



Islamabad POST

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Aurangzeb calls for global trade reform, urges fairer policies

Detailed News On Page-08

Sanctions must be lifted before ceasefire: Russia

Detailed News On Page-08

Neesham stars as NZ thump Pak in 5th T20I

Detailed News On Page-06

Commends economic team

Shehbaz stresses need to ensure economic stability

Premier reflects on opposition's skepticism about mini-budget being necessary to secure IMF deal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: Hailing the successful conclusion of a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new \$1.3 billion arrangement, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasised the need to eliminate debt and pave the way for sustainable economic growth. Addressing the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the premier acknowledged that achieving economic stability is a long and challenging journey but expressed confidence that Pakistan will progress through relentless hard work and dedication. The prime minister also commended the collective efforts of the deputy prime minister, finance minister, planning minister, commerce minister, economic affairs minister, FBR chairman and other key members of the economic team for their diligent work in securing the IMF agreement.

He reflected on the skepticism from opponents, who had predicted that a mini-budget would be necessary to secure the deal. However, the premier asserted that the agreement was achieved without the need for additional taxation measures, proving the government's resolve and planning. Shehbaz also acknowledged the hardships faced by the common people who bore the burden of the price hike during the process of achieving economic stability. Besides, he paid tribute to the salaried persons who contributed a major portion in tax collection. The government will receive \$1.3 billion from the IMF, which will bolster Pakistan's foreign reserves to \$8.3 billion, the prime minister said, terming it a big achievement to stabilise the country's economy. He also highlighted the contributions of all the provincial governments and their relevant chief ministers in supporting the federal government in securing the IMF agreement. Highlighting the government's success in surpassing tax collection targets, he said the IMF had aimed for a 10.2% tax-to-GDP ratio, but with strong

Continued on Page 06

Federal Govt approves Rs1.3tr mega projects

Infrastructure projects see cost hikes; allocation exceeds annual budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government approved over a dozen mega projects worth Rs1.3 trillion, many of which were already under implementation but have seen significant cost escalations. Among them is the construction of a new federal-funded motorway in Punjab, now costing Rs436 billion. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (EC-NEC), the country's top project approval authority, sanctioned these projects, including major infrastructure developments and a satellite initiative. Chaired by Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, EC-NEC approved 13 schemes, including two flood-related projects in Sindh. According to a statement issued by the Deputy PM's Office, these 13 projects span key sectors, including transport, communications, railways, space technology, and public infrastructure. The Rs1.3 trillion allocation exceeds this year's annual federal development budget, with some new projects also receiving provincial funding. Among the most significant approvals was the Lahore-Sahiwal-Bahawalnagar Motorway, stretching 295 kilometres. Initially approved in August 2023 for Rs264 billion, its cost has now increased by 65% to Rs436 billion. Despite severe resource constraints,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs the Federal Cabinet Meeting. - DNA

Govt takes notice of Pak journalists' visit to Israel

Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said no such visit is possible under existing regulations

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office spokesperson, responding to media queries regarding Pakistani journalists' visit to Israel, stated that the government has taken notice of these reports. The Foreign Office has clarified that Pakistani passports explicitly state that they are "not valid for travel to Israel. Responding to the reports, Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said no such visit is possible under existing regulations. He reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to a just and peaceful resolution of the Palestinian issue in accordance with relevant UN resolutions and the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Continued on Page 06

ECP disqualifies 24 former lawmakers

The ECP issued verdict of case of parliamentarians who did not file declaration of their wealth

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Twenty-four former parliamentarians - 10 members of the National Assembly (MNA) and 7 members of provincial assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan each - have been disqualified for not declaring details of their assets for the year 2022-23 to the Election Commission (ECP). The ECP issued verdict of case of parliamentarians who did not file declaration of their wealth for the year 2022-23.

Continued on Page 06

'No letter received' UK yet to decide on lifting flight ban: PIA spox

The ban on PIA operating in the EU was lifted] 4 by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in November last year, which was a prerequisite for approval from the UK Department of Transportation (DfT) to allow PIA to resume its flights to the UK

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said on Wednesday that authorities in the United Kingdom have still not decided whether they would lift the flight ban on the airline. The statement comes amid reports that the flight ban on the national flag carrier had been extended. The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and UK authorities had suspended permission for PIA to operate in the region in June 2020 after Pakistan began investigating the validity of pilots' licenses following a deadly plane crash that killed 97 people. The ban on PIA operating in the EU was lifted]4 by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in November last year, which was a prerequisite for approval from the UK Department of Transportation (DfT) to allow PIA to resume its flights to the UK.

Continued on Page 06

Sana asks PTI to use parliamentary forum

Rana Sanaullah said that PTI should come forward and initiate dialogue with the government

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday asked the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to choose parliamentary forum for discussing political issues. PTI should come forward and initiate dialogue with the government for resolving political issues, he said while talking to a private television channel. In reply to a question

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

IHC issues notice to PM, President

Petitioners' lawyer Sameer Khosa argues the CEC, ECP members continue to serve despite the expiration of their terms

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The IHC has issued pre-admission notices to the federal government, prime minister, and president over the delay in appointing CEC and two ECP members. The notices were issued following a petition filed by Opposition Leaders Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz, challenging the delay in filling the crucial positions. The case was heard by Justice Muhammad Azam Khan, who also directed notices to the CEC and ECP members. Petitioners' lawyer Sameer Khosa argued that the CEC and ECP members continue to serve despite the expiration of their terms, which he claimed violates constitutional provisions.

Minister announces resumption of train services

Eid Special Train will leave Quetta on March 29

DNA

QUETTA: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi has announced the resumption of train operations in Quetta from tomorrow (Thursday). Speaking at a press conference, he revealed that the Jaffar Express will depart from Peshawar tomorrow and begin operations from Quetta the following day. The Bolan Mail will now run seven days a week, while an Eid Special Train will depart from Quetta on March 29, offering a 20 percent discount for passengers during the first three days of Eid.

Quds Day celebrated

Iran envoy lauds Pakistan support to Gaza people

The Ambassador pointed out the harsh realities that have unfolded since October 7, 2023, when the world witnessed the dual dynamics of aggression and resistance

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Reza Amiri-Moghaddam has extended special gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their strong, courageous stance on Palestine. He emphasized how Pakistan's vocal support and media coverage have played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the Palestinian plight on the global stage. He expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of Quds Day. The Ambassador reminded the audience that International Quds Day, established by the late Imam Khomeini (RA), is observed on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan to show solidarity with the Palestinian people. This annual observance, which started decades ago, has grown in significance as it continues to shed light on the ongoing struggle for justice and freedom for Palestine.

The Ambassador pointed out the harsh realities that have unfolded since October 7, 2023, when the world witnessed the dual

dynamics of aggression and resistance. On one hand, the Israeli regime, with the support of Western powers, particularly the United States, has continued its brutal actions against Palestinians, committing genocide. On the other hand, Hamas, the Palestinian resistance group, has displayed remarkable resilience, particularly after the ceasefire and prisoner exchanges. The Israeli regime, which once vowed to eradicate Hamas, has been forced to engage in direct negotiations, recognizing the strength and resolve of the Palestinian resistance.

He expressed immense pride in Iran's steadfast support for the Palestinian cause. He affirmed Iran's commitment to stand by the people of Gaza until the complete liberation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the revered holy city of Jerusalem. Despite the challenges, including the passivity and silence of some governments and the ongoing censorship and propaganda, the Ambassador noted that global awareness of Israel's genocidal actions is growing.

Continued on Page 06

IMF reaches staff-level agreement with Pakistan

"Upon approval, Pakistan will have access to approximately \$1bn under EFF, bringing total disbursements to around \$2bn," says IMF

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund staff reached a deal with Pakistan for a new \$1.3 billion arrangement and also agreed on the first review of the ongoing 37-month bailout program, the IMF said on Tuesday. "Over the past 18 months, Pakistan has made significant progress in restoring macroeconomic stability and rebuilding confidence despite a challenging global environment," the IMF said in a statement. The new 28-month deal would support Pakistan's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, the Fund said in the statement announcing its decision. Both the new programme and the loan review require approval from the Fund's executive board, which is largely a rubber-stamping exercise. Pakistan's inflation is expected to remain steady in March, in the 1% to 1.5% range, according to the country's finance ministry in its monthly economic outlook. This follows a slowdown to its lowest level in almost a decade the previous month. "Upon approval (by the IMF board), Pakistan will have access to approximately \$1 billion under the EFF, bringing total disbursements under


Continued on Page 06

US adds 80 firms including from Pak to export blacklist

AGENCIES



WASHINGTON: The United States has added 80 companies from various countries, including Pakistan, to its export blacklist. The US added six subsidiaries of Inspur Group, China's leading cloud computing and big data service provider, and dozens of other Chinese entities to its export restriction list on Tuesday. The Inspur units were listed for contributing to the development of supercomputers for the Chinese military, the Commerce Department said in a posting. Five of the subsidiaries are based in China and one in Taiwan. Inspur Group itself was placed on the list in 2023. The Inspur units are among about 80 companies and institutes added to




