can Europe break free from NATO

THE recent calls by some US figures for "US withdrawal from NATO" have sent shockwaves through Europe. For decades, Europe's security architecture has heavily relied on the US-led NATO framework. Amid the current instability, Europe's contemplation of its own long-term security has deepened further. Can the EU break free from its long-standing reliance on NATO for security? How can Europe "return to itself" and strive for its own interests, autonomy, and identity? The Global Times consulted four European scholars to gather their perspectives. It has been a long time since some European leaders noted that EU has been treated as a vassal of the US and that Europe should make a turn "toward itself" to work for its own interests, autonomy and identity. However, these views have never been transformed into practice. Different approaches and particularistic interests prevailed. The new policy announcements of the new US administration have provoked confusion and uncertainty among European allies. For them, news from Washington was too quick, too much and too striking. Many questions appeared: Will the US stay in NATO? Why do some demand that Europe must pay for its own defense? Will Europe be included in the peace negotiations to end the war in Ukraine? Will Europe be included in other topics of global significance? Concerning NATO, it is interesting to note that in recent weeks, amid unprecedented developments and intensive political activities, it has maintained a low profile. I presume this has not been a choice made by Brussels, but rather by Washington, which has visibly prioritized diplomacy over military action. Otherwise, I believe that NATO's future is one of dissolution. It represents a heavy burden from the Cold War era, responsible for causing massive deaths of innocent people, displacing millions of refugees and fragmenting states, nations, and cultures. The best way for Europe to return to itself, its own interests, identity and prosperity is to concentrate on building a new security and cooperation order based on equal security and equal opportunities for all. While NATO has undoubtedly played a critical role in European security during the Cold War, what it has done in the post-Cold War era is instill a strong illusion that Europe is inherently dependent on the US for its defense. However, the rigid geopolitical divisions of the Cold War are no longer relevant. In today's increasingly multipolar world, power is becoming more decentralized. Instead of rigid, long-term alliances, modern international relations are driven by fluid, pragmatic coalitions that shift based on mutual interests. This trend, in turn, diminishes NATO's overall relevance. Europe has both the resources and the experience to maintain its own security without the US – yet what's truly at stake is not only capability, but political will and strategic vision. The real question is not one of feasibility – we already know that Europe possesses the resources, military expertise and strategic infrastructure to defend itself without NATO or the US. The real issue is that moving away from this reliance is no longer a "luxury" – it has become a "historical necessity."

The world must not accept the 'new normal' in Palestine

Mohamad Alasmar

Despite the film winning the highest accolades (or perhaps because of it), the attacks by Israeli soldiers and settlers on MasaferYatta, Adra's community, have only intensified. There has been no meaningful action from the international community about it. People can be forgiven for being overwhelmed in the face of relentless brutality taking place for more than a year and a half now. It's only human to feel numb. Besides, so many people have been exposed to media coverage that has systematically dehumanised Palestinians and sidelined their voices, severing human connection and empathy. But governments cannot be forgiven for taking no action

WHEN I returned to my hometown near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank in January, the tension was palpable. It reminded me of the second Intifada, which I witnessed firsthand as a child. There was fear and anxiety and an increased sense of uncertainty due to constant attacks by Israeli settlers. Roads to and from the town were blocked by checkpoints, leading to hours-long waits and humiliation for Palestinians trying to enter or leave. Weeks before I visited, Israeli settlers had set fire to my family's land during the olive-picking season. This followed a similar attack last summer and two more the year before, which had destroyed property, crops, and ancient olive trees. My father told me he stood powerless, unable to extinguish the fire as the armed settlers were protected by Israeli forces. Even if the soldiers hadn't been there to prevent any action to save the property, there would not have been enough water available to put out the fire because it is diverted by nearby illegal settlements. The situation across the occupied West Bank has been worsening for years, but violence escalated sharply after October 7, 2023. Nearly half of all Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces or settlers since records began were killed in just the past two years. So far this year, that violence has seen a two-year-old shot in the head by an Israeli sniper inside her family home, and a 23-year-old pregnant woman killed by Israeli fire. These are not isolated incidents, but part of a broader pattern where Palestinians are killed in unprecedented ways, at unprecedented rates. Israeli military raids on Palestinian homes and arbitrary detention have become a daily occurrence. Of the 10,000 Palestinians lingering in Israeli prisons, more than 300 are children, most of whom face no charge and have no way of knowing if or when they will see their families again. Villages are attacked, homes are demolished, and property is destroyed at accelerated rates. The architecture of occupation – checkpoints, barriers, and permits – has intensified and made daily life un-

bearable for Palestinians. Nearly 900 new military checkpoints and barriers have been installed since October 7. This has led to severe movement restrictions and disruptions to essential services, deepening an already dire humanitarian crisis. What was once unprecedented has become "routine" – and the world seems to be getting used to it. Our new reality includes Israeli air strikes on refugee camps, hospitals under siege, children shot in front of their homes. Such incidents of brutal violence have become regular occurrences, just like in Gaza. Remember the first hospital attack in Gaza? The first targeting of a school sheltering the displaced? The first fire from an Israeli air strike tearing through tents of the displaced and burning people alive? Now try to remember the last one. Such violent incidents have become so normalised that they are ultimately accepted as a grim reality in a faraway land. The same is now happening in the occupied West Bank. As Save the Children's representative to the United Nations, I see how this dynamic is reflected on the international stage. The persistent lack of meaningful accountability for Israeli forces has fostered a culture of impunity – allowing acts like bombing schools, burning down homes, and the killing of journalists and humanitarian workers to become perceived as "normal". And even when the spotlight is cast on Palestine at global events, it seems to make no difference. Earlier this month, the Palestinian-Israeli film No Other Land won the Oscar for best documentary. Accepting the award, Palestinian filmmaker Basel Adra expressed his hope that his infant daughter would not have to live the same life that he was currently living – always fearing settler violence, home demolitions and forced displacement. Despite the film winning the highest accolades (or perhaps because of it), the attacks by Israeli soldiers and settlers on MasaferYatta, Adra's community, have only intensified. There has been no meaningful action from the international community about it. People can be forgiven for being

overwhelmed in the face of relentless brutality taking place for more than a year and a half now. It's only human to feel numb. Besides, so many people have been exposed to media coverage that has systematically dehumanised Palestinians and sidelined their voices, severing human connection and empathy. But governments cannot be forgiven for taking no action. They have a legal obligation to uphold international law. Its norms are not relative; they are not up for negotiation. The truth is that the shocking violations taking place in Gaza and the West Bank have been normalised because they are being accepted by those entrusted to uphold the norms of international law. We must demand that international bodies and governments take concrete steps to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. This includes suspending arms transfers and supporting mechanisms that challenge impunity for those who flout international law. The global community must act decisively to restore respect for international law. States that ignore these laws undermine the very foundation of a rules-based global order. While those who violate children's rights and international law bear ultimate responsibility, all member states of the United Nations have a duty under the Geneva Conventions to ensure adherence to these principles. Weekly massacres are not normal. A population brought to the brink of a man-made famine is not normal. Air strikes on refugee camps are not normal. A two-tier system of rights based on ethnicity is not normal. Detaining, imprisoning and killing children is not normal. The time for passive observation has passed. The world must demand accountability, support humanitarian efforts, and refuse to accept the unacceptable. Every delay costs more lives; every delay weakens the system designed to keep people across the world safe. Only through collective action can we break this cycle of violence and ensure a future where children in Palestine and Israel, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, are protected and valued.

