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Uzbekistan embassy celebrates spirit of Navruz in Islamabad

Detailed News On Page-08

PM Li calls for 'dialogue' with US

Detailed News On Page-08



Sabalenka advance at Miami Open

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Nation marks Pakistan Day

'Evil designs of Khawarij outfits will be thwarted'

"We have given a strong response to both external and internal terrorism," says President Zardari

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The nation is celebrating Pakistan Day with patriotic zeal and fervour today (Sunday) with Aiwan-e-Sadr hosting the iconic military parade to commemorate the 1940 Lahore Resolution which provided a framework for the realisation of the goal of a separate homeland for Muslims of South Asia. President Asif Ali Zardari is the chief guest of this year's Pakistan Day parade, also attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, services chiefs and other dignitaries, which is being held at Aiwan-e-Sadr instead of the Shakarparian Parade Ground – which traditionally hosts the parade. The day began with a 31-gun and 21-gun salute in the federal capital and provinces, respectively. Meanwhile, a change of guard ceremony was held at the mausoleum of Allama Iqbal in Lahore with Pakistan Air Force (PAF) contingent taking over the duties from the Rangers.

Addressing the parade, which also featured the march past of military personnel as well as the flypast of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) fighter jets, President Zardari recalled the sacrifices of millions of Muslims – who laid down their lives for the creation of Pakistan. "We have achieved freedom by making many sacrifices," he said while underscoring the significance of the Pakistan Day. Stressing that the people of Pakistan and the armed forces stood together, the president paid tribute to the martyrs, saying: "We have the ability to overcome difficulties [and] are not afraid of it." "The journey ahead of us is not easy, but it is not impossible [...] I appeal to everyone to devote all their energies to the development of the country. We have to rise above differences and work for a prosperous and peaceful Pakistan," President Zardari said. Noting that the country is facing various geopolitical

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President confers Pak civil awards upon 69 recipients

The ceremony was attended by the federal ministers, Chairman Senate, parliamentarians, members of the civil society, diplomats

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday conferred Pakistan's civil awards upon 69 personalities including the Pakistani nationals and foreigners in recognition of their outstanding services in various fields. The investiture ceremony was held at the Aiwan e Sadr in which different personalities were decorated with the civil awards in recognition of their services in health, education, literature, journalism, public, research, diplomatic matters and economy. The ceremony was attended by the federal ministers, Chairman Senate, parliamentarians, members of the civil society, diplomats, media and a large number of people. Nishan-i-Pakistan (posthumous) was conferred upon Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former prime minister and

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad and Army Chief General Asim Munir witnessing fly-past by the PAF jets, on the occasion of Pakistan Day celebrations. – DNA

Azerbaijan President greets PM on Pak Day

Says, "We attach exceptional importance to the comprehensive development of our relations"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and people of Pakistan on the occasion of Pakistan Day. In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the President of Azerbaijan said, "On behalf of myself and the people of Azerbaijan, I sincerely congratulate you and your brotherly people on the occasion of the national holiday of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – Pakistan Day, extending my best wishes." He said, "The current level of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan strategic partnership and our cooperation, which is

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PM Shehbaz condemns terrorist attack on Niger mosque

Attack on a mosque in the country's southwest that killed at least 44 people

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on worshippers in Niger that claimed lives of innocent people. In a message on social media platform X (Sunday), the Prime Minister said Pakistan stands in solidarity with the people of Niger and shares in their grief during this difficult time. He said the terrorist attack on worshippers during the sacred month of Ramadan is a painful

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No change in solar energy policy

Comprehensive relief package on electricity costs soon: Shehbaz

Prime minister instructs authorities to clear all ambiguities regarding solarisation policy through facts, figures

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ruling out any change in the government's policy and priorities regarding solar energy, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday instructed the authorities concerned to clear all ambiguities among the people regarding the solarisation policy through facts and figures. The prime minister said this while chairing a review meeting on the matters related to the Power Division. He said there was no change in government's policy on solar energy and promotion of renewable energy remained a priority. The statement came days after the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet approved amendments to the existing net metering regulations of rooftop solar under which the buyback rate was slashed down from Rs27 to Rs10 per unit. The decision comes in light of a significant increase in the number of solar net-metering consumers, with associated financial implications for grid consumers. As part of the approved changes, the ECC has

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Anyone who speaks out lands in jail, says Omar Ayub

He said under the leadership of Mehmood Achakzai, political parties are uniting against the regime

FAISAL SHEIKH

HARIPUR: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan said on Sunday that no one is free in the country at the moment; anyone who speaks out is imprisoned under the PECA (Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act). Speaking to the media here, Omar Ayub, who is a senior leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stated that under the leadership of Mehmood Khan Achakzai,

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Pak, Afghanistan vow to enhance mutual coop

Peace and progress in Afghanistan necessary for regional stability: envoy

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan have reaffirmed their commitment to once again upgrade and strengthen diplomatic engagement and together harness their full potential for the mutual benefit of the people of both countries, The News reported on Sunday. "Met [Afghan] Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul, today. Reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to continued engagement & mutually beneficial ties with Afghanistan," said Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq Khan in a post on X. "Both sides agreed to enhance high-level



el engagements and dialogue to further consolidate bilateral relations," he added. Sadiq's visit to Kabul – in light of Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's directives as per the Foreign Office – comes on the heels of a US delegation that just left Afghanistan, seeing Zalmay Khalilzad, former US Special

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Briefs

Murad urges centre to convene CCI

He also pointed out the delay in the construction of the Hyderabad-Sukkur motorway

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, along with cabinet members, visited the mausoleum of founder of the nation – Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah – on the occasion of Pakistan Day. They offered Fateha (prayers) and laid flowers at the grave of the founder of Pakistan. Speaking to the media, CM Murad Ali Shah reflected on the significance of March 23, 1940, when the All-India Muslim League adopted the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, which laid the foundation for an independent homeland.

Rail service in Balochistan after clearance

Kayani assured that railway operations in Balochistan will resume with full security protocols

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Railways, Bilal Azhar Kayani, has announced that rail service in Balochistan will be restored once security clearance is made. In his statement, Kayani assured that following the Jaffar Express incident, railway operations in Balochistan will resume with full security protocols. He emphasised that damaged tracks and coaches are being fully restored to ensure passenger safety and convenience.

At Pak-Afghan border

Sixteen terrorists killed during infiltration attempt

Security forces detect terrorists attempting to cross Afghan border in North Waziristan's Ghulam Khan Kallay area

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: At least 16 terrorists were killed by security forces during an attempt to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan in general area Ghulam Khan Kallay of North Waziristan district, the military's media wing said on Sunday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), security forces detected a group of terrorists attempting to cross the Afghan border in North Waziristan's Ghulam Khan Kallay area. "Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. After an intense fire exchange, all sixteen Khawarij [terrorists] were sent to hell," said the ISPR in the statement, using the term designating members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It noted that Pakistan has consistently been asking the interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. "Interim Afghan government is expected to fulfill its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khawarij for perpetrating acts of terrorism against Pakistan," it added. The statement said security forces are determined and remain committed to securing its borders and eliminating

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Quetta reopens but some parts remain shut for 2nd day

The strike call had been issued after the BYC claimed on Friday that three of its protesters were killed

DNA

QUETTA: The situation in Quetta returned to normal on Sunday – a day after a partial shutdown – while a shutter-down strike continued for a second day in some cities across Balochistan in response to a call by the Baloch Yakjeh-ti Committee's (BYC), which demanded the release of its leadership. The strike follows the arrests of BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch and 16 other activists from their protest camp at Quetta's Sariah Road as well as a police crackdown on its sit-in against alleged enforced disappearances. Mahrang had been leading the protest against

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Well-nourished children learn the best and can change the world

HANNU RIPATTI



As Finland became independent in 1917 and started to build up its institutions, one of the first tasks was to get children to school, instead of forcing them to work in harsh conditions. Soon it became clear that hungry school children are not capable of learning. Thus, Finland was the first country in the world, in 1943, to enact a law whereby school children were guaranteed free-of-charge meal during the school days. First, food was served for underprivileged children but since 1948 school meals have been available for all students. Having learned from our history, there was a strong will to develop the country away from unequal, agriculture-based society towards a more modern welfare

society. It was understood that the best way to improve our economy, was to educate people and not just the rich ones but the whole population. Education was perceived as an investment in the future. Over 70 years later, Finland has developed into a modern welfare society, recognized for having one of the best education systems in the world. Free school meals remain an essential part of Finland's education system to ensure equal access and participation for children, and it plays a role in the country's development into an information society. In many parts of the world, the situation is much gloomier. School attendance as such has increased considerably, which is good news. Simultaneously, we are struggling with a persistent learning crisis where the majority of children in low and lower middle-income countries are in school but cannot read or write a simple sentence. Climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts around the world, have aggravated the situation. Due to increasingly frequent extreme weather conditions, crops become smaller and uncertain. Children are the ones that are hardest hit by the global food crisis. There is a simple, yet effective solution for both improving food security and better learning results: free school meals. Thus, Finland was one of the founders of the global School Meals Coalition that was created in 2021. It now includes over 100 member countries and 108 other partner organizations. The aim is to support and encourage countries to develop their food and education systems, recovery from the pandemic, and promote the achievement of sustainable development goals. The ultimate objective of the Coalition is that every child in the world

will receive a school meal on a daily basis by 2030. We provide financial support for school meal programmes worldwide. In 2024, Finland allocated 5 million euros to WFP's school meals programmes globally. This also includes support to the School Meal Coalition Secretariat coordinated by WFP. We also provide technical expertise for countries wishing to develop their school meals programmes. Finland has launched a website about the Finnish model and relevant stakeholders: <https://www.educationfinland.fi/schoolmeals> For those countries that are currently looking to reform their education, Finland wants to give a gentle hint. Please invest in free school meals! It is a small but significant concrete investment in children's future, and school meals programs can be started with small steps. School meals programs can strengthen the overall food security, but they can also contribute to the local economy. When implemented correctly, food programs can help diversify food systems. The use of locally produced products in school meals benefits the consumption of locally produced agricultural products and can promote the diversification of production. This in turn positively impacts the crisis resilience and economy of local communities. Looking ahead, our mission remains clear. We have to ensure that by 2030, every child, everywhere, has access to a healthy and nutritious school meal. This goal is very ambitious but it can be reached. We only need to intensify our efforts and work together. As an end result, we get an affluent youth that is capable and motivated to build a better and more equal and prosperous world for all. Let us go for it!

– The writer is the Ambassador of Finland to Pakistan

Ramesh announces restoration of 46 Gurdwaras

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs, Ramesh Singh Arora, stated that under the guidance of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the restoration project for 46 historic gurdwaras, which were closed after the creation of Pakistan, has officially begun. He made these remarks during his participation in the ongoing Bhog Sahib Ardas at the 12th Annual Sammagam at Baba Di Berri Sahib Gurdwara. He mentioned that after reopening of the 70-year-closed Baba Di Berri Sahib Gurdwara, the land of the Baba's Pond was retrieved from the land mafia and handed over to the local Sikh community, Sangat. This gesture was part of the provincial government's broader efforts to restore and preserve sacred religious sites for the Sikh community. The provincial minister thanked Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain Langrial for their support in retrieving the sacred Baba Di Berri Sahib Pond from illegal encroachment. He emphasized that the government aimed to make Gurdwara Baba Di Berri Sahib, an international Sikh site, enabling Sikhs from around the world to visit this sacred site in Sialkot, along with other prominent gurdwaras in Lahore, Narowal, Punjab Sahib, and Nankana Sahib.—APP

IFA conducts 457 inspections, discards 989 kg/l unsafe food

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has confiscated over 980 kilograms of unfit food and drinks during 457 inspections across markets, Ramadan bazaars, and meal distribution sites in the second Ashra of Ramadan (March 12-21). Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr Tahira Siddique said that the food safety teams (FSTs) have issued 265 warnings, fined 59 businesses a total of Rs 462,000, and shut down five vendors for severe violations, including selling expired dairy products and adulterated items. She said that the teams conducted daily checks at 120 Ramadan bazaar stalls, 53 Sehri hubs, and 79 Iftar points. Over 12 days, they discarded 429 liters of non-compliant carbonated drinks, 329 kg/liter of spoiled dairy, 108 liters of rancid oil, and 44 kg/liter of expired goods. Nearly 500 sachets of banned gutka were also seized. Dr Tahira revealed that the IFA granted 55 new food licenses and resolved 12 public complaints, primarily about overpricing and substandard goods.—APP

Court Notice

In the Court of Saba Alam Civil Judge Family Court Rawalpindi. Suit for Dissolution of Marriage on the Basis of Khula. Mst. Shumila Bibi versus Muhammad Javed S/o Faqeer Muhammad R/o House No. 599 Dhoke Mangtal Rawalpindi. Whereas respondent cannot be served in ordinary manner so you are inform to attend the Court personal through counsel or attorney on 25-03-2025 at 9 am to avoid ex-parte proceedings.