Continued on Page 06



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KP CS reviews performance of outsourced ho

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Health Foundation to review the performance of hospitals outsourced in remote areas. The initiative aims to enhance healthcare services for underserved communities by ensuring better management and improved medical facilities. According to the Health Foundation, 19 medical centers across the province have been outsourced in two phases. Officials emphasized that the outsourcing initiative is part of the government's strategy to improve healthcare services in remote regions, ensuring better medical care, availability of medicines, and efficient hospital management. The Chief Secretary directed authorities to closely monitor the progress and address any challenges faced by these medical centers. The government remains committed to strengthening the healthcare system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas.—APP

Wasa's anti-dengue campaign in full swing

FAISALABAD: Anti-dengue awareness campaign of Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) is in full swing as its Citizen Liaison Cell (CLC) is actively orienting awareness seminars and workshops to sensitise the community against dengue menace. Managing Director WASA Aamer Aziz said here on Wednesday that the CLC staff visited Government MC High School D-Type Colony and delivered keynote lecture to activate students for the success of anti-dengue campaign. The CLC officials also distributed pamphlets inscribed with preventive and precautionary measures against dengue. He said that the changing weather provides a favorable environment for breeding of dengue mosquito. However, preventive measures can help in curbing its spread. He said that Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz was also committed to eradicate dengue menace once for all and under her vision the anti-dengue SOPs are being strictly implemented.—APP

Pakistani food exporters secure key deals in KSA

LAHORE: A delegation of Pakistani food exporters returned to Pakistan on Wednesday after a successful month-long visit to Saudi Arabia, where they explored new export opportunities and strengthened trade ties. In a statement, delegation leader and Coordinator to the Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman described the visit as a significant step toward enhancing bilateral trade. The delegation engaged in extensive B2B meetings and interacted with Saudi corporate leaders, resulting in multiple memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and strategic partnerships between Pakistani exporters and Saudi firms. The delegation noted a growing demand for Pakistani food products.—APP

Randhawa assures to resolve issues of business community

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi pointed out the deteriorating condition of markets, unjustified increases in CDA taxes, excessive trade change charges, and CDA's non-compliance with court orders

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Chaudhry Mohammad Ali Randhawa has lauded Islamabad's business community for its pivotal role in driving economic growth, generating employment, and strengthening the city's commercial landscape. Addressing business leaders during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday, Mr. Randhawa assured that CDA is committed to resolving the key issues confronting traders and industrialists. He announced that focal persons from ICCI and FCCI would be invited to CDA Board Meetings to highlight their concerns and present research-based solutions for their resolution. The CDA Chairman also outlined steps taken by the Authority to address the city's ongoing water crisis. Additionally, he expressed gratitude to ICCI for initiating a large-scale tree plantation drive in collaboration with CDA, emphasizing the need to ensure the protection and maintenance of the newly planted saplings.

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, in his welcome address, highlighted several critical challenges faced by the business community. He pointed out the deteriorating condition of markets, unjustified increases in CDA taxes, excessive trade change charges, and CDA's non-compliance with court orders. He also raised concerns about excessive fines on traders, unfair



parking fees, poor sanitation in fruit and vegetable market, and deteriorating industrial area infrastructure, which he said were severely affecting business operations. Mr. Qureshi also stressed the urgent need for a dedicated graveyard in Sector H-13. He announced that ICCI, with the support of the business community, has planned to plant one lakh sapling to enhance Islamabad's greenery and maintain its beauty. Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, while conducting the ceremony, reaffirmed ICCI's role as a strong bridge between

the government and the business community, emphasizing the Chamber's unwavering commitment to promoting business-friendly policies. During a lively Question/Answer session, business leaders engaged with the CDA Chairman, raising various concerns impacting the trade and industrial sectors. In his vote of thanks, ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry expressed hope that the CDA Chairman's visit and assurances would lead to swift action, paving the way for a thriving business environment in the

capital. The event was attended by prominent figures, including DG Environment, DG Building & Housing Control, and former ICCI Presidents Mian Shaikat Masood, Ejaz Abbasi, Basit Dawood, Khalid Iqbal Malik, along with Executive Members Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Irfan Chaudhry, Malik Abdul Aziz, Ishaq Sial, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Imran Minhas, Tahir Ayub, Naeem Akhtar Awan, Amir Qureshi, Sanaulah Khan, Fatima Azeem, and Advisor to ICCI President Naeem Siddiqui. On the occasion, Dr. Raashid Aftab delivered a comprehensive presenta-

tion on the significance of water conservation and the looming water crisis in the twin cities. Earlier on arrival the visiting guest along with the ICCI President, inaugurated the ICCI tree plantation drive in collaboration with the CDA by planting a sapling in the lawn of the Chamber, symbolizing a joint commitment to a greener Islamabad. The meeting ended with a shared resolve to maintain close collaboration between ICCI and CDA to ensure Islamabad's business community thrives in a supportive and sustainable environment.

Punjab CM launches women police squad

Women Police Squad will patrol markets during peak hours on foot, bicycles, and motorbikes, actively preventing harassment and monitoring anti-social activities

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken a landmark initiative to protect women and children by establishing a Women Police Squad in major markets across the province. The squad has officially begun patrolling to ensure a safe shopping environment for women. On the CM's directive, the Women Police Squad will patrol markets during peak hours on foot, bicycles, and motorbikes, actively preventing harassment and monitoring anti-social activities. The squad will also play a crucial role in curbing incidents of mobile snatch-

ing, wallet thefts, and robberies, particularly during the Eid shopping rush. Patrolling has already commenced in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Chiniot, Burewala, Vehari, Khanewal, and other cities. Additionally, a special Dolphin Police Squad has been deployed in Lahore, with a Quick Response Cycle Squad stationed at 65 major commercial centers, including DHA Raya Club, Ichhra, Anarkali, and Liberty Market. The Dolphin Force bicycle squad and PRU squad will provide additional patrolling support. More than 4,000 police personnel will be on special squad duty across Lahore, with Dol-

phin Police patrolling after Iftar until market closures. The first Women Police Squad in Okara has also been mobilized, with police constables patrolling crowded markets on foot, bicycles, and motorcycles. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that the protection of women and children is a shared responsibility of both the government and society. Women have widely welcomed the initiative, expressing a greater sense of security and confidence while shopping in busy markets. Many have praised the move, stating that it is now easier to report harassment to women police personnel, making public spaces safer and more accessible.

Interfaith Iftar dinner hosts by minister for minorities

DNA

LAHORE: Minister for Minorities Ramesh Singh Arora hosted a interfaith Iftar dinner here on Tuesday evening to bring together leaders, dignitaries, and influential figures from various sectors. The event was attended by Zhao Shiren, Consul General of China; Ms Kristin K Hawkins, US Consul General; Ben Warrington, Head of the British High Commission's Lahore office; Bilal Yaseen, Minister for Food; Bilal Akber Khan, Minister for Transport; Rana Nasrullah Khan, Minister for Zakat; and MPAs Ahmad Iqbal, Baba Fables, Sonia Asher, Raheela Khadim Hussain and Ijaz Alam Augustine. Ali Bahadur Qazi, Secretary of Human Rights and

Minorities Affairs; Saif Ullah Khokher, Additional Secretary of the ETPB; In his welcome address, Minister Ramesh Singh Arora highlighted the significance of Ramadan and Iftar, emphasizing that the sacred month serves as a reminder of the importance of unity, peace, and compassion. He stated, "The act of fasting and breaking the fast together is an embodiment of brotherhood, solidarity, and empathy. Ramadan teaches us the virtues of patience, humility, and self-discipline. As we gather here today, we reaffirm our commitment to the welfare and inclusion of all communities in our society." The minister also remarked on the importance of interfaith and inter-community dialogue, underscoring the role of religious harmony in strengthening Pakistan's

diverse social fabric. He expressed gratitude for the presence of foreign diplomats and religious leaders who contributed to making the event a success, fostering goodwill and collaboration. The evening served as a wonderful opportunity for attendees to not only break their fasts together but also to engage in meaningful discussions about social justice, minority rights, and mutual respect. The dinner, which included traditional Iftar delicacies, was a memorable occasion, providing a platform for fostering positive relationships across different sectors. The dinner, which took place during the blessed month of Ramadan, also witnessed the presence of prominent religious leaders, including Sardar Bishan Singh, Sardar Kalyan Singh, and Irfan Khan, Chairman of PPFO, among others.

