



Friday, March 21, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

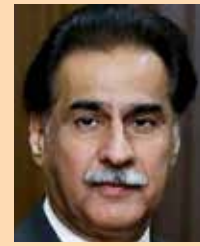
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**Total blockade of Gaza breaking int'l law: UK foreign secy**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Democracy in Pak gradually moving forward**

Detailed News On Page-08


**Kyrgios earns first win in more than two years**

Detailed News On Page-06



## PM Shehbaz meets MBS

# Pak, KSA pledge cooperation for regional stability

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his appreciation for Saudi Arabia's commitment to increasing investments

DNA

JEDDAH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Thursday where they discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation across several sectors, including economic, trade, investment, energy, and defense. The meeting, part of Shehbaz Sharif's four-day visit to Saudi Arabia, comes as Pakistan seeks to bolster its trade and investment relationships with global partners, particularly in light of its ongoing economic challenges. Saudi Arabia has committed a \$5 billion investment package to Pakistan, aimed at stabilising its foreign reserves and addressing its balance of payments crisis. This follows a series of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs), including 34 agreements worth \$2.8 billion signed last year to enhance private sector and commercial collaboration. Both nations are also in advanced discussions on investing in the Reko Diq copper and gold mine, one of the world's largest undeveloped copper-gold areas. Additionally, Pakistan signed an agreement with the Saudi Fund for Development last month to defer a \$1.2 billion payment on oil imports for one year. During the meeting today, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his appreciation for Saudi Arabia's commitment to increasing investments, which will contribute to Pakistan's economic stability. Both sides reaffirmed their historical ties and stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation in defense and security to address regional challenges. They also discussed regional and geopolitical developments and agreed to work closely to promote peace, stability, and prosperity. The two leaders emphasised the need for stronger people-to-people ties, cultural exchanges, and educational collaboration. Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz also held discussions with Saudi Investment Minister

Continued on Page 06

## PM Shehbaz Sharif vows to facilitate Saudi investors

Saudi Minister Khalid Al-Falih and Head of Task Force Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri expressed Saudi Arabia's strong interest in deepening economic ties with Pakistan

DNA

JEDDAH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with Saudi Investment Minister HE Khalid Al-Falih and Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri, Head of the Joint Task Force for Economic Engagement, during his official visit to Saudi Arabia. The discussions focused on strengthening economic cooperation, attracting Saudi investments, and expediting joint initiatives in key sectors. After extending best wishes to the Kingdom's leadership, the PM reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to facilitating Saudi investors, highlighting the country's strategic position and investment-friendly policies. He emphasized Pakistan's vast potential in energy, infrastructure, agriculture and technology, inviting Saudi businesses to explore opportunities under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Saudi Minister Khalid Al-Falih and Head of Task Force Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri expressed

Continued on Page 06



JEDDAH: Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Muhammad bin Salman al-Saud. – DNA

## US State Dept avoids question on Imran Khan

The spokesperson, instead of replying to the question, expressed concern on global events

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: The United States Department of State spokesperson on Wednesday ignored a question regarding former prime minister Imran Khan. During a press briefing, spokesperson Tammy Bruce was questioned about the US stance on Imran Khan, the founder of the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) by a journalist. The spokesperson, instead of replying to the question, expressed concern on global events, mentioned President Trump and Ukrainian President Zelensky's telephonic conversation.

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan Day parade 'scaled down'

This year's parade marks the 85th Republic Day of Pakistan, with contingents from all three armed forces participating

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Day military parade will take place on Sunday, March 23, albeit on a "limited scale" due to the holy month of Ramadan. Contingents from the country's three armed forces will participate in the event. The decision to scale back the parade was made due to the ongoing month of Ramadan. Unlike last year's parade, which was held at

Continued on Page 06

## Torkham border to remain open till 15th

# FO: Afghan govt must take action against TTP, ISKP

FO spokesman says the foreign ministry had nothing to do with visit of Pakistani individuals to Israel adding the information on the matter was being gathered

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan on Thursday reiterated that India's fictitious narrative of victimhood could not hide its involvement in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil and the state-sanctioned oppression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, at his weekly press briefing, said that Indian involvement in fanning terrorism in Pakistan and destabilising Balochistan was clear. The spokesperson told the media that the deadline for the deportation of illegal foreign nationals was unchanged and reiterated Pakistan's call for Afghan authorities to act against TTP and ISKP involved in carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistan. He told the media that the Torkham border had been reopened till April 15 as efforts would continue to seek

Continued on Page 06

## Afghan FM calls for 'gradual' repatriation of Afghan refugees

Trump administration secures release of US citizen detained in Afghanistan

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Thursday called for the gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees, from not just Pakistan but the rest of the world. The minister was addressing an iftar gathering for diplomats based in Kabul, at which Pakistani Charge d'Affaires Ubaidur Rehman Nizamani was present.

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## Briefs

### High-level transfers in ECP

PEC Sindh reassigned to Punjab as PEC, Balochistan's EC Afridi as Joint PEC Peshawar

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The ECP made high-level transfers in the organisation, appointing Sharifullah as the Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) of Punjab. Previously serving as the PEC Sindh, Sharifullah was posted as Punjab as PEC. Meanwhile, Balochistan's Provincial Election Commissioner, Farid Afridi, was posted as the Joint Provincial Election Commissioner in Peshawar. In another major reshuffle, Punjab's Election Commissioner, Ijaz Anwar Chaudhan, was transferred to Sindh as its new Provincial Election Commissioner.

### KP Police foil terrorist attack

KP police confronted the Khawarij terrorists with remarkable courage

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has praised KP police for bravely foiling a terrorist attack on the Kinger Pul police checkpoint in Bannu. According to Naqvi, the KP police confronted the Khawarij terrorists with remarkable courage, successfully repelling the assault. He commended the force for its swift and fearless response, saluting the brave officers who thwarted the militants' nefarious intentions.

### Holiday Notice

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

– Editor

## If court orders

# Govt will not oppose Imran's release: Rana

KP CM Gandapur asked to strengthen police and CTD in civil-military huddle, reveals Sanaullah

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Thursday said the incumbent government would not have any objection if the court releases incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan. The development comes as the key opposition party, the PTI, is gearing up for a countrywide protest drive after Eidul Fitr against what the former ruling party said is a "stolen mandate", to restore the supremacy of the rule of law and Constitution and the release of political prisoners in the country. In addition to this, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman last week said that the religio-political party was planning to protest against the federal government's policies after the Eid, along with the PTI. During his interaction with journalists today, the PM's aide said that the PTI founder was in jail due to the cases he was convicted in. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from

Continued on Page 06

## Efforts underway to bring Fazl into grand alliance

PTI leader expresses optimism that JUI-F chief would soon become part of opposition bloc

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub on Wednesday said that efforts were ongoing to convince Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to join the grand alliance. Speaking to media, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader expressed optimism that Fazl would soon become part of the opposition bloc, adding that negotiations with the JUI-F leader

Continued on Page 06

# IHC seeks clarity on CJ's authority to withdraw case

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan questions legality of forming a larger bench without clear justification

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed the Deputy Registrar (Judicial) to present the high court rules to determine whether the chief justice has the authority to withdraw a case from a bench. A key question raised during the proceedings is whether forming a larger bench and conducting judicial proceedings without explicitly addressing prior office objections is legally valid. Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan was hearing a contempt of court case against the Deputy Registrar (Judicial) for delisting a contempt petition filed by Mashal Yousafzai against the Jail Superintendent. He remarked that a final judgment on this issue is necessary, emphasising that there is no legal provision for transferring a case in such a manner. The judge further noted that if a high court judge had not made this decision, it could have amounted to criminal contempt of court. However, he clarified that he would not issue a contempt notice, stressing that the case is about setting a legal precedent rather than focusing on a political party leader.

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## MQM-P hints at quitting coalition govt

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has indicated that the party might soon separate from the ruling coalition, stating that the time for a final decision is drawing near. He clarified that MQM-P is not issuing threats or ultimatums but is making a firm choice based on its political stance. Speaking at the party's annual welfare event, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui stated that MQM-P had previously left a government due to its "non-serious approach" and expressed frustration with the existing political system. "The system is not accepting us because we refuse to conform to it," he said. He also recalled the party's history of social work, highlighting the role of Khidmat-e-Khalq Foundation (KKF), MQM-P's charitable arm.

Continued on Page 06

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Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, Special Assistant to CM Waqar Mahdi, Chief PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Chairman of P&D Najam Shah, and Secretary of Local Government Khalid Hyder Shah attended the meeting held at CM House

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, presiding over a meeting, reiterated his commitment to addressing Karachi's challenges through efficient governance, rigorous monitoring, and enhanced coordination between the city administration and local government departments. The discussion focused on critical issues such as drainage, illegal encroachments, road-cutting, sanitation, security, and traffic management. Several significant decisions were made to improve the city's infrastructure and services. CM Shah noted that road-cutting in three districts of the city has created difficulties for residents, especially since many of these roads were newly constructed. He was informed that local towns had issued road-cutting permissions within their areas. As a result, the CM decided that road-cutting permissions would now be granted exclusively by the Mayor and Commissioner of Karachi. He instructed the Local Government department to issue an Executive Order to ensure that no KMC or Town officer could

independently approve road cutting. He also directed the Chief Secretary to streamline road-cutting operations to minimize disruptions.

During the discussion, Murad Shah pointed out various minor issues such as overflowing gutters, sanitation problems, debris on main roads, and other factors disrupting traffic flow and harming the administration's reputation. He directed Commissioner Karachi to enhance the monitoring of civic issues. "Assistant Commissioners will conduct citywide inspections to address drainage overflows, sanitation problems, and illegal parking," he stated. He also announced the development of a dedicated Karachi Issues Portal at CM House, where Assistant and Deputy Commissioners must upload reports on drainage, encroachments, and cleanliness. With Eid approaching, the CM emphasised that people would begin visiting markets for shopping. He instructed Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah to enhance police patrolling for improved security and to make special arrangements to facilitate citizens during Eid shopping. He also directed the KMC and Traffic Police to improve street light-

ing, traffic management, and security in key commercial areas. CM Murad Shah tasked the Mayor Karachi with beautifying four major markets and their surroundings, ensuring the provision of seating areas in the city by the end of the financial year. "Next year, we can beautify more markets and public places to make them invite visitors," he said. Additionally, it was noted that the ongoing water pipeline installation in Lyari was still in progress. The CM directed the Local Government Minister to expedite completion and provide him with updates. "If there are any issues, resolve them through the P&D department," he instructed. The CM issued clear instructions for removing soft encroachments after Eid to ensure that public spaces remain accessible. Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, Special Assistant to CM Waqar Mahdi, Chief PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Chairman of P&D Najam Shah, and Secretary of Local Government Khalid Hyder Shah attended the meeting held at CM House.

**PESHAWAR:** The Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has formally directed all public sector universities in the province to implement the recently amended Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012 (Amended 2024). A notification issued to vice-chancellors of all public universities states here on Thursday that the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa passed the amendment on January 21, 2025. The amendments introduce key changes that require immediate compliance from universities. The department has instructed universities to align the composition of their statutory bodies and statutes with the updated Act. Additionally, universities are required to initiate the appointment process for key positions in accordance with the revised provisions. The directive emphasizes strict adherence to the new regulations, ensuring governance structures and administrative policies comply with the amended law. This move is expected to enhance transparency and efficiency in the management of higher education institutions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It said that University administrations are now tasked with swiftly implementing the changes to meet the legal requirements set forth by the provincial government.—DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday emphasized the need for national unity and consensus to tackle the province's growing security challenges.

Talking to a private news channel, he criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for politicizing sensitive national issues and stressed the importance of collaborative efforts between the federal and provincial governments along with the military leadership.

Addressing the situation in the merged districts, Kundi raised concerns about the misuse of NFC funds allocated over the past decade. He questioned the lack of resources for law enforcement, highlighting the poor conditions faced by police personnel battling heavily armed militants. "We must provide modern equipment and bulletproof vehicles to our officers, even at the SHO level, to ensure their safety during operations," he said.

Kundi also called on Chief Minister KP to engage with political parties and hold an All Parties Conference (APC) to develop a unified stance on security issues.