PAF contingent takes charge of guard duties at Mazar-e-Quaid

Air Vice Marshal Akhtar Imran Saddozai, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek laid a floral wreath and offered Fateha at the grave of Allama Iqbal on behalf of Chief of the Air Staff, Officers, Airmen and Civilians of Pakistan Air Force



DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Day was celebrated at all PAF Bases and installa-

tions with traditional zeal and fervor. The day-long celebrations started with special prayers after Fajar for the solidarity, progress and prosperity of

Pakistan and the Muslim World. To commemorate this auspicious day in a befitting manner, a Guard Mounting and Wreath Laying Ceremony was held at

the Mausoleum of great poet and philosopher Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force took over guard du-

ties from Satluj Rangers. Air Vice Marshal Akhtar Imran Saddozai, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek laid a floral wreath

and offered Fateha at the grave of Allama Iqbal on behalf of Chief of the Air Staff, Officers, Airmen and Civilians of Pakistan Air Force.

Pakistan to continue to thrive despite challenges: Sindh CM

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday said that Pakistan will continue to thrive and progress despite the challenges it faces. Speaking to media persons on the occasion of Pakistan Day at Mazar e Quaid, Chief Minister Shah reflected on the significance of March 23, 1940, when the All-India Muslim League adopted the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, which laid the foundation for an independent homeland. He was flanked by Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and cabinet members. He emphasised that this year, marks the 85th anniversary of the resolution. On this historic occasion, he prayed for Pakistan's progress in line with the vision of its founder and expressed hope that the country would continue to thrive as an Islamic democratic state. The chief minister highlighted Sindh's crucial role in creating Pakistan, recalling that on March 3, 1943, the Sindh As-

sembly was the first to approve the Pakistan Resolution. He stated that the struggle for independence culminated on August 14, 1947, when Pakistan emerged as a sovereign nation founded on Islamic principles. Reflecting on the challenges facing the country today, Murad Ali Shah stressed the necessity of national unity against terrorism and the need for collective efforts toward economic development. He urged all citizens to contemplate the forces that threaten Pakistan's stability and reinforced that everyone must stand united against any threat to the nation. The chief minister also mentioned the tragic events of 1971 and how former prime minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto played a pivotal role in rebuilding and uniting Pakistan. He noted that the democratic process was disrupted in 1977 when a military dictator overthrew an elected government, leading to what many regard as the darkest period in the country's

history. Commenting on recent terrorist incidents in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, including the attack on the Jaffer Express and incidents in Noshki, Kalat, and Bannu, Murad Ali Shah underscored the importance of national security. He criticized political elements, who had previously neglected to attend National Security Committee meetings and reiterated that terrorism must be addressed collectively. The Sindh CM urged the nation to reaffirm its pledge on Pakistan Day to strive for the country's prosperity. He called on all political forces to unite and contribute to Pakistan's development, just as Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did in making Pakistan a nuclear power, and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto did in advancing missile technology for national defence. He accused external adversaries of supporting terrorist groups to destabilize Pakistan and stressed the need for a united front to counter these threats.—DNA

Change of guard ceremony held at Iqbal's mausoleum

The day was being marked with various events and ceremonies across the country, reflecting the spirit of unity, patriotism, and national pride

DNA

LAHORE: The nation is celebrating Pakistan Day with traditional zeal and enthusiasm, marking the historic resolution passed on March 23, 1940, which laid the foundation for an independent homeland for Muslims of the sub-continent. The day began with a 21-gun salute in the provincial capital, paying tribute to the sacrifices of the country's forefathers. A solemn

change of guard ceremony was held at the mausoleum of Poet of the East, Hazrat Allama Muhammad Iqbal (RA), in Lahore where a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) contingent took over the guard duties, showcasing discipline and dedication. Air Vice Marshal Akhtar Imran Sadozai, the chief guest at the ceremony, offered Fateha, prayed for the country's prosperity and security, and laid a wreath at the mausoleum. He also recorded his sentiments in the guest book, honoring

the vision of Allama Iqbal. Earlier, special prayers for the country were offered in the mosques after Fajar prayer, seeking peace and progress for the nation. Pakistan Day commemorates the momentous Lahore Resolution at Minar-e-Pakistan on March 23, 1940, which paved the way for the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The day was being marked with various events and ceremonies across the country, reflecting the spirit of unity, patriotism, and national pride.

Mango bloom marks start of season

MULTAN: With the arrival of spring, the mango orchards of South Punjab — known for their unmatched sweetness — have begun to bloom with the fragrant scent of budding fruit. To review progress on mango production, exports, and research, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) South Punjab, Fuad Hashim Rabbani, paid a visit to the Mango Research Institute (MRI) in Multan. During the visit, the ACS inspected the high-density experimental farm, mango nursery, and the post-harvest laboratory. He was accompanied by Special Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Sarfraz Khan Magsi, Principal Scientist Dr. Asifur-Rehman, Director Cotton Research Center Dr. Ghulam Sarwar, and Director Agriculture Extension Shehzad Sabir. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Rabbani remarked that South Punjab's mangoes have become Pakistan's identity in international markets. "Mangoes from this region are unmatched in flavor and sweetness globally," he said. "They are more than just a fruit — they are a symbol of culture, tradition, and love." He stressed the need to enhance mango exports to ensure economic prosperity for orchard owners. "Value addition in mango production must be a priority to access high-end markets," he emphasized. Briefing the ACS, officials noted that Pakistan boasts over 100 mango varieties, with five of these enjoying significant popularity worldwide. Despite a decrease in the total area under mango cultivation, advances in modern farming techniques have led to increased yields. It was also highlighted that the largest contiguous cluster of mango orchards in the world is located along the River Chenab in South Punjab. Mr. Rabbani also visited the Cotton Research Center, where he personally sowed early-season cotton seeds as part of a demonstration of the region's cotton advancement efforts. Later, he toured the Agri Mall, an initiative aimed at promoting agricultural innovation and services. The visit underscored the government's commitment to supporting South Punjab's agriculture sector by combining traditional strengths with modern technology.—DNA

Pakistan Day renews our determination to serve country: DG PNCA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ayub Jamali, Director General of the Pakistan National Council of Arts, said that Pakistan Day provides us with an opportunity to renew our determination to devote all our energies to the country's progress and prosperity. He was addressing the Pakistan Day event as the chief guest organized under the auspices of the Ideology of Pakistan Institution. The event was hosted by the Ideology of Pakistan Institution's Board of Governors and Secretary General of UBG (FPCCI), Zafar Bakhtawari, and was attended by MNA Mrs. Farah Khan, Vice President of ICCI Nasser Mahmood Chaudhry, Syed Sadat Hussain, Imtiaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Nisharmirza, Maqsood Ta-

bish, Nawaz Basra, Shah Faisal, Zahid Basariya, and others. In his speech, Ayub Jamali emphasized that today we must work unitedly to realize the dream of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. He paid tribute to the founding of Pakistan, its background, and the heroes of the Pakistan Movement. He also stressed the need to highlight national identity through art and culture and stated that it is crucial to acquaint

the youth with their heritage and national history. "Pakistan Day teaches us that when a nation unites for a common purpose despite its differences, history never forgets it." MNA Mrs. Farah Khan noted that women also played an important role in the Pakistan Movement. Zafar Bakhtawari, she said, is the face of Islamabad, embodying Pakistanism in every fiber. He further remarked that we need to wage a war against corruption, as

unity is essential for progress; with unity, the Kala Bagh Dam would have been built and today's energy issues would not exist. He added that if you ask the people of Kashmir and Palestine, they will tell you the price of freedom. Pakistan Day sends us the message that we must work together for our country's development and stability by adhering to the principles of Quaid-e-Azam. He continued by saying that this country was granted to

us through sacrifices, and for its progress, stability, and dignity, each of us must play our part because Pakistan is our identity. Zafar Bakhtawari also stressed that the youth should secure their future in Pakistan. He pointed out that our country's defense is inherent in its foreign policy and that this policy needs to be revised. Relations with countries similar to the European model (ECOWAS-like) need improvement. He stated that today we must renew our pledge with Pakistan as our foremost slogan, "If Pakistan exists, we exist," and work together for its development and stability. He described Pakistan Day not merely as a historical day but as an enduring tale of our determination, unity, and sacrifices—a reminder of the tremendous struggles we endured to become a free and independent nation.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01/Bosnia National Day

March 03/Bulgaria National Day

March 06/ Ghana Independence Day

March 12 /Mauritius National Day

March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20/Tunisia Independence Day

March 21/Namibia National Day

March 25/Greece National Day

March 26/Bangladesh National Day

March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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




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Edhi Ambulance.....115
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PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



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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

PAF majestic fly-past marks Pakistan Day celebrations

The fly-past began with the awe-inspiring performance of Team Sherdils, which executed stunning aerial maneuvers and aerobatics, showcasing the rigorous training and exceptional skill of PAF aircrew

DNA

ISLAMABAD: : Pakistan Air Force's fighter jets presented a spectacular aerial display during the Pakistan Day parade held at Aiwan-e-Sadar, Islamabad. The President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, Services chiefs and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force, were also in attendance on the occasion. As a tribute to the historic Lahore Resolution of 23 March, 1940 PAF's combat aircraft roared through the skies, demonstrating unmatched precision, professionalism and air superiority. The fly-past began with the awe-inspiring performance of Team Sherdils, which executed stunning aerial maneuvers and aerobatics, showcasing the rigorous training and exceptional skill of PAF aircrew. The formation soared above Aiwan-e-Sadar, spreading the vibrant colours of the Pakistani flag and reaffirming PAF's unwavering commitment to defend the country's airspace. A diverse fleet of Pakistan Air Force jets, including JF-17 Thunders, F-16 Fighting Falcons, Mirages and state-of-the-art J-10C aircraft – executed a series of breathtaking aerial maneuvers. The audience was enthralled as the aircraft performed precision formations, high-speed passes and synchronized flight pat-



terns, reinforcing PAF's operational readiness and combat capability. This year's Pakistan Day celebrations were held on a limited scale in respect of the holy month of Ramadan. However, PAF's flypast remained the highlight of the event, reflecting the Air Force's unwavering dedication to safeguard national sovereignty. As the guardian of skies, PAF continues to evolve with cutting-edge technology, modernized aerial platforms and relentless training to ensure air superiority. Pakistan Air Force remains steadfast in its mission to defend the nation and inspire the next generation with its legacy of excellence and bravery.

Uzbek envoy felicitates entire nation on Pakistan Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtayev on Sunday expressed the hope that the bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan will become even stronger in the future, while congratulating the entire nation on the occasion of 85th anniversary Pakistan Day on March 23. In his message, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan said that today, March 23, is a memorable day for Pakistanis, the day when millions of people dream of Pakistan, the dream of a free, just and sovereign state, and the echo of this dream is heard in the heart of every Pakistani. The Ambassador said that under the visionary leadership of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a new spirit of truth, trust and sincerity has evolved in the bilateral ties of both nations.