UAF, China university to fortify academia, research ties

FAISALABAD: The Xinjiang Agriculture University of China and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) will collaborate to strengthen academia and research ties further and address common challenges. This was stated during the 11th Board of Directors meeting of Chinese Confucius Institute (CI) which was chaired by University of Agriculture Faisalabad Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zulfiqar Ali while Prof Dr Jiang Ping'an President of Xinjiang Agriculture University China presided over it online. Prof Dr Jiang Ping'an invited a team of the UAF experts to visit Xinjiang Agriculture University China that will help in learning from each other experiences and foster ties. He said that collaboration between our two universities serves as a tangible manifestation of the amicable relationship. Eleven years ago, we signed an agreement to jointly establish the Confucius Institute at UAF. He said that over the past 11 years, CI-UAF has made fruitful achievements in Chinese culture promotion, language teaching, academic cooperation, and teacher-student exchanges. He congratulated Dr Zulfiqar Ali on assuming the charge of Vice Chancellor UAF. Dr Zulfiqar Ali said that Confucius Institute has played role in fostering mutual understanding and respect through the promotion of Chinese language and culture. This institute has also contributed to deepening the Pak-China relationship in the ways that go beyond academics, he added. He said that CI UAF has produced 22,000 students of Chinese language courses in a decade. Out of which, 600 are studying in Chinese universities under scholarship programs. CI Local Dean Dr Zahir Ahmad Zahir said that in 2024, CI-UAF administered 11 HSK/HSKK exams across its testing centers, with a total of 1,882 candidates including 447 oral test takers. He said that in 2024, CI-UAF recommended 104 candidates for international Chinese language scholarships. He shared that in expansion, CI-UAF will establish sub-centers at the University of Faisalabad, Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (Bahawalpur), and Ghazi University (Dera Ghazi Khan). UAF Registrar Umar Saeed Qadri, Director ORIC Prof. Dr Imran Arshad, Director Planning and Development Mr. Irfan Abbas and Deputy Treasurer Mr. Faisal Shahzad attended the meeting from UAF while Director International Exchange XJAU Yang Zhijiang, Chinese Dean Prof Zhou Changming, Dean International Education Prof Chen Yingjie attended it online from XJAU. Since its inception in 2014, CI has produced thousands of the students skilled in Chinese language, helping further strengthening ties and people to people contact between the countries, UAF spokesman added.—DNA

Minister visits to review PNSC ongoing initiatives, performance

Federal Minister was particularly enthusiastic about PNSC's modern initiatives, which aim to introduce cutting-edge technologies and improve operational efficiency

DNA

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Junaid Anwar Chaudhry visited the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) Head Office in Karachi Tuesday to review the corporation's ongoing initiatives and performance, as well as to discuss future plans for the maritime sector. Upon his arrival at the PNSC headquarters, the Federal Minister was warmly welcomed by the Chief Executive Officer, Syed Jarrar Haider, and senior management of the corporation, said a press release. A detailed briefing

on PNSC's activities, operations, and strategic objectives was presented to the Minister, providing insight into the corporation's key initiatives and its role in Pakistan's shipping and maritime sector. During the visit, Federal Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry took the opportunity to plant a tree within the PNSC premises, symbolizing his commitment to environmental sustainability and green initiatives. The Minister's gesture highlights the government's dedication to promoting eco-friendly practices within national industries, including the maritime sector. The Federal Minister expressed

his satisfaction with the corporation's overall performance and its contributions to the national economy. He emphasized the importance of continued innovation and efficiency within the organization, commending the efforts of the PNSC team in maintaining a strong position in the global shipping industry. Minister Chaudhry also took a keen interest in the ongoing and upcoming projects under the PNSC portfolio. He reviewed the progress of various development initiatives and urged the management to accelerate the pace of these projects. His visit underscored the government's focus on enhancing the operational

capacity and infrastructure of Pakistan's maritime sector. Federal Minister was particularly enthusiastic about PNSC's modern initiatives, which aim to introduce cutting-edge technologies and improve operational efficiency. He highlighted the importance of staying ahead of global maritime trends to ensure that Pakistan remains competitive in the international shipping market. Minister Chaudhry reiterated the government's commitment to supporting the growth of the maritime industry and enhancing the performance of organizations like PNSC. He assured the management of the government's full support in facilitating

the timely completion of development projects, as well as addressing any challenges faced by the corporation. The minister also visited the KPT Head Office, where he was welcomed by Chairman KPT Rear Admiral Habib-ur-Rehman and senior management officials of KPT. During his tour of the port area, he visited the KGTL and SAPTL terminals, where terminal operators briefed him on port operations. The minister also paid a visit to the Mausoleum of Quid-e-Azam, laying a wreath in honour. He was accompanied by KPT's top management officials.

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
BOXING
KOREANING
TAEKWONDO

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
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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

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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Workers of local administration installing the setup for supplying the water to plants on green belts along the sides of Srinagar Highway as this new setup will run on the solar .

CII discusses human milk bank, organ transplantation, key Islamic rulings

The council stressed that Zakat funds should be distributed to deserving individuals without unnecessary delays. However, if administrative procedures cause delays, these funds can be placed in profit-generating Islamic bank accounts. In the event of any financial losses, the government will be responsible for compensating them

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) on Wednesday convened a meeting in which members deliberated on a total of 19 agenda items. The session was chaired by Dr. Muhammad Raghieb Hussain Naeemi, Chairman of the Council. In the meeting, four experts from the Sindh Institute of Child and Neonatology were invited to present a briefing on the establishment of a human milk bank. They provided detailed responses to 33 queries raised by the council members. Additional questions from the members were also addressed. The council decided to conduct an in-depth study on the matter and will present its final decision in the next meeting. The council ruled that organ transplantation, particularly of the kidney and liver, is permissible as long as the donor's life is not endangered. It was decided that Islamic terms such as Salah (prayer), Ayah (verse),

and Masjid (mosque) should be retained in their original Arabic form instead of being translated into English. The council emphasized that scholars and intellectuals should raise awareness at their respective levels regarding the issue of electricity theft. The council ruled that newly hired employees can be required to participate in the contributory pension system, but existing employees cannot be compelled to join it. Additionally, it stressed that pension funds must be entirely free from interest-based financial systems. It was decided that premarital testing for thalassemia or other contagious diseases can be included in the Nikahnama (marriage contract) as an optional provision. However, the decision to marry will remain solely at the discretion of both parties under Islamic law. The council ruled that granting a first wife the right to annul her marriage if her husband

remarries without her permission is un-Islamic. Any judicial ruling that permits such annulment contradicts Islamic teachings. The council stressed that Zakat funds should be distributed to deserving individuals without unnecessary delays. However, if administrative procedures cause delays, these funds can be placed in profit-generating Islamic bank accounts. In the event of any financial losses, the government will be responsible for compensating them. The council reaffirmed its previous stance that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Transgender Bill contains the same un-Islamic elements as the Transgender Act of 2018, which had been declared inconsistent with Islamic principles by the council and the Federal Shariat Court. Additionally, the council expressed concerns over the bill's inclusion of the Guru-Chela (mentor-disciple) concept, deeming it un-Islamic. At the

conclusion of the meeting, prayers were offered for the late mother of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir. The following members participated in the meeting: Dr. Muhammad Raghieb Hussain Naeemi, Zafar Iqbal Chaudhry, Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Rashid, Pir Khalid Sultan Qadri, Muhammad Jalaluddin, Farida Rahim, Justice (R) Altaf Ibrahim Husain Qureshi, Dr. Uzair Mahmood Al-Azhari, Pir Shams-ur-Rehman Mashhadi, Allama Muhammad Yousuf Awan, Mufti Muhammad Zubair, Syed Iftikhar Hussain Naqvi, Professor Dr. Mufti Intikhab Ahmad, Hassan Hasib-ur-Rehman, Muhammad Shafiq Khan (Shafiq Pasrori), Hafiz Muhammad Amjad, Syed Saeed-ul-Hasan, Syed Atiq-ur-Rehman. The meeting concluded with a commitment to further research and deliberation on the discussed matters in future sessions.

ICT Admin launches crackdown

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Wednesday intensified its efforts to combat price gouging and market irregularities, conducting a comprehensive operation against profiteers and overcharging vendors. According to DC office, during the inspections, authorities imposed fines totaling Rs 95,500, arresting 78 individuals involved in illegal pricing practices. A total of 430 operations were conducted across the city, leading to the sealing of 7 shops found violating regulations. —APP

Dacoit gang attacks police to free accomplices

ISLAMABAD: A team from Islamabad Capital Police's I-9 Police Station was attacked late at night while transporting members of an inter-provincial dacoit gang for identification and recovery purposes. An official told APP on Wednesday that the suspects, whom the attackers attempted to free, were also involved in a Rs 5 million robbery in the Sabzi Mandi area and opened fire on the police team. He said the police personnel remained unharmed due to their precautionary measures and bulletproof jackets. He said the dacoits in police custody were identified as Saim Ali and Muhammad Taimoor. He said two dacoits were injured in the crossfire after their associates fired indiscriminately. He said the injured suspects were shifted to a hospital for medical treatment. He said the police thwarted the attack with remarkable bravery and professionalism, preventing the suspects from escaping. He said inter-provincial dacoit Saim Ali was involved in 56 cases of robbery. He said another suspect, Muhammad Taimoor, had nine cases registered against him for serious crimes. He said police are conducting raids to apprehend the remaining accomplices. —APP