He criticized the provincial leadership for not consulting local stakeholders before presenting concerns to the federal government.—APP

ISLAMABAD: The export of footwear from the country witnessed an increase of 15.48 percent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The country exported footwear worth US\$ 126.413 million during July-February 2024-25 as opposed to the export of US\$ 109.465 million during July-February 2023-24, showing growth of 15.48 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the footwear products, the exports of

leather footwear witnessed an increase of 14.94 percent, from US\$ 85.368 million to US\$ 98.121 million during the months under review. Canvas footwear exports also surged by 15.20 percent by going up from US\$ 1.723 million last year to US\$ 1.985 million, the PBS data revealed. The exports of all other footwear rose by 17.58 percent to US\$ 26.307 million from US\$ 22.374 million in the same months last year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the footwear exports appreciated by 11.57 percent during the month of February 2025 as compared to the same month of last year.

The footwear exports during February 2025 were recorded at \$16,981 million against the export of \$15,220 million in February 2024. During the period under review, the export of leather and canvas footwear witnessed an increase of 6.16 17.56 percent respectively. In addition, the export of all other footwear also increased by 29.26 percent, it added. On a month-on-month basis, the exports of footwear commodities witnessed a decreased of 9.20 percent during February 2025 as compared to the exports of \$18,701 million in January 2025, the PBS data revealed.—DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held on Thursday under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, regarding various projects, the beautification plan and price control of food items during the holy month of Ramadan. The meeting was attended by the Member Admin, Member Planning, Member Engineering, Member Finance, DG Environment, DG Building Control, and officers from MCI and DMA. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that CDA is working on various projects to promote tourism in Islamabad, improve citizens' facilities, and modernize the city's infrastructure. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa mentioned that these projects will not only provide excellent facilities for the citizens but will also establish Islamabad as a major hub for tourism, recreational and hospitality sector. He instructed that efforts be accelerated to complete these projects on time and directed the preparation of initial working paper and feasibility reports for all projects to begin work promptly. It is noteworthy that the CDA administration is highly committed to improving the citizens' welfare and the development of the city. In this regard, practical steps are being taken through infrastructure, tourism, and other recreational projects to make Islamabad a modern and attractive city. Furthermore, Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa was briefed on the official prices of food items during the holy month of Ramadan. The briefing highlighted the extensive measures being taken to ensure the availability of food items at government rates so that citizens do not face any difficulties. As of now, 6,105 inspections have been conducted, while 183 shops have been sealed and 126 FIRs have been registered against the profiteers. A total of 1,393 people have been arrested for violating laws. In total, fines amounting to 1,736,500 rupees have been imposed. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa stressed that official price lists should be prominently displayed in the Ramdhan bazars set up under the Ramadan relief package, so that the public can be made aware of the actual prices. He further stated that hoarding and profiteering will not be tolerated under any circumstances, and strict legal action will be taken against violators. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad concluded by saying that providing maximum relief to citizens during the month of Ramadan is a top priority for the institution, and citizens should ensure they purchase items according to the official price list.—DNA

He reaffirmed that the ICCI is committed to playing an active advocacy role, working with stakeholders to create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive and contribute effectively to the nation's economic progress

**ISLAMABAD:** President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has emphasized that the business community, being the backbone of the national economy, remains steadfast in its commitment to driving

economic progress despite prevailing challenges. Speaking to visiting business leaders at the Chamber House on Thursday, Qureshi acknowledged the efforts of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in promoting economic development and prosperity. However, he pointed out that bureaucratic hurdles

are significantly hampering business growth and obstructing the ease of doing business. He stressed that sustainable long-term policies' consistency and political stability are equally crucial for fostering economic growth and boosting exports. Qureshi urged the government to adopt practical measures that

would facilitate businesses, enhance the country's trade competitiveness, and ensure long-term economic stability. Highlighting the importance of collaboration, Qureshi asserted that engaging business community leaders in decision-making processes related to trade and commerce is essential

for achieving sustainable industrial and trade growth. He reaffirmed that the ICCI is committed to playing an active advocacy role, working with stakeholders to create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive and contribute effectively to the nation's economic progress.



**KARACHI:** Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets Australian High Commissioner Mr. Neil Hawkins at CM House to discuss bilateral cooperation.

**PESHAWAR:** The owners of public transport wagons and buses have demanded of the KP government to abolish ban on renewal of the route permits of the wagons operating on urban routes of Peshawar city.

Addressing a press conference here on behalf of the local wagons' owners and Muthaidha Transport Workers Federation, Haji Noor Mohammad Mohmand said that ban on the renewal of route permits of the public transport operating on urban routes has rendered thousands of transporters and workers unemployed.

Planked by dozens of owners and workers of the affected transporters, he said that PTI has miserably failed in meeting the expectations of the electorates and disappointed the people. Haji Noor Mohammad said that these affected transporters have had sold out their properties and ornaments of their wives to purchase vehicles on installments to generate employment for themselves. But, the rulers of the province are not to snatch it from them leaving the people with no other option than committing suicide. He demanded of the Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur to abolish ban on the renewal of the routes permits to wagons and other transport vehicles operating on urban routes of the city to prevent the poor transporters from starvation and on the other hand provide alternate public transport of the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) service to the people. He warned that if the provincial government failed in paying heed to the poverty and compulsion of urban transporters then will have no other option than taking streets along with their children and responsibility of any untoward incident will rest with the rulers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—APP

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has decided to reclaim unused industrial land allocated for setting up industries. The decision was made during a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, attended by cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, administrative secretaries, and other officials. The meeting reviewed the lease policy for state-owned land and addressed the issue of

billions of rupees worth of land lying unused despite being allocated for industrial purposes. The chief minister directed the Industries Department and Board of Revenue to identify all such unused land across the province and take steps to reclaim it for government use. The chief minister emphasized that the land, originally allotted to promote industrialization and create employment opportunities, cannot be used for any other purpose. Officials briefed that the current market value of these unused plots is in billions

of rupees, and their intended purpose remains unfulfilled. Effective utilization of this land could significantly boost provincial revenue. Additionally, the meeting discussed long-term leasing of government land for commercial purposes. A committee was tasked with reviewing relevant laws and presenting final recommendations for amendments in the next cabinet meeting. This decision reflects the government's commitment to ensuring optimal use of resources and promoting industrial growth in the province.

The advertisement is for the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) in Islamabad. It features a black header with the PEMRA logo on the left and the authority's name in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the header is a black banner with the words 'EXTENSION IN DATE' in large, bold, white capital letters. The main body of the advertisement is white with black text. It starts with the title 'INVITATION TO APPLY FOR FM RADIO BROADCAST STATION LICENSES IN DISTRICT(S) OF PUNJAB PROVINCE' in bold. The text then states that reference advertisements published in national dailies on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2025 and 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 regarding the invitation for applications for FM Radio Broadcast Station Licenses in Punjab Province, under Section 19 of PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) ACT 2023, last date for submission of applications has been extended till 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2025 (1700 Hrs). It also mentions that other details as per advertisement dated 02-02-2025 with terms and conditions will remain the same. At the bottom, there is a black footer with white text providing the contact information for the Director Licensing (Broadcast Media- FM) at PEMRA Headquarters, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mauve Area, G-8/1, Islamabad. The phone and fax numbers are also listed.

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REGULATORY AUTHORITY  
ISLAMABAD**

**EXTENSION IN DATE**

**INVITATION TO APPLY FOR FM RADIO BROADCAST STATION  
LICENSES IN DISTRICT(S) OF PUNJAB PROVINCE**

Reference advertisements published in the national dailies on **2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2025** and **4<sup>th</sup> March, 2025** regarding invitation of applications for grant of FM Radio Broadcast Station Licenses in district(s) of Punjab Province, under Section 19 of PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) ACT 2023, last date for submission of applications has been extended till **21<sup>st</sup> April, 2025 (1700 Hrs)**. Other details as per advertisement dated **02-02-2025** with terms and conditions will remain the same.

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March 06/ Ghana Independence Day

March 12 /Mauritius National Day

March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20/Tunisia Independence Day


March 21/Namibia National Day

March 25/Greece National Day


March 26/Bangladesh National Day

March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

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Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
Motorway Police.....9266044  
Motorway Police.9270601-20  
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489  
CAA.....9281092

**Hospitals**

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....561116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666

**Departments**

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

**Water Tank**

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Chinese envoy hands over cash assistance to PRCs

Jiang Zaidong said that Chinese side resolutely opposes all forms of terrorism and strongly condemns the train hijacking incident in Balochistan, expresses deepest condolences to the deceased victims, extends sincere sympathies to the bereaved families, and wishes the injured a speedy recovery

MAHNOOR ANSAR/DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Jiang Zaidong, on behalf of the Red Cross Society of China, handed over the emergency cash assistance to the Pakistan Red Crescent Society. The ceremony was attended by Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Ms. Amna Baloch, Chairperson of Pakistan Red Crescent Society Ms. Farzana Naek, and Minister-Counselor Mr. Xu Hangtian from the Chinese Embassy. Jiang Zaidong said that Chinese side resolutely opposes all forms of terrorism and strongly condemns the train hijacking incident in Balochistan, expresses deepest condolences to the deceased victims, extends sincere sympathies to the bereaved families, and wishes the injured a speedy recovery. To support Pakistan in providing medical treatment for the injured and handling aftermath matters, the Red Cross Society of China decided to offer emergency cash assistance.

Amna and Farzana expressed their heartfelt gratitude for China's assistance, said that Pakistan side is deeply moved by China's steadfast support during this critical moment, which fully manifests the ironclad brotherly friendship between the two countries. They pledged to immediately allocate the Chinese aid fund for relevant efforts to ensure maximum effectiveness.

# Int'l support essential to fight against escalating terrorism in Pak: Ayaz

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that growing threat of terrorism and extremism remains one of Pakistan's most pressing challenges. He expressed these views in his address to a delegation of students from Harvard University, USA, at Parliament House, Islamabad. He said that it is an alarming fact that Pakistan's neighboring country, Afghanistan, has increasingly become a safe haven for terrorist groups targeting Pakistan. Ayaz Sadiq said that Afghanistan's soil has been used as a base for launching terrorist activities directed at Pakistan, and the lack of effective control over these elements is exacerbating the situation. This growing threat of terrorism could spiral out of control, extending its reach to neighboring countries and even to the larger international community, if not contained, he added. Ayaz Sadiq also pointed out that the events of 9/11 serve as a stark reminder of how unchecked terrorism can expand, affecting not only the region but also impacting international peace and security. He urged the global community to recognize that terrorism is not merely a challenge for Pakistan but an international threat that requires a united, concerted effort to confront and eliminate. "Pakistan has long been at the forefront of the battle against terrorism," the Speaker added. He reiterated that the Pakistani government has consistently provided evidence to the Afghan interim government regarding the presence of terrorist organizations operating from Afghan territory. Ayaz Sadiq further highlighted that this issue has been repeatedly raised in the United Nations and communicated to high-ranking officials in the United States. The Speaker expressed deep concern over the sophisticated weaponry left behind by the U.S. in Afghanistan, valued at an estimated \$7 billion, which is now being used against Pakistan. While praising the valour and commitment of Pakistan's Security Forces and the immense sacrifices they have made in combating terrorism, he said that Pakistan has rendered over 90,000 sacrifices in the War Against Terrorism. "Terrorism, he emphasized, represents a threat to civilization itself and must be eradicated for the sake of all nations." Ayaz Sadiq has said that the critical issue of climate change remains another existential challenge for Pakistan. Despite contributing only 0.06% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan ranks among the most vulnerable countries to the devastating impacts of climate change.

# Police nab 16 in illegal arms, narcotics crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have launched a crackdown against illegal arms and drug dealers, arresting 16 suspects in the last 48 hours and registering cases against them. A public relations officer told APP on Thursday that the crackdown was conducted under the directives of senior officials to curb crime in the capital. He said that during the operations, law enforcement officers recovered six pistols of different calibers, one rifle along with ammunition, from the arrested suspects. He further stated that the police also confiscated 3,480 grams of heroin, 560 grams of hashish, and 1,448 grams of crystal meth (Ice) from drug peddlers. He said cases have been registered against the arrested individuals, and further investigations are underway to dismantle networks involved in illegal arms trade and drug trafficking. IG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq emphasized that ensuring the safety and security of citizens remains the top priority of the Islamabad Police.