While performing my duties as the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, "I feel a sense of pride for the people of Pakistan and this country, and their sincerity and hospitality are unparalleled. He



said the people of Pakistan have an unwavering devotion to their country and pride in their history, which is what distinguishes them from other nations. The people of Pakistan know how to deal with challenges and "I am sure that the future of Pakistan is bright." He said, "We, the people of Uzbekistan, stand shoulder to shoulder with

Pakistan as a true friend with mutual respect and sincerity and are proud of it." The Uzbek ambassador said that Pakistan is not just a state but a faith and ideology that is getting stronger with every passing year. March 23 is not an ordinary date, "I sincerely congratulate the great people of Pakistan on this sacred day, Pakistan is not just a friendly country, for us Pakistan has the status of a brother." "We are connected not only by a strategic partnership but also by spiritual closeness, shared past and hopes for a bright future that brings our hearts closer," he said. The envoy said that on the occasion of this special day, "I wish that there is prosperity in every home of Pakistan and pray for unity, progress and a bright future among the entire people." He hoped that bilateral relations and friendship between the two countries in the future would strengthen.

President remembers Nusrat Bhutto as "symbol of courage"

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday paid tribute to renowned political figure late Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her 96th birth anniversary, recalling her as a "symbol of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to democracy." The president, in a statement, said that Begum Nusrat Bhutto courageously faced the darkest era of military dictatorship and led the struggle to restore democracy. He said that Nusrat Bhutto endured immense personal and political hardships with patience and dignity, confronted the unjust imprisonment and martyrdom of her husband, besides facing the worst political victimisation. "Begum Nusrat Bhutto remained steadfast and determined, keeping the Pakistan Peoples Party united during the dark times. Her sacrifices and services for democracy will always be remembered. On this day, we reaffirm our commitment to Begum Nusrat Bhutto's mission," he remarked and prayed for peace for her soul.—APP

Mania for Eid shopping reaches new heights

ISLAMABAD: As the countdown to Eid-ul-Fiter begins, Pakistanis are busy making last-minute preparations to ensure a joyous and memorable celebration where markets are flooded with people of all ages, from children to adults, eagerly shopping for new clothes, shoes and accessories. As the Eid-ul-Fiter celebrations approach, the mania for Eid shopping has reached new heights across Pakistan, a report aired. The report stated that major cities like Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad are experiencing a shopping frenzy, with many markets remaining open till late at night to cater to the huge demand. Parents are spoiling their kids with fancy outfits, glittering jewelry and trendy shoes, while youngsters are picking out stylish attire to wear on the big day, said group of citizens. From traditional shalwar kameez to modern-day designer wear, the options are endless and the excitement is palpable, said a woman from Lahore. Women are also busy selecting elegant outfits, adorned with intricate embroidery and sparkling sequins to wear on Eid day, she added. Meanwhile, shopkeepers are working overtime to restock shelves, replenish supplies and cater to the overwhelming demand for Eid essentials. "We have never seen such a huge rush of customers before," said a shopkeeper at Lahore's famous Anarkali Bazaar. "Our sales have increased by at least 50% compared to last year, and we're struggling to keep up with the demand." Another shopkeeper from Karachi's Tariq Road, added, "People are buying everything from clothes to shoes to jewelry. We are doing our best to restock our shelves, but it is getting difficult to keep up with the demand." The shopkeepers also expressed their gratitude to the customers for their enthusiastic response, saying that it was a welcome boost to their business after a slow year. Local boutiques and high-end fashion stores also reported a significant surge in sales, with many of their Eid collections selling out quickly.—DNA

PM grieved over martyrdom of four policemen

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his deep grief over the martyrdom of four policemen in a terrorist attack targeting a police mobile van in the Noshki district of Balochistan. The prime minister, in a statement, ordered an immediate probe into the incident to identify and punish the perpetrators. He also prayed for peace for the martyrs' souls and strength for their families to bear the loss. "The nation will never forget the great sacrifices rendered by police and law enforcement personnel in the war against terrorism. We will continue the fight against terrorism until it is completely eradicated from the country", he remarked. The prime minister said that the government would never let the nefarious designs of terrorists succeed who were the enemies of the development and peace of Balochistan.

Motorway police crackdown on speeding

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) have intensified their campaign against speeding, registering 112 FIRs against drivers caught exceeding the speed limit of 150 km/h on major motorways. According to the NH&MP spokesperson, 112 FIRs have been registered in the different zones of the motorways so far. The crackdown has been enforced on key motorways, including the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway (M2), Lahore-Multan Motorway (M3), and Motorways M4 and M5. As part of the operation, the Motorway Police have taken drivers into custody along with their vehicles and handed them over to the local police. The registered FIRs include charges of negligence and reckless driving. According to official data, 8 cases were registered on the Lahore-Sialkot

Motorway, 43 FIRs were filed on the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-2), 8 cases were registered on the Lahore-Abdul Hakeem Motorway (M-3), 12 FIRs were filed on the Multan-Pindi Bhattian Motorway (M-4), and 41 drivers were arrested on the Sukkur-Multan Motorway (M-5). The NH&MP reiterated that the speed limit for three-lane motorways is 120 km/h for private vehicles and 110 km/h for public transport. Violations of these limits pose a severe risk to public safety. The department's spokesperson stressed that ensuring the safety of travellers remains their top priority, and they are firmly committed to enforcing traffic laws. Inspector General of Motorway Police Riffat Mukhtar Raja has instructed officials to intensify efforts against speeding. The Motorway Police reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring safe travel on national highways, urging motorists to abide by speed limits to prevent accidents.

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Briefs

March 23 a milestone in nation's history: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Sunday said that March 23 holds immense significance in the country's history as a landmark in the struggle for independence. In his special message on Pakistan Day, he recalled that it was on this day in 1940 when the Muslims of the subcontinent, with firm resolve and unity, demanded a separate and sovereign state. "The Pakistan Resolution was not merely a demand but the first decisive step towards the realization of a dream that materialized under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on August 14, 1947," he added. Syedaal Khan said that Pakistan Day reminds the nation of the unparalleled sacrifices, unwavering struggle, and unity of the forefathers who secured a free and independent homeland for future generations. "Today, it is our collective responsibility not only to honor those sacrifices but also to contribute to Pakistan's progress, prosperity, and stability," he added. He underscored the need to foster national unity, brotherhood, and tolerance to overcome the challenges facing the country. "We must strengthen our institutions, uphold the rule of law, and advance in education and research to transform Pakistan into a modern and prosperous state," he stressed. Syedaal Khan extended heartfelt felicitations to the nation on Pakistan Day and prayed for the country's lasting peace and development.—APP

Hiking during Ramadan offers several health benefits

ISLAMABAD :The holy month of Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide for fasting. Besides this, it is also linked with many health benefits, like the reset of the digestive system, helping weight management and several others. In recent years, many have incorporated hiking into their Ramadan routines, seeing it as a natural opportunity to gain health benefits while fasting. Trail-3 in Islamabad remains a popular destination for hikers, even during this sacred month. Touqeer Ahmed, a regular hiker aiming to lose weight, shared his experience, saying, "I have joined hiking in Ramadan to accelerate my weight loss and it has been more effective than I expected." Similarly, some individuals see hiking as tough during fasting due to the impact of weather. "I hike regularly and though I feel thirsty but it's bearable; I feel both mental and physical relaxation during hiking," said Fakhr Intiaz. Many hikers enjoy the natural environment while maintaining their fitness goals. Syed Muhammad Tayyab, another regular hiker, remarked, "I joined hiking again in Ramadan to spend more time in nature because hiking during Ramadan is particularly effective for weight loss, but the serene environment of the trails also gives mental satisfaction." However, with rising temperatures and the physical demands of fasting, this year's Ramadan has seen a moderate turnout on hiking trails.—APP

ICT admin conducts 11,329 inspections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a sweeping effort to curb overpricing during Ramadan, the Islamabad's district administration has reported detaining over 1,678 shopkeepers and sealing 42 stores across the Federal Capital between March 1 and 20. The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration's officials carried out 11,329 inspections, issuing fines totaling Rs 2.74 million for violations related to substandard goods and inflated prices. Meanwhile, six Ramadan bazaars and 20 fair-price shops were established to stabilize costs for essen-



Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting on the matters related to Power Division.

PIAF for enhancing institutional frameworks, ease of doing business

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol has underscored the need for enhancing institutional frameworks and improving ease of doing business, as the government must address gaps in service provision, regulatory enforcement, and financial inclusion to ensure sustainable economic growth. In a ceremony held here today, PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, Senior Vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice chairman Tahirm Manzoor Chaudhry said that the business community in Pakistan has a crucial role to play in advocating for policy consistency, transparency, and regulatory streamlining. Bold and sustained policy interventions are necessary to overcome the economic challenges Pakistan faces. Referring to the Business Ready 2024 report of the World Bank, Faheem Saigol said that adopting best practices like leading economies could help drive economic resurgence. The PIAF chairman said that the recently released report by the World Bank highlights Pakistan's low global ranking in business climate, emphasizing deficiencies in regulatory

framework, public services, and operational efficiency. Without significant reforms, the country risks deepening financial vulnerabilities, increasing its debt burden, and weakening its fiscal management. This could further complicate its ongoing engagement with the International Monetary Fund, making economic stability even more difficult to achieve. The report said that unchecked fiscal deficits will make it challenging for the government to meet debt obligations, exacerbating economic instability and increasing reliance on foreign assistance. The urgency for structural economic reforms cannot be overstated. Delayed action will only worsen financial conditions, threatening long-term economic resilience and growth prospects. Addressing these structural issues through well-implemented policies is crucial to setting Pakistan on a path toward economic stability and sustainable development. Nasrullah Mughal and Tahirm Manzoor Chaudhry said that government is facing an urgent need for economic reforms as the country grapples with persistent fiscal deficits, rising inflation, and weak institutional frameworks. The economy remains under immense pressure due

to heavy reliance on internal and external debts, a depreciating rupee, and increasing import costs, all of which have led to financial instability. Structural reforms in taxation and industrial development are critical for sustainable economic growth, yet progress remains sluggish. Despite being the world's fifth-most populous country, Pakistan lags behind smaller economies such as Singapore, Estonia, and Georgia in global business readiness. These nations have successfully implemented policies that facilitate business growth, while Pakistan struggles with bureaucratic inefficiencies, high costs of doing business, and inconsistent policy measures. Governance issues, including red tape and poor policy implementation, continue to obstruct economic progress. Political instability further hampers long-term economic planning, deterring both domestic and foreign investments. Although the law-and-order situation has improved in recent years, sporadic security threats persist, particularly in border regions. The judicial system also faces significant challenges, with an overwhelming backlog of cases delaying justice for both individuals and busi-

nesses. Pakistan's taxation system remains another major hurdle, characterized by a narrow tax base, high tax rates, and an overreliance on indirect taxes, discouraging compliance and investment. In contrast, Estonia has successfully digitized tax collection, leading to improved revenue generation, a model that Pakistan could adopt for better financial governance. The recently released Business Ready 2024 report by the World Bank highlights Pakistan's low global ranking in business climate, emphasizing deficiencies in regulatory framework, public services, and operational efficiency. The country's regulatory framework scored 59.10, indicating only moderate adherence to international business standards, while public services, including infrastructure and digital services, received a score of 44.97, reflecting significant inefficiencies. Operational efficiency fared slightly better at 65.90 but still falls short of global benchmarks. Countries such as Portugal and New Zealand have fostered business-friendly environments through policy consistency, transparency, and efficient service delivery, setting examples for Pakistan to follow.