A new Syria hinges on settlements and breakthroughs

Eyad Abu Shakra

The Druze understood the impetus behind Israel's pressure campaign when Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister, Israel Katz, mentioned the \$1 billion that Israel had allocated for this campaign. This development certainly did not come out of nowhere. Rather, the seeds of this plan were probably planted some time ago – in Syria itself, as well as in Lebanon and the diaspora, particularly in the US, where the Israeli lobby has plenty of room for maneuver, as well as a lot of sway, including through intelligence infiltration

THE new chapter in Syria, which began after it turned the page on almost 54 years of Assadist rule in December, could be undermined by the painful developments earlier this month. The new leadership in Damascus, as far as I can tell, was aware that former regime remnants had been present in the region, and of the communities had profited from its transgressions without having necessarily played any part in them. On the other hand, I also believe that certain Syrian factions are skeptical that coexistence with the new leadership's ideology (with its interpretation of political Islam "in power") is possible. Indeed, Syria has witnessed many episodes of religious and sectarian violence from various directions over the past 14 years – kidnappings, forced disappearances and even massacres. Moreover, despite the broad popular support they enjoy, the current interim authorities only came to power under exceptional circumstances and due to a military balance that could change at any moment. While this leadership currently enjoys some regional and international support, every reasonable observer understands that it does not have a mandate to do what it likes. On the contrary, it is being closely scrutinized by international actors and the immense confidence exhibited by key figures in the top brass despite the tabs the world is keeping – perhaps even more confidence than a great many Syrian citizens – is striking. On the other hand, the speed at which the "understanding" between the new Damascus authority and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces was announced, despite indications that a clash had been all but inevitable, strongly signals that Washington is comfortable with the new leadership in Damascus. Since the SDF is an integral part of Washington's strategy in Syria, the underlying message is that Syria's territorial unity will not be threatened, as had previously been assumed, by a separatist Kurdish insurgency. Thus, it seems that all the gains made by the SDF in recent

years merely improved the terms of this deal with the authorities in Damascus, encouraging the Druze in southern Syria to follow a similar path. The Druze, particularly in southern Syria, remain a force to be reckoned with. However, it may take longer for a decisive outcome to emerge. Keen observers have gotten the sense that the unprecedented Israeli offensive to "protect" and "support" the Druze has complicated things in the Druze-majority province of Suwayda. Israel has taken these steps despite not having been publicly asked to do so by the Druze and many doubt that any major Druze political leader would openly endorse such an initiative. The Druze understood the impetus behind Israel's pressure campaign when Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister, Israel Katz, mentioned the \$1 billion that Israel had allocated for this campaign. This development certainly did not come out of nowhere. Rather, the seeds of this plan were probably planted some time ago – in Syria itself, as well as in Lebanon and the diaspora, particularly in the US, where the Israeli lobby has plenty of room for maneuver, as well as a lot of sway, including through intelligence infiltration. Indeed, while Suwayda activists from various factions have sought arrangements with Damascus to preserve national unity and reinforce the fraternity of Syria's communities, Israel's "veto" has upped the ante and shed doubt on these settlements. In my view, even in the southern region (Suwayda, Deraa and Quneitra), Washington's priorities do not significantly diverge from Netanyahu's. This brings us to the wounded coastline. Alawites make up a majority of the population in rural Latakia and Tartus, as well as the suburbs of Syria's four coastal cities: Latakia, Tartus, Jableh and Baniyas. The operations of paramilitaries affiliated with the former regime, or some of its factions, could not have happened without Iran's support. Indeed, the statements that Iranian officials made before the militias

launched their attacks, which had horrific consequences, make Iran's stance crystal clear: the new authorities in Damascus are not acceptable and that they will not last long. However, one might wonder whether the leadership in Tehran misread the situation and misunderstood the dynamics of the relationship between the new Damascus authorities and the international community, especially Washington. It is reasonable to assume that the US-Israeli strategy is hostile to a resurgence of Iranian influence. That might explain the restraint of the US-Russian initiative at the UN Security Council and relatively mild rhetoric about the massacres on the coast last week, which led to the deaths of approximately 1,225 people. The UNSC condemned the "massacre" of civilians, called on the Damascus authorities "to protect all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion" and condemned the violence, particularly against Alawite civilians. It then urged the authorities to prosecute those who were implicated in the violence and called for "further measures to prevent its recurrence." Finally, the draft constitutional declaration was recently announced in Damascus. Several of its provisions sparked controversy, particularly the way in which it concentrated power in the hands of the president, its five-year timeline for the transition, the dissolution of Syria's constitutional court, and the president's authority (albeit temporary) to appoint the members of the new constitutional court. Critics argue that it would have been better to avoid stipulations that bring the recent past to mind. Instead, they recommend a stronger focus on broadening political representation and reassuring Syria's communities, as well as avoiding "past experiments" and not rekindling old concerns. Diversity enriches and protects Syria. Fostering unity and communal harmony is particularly crucial at this stage; the country needs all its qualified and dedicated citizens to contribute. No community should be excluded or marginalized.

Briefs

NA security moot expresses resolve to...

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Pakistan as the second-most affected country by terrorism. The country, placed at the second spot from its previously fourth position – witnessed an alarming 45% increase in terrorism-related deaths with the total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 – one of the steepest surges globally. The number of terror attacks more than doubled from 517 in 2023 to 1,099 in 2024, which also marked the first year that attacks exceeded the 1,000 mark since the inception of the Index.Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain the most heavily affected provinces – which also share a border with neighbouring Afghanistan – accounted for over 96% of terrorist attacks and deaths in Pakistan in 2024.

Pakistan, Bahrain vow to strengthen mity coop

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Last month, Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) of the Maldives Armed Forces, Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, called on Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, including bilateral defence cooperation and regional security dynamics, were discussed in detail, it added. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the enduring bonds of brotherhood and friendship between Pakistan and the Maldives, underscoring their shared perspectives on key regional issues.

Israel breaches ceasefire, Gaza attack..