PMD forecast intermittent rain

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast intermittent rain, windstorms, and thunderstorms, with snowfall over high mountains, for multiple regions of the country on Wednesday. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, and Kashmir are expected to experience widespread rain, while upper Punjab, Islamabad, and northeastern Balochistan will also receive showers. Heavy rainfall and hailstorms are likely in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, and Kashmir. Strong winds and thunderstorms may damage infrastructure, including electric poles, trees, vehicles, and solar panels. Agricultural concerns arise as windstorms and hailstorms could damage standing crops in the plains of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on March 26 and 27. Landslides and slippery roads may affect travel in hilly areas, including Murree, Galliat, Naran, Kaghan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Shangla, Astore, Hunza, Skardu, Neelum Valley, Bagh, Poonch, and Haveli. Flash floods could occur in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, and Mansehra due to heavy rainfall. Islamabad is expected to experience partly cloudy weather with a 55% chance of rain and thunderstorms. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rain and thunderstorms with snowfall over high mountains are forecasted for several districts, including Peshawar, Abbottabad, Swat, and Mansehra, with hailstorms likely in the southern areas. Punjab will see partly cloudy conditions, with isolated rain and thunderstorms in Rawalpindi, Murree, Lahore, Faisalabad, and other areas. Sindh will remain mostly dry, with gusty winds and partly cloudy conditions in upper districts during the afternoon. Balochistan will experience dry to partly cloudy weather, with rain and thunderstorms expected in Quetta, Ziarat, Zhob, and other regions. Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan will have partly cloudy conditions with rain, thunderstorms, and snowfall over hilly areas. Dry conditions prevailed in most parts of the country in the past 24 hours, with isolated rain in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan. The highest temperatures recorded were 42C in Shaheed Benazirabad, 41C in Dadu, and 40C in Mithi. The authorities urge residents in affected regions to take precautions against potential flooding, landslides, and storm-related damage. Farmers should secure their crops, and travelers in mountainous areas are advised to be cautious of slippery roads and landslides. —DNA

People seek action against encroachment

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A massive crowd of buyers has created a mess on main roads. Despite continued anti-encroachment operations by Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) in many areas, the challenge of congestion remains still standing. The residents of Tench Bhatta, Mughalabad, Kamalabad and other adjacent localities have complained of difficulty in their movements. "On return from the offices, we have to combat long cues from Octroi No 22 for a long time" said Fawad a resident of Tench Bhatta. Fawad said the issue of encroachments still stands as it was before the

anti-encroachment operations. "Because of the absence of follow up by the authority, moveable stalls and carts re-enter to the main bazaars. The campaign of removing encroachments by RCB continued for more than 2 weeks in which various concrete sheds and moving shops were destroyed. However, one can't walk an inch during the rush hour. "Symbolic presence of traffic wardens at partial timings will never tackle the issue, instead it needs regular deployment of traffic police officials and continuous movement by RCB personnel are required on an urgent basis", said Aziz Butt who resides and runs a shop in Tench Bhatta. The residents also criticized the bazaars'

trade unions in this regard. They said that elected representatives of the market should not allow the moving carts remain stay in front of the shops. "Even the shopkeepers wrongly park their bikes on main roads in a way to create hurdles in traffic flow", said Tariq who resides in Kamalabad. He blames the business owners for letting the small spaces to be rented out for such moving stalls. The residents appealed to the authorities to take urgent collective actions for restoration of traffic flow and easy pedestrian movement. They demanded for special deployment of traffic wardens and regular monitoring of encroachers in Tench Bhatta and Kamalabad roads, particularly during the month of Ramadan.

AIOU inks MoU with NBF

The ceremony was also attended by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, along with other senior officials

ISLAMABAD: A signing ceremony for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Center for Languages and Translation Studies (CELTS) at Allama Iqbal Open University and the National Book Foundation (NBF) was held on Tuesday. On behalf of the university, Registrar Raja Umar Yunus signed the documents, while Secretary Murad Ali Mohmand signed on behalf of the NBF. The event was presided over by Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood. In his address, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood stated that Pakistan holds a distinguished position globally in terms of its culture, history, and natural resources. He highlighted that 70 languages are spoken in Pakistan, making it a rich multicultural bouquet. The Vice Chancellor further explained that the CELTS was established with the objective that graduates from this institution would be able to promote regional languages of Pakistan and transfer knowledge into other languages. He emphasized that through this collaboration, the National Book Foundation would receive valuable material from the Open University, the dissemination of which would foster religious and cultural harmony within the country. On this occasion, Managing Director of the National Book Foundation, Dr. Kamran Jahangir, expressed his happiness over the agreement and stated that the availability of such study material would not only benefit individuals but also play a significant role in shaping society. During the event, the Director CELTS, Dr. Ghulam Ali, elaborated on the objectives of the MoU, informing the attendees that this mutual partnership would enhance academic cooperation and promote the field of translation. The ceremony was also attended by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, along with other senior officials. —DNA

Women safety squads deployed in Rawalpindi markets

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police have formed special women safety squads to ensure a safe and comfortable environment to woman shoppers in rush in the city markets during the last days of Ramadan. The squads comprising lady officers of District and Traffic Police would particularly be deployed in Bank Road and Commercial Market, the police spokesman said on Wednesday. The squad, which would patrol the markets on scooters and bicycles, would protect women from harassment and other crimes. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani on the launch of women safety squads said as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, they were ensuring the provision of the safest environment for women. "The women can now come to the markets for Eid shopping with more confidence," he added. The safety of women, he added, was among the top responsibilities which would be ensured by the police at all costs. Superintendent of Police Potohar Talha Wali, DSP Cantt, SHO Cantt and other officers were present at the launch of the women safety squads. Meanwhile, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq, conducted an early morning visit to various areas of the city during Fajr prayers to review security arrangements at mosques and Imambargahs. A public relations officer told APP on Wednesday that under the special direction of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), the Islamabad Police have intensified security measures to ensure the safety of citizens, particularly during prayer times. DIG Tariq personally inspected the security arrangements and lauded the police officers performing their duties with vigilance. He emphasized that protecting citizens' lives and property remains the foremost responsibility of the police force. "Our primary duty is to safeguard worshippers and places of worship. Ensuring their security is our form of worship," DIG said. He instructed all officers to remain active in the field and to consider their duty a sacred responsibility. —DNA

Briefs

IGP visits
Rawalpindi
Safe City
project

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar on Wednesday visited the Safe City project Rawalpindi. Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa and City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani gave a briefing to the IGP regarding the working of Safe City. The IGP took a round of the Command and Control Room of Safe City and gave instructions to the staff to improve their working. He directed that the remaining civil work, planning and decoration of the project should be completed at the earliest.

He said the Safe City's artificial intelligence-based facilities should be fully used for effective investigation and tracing of criminals. The Safe City projects, he said, were also playing a key role in traffic management, environmental protection surveillance, and prevention of encroachments in the cities. They had set an example in community policing, besides providing services to the citizens, he added. He directed the Safe City Rawalpindi officers to improve their performance with effective coordination with their counterparts in Islamabad. He further directed to improve coordination with other law enforcement agencies to ensure better law and order, and security in the city. The IGP said the scope of Safe City projects was being extended to all districts and tehsils of Punjab. —APP

China-Pak youth exchange community distributes food items

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community (CPYEC) in support of local charity volunteers distributed vital food supplies and nutritional assistance to 200 struggling families across Quetta, helping ease food shortages during the holy month. Each relief package contained rice, flour, cooking oil, beans, sugar, and two cans of powdered milk—enough to sustain a family of six for a month. The initiative aims to support vulnerable communities in Balochistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. "No one should go hungry, especially in Ramadan," said Ma Bin, head of the volunteer team. "This year, we've expanded our efforts to reach 1,800 families in Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, and Sindh. Our community kitchens also serve hundreds daily, including orphans and those in need." Alongside food distribution, the Pakistan Community Kitchen initiative provides hot meals for 200 people nightly in Islamabad, 600 in Sindh and regular dinners for nine orphanages during Ramadan. Local residents expressed deep gratitude. Bilal, a beneficiary from Quetta, said, "In tough times, such kindness gives us hope." The relief effort is part of CPYEC's ongoing humanitarian programs in Pakistan. As Ramadan continues, the organizer pledged further support to strengthen solidarity with vulnerable communities across Pakistan.—DNA

NUML, MoFE&PT, NAVTTC join hands to launch language training

This flagship program aims to equip 10,000 students over the next five years with language skills that will improve their access to higher education opportunities abroad and boost their competitiveness in the global job market

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD : In a groundbreaking initiative to enhance global education and career prospects for students, the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), and the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) have signed a tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to introduce international language training for secondary and higher secondary students in the Federal Capital. This flagship program aims to equip 10,000 students over the next five years with language skills that will improve their access to higher education opportunities abroad and boost their competitiveness in the global job market. The initiative will offer training in eight international languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, German, Arabic, Spanish, French, and Russian. A high-profile signing ceremony was held at the Ministry of Federal Education to mark the occasion, attended by Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Rector NUML, Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M), Retired, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary MoFE&PT, and Executive Director NAVTTC, Mr. Muhammad Aamir Jan. Speaking at the event, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui congratulated NUML and NAVTTC on launching this visionary initiative and commended the ef-



orts of his team in making this collaboration possible. He emphasized the significance of language proficiency in expanding educational and professional opportunities for Pakistan's youth. In the first phase of the project, NUML has already trained over 1,000 students in five international languages, setting the stage for the initiative's expansion. Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, reaffirmed the university's commitment to national development and

expressed gratitude to MoFE&PT for its continued support in advancing language education. Highlighting the long-term impact of this initiative, Special Secretary MoFE&PT, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, emphasized the importance of equipping students with diverse linguistic skills to support their academic and professional growth. The ceremony was also attended by Brig. Shahzad Munir, Director General NUML, Syed Junaid

Akhlaq, Director General FDE, Joint Secretary MoFE&PT Capt. Asif Bhatti, Prof. Dr. Jamil Asghar Jami, Dean, Faculty of Languages NUML, and Dr. Syed Waqas Ali, Registrar NUML, among other distinguished guests. With this initiative, NUML, FDE, and NAVTTC take a significant step towards empowering the youth of Pakistan, equipping them with essential language skills to thrive in an increasingly globalized world.