Minister Das stresses unity

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Religious Affairs Khail Das Kohistani Sunday extended warm greetings to the nation and emphasized the importance of unity among all political stakeholders to ensure national security and sovereignty. In an interview with a private news channel, the minister of state expressed his pride in Pakistan's martyrs, who successfully defeated a much larger enemy, terming this victory as the most memorable day in Pakistan's military history. He emphasized that Pakistan Day is also a day to reiterate our pledge to build a robust and prosperous Pakistan, founded on the principles of solidarity, cohesion and national unity. He emphasized the need to emulate the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and work towards fostering unity among the nation. Kohistani urged the opposition PTI to put aside their differences and unite against threats to the country's sovereignty and national security, adding, the need for national unity and cooperation to combat the growing threat of terrorism, expressing concerns that PTI's social media campaigns are instead causing harm. He emphasized that democracy thrives on dialogue, stressing the importance of constructive conversation and negotiation in resolving differences and advancing the nation's interests.—DNA

AIOU offers Russian Language Course

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards promoting international languages, Allama Iqbal Open University has introduced a three-month, face-to-face Russian language course. According to the AIOU, the course will be conducted under the supervision of an expert and experienced Russian instructor. Classes will be held three days a week, with each session lasting three hours. To facilitate students, two groups (Morning session 10 am to 1 pm) and afternoon session (2 pm to 5 pm) have been formed. Last date for admission is April 10, while classes will commence on April 14. For online registration and further information, students can contact the university's Director of International Affairs, Dr. Zahid Majeed, at his phone number 0321-6840501 or via official email: zahid_majeed@aiou.edu.pk. The university's Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, is keen on providing young individuals with global education and employment opportunities. The university has also introduced short-term courses in Turkish, Chinese, and Japanese languages. Additionally, special offices have been set up on campus to support the promotion of these languages.—DNA

Pakistan Day symbolizes unity, resolve for progress

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Sunday said that March 23 holds immense significance in Pakistan's national history, marking the day when the Muslims of the subcontinent united with a resolute pledge to establish an independent and sovereign state. In his message on Pakistan Day, he said the Pakistan Resolution, passed on March 23, 1940, galvanized the Muslims of the subcontinent toward a common goal. "This historic day serves as a reminder of our collective commitment to make every possible effort for the development, prosperity, and stability of our beloved country," he remarked. Chairman Senate said that the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the philosophy of Allama Muham-

mad Iqbal should continue to guide the nation's journey toward building a modern, democratic, and welfare-oriented state. He underscored the importance of strengthening democracy, upholding the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law, promoting national unity, and reinforcing institutions as fundamental pillars for a stable and prosperous Pakistan. "In today's era, it is imperative to foster mutual harmony and unity by setting aside all differences, making national development and stability our foremost priority," Gilani urged. He further stressed the need for collective efforts to position Pakistan among the world's developed nations. "May Allah Almighty bless our beloved homeland with enduring peace and stability and lead it to new heights of progress," Chairman added.

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tials like cooking oil, sugar, and poultry, with direct subsidies and discounted produce. The spokesman of ICT administration said that the authority intensified market checks in the first 20 days of Ramadan, targeting shops accused of overcharging or selling low-quality items. To counter price hikes, the administration launched six Ramadan bazaars offering subsidized essentials such as ghee, sugar, chicken, and eggs. Twenty fair-price shops provided discounts of up to 15% on over 15 types of fruits and vegetables. These markets operate under strict monitoring, with daily visits by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Irfan Nawaz Memon and field teams to

ensure compliance, he added. On the occasion, DC Memon emphasized a zero-tolerance policy toward compromises on quality or pricing. "Our teams are on the ground daily. No exceptions will be made for violations," he stated. The district's helpline resolved 95% of consumer complaints within 24 hours, according to officials. While praising the majority of vendors for adhering to guidelines, Memon urged residents to report overpricing via the helpline. "Public input is critical to identifying violations," he added. Open markets remain under surveillance, with inspections continuing post-Iftar to deter illegal price surges. He said that the administration

plans to sustain inspections until Eid, focusing on wholesalers and retailers in high-traffic areas. Over 50% of fines were linked to poultry and dairy products, sectors prone to sudden price jumps. Subsidies in Ramadan bazaars are funded by local authorities, with no middlemen involved in supply chains to reduce costs. "Our goal is accessibility, not profit," Memon reiterated. "The fair-price initiatives will continue post-Ramadan if proven effective." Residents have welcomed the measures, though some call for stricter penalties against repeat offenders. With Eid approaching, officials remain on high alert to prevent last-minute price spikes.

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Global 'de-risking'

US President Donald Trump is waging a trade war against the world with tariffs. He has imposed a 25 per cent tariff on some imports from Mexico and Canada, a 20 per cent levy on Chinese imports, and a 25 per cent duty on imported steel and aluminium. He also plans to add a 25 per cent tariff on European goods and enact reciprocal tariffs for all US trading partners. And he has threatened to implement a 100 per cent tariff on goods from Brics countries – an alliance initially comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and recently expanded to include several other economies – if they “play games with the dollar”. The response to the blitz of tariffs and threats has been varied. Countries such as Japan and India have tried to pacify Trump with investment commitments and improved market access for US companies, in the hope of being spared. Meanwhile, Britain, Mexico and Australia chose to effectively do nothing beyond expressing their grievances, presumably fearful that any countermeasures would provoke Trump's zero-tolerance retaliation. Some tried to dodge the bullet by diverting Trump's gunfire. French President Emmanuel Macron reminded Trump that America's priority was China, not the European Union. Others put up a fight. China, Canada and the EU have separately announced retaliatory tariffs. None of these responses has proven effective. The appeasement strategy has quickly revealed its limitations. Japan remains concerned that the tariff Sword of Damocles may fall. Canadian and Mexican help with America's illegal immigration and drug crisis also appears to be of no avail. As with a school bully, showing weakness or catering to Trump's whims is unlikely to motivate him to show mercy. His mockery of Canada's then-prime minister Justin Trudeau and threat to annex Canada is attributed in part to what he conceived as a weakness in Trudeau's character. The reality is that Trump needs all the resources he can lay his hands on to realise his Make America Great Again dream. He intends to fleece not just China, but the whole world. The retaliatory tariffs have also turned out to be inadequate. One important criterion of the success of any countermeasure is its ability to deter Trump from levying further aggressive tariffs. Yet Trump remains as determined as ever to crush any resistance to his punitive import duties. Trump's imposition of tariffs at will highlights the power of the US market over the rest of the world. This is what allows him to behave this way. The US is the world's largest importer. It bought US\$3.17 trillion of goods in 2023, accounting for 13 per cent of global imports. Furthermore, a number of countries have a high degree of dependence on the US. To resist Trump's economic coercion, it is essential for countries to minimise reliance on the US market. To be sure, weaning themselves off the US market will cause considerable pain. But short-term pain is preferable to enduring agony, or worse – just as the pain from appendicitis necessitates the removal of the appendix. Admittedly, economic “de-risking” with the US would be fraught with challenges. For instance, geopolitics may get in the way. It has not gone unnoticed that the EU criticised Trump's punitive tariffs on Canada and Australia while opting to ignore his action on China. But the stakes are high if reliance on the US market is not lessened. Trump is leveraging this dependence when he wields his tariffs, and it is destroying the multilateral trading system, upending the global trade order and opening a Pandora's Box of a bygone era – the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act saw global trade plummet by over 60 per cent between 1929 and 1934.

Europe's decision-making level

AMID the complex and changing international situation, Europe's self-positioning and the development of China-Europe relations have drawn significant attention. However, a series of recent actions and statements from the European side have been puzzling. First, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas claimed that if the US and Europe engage in a trade war, China would “laugh on the side.” Then, European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic said that if Chinese electric vehicle (EV) and battery manufacturers want to invest in the EU, they should be prepared to transfer technology. Moreover, latest reports indicate that the EU is probing “whether China provided unfair subsidies for a BYD electric car plant in Hungary.” Meanwhile, five years after the release of the “EU's 5G cybersecurity toolbox,” which urged member states to ban Huawei and ZTE from their networks, surveys indicate that 17 EU countries, including the biggest economies, have not fully implemented its provisions. In addition, Europe's 5G network deployment has clearly fallen behind North America and the Asia-Pacific region, leading to increasing discussions within Europe about strategic missteps in 5G development. Spain announced on Thursday that Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will visit China and Vietnam next month, stating his intention to contribute to the rapprochement between the EU and “other powers and regional blocs” in the current “highly changing geopolitical context.” Clearly, there is a gap between the European Commission's stance on China and the views held by some European countries, the European business community, and insightful individuals. It is not difficult to see that behind the European Commission and the European Parliament's perplexing stance on China, several prevailing mindsets are at play. The first mindset is that, under the threat of Washington's tariff war, there is a desire to shift blame and deflect attention by promoting the narrative that “China benefits from the US-EU trade war.” The second mindset, anchored in maintaining transatlantic relations, seeks to use improved ties with China as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Washington. The third mindset is more awkward, with the belief that China has seen an opportunity in the discord between the US and Europe, but Brussels should not allow Beijing to profit without paying the price; instead, it should approach Beijing more cautiously and strategically. The fourth mindset is shaped by a heightened defensive posture, especially after seeing China's industrial and technological advancements, leading to the attempt to cling even more stubbornly to the already struggling “de-risking” strategy. Looking back at Europe's mindset over the past few years, from the Russia-Ukraine conflict to the current crisis in the transatlantic relationship, Europe's anxiety about its own vulnerabilities has been growing rapidly. In many policy areas, there is an increasing trend toward “pan-securitization.” What stands out even more is that some in Europe instinctively point the finger at China, essentially crafting so-called “de-risking” against China, and formulating a variety of other toolkits such as “anti-coercion tools” that have profoundly affected the economic and trade relations between China and Europe.

Can Pakistan be a hard state?

Qamar Bashir



Civilian governance, too, has been hollowed out. All major decisions—political, economic, and administrative—are now taken by the military or its proxies. Elected representatives are either bypassed or given ceremonial roles, while real power is exercised behind closed doors. Ministries have been reduced to implementing orders rather than crafting policies. This imbalance not only breeds inefficiency but also eliminates accountability, making it impossible for the government to respond to the public's needs or correct its own course. A hard state, by contrast, requires effective civilian governance supported...

IN a recent public statement, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff vowed to turn the country into a “hard state.” While this declaration may resonate with the desire for national strength and order, it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of what the term truly means in a political context. Turning Pakistan into a hard state requires far more than military power or suppression; it demands strong, independent institutions, a rule-based system, and unwavering adherence to democratic norms. Ironically, the steps taken by the establishment, particularly after the February 2024 elections, have pushed Pakistan further into the category of a soft state—fragile, inconsistent, and vulnerable to internal and external pressures.

A hard state is defined not by the might of its army or the fear it can instill but by the integrity and functionality of its institutions. It enforces the law consistently and fairly, possesses a judiciary that functions independently, and maintains internal security without undermining civil liberties. In such a state, the bureaucracy works efficiently, policies are enforced without political compromise, and national sovereignty is upheld with dignity. Countries often cited as hard states, such as China and Israel, have built systems of governance that, while autocratic or semi-democratic, still ensure institutional resilience and policy continuity. They are capable of making and implementing difficult decisions without succumbing to domestic chaos or foreign influence. In stark contrast, soft states suffer from policy U-turns, weak law enforcement, politicized institutions, and frequent subservience to foreign interests. Laws are selectively applied, corruption is widespread, and national direction is unclear. Unfortunately, this description fits today's Pakistan far more accurately than the aspirational “hard state” image being promoted by the military leadership. The events following the February 2024 elections have laid bare the extent of institutional decay and political manipulation in the country. The manipulation began with the democratic process itself. The party that received the popular mandate, commanding a clear majority, was sidelined. Instead, a party that won only eighteen seats was elevated to form the government, while leaders of the majority party were jailed, silenced, or excluded from the political process. Parliament was reduced to a rubber stamp, mechanically passing pre-drafted legislation provided by military-backed forces. No real debate, no democratic process, and no respect for public opinion—all hallmarks of a system that has drifted far from democratic norms. In such a scenario, the very foundation of a hard state—public legitimacy—was shattered.

Next came the judiciary, another pillar of state strength that was swiftly undermined. Constitutional amendments passed in the wake of the election stripped the Supreme Court of its inherent powers, effectively making it subservient to the executive. The procedures for the appointment, promotion, and transfer of judges were modified, placing the judiciary under the influence of the legislature and the bureaucracy—both now acting under the military's shadow. This erosion of judicial independence has rendered the legal system toothless, unable to check the excesses of power or safeguard the rights of citizens. In a true hard state, the judiciary serves as the guardian of justice; in Pakistan, it has been forced into submission.