# VC NSU honored

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark achievement for Pakistan's higher education sector, the Vice Chancellor of National Skills University Islamabad (NSU), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, has been appointed as a permanent member of the Board of Governors of the newly established National Institute of Technology. This prestigious federal institution, headquartered in Lahore, was recently sanctioned under Clause 23(j) of its governing act following the approval of legislation by the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) and subsequent assent by the President of Pakistan. This historic appointment sets a rare precedent, as it is among the first instances where a public-sector university leader has been granted a permanent governance role in a private-sector university in Pakistan. Prof. Mukhtar while talking to APP hailed the recognition as a significant milestone, highlighting the increasing prominence of skills-based education and the rapid ascent of NSU's governance model within just five years of its establishment. Under the visionary leadership of Prof. Mukhtar, NSU Islamabad has emerged as a trailblazer in vocational and technical education. The university's commitment to excellence has

earned it numerous national and international accolades, reinforcing its reputation as a center of academic and professional distinction. Most notably, Prof. Mukhtar, along with the Additional Registrar and four senior faculty members, was recently awarded the prestigious Badge of Excellence by the European Training Foundation, a flagship initiative of the European Union. This honor is bestowed upon professionals who demonstrate unwavering dedication to self-assessment, institutional development, and the continuous enhancement of vocational education standards. As a UNESCO-UNEVOC center, NSU has strengthened its global footprint through more than two dozen active international partnerships. The university's engagement in key initiatives, such as the Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) program—sponsored by the German government under UNESCO's umbrella—underscores its commitment to modernizing technical and vocational education in line with global best practices. Among its most promising initiatives, NSU has launched a pioneering Mechanical Engineering Technology program that provides students with a fully funded one-year—APP

**NA offers fateha for former senator**

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday offered Fateha for the departed soul of former Senator Hafiz Hussain Ahmed. Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah requested MNA Misbah Uddin to lead the prayer. Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, who had been battling kidney disease and undergoing dialysis, had largely stepped back from active politics in recent years. Born in 1951 in Quetta, he hailed from a religious family. His father, Maulana Araz Muhammad, was a prominent Islamic scholar associated with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) during the leadership of Maulana Mufti Mehmood.—APP

**IIUI President stresses research reforms**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) is advancing its research agenda with a renewed focus on innovation, collaboration, and societal impact. Under the leadership of President IIUI, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, a follow-up meeting was convened to assess the progress of three newly established research working groups, initiated to enhance research quality and bridge gaps between academia and industry. Presiding over the meeting, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed emphasized the importance of research as the core function of academia. He highlighted the need to address trust deficits, engage stakeholders, and reform research strategies to ensure IIUT's contributions align with national and global challenges. He stressed that research must move beyond traditional academic work and evolve into interdisciplinary and policy-driven initiatives. The meeting, organized by the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC), was attended by Director ORIC, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amir, along with the heads and members of the working groups.

**High-level delegation visits COMSTECH**

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP), Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan, led a high-level delegation to the COMSTECH Secretariat to explore collaborative opportunities in youth development, science, and technology. The delegation included Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC); Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC); Prof. Dr. Zia ul Qayyum, Executive Director HEC; Mr. Muhammad Aamir Jan, Executive Director NAVTTC, and senior officials from PMYP. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTECH, welcomed the delegation and presented an overview of COMSTECH's initiatives aimed at empowering young scientists and professionals, particularly in Pakistan and the broader OIC region. During the meeting, Prof. Choudhary highlighted COMSTECH's ongoing efforts in science, technology, and capacity-building programs designed to equip youth with modern skills and knowledge. He emphasized the organization's commitment to fostering innovation, research, and scientific excellence. Chairman PMYP Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan lauded COMSTECH's achievements and underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships for the advancement of youth-centric programs. "It is time to establish robust linkages and launch youth-centric programs that will create new opportunities for skill development, technology advancement, and entrepreneurship. COMSTECH provides a powerful platform to strengthen Pakistan's presence in the OIC region and the world," he stated. Both sides agreed to collaborate on initiatives focused on skill development, science and technology, and professional training. Rana Mashood reaffirmed the government's commitment to youth empowerment, while Prof. Choudhary assured COMSTECH's dedication to fostering scientific progress and global partnerships. This collaboration marks a significant step in enhancing Pakistan's scientific and technological landscape while creating new opportunities for young professionals in emerging fields.

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## Briefs

Spring tree  
plantation  
campaign  
kicks off

RAWALPINDI: The Director General, Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Kinza Murtaza, on Thursday inaugurated the "Rawalpindi District Plantation Campaign" by planting trees in three housing schemes. To mark the commencement, trees were planted in Eighteen Housing Scheme, Top City, and Gandhara Housing Scheme symbolizing the beginning of an extensive afforestation drive aimed at improving air quality, reducing carbon footprint, and enhancing green spaces in Rawalpindi. Speaking on the occasion, the DG RDA emphasized the significance of urban forestry, stating that this plantation drive was a vital step in making Rawalpindi a cleaner and greener city. "Trees are essential for our ecosystem, and we encourage communities, developers, and residents to actively participate in this initiative." She further added "We are excited to kick off the Spring Tree Plantation Campaign 2025. Our goal is to not only beautify these communities but also contribute to a greener and healthier environment for current and future generations. This campaign is an essential step towards fostering sustainability within Rawalpindi's urban landscape." Kinza said that the initiative also aimed to raise awareness among residents about the importance of environmental conservation and the role of greenery in improving air quality and overall well-being. Ongoing efforts will continue throughout the coming months, with local communities actively involved in the tree-planting activities.

At the conclusion of the event, the DG RDA extended heartfelt thanks to the owners of the three housing schemes for their invaluable contribution and support in tree planting.—APP

Export of footwear  
increases 15.48%

ISLAMABAD: The export of footwear from the country witnessed an increase of 15.48 percent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year. The country exported footwear worth US\$ 126.413 million during July-February 2024-25 as opposed to the export of US\$ 109.465 million during July-February 2023-24, showing growth of 15.48 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the footwear products, the exports of leather footwear witnessed an increase of 14.94 percent, from US\$ 85.368 million to US\$ 98.121 million during the months under review. Canvas footwear exports also surged by 15.20 percent by going up from US\$ 1.723 million last year to US\$ 1.985 million, the PBS data revealed. The exports of all other footwear rose by 17.58 percent to US\$ 26.307 million from US\$ 22.374 million in the same months last year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the footwear exports appreciated by 11.57 percent during the month of February 2025 as compared to the same month of last year.—APP

NUML moot reaffirms  
commitment to national unity

Renowned scholars and intellectuals, including Professor Khursheed Nadeem (Chairman Rehmat-al-Almeen Authority), Dr. Khalid Rehman (Chairman Institute of Policy Studies), and Professor Dr. Muhammad Zia Ul Haq (Director General, Islamic Research Center, International Islamic University), graced the occasion as guest speakers

## DNA

ISLAMABAD : In connection with Pakistan Day, the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized a thought-provoking conference titled "Tajdeed-e-Ehad-e-Pakistan", jointly hosted by the Department of Islamic Thought and Culture, Department of Arabic, and Department of Pakistan Studies. The event aimed to rekindle the spirit of national unity and commitment envisioned by the country's founding fathers. Renowned scholars and intellectuals, including Professor Khursheed Nadeem (Chairman Rehmat-al-Almeen Authority), Dr. Khalid Rehman (Chairman Institute of Policy Studies), and Professor Dr. Muhammad Zia Ul Haq (Director General, Islamic Research Center, International Islamic University), graced the occasion as guest speakers. The conference was presided over by Rector NUML, Major General (Retd) Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI (M). Professor Khursheed Nadeem, in his address, reflected on the significance of Pakistan's independence in the blessed month of Ramzan, calling it a time for self-reflection and recommitment. He urged the youth to think and pray for the country's prosperity, just as their forefathers struggled for its creation. Stressing the importance of unity, he emphasized that while differences and challenges exist, Pakistan must remain a single, united entity. He also advocated for true democra-



cy, where people are genuinely empowered, and called for an end to dynastic politics. Dr Khalid Rehman in his address, highlighted the need to combat misinformation and digital extremism, urging people to focus on the country's strengths rather than dwelling on negativity. He encouraged promoting a positive national discourse to strengthen Pakistan's image globally. Speaking on the occasion, Professor Dr Zia Ul Haq reflected on Pakistan's journey

of progress and setbacks, urging introspection on why the country has faced challenges despite its rich resources and youthful population. He noted that nations like Bangladesh, Malaysia, and India once learned from Pakistan's development model but have since surpassed it. He called for reviving the national narrative and utilizing the country's 64% youth population for constructive nation-building rather than allowing external forces to exploit them. In

his address, Rector NUML Major General (Retd) Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI (M) reiterated that March 23rd is a day of reaffirmation and national commitment. He described Pakistan as a divine blessing, emphasizing that independence is a privilege that millions of Muslims in India do not have. He stressed the importance of highlighting Pakistan's strengths rather than focusing on its shortcomings, assuring that the nation will overcome

its challenges through collective resilience. The conference concluded with the presentation of shields and souvenirs to the distinguished guests by the Rector NUML, recognizing their invaluable contributions to national discourse. This event served as a powerful reminder of Pakistan's founding principles, urging individuals, especially the youth to play an active role in shaping a prosperous future for the country.

AI's transformative power  
for national security

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, organised a webinar on 'Use of Emerging Technologies in Research' under its Tech Talk Series. Technology Expert from Silicon Valley and Guest Speaker, Mr Hassan Nadim, underscored the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), highlighting both its risks and the imperative for timely adoption. He cautioned that the sheer volume of data generated on the internet has surpassed human capacity to analyse it effectively, making AI integration not just beneficial but essential. He stressed that organisations, particularly those dealing with national security, must remain vigilant about AI's role in data processing. He warned that inputs provided to AI are monitored, posing potential risks for organisations handling sensitive information. Mr Nadim also pointed out that AI models often exhibit Western-centric biases which could lead to challenges for the Global South as people navigate a pre-set, biased digital landscape. However, he stressed that the biggest risk of AI was not just its bias but also failure of individuals and organisations to adopt it in time. "We are living in a world of AI-haves and AI-have nots," he stated. Mr Nadim urged policymakers and professionals to take charge of their country's AI education, noting that those who embrace AI tools will be better positioned to excel. Closing his remarks, he predicted an imminent future where digital agents and robots would outnumber humans, drastically accelerating data production. He called on individuals and organisations to embrace AI as a companion rather than a competitor, or risk obsolescence. Participants posed thought-provoking questions on AI capacity building, ethical and philosophical implications of its rapid evolution, and the intensifying technological race between China and the US. Highlighting the importance of informed engagement with AI, Air Marshal Javid Ahmed (Retd.), President of CASS, urged stakeholders to actively learn, think, and participate in AI-driven advancements. He stressed that with technological progress comes the responsibility to harness AI for both social and cognitive benefits while minimising its adversarial applications. Reiterating the ethical responsibilities associated with AI adoption, President CASS called for a concerted effort to instil a culture of responsibility in technological development. He asserted that strategic engagement with AI could unlock maximum benefits for society while preventing its detrimental consequences.—DNA

PHAF committed to  
improve life quality

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF), Ministry of Housing and Works has emerged as a beacon of hope for residents of Pakistan which was committed to enhance the quality of life, promoting economic prosperity, and improving mobility for the residents. As a recognized public works leader and in collaborations with Federal & Provincial public entities, PHAF was striving to continuously improve operations to provide a safe and sustainable environment and was consistently striving to eliminate shelterlessness and to reduce the housing shortfall in Pakistan. According to an official document, in 2000, PMHA was renamed as Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF) and placed under the Ministry of Housing and Works. In 2012, PHAF was registered as an NPO under the Companies Ordinance. From 1989-2007, the FGE Housing Authority allotted 22,785 units to its members. Mem-

bership Drives I and II began in 2009 and 2015, registering over 186,000 employees. Members were accommodated in four housing schemes. PHAF major accomplishments included multiple successful projects in major cities, handing over 24 projects, including 6,362 apartments/houses. Over the past year, FGEHA made significant progress in project development and resolving related issues. Pak PWD contributed to infrastructure by completing office buildings and road rehabilitation, investing over 3 billion rupees. They also modernized operations with the Electronic Project Approval and Documentation System (EPADS). Moreover, several initiatives were implemented, including Creation of a web-based application and central database for improved coordination, Regular data updates and record management, Issuance of 2,136 allotments to federal government servants.—APP

Establishment division  
implements major reforms

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Establishment Division has made significant strides in modernising Pakistan's civil service through administrative, legislative, and policy reforms during past one year. According to the official data, the major accomplishments of the Establishment Division are the successful transition to the E-Office system for improved communication, the initiation of the Rightsizing process, and the amendment of Civil Servants Promotion Rules. Moreover, amendments to the Civil Servants Promotion Rules have improved the career progression framework, fostering merit-based advancements. To further enhance efficiency, the Division has devel-

oped an online Personnel Evaluation Reports (PER) module, streamlining the appraisal process for civil servants. The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) has also played a key role by conducting major examinations, including CSS 2023 and 2024, Special CSS Examination 2023, and MPT for CSS 2025, leading to a transparent and merit-driven recruitment process. Around 35 key appointments were made in federal government departments, and 16 meetings were held for performance evaluation and extension cases of MP Scale officers. Recruitment through FPSC resulted in the induction of officers into various services, including the PAS, PSP, and OMG. The division processed 150 legal cases, handled from different ministries, and ad-

ressed induction and probation matters for officers. It also managed parliamentary affairs and processed over 50 medical claims for officers and retirees. An amount of Rs.121.3 million has been expended for the rent of residential accommodation hired for officers/officials of the Establishment Division during the fiscal year 2023-24. These initiatives collectively contribute to a more efficient, transparent, and performance-driven civil service. Key impacts included enhanced reporting and documentation with streamlined Personnel Evaluation Reports (PERs), performance and productivity boost by aligning individual goals with organisational objectives and recognising top performers, an update to the Civil Servants Promotion Rules, 2019,

improved career progression aligned with good governance principles, workforce optimisation, improved communication, and leadership development. strengthened internal coordination and decision-making. Notable developments included the introduction of posting guidelines for Pakistan Military Accounts Department personnel and amendments to the FBR staff selection and PA&AS officer policies, significant rule changes to the Occupational Group & Services Rules and the NSPP Ordinance, and a proposed amendment to the Civil Servants Act that aims to enhance transparency by requiring asset declarations for senior public officials and enhance international collaborations by signing MOUs with institutions in Vietnam.