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war of genocide against Gaza that began after Hamas and its fellow resistance groups from the Palestinian territory launched a historic operation against the occupied Palestinian territories. The operation saw the fighters venture deep inside the territories, encircling strategic Israeli bases and ensnaring 240 Zionists, including some American-Israelis. Since initiation of the ceasefire deal, the regime has been routinely violating it besides blocking the entry of vital aid items into Gaza, including foodstuffs, medicine, and water, in an attempt to pressure Hamas into releasing those of the captives, who remained in the group's captivity, in one batch. Hamas has released 25 living captives and the remains of eight others in exchange for more than 2,000 Palestinian prisoners during the implementation of the first phase of the deal.

Bangladesh rebukes US spy chief remarks

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interview with Indian broadcaster. "The long-time unfortunate persecution, killing, and abuse of religious minorities... have been a major area of concern for the US government," she said in response. She added that the issue, along with Islamist extremism, remained "central focus areas of concern" and said the Trump administration has already raised them with the Bangladeshi government. Bangladesh responded in a statement earlier today that Gabard's comments were both "misleading" and "damaging" to the country's image and reputation. "Political leaders and public figures should base their statements, especially on sensitive issues, on actual knowledge and take care not to reinforce harmful stereotypes, fan fears, or potentially stoke sectarian tensions," the statement said.

New Zealand crush Pakistan to take 2-0 lead in T20I series

The match was reduced to 15 overs per side due to persistent rain in Dunedin

SPORTS DESK

DUNEDIN: New Zealand secured a commanding five-wicket victory over Pakistan in a rain-affected second T20I at the University Oval on Tuesday, taking a 2-0 lead in the five-match series. Chasing a target of 136 runs, the Black Caps got off to a blistering start, with openers Tim Seifert and Finn Allen putting on a 66-run partnership. Seifert was particularly aggressive, finding boundaries all around the ground before falling for a quickfire 45 off 22 deliveries. His innings came to an end when Mohammad Ali claimed his maiden T20I wicket. Finn Allen continued the onslaught, adding 21 runs with Mark Chapman for the second wicket. However, his entertaining knock of 38 from just 16 balls was cut short by Jahadad Khan, leaving New Zealand at 87-2 in 6.5 overs. Mark Chapman couldn't make an impact, departing for just one run after being dismissed by Khushdil Shah. Haris Rauf then struck, removing Jimmy Neesham for 14, as New Zealand lost their fourth wicket with 97 runs on the board in 8.3 overs. Daryl Mitchell and Mitchell Hay built a 35-run partnership for the fifth wicket, bring-



ing their team within touching distance of victory. However, Haris Rauf dismissed Daryl for 14, leaving New Zealand at 132-5 in 12.5 overs. Skipper Michael Bracewell hit the winning runs alongside Mitchell Hay, who remained unbeaten on 21, sealing the win with 11 balls to spare. For Pakistan, Haris Rauf claimed two wickets, while Mohammad Ali, Khushdil Shah

and Jahadad Khan took one wicket each. After being asked to bat first, Pakistan posted a total of 135 runs, thanks to crucial contributions from skipper Agha Salman, vice-captain Shadab Khan, and Shaheen Afridi. The innings started on a poor note as Hasan Nawaz fell for a second consecutive duck, dismissed by Jacob Duffy in the first over. Pakistan's troubles deepened when

Ben Sears removed Mohammad Haris for 11, leaving the visitors at 19-2 in 3.1 overs. Agha Salman and young Irfan Khan attempted to rebuild with a 31-run partnership, easing the early pressure. However, Ish Sodhi struck in the seventh over, dismissing Irfan (11) and Khushdil Shah (2), reducing Pakistan to 52-4. Despite the setbacks, Agha played aggressively, scoring 46 off 28 balls. Shadab Khan provided brief support with 24 runs before falling to Sears. Salman's dismissal further dented Pakistan's hopes, and Shadab, after accelerating the score, was removed for 26 off 14 by Duffy. Jahadad Khan fell for a duck, while Abdul Samad's 11-run cameo was cut short by Jimmy Neesham. Shaheen Afridi's late contribution of 22 runs helped Pakistan reach 135. For New Zealand, Duffy, Sears, Sodhi, and Neesham each claimed two wickets. Pakistan playing XI: Mohammad Haris (w), Hasan Nawaz, Salman Agha (c), Irfan Khan, Shadab Khan, Abdul Samad, Khushdil Shah, Jahadad Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Ali. New Zealand playing XI: Tim Seifert, Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell, James Neesham, Mitchell Hay (w), Michael Bracewell (c), Zakary Foulkes, Jacob Duffy, Ish Sodhi, Ben Sears.

Djokovic player union begins legal action against tours

LONDON: The players' union co-founded by Novak Djokovic has begun legal action against tennis' governing bodies, citing "anti-competitive practices and a blatant disregard for player welfare". The Professional Tennis Players' Association (PTPA) has filed papers at the United States District Court in New York, where it is seeking a jury trial. The 146-page lawsuit, which has been seen by BBC Sport, says "professional tennis players are stuck in a rigged game" which gives them "limited control over their own careers and brands". The lawsuit criticises the

schedule, ranking systems and control over image rights. The complaint is being brought by the PTPA and 12 players - including Djokovic, his co-founder Vasek Pospisil and Nick Kyrgios - "on behalf of the entire player population". The PTPA was formed in 2020 and wants to increase the power of the players, and reduce the control of the governing bodies. The lawsuit seeks an end to "monopolistic control" of the tennis tour, as well as financial compensation from the men's ATP, the women's WTA, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the International

Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA). The organisation has also started legal proceedings in the UK and the EU to end what it considers the "unchecked authority of the sport's governing bodies". "Tennis is broken," said Ahmad Nassar, the Executive Director of the PTPA, who told the BBC in October they would have no qualms about going down this route. "Behind the glamorous veneer that the defendants promote, players are trapped in an unfair system that exploits their talent, suppresses their earnings, and jeopardises their health and safety.

"We have exhausted all options for reform through dialogue, and the governing bodies have left us no choice but to seek accountability through the courts. "Fixing these systemic failures isn't about disrupting tennis - it's about saving it for the generations of players and fans to come." The PTPA believes, external governing bodies act as a "cartel" by forming agreements with tournaments that cap prize money and prevent potential competitors entering the market. The union describes the ranking points system as "draconian" as it effectively forces a player to enter their tournaments in order to build a status and reputation as a professional. The lawsuit also takes aim at an "unsustainable" schedule which runs for 11 months of the year, and can require players to compete in excessive heat or in the early hours of the morning. It alleges players suffer serious wrist, elbow and shoulder injuries because the type of ball used changes regularly throughout the season - and that the governing bodies' control of image rights diverts money from players' pockets. - Agencies