Civilian governance, too, has been hollowed out. All major decisions—political, economic, and administrative—are now taken by the military or its proxies. Elected representatives are either bypassed or given ceremonial roles, while real power is exercised behind closed doors. Ministries have been reduced to implementing orders rather than crafting policies. This imbalance not only breeds inefficiency but also eliminates accountability, making it impossible for the government to respond to the public's needs or correct its own course. A hard state, by contrast, requires effective civilian governance supported—not supplanted—by the military. Perhaps the most chilling consequence of this shift has been the crackdown on media and freedom of speech. Independent journalism has been silenced through censorship, harassment, and exile. Journalists are persecuted, news channels are gagged, and many outspoken voices have been forced to flee and continue their work from abroad. Even social media, the last refuge for open discourse, has been increasingly restricted. A state that fears open dialogue is not strong—it is insecure. A hard state allows criticism because it believes in its own legitimacy. Pakistan's current trajectory suggests a state trying to mask its weaknesses through control and coercion. These internal failures are compounded by growing unrest in various regions of the country. Instead of addressing the root causes of discontent—poverty, political marginalization, lack of infrastructure—the state has responded with overwhelming force. This has only deepened alienation, fueling separatist sentiments and insurgencies. Borders have become more perforated, and citizens increasingly feel like strangers in their own land. When force is used to fix problems caused by force in the first place, the cycle of instability only deepens. This is not the path to a hard state but a descent into chaos under the illusion of control. The military's assertion that it will transform Pakistan into a hard state rings

hollow against this backdrop. What it has actually built is a weak and soft state, deprived of democratic legitimacy, judicial independence, and civil freedoms. Without the very institutions that define a hard state, the promise to create one becomes either a façade or a warning of further repression. Even if we were to take inspiration from hard states like China or Israel, we must recognize that their models are rooted in unique political ideologies and historical conditions. China's success is tied to its centralized, one-party system and decades of economic reforms. Israel's strength stems from its national security doctrine and compulsory civic participation. Pakistan, by contrast, is a democracy—flawed, yet still defined by its Constitution and public mandate. Attempting to replicate authoritarian models without replicating the structural foundations that support them is not only unrealistic but also dangerous. What Pakistan truly needs is a return to democratic norms. The most successful models in South Asia and beyond—India, the United States, and European countries—demonstrate that long-term stability and prosperity come through democratic resilience, not authoritarian shortcuts. India, despite its flaws, has maintained democratic continuity for decades and is now among the world's fastest-growing economies. Its 7% annual growth over the past two decades and emergence as a potential global economic power is a testament to the strength of democratic systems supported by independent institutions.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has experimented with martial law and military-led governance multiple times in its history, and each time, it has emerged weaker. Institutions were eroded, democratic norms were bypassed, and the country was left grappling with deeper economic and political crises. The current approach is no different. If anything, it is a repetition of a failed script—one that never produced a hard state, only harder times for the people. Before invoking the language of strength, the military and political elite must first understand its true essence. A hard state is not built by force—it is built by trust. Trust in democratic processes, in judicial independence, in freedom of expression, and in the will of the people. Without these elements, any promise of national strength is merely rhetorical. If Pakistan is to emerge as a strong and respected nation, it must restore its institutions, respect its democratic values, and empower its people—not suppress them.

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

Health sector reforms in Punjab

Abdul Rashid Shakir



The Government of Punjab, under the leadership of its people-friendly and welfare-focused Chief Minister Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is committed to invest heavily in its healthcare and education sectors in order to raise a healthier and more productive workforce that can contribute massively to the socio-economic development of not only Punjab but of entire country

PHYSICALLY strong, emotionally stable, educationally qualified and vocationally trained human resource is a real asset of any society. Welfare countries around the globe invest liberally in the health, education and skill development of its population, because a well-nourished and well-nurtured workforce is not only emotionally strong but economically more productive. Governments not only introduce attractive plans customized to the local needs of its population but also incentivize people to benefit from them for good health and rewarding lifestyle. And most importantly, the resources needed to get these plans implemented are not considered expenditures but investment to increase productivity of the workforce. For this very reason, the United Nations recommends for its member states substantial expenditures on health and education. Though no specific percentage of GDP is suggested for the healthcare sector because the more the better, spending at least 4-6% of the GDP is a minimum threshold (commonwealthfund.org). Similarly, Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) recommends a country to spend at least 4-6% of its GDP for providing quality education facilities to its people (Report on Education Expenditure Data, published in February 2024 by United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Institute for Statistics).

The Government of Punjab, under the leadership of its people-friendly and welfare-focused Chief Minister Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is committed to invest heavily in its healthcare and education sectors in order to raise a healthier and more productive workforce that can contribute massively to the socio-economic development of not only Punjab but of the entire country. Therefore, in her maiden budget after assuming charge as the Chief Executive of Punjab in February 2024, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif liberally increased funds allocation in major sectors of the economy including health, education and social protection (finance.punjab.gov.pk). The Government is not only focusing on infrastructure development is these sectors but also on introducing policy reforms, besides capacity building of the employees to ensure public satisfaction through better service delivery using digital technology.

Government's remarkable initiatives like 'Field Hospital' and 'Clinic on Wheels' are aimed at improving access to healthcare facilities for the under-served communities across all 36 districts of Punjab. 32 field hospitals, including 21 mobile healthcare units and 11 mobile diagnostic units have been deployed under the 'Field Hospital' initiative, whereas 200 mobile clinics under 'Clinic on Wheels' project are focussed on bringing essential healthcare services to the doorsteps of some 04 Million patients in densely populated urban areas (pshealthpunjab.gov.pk). Under the initiative, 444 clinic-on-wheels vans will be provided in 112 tehsils across Punjab (punjab.gov.pk). Additionally, Motorcycle Mini-Clinics, supported by telemedicine, where paramedical staff provide initial diagnosis and treatment after real-time consultation with doctors; and Woman Clinics in district hospitals, where Mammography machines will provide diagnostic services and treatment for breast cancer and other female-specific health complications, are not less than revolutionary interventions of the Punjab Government. Free Home Delivery of Medicines Program to deliver at the doorsteps 02-month's medicines stock for more than 02 lac patients suffering from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, tuberculosis and hepatitis (punjab.gov.pk); Insulin Home Delivery Program to ensure safe and secure supply of insulin to patients, especially suffering from Type-I diabetes; increase in Dialysis Fund for poor patients from Rs.700,000 to Rs.1 million; Children Heart Surgery Program to not only clear backlog of pediatric heart surgery cases but also to save lives of over 5,000 children who die annually due to lack of timely heart surgery (punjab.gov.pk); and Chief Minister's Organ Transplantation Programme to get liver, kidney, bone marrow, cornea and cochlear implant transplanted at Government expense are milestone interventions of the Punjab Government to make its healthcare system more responsive to public needs.

Moreover, Madam Chief Minister is committed to get laparoscopy, endoscopy, state-of-the-art CT scan, MRI and ventilator facilities operational, besides providing trained staff and mechanical sweepers to mechanize the cleaning system in hospitals. She is determined to adopt home delivery model of health services in Punjab, besides bringing sur-

gery in government hospitals to laparoscopy. Additionally, She is focused on building three Medical Cities in South, Central and North Punjab during her tenure.

Upgradation of tehsil and district hospitals with the latest medical equipment and machinery; revamping and upgradation of 2500 Basic Health Units (BHUs)/Rural Health Centers (RHCs); rebranding of 150 Rural Health Centers (RHCs) as 'Maryam Nawaz Health Clinic' to ensure the provision of best medical treatment facilities there; and the launch of 'Maryam Nawaz Community Health Services' in Punjab to complete 19 important tasks of the health sector, besides integrated tasks of health-related issues, are sincere efforts of the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif-led Punjab Government to lend quality healthcare facilities to the people by developing the healthcare infrastructure as per international standards in order to make them more productive and valuable for the national economy. Under 'Maryam Nawaz Community Health Services' program, services of not only 20,000 more health inspectors will be hired, but the existing 39,000 lady health workers will also be made part of the program, raising the total workforce of the program to more than 60,000. Pakistan's first 1000-bed public-sector cancer hospital, Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment & Research Lahore, and Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology Sargodha are some other milestone initiatives of the Punjab Government to provide quality healthcare facilities to the common man. Moreover, restoration and upgradation of 590 major roads measuring over 11000 kMs, besides the construction of new roads, expressways and motorways in the province; the introduction of motorway ambulance service on all 76 motorway interchanges and on 1588 km-long motorways running through the province; and the launch of air ambulance service to timely shift critical patients from far-flung areas of South and North Punjab to specialized hospitals, following the 'Golden Hour' principle, would prove to be great initiatives for providing quality healthcare facilities to the calamity-stricken destitute people in the far-out reaches of the province. One Air Ambulance will be stationed at Rawalpindi/ Mianwali, while the other at Multan/ Bahawalnagar. (punjab.gov.pk).

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Briefs

'Evil designs of Khawarij outfits will...

FROM PAGE 01 challenges, the head of the state termed the youth as an essential capital of the country. Touching upon the country's foreign policy, the president said that it is based on the principles of peace and stability. He further reiterated Pakistan's desire to establish strong ties with its neighbouring country and the international community. "On this day, we also remember our Kashmiri brothers, who have long been victims of Indian atrocities," he said while reaffirming Islamabad's unwavering commitment to raising its voice for Kashmiris on all global forums. "Our goal is to build a strong, modern Islamic welfare state," he said, stressing the importance of safeguarding the country's independence, which was achieved through countless sacrifices.

President confers Pak civil awards..

FROM PAGE 01 founder of PPP in recognition of his outstanding services to the country, democracy and people. The award was received by Sanam Bhutto. The other recipients who were conferred upon with awards in different categories included:- Air Marshal (ret'd) Raja Shahid Hamid (late) Nishan-i-Imtiaz (posthumous), Sultan Ali Akbar Allana Nishan-i-Khidmat, SP Muhammad Ejaz Khan Shaheed Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous), DSP Allama Iqbal Shaheed Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous), DSP Sardar Hussain Shaheed, constables Irshad Ali and Jahnzaib Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous), Additional SHO Adnan Afridi Shaheed Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous), SI Taimoor Shahzad Shaheed Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous), LHC Mohammad Farooq Shaheed Hilali-Shujaat (posthumous).

Sixteen terrorists killed...

FROM PAGE 01 the menace of terrorism from the country. The two nations share a porous border spanning around 2,500 kilometres with several crossing points which hold significance as a key element of regional trade and relations between the people across both sides of the fence. However, the issue of terrorism remains a key issue for Pakistan which has urged Afghanistan to prevent its soil from being used by groups such as the TTP to carry out attacks inside the former's territory.

Quetta reopens but some parts..

FROM PAGE 01 the arrests of BYC activist Bebarj Baloch, his brother, and Bolan Medical College Vice Principal Dr Ilyas Baloch and his family members. Dr Ilyas and his relatives have been released. The participants were also protesting against the alleged burial of 13 bodies without identification. The strike call had been issued after the BYC claimed on Friday that three of its protesters were killed by blank shots allegedly fired by the police. However, Quetta Commissioner Hamza Shafqaat had denied the claim, saying the deaths resulted from alleged firing by "armed elements accompanying BYC leadership".

Comprehensive relief package...