Urdu poet  
Eshrat  
remembered

ISLAMABAD :Today marks the 33rd death anniversary of Eshrat Rahmani, a celebrated Urdu poet known for his eloquent poetry and deep reflections on human emotions and social issues. Eshrat Rahmani was born on April 16, 1910, in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, British India, his real name was Imtiaz Ali Khan. After the independence of Pakistan, he migrated to Karachi, where he continued his literary pursuits. His poetry captured themes of love, loss, and societal change, earning him a devoted readership. Throughout his career, he published several acclaimed collections of poetry that continue to inspire literature enthusiasts. He left behind more than 100 books, most of which are on historical and biographical subjects. He passed away on March 20, 1992, in Karachi.—APP

FFC signs  
MOUs with  
leading Banks

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) has partnered with four leading banks to provide clean financing of up to Rs. 500,000 for farmers registered with its Sona Centers, ensuring greater financial inclusion and agricultural growth. The signing ceremony at Serena Hotel, Islamabad, was attended by Chairman of the Board of FFC, Lt. Gen Anwar Ali Hyder (R), MD & CEO FFC, Mr. Jahangir Piracha along with Mr. Zafar Masud, President & CEO Bank of Punjab; Mr. Atif Aslam Bajwa, President Bank Alfalah, Mr. Zia Ijaz, President & CEO, Askari Bank Limited and Mr. Altaf Hussain Saqib, Head of Commercial Banking at Faysal Bank. The initiative echoed the importance of collaborating with FFC to extend financial support to the backbone of Pakistan's economy—the farmers. They reaffirmed their commitment to bridging the gap between financial institutions and the agricultural sector, making credit facilities more accessible and farmer-friendly. Under this agreement, farmers will gain access to hassle-free credit, allowing them to invest in quality inputs and improve their agricultural outputs. This collaboration marks a milestone in agricultural finance, reinforcing FFC's commitment to farmer empowerment, financial inclusion.—APP

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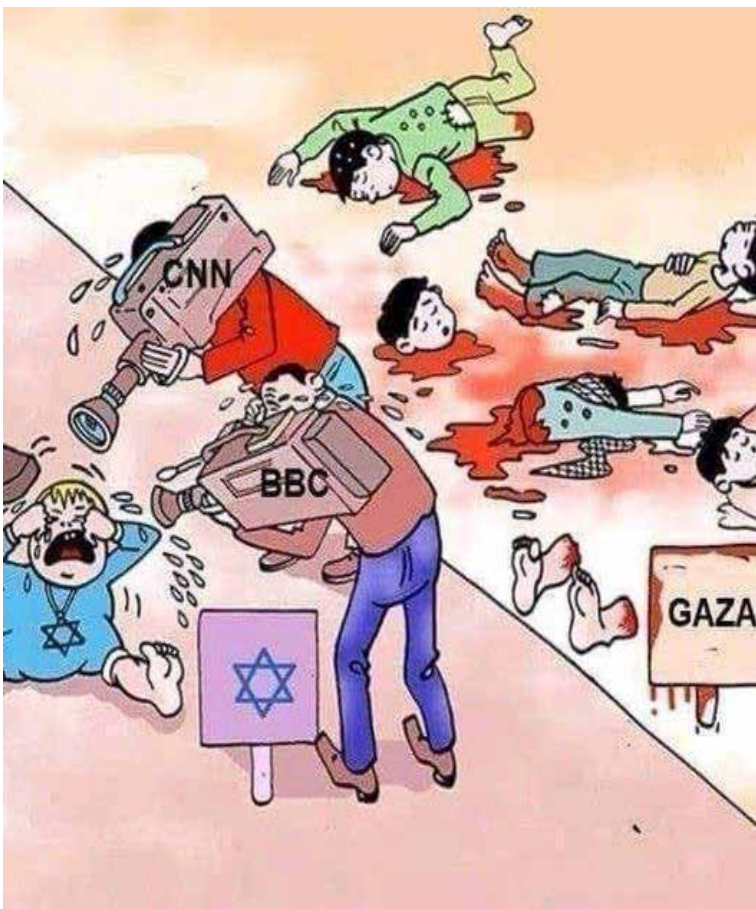
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## Food crisis hits Gaza

MORE than two million citizens in the Gaza Strip are facing a multifaceted war, with Israel being the main actor. However, they see the greed of traders and market monopolists as the harshest daily battles they fight. Citizens complain that the market has turned upside down since March 2, after the Israeli occupation authorities closed the crossings following the end of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza on January 19, 2025. Osama Amer says that goods have gradually disappeared from the markets, and what is available is sold at doubled prices, reminiscent of the first famine during the genocide war. Amer, a father of a family of five, realizes that the closure of the crossings is the reason for the lack of vegetables in the markets, as they cannot be stored by traders amid the ongoing power outages. However, the thirty-something young man does not hide his anger at the traders who sell basic goods such as sugar, oil, legumes, and canned foods. Before the genocide, Radwan worked in a sweets factory and earned a daily wage ranging from 50 to 70 shekels, noting that Ramadan was considered a big season for making oriental sweets and chocolates. "Today, I can barely secure food for Iftar. Personally, I rely on the provisions of international and local relief organizations and local charity kitchens." The Government Media Office (GMO) in Gaza announced on Wednesday that the Strip has entered "the first stages of famine" due to the ongoing Israeli siege and the closure of crossings to aid and goods since March 2. Ismail Thawabteh, the GMO director general, stated, "The Gaza Strip has officially entered the first stages of famine, after nearly two million people have lost their entire food security." He adds that this comes amid an "unprecedented humanitarian disaster" experienced by the Palestinians in the Strip due to the closure of crossings, halting charity organizations, and the interruption of humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warns that more than one million people in the Gaza Strip will face severe food shortages if humanitarian aid deliveries do not resume due to Israel's continued closure of crossings. In a statement on its website on Wednesday, it emphasized that the available stocks in the Strip are depleting rapidly, indicating that UN partners dealing with the crisis have sharply reduced food aid, suspended the distribution of flour and fresh food items, and decreased the quantities of hot meals in public kitchens. The office also warned that if the situation remains unchanged, at least 80 out of 170 public kitchens in the Strip will have to close within a week or two. Economist Ahmad Abu Qamar warns that the Gaza Strip is rapidly approaching a real famine amid the choking siege and food supply shortages. Abu Qamar stated in remarks reported by the Palestine newspaper, "We are no longer talking about poverty or unemployment; we are facing a complete food collapse. People are no longer looking for complete meals but dream of a can of fava beans or a handful of lentils." He pointed out that vegetable prices have reached exorbitant levels, "a kilogram of cucumber is now sold for 14 shekels while there is no type of meat available. These prices exceed the capacity of the Gazan citizens, most of whom have become without any source of income since the beginning of the war."



## Donald Trump's foreign policy

IN the past decade, more than two dozen women have publicly alleged sexual harassment or assault by Donald Trump. It dawned on me that there are strong similarities in the way he now treats other nations. One thing that seems to puzzle many people is why he is directing his tariffs and sanctions – and constant threats and insults – against allies and adversaries alike. But why? There is no point trying to figure out an underlying ideology or philosophy to, say, distinguish between democracy and autocracy, or friends and foes. For Trump, power is to be used, and abused, as he sees fit. The following memorable quote, dating back to 1995, is what led me to this conclusion. It was leaked to the press during his first run for the presidency in 2016. "You know I'm automatically attracted to beautiful [women] – I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything," he said. Now serving as US president for a second time, he is much more adept at wielding power, and many of the constraints put on him have been lifted. America, the nation, is "the star" and it "can do anything". He seems to apply old-fashioned gender aesthetics to women and nations alike – the beautiful and the ugly. His political libido, so to speak, has been unbounded. For example, according to the president, Norway is a "beautiful" country, but most of those in the Global South, especially the nations of South America, are "sh\*thole countries". "Why are we having all these people from sh\*thole countries come here?" he complained in 2018. "We should bring in more people from places like Norway." Well, that's really his view of the migrant crisis, having once referred to people from Mexico as "rapists" and "criminals". It informs his current brutal campaign to get rid of such migrants in the United States. There are of course exceptions from South America, such as Javier Milei of Argentina and former president of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro. These are the adoring groupies whom Trump can tolerate being around. Greenland and Canada, however, are respectable ladies who need to be taken forcefully – for their own good. Sovereignty and international law? Trump doesn't think in those terms any more than he does about sex discrimination and harassment laws in the US. "Canada would be great as our cherished 51st state", he said, again, last week. And this month, he declared, again: "We need Greenland for national and international security ... We'll get it one way or another. We will keep you safe, we will make you rich, and together, take Greenland to heights like you have never thought possible before." What about other allies, such as those in NATO and the European Union? He claims that NATO states are free-riding on the American defence umbrella, while those in the European Union were happy to let the US "pay their defence bills" while "refusing to buy American products." "We were supporting NATO, we were paying the bills for other countries, yet those same countries ... were ripping us off in trade," he said this month. So if they don't pay up, they ought to be cut loose. That would, of course, overturn the entire post-war transatlantic security and economic frameworks.

## Strengthening ties: Pakistan's economic potential within the ECO

Atif Ikram Sheikh



Significant potential exists for strengthening trade relations between Pakistan and ECO member countries, which include Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These nations are not only geographically close but also share deep historical, cultural, and economic ties. As a founding member of the ECO Chamber, Pakistan benefits from a platform that promotes regional economic growth and stability

ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI), established in 1990, is an affiliated body of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) dedicated to facilitating trade and economic cooperation among member countries, promoting trade relations, and organizing trade-related activities. It is a matter of pride that I am representing Pakistan as the President of ECO-CCI for 2025–26 and confident that, during this two-year term, there is tremendous potential to elevate Pakistan's relations with ECO nations. It is also a blessing that under the experienced leadership and visionary foresight of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, economic, social, and trade, ties between Pakistan and ECO countries will be further strengthened and future cooperation will unlock new avenues for economic development not only in Pakistan but also across the entire region. Significant potential exists for strengthening trade relations between Pakistan and ECO member countries, which include Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These nations are not only geographically close but also share deep historical, cultural, and economic ties. As a founding member of the ECO Chamber, Pakistan benefits from a platform that promotes regional economic growth and stability. The proximity of these countries lowers transportation costs, making trade more economical and efficient. Furthermore, their diverse natural resources and industrial capabilities present ample opportunities to satisfy Pakistan's trade needs. Enhanced trade relations are vital for ensuring political stability, regional peace, and the expansion of export markets. Facilitating the exchange of technology and expertise can transform Pakistan's industrial and economic landscape. Simultaneously, enhancing banking and financial cooperation is essential for streamlining trade transactions with these nations. By judiciously leveraging the abundant opportunities for increased trade, Pakistan and its ECO partners can embark on a swift journey towards development and prosperity.