Hafeez clarifies '90s players' remarks after backlash

Hafeez took to social media on Monday to issue a clarification

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez has addressed the criticism surrounding his recent comments about the legacy of cricketers from the 1990s. Hafeez, who faced backlash for stating that his predecessors did not leave a lasting legacy in Pakistan cricket, has now clarified that his remarks were misrepresented by certain media outlets and were not intended as a personal attack on any former cricketer. His statement came in the wake of Pakistan's disappointing performance in the 2025 Champions Trophy, where they were eliminated after losing their first two group matches against New Zealand and arch-rivals India. A washed-out fixture against Bangladesh further confirmed their exit from the tournament. "I am a big admirer of the cricketers from the 1990s, but when we talk about their legacy, it's clear they didn't bring home an ICC trophy. They were part of the World Cups in 1996, 1999, and 2003, and despite our strong performances, we lost each time. In fact, we only made it to the 1999 final, and that loss was quite heavy," Hafeez said. "They were megastars as players, but they couldn't inspire us by winning an ICC event. After that, we endured a tough phase, losing the 2007 T20 World Cup final. However, in 2009, under Younis Khan's leadership, we finally secured a title, providing inspiration for the next generation," he added. Amid growing criticism, the former all-rounder took to social media on Monday to issue a clarification, emphasizing that his remarks were solely about Pakistan's inability to win ICC tournaments during that era, not an attack on any individual player. "Some media houses are fabricating the actual content. The context of the discussion was all about teams winning ICC events to inspire future generations," Hafeez tweeted. "Therefore, I explained how the greatness of the game from Pakistan, despite all their cricketing talent, couldn't win ICC events (post-'92 WC) in 1996, 1999, and 2003. It was never personal criticism of any individual player," he added.

Imran Khan says Afghanistan is not...

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should have 90 minutes of visitation time - 30 minutes each with family and separately between themselves. However, they were only allowed 30 minutes, prompting them to extend it to 45 minutes in protest. She also stated that Imran Khan has been deprived of newspapers and television access in jail, leaving him unaware of current affairs. Upon learning about the APC, he remarked, "This is why they have cut off my access to news." Imran Khan personally stated that PTI would only participate in the NSC meeting with his approval. He also pointed out that terrorism had significantly declined until 2021 but saw an increase in 2022. Regarding Afghanistan, he asserted, "Afghanistan is not our enemy. Stop trying to turn them into one. Why are you unnecessarily provoking conflict with our Muslim brothers?" Aleema Khan further highlighted that Imran Khan is not allowed phone calls with his children or access to his personal doctor for medical check-ups. She claimed that the authorities are deliberately harassing him, despite court permission for his dentist, Dr Samina Niazi, to examine his dental issues.

'All state institutions controlled...

FROM PAGE 01
are currently under the influence of "other powers," expressing concern over the lack of accountability and cooperation in judicial matters. The remarks were made by Judge Tahir Abbas Supra during a bail hearing for PTI lawmaker Ali Shah. The judge criticised the prosecution for failing to produce the required case record, questioning whether it was a deliberate act. "All departments seem to be in the hands of some other powers right now," Judge Supra remarked, hinting at interference in state affairs. When the prosecutor informed the court that the investigation officer (IO) was in Mandi Bahaudin and had not returned, the judge questioned the prosecution's understanding of its responsibilities. "To this day, I fail to understand the actual responsibility of the prosecution," he said. "If the investigation officer does not appear, whose responsibility is it?" The prosecutor responded that their duty to submit the case record begins only after they receive it officially. In response, Judge Supra expressed frustration over what he described as the "stubbornness" of Islamabad prosecutors, who he said "consider themselves equal to judges."

PM to visit Saudi Arabia today

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in key sectors and facilitate greater economic collaboration. "Matters of mutual interest and concern, including global and regional developments," noted the statement. The prime minister's visit underscores the deep-rooted historical relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and will pave the way for increased mutual understanding, enhanced cooperation in trade, investment and greater diplomatic coordination on bilateral, regional and global matters. The premier's visit comes in response to the invitation by the Saudi crown prince with The News reporting that the former would avail the opportunity to spend a few days in Makkah and Madina and would also the coastal city Jeddah where he would meet King Salman bin Abdul Aziz.

Wikimedia challenges...

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the Delhi High Court over the way in which the news agency was described on the platform, which is run by a community of volunteer editors. ANI said in its lawsuit it was being described on its Wikipedia page as an agency facing criticism for being a "propaganda tool" for the government. Edits that reflected the "true and correct" position were removed by the platform, it said.



Pakistan's ODI squad to undergo training

Pakistan's ODI squad is set to depart for New Zealand on March 23

DNA

LAHORE: Nine members of Pakistan's squad for the upcoming ODI series against New Zealand will train at the Lahore Cricket Association (LCCA) ground here, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Tuesday. According to the details, the players scheduled to undergo a brief training camp until Friday are white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Abdullah Shafique, Imam-ul-Haq, Tayyab Tahir, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Naseem Shah and Akif Javed. Notably, Pakistan's ODI squad will depart for New Zealand on March 23 to play a three-match series, scheduled to run from March 29 to April 5. Meanwhile, the green shirts are currently featuring in a five-match T20I series against New Zealand, led by the home side 2-0. Pakistan's ODI squad against New Zealand: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Imam-ul-Haq, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Sufyan Moqim and Tayyab Tahir. NOTE: A wicketkeeper/batter will be added to the ODI squad following the T20Is Player Support Staff: Naveed Akram Cheema (team manager), Aqib Javed (interim head coach), Azhar Mahmood (assistant coach), Mohammad Yousuf (batting coach), Mohammad Masroor (fielding coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist).

Salman Ali Agha Agha opens up after defeat in second T20I

Agha acknowledged the team's improvement compared to the previous match

WEB DESK

DUNEDIN: Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha shared his thoughts following the team's five-wicket defeat against New Zealand in the second T20I at University Oval on Tuesday. Speaking at the post-match conference, Agha acknowledged the team's improvement compared to the previous match but emphasized the need for better performances in key areas. "It was freezing. It was a good game compared to the last one. We batted better, and our fielding was outstanding. Bowling in patches was good, but we need to understand the different bounce here," Agha stated. "After the powerplay, we bowled well, and Haris bowled well. However, we need to improve in the powerplay as a bowling unit and also as a batting unit," he added. After losing the first T20I by nine wickets on Sunday, Pakistan struggled again in the second encounter, failing to defend 135 runs after being put in to bat in a rain-affected match reduced to 15 overs per side. In response, New Zealand's chase got off to a blazing start, with openers Tim Seifert and Finn Allen adding 66 runs for the first wicket. Seifert, in particular, played an aggressive knock, smashing 45 runs off 22 balls before falling to Mohammad Ali, who claimed his maiden T20I

wicket. Allen continued his attacking approach, adding 21 runs with Mark Chapman for the second wicket. However, his explosive 38 off just 16 deliveries was cut short by Jahadad Khan, reducing New Zealand to 87-2 in 6.5 overs. Chapman struggled, departing for just one run off Khushdil Shah's bowling, while Haris Rauf dismissed Jimmy Neesham (14), leaving the Black Caps at 97-4 in 8.3 overs. Daryl Mitchell and Mitchell Hay then formed a steady 35-run stand, taking New Zealand closer to victory. Though Haris Rauf struck again to remove Mitchell (14), skipper Michael Bracewell and Hay ensured New Zealand sealed the win with 11 balls to spare. Pakistan's batting faltered once again, with the team losing early wickets. Skipper Salman Ali Agha and young Irfan Khan attempted to stabilize the innings with a 31-run partnership, but Ish Sodhi's double strike in the seventh over dismissed Irfan (11) and Khushdil Shah (2), leaving Pakistan at 52-4. Despite the pressure, Agha played a valiant knock, scoring 46 off 28 balls, while Shadab Khan provided brief support with 24 runs. However, their dismissals left Pakistan struggling, and a late cameo from Shaheen Afridi (22) helped them post a modest total. Playing XI Pakistan: Mohammad Haris (w), Hasan Nawaz, Salman Agha (c), Irfan Khan, Shadab Khan, Abdul Samad, Khushdil Shah, Jahadad Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Ali.