FROM PAGE 01 revised the buyback rate from NAPP to Rs10 per unit. Furthermore, the committee approved the proposal, subject to the ratification of cabinet, to allow NEPRA to revise this buyback rate periodically, ensuring that the framework remains flexible and aligned with evolving market conditions. It was clarified, however, that the revised framework will not apply to the existing net-metered consumers who had a valid license, concurrence, or agreement under Nepra.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people are having the Iftar at the broken Former Monal Resturent Site in on the debris of building at Margalla Hills, in Federal Capital. -- Online

NZ crush Pakistan to seal T20I series 3-1

Jacob Duffy took four wickets, while Zakary Foulkes claimed three

SPORTS DESK

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand thrashed Pakistan by 115 runs in the fourth T20I at Bay Oval on Sunday, sealing the five-match series 3-1. Chasing a daunting target of 221, Pakistan's batting lineup crumbled under pressure, getting bowled out for a mere 105 runs. The visitors suffered an early setback when Mohammad Harris fell for just two runs in the first over, dismissed by Will O'Rourke. Pakistan's troubles deepened in the following over as Jacob Duffy removed Hasan Nawaz and captain Salman Ali Agha, both managing only a single run each, leaving the team struggling at 9-3 in just two overs. The Men in Green endured another blow when vice-captain Shadab Khan departed for just one run, dismissed by Zakary Foulkes, reducing Pakistan to 26-4 in 4.1 overs. Irfan Khan Niazi provided brief resistance with an aggressive 24 off 16 balls, hitting a few boundaries. However, his stay was short-lived as Duffy claimed his third wicket, leaving Pakistan reeling at 42-5. Khushdil Shah followed suit after scoring just six runs, and Pakistan's collapse continued as Abbas Afridi's dismissal signaled



the end of their hopes of leveling the series. Next in line was Shaheen Shah Afridi, who departed after scoring just six runs, with Foulkes picking up his third wicket as the score stood at 56-8 in 10 overs. Duffy was in top form as he claimed his fourth wicket, dismissing Haris Rauf for six and leaving the team struggling at 80-9 in 13.5 overs. Middle-order batter Abdul Samad put up a valiant fight, playing a crucial knock for his side. However, he fell short of

his maiden fifty and lost his wicket, bringing Pakistan's innings to a disappointing close. After being asked to bat first, the hosts made a fiery start, with their openers racing to 59 runs in just 4.1 overs. Pakistan's bowling attack, led by Shaheen Afridi, struggled to stem the flow of runs. However, Haris Rauf provided a much-needed breakthrough by dismissing the dangerous Tim Seifert for 44 off 22 balls. Despite the dismissal, Finn Allen main-

tained the momentum, adding 49 runs with Mark Chapman. Rauf struck again, removing Chapman for 24 off 16 balls, reducing New Zealand to 108-2 in 8.1 overs. Allen continued his blistering assault, reaching fifty in just 19 deliveries. However, his innings ended at 50 off 20 balls when Abbas Afridi's short delivery induced a top edge, caught by Hasan Nawaz at 134-3 in 10.1 overs. New Zealand then faced a mini-collapse, losing James Neesham and Daryl Mitchell cheaply to Abrar Ahmed, slipping to 149-5 in 13.2 overs. However, a counter-attacking 68-run partnership between Michael Bracewell and Mitchell Santner boosted the total. Rauf struck again to dismiss Santner for 29 at 205-6 in 18.2 overs. Bracewell's unbeaten 46 off 26 balls guided New Zealand to a formidable total. Rauf finished with three wickets, while Abrar Ahmed and Abbas Afridi shared the rest. Playing XIs Pakistan: Mohammad Harris (w), Hasan Nawaz, Salman Agha (c), Irfan Khan, Shadab Khan, Abdul Samad, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf, Abrar Ahmed. New Zealand: Tim Seifert, Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Mitch Hay (wk), Michael Bracewell (c), Zak Foulkes, Ish Sodhi, Jacob Duffy, Will O' Rourke.

Anyone who speaks out lands in...

FROM PAGE 01 political parties are uniting against the installed regime. On March 23, the Pakistan Resolution was presented at Minare-Pakistan, and in this resolution, it was decided that a separate country would be created where Muslims could live freely, he added. He said unfortunately, no one is free at the moment. The media is not free either. Anyone who speaks out is imprisoned under the PECA. The situation is worsening in the country. Omar said the party leadership was ready to meet PTI founder Imran Khan. A letter was written to the speaker for permission, but it was not approved. As a result, we decided not to attend the meeting [of national assembly security committee] in protest. The decision made by the party [not to attend the meeting] was justified, he added.

Pakistan, Afghanistan vow to...

FROM PAGE 01 Representative for Afghanistan, making the first official contact by the Trump administration. The envoy's visit also coincides with the Torkham border re-opening after nearly a month, with the pedestrian walkway opening on Saturday. "In my meeting with Acting Commerce Minister of Afghanistan Nooruddin Azizi in Kabul, today we discussed bilateral trade and economic relations as well as cooperation in areas of transit and connectivity. "I underlined Pakistan's commitment to mutually beneficial ties with Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan President...

FROM PAGE 01 enriched with new content day by day, is a source of great satisfaction." "Our successful joint activities in the economy, transport, logistics, energy, investment, defense industry, and several other areas of mutual interest are among the key factors determining our ties," he added. He said, "At the same time, the alignment of our positions on international issues and our mutual support serve as a clear expression of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan brotherhood, contributing to the fundamental interests of our countries and peoples."

PM Shehbaz condemns...

FROM PAGE 01 reminder that terrorism recognizes neither faith nor humanity. West Africa's Sahel region has seen an uptick in violence in recent years following the rise of armed fighters linked to the al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) armed groups that took over territory in north Mali after the 2012 Tuareg rebellion. Since then, it has spread into neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso, and more recently into the north of coastal West African countries such as Togo and Ghana.

Sunrisers Hyderabad smash several records in IPL 2025

Sunrisers Hyderabad finish at 286/6 in 20 overs against Rajasthan Royals

WEB DESK

HYDERABAD: 2016 champions Sunrisers Hyderabad wreaked havoc in their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 campaign opener as they broke a plethora of records with their belligerent batting against Rajasthan Royals here at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on Sunday. Royals' captain Riyan Parag's decision of putting the Sunrisers into bat first backfired as the home side racked up 286/6 in the allotted 20 overs – the second-highest total in the league's history. Leading the way for the former champions was Ishan Kishan, who smashed an unbeaten 106 off just 47 balls with the help of 11 fours and six sixes. Australia's left-handed opener Travis Head set the tone with a quickfire 67 off 31 deliveries, laced with a dozen boundaries including three sixes, while Heinrich Klaasen gave the final touches with a 14-ball 34. Their batters' carnage left the Royals' bowlers gasping, especially England international Jofra Archer, who conceded 76 runs in his four-over spell and went wicketless to register the worst bowling figures in the history of the league, surpassing Mohit Sharma's 0/73 for Gujarat Titans from the previous edition. The Sunrisers Hyderabad also became the first team to breach the 250-run barrier in T20s four times and went past both the India men's cricket and English domestic side Surrey, who have 250-plus total thrice each.

Shoaib 'fed up' of Virender Sehwag

'I saw a video of ViruPaaji. Man, I am fed up of hearing him talk,' says Akhtar

DNA

KARACHI: Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar called out India's Virender Sehwag for repeatedly recalling his infamous 300-run knock against Pakistan in 2004, stating that the latter has been playing the same tape for 20 years. The banter began when Sehwag shared a video clip of a commercial on Instagram and referenced his triple century in the post caption. His continuous mention of the knock did not sit well with Akhtar, who called out the former Indian batter and offered him an induction into the Guinness World Records for saying the word "300" the most by any person in the world.

'We need to do better,' says Agha after defeat

Salman admitted that New Zealand outplayed Pakistan in all departments

WEB DESK

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha reflected on his team's performance following a crushing defeat against New Zealand in the fourth T20I at Bay Oval on Sunday. With this loss, Pakistan conceded the five-match T20I series 3-1 after being bowled out for 115 while chasing a formidable 221-run target. Speaking at the post-match press conference, Salman admitted that New Zealand outplayed Pakistan in all departments. "They bowled really well and completely outplayed us. Credit goes to them. The ball was swinging and turning, making it difficult in the second innings. But as international cricketers, we need to adapt and do better. It was challenging with so much swing, but we need to regroup and aim to win the last game," Salman said. Pakistan suffered an early collapse as opener Mohammad

Harris was dismissed for just two runs in the first over by Will O'Rourke. The situation worsened in the next over when Jacob Duffy struck twice, removing Hasan Nawaz and captain Salman Ali Agha for single-digit scores, leaving Pakistan struggling at 9-3. The downfall continued with Shadab Khan departing for just one run, dismissed by Zakary Foulkes, reducing Pakistan to 26-4 in 4.1 overs. Irfan Khan Niazi showed some resistance with a quick 24 off 16 balls, but Duffy's brilliance saw him dismissed at 42-5. Khushdil Shah and Abbas Afridi failed to provide stability, while Shaheen Afridi's departure at 56-8 signaled Pakistan's impending defeat. Duffy claimed his fourth wicket, dismissing Haris Rauf at 80-9 in 13.5 overs. Abdul Samad fought hard but fell short of his fifty as Pakistan's innings ended in disappointment. New Zealand's openers got off to a flying start, racing to 59 in just 4.1 overs. Shaheen Afridi struggled with the new ball, but Haris Rauf provided a breakthrough by dismissing Tim Seifert for 44. Finn Allen's explosive fifty off just 19 balls maintained the momentum before he was removed by Abbas Afridi for 50.

Zverev and Sabalenka advance at Miami Open

Sabalenka won the first set 6-1 before Ruse retired due to a thigh injury

WEB DESK

MIAMI: World number one Aryna Sabalenka reached the last 16 at the Miami Open when Elena-Gabriela Ruse retired injured on Saturday, while men's top seed Alexander Zverev beat Jacob Fearnley 6-2 6-4 to reach the third round. Sabalenka, who arrived in Miami fresh off a loss in last week's Indian Wells final, wrapped up the first set 6-1 before Romanian Ruse was forced to retire with a right thigh injury. Up next for three-times Grand Slam champion Sabalenka will be the winner of Saturday's night match on Grandstand between American defending Miami champion Danielle Collins and Swiss qualifier Rebekha Masarova. Naomi Osaka won 7-6(6) 3-6 6-4 against American wild card Hailey Baptiste while Italian sixth seed Ben Shelton 7-6(3) 2-6 7-6(5) to advance, while Canada's Denis Shapovalov and American third seed Taylor Fritz also won and will meet in the third round.

seed Coco Gauff also progressed with a 6-2 6-4 win over Greece's Maria Sakkari. On the men's side, Zverev looked comfortable against British qualifier Fearnley as the German mixed a solid serve with dominance from the baseline while saving the only two break points he faced during the 74-minute match. For Zverev, who lost at the first hurdle in Indian Wells, the win gave him a German record 145th Masters 1000 win, one more than Tommy Haas. He now faces Australia's Jordan Thompson. "Happy to kind of have improved a few things from Indian Wells where I didn't feel well on the court. I didn't feel like I played good," Zverev told reporters. "Hopefully this is just the first of many matches for me here and I can continue playing well." Hong Kong wild card Coleman Wong stunned 13th seed Ben Shelton 7-6(3) 2-6 7-6(5) to advance, while Canada's Denis Shapovalov and American third seed Taylor Fritz also won and will meet in the third round.



Briefs

Canada's PM to run in Ottawa area district

TORONTO: New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will run in an Ottawa area district as he seeks to join Parliament for the first time, the Liberal Party announced Saturday, a day before Carney triggers an early general election before a vote on April 28. The election will take place against the backdrop of a trade war and sovereignty threats from US President Donald Trump. The Liberal Party said Carney will run to represent the suburban Ottawa area of Nepean, noting in a social media post that Ottawa is where he raised his family and devoted his career to public service. He previously served as the head of Canada's central bank and before that its deputy. The election campaign for 343 seats or districts in the House of Commons will last 37 days. The party that commands a majority in the House of Commons, either alone or with the support of another party, will form the next government and its leader will be prime minister. Carney replaced Justin Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January, but remained in power until the Liberal Party elected a new leader on March 9 following a leadership race by the governing party.—APP

Russian authorities bring in trains to fight oil depot fire

MOSCOW: Authorities in southern Russia's Krasnodar region brought in fire-fighting trains loaded with water on Saturday to help battle a blaze still raging at an oil depot following a Ukrainian drone attack. Regional officials, writing on the Telegram messaging app, said four trains were drafted into the site at Kavkazskaya, where the fire first broke out last Tuesday. Firefighters were tackling a fire still burning at one of the tanks at the site covering 1,250 sq. meters (13,500 square feet) while also trying to cool other equipment at the site. The statement said 473 firefighters and 189 pieces of equipment were engaged in the operation. On Friday, depressurization of the burning tank triggered an explosion and the release of burning oil. Reports on Friday said the fire covered some 10,000 square meters. Russia's Foreign Ministry said this week the attack amounted to a violation of a proposed ceasefire on energy sites in the more than three-year-old war, agreed between Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump. The accord fell short of a wider agreement that the US had sought, and which was accepted by Ukraine, for a blanket 30-day truce.—APP

Flag hoisting ceremony at Pak embassy, Beijing to mark Pakistan Day

The event concluded with prayers for Pakistan's success, development and prosperity

DNA

BEIJING: A flag hoisting ceremony was held today at the Pakistan Embassy, Beijing to celebrate the Pakistan Day. The ceremony was attended by Embassy officials and their families, and members of the Pakistan community. H.E. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi hoisted the national flag to the tune of the national anthem played on the occasion. The Embassy officials read out the messages from the President, Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, underscoring the significance and underlying spirit of the Lahore resolution adopted on 23rd March 1940 in Lahore. The messages from the nation's leadership called for upholding the guiding principles of unity, faith and discipline to steer Pakistan forward in the journey towards greater progress, strength and prosperity. The messages also reaffirmed unwavering po-



litical and moral support to the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir in their struggle for the right to self-determination and called on the international community to take immediate and decisive steps for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu & Kashmir. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, in his remarks, congratulated the Pakistani community on the National Day. He urged them to celebrate the occasion with a renewed commitment to working with integrity, dedication and sincerity, aiming to project a positive image of Pakistan in China. The Ambassador also highlighted the initiatives undertaken and planned by the Embassy to deepen China-Pakistan trade and economic cooperation and to advance the welfare of Pakistani community, particularly the Pakistani students studying in Chinese universities. The event concluded with prayers for Pakistan's success, development and prosperity.