*Trade Volume Highlights*

- Pakistan–Kazakhstan: In 2021, bilateral trade was approximately \$20 million, which soared to \$139.33 million by 2023. Pakistan's exports valued at \$68.1 million featured prominent products such as bananas (\$6.47 million), packaged medicines (\$14.7 million), and lemons (\$14.9 million). Imports from Kazakhstan reached \$5.58 million, yielding a favorable trade balance. Both nations now aim to expand bilateral trade to \$1 billion.
- Pakistan–Iran: In 2023, trade between Pakistan and Iran totaled around \$2.8 billion. Iranian exports to Pakistan reached \$943 million, significantly surpassing Pakistan's \$9.97 million in exports. Pakistan's exports, primarily comprising construction vehicles, excavation machinery, and trailers, complement Iran's offerings, which include petro-

- um gas, refined petroleum products, dried beans, LPG, bitumen, coal tar, non-alloy steel bars and rods, cyclic hydrocarbons, nuts, ethylene polymers, and agricultural commodities such as tomatoes, onions, and dates. Ambitious targets are set to raise bilateral trade to \$10 billion, supported by joint initiatives to combat terrorism. Industry experts affirm that enhanced trade ties will benefit the economies, business communities, and people of both nations. Pak-Iran Preferential Trade Agreement Procedure for Operationalization of Barter Trade under the agreement on Barter Trade between Quetta CCI and Pakistan and Zahidan CCI.
- Pakistan–Türkiye: Bilateral trade with Türkiye reached a record \$1.4 billion in 2024, a nearly 30% year-on-year increase—with both nations now aspiring to boost trade to \$5 billion. The cooperation spans sectors including textiles, education, health, and culture. Pakistan and Türkiye have an agreement on Trade in Goods.
- Pakistan–Tajikistan: In 2023, bilateral trade totaled \$52.73 million, an increase of 62.33% over the previous year. Pakistan's exports surged to \$48.94 million (a growth of 152.2%), while imports amounted to \$3.80 million. Major exports include sugar and confectionery, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, pharmaceuticals, cucumbers, used clothing, and rice; imports primarily comprise coal, cotton, fruits, and vegetables. Pakistan and Tajikistan had signed Transit Trade Agreements.
- Pakistan–Azerbaijan: In 2024, trade with Azerbaijan climbed to \$22 million—a 22.5% increase over 2023. Pakistan's exports amounted to \$21.8 million, contrasted with Azerbaijani exports of \$196,000. This growth is bolstered by efforts to strengthen energy cooperation, exemplified by the Machike-Thalian-Tarujabba white Oil Pipeline project, an initiative between the Federation of West African States (FWO) and Pakistan State Oil (PSO). Agreements to revise the framework for energy cooperation further underline both countries' commitment to expanding trade and investment in energy, infrastructure, and connectivity. Pakistan and Azerbaijan had signed Preferential and transit Trade Agreements.
- Pakistan–Turkmenistan: Bilateral trade in 2023 totaled approximately \$8.41 million, with Pakistan exporting around \$2.23 million and importing \$6.17 million. Over the past five years, Pakistan's exports to Turkmenistan have grown at an annual rate of 16.3%, rising from \$798,000 in 2018 to between \$1.7 million and \$2.23 million in 2023. Major exports include jute fabrics, jute bags, pyrotechnic products, fruits, vegetables, and pharmaceuticals.
- Pakistan–Uzbekistan: Pakistan's exports have grown at an annual rate of 14.4%, increasing from \$66.9 million in 2018 to \$131 million in 2023. However, no services were exported in 2023. On the import side, Uzbekistan's exports to Pakistan reached \$231 million. Both countries had signed the Preferential Trade Agreement.

- Pakistan–Kyrgyzstan: In 2023, Pakistan's exports to Kyrgyzstan totaled approximately \$10.68 million, indicating substantial potential for growth.
- Pakistan–Afghanistan: Pakistani exports to Afghanistan were valued at \$969 million in 2023—a decline of 10.4% from \$1.68 billion in 2018, while Afghan exports to Pakistan increased by 5.41% to \$531 million (from \$691 million in 2018). Key Pakistani exports include rice (\$212 million), packaged medicines (\$103 million), and other edible preparations (\$86.7 million). Pakistan remains the largest importer of Afghan products, with Afghanistan ranking as the fourth largest destination for Pakistani exports. Pakistan facilitating Afghanistan through Transit Trade Agreement. As President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, I firmly believe that entering into preferential trade agreements with ECO countries is essential to boosting Pakistan's trade volume. Improving land and air connectivity by establishing direct routes coupled with increased investments in joint projects, will fortify economic ties. Prioritizing cooperation in energy, infrastructure, and transportation and bolstering digital trade through strengthened e-commerce platforms will enable small- and medium-sized enterprises to access international markets. The Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) has proposed and worked on several rail infrastructure projects to enhance connectivity and trade among its member countries, including the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (TTI) route, the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) railway, and the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara railway. The "ECO Container Train," also known as the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train, is a project under the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) that aims to facilitate trade and regional connectivity by linking Islamabad, Tehran, and Istanbul via a railway route, with the train resuming operations in 2021 after a period of inactivity. Furthermore, formulating common economic policies to foster regional integration—particularly by accelerating major infrastructure and corridor projects will significantly enhance trade activities. ECO nations must work collaboratively to address shared challenges such as climate change, energy crises, and pandemics. Although obstacles remain, further strengthening trade relations between Pakistan and ECO member countries will unlock new avenues for economic development throughout the region. The ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry is poised to play a pivotal role by providing trade intelligence, facilitating the exchange of trade delegations, and organizing trade fairs and exhibitions. Exploring advancements in digital trade, renewable energy partnerships, and cross-border technology exchange promises to further transform regional dynamics and reinforce economic resilience among ECO countries.

## Regional boundaries and geopolitics of Middle East

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



This framework provides a coherent and analytically useful understanding of the region, as it centers on key security dynamics that shape regional interactions. Within this context, North Africa is largely excluded from the Middle Eastern system. Although North African states may engage with the Arab–Israeli conflict, their influence on the issue is not primary. Conversely, Turkey's increasing involvement...

LEONARD Binder was among the first scholars to question the geographical and political scope of the Middle Eastern system in 1958. In defining this system, Binder considered various criteria, including the existence of regional organizations and defense pacts, the interrelationship between domestic and international politics, conflicting intra-area policies, the role of religious opposition to nationalism, government policies, and historical and colonial experiences. Based on these factors, Binder argued that "the Middle East proper stretches from Libya to Iran, with fringe areas including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Maghreb, and the core area comprising the Arab states and Israel." This conceptualization of the Middle East underscores its broad geographical span, while also highlighting the unifying elements of religion and colonial legacy that link its individual components. Binder's formulation initiated a debate regarding the composition and scope of the Middle Eastern system. This discourse revealed the diversity of perspectives on what constitutes the Middle East. One school of thought, for instance, identified 'Ottoman political culture' as the primary determinant of regional inclusion, which led to the exclusion of Morocco and Iran from the system. Another approach concentrated on Israel, its neighboring Arab states, and the involvement of extra-regional great powers, consequently omitting Iran, Turkey, and the Maghreb states. A third perspective restricted the definition of the Middle East to Arab states, emphasizing Arab nationalism as the central criterion. These differing approaches illustrate the inherent subjectivity in defining the Middle East, as the system's boundaries expand or contract depending on the criteria adopted. This issue of defining the Middle East becomes more complex when considering the impact of Islamist movements. If Islamist ideology is treated as the binding element of the system, the Middle Eastern system could theoretically encompass a vast area stretching from Morocco to the Philippines. Such a broad conceptualization, however, renders the system analytically ineffective due to its sheer size and complexity. In response to this challenge, Buzan and W ver introduced the notion of regional subcomplexes within larger systems. They proposed that, given the significant number of states in the Middle East, it is necessary to recognize distinct subcomplexes to better understand regional dynamics. Specifically, they identified the Levant subcomplex, consisting of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon,

and Syria, and the Gulf subcomplex, which includes Iraq, Iran, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. However, Buzan and W ver do not offer explicit criteria for distinguishing these subregions beyond geographic proximity. They acknowledge the considerable overlap and interconnections between these subcomplexes, making clear-cut distinctions challenging. Additionally, their assertion that Turkey lies outside the Middle East is contentious, as Turkey has played a significant role in the region's geopolitics, particularly in both the Levant and the Gulf. Turkey's foreign policy initiatives, military interventions, and diplomatic engagements have frequently positioned it as a key actor in Middle Eastern affairs, further complicating its exclusion from the system. An alternative approach to conceptualizing the Middle Eastern system is to view it as a structure defined by the foreign policy priorities of its core states. From this perspective, the Middle Eastern system comprises states that primarily focus on two inter-related geopolitical issues: the Arab–Israeli conflict and Gulf security. This framework provides a coherent and analytically useful understanding of the region, as it centers on key security dynamics that shape regional interactions. Within this context, North Africa is largely excluded from the Middle Eastern system. Although North African states may engage with the Arab–Israeli conflict, their influence on the issue is not primary. Conversely, Turkey's increasing involvement in Middle Eastern affairs over the past seven decades has positioned it as one of the system's main participants. Based on this approach, the Middle Eastern system comprises sixteen state actors: Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen. These states are central to regional security and political dynamics, particularly concerning the Arab–Israeli conflict and Gulf security. Additionally, the Middle East is characterized by the presence of influential non-state actors that often challenge the authority of state governments and contribute to regional instability. Among these non-state actors are militant groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and Hamas; paramilitary organizations like the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq; and political movements, including Kurdish nationalist groups, Palestinian factions such as Fatah and Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The influence of these non-state actors varies depending on their resources, organiza-

tional capacities, and ideological motivations. The significance of non-state actors in the Middle East is particularly evident in their ability to shape security dynamics and state policies. For instance, Hezbollah's military capabilities and political influence in Lebanon make it a critical actor in the Levant subcomplex, while the role of the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq highlights the intersection of state and non-state security structures in the Gulf subcomplex. Similarly, Hamas and Islamic Jihad exert considerable influence over the Palestinian territories, complicating efforts to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These non-state actors operate within and across state boundaries, further blurring the lines between domestic and international politics in the region. Furthermore, external powers play a crucial role in shaping the Middle Eastern system. The involvement of great powers such as the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union influences regional security, economic policies, and diplomatic engagements. The U.S. has historically maintained a strategic presence in the Gulf, ensuring the security of energy resources and supporting regional allies. Russia, on the other hand, has strengthened its ties with Iran and the Syrian government, asserting its influence in the Levant. Meanwhile, China's growing economic footprint in the Middle East, particularly through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, signals an evolving geopolitical landscape that further complicates the dynamics of the regional system. The Middle Eastern system is a complex and multifaceted geopolitical structure whose definition is subject to varying interpretations. Binder's initial conceptualization of the region provided a broad framework that underscored the significance of historical, religious, and political factors in shaping the Middle East. Subsequent scholarly debates have refined this framework, introducing alternative criteria based on political culture, Arab nationalism, and security concerns. The recognition of regional subcomplexes by Buzan and W ver offers a more nuanced approach to understanding the Middle East, although challenges remain in clearly delineating these subregions. Ultimately, the Middle Eastern system is best understood as comprising state and non-state actors that are primarily engaged in issues related to the Arab–Israeli conflict and Gulf security. This perspective allows for a coherent analysis of regional interactions, while also acknowledging the critical role of external powers and non-state actors in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.



## Briefs

Pak, KSA  
pledge co-  
operation...

FROM PAGE 01  
Khalid Al-Falih and Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri, Head of the Joint Task Force for Economic Engagement, during his four-day official visit to Saudi Arabia. The talks focused on strengthening economic cooperation, attracting Saudi investments, and expediting joint initiatives in key sectors. Prime Minister Sharif expressed Pakistan's commitment to facilitating Saudi investors, emphasizing the country's strategic location and its investment-friendly policies. Sharif highlighted Pakistan's potential in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and technology, encouraging Saudi businesses to explore opportunities under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). In response, Minister Al-Falih and Al-Tuwaijri conveyed Saudi Arabia's interest in deepening economic ties with Pakistan. The discussions also included enhancing institutional collaboration to expedite investment projects and ensure their effective implementation.

PM Shehbaz  
Sharif vows  
to facilitate..

FROM PAGE 01  
Saudi Arabia's strong interest in deepening economic ties with Pakistan. They discussed enhancing institutional collaboration to accelerate investment projects and ensure their smooth implementation. Both sides agreed to further strengthen the Pakistan-Saudi economic partnership through structured engagements and swift execution of joint projects. The meeting underscored the commitment of both nations to fostering a long-term, mutually beneficial economic relationship.

IHC seeks  
clarity on  
CJ's...