China's role commendable in transforming Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Chinese companies' role highly commendable in Pakistan's development, from road expansions to energy projects and port enhancements. This was stated by Associate Researcher Kumar Raja who is engaged in the Artificial Intelligence and Public Safety Research Center at the Yangtze Delta Region Institute (Huzhou) of the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC). Chinese companies have played a major role in transforming his hometown. The changes are evident in every corner of the city," he added. Kuma hails from Karachi, a city that has experienced significant infrastructure improvements due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In 2016, Kumar enrolled at UESTC to pursue a Ph.D. with a focus on machine learning and information security. During his studies, he contributed to several research projects funded by China's National Natural Science Foundation. After earning his doctorate, he remained at UESTC as a postdoctoral researcher, publishing more than 70 academic papers. In 2021, he joined the Yangtze Delta Research Institute as an associate researcher. "The institute's research focus closely aligns with my academic interests. It also offers extensive research resources and collaboration opportunities, enabling me to apply my findings to real-world challenges," Kumar explained. Since joining, he has led several projects, filed multiple invention patents, and collaborated with institutions such as Huzhou Central Hospital to facilitate technology transfer. Currently, he is developing an AI-powered illustration generation system based on a proprietary large language model. "In simple terms, we are creating an 'AI drawing assistant' to help businesses and individuals generate illustrations from text descriptions," he stated. "I believe that technological innovation serves as a catalyst for unlocking human potential and addressing significant challenges. Creativity and adaptability are essential," he noted, expressing his enthusiasm for exploring more AI projects with enterprises, Gwadar Pro reported.—DNA

China, Pak strengthen castor industry cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Roomi Agriculture Company and China's Zibo Academy of Agricultural Sciences signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement focused on the castor industry. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. The agreement outlines their collaboration in scientific breeding, planting technology, deep processing, and marketing of castor products. Castor seed cultivation is highly sensitive to environmental factors, particularly water availability. Under the agreement, a Shandong-based agricultural company will oversee seed production, provide technical support, develop digital cultivation technologies, and research and manufacture digital water-fertilizer equipment. Additionally, they will design digital models for the pre-planting, mid-planting, and post-harvest stages. Zibo Academy of Agricultural Sciences has developed castor germplasm resources that are resistant to herbicides and tolerant of salt and alkali through

field hybridization, biotechnology, and molecular breeding. The academy will oversee variety selection, cultivation techniques, and provide support for industry chain information. Roomi Agriculture will promote large-scale castor bean cultivation on its own farms as well as on partner farms. According to World Bank data, India accounts for over 80% of global castor oil production, playing a crucial role in the supply chain. Data from China's General Administration of Customs indicates that in 2024, China imported castor oil and chemically unmodified derivatives valued at RMB 3.75 billion, with India supplying RMB 3.74 billion of that total. The demand for castor oil is anticipated to remain strong, especially in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. This reliance renders global markets susceptible to price fluctuations caused by supply constraints, according to industry experts. Industry experts note that innovations in breeding and improved irrigation techniques could alleviate supply constraints; however, castor oil prices are likely to remain elevated due to persistent demand outpacing supply.

Tarar condoles demise of journalist's father

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday expressed deep grief over the death of the father of senior journalist Naveed Akbar. In his condolence message, the information minister expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy with Naveed Akbar and other family members. Tarar said that he was deeply saddened to hear the news of the death of Naveed Akbar's father, which was a great tragedy for the bereaved family. Parents are an invaluable gift, their passing away is a great shock and irreparable loss, he said adding that he shared the grief of the family in this hour of trial and prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.—APP

Net metering policy changes threaten solar energy growth

ISLAMABAD: The recent amendments in Pakistan's net metering policy pose a significant threat to the country's renewable energy sector, potentially halting investments worth billions and depriving both industries and households of affordable solar energy. In the modern era, solar power has emerged as an essential solution for reducing energy costs, ensuring sustainability, and meeting the growing electricity demands of consumers. However, the proposed reductions in net metering tariffs may significantly impact this progress, making solar power less accessible for businesses and residential users. This was stated by the participants of a ceremony of held to strengthen partnership with local distributors by a solar energy company. In response to these developments a globally recognized solar technology provider, has partnered with multiple companies in Pakistan to deliver cost-effective solar solutions. The objective of these agreements is to cater to the energy needs of industrial, commercial, and residential sectors, ensuring affordable and uninterrupted electricity supply. Industry experts warn that any policy shift that discourages solar adoption will have far-reaching economic consequences, particularly for industries already struggling with high electricity costs. During a recent discussion, the CEO of a leading solar energy company Trina Solar highlighted the benefits of modern solar modules, emphasizing their ability to enhance energy production while reducing the overall cost of electricity. He stressed that for a developing country like Pakistan, energy sustainability is not just a luxury but a necessity for economic growth and environmental stability. To ensure a brighter future, he urged policymakers to formulate a balanced and progressive energy strategy that actively supports the renewable energy sector rather than hindering it.—DNA

Motorcycle theft gang busted

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police arrested a key member of an organized motorcycle theft gang and recovered seven stolen motorcycles worth millions of rupees during a major crackdown on Wednesday.

An official told APP that the arrested suspect has been identified as Asif. He was taken into custody following an intelligence-based operation.

He said that during the initial interrogation, the suspect confessed to committing multiple motorcycle thefts in the Humak police jurisdiction.

He said efforts are underway to apprehend the accomplices and facilitators of the arrested suspect.

He said that operations against criminals depriving citizens of their valuable assets will continue. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq, reaffirmed the commitment of the Islamabad Police to ensure public safety through sustained crackdowns against criminal elements.

Salik reviews OPF performance, initiatives

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review the overall performance and initiatives of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF).

The meeting was attended by the Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), the Director General of Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment (BE&OE), Managing Director of OPF, Chairman of the Board of Governors (BoG) OPF, and other senior officials from the Ministry and OPF.

During the meeting, the minister took note of key initiatives, including the development of the PAK-TOK app. He proposed a logo design competition among the Ministry's attached departments, with the winning team receiving recognition for their efforts. Emphasizing the need for OPF to become a profit-generating entity, Salik Hussain urged all stakeholders to maximize their efforts in this regard.—APP



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Reduction in cotton production mars textiles' future

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that the continuous decline in cotton production and the constant increase in business costs have tarnished the future of Pakistan's largest industrial sector. He said that it has become difficult to continue business at the current electricity, gas, and tax rates. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the spinning units are closing down while Pakistan faces difficulties in the international market.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that apart from refunds and high interest rates, the textile sector is also facing problems like unilateral decisions and policy ambiguity, which is continuously decreasing investment in this sector. The business leader said that the weaving industry is currently more dependent on imported yarn, and misuse of the Export Facilitation Scheme is also on the rise. He noted that the textile industry is far from value addition, while research and development are non-existent. Textile exports depend more on the European Union and American markets. Still, we are far behind in introducing new and improved products. He observed that established government institutions also prefer lip service over something concrete. Mian

Zahid Hussain said that due to the IMF targets, the FBR's attitude is becoming harsher. As a result, the burden of various types of taxes on the export industry is increasing, and workers are being forced to work under severe pressure, which is creating problems. The ongoing terrorism in the country is also hurting the overall situation, which has reduced the possibility of any improvement. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the fear of declining textile exports in the current financial year is growing, affecting the export targets. Due to the lack of a clear textile policy, this vital industry is losing its direction. He said that if the focus is given to value addition, a significant increase in Pakistan's exports in the short term is possible, which can also increase employment. At

present, most of the units are operating below their production capacity, which is mainly due to distrust and a lack of cooperation between the industry and the government. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the government has tried to reduce the problems faced by the industry to some extent by reducing the interest rate to 12 percent. However, the interest rate in Pakistan is still much higher than in other countries in the region. Therefore, he said, the industry's capital shortage will not be eliminated unless the interest rate is reduced from ten percent to single digits. Mian Zahid Hussain said the textile industry urgently needs to resolve its refund issues, ensure its supply of electricity and gas at competitive rates, and increase cotton production.