Refugees, kids badly hit by global aid funding crisis

UNITED NATIONS: Children, refugees and displaced people worldwide are paying the price for the deep-seated funding crisis that has engulfed the international aid sector, made worse by pronounced cuts in Washington, the UN children's and refugee agencies said on Friday. Spokespersons for UNICEF and UNHCR in Geneva warned that the liquidity crunch has jeopardized lifesaving work, including progress in reducing child mortality, which has fallen by 60 per cent since 1990. By slashing severe acute malnutrition by one-third since 2000, UNICEF's efforts have kept 55 million children alive, through simple interventions, it insisted. "There are ways in which we can still be optimistic if we know that we can do it," said Kitty van der Heijden, UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director said from Abuja, Nigeria. But that work can only get done with the support of a "conveyor belt" of partners in government, philanthropy, and the private sector. Donors are essential to delivering lifesaving assistance to children and mothers worldwide, Ms. Van der Heijden insisted. "We never do this alone." But these gains are now at risk of being rolled back by recent pullouts, she warned, adding that the issue does not lie with a single benefactor. "It is the fact that it's a cumulative set of donors that are doing this. That really risks rolling back that progress," she said. "These decisions have impacts on real children, real lives every day in the here and now." Due to funding shortages, around 1.3 million children could lose access to life-saving support and ready-to-use therapeutic foods this year in Nigeria and Ethiopia. In 2025, some 213 million children in 146 countries will need lifesaving humanitarian support, according to the UNICEF spokesperson. In the Afar region of northeast Ethiopia, UNICEF runs 30 mobile clinics – which Ms. van der Heijden visited last week and described as a "sheet under a shaded tree". The facilities, aimed at supporting impoverished pastoralist communities that are on the move, provide pregnant and lactating mothers as well as children with the "bare minimum", she said, including supplementary vitamin A, iron deficiency, malnutrition and malaria treatments. Only seven out of these 30 clinics remain, with the others shut by the wave of financial cutbacks. "Without new funding, we will run out of our supply chain by May," she said. "And that means that 70,000 children in Ethiopia depend on this type of treatment cannot be served." Similarly, in Nigeria, UNICEF could run out of supplies between this month and May. Investing in prevention, nutrient supplementation and early screenings is also crucial to preventing more unnecessary deaths, it was pointed out. "It's not just about the treatment. We have to be able to prevent it getting to this stage." Earlier this week, Ms. van der Heijden visited a Nigerian hospital and saw a child so malnourished that his skin was peeling off. —DNA

Russian drone attack on Kyiv kills two, injures several

KYIV: A Russian drone attack on Kyiv killed at least two people and injured several, sparking fires in high-rise apartment buildings and throughout the capital, Ukrainian officials said early on Sunday. "A massive enemy drone attack on Kyiv," Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on the Telegram messaging app. The scale of the overnight attack was not immediately clear. Reuters witnesses heard several blasts in what sounded like air defense systems in operation. The state emergency service posted photos showing firefighters fighting blazes at night, including high in an apartment building. A woman died after drone debris sparked a fire in a high-rise residential building in Dniprovskiy district, the emergency service said on Telegram, while at least 27 people were evacuated from the building. Another person died in the Holosiivskiy district, the service said. The United States is pushing for a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia, and hoping to agree on a partial ceasefire that would halt strikes on energy infrastructure. But both sides have been reporting continued strikes. At least seven people were injured throughout Kyiv and emergency services were dispatched to several districts of the city where fires were reported, Klitschko said. Two were injured and several houses damaged in the region surrounding the capital, regional Governor Mykola Kalashnik said on Telegram.—APP

BMP concerned over IMF-backed Customs tariff cut to hit industry

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has expressed serious concern over the government agreement with the IMF to completely abolish additional customs duties, cut regulatory duties by 80%, and withdraw concessions for the local industry. FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the IMF had long been raising concerns over the protection available to local industries, but Pakistani authorities were reluctant to open these areas. Pakistan's agreement with the IMF on trade liberalisation comes at a time when the world is closing its borders to foreign companies. Anjum Nisar said that government agreement with the International Monetary Fund to make further adjustments to the economic liberalisation plan and to cut weighted average applied tariffs cut by over 40% in five years, would create troubles for the local industry. The BMP Chairman observed that after the implementation of the full liberalisation plan, it will have the lowest weighted average tariffs in the region. Referring to the reports, he said that it has been agreed that the weighted average applied tariffs will be reduced from the current 10.6% to just around 6% over five years, starting in July this year, they added. This 43% reduction in tariffs will completely open the economy to foreign competition while local industry is not ready for it due to high cost of production. According to reports, the reduction will be achieved under two different policies. Under the new National Tariff Policy, the weighted average tariffs will be reduced to 7.4% by 2030. To cut these further to around 6%, the government will lower tariff protection available to the automobile sector through the Auto Industry Development and Export Policy (AIDEP) 2026-30 from July next year, according to the sources. The Ministry of Commerce deals with the National Tariff Policy, while the Ministry of Industries is responsible for the AIDEP Policy. They added that excluding the tariff reduction plan for the automobile sector, the weighted average applied tariffs will now be 7.4% compared to the earlier understanding of 7.1%. The difference between the 7.4% and the earlier agreed 7.1% was due to the status of the import tariffs for Customs Chapter 27, which deals with the duty structure of imported energy products. The plan states that the 7% additional customs duty on specific goods will be abolished from July this year. Likewise, the 2% additional customs duty on the zero-tariff slab will also be abolished in July. The 2% duty on the 3% tariff slab will be cut to 1% in the next fiscal year and to nil from the year 2027. The 4% additional customs duty on the 16% tariff slab will remain unchanged for the next fiscal year but will be reduced to 3% the following year and completely abolished in 2030.—DNA

Ambassador Munir holds farewell reception in New York

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan's outgoing Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram, gave a largely attended farewell reception at his official residence. Heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the United Nations, senior UN officials, prominent citizens and senior journalists attended the event. Ambassador Akram, a well known figure at the UN, will be replaced by Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad as permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN on April 1. On Friday, the UN Security Council President, Christina Markus Lassen of Denmark, paid high tributes to Ambassador Akram for his "cooperation and dedication" to the work of the Council and the United Nations. Before giving him the floor to make his last statement to the 15-member Council, Ambassador Lassen, the Council president, said, "Allow me to pay tribute to our dear colleague, Ambassador Munir Akram, on the completion of his tenure as permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations." She added, "I know I speak for all our colleagues when I say we thank you for your cooperation and your dedication to the work of the Security Council and the United Nations. We'll all miss your wisdom, your wit and your warmth, so we wish you the very best in your future endeavors.—APP

Turkish court jails Istanbul mayor pending trial

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court jailed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu on Sunday pending trial, state media and other broadcasters said, in a move likely to stoke the country's biggest protests in more than a decade. The decision to send Imamoglu – who is President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival – to prison comes after the main opposition party, European leaders and tens of thousands of protesters criticized the actions against him as politicized. The court said Imamoglu and at least 20 others were jailed as part of a corruption investigation. A separate ruling on a terror-related investigation has yet to be issued. Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu said on Sunday that he will not bow down after court ruled to jail him pending trial over corruption related investigation.—APP

Iraqis find Ramadan joy in centuries-old ring game

BAGHDAD: In a Baghdad arena, a crowd cheers to the rhythm of drums, not for a football match but for a fiery centuries-old game enjoyed by Iraqis during Ramadan called "mheibes." "It's a heritage game, the game of our ancestors, which unites all Iraqis," said Jassem Al-Aswad, a longtime mheibes champion in his early seventies and now president of the game's national federation. The game involves members of one team hiding a ring – "mehbis" in Arabic – and the captain of the opposing team trying to guess who has it in the palm of his hand.—APP

World Bank's SFERP initiative is a lifeline for flood-affected Sindhis

With the financial & technical support of the World Bank, the Government of Sindh is making substantial progress in restoring infrastructure, livelihoods, & essential services

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



THE Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP) is a large-scale initiative aimed at addressing the catastrophic effects of the 2022 floods in Sindh, Pakistan. Launched with financial and technical assistance from the World Bank, the project seeks to rebuild essential infrastructure, rehabilitate affected communities, and enhance disaster resilience

in the province. The unprecedented monsoon rains of 2022 led to widespread destruction, severely impacting millions of people, causing extensive displacement, loss of life, and economic downturns. In response, the Government of Sindh, in collaboration with the World Bank, formulated SFERP to address immediate relief needs and implement long-term recovery strategies. The 2022 floods in Sindh were among the worst in the province's history. Excessive monsoon rains resulted in overflowing rivers and reservoirs, submerging entire villages and towns. The flooding destroyed roads, bridges, farmlands, and homes, severely impacting agriculture—the backbone of Sindh's economy. The humanitarian crisis necessitated an urgent response, prompting the Government of Sindh and international stakeholders to intervene. The primary goal of SFERP was not only to address immediate relief needs but also to lay the foundation for long-term disaster resilience and sustaina-

ble development. Rebuilding and restoring damaged roads, bridges, and irrigation systems to ensure smooth connectivity and agricultural productivity. Providing financial aid, agricultural support, and livelihood opportunities to flood-affected communities. Assisting in the rebuilding of homes for displaced families with improved flood-resistant designs. Repairing damaged health and educational facilities to ensure uninterrupted services. Implementing early warning systems and strengthening institutional capacity for future disaster management. Addressing waterlogging and salinity issues caused by excessive floodwater and restoring ecosystems. The project is structured around several components to ensure comprehensive recovery. Infrastructure Rehabilitation, Repairing and upgrading major roads and bridges. Restoring irrigation and drainage networks essential for agriculture. Ensuring sustainable water management solutions. Reconstructing homes with climate-resilient

designs. Providing financial assistance to families who lost their homes. Implementing low-cost housing solutions in high-risk areas. Offering financial grants and micro-loans to small businesses and farmers. Introducing skill development programs for employment generation. Supporting farmers with seeds, fertilizers, and modern farming techniques. Rebuilding and equipping damaged hospitals and clinics. Ensuring the availability of essential medicines and healthcare workers. Repairing schools and providing necessary educational materials. Establishing flood monitoring and early warning systems. Training local communities in disaster response and mitigation. Strengthening institutional coordination. Since its launch, SFERP has made significant strides in implementing recovery and rehabilitation initiatives. 378 water supply schemes and 156 drainage schemes have been completed, with 80% of the work finalized. Sindh Emergency Rescue Ser-

vices 1122 District Headquarters Expansion: Four District Headquarters in Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, and Tharparkar were completed in February 2025, with handover planned for March 2025. Six District Headquarters in Qambar Shahdadkot, Jacobabad, Ghotki, Sanghar, Matiari, and Umerkot are at the completion stage, with handover planned for April 2025. Two more District Headquarters in Khairpur and Naushahroferoz are under construction and will be completed by June 2025. Three government hospital emergency facilities were refurbished in August 2024. Ten trauma centers and emergency rooms were refurbished in ten district civil hospitals, including Civil Hospital Ghotki, Kumbhar, Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Sujawal, Johi, Matiari, Matli, and Thatta. Roadwork is in progress in 19 districts, with a total of 144 roads covering 836 km. 120 roads covering 704 km have been completed. The remaining

24 roads, covering 132 km, will be completed by May 2025, benefiting 5.0 million people. The project ensures that all roads, water supply schemes, and infrastructure are constructed using the best available materials, adhering to international standards. Procurement of advanced vehicles and equipment for emergency rescue operations. Adherence to climate-resilient construction standards to prevent future flood damage. The successful execution of the SFERP project is a testament to the exceptional leadership of Secretary P&D Sajjad Hussain, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, and Project Director Muhammad Aslam Leghari. Their dedication, strategic planning, and professional approach have ensured efficiency, quality, and timely implementation. Strong leadership is vital in large-scale projects, and their commitment to excellence has significantly contributed to its progress. Through effective project management, they have optimized resource

allocation, mitigated risks, and fostered seamless coordination among teams. Their unwavering efforts deserve immense appreciation, as they continue to drive the project toward successful completion with vision and determination. The Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP) represents a significant step toward rebuilding and strengthening Sindh's disaster resilience. With the financial and technical support of the World Bank, the Government of Sindh is making substantial progress in restoring infrastructure, livelihoods, and essential services. The project not only addresses the immediate needs of flood-affected communities but also lays a strong foundation for sustainable development and future disaster preparedness. Through its comprehensive approach, SFERP is transforming Sindh into a more resilient and secure province, ensuring that the devastating impacts of the 2022 floods do not repeat in the future.