FROM PAGE 01  
During the hearing, Advocate General (AG) Islamabad, Ayaz Shaukat, sought permission to present his argument, saying that he should be allowed to speak just as the court had expressed its views the previous day. He asserted: "If this high court exists, it is because of us. Everyone knows you are not here just for a job or salary." He argued that the primary issue was whether Yousafzai remained the legal representative of the PTI founder. He cited a media statement by the PTI founder's focal person claiming that Yousafzai was no longer his lawyer.

Efforts  
underway to  
bring Fazl...

FROM PAGE 01  
were underway to finalise the alliance. Since the imprisonment of its founder, Imran Khan, the PTI has been struggling on multiple fronts. Its bid to form a grand opposition alliance has faltered, and its strained ties with the establishment have further narrowed its options. Meanwhile, PTI has expedited efforts to form a grand opposition alliance to launch an anti-government movement after Eid ul Fitr, following the party founder's directives.

FO: Afghan  
govt must...

FROM PAGE 01  
a permanent solution to the issue in the meantime. Referring to Indian involvement in global assassination plots, he said that not only in Pakistan, India had been sponsoring such unlawful activities in the entire region. "Instead of blaming others, India should reflect on its own record of orchestrating targeted assassinations, subversion and terrorism in foreign territories," he remarked and pointed out that India had not condemned the recent attack on Jaffar Express in Balochistan. The spokesperson said that Pakistan was alarmed over the increased frequency of Indian leadership's unwarranted assertions about Jammu and Kashmir.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Islamabad Hockey Association Syed Ziaullah Shah presenting portraits to High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato Azahar Mazlan and High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmad, on the occasion of Iftar dinner hosted by the Brunei high commissioner for the players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club. Romanian DHM Eduard Preda who is also a member of the Rising Stars Hockey Club, is also present in the picture. — DNA

PCB refutes Indian media's  
claims on CT 2024 financials

Mir revealed that the ICC Champions Trophy is expected to generate a profit of three billion rupees

## SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Advisor to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman, Amir Mir, and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Javed Murtaza on Thursday addressed recent reports regarding the financial aspects of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 and the alleged losses claimed by Indian media. The press conference was held in response to reports by Indian media alleging that the PCB suffered a loss of \$85 million (INR 869 crore) by hosting the Champions Trophy, with claims that Pakistan played only one home game in the tournament. Amir Mir strongly condemned the false narratives being spread by Indian media and certain anti-Pakistan elements, emphasizing that such misinformation campaigns aim to undermine Pakistan's successful hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy and create unnecessary controversy around the PCB's financial stability. "We need to expose the propaganda of the Indian media and the anti-Pakistan elements who are running a shop of lies—unfortunately, even some Pakistani media outlets are broadcasting it," Mir stated. Addressing financial matters, Mir revealed



that the ICC Champions Trophy is expected to generate a profit of three billion rupees, exceeding the initial projection of two billion rupees. "The estimated profit from the ICC Champions Trophy stands at three billion rupees, surpassing the initial expectation of two billion. This revenue is generated from gate money and ground fees," he said. He clarified that the PCB spent nothing on hosting, as the ICC covered all \$70

million. A full audit is pending. "PCB did not contribute any money for the ICC Champions Trophy; ICC covered all expenses with a budget of 70 million dollars, and a complete audit is yet to be conducted." — Aamir Mir Highlighting the PCB's financial strength, Mir stated that the board has already paid four billion rupees in taxes to the government while its funds continue to grow. "The

PCB has paid four billion rupees in taxes to the government while its financial reserves continue to increase. The Champions Trophy was successfully organized, with all major teams playing in Pakistan," he affirmed. Discussing infrastructure development, Mir praised PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi's leadership in upgrading stadiums to international standards. "Chairman Mohsin Naqvi took on the challenge of stadium upgrades, completing 90% of Gaddafi Stadium's reconstruction, turning it into a valuable national asset," he stated. The renovation of Gaddafi Stadium is a significant step toward ensuring top-notch facilities for both players and fans, setting a benchmark for future cricket events in Pakistan. The ICC Champions Trophy was a complete success, as six out of seven other participating teams felt safe and secure playing in the host nation. However, the Indian team found it difficult to travel to Pakistan due to so-called security concerns and was set to play its league matches in Dubai. In the end, it was team India that had the advantage, lifting the Champions Trophy title by defeating New Zealand at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium and claiming their third title.

CSA announces int'l  
fixtures for 2025/26  
home season

The fixtures include series against West Indies, Ireland, and Pakistan

## WEB DESK

JOHANNESBURG: Cricket South Africa (CSA) has unveiled the schedule for the Proteas men's and women's senior teams for the 2025/26 home season. The fixtures include series against West Indies, Ireland, and Pakistan as both teams prepare for the ICC Men's and Women's T20 World Cup 2026. Both the Proteas men's and women's teams finished as runners-up in the previous edition of the T20 World Cup, and they will now focus on the shortest format as they gear up for the upcoming global tournament. Proteas Men's Fixtures: The Proteas men will take on the West Indies in a five-match T20I series starting on January 27, 2026. The matches will be played across five different venues:

- 1st T20I – January 27, 2026 | Boland Park
- 2nd T20I – January 29, 2026 | Newlands Cricket Ground
- 3rd T20I – February 1, 2026 | Buffalo Park Cricket Stadium.
- T20I – February 4, 2026 | SuperSport Park
- T20I – February 6, 2026 | DP World Wanderers Stadium.

Boxing earns  
spot in LA  
2028 summer  
games: IOC

## WEB DESK

PYLOS: Boxing was included on Thursday in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics program after a unanimous vote from the International Olympic Committee, ending years of doubt over the sport's Olympic future. The IOC last month granted provisional recognition to World Boxing in a major step towards the sport's inclusion in the LA Games and Thursday's decision ensured the sport's Olympic presence would continue. "I thank you for the approval of having boxing back. We can look forward to a great boxing tournament," IOC President Thomas Bach said.

Kyrgios earns first win  
in more than two years

Kyrgios faces Khachanov next, who upset him in the 2022 US Open quarters

## WEB DESK

MIAMI: Australian Nick Kyrgios came from behind to defeat Mackenzie McDonald 3-6 6-3 6-4 in the first round of the Miami Open on Wednesday to earn his first win since October 2022. Kyrgios, who retired from his first-round match at Indian Wells this month due to pain in his surgically repaired right wrist, soaked in the moment, looking skyward and taking a deep breath after sealing the win. "It has been a long journey even to get to the start line of matches and be scared to even be able to finish them," he told Tennis TV. "So to come in and get a win and feel like I belong again, it's pretty special." Kyrgios, who had lost all three matches he played this year, got off to a slow start

on a hot and humid day in South Florida but after dropping the first set, he began to settle in, finding his rhythm on serve to level the contest. In the decider, he hit a well-disguised drop shot to set up a break point and converted when his American opponent double-faulted to hand Kyrgios a 4-3 lead. From there he rode his best shot, his booming serve, to the finish line. Next up for Kyrgios is Russian Karen Khachanov, who stunned the Australian in a hard-fought quarter-final at the 2022 U.S. Open, a tournament Kyrgios was among the favourites to win that year. Soon after that bitter disappointment he would take a lengthy break from the court to tend to a series of knee, foot and wrist problems that threatened to permanently derail the 29-year-old's career before returning to the tour this year. Frenchman Gael Monfils, Belgian David Goffin, and Russian-born Kazakhstani Alexander Bublik were among the players who also advanced out of the first round with wins on Wednesday.



ISLAMABAD: United Nation (UN) Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian in Pakistan, Mohamed Yahya, cutting the ribbon during inauguration ceremony of painting exhibition by Chinese artist Prof Zhao Yingming, title "Mirror of the Soul" at Pakistan National Council of the Arts, in the Federal Capital. — Online

MQM-P  
hints at  
quitting...

FROM PAGE 01  
"For nearly 45 years, KKF has been serving the people. It was to meet this need that MQM was created," he said, emphasising the party's commitment to welfare beyond political affiliations. Siddiqui reflected on the challenges MQM-P has faced over the years, recalling its struggles in the 1990s and the aftermath of the events of 22 August 2016, when the party distanced itself from its London-based founder. "People thought MQM would collapse, but we have not disintegrated—we have evolved," he asserted.

Govt will  
not oppose  
Imran's...

FROM PAGE 01  
corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition's no-trust motion in April 2022. Responding to another question regarding the recent in-camera meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security, the former security czar said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur was asked to strengthen the capability of the police and the CTD amid rising incidents of terrorism.

Afghan FM  
calls for...

FROM PAGE 01  
He stated that over the past four decades, millions of Afghans have migrated to different countries, including Pakistan and Iran. "Our hope is that, just as the hospitality shown so far has been met, the appreciation shown to refugees in the future will continue to be the same, and their return will be gradual and peaceful," he said. "Refugees should be respected and their return should be gradual and dignified," Muttaqi emphasised. "We have no security problems throughout the country, but there are some problems that make it difficult to prepare for the arrival of refugees all at once.

US State  
Dept avoid..

FROM PAGE 01  
She said President Zelensky thanked the US for support and efforts toward peace in the region. She emphasized that negotiations for a complete ceasefire in a short time are the best course of action. She mentioned that technical teams would engage in further discussions during a meeting in Saudi Arabia. The first agreement had helped reduce tensions, and the second agreement would lead to the complete elimination of conflicts.

Pakistan  
Day parade..

FROM PAGE 01  
Parade Avenue in Islamabad, the 2025 event is scheduled to take place at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. President Asif Ali Zardari will be the chief guest for the occasion, Radio Pakistan confirmed. PAF will also participate with a flypast, showcasing fighter jets during the event.



## Briefs

## UN raises alarm on civilian deaths in Khartoum attacks

GENEVA: Dozens of civilians have been killed by shelling and bombardments in and around Khartoum, the United Nations said Thursday, as fighting for control of the Sudanese capital intensifies. The UN Human Rights Office demanded an end to the “lawlessness and impunity” in war-ravaged Sudan, where the SAF regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been locked in a battle for power since April 2023. “We are receiving troubling reports of escalating violence against civilians in Khartoum, amid continued intense hostilities,” spokesman Seif Magango said in a statement. “Dozens of civilians, including local humanitarian volunteers, have been killed by artillery shelling and aerial bombardment by the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces in eastern Khartoum and north Omdurman since March 12.” The war has escalated in recent months, with the army seeking to reclaim territory in Khartoum and beyond. Less than a kilometer now separates army units in central Khartoum from the presidential palace, overrun by RSF troops at the start of the war. Nearly two years of fighting have left large swathes of the capital unrecognizable. Magango said credible reports indicated that the RSF and allied militia had raided homes in eastern Khartoum, carrying out summary killings and arbitrary detentions, and looted food and medical supplies from community kitchens and medical clinics. The UN rights office has also received allegations of sexual violence in the Al Giraf Gharb neighborhood. Meanwhile SAF and affiliated fighters are also reported to have engaged in looting and other criminal activities in areas they control in Khartoum North and East Nile. Magango said, amid widespread arbitrary arrests in East Nile. “We call once again on both parties – and all states with influence over them – to take concrete steps to ensure the effective protection of civilians, and to bring an end to the continuing lawlessness and impunity,” Magango said. The fighting has plunged Sudan into what the UN calls the world’s largest humanitarian catastrophe.—APP

## Istanbul’s mayor still held as new rally called

ISTANBUL: Istanbul’s powerful mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu, remained in police custody Thursday over graft and terror allegations after being held the day before, as his party called for more protests in Turkey’s largest city. Imamoglu is President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s main political rival and his detention came just days before the party was expected to name him as its candidate for the 2028 presidential election. Financial markets in Turkey fell shortly afterwards in what analysts said indicates investors’ serious concerns that the move was politically motivated. The leader of the main opposition CHP, of which the mayor is a member, is expected to address supporters outside Istanbul’s City Hall at 1730 GMT on Thursday, a party spokesman told AFP. University students also planned several demonstrations in the city. The governor has banned all protests in Istanbul for four days. Hundreds of police joined the pre-dawn raid on Imamoglu’s home in Istanbul on Wednesday, he posted on X before being taken away, with the authorities then blocking access to social networks. Access to the Internet and social media was still slow early Thursday. Thousands of angry protesters gathered outside City Hall late on Wednesday, chanting slogans including “Erdogan, dictator!” and “Government, resign!” Already facing an array of legal battles, the two-time Istanbul mayor is now under investigation for “aiding and abetting a terrorist organization” – namely the banned Kurdish militant group PKK.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Zahid Latif Khan hosted iftar dinner for friends from corporate sector and the diplomatic community. Among others, Ambassador of Portugal Fredrico Silva also attended the event.—DNA