Eastern Europe's anxiety

RECENTLY, "strategic autonomy" has become a central issue in Europe and a focal point of global attention. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has drastically altered Europe's security landscape, exposing significant weaknesses in the European security system. After the new US administration openly "betrayed" Europe, the illusion that Europe's security could rely on the US was shattered, and "strategic autonomy" finally gained the attention of the EU and its member states. The core of achieving "strategic autonomy" for Europe is to build an independent and strong European security system. France and Germany are particularly focused on this issue. French President Emmanuel Macron publicly declared the goal of providing a nuclear umbrella for Europe, while German chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz has led the push for a fiscal expenditure plan to inject one trillion euros into Germany's infrastructure and defense industries over the next decade, which has been passed by Germany's parliament. Although many European countries have signaled positive intentions toward achieving "strategic autonomy," divisions still exist within Europe regarding the approach to this issue. Notably, differing opinions from Eastern European countries are particularly evident. For a long time, the differences between Eastern and Western European countries in terms of economy, society, culture and development - particularly the differing values surrounding "European identity" - have often led to disputes over major policy issues. This contradiction is also reflected in the attitudes of Eastern European countries toward the European "strategic autonomy" plan. For example, Poland strongly supports continued aid to Ukraine and the EU's proposed "rearming Europe" plan, and it has announced plans to increase defense spending to 5 percent of its GDP by 2025. In contrast, Hungary has shown indifference to aid for Ukraine and opposed the EU's defense strengthening proposal. While the UK and France are leading efforts to actively form a "peacekeeping force" for Ukraine, Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine, has stated that it will not send troops. Regarding the nuclear umbrella, Polish President Andrzej Duda publicly called on the US to deploy nuclear weapons to Polish soil, indicating that Poland is not as enthusiastic about Macron's proposal of a nuclear umbrella. The significant differences and disagreements among Eastern European countries on European security issues can be attributed to two main reasons. First, the European "strategic autonomy" plan fails to alleviate the longstanding security anxieties of Eastern European countries. Additionally, with the US military presence in Eastern Europe, countries like Poland and Romania rely, to varying degrees, on US security guarantees. With Europe's longstanding state of "military neglect," these countries are clearly more willing to trust the protection offered by the US. Poland's reluctance to deeply engage in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Hungary's decision to ease relations with Russia are examples of "self-preservation" actions that are directly related to the belief that Europe cannot provide adequate security guarantees. Second, the interests of Eastern European countries do not completely align with the EU's security plan. When faced with the choice between "building infrastructure" and "ensuring security," Eastern European countries generally prioritize the former.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 285

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Trump upending rules-based order

THE world's major growth engines are about to run in reverse. The policies and uncertainties of US President Donald Trump's second administration have hit a sluggish global economy with a transformational exogenous shock. Risks are especially worrisome in both the United States and China, which have collectively accounted for a little more than 40 percent of cumulative global gross domestic product growth since 2010. America is now the problem, not the solution. Long the anchor of the rules-based international order, the US has turned protectionist, posing major risks to an already-fragile global trade cycle. At the same time, Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement has driven a powerful wedge between the US and Europe and divided North America, with Canada's very independence in Trump's crosshairs. The central role of the US in sustaining post-World War II geopolitical stability has been shattered. The US will be unable to put the genie back in the bottle. Trump's shocking actions have eroded the trust that has underpinned America's global leadership, and the damage will be evident long after Trump has left the scene. Having once abdicated its moral authority as the anchor of the free world, who is to say it can't happen again? This breakdown in trust will cast a long and lasting shadow over economic performance, not least in the US itself, where it is affecting business decision-making, especially the costly long-term commitments associated with hiring and capital spending. Businesses need to scale their future operations relative to confident expectations of future growth trajectories - now an increasingly uncertain proposition. Asset values and consumer confidence, too, have been shaken. Uncertainty, the enemy of decision-making, is likely to freeze the most dynamic segments of the US economy. For China, state-directed policy guidance might temper the initial blow of a Trump policy shock. But the pressures of Trump's tariff escalation will undermine China's export-led growth model, which is especially problematic for economic growth, given the lingering weakness of China's domestic demand. China vows to take 'all necessary measures' after imposition of latest US tariffs. The country's long-promised consumer-led rebalancing of the economy remains more of a slogan than an actual shift in the sources of Chinese growth, especially with a deficient social safety net that continues to encourage fear-driven precautionary saving. China's just-announced 30-point action plan to boost household demand draws much-needed attention to the seemingly chronic plight of the Chinese consumer, but it offers only modest support to an inadequate social safety net. The Trump shock is likely not only to exacerbate the Sino-American conflict but also weaken both countries' growth prospects significantly. Don't count on other economies filling this void. Eventually India might be able to take up some of the slack, but its relatively small share of world GDP - currently 8.5 percent in purchasing-power-parity terms, compared to 34 percent for China and the US combined - means that day is in the distant future. The same is true of Europe.

The tale of two deserts

Qamar Bashir



The Dasht-e-Margo is a desert etched into history. In 325 BCE, Alexander the Great lost thousands of his soldiers to thirst and exhaustion while attempting to cross this merciless landscape. More than two millennia later, its terrain remains untouched, unreclaimed, and largely uninhabited—where nomadic tribes still live as they did centuries ago, and modern development has yet to arrive. It is a land suspended between ancient endurance and modern abandonment. Yet, halfway across Asia, I had once witnessed a desert of similar character—unforgiving and untamed—undergo...

AS a television news producer (1986-1991), I've covered my share of human tragedy, bureaucratic inertia, and moments of quiet hope. But few stories have stayed with me as powerfully as a journey through the deserts of Balochistan—where a tragic accident illuminated not just systemic neglect, but also the remarkable contrast between two deserts: one forsaken and fossilized in time, and the other transformed into a symbol of possibility through vision, science, and human resolve. Our assignment began with a grim dispatch: a head-on collision between two passenger buses near Dalbandin, a remote town in southwestern Pakistan, roughly 400 kilometers from Quetta. Departing from the provincial capital at dusk, we drove through fading light and battered roads, arriving in Naushkey by midnight. At dawn, we resumed our journey. But as the sun rose, the road disappeared altogether—claimed by the vast, unmarked expanse of the Dasht-e-Margo, literally the "Desert of Death." There was no map to follow, only hardened mud plains, windswept dunes, and the intuition of our local cameraman, who led us like a nomadic guide across the skeletal terrain. By midday, we reached Dalbandin, where we were received in a modest roadside rest house by the local Assistant Commissioner. What awaited us was chilling. The two buses, barreling at speeds exceeding 100 kilometers per hour along an unmarked track, had collided head-on and burst into flames. There were no survivors—just twisted steel, scorched earth, and the acrid scent of human tragedy. It was a disaster shaped not only by fate but by decades of neglect. In a desert of over 347,000 square kilometers—larger than Germany—there were no roads, no signs, no protections. Just emptiness and vulnerability. The Dasht-e-Margo is a desert etched into history. In 325 BCE, Alexander the Great lost thousands of his soldiers to thirst and exhaustion while attempting to cross this merciless landscape. More than two millennia later, its terrain remains untouched, unreclaimed, and largely uninhabited—where nomadic tribes still live as they did centuries ago, and modern development has yet to arrive. It is a land suspended between ancient endurance and modern abandonment. Yet, halfway across Asia, I had once witnessed a desert of similar character—unforgiving and untamed—undergo a profound transformation. The Taklamakan Desert in China's Xinjiang region,

slightly smaller in size at 337,000 square kilometers, was once considered one of the most dangerous deserts in the world. Its very name means, "Go in, and you won't come out." Silk Road traders feared its shifting sands and sudden storms. For centuries, it remained a death zone for caravans and a barrier to settlement. But in the past few decades, the Taklamakan has defied its ancient reputation. Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has undertaken one of the most ambitious ecological projects in human history: the creation of a "Green Wall" to contain the desert's expansion and regenerate its periphery. Over 100 million drought-resistant trees—poplars, tamarisks, and desert willows—have been planted, stretching over 3,000 kilometers around the desert's edge. Drip irrigation systems, soil stabilization techniques, and satellite-guided planting have reclaimed thousands of hectares of land. What satellite images once showed as a yellow void now reveals a ring of green steadily encroaching on the sands. And beyond the ecological triumph lies a deeply human story: that of how Xinjiang's local populations—Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and others—were turned from desert survivors into stakeholders of transformation. Former herders and subsistence farmers were trained as tree planters, irrigation workers, and forest guardians. More than 300,000 jobs have been created in Xinjiang's forestry and agricultural sectors since 2010. Eco-compensation programs paid villagers to plant trees instead of overgrazing livestock, and fruit orchards—producing pomegranates, walnuts, and dates—have flourished where once there was only dust. This economic revitalization has drastically improved livelihoods and reduced the appeal of insurgent ideologies, replacing alienation with agency. It is no coincidence that the Taklamakan's transformation coincided with broader development in Xinjiang. Once plagued by separatist unrest and violence, Xinjiang has seen its GDP per capita rise from \$3,000 in 2010 to over \$8,000 in 2023. Poverty rates have fallen from over 30 percent to near zero. High-speed rail now links its cities to the rest of China. New industries—textiles, solar energy, food processing—have taken root, and tourism has emerged around the newly greened belts of desert. Terrorist incidents have dropped by over 90 percent in the last decade, not solely due to security measures, but because people were offered a stake in stability.