Kaleem bags silver at World Muaythai C'ship

The referee showed partiality in the final and supported Croatian fighter, claims Kaleem

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's kickboxer Agha Kaleem clinched a silver medal in the 51-kilogram category at the International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA) World Muaythai Championships in Bangkok. The World Muaythai Championships, organized annually by the IFMA, represent the pinnacle of Muay Thai competition alongside the World Games. This prestigious event saw participation from 40 countries. Meanwhile, Kaleem, who stormed into the final of the 51-kilogram category on the back of dominant performances, squared off against a Croatian opponent in the summit clash but ended up on the losing side. The 24-year-old alleged the referee of favouring his opponent in the final but expressed gratitude for winning the laurel for his country.



"I did not lose. They made me lose. The referee showed partiality in the final," claimed Kaleem. "Thanks to Almighty Allah, I won a silver medal for my country," he added. Kaleem, originally from Quetta and currently residing in Baldia Town, Karachi, works as a tea vendor. Despite his spectacular achievements and numerous medals at national and international levels, Kaleem was forced to sell parathas (fried bread) at a local stall in Karachi. The kickboxer was eventually supported by renowned singer Ali Zafar and former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi, paving the way for Kaleem to go on and win the International MMA Championship in 2023. "Alhamdulillah, I won the international MMA championship," Kaleem had written on X, formerly Twitter, tagging Zafar in his post. The singer generously replied to congratulate the fighter. "Amazing! Believed in you all the way. So proud."

Briefs

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.26 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.16. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.60 and Rs282.10, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.86 to close at Rs306.62 against the last day's closing of Rs304.76, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.86, whereas an increase of Rs1.74 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs364.20 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs362.46. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went up by 03 and 02 paise and closed at Rs 76.31 and Rs 74.72 respectively.—APP

UK businesses eyeing ME investments amid growing regional appeal

RIYADH: Interest among UK business leaders in the Middle East as a key investment hub has doubled to 36 percent, driven by the region's economic transformation and strategic appeal, a new survey has revealed. The study, conducted by communications consultancy Pagefield, surveyed over 200 senior figures across the finance, technology, and manufacturing sectors. Europe is the leading region, with 55 percent of respondents naming it their primary international investment market, yet the Middle East's growing appeal reflects regional efforts to diversify economies and attract foreign direct investment. Mega projects such as Saudi Arabia's NEOM and large-scale developments in the UAE are reshaping the landscape, promising to draw more global capital. "The data shows a clear shift in UK businesses' global outlook. While Europe remains a top priority, the sharp rise in interest in the Middle East and Asia signals a growing appetite for new, high-potential markets," said Christopher Clark, partner at Pagefield. He added: "Businesses are looking beyond traditional hubs and seeking opportunities in regions that offer both economic dynamism and strategic advantages." Saudi Arabia's regional headquarters program has emerged as a major pull for international firms, including UK companies.—APP

World reacts to deadly Israeli airstrikes on Gaza

DUBAI: Israel launched a wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Tuesday, killing more than 320 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The escalation has triggered worldwide condemnation to Israel's heaviest assault in the territory since a ceasefire took effect in January. United Nations rights chief Volker Turk said: "I am horrified by last night's Israeli airstrikes and shelling in Gaza," in a statement, adding that "This will add tragedy onto tragedy." The United Nations' Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory urged for the ceasefire in Gaza to be immediately reinstated. "This is unacceptable. A ceasefire must be reinstated immediately" Muhammad Hadi said in a statement. Saudi Arabia strongly condemned the resumption of "aggression by the occupying forces against Gaza," including the direct shelling of civilian areas, the Foreign Ministry said. Turkey also denounced Israel's deadly strikes in Gaza as "a new phase" in its "genocide policy," saying the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defied humanity through its breach of international law.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President FPCCI Atif Ikram presenting bouquet to Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Chairman Senate of Pakistan on the occasion of Iftar dinner hosted by the FPCCI for the diplomatic corps and political leadership. DNA

FPCCI shares charter of economy with FM to overcome challenges

On the occasion, the FPCCI team emphasized that this Charter was developed to foster political consensus and intended to meet with all stakeholders, including political parties, to form an effective economic strategy that transcends political divides and addresses Pakistan's economic challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) here on Tuesday shared a comprehensive Charter of Economy prepared by the federation with the Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team. The charter was shared by FPCCI delegation during a meeting with the finance minister, according to press release issued by finance ministry here. The delegations was led by President FPCCI, Atif Ikram and included Patron-in-Chief, S. M. Tanveer and Chief Executive of FF Steel, KPK, Senator Noman Wazir. On the occasion, the FPCCI team emphasized that this Charter was developed to foster political consensus and intended to meet with all stakeholders, including political parties, to form an effective economic strategy that transcends political divides and addresses Pakistan's economic challenges. Their goal is to free the country from its economic calamities by prioritizing the nation's development and economic growth, particularly to

meet the needs of the growing population, especially the youth, who form the core of Pakistan's demographic structure. Senator Noman Wazir Khattak provided a detailed presentation on the proposals and recommendations outlined in the Charter of Economy. The key recommendations included the reorganization of specialized civil services with the establishment of dedicated groups in critical sectors such as Energy, Finance, Industry, and Health to lead policy formulation and ensure informed decision-making. The Charter also called for embracing solar and wind energy, seen as the cheapest sources of power, and proposed keeping wheeling charges for the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) at a maximum of Rs 4 per kWh. It also emphasized a greater focus on regional trade and development financial institutions, with proposals for at least 20% of lending directed toward long-term CAPEX and 10% toward startup CAPEX. A stable exchange rate was recommended to support exports and discourage imports that do not