## India detains hundreds of farmers as police bulldoze protest sites

“On one hand the government is negotiating with the farmer organizations and on the other hand it is arresting them,” Rakesh Tikait, a spokesperson for farmer group Bhartiya Kisan Union said on X

NEW DELHI: Police in India’s northern state of Punjab detained hundreds of farmers and used bulldozers to tear down their temporary camps in a border area where they had protested for more than a year to demand better crop prices. The farmers had camped on the border with adjoining Haryana since last February, when security forces halted their march toward the capital, New Delhi, to press for legally-backed guar-

antees of more state support for crops. “We did not need to use any force because there was no resistance,” Nanak Singh, a senior police officer, told the ANI news agency about Wednesday night’s clearance action. “The farmers cooperated well and they sat in buses themselves.” The farmers had been given prior notice, he added. Television images showed police using bulldozers to demolish tents and stages, while escort-

ing farmers carrying personal items to vehicles. Media said among the hundreds detained were farmers’ leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal, the latter carried away in an ambulance as he had been on an indefinite protest fast for months. “On one hand the government is negotiating with the farmer organizations and on the other hand it is arresting them,” Rakesh Tikait, a spokesperson for farmer group Bhartiya Kisan

Union said on X. Punjab’s ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which authorized the eviction, said it stood by the farmers in their demands, but asked them to take up their grievances with the federal government. “Let’s work together to safeguard Punjab’s interests,” said the party’s vice president in the state, Tarunpreet Singh Sond, adding that the blockage of key roads had hurt the state’s economy. “Closing highways is not the solution.” Prime Minister

Narendra Modi’s government was forced to repeal some farm laws in 2021 after a year-long protest by farmers when they camped outside Delhi for months. Federal government officials met the farmers’ leaders on Wednesday, said Fatehjung Singh Bajwa, the vice president of Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Punjab. “It is clear that this arrest is a deliberate attempt to disrupt the ongoing dialogue between farmers and BJP leadership,” he added in a post on X.—DNA

## Lebanese army begins securing border with Syria, closes illegal crossings

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army on Wednesday entered the town of Hawsh Al-Sayyid Ali, on Lebanon’s eastern border with the Syrian Arab Republic. Its vehicles reached the town’s administrative border as established in official Lebanese state maps. According to these maps, the town is divided into two: one part in Syrian territory, inhabited by Lebanese citizens; and the other in Lebanese territory. The development follows communications between the Syrian and Lebanese sides to halt armed clashes that began last Sunday as a result of disputes among smugglers in an area teeming with illegal crossings. The conflict escalated on Monday after the killing of three Syrian gunmen, and evolved into a broader confrontation between Lebanese tribes and armed members of the new Syrian authorities. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Health, the clashes and killings resulted in “the death of seven Lebanese citizens and the injury of 52 others.” Additionally, property and buildings suffered heavy damage in the exchange of shelling between Syrian forces and Lebanese tribes. Forces affiliated with the Syrian Ministry of Defense entered the Syrian part of the Lebanese town on Monday night. Negotiations between the Lebanese and Syrian sides over deployment zones, based on border maps between the two countries, delayed the Lebanese army’s deployment for several hours, when a Lebanese army convoy of 60 vehicles arrived on the outskirts of Hawsh Al-Sayyid Ali. An official source in the area said the Lebanese army’s deployment “was not smooth, as it faced protests related to the confiscation of weapons belonging to local clans. However, the situation soon returned to normal, allowing the army to continue its mission. The Lebanese army command announced that its units “commenced implementing security measures in the Hawsh Al-Sayyid Ali area of Hermel, including the deployment of patrols, to maintain security and ensure stability in the border region.” It said the army has taken measures “to close illegal crossings between Lebanon and Syria,” adding: “As part of the efforts to monitor and secure the borders in light of the current situation, and to prevent infiltration and smuggling activities, a unit of the army has closed the illegal crossings, which include Al-Mat-laba in the Qasr-Hermel area, as well as Al-Fatha, Al-Maarawiya, and Shahit Al-Hujairi in the Mashari’ Al-Qaa-Baalbek region.” President Joseph Aoun monitored the security developments along the northeastern border through a series of communications with army chief Gen. Rodolphe Haikal.—DNA

## Meta to launch generative AI assistant in the EU

PARIS:Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta said Thursday it would launch its generative artificial intelligence assistant Meta AI in the European Union from “this week”, more than a year after the service’s US release. “It’s taken longer than we would have liked to get our AI technology into the hands of people in Europe as we continue to navigate its complex regulatory system - but we’re glad we’re finally here,” the company said in a statement. “Starting this week, Meta AI will begin rolling out across 41 European countries.” Meta AI was first unveiled for the US in September 2023, then rolled out across all the group’s applications in April 2024. Although image generation is available in the US, in the EU the generative AI tool will craft text-only responses to users’ questions. Meta AI can also draw on web search for its answers. The company said the bot’s inclusion in conversations could help “deep dive on topics of interest, or get help with a ‘how-to’ or a problem that needs solving” such as planning a trip. Developing “large language models” (LLMs) like Meta AI requires vast reserves of data, which is heavily regulated in the European Union where it relates to individual users. Meta’s bot available in the EU was not trained on data from EU users. Until now, the company had held off on introducing its AI in the bloc, saying it was unclear how authorities might interpret overlapping rules on data protection, AI and digital markets. Europe suffers from a “fragmented regulatory structure riddled with inconsistent implementation,” chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said in an August op-ed piece for the Economist newspaper co-written with Spotify chief Daniel Ek. Meta now appears to have overcome those hurdles for the 41 European countries and six languages it operates in. AI is an overriding priority for Meta as for other Silicon Valley giants. The group plans to invest \$60-65 billion this year, with much of the cash going into data centres, servers and network infrastructure necessary to develop AI models. “This is a massive effort, and over the coming years it will drive our core products and business, unlock historic innovation, and extend American technology leadership,” Zuckerberg said in January as he announced Meta’s 2024 financial results. For now, Meta claims around 700 million monthly active users for its AI assistant - still somewhat shy of the one billion Zuckerberg said was needed to secure “a durable long-term advantage”.—DNA

## Int’l Jewelry Fair held to bestow chances

BEIJING: At the Beijing International Jewelry Fair, the Burmese rubies, Kashmir sapphires, Colombian emeralds, Australian opals...precious gems from different countries and regions sparkle with brilliant light, firmly attracting the attention of customers. Covering an area of 22,000 square meters, the exhibition attracted more than 1,000 jewelers from home and abroad. “You ask me what the exhibition has brought us? Actually, I do not need to say anything, this is the answer,” said Muzaffar Ahmed Bhat, a jewelry and handicraft trader from Tehran, excitedly, pointing to the endless stream of customers at his booth. “Since I came to Beijing in 2012, the China International Fair for Trade in Service, the China International Import Expo, China International Supply Chain Expo, as well as jewelry and handicraft exhibitions of various sizes have all been great opportunities for us to expand business. Now, I have established my brand store in Beijing, with a stable customer network.” While displaying tapestries inlaid with various gemstones and greeting customers who stopped at the booth, Muzaffar told China Economic Net. “When I first came to China, I knew almost nothing about this country except that a huge market. But soon, with the help of staff from relevant departments, I took the first step. In addition to the market size, a series of targeted guidance and preferential policies given to foreign business people have greatly helped me. From an outsider to a fish in water, I must say that here is the safest and most prosperous market. Next, I will further expand the scale of my business.” Another foreign trader, Suresh from Sri Lanka, was also busy greeting customers trying on the gem necklaces and rings he brought from his hometown. “As we all know, Sri Lanka is a famous gemstone country with rich resources. In addition to the most famous sapphire, ruby, garnet, spinel and cat’s eye are also well-known. More than just looking for sales, we are also seeking suitable Chinese partners here.—DNA

## Muslims with tattoo regrets flock to free removal service during Ramadan

“Bad image (against people with tattoos) is not a big deal for me, but it affected my husband and son,” said Zadora, 36. “They are not comfortable with my tattoos and I respect their feelings, so I want to remove it

JAKARTA, Indonesia: Teguh Islean Septura groans in pain as each staccato rata-tat-tat of the laser fires an intense beam at the elaborate tattoos on his arm. But the former musician’s determination to “repent” in the holy month of Ramadan is enough to keep him going. The 30-year-old guitarist got his back, arms and legs tattooed to “look cool” when he was performing in a band. But these days Septura has a newfound zeal for Islam, including the conviction that Muslims should not alter the body that God gave them. “As humans, sometimes we make mistakes. Now I want to improve

myself by moving closer to God,” Septura said, as a health worker aimed the white laser wand at Septura’s skin, blasting the red, green and black pigments with its penetrating light. “God gave me clean skin and I ruined it, that’s what I regret now.” Septura is among a growing number of people in Indonesia’s capital who have signed up for free tattoo removal services offered by Amil Zakat National Agency, an Islamic charity organization, during Ramadan to give practicing Muslims an opportunity to “repent.” Launched in 2019, the tattoo removal program is now held every Ramadan, a month of

fasting, increased worship, religious reflection and good deeds. Some 700 people have signed up for the services this year, and in total nearly 3,000 people have taken part. “We want to pave the way for people who want to hijrah (to move closer to God), including those who want to remove their tattoos” said Mohammad Asep Wahyudi, a coordinator of the event. He added that many people cannot afford to remove their tattoos or know where and how they can do so safely. Laser removal, which takes repeated treatment and may not be completely successful, could cost thousands of

dollars for tattoos as extensive as Septura’s. Tattooing remains strongly associated with gangs and criminality in some Asian cultures. In addition to the religious prohibitions in Muslim-majority Indonesia, ideas about tattoos also reveal oppressive attitudes toward women, who if tattooed can be labeled as promiscuous or disreputable and not worth marrying. Sri In-drayati, 52, said she tattooed the name of her first daughter on her hand shortly after she gave birth to her at the age of 22. She said she regretted it when her two grandchildren kept asking her to erase it because it looked

like dirty, thick marker writing. “When I take my grandson to school, (the children) whisper to each other: ‘look at that grandma, she has a tattoo!’” she said. Another woman, Evalia Zadora, got a tattoo of a large star on her back and the words “Hope, Love and Rock & Roll” on her upper chest as a teen to gain acceptance into a gang. She wants to remove them now to move closer to God and out of consideration for her family. “Bad image (against people with tattoos) is not a big deal for me, but it affected my husband and son,” said Zadora, 36. “They are not comfortable with my tattoos and I respect their feelings, so I want to remove it.—Agencies

## Kyrgyz okays ratification of agreement on Kyrgyz-Tajik state border

BISHKEK: The Jogorku Kenesh at a plenary session approved the ratification of the Agreement on the Kyrgyz-Tajik state border. Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers - Chairman of the State Committee for National Security Kamchybek Tashiev presented the information on the draft laws. In particular, 85 deputies supported the draft laws “On ratification of the Agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan on the Kyrgyz-Tajik State Border, signed on March 13, 2025 in Bishkek”, “On ratification of the Agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan on the construction and use of roads, arrangement and use of the Crossroads of roads, signed on March 13, 2025 in Bishkek”, “On ratification of the Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on ensuring access to water and energy facilities, signed on March 13, 2025 in Bishkek”. Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh Nurlanbek Turgunbek uulu noted on a historic day. “Border issues are the most difficult in the world. In Europe, there were terrible wars over borders, now these countries are the closest friends. Kyrgyzstan is a peace-loving country. We thank the inter-governmental commission headed by you for the work done, which will remain in history,” he said. Kamchybek Tashiev noted that the border delimitation issues were resolved thanks to the political will of President Sadyr Zhaparov. This is a great victory for the people, the Kyrgyz Republic. I believe that every person will work for the benefit of the development of their country. These decisions were not easy. But we were able to overcome such difficulties and were able to reach the end. I thank everyone who supported us and believed in us,” the official concluded.—APP

## Egypt, India reaffirm \$12b trade target

RIYADH: Egypt and India have reaffirmed their commitment to tripling bilateral trade from \$4.2 billion in 2024 to \$12 billion within five years, reinforcing a target set last year during a joint meeting. The pledge came during a trip to India by Egypt’s Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade Hassan El-Khatib, when he met with the Asian country’s Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The push builds on a record \$7.26 billion in bilateral trade during the 2021-22 financial year – a 75 percent rise from the previous year – positioning India as Egypt’s sixth-largest trading partner, according to the North African country’s Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. Trade fell to \$4.6 billion between April 2023 and February 2024, largely due to the Israel-Hamas conflict and Houthi disruptions to Suez Canal traffic. “Al-Khatib also highlighted the expected surge in Indian investments in Egypt in the coming period, especially in light of the major investment agreements concluded by Indian companies in the energy sector, including the signing of two agreements for the production of green hydrogen and green ammonia in Egypt with an investment cost of up to \$12 billion, in addition to other Indian investments in various sectors,” an official release stated. The minister added that his country is ready to provide all necessary support and facilitation for Indian investors, highlighting Egypt’s efforts to create a favorable business climate by improving infrastructure, developing new ports, and enhancing existing facilities, including the Suez Canal Economic Zone. El-Khatib also underscored India’s growing presence in other industries within the Egyptian market. During the discussions, the minister extended an official invitation to Goyal to visit Egypt in 2025 to further strengthen bilateral economic ties and explore additional collaboration opportunities.—APP



## Briefs

ATC  
dismisses  
acquittal  
pleas of  
Faisal Javed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad has rejected the acquittal pleas of PTI leaders Faisal Javed Khan, Wasiq Qayyum, and three other accused in the protest case. Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra presided over the hearing related to the protest at Faizabad following former prime minister Imran Khan's disqualification. The court announced its verdict on the acquittal requests of Faisal Javed Khan and Wasiq Qayyum. Additionally, Faisal Javed Khan's request for the removal of terrorism-related charges was also dismissed. Due to continued absence, former MPA Raja Rashid Hafeez was declared a proclaimed offender in the case. The court scheduled the indictment of the accused in the next hearing, which is set for April 8. It is noteworthy that Faisal Javed Khan and other accused are facing FIR filed at Industrial Area Police Station.