A key to this success lies in water. Like Balochistan, Xinjiang is bone-dry and vulnerable to drought. But China's investment in water management has been transformative: the construction of reservoirs and canals, the deployment of solar-powered pumps, and the implementation of efficient drip irrigation. These systems were built not only by state planners but by local laborers, whose participation ensured sustainability. Ownership of forest zones was assigned to communities, linking environmental restoration with livelihood security.

The comparison between these two deserts—Balochistan's Dasht-e-Margo and China's Taklamakan—reveals the stark divergence between potential and action. It is not geography but governance that determines whether a desert remains a death zone or becomes a cradle of renewal. In Balochistan, where underground aquifers are vanishing and over 62 percent of the land is water-stressed, similar rehabilitation could be attempted. The ancient karez system, once used to irrigate Baloch settlements, could be revived and augmented with solar desalination technologies. And afforestation programs, modeled after Pakistan's successful Billion Tree Tsunami in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, could stabilize soil and restore ecological balance. What the Taklamakan has shown is that with vision, investment, and inclusion, even the harshest terrain can bloom. What is needed in Balochistan is not merely funding, but a shift in philosophy: from command to collaboration, from marginalization to empowerment. The story of these two deserts is not just about climate or culture. It is a story about choices. One desert was seen as doomed, but was transformed by patience, science, and people. The other, still majestic and mysterious, waits under the sun for a similar awakening. Pakistan has the land, the talent, and the tools. What it needs is the will—the kind that sees deserts not as dead zones, but as frontiers of possibility. If the sands of Taklamakan can host orchards, if once-forgotten plains can hum with new life, then surely the Dasht-e-Margo too can echo with the sounds of roads being paved, trees being planted, water flowing once more. The desert will always whisper to us. The question is—will we finally listen?

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

From the cold war to Ukraine

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The historical record suggests that nuclear arsenals function primarily as deterrents rather than offensive weapons. A nuclear-armed state must consider several variables before initiating an attack: the potential for retaliation, the strategic gains versus losses and the rationality of leadership decision-making. The fundamental constraint is mutually assured destruction. Even if one side possesses superior intelligence and can pinpoint enemy nuclear assets with high precision...

THE Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 remains one of the most pivotal moments in Cold War history, serving as a foundational case study for nuclear strategy, deterrence and the psychology of brinkmanship. The crisis demonstrated the perils of nuclear escalation, highlighting that the threshold for nuclear warfare was exceedingly high due to the principle of mutually assured destruction (MAD). The central criterion for a nuclear first strike rested on the assumption that the opposing side's command-and-control system had either collapsed—leaving it incapable of retaliatory action—or that the adversary's nuclear arsenal had been grossly misrepresented. Despite various theoretical scenarios that have been proposed, the reality remains that nuclear weapons are almost never deployed due to their catastrophic implications. Nonetheless, contemporary geopolitical actors continue to invoke nuclear threats as strategic leverage. Russian President Vladimir Putin's rhetoric surrounding nuclear warfare in the context of the Ukraine conflict exemplifies a contemporary iteration of this strategic posture what may be termed the "insanity gambit." Throughout the Cold War and beyond, scholars and policymakers have grappled with the question of whether nuclear weapons could ever be feasibly used in conflict. The historical record suggests that nuclear arsenals function primarily as deterrents rather than offensive weapons. A nuclear-armed state must consider several variables before initiating an attack: the potential for retaliation, the strategic gains versus losses and the rationality of leadership decision-making. The fundamental constraint is mutually assured destruction. Even if one side possesses superior intelligence and can pinpoint enemy nuclear assets with high precision, the likelihood of total nuclear disarmament through a first strike remains dubious. Technological advancements in second-strike capabilities such as submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and hardened silos ensure that a retaliatory response remains possible even in the wake of a large-scale nuclear attack. This reinforces the logic that nuclear war is an instrument of deterrence rather than a practical tool of warfare. Further complicating nuclear strategy is the advent of alternative operational doctrines. During the Cold War, there were proposals to neutralize enemy nuclear capabilities through clandestine operations, including deploying special forces to penetrate command centers or utilizing chemical agents to incapacitate launch personnel. However, these strategies faced significant ethical, legal and logistical obstacles.

Ultimately, any direct nuclear strike on a nuclear power would precipitate a global crisis, reinforcing the MAD doctrine. Despite these constraints, there exists a theoretical loophole in nuclear deterrence: the perception of irrationality. The "insanity gambit" hinges on convincing adversaries that a leader is willing to accept national annihilation in pursuit of strategic goals. This doctrine is not entirely novel figures such as Richard Nixon reportedly employed a "madman theory" to make adversaries believe he was unpredictable and capable of extreme measures. However, unlike Nixon's strategy, which relied on calculated unpredictability, the insanity gambit requires a leader to genuinely convince both external and internal audiences that nuclear war is a plausible outcome. Putin's nuclear rhetoric in the Ukraine war illustrates an application of this gambit. On multiple occasions, he has suggested that Western military support for Ukraine risks escalating into a nuclear confrontation. By invoking nuclear warfare, he aims to instill fear among Western policymakers, compelling them to adopt more accommodating policies toward Russia. The underlying premise is that the West, believing Russia might irrationally resort to nuclear arms, would be forced into strategic concessions to avert catastrophe. For the insanity gambit to succeed, several conditions must be met:

1. Credibility The leader must convincingly portray an intention to use nuclear weapons, even at great personal and national cost.
2. Conviction The leader's own government and military must believe in the plausibility of such an action.
3. Strategic Leverage The gambit must create a significant shift in adversarial policies.

However, the viability of this strategy is questionable. Unlike conventional deterrence, which relies on rational calculations, the insanity gambit requires an actor to appear so irrational that even their own military and political elites fear escalation. This paradoxically weakens internal cohesion and risks miscalculations. If Russia's leadership, military command and citizens do not perceive an imminent existential threat, then the credibility of the insanity gambit collapses. Furthermore, the historical precedent set by Hiroshima and Nagasaki underscores the reluctance of nuclear-armed states to engage in direct nuclear conflict. Since 1945, nuclear weapons have functioned as strategic deterrents rather than offensive tools. Even during the Cuban Missile Crisis when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war, both the United States and the Soviet Union ultimately sought diplomatic resolutions

over military escalation. The existence of second-strike capabilities further disincentivizes first-use scenarios, as retaliation remains assured. Understanding the insanity gambit within the broader context of international relations reveals several key insights:

1. Psychological Warfare and Diplomacy - Nuclear threats, even if unlikely to materialize, can shape diplomatic engagements. By introducing nuclear risk-taking into the strategic calculus, Russia aims to influence Western policy on Ukraine.
2. Risk of Escalation - While the probability of an actual nuclear strike remains low, persistent nuclear rhetoric heightens tensions and increases the likelihood of miscalculations or accidental escalations.
3. Erosion of Deterrence Stability - If nuclear threats are used too frequently without follow-through, their deterrent value diminishes. Repeated invocations of nuclear war without action can lead adversaries to call a bluff, thereby undermining strategic credibility.
4. The Role of Second-Strike Capabilities - The United States and NATO's established second-strike capabilities serve as a fundamental check against Russia's nuclear threats. Even if Russia were to use nuclear weapons, a retaliatory strike would ensure its own destruction.

The Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated the fragility of nuclear risk-taking and the necessity of diplomatic resolution in high-stakes confrontations. Contemporary applications of nuclear threats, particularly in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine, reflect a calculated attempt to manipulate adversarial policy through strategic deception. The insanity gambit, while theoretically compelling, remains an unreliable and high-risk strategy. For it to work, Putin must convince both external adversaries and internal elites of his willingness to embrace nuclear catastrophe. However, the structural realities of deterrence, second-strike capabilities and historical precedent render actual nuclear conflict unlikely. Rather than heralding a new era of nuclear warfare, Putin's nuclear rhetoric underscores the enduring relevance of deterrence theory. The lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis remain pertinent: nuclear weapons are tools of deterrence rather than instruments of war and strategic stability depends on credible but rational leadership. The insanity gambit, while an intriguing theoretical construct, ultimately serves as a psychological maneuver rather than a viable military strategy. In this sense, nuclear risk-taking remains a precarious endeavor—one that, despite its rhetorical impact, is unlikely to alter the fundamental dynamics of global power structures.

Briefs

Iran envoy
lauds Pak
support to...

FROM PAGE 01
More people worldwide are holding the perpetrators and their supporters accountable for their crimes against humanity. At the core of his message was the importance of unity and solidarity within the Muslim world. He called upon Muslims around the globe to unite and raise their voices in support of Palestine and Gaza, underscoring that unity is essential for overcoming the aggression of the Zionist regime. As International Quds Day was observed, the Ambassador urged the audience to join in collective prayer for the liberation of all oppressed Muslims and the freedom of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Concluding his remarks, the Ambassador once again thanked everyone for attending and highlighted the sacred nature of this gathering. The Ambassador's words resonated deeply with the spirit of unity and resistance, urging the Muslim world to stand together for justice, peace, and the liberation of Palestine.