comply with the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA). The Charter also stressed the importance of a uniform gas pricing structure for industries across the country to promote industrial growth. Further recommendations included transferring ownership of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to employees, allowing them to manage these enterprises or privatize them, and converting their pension funds into equity. The presentation proposed strategic reforms on various fronts, including debt management, trade partnerships, tax compliance, energy efficiency, and the exploitation of mineral resources. It also called for a progressive taxation model for agriculture, better governance structures, pension and welfare reforms, digitalization, and improvements to the bankruptcy laws in Pakistan. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb welcomed the FPCCI delegation and praised their efforts in preparing a comprehensive and timely Charter of Economy, noting that such initiatives are crucial at this juncture, even when political parties agree on a common set of economic goals. He reflected

on his previous involvement in the preparation of a similar Charter of Economy by the Pakistan Business Council in 2020, highlighting the importance of uniting all stakeholders on a common platform to address the challenges of declining living standards and achieve sustainable economic growth. The Finance Minister reiterated that quick fixes would not suffice, and a steady, unified effort was required to drive Pakistan's economic recovery. Aurangzeb also briefed the delegation on the ongoing reforms in key sectors, including macroeconomic stability, taxation, energy, and right-sizing of the federal government. He reassured the delegation that the government was committed to resolving pressing issues, such as energy costs for industries, to foster industrialization and export-led growth, in line with the government's economic vision. The members of the FPCCI delegation expressed their appreciation for the Finance Minister and his team's efforts in improving Pakistan's economic indicators and hoped that the government would continue addressing critical

issues to support industrialization and economic growth in the country. The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Ministry of Finance and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Amongst the businessmen who attended the meeting included Mr. Atif Ikram, President FPCCI; Senator Noman Wazir, Chief Executive, FF Steel, KPK; Mr. S. M. Tanveer, Patron-in-Chief, United Business Group (UBG); MNA Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig; Ahsan Bakhtawri, Former President Islamabad CCI; Momin Malik, Guard Group; Zafar Bakhtawri, Secretary General UBG; Mr. Zaki Ajaz, Vice President FPCCI; Mr. Tariq Mehmood, Chief Executive OTTO Petroleum; Nasir Qureshi, President Islamabad CCI; Sohail Altaf, Group Leader Rawalpindi CCI; Ashfaq Ahmed, Vice President FPCCI, Gilgit Baltistan; Tariq Jadoon, Vice President FPCCI; Malik Sohail, Chairman Coordination; Adeel Rauf, Convener FPCCI; Riaz Arshad, Convener FPCCI; Ms. Quart Ul Ain, Vice President FPCCI; and Hamid Waleed, Economic Advisor to Patron-in-Chief UBG.

Pak, Japan trade coop expansion discussed

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Pak Suzuki Hiroshi Kawamura on Tuesday met with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan to discuss expanding industrial and trade cooperation between Pakistan and Japan. During the meeting, Hiroshi Kawamura congratulated Haroon Akhtar Khan on his appointment as SAPM and expressed confidence in further strengthening economic and industrial ties between the two countries, said a news release. Haroon Akhtar Khan emphasized that Pakistan is a significant and promising market for Pak Suzuki and underscored the importance of continued collaboration in the automotive sector. He highlighted Pakistan's interest in joint industrial ventures that could open new avenues for growth and innovation. A key focus of the discussions was Pakistan's commitment to sustainable and environment-friendly transportation, aligning with Prime Minister's "Uraan" vision, which promotes eco-friendly vehicles. The SAPM appreciated Pak Suzuki's plan to establish Biogas Plant in Manga Mandi, acknowledging its contribution to green energy solutions. The meeting also covered ethanol fuel integration in vehicles, engine compatibility, and local production of auto parts to boost Pakistan's automotive industry. Haroon Akhtar Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's dedication to localizing auto manufacturing and increasing local content. He also stressed the importance of bio-gas and electric vehicle (EV) projects in collaboration with Japan, reinforcing the two countries' commitment to technological innovation and clean energy solutions.—DNA

Canada reviews F-35 fighter jet deal

OTTAWA: Canada is looking for possible alternatives to its deal to buy US fighter jets in part because it relies too much on the United States for security, Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Monday. Carney made the comments just days after ordering a review of a C\$19-billion (\$13.29 billion) contract for 88 F-35 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin. Canada is locked in a trade war with the United States. Canada's defense ministry says the contract remains in place and Ottawa has made a legal commitment of funds for the first 16 F-35 aircraft. Carney made clear Canada would seriously look elsewhere. "It is clear that our security relationship ... is too focused on the United States.—APP

Bangladesh rebukes US spy chief over religious violence remarks

DHAKA: Bangladesh has rebuked Washington's intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard, saying her comments on religious violence in the South Asian country were unfounded and risked fanning sectarian tensions. Gabbard arrived this week for a diplomatic trip to India, whose relations with Bangladesh have soured since a student-led uprising overthrew the latter nation's government last year. New Delhi has repeatedly accused its Muslim-majority neighbor of failing to adequately protect its minority Hindu citizens - charges denied by the caretaker administration now in charge. But Gabbard appeared to give credence to the claims when she was asked about violence in Bangladesh during a Monday interview with Indian broadcaster NDTV. "The long-time unfortunate persecution, killing, and abuse of religious minorities... have been a major area of concern for the US government," she said in response. She added that the issue, along with Islamist extremism, remained "central focus areas of concern" and said the Trump administration has already raised them with the Bangladeshi government. Bangladesh responded in a statement late Monday that Gabbard's comments were both "misleading" and "damaging" to the country's image and reputation. "Political leaders and public figures should base their statements, especially on sensitive issues, on actual knowledge and take care not to reinforce harmful stereotypes, fan fears, or potentially stoke sectarian tensions," the statement said. Hindus make up about eight percent of Bangladesh's 170 million people. In the chaotic days following the August ouster of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina, there was a string of attacks on Hindus - seen by some as having backed her rule. The caretaker government that replaced her has insisted that many of those attacks were motivated by politics rather than religion. It has also accused India's media and government of spreading disinformation exaggerating threats to Bangladeshi Hindus. Gabbard met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington last month soon after her confirmation as director of national intelligence under President Donald Trump.—DNA

German embassy first Secretary visits ICCI to strengthen trade ties

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The First Secretary of the German Embassy on Economic and Political Affairs Ms. Janine Rohwer visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Tuesday to discuss ways to enhance bilateral trade relations and explore new investment opportunities. During the visit, both sides engaged in a productive dialogue on strengthening economic ties, particularly in sectors such as renewable energy, IT, automotive, mines & minerals and textiles. The First Secretary highlighted Germany's interest in

expanding trade partnerships with Pakistani businesses, emphasizing the potential for collaboration in value-added industries.

The ICCI representatives welcomed the initiative, underscoring Pakistan's growing potential

as a trade and investment hub. Both parties agreed to facilitate business-to-business (B2B) linkages and exchange delegations to

promote closer economic cooperation. The visit marks a significant step in fostering stronger commercial ties between Pakistan and Germany, paving the way for mutual growth and prosperity. It is noteworthy that Germany is one of Pakistan's key trading partners in the European Union and this visit may encourage more investment, technological exchange and joint ventures in industries like renewable energy, automotive, textile and IT sectors. The meeting was attended by Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Senior Advisor to ICCI President Naeem Siddiqui and Secretary General Gulam Murtaza.