Briefs

Japanese
envoy
extends
greetings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, AKAMATSU Shuichi has extended his heartfelt felicitations to the government and people of Pakistan on the occasion of Pakistan Day, observed annually on March 23. In a message, Ambassador Shuichi conveyed his best wishes for Pakistan's continued development and prosperity, reaffirming Japan's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with the country. Pakistan Day commemorates the historic Lahore Resolution of 1940, which laid the foundation for the creation of Pakistan. The occasion is marked by celebrations across the country, including a grand military parade in the federal capital. On this landmark day in 1940, the Lahore Resolution set the course for that vision. Just seven years later, on August 14, 1947, Pakistan emerged as an independent nation, a testament to the unyielding spirit, perseverance, and sacrifices of our forefathers. Over the decades, Pakistan has shown extraordinary strength.

Kremlin says
'difficult
negotiations'
ahead

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Sunday downplayed expectations for a rapid resolution to the Ukraine conflict, saying talks were just beginning and that "difficult negotiations" were ahead. Delegations from Russia and Ukraine are set to hold separate talks with US officials in Saudi Arabia over the next 48 hours as President Donald Trump pushes for a rapid end to more than three years of fighting. "We are only at the beginning of this path," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian state TV. He said there were many outstanding "questions" and "nuances" over how a potential ceasefire might be implemented. Russian President Vladimir Putin has rejected a joint US-Ukrainian call for a full and immediate 30-day pause, proposing instead to halt attacks only on energy facilities. "There are difficult negotiations ahead," Peskov said in the interview, published on social media. He also said Russia's "main" focus in its talks with the United States would be discussing a possible resumption of a 2022 Black Sea grain deal that ensured safe navigation for Ukrainian agricultural exports in the Black Sea.

Canada likely
to hold snap
elections amid
Trump threat

OTTAWA: Canada's new prime minister Mark Carney is expected to announce snap elections today (Sunday), seeking a stronger mandate as his country fights off a trade war and annexation threats from United States President Donald Trump. The former central banker was chosen by the centrist Liberal Party to replace Justin Trudeau as prime minister, but he has never faced the broader Canadian electorate. That will change on April 28, if, as expected, Carney announces he is bringing parliamentary elections forward several months from October. Government sources told AFP that he would announce the decision at 12:30pm local time in a speech to Canada's 41-million-strong nation. In power for a decade, the Liberal government had slid into deep unpopularity, but Carney will be hoping to ride a wave of Canadian patriotism to a new majority — thanks to Trump's threats. Trump has riled his northern neighbour by repeatedly dismissing its sovereignty and borders as artificial, and urging it to join the United States as the 51st state. — Agencies

Uzbekistan embassy celebrates
Spirit of Navruz in Islamabad

In a heartfelt gesture, the Ambassador extended congratulations to the people of Pakistan on the upcoming Pakistan Day (March 23), conveying his best wishes for the country's continued progress and long-term prosperity



ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Pakistan hosted a grand celebration to mark the occasion of Navruz, a festival that signifies new beginnings, renewal, and the beauty of nature. The event, held in Islamabad, brought together distinguished guests, diplomats, and members of the Pakistani community to share the joy of this ancient and cherished tradition.

In his address, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan Alisher Tukhtaev warmly welcomed the esteemed guests, emphasizing the deep cultural and historical significance of Navruz. The festival, celebrated for over 3,000 years, unites diverse nations and symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, harmony between humanity and nature, and the universal values of peace, unity, and gratitude. This year's Navruz held special significance as it coincided with the holy month of Ramadan, a period of spiritual reflection, generosity, and togetherness. The occasion provided an opportunity to celebrate not only the renewal of nature but also the values of kindness, gratitude, and community bonding that both Navruz and Ramadan promote. The Ambassador highlighted that Navruz is more than just a national festival; it is a shared cultur-

al heritage that transcends borders, languages, and ethnic backgrounds. From Central Asia to the Middle East, the Caucasus to South Asia, millions of people come together to embrace the spirit of the festival. The event in Islamabad served as a reminder of the historical and cultural ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, which continue to strengthen through mutual cooperation and people-to-people connections.

A central feature of the celebration was the sharing of sumalak, a traditional dish made from sprouted wheat, symbolizing patience, prosperity, and renewal. The Uzbek Embassy took pride in offering this delicacy to guests as a gesture of friendship, unity, and goodwill. The Ambassador underscored the special bond between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, built on a shared history, cultural affinities, and a commitment to regional development. Both nations are dedicated to preserving their traditions while embracing modern progress. The celebration of Navruz served as a reaffirmation of the strong bilateral relations and the ongoing efforts to enhance cooperation in various fields.

As the world faces numerous challenges, the Ambassador expressed hope that Navruz would inspire people to work towards harmony, mutual respect, and global peace. He concluded his speech with warm wishes for pros-



perity, good health, and happiness for all. In a heartfelt gesture, the Ambassador extended congratulations to the people of Pakistan on the upcoming Pakistan Day (March 23), conveying his best wishes for the country's

continued progress and long-term prosperity. The event concluded with a resounding cheer: "Uzbekistan-Pakistan Dosti Zindabad!" — reaffirming the enduring friendship between the two brotherly nations.

Israel strikes south Gaza as
death toll crosses 50,000

The Government Media Office (GMO) has warned that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe amid ongoing genocide and int'l silence

NEWS DESK

DEIR AL-BALAH: Israeli strikes across the southern Gaza Strip killed at least 26 Palestinians overnight into Sunday, including a Hamas political leader and several women and children. The military sent ground troops into part of the southern city of Rafah as thousands of Palestinians heeded new evacuation orders. Gaza's Health Ministry said the total number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since the start of the Israel-Hamas war has now passed 50,000 after Israel ended the ceasefire last week with a wave of strikes that killed hundreds. Israel has continued striking what it says are militant targets and has launched ground incursions in northern Gaza. In a statement released on Sunday, Hamas said Bardawil was targeted in a "treacherous Zionist assassination" operation, while he was performing his night prayers on the 23rd night of the holy month of Ramadan. Bardawil, it added, was killed alongside his wife in an Israeli aerial assault that targeted his tent in the al-Mawasi area, west of the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis. The resistance group also hailed Bardawil as a "symbol of political, media, and national work," noting that he "never failed to perform his duties or ... jihad (endeavor for the sake of God)" aimed at promoting the Palestinian cause. It further emphasized that the criminal regime will not weaken the Palestinians' resolve and steadfast-

ness as "with every martyr, the flame of resistance grows stronger until the occupation is ended." The Government Media Office (GMO) has warned that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe amid ongoing genocide and international silence. In a statement on Sunday, the GMO said, "In light of the continued genocide and aggression carried out by the brutal Israeli occupation army on the Gaza Strip, more than 2.4 million Palestinians are facing an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. The Israeli occupation continues to implement a policy of genocide and daily killings against unarmed civilians, targeting people, property, structures, and agricultural land without any deterrent from the international community." It emphasized that the occupation's insistence on closing the crossings leading to and from the Gaza Strip and preventing humanitarian aid from entering deepens the worsening crisis. The statement noted that the occupation forces are preventing trucks carrying food and medicine from entering, leading to increased rates of hunger and malnutrition, especially among over a million children and the elderly. Additionally, the occupation continues its policy of water deprivation and the destruction of water wells, making it difficult for civilians to access water, resulting in a suffocating water crisis that threatens the lives of the Palestinian people, amidst a lack of safe drinking water and the spread of diseases due to pollution and the absence of basic health services, GMO elaborated.

PM Li calls for 'dialogue' as
US senator visits Beijing

"Our two sides need to choose dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition," says Li

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China's number two leader on Sunday called for "dialogue" with Washington, during a meeting in Beijing attended by prominent US business executives and a key congressional ally of President Donald Trump. Relations between the world's two largest economies have plunged in recent weeks, as blanket tariffs imposed by Trump threaten China's trade prospects. Premier Li Qiang's comments came during a meeting with Trump supporter Steve Daines, a Republican senator from Montana. His visit has been viewed as a bid to ease strained relations, to set up a summit between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. "Our two sides need to choose dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition," Li told Daines. CEOs of major firms including FedEx, Pfizer and Qualcomm were also present. Li said he hoped Washington would "work together with China to promote the steady, sound and sustainable development" of relations. Earlier on Sunday, Li told the China Development Forum that Beijing would pursue economic globalisation despite "fragmentation", a thinly veiled reference to trade turmoil sparked by Trump. Chinese leaders have been attempting to steer a shaky economy onto a more stable path since the end of the pandemic, particularly by boosting consumption. They are seeking to position the country as a defender of the multilateral economic system, as Trump wages tariff wars with major US trading partners including China, Canada and Mexico. "China will firmly stand on the correct side of history, that of fairness and justice, and act righteously amid the rough wa-

ters of the times," Li said at the annual forum, attended by business leaders including Apple CEO Tim Cook. Beijing will "adhere to the correct direction of economic globalisation, practice true multilateralism and strive to be a force for stability and certainty", Li said. In an apparent reference to renewed wars sparked by Trump, Li said that "global economic fragmentation is intensifying" and that "instability and uncertainty are on the rise". Talks were also expected to discuss the flow of the deadly drug fentanyl and its precursor chemicals from China into the United States. Trump says his new tariffs on China are due to Beijing's failure to stem shipments of the chemicals, which underpin a devastating drug crisis. Beijing insists it has already cracked down on the illicit production and trade of drugs, describing the issue as one for Washington to solve. Daines on Saturday also met with Vice Premier He Lifeng, a close advisor to President Xi Jinping on economic matters. During his meeting with Daines, He said that China "firmly opposes the politicisation, weaponisation and instrumentalisation of economic and trade issues". The vice premier added that China was willing to "engage in candid dialogue" with the United States, saying they had "many common interests and broad space for cooperation". The tariffs imposed by Trump amount to a 20% blanket hike on Chinese overseas shipments to the United States. China's exports reached record heights last year, but observers warn that turbulence in the global trading system could soon force Beijing to find other ways to boost activity. Beijing says it is targeting growth this year of around 5% — the same as last year and a goal considered ambitious by many economists.

Turkish court jails Istanbul
Mayor Imamoglu

Decision to jail Erdogan's main political rival comes after actions against him were criticised by many

WEB DESK

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court jailed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu on Sunday pending trial on graft charges, state media and other broadcasters said, in a move likely to stoke the country's biggest protests against President Tayyip Erdogan's government in more than a decade. The decision to send Imamoglu, Erdogan's main political rival, to pris-

on comes after the main opposition party, European leaders and tens of thousands of protesters criticised the actions against him as politicised and undemocratic. The court said Imamoglu, 54, and at least 20 others were jailed as part of a corruption investigation, one of two that were opened against him last week. The court decided to release the mayor under judicial control measures over a separate terror-related charge, broadcasters Halk TV and A Haber reported.

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