Marriyum  
demands  
CM KP's  
resignation

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Senior Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday demanded Ali Amin Gandapur's resignation, saying that there is no infrastructure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to combat terrorism. Addressing a press conference, she criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for boycotting the parliamentary committee meeting on national security, accusing it of abetting anti-state elements. She said that the PTI skipped the meeting solely due to its incarcerated leader's absence from the high-level security moot. She further said that the PTI founder never attended a single national security forum even when he was prime minister. Marriyum Aurangzeb accused PTI of diverting attention from the growing spectre of terrorism by casting doubt on the performance of security forces. She warned that anyone seeking to spread chaos at this juncture would not be spared.

Police arrest  
father of  
Armaghan

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The police on Thursday arrested the father of Armaghan, the prime suspect in the Mustafa Amir murder case and also recovered drugs from his possession. According to sources, Kamran Qureshi was arrested by the Anti-Violence Crime Cell and Crime Investigation Agency in Karachi. The authorities also recovered drugs and illegal firearms from the suspect's possession. A case has been registered against the accused under the sections related to possession of narcotics and illegal weapons. The police said that Kamran Qureshi was arrested from Defence phase V, Khayaban-e-Momin during a crackdown against the drug traffickers. According to police, 200 grams of ice, a 9mm pistol and ammunition were recovered from the suspect. Mustafa Amir was brutally killed allegedly by his friend Armaghan in Karachi. The police said that the murder was an outcome of a dispute between two friends. Sheraz, one of the suspects police earlier apprehended, claimed that Armaghan killed the young man to settle personal score. There were also reports that a girl was involved in the gruesome murder of 24-year-old Mustafa. Armaghan called Mustafa to his home on some pretext on Jan 6 and thrashed him with an iron rod for three hours. He later put him in his car trunk and drove towards Hub, Balochistan, police quoted Sheraz as having said.



ISLAMABAD: The Indian Charge d'Affaires, Geetika Srivastava, hosted a well-attended Iftar dinner in Islamabad for Pakistani friends, including members of the media. The event included notable individuals like the former President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Saqib Rafiq, Samian Fazal, from women chamber, Malik Sohail Hussain, Khurshid Barlas and Happy Guptan, the Head of the Commercial Section at the Indian High Commission, along with other attendees. — DNA

Democracy in Pakistan  
gradually moving forward

Pak continues to face terrorism, with Afghanistan serving as haven for terrorists: Ayaz Sadiq

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that growing threat of terrorism and extremism remains one of Pakistan's most pressing challenges. He expressed these views in his address to a delegation of students from Harvard University, USA, at Parliament House, Islamabad. He said that it is an alarming fact that Pakistan's neighboring country, Afghanistan, has increasingly become a safe haven for terrorist groups targeting Pakistan. Ayaz Sadiq said that Afghanistan's soil has been used as a base for launching terrorist activities directed at Pakistan, and the lack of effective control over these elements is exacerbating the situation. This growing threat of terrorism could spiral out of control, extending its reach to neighboring countries and even to the larger international community, if not contained, he added. Ayaz Sadiq also pointed out that the events of 9/11 serve as a stark reminder of how unchecked terrorism can expand, affecting not only the region but also impacting international peace and security. He urged the global community to recognize that terrorism is not merely a challenge for Pakistan but an international threat that requires a united, concerted effort to confront and eliminate. "Pakistan

has long been at the forefront of the battle against terrorism," the Speaker added. He reiterated that the Pakistani government has consistently provided evidence to the Afghan interim government regarding the presence of terrorist organizations operating from Afghan territory. Ayaz Sadiq further highlighted that this issue has been repeatedly raised in the United Nations and communicated to high-ranking officials in the United States. The Speaker expressed deep concern over the sophisticated weaponry left behind by the U.S. in Afghanistan, valued at an estimated \$7 billion, which is now being used against Pakistan. While praising the valour and commitment of Pakistan's Security Forces and the immense sacrifices they have made in combating terrorism, he said that Pakistan has rendered over 90,000 sacrifices in the War Against Terrorism. "Terrorism, he emphasized, represents a threat to civilization itself and must be eradicated for the sake of all nations." Ayaz Sadiq has said that the critical issue of climate change remains another existential challenge for Pakistan. Despite contributing only 0.06% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan ranks among the most vulnerable countries to the devastating impacts of climate change. He highlighted the tragic consequences of climate-related disasters in 2022, when Pakistan's most vulnerable regions suffered

significant losses, both in terms of human lives and economic damage. Ayaz Sadiq called on the developed nations, which are responsible for the majority of global emissions, to significantly reduce their carbon footprints & support the developing countries suffering from Climate Change. While Pakistan bears the brunt of these environmental disasters, it has contributed minimally to global emissions. The Speaker emphasized that this imbalance requires urgent international action. He reiterated that climate change is a global issue, and the international community must work together to mitigate its effects, providing assistance to countries like Pakistan, which are struggling to cope with the consequences. Ayaz Sadiq also shared the National Assembly's significant progress in recent years, especially in terms of modernization and digitalization. He highlighted the various reforms aimed at improving legislative processes and increasing transparency. One of the key initiatives he discussed was the establishment of the Law Drafting Council, which has played an instrumental role in enhancing the quality of legislative work. He also emphasized the National Assembly's focus on youth empowerment. Over 5,000 young interns have been trained in the legislative process through hands-on experience, he stated. In addition, the National Assembly has hosted Mock Parliaments, where young participants have taken on roles as minis-

ters and opposition members, actively engaging in discussions on public policy. This initiative aims to build a future generation of informed leaders capable of navigating complex political landscapes, he added.

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, under NA Speaker's leadership, has also been transformed into a premier training center for legislators. This initiative aims to enhance parliamentary expertise and strengthen democratic governance in Pakistan. Furthermore, the Parliament House, which has earned the distinction of being the world's first Green Parliament, exemplifies the National Assembly's commitment to environmental sustainability and good governance. Ayaz Sadiq has said that social media is not reflecting true image of Pakistan at the international level. He invited Harvard students to explore Pakistan's rich natural resources and breathtaking landscapes as it will change their perception. He pointed out the country's northern regions, which have garnered global attention for their stunning beauty, as well as Pakistan's role as a major producer of fruits, including mangoes and oranges. He extended a warm invitation to the students to visit Pak, emphasizing that it is a peaceful and hospitable country often misrepresented in global media. The Speaker expressed hope that through direct engagement, the students would gain a true understanding of Pakistan, its challenges, and its strengths.

Iran will  
respond  
to Trump's  
letter: FM

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that the Islamic Republic will respond to the letter of US President Donald Trump in the coming days through appropriate channels. Araghchi made the remarks while speaking during a live program on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) Channel 2 on Thursday.

Araghchi also noted that this time, the development comes alongside a diplomatic move from the Americans, including a letter and a request for negotiations. He also stated that the Islamic Republic's policy is clear. "We will not engage in direct negotiations under pressure, threats, or increased sanctions."

According to Araghchi, negotiations must take place on equal footing and under fair conditions. The foreign minister also stated that the letter is "mostly threatening," but it also claims that there are opportunities.

As per the foreign minister, the Islamic Republic's response will take all dimensions of the letter into account. "We have thoroughly examined all aspects of the letter, considering every detail carefully," he stated. "We will see both the threat and opportunity aspects," said Araghchi, citing the Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani, saying, "Within every threat, there also lies an opportunity." — Agencies

JIT summons  
Aleema Khan,  
16 others

DNA

LAHORE: The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) has summoned Aleema Khan and 16 others again over allegations of negative propaganda on social media. They are required to appear on March 21 for further questioning. Notable names on the list include Syed Firdous Shamim Naqvi, Mian Aslam Iqbal, Hammad Azhar, Aun Abbas, AzharMishwani, and Zulfi Bukhari. Aleema Khan, sister of PTI founder, had already appeared before the JIT on March 19. The JIT, formed under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, is digging deep into the case, leaving no stone unturned. The federal government has tasked Islamabad Police's Inspector General with heading the probe.

Miftah criticises govt for  
electricity, sugar prices

KARACHI: Former finance minister and economist Miftah Ismail on Thursday criticised the federal government for allowing electricity and sugar prices to get to an exorbitant level. Speaking at a press conference in Karachi, Miftahcriticised the current government for allowing sugar mill owners to export for profits. "Six months ago, the government permitted the export of 5 to 6 million tonnes of sugar, so that Sindh and Punjab's sugar mill owners can get dollars and relief," he said. He said he wanted to remind the current government that when the former premier Imran Khan had exported sugar, PML-N leaders had criticised the move, calling it "theft and a decision influenced by powerful sugar mills". "Today, I ask Shehbaz Sharif sahab, who influenced your decision to export sugar?" he rhetorically asked. "Because you had promised — when sugar was Rs80 to 90 — that you won't let it exceed Rs140," he highlighted, adding that "exports started when sugar was at Rs115 — now it was at Rs175". "Pakistani people should know why is sugar expensive, why are you cutting solar energy bills, and why are you making people's electricity expensive?" he asked. After repeated failures of the federal and provincial governments to provide sugar at the stipulated

rate of Rs130 per kilogramme, the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) too has entered the scenario with a warning to the sugar mills. Contrary to the rates announced by the prime minister, and several attempts by the government to maintain retail sales at Rs130 per kg, sugar prices in the markets continue to soar above Rs180 per kg in various markets across the country. Sugar consumption is forecast to increase slightly to 6.7 million tonnes as it has continuously grown due to population growth and demand from the food processing sector. During the last season, Pakistan produced more than 6.84m tonnes of sugar, which is expected to rise in 2024-25. On electricity prices, Miftah said, "Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka Indonesia, Thailand Cambodia, South Africa, Kenya — these are just some of the countries that may have surpassed us and when investment doesn't come in Pakistan, it goes to these countries." He noted that Pakistan's electricity prices, however, were more expensive than these countries. "So, what is so special about your electricity that you are selling it at such an expensive rate? What is so special about your gas that you're selling it at such an expensive rate?" — DNA

Pak, UK discuss adopting  
joint Anti-terror strategy

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Rana Sanaullah, adviser to the prime minister on political affairs, met British High Commissioner Jane Marriott on Thursday to discuss enhancing security cooperation between the two countries and adopting a joint

Sanaullah holds key meeting  
with British High Commissioner

strategy against "terrorism," state-run media reported. Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK) share a long-standing relationship built on strong diplomatic, economic and security ties. Over the years, the militaries of both countries have maintained robust cooperation, particularly in the fields of counterterrorism and professional training. The meeting between the two officials took place amid Pakistan's struggle to contain surging militancy, particularly in its southwestern Balochistan province, where separatist militants last week hijacked a train and held hundreds hostage before the army launched a rescue operation. The military said it killed all 33 militants while 31 Pakistani soldiers, staff and civilians were killed. "The discussion also focused on adopting a joint strategy against terrorism, increasing security cooperation, and taking collaborative measures to ensure regional peace and stability," state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported about the meeting between Sanaullah and Marriott.

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