Algeria rejects French deportation drive in latest row

ALGIERS: Algeria on Monday opposed a French bid to deport several dozen Algerians, rejecting "threats" and "ultimatums" by Paris as the two countries' ties came under increasing strain. The Algerian foreign ministry said in a statement that the authorities would not accept a list handed over by France in recent days with the names of around 60 Algerians set for deportation. It cited procedural requirements but also said Algeria "categorically rejects threats and intimidation attempts, as well as... ultimatums." In rejecting the French list, Algeria was "solely motivated by the wish to fulfil its duty of consular protection for its citizens" and to ensure "the rights of individuals subject to deportation measures," the ministry's statement said. Hard-line French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau has said those selected for deportation were "dangerous" or former convicts. Relations between Paris and Algiers have been strained since French President Emmanuel Macron recognized Moroccan sovereignty of the disputed territory of Western Sahara in July last year. But they have worsened since Algiers refused to accept the return of undocumented Algerian migrants from France. Retailleau has led verbal attacks on Algeria in the media, fueling tensions between the countries. In late February, Prime Minister Francois Bayrou warned Paris could revoke a special status given to Algerians in France, the former colonial power.—APP

Police evict hundreds of migrants squatting in Paris theater

PARIS: French police evicted more than 400 migrants on Tuesday who had been squatting inside the Gaité Lyrique theater in central Paris for more than three months. Officers began their operation shortly before 6 a.m. (0500 GMT) at the theater, where hundreds of demonstrators had gathered to protest against the eviction. Since December 10, the migrants, including many unaccompanied minors, had occupied the concert and arts venue as part of their demands for shelter, leading the Gaité Lyrique management to suspend its operations on December 17. A large banner on the Gaité Lyrique read: "400 lives at risk, 80 jobs under threat." "Shame, shame, shame to authorities who are at war with isolated minors," demonstrators chanted in front of the theater in solidarity with the migrants, urging local authorities to provide sustainable housing to them rather than force them out. Police briefly used tear gas at the start of their operation, but overall the evacuation proceeded without any major incidents or clashes.—Agencies

India orders curfew after violence over tomb

MUMBAI: Authorities clamped indefinite curfew on parts of the Indian city of Nagpur after more than a dozen police officers were hurt in clashes sparked by a Hindu group's demand for the removal of the tomb of a 17th-century Mughal ruler, police said on Tuesday. Monday's violence in the central Indian city damaged many vehicles and injured several people, among them at least 15 police personnel, one of whom was in serious condition, a police officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Devendra Fadnis, chief minister of the western state of Maharashtra, where the city is located, criticized the violence in a video message, calling for every effort to maintain law and order. "I have told the police commissioner to take whatever strict steps are necessary," Fadnis added. Police said in a statement that members of the group, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), burnt an effigy of the Emperor Aurangzeb and his tomb as they chanted slogans demanding its removal from the nearby city of Aurangabad.—APP

Briefs

PML-N committed to eradicating terrorism

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to PM on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaulah Khan on Tuesday said that PML-N in leadership of Nawaz Sharif played an active role to eliminate terrorism from the country. Speaking to a private news channel, Rana Sanaulah said that after the Army Public School (APS) attack in 2014, the PML-N government convened an All Parties Conference (APC) and developed the National Action Plan (NAP) to combat terrorism. He stated that terrorism was significantly reduced through military operations, including Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, which targeted militant hideouts and dismantled terrorist networks across the country. He highlighted that the upcoming meeting will focus on the security situation and the strategy to combat terrorism. He mentioned that the military leadership will present their plan to stamp out terrorism, while political leaders will share their views and offer guidance. Responding to PTI's claims of state bias, he accused PTI of using its resources against the state through propaganda and social media campaigns.

Tehran's Azadi Tower lights up in green

DNA

TEHRAN: The famous Azadi Tower of Tehran was illuminated with the green and white colours of the Pakistani flag ahead of Pakistan Day to be celebrated on March 23. Ambassador of Pakistan in Tehran Mudassir Tipu witnessed the video mapping at the landmark, locally known as Burj Azadi. The flags of Pakistan and Iran were displayed and the national anthems of both countries were played followed by the traditional music representing federating units of Pakistan and displaying the country's landscapes. The colorful event was witnessed by a large number of Pakistan diaspora, students and media representative. Ambassador Muhammad Mudassir Tipu welcomed the guests and highlighted the historical significance of Pakistan National Day. He thanked the Government of Iran for extending facilitation to celebrate this day. He said that Pakistan was a cradle of ancient civilizations like Harappa, Moenjodaro and Indus Valley civilizations and Mehrghar which should be linked through cultural activities and tourism promotion.

Curfew in Indian city after violence

NEW DELHI: Violence erupted in central India's Nagpur city after groups demanded the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb. A curfew has been imposed in parts of a city in India's western state of Maharashtra after Hindu groups demanded the removal of the tomb of Aurangzeb, a 17th-Century Mughal emperor, sparking violence on Monday night. Vehicles were set on fire and stones were thrown in the Mahal area of Nagpur city. Police say the situation is now under control and are appealing to people to keep the peace. The tomb of Aurangzeb, who died more than 300 years ago, has in recent years become a political flashpoint amid growing calls for its removal by hardline Hindu groups. It is located about 500km (311 miles) from Nagpur in the state's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, which was earlier called Aurangabad after the emperor. Monday's violence broke out after two Hindu organisations, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, burnt the emperor's effigy and chanted slogans demanding the removal of his tomb, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis told the state assembly. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, provided an insightful briefing on the various pictures displayed during the Canakkale Victory and Martyrs' Day event, commemorating the 104th anniversary of the acceptance of Türkiye's National Anthem. The exhibition highlighted historical moments, sacrifices, and national pride, highlighting the significance of the Turkish national anthem in shaping the country's identity. The ambassador emphasized the importance of remembering the sacrifices made for Türkiye's independence and sovereignty. - DNA

OIC calls Islamophobia a threat to human dignity

ISSI hosts seminar commemorating 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a seminar titled "Islamophobia in Focus: Three Years of Progress and Emerging Challenges." The seminar featured a keynote address by Prof Dr Anis Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of RIPHAH University. Other distinguished speakers included Dr Israr Madani, Founder President of the International Research Council for Religious Affairs (IRCRA); Dr Mujeeb Afzal, Associate Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University; Prof Dr Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Director General of the Islamic Research Institute at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI); Dr Greg Simons, Professor of Journalism at Daffodil International University; and Dr Sofya Ragozina, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, said a press release. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI, highlighted Pakistan's pivotal role in international advocacy, particularly through the designation of March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia by the UN.

Despite some legislative steps in Sweden, Denmark, and the U.S., Ambassador Mahmood highlighted persistent and increasing Islamophobic incidents in Europe, the U.S. and India. He underscored the urgent need for implementation of UN resolutions and for the international community to forge unity and work together, fostering understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. He further stressed that people of goodwill in all faiths should make their rightful contribution towards building a world that respects diversity, pluralism, and interfaith harmony. In a video message, H.E. Husein-Brahim Taha, Secretary General of the OIC, described the proclamation of the International Day against Islamophobia by the United Nations as a significant milestone in combating religious discrimination. He expressed concern over the rise in anti-Muslim incidents globally, including online hate speech and attacks on places of worship, which threaten human dignity and religious freedom. He stressed that this challenge demands collective action and innovative responses, affirming OIC's commitment to effective strategies against Islamophobia, strengthening legal protections for minorities, and combating religious hatred through

dialogue and mutual respect. In his keynote address, Prof Dr Anis Ahmad characterized Islamophobia as a socially constructed phenomenon rooted in unjustifiable fear and distorted perceptions of Islam and Muslims, resulting in harassment, discrimination, exclusion, and violation of fundamental human rights globally. Drawing from the Runnymede Trust Report (1997) and recent academic studies, he highlighted the media's role in perpetuating negative stereotypes and the global spread of Islamophobia, including in non-Western countries like India. Dr. Ahmad emphasised institutionalized educational biases that glorify imperial narratives and depict Muslims negatively. He advocated for decolonization of social sciences, projection of strengths and positive dimensions of Islam and Muslims, need for critical thinking, empathy and justice, universal ethical values, respect for dignity, religious freedom, and educational reforms to accurately represent Islam and Muslims. Prof Dr Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq traced the historical origins of Islamophobia to medieval Europe and highlighted its perpetuation through Orientalism and colonial narratives. He underscored the critical need for interfaith dialogue and educational reforms, em-

phasizing Pakistan's stability as essential to strengthening the broader Muslim community globally. Dr Israr Madani discussed the significant rise of Islamophobia post-9/11, driven largely by Western media portrayals associating Islam with security threats. He recognized emerging global awareness and counter-efforts through advocacy, education, and alternative media. Dr Greg Simons critically examined Western media's role in exacerbating Islamophobic perceptions post-9/11, asserting that Islamophobia has been politically instrumentalized to justify foreign interventions. He proposed leveraging alternative media to challenge these biased narratives effectively. Dr. Mujeeb Afzal explained Islamophobia in the context of India, attributing it to historical narratives from the era of Muslim dynasties through colonial rule, and subsequent marginalization under Hindu nationalism. He critiqued contradictions within Nehruvian secularism, which masked grassroots communal politics. Dr. Sofya emphasized proactive measures to address Islamophobia, advocating for positive representations of Islam rooted in universal ethical values. She called for substantial academic and curricular reforms to instill a confident Muslim identity among youth.

IMF shares MEFP draft with Pak to finalise deal

According to sources, some relief measures are being considered for the construction and real estate sectors

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The IMF has provided Pakistani authorities with the draft of the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) to help build consensus. This move could pave the way for reaching a staff-level agreement under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). According to sources, some relief measures are being considered for the construction and real estate sectors. However, it is yet to be decided whether these relief measures will be implemented immediately or included in the upcoming budget. It is worth noting that negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF concluded without a final agreement, and a staff-level agreement remains essential before the release of a \$1 billion tranche. Meanwhile, IMF has imposed strict conditions for financial discipline, Express News reported.

India asks US to list Sikh group as terrorist org

India's request to US to list SFJ as terrorist group came during talks between Rajnath Singh and Tulsi Gabbard

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India has asked the US to list a Sikh separatist group as a terrorist organisation, an Indian government source said on Tuesday, more than a year after the US said it had foiled a plot with Indian links to kill a leader of the group in the US. Washington went public about the plot in November 2023 and later charged a former Indian spy service officer with directing the plot against Gurbatwant Singh Pannu, a dual US-Canada citizen and the general counsel of Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), in an episode that tested growing India-US friendship.

Justice Mandokhail: Laws exist but lack enforcement

He emphasised that responsibilities must be fulfilled by the concerned authorities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has observed that while the country has laws in place to address child abduction, their enforcement remains inadequate. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail made the remarks during a hearing on a suo motu case regarding child abductions across the country. The court, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, has summoned a representative from the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) for the next hearing. The petitioner's lawyer argued that the attorney general had been directed to meet with all provincial police chiefs but claimed no such meetings had taken

place. However, Additional Attorney General Amir Rehman asserted that consultations had occurred, noting that institutions for child protection exist but lack effective implementation. Justice Aminuddin Khan remarked that responsibilities should be fulfilled by relevant authorities, while Justice Mandokhail stressed that mere legislation without execution is insufficient. The hearing has been adjourned indefinitely. Last month, Additional Inspector General (AIG) of Karachi police Javed Alam Odho formed a special taskforce to intensify investigations into the alarming rise in child abduction cases in the metropolitan city. The team, headed by DIG CIA Muqaddas Haider, will trace and dismantle criminal networks involved in these abductions.

Mustafa case: Armaghan's physical remand extended

Police take accused's father out of courtroom to maintain decorum

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Karachi on Tuesday extended the physical remand of Armaghan Qureshi, the key accused in the Mustafa Amir abduction and murder case, till March 24. The accused subjected his friend, Amir, to horrific torture at his residence in Karachi's Defence Housing Authority (DHA) before burning him alive in the Hub area of Balochistan on January 6 this year. At the outset of today's hearing, the investigating officer produced the accused before the ATC judge on completion of his remand and requested an extension of his physical remand for the completion of the investigation. Meanwhile, police dragged the accused father out of the courtroom to maintain decorum as he was creating a ruckus before the honourable judge. Armaghan, however, refused to accept new counsel provided by his father in the case. He also refused to meet his father too. Meanwhile, the judge

adjourned the hearing and sought progress report on the next hearing. Last week, the ATC handed over the prime suspect to the police for seven more days in the Mustafa Amir kidnap and murder case. The whole saga unfolded after Armaghan opened fire at a team of the Anti-Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) - a specialised unit of the Karachi police responsible for tackling cases related to murder and extortion - during a raid at his residence in Karachi's DHA earlier this month. The deceased's body - found by police in a car near the Hub checkpoint on January 12 and buried by the Edhi Foundation on January 16 - was later exhumed and subsequently buried after an initial DNA profiling report confirmed that the mortal remains belonged to Mustafa. During the previous hearing, the investigation officer said, Armaghan admitted to confiding in his father, Kamran Asghar, about the entire incident after Amir's murder, adding that his father had then advised him to leave Karachi and go into hiding, assuring him that they would also relocate the software house to another location. The IO further said that the suspect admitted to travelling to Lahore, Islamabad, and Skardu with his friend, Shiraz, to evade arrest.



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