Shehbaz
stresses
need to...

FROM PAGE 01
performance from the economic team, the tax-to-GDP ratio had reached 10.6%, marking the highest achievement in the last four years. "This performance reflects a 26% increase in tax collection so far," he added. "Pakistan's tax collection target for the year 2024-25 was set at Rs12.9 trillion, and despite the IMF initially suggesting a downward revision of this target, I personally insisted on maintaining the original figure. Following successful negotiations, the target, which was initially revised down to Rs12.1 trillion, was adjusted to Rs12.3 trillion," he added. PM Shehbaz underscored that the government had planned to fast-track the cases relating to taxes pending in the tribunals worth billions of rupees and informed that as a result of this decision, the government had recovered Rs34 billion.

Federal
Govt
approves...

FROM PAGE 01
the federal government is proceeding with the project, even though it begins and ends in Punjab. The National Fiscal Pact, signed under the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) directives, prohibits such projects from being federally funded. In January, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif instructed the Punjab government to finance at least half of the motorway's cost, but no final decision has been made. ECNEC was informed that 90% of the land acquisition for Package-I of the motorway is complete. The National Highway Authority (NHA) has been permitted to commence construction from Lahore Ring Road to Raiwind-Kasur Road Interchange through Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) funds, based on the originally approved PCI.

IMF reaches
staff-level
agreement...

FROM PAGE 01
the programme to around \$2 billion," the IMF stated. The country's finance minister expressed optimism with results of policies that the government has executed in line with the lender. "We remain committed to stay the course and continue to execute structural reforms with respect to taxation, energy and SOEs to put our country on the trajectory of sustainable productivity and export-led growth," said Muhammad Aurangzeb, the finance minister, while talking to Geo News from China. Inflation in the South Asian country has been falling for several months, dropping to 1.5% in February, after soaring to around 40% in May 2023. Pakistan maintains that its \$350 billion economy has stabilised under a \$7 billion IMF bailout, which helped avert a default.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins hosted iftar dinner for players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club (men and women), at his residence. Seen in the picture are High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmad, DHM Romanian embassy Edaurd Preda, Olympian Khawaja Junaid, Mehmood Ahmad, Sohail Janjua, Ansar M Bhatti, Imran, Azeem, Nasir, Khyber, Hassan, Awan and others. - DNA

Neesham, Seifert star as NZ
thump Pakistan in fifth T20I

New Zealand have an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series

SPORTS DESK

WELLINGTON: James Neesham's five-wicket haul, followed by Tim Seifert's swash-buckling half-century gave New Zealand a commanding nine-wicket victory in the final T20I of the five-match series against Pakistan at the Sky Stadium on Wednesday. Set to chase a modest 129, the home side comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just two wickets and 60 balls to spare, courtesy of a blazing opening stand between Seifert and Finn Allen. The duo added a quickfire 93 runs until Allen was dismissed by Sufiyan Muqeem in the seventh over. He scored 27 off 12 deliveries with the help of five fours and a six. Muqeem caused a stir in New Zealand's run chase by getting in-form Mark Chapman stumped in his next over. However, Seifert continued his onslaught and steered New Zealand over the line with an unbeaten 87 off 38 deliveries, studded with six fours and 10 sixes. He was also involved in a one-side 28-run partnership with Daryl Mitchell, who scored two not out. For Pakistan, Sufi-



yan Muqeem was the solitary wicket-taker, making two scalps for just six runs in his two overs. New Zealand captain Michael Bracewell's decision to put Pakistan into bat paid dividends as the touring side could register a modest total on the board despite Salman Ali Agha's half-century.

The visitors got off to an unwanted start as they lost hard-hitting opener Hasan Nawaz (0) in the second over with just five runs on the board. Following the early hiccup, Omaid Bin Yousuf joined Mohammad Harris in the middle for a brief 18-run stand, which was followed by their back-to-back dismiss-

als. Harris scored 11 off 17 deliveries with the help of two boundaries, while Yousuf made seven. The green shirts then lost two more wickets in quick succession as Usman Khan (seven) and Abdul Samad (four) perished cheaply. Their dismissals had reduced Pakistan to 52/5 in 10.2 overs until skipper Agha and experienced all-rounder Shadab recorded an anchoring partnership. The duo added an important 54 runs for the sixth wicket until Shadab was removed by James Neesham on the first delivery of the 17th over. The all-rounder scored 28 off 20 deliveries with the help of five boundaries. Neesham inflicted another blow on the visitors as he sent Jahadad Khan back in the same over as Pakistan slipped further to 108/7 in 16.4 overs. Agha also fell victim to Neesham in the penultimate over and walked back after top-scoring for Pakistan with a 39-ball 51, comprised of six fours and a six. Neesham was the standout bowler for New Zealand, taking five wickets for just 22 runs in his four overs, followed by Duffy with two, while Ish Sodhi and Ben Sears chipped in with one scalp apiece.

Iran coach lauds
Mehdi after WC
qualification

'He is the best player on the field from the Iranian national team,' says coach Ghalenoei

IRAN coach Amir Ghalenoei praised Mehdi Taremi's impact after the Inter Milan striker scored twice in a 2-2 draw with Uzbekistan on Tuesday that secured qualification for the 2026 World Cup finals. Taremi has endured an inconsistent season due to injury since joining the Italian side from Porto on a free transfer last summer but his two goals made all the difference for the national team in Tehran. "A great player must help both technically and physically," Ghalenoei said. "Taremi is one of them, and even though he plays for a great team and is not in good condition and could have missed the season, he played and was with the team and played for the people. "He became the best player on the field and I am happy that, in most games, he is the best player on the field from the Iranian national team." Taremi's first goal at the Azadi Stadium came in the 52nd minute when he smashed home a volley to cancel out HojimatErkinov's 16th minute opener for the visitors. And while AbbasbekFayzullaev restored Uzbekistan's lead a minute later, it was Mehdi Taremi who struck from close range seven minutes from time to secure the point Iran required to secure their place at the finals in North America. Taremi's goal-scoring display, which took his tally to 54 in 92 internationals, came after the 32-year-old missed Iran's 2-0 win over the United Arab Emirates on Thursday due to illness while groin issues have impacted his season in Milan. He has started only 14 times since his switch to Italy after five seasons as a prolific scorer in Portugal for Rio Ave and Porto but his exploits on Tuesday helped Iran seal a fourth consecutive trip to the World Cup. With their place now assured, Ghalenoei has set his sights on taking the Iranians into the knockout rounds of the expanded World Cup for the first time. - Agencies

PSL exhibition
match at
Arbab Niaz
Stadium
in limbo

DNA

LAHORE: The highly-anticipated Pakistan Super League (PSL) exhibition match between former champions Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators has come in jeopardy after PCB analysis of the Arbab Niaz Stadium, sources told Geo News on Wednesday. According to the details, a PCB team visited the venue in Peshawar and thoroughly analysed its outfield, pitch dressing rooms, commentary and media boxes. As per the sources, the team deemed the pitch and outfield of the venue unsatisfactory and claimed that the dressing rooms lack basic necessities, while the media and commentary and media boxes also severely lack facilities. This highly anticipated encounter, scheduled to be played 8, is a part of the PCB's efforts to engage local fans and build excitement ahead of the 10th edition of the PSL. The board aims to generate momentum for the tournament while reaffirming its commitment to expanding cricket across Pakistan.

Brazil thrashed by Argentina
FIFA in World Cup qualifying

WEB DESK

BUENOS AIRES: Brazil captain Marquinhos has apologised to the fans after an "embarrassing" display in their 4-1 World Cup qualifying defeat by Argentina in Buenos Aires. Julian Alvarez, Enzo Fernandez, Alexis Mac Allister and Giuliano Simeone were on target for Argentina, whose World Cup qualification was confirmed before kick-off by Bolivia's draw with Uruguay. Matheus Cunha replied for the five-time

world champions, who suffered their worst defeat in World Cup qualifying and are not yet guaranteed of a place in next year's finals. "What we did here can't happen again," Marquinhos told Brazilian TV station Globo. "It's hard to talk about it in the heat of the moment. It's embarrassing." He added: "We started the game badly, far below what we could do and they're on a great run of confidence. They knew how to play smart. I'm sorry for our fans." Argentina, who were without Lionel Messi, went 2-0 ahead in the opening 12 minutes through Alvarez and Fernandez. A mistake from Cristian Romero allowed Cunha to pull one back, but Mac Allister restored Argentina's two-goal advantage before half-time. Argentina wasted several chances to extend their lead before Simeone wrapped up the win with 19 minutes left, sparking wild celebrations among the home fans. "It was a historic result, winning by 4-1, and that makes us really proud, I'm so happy for the fans," said Atletico forward



ing his team and I don't think there was any intention to offend anyone." Argentina top the South American table with 31 points from 14 matches, 16 points clear of seventh-placed Venezuela, with the top six automatically qualifying for next year's finals. Brazil are fourth on 21 points and not yet guaranteed of qualification with four matches remaining. Elsewhere, Paraguay stayed fifth and one point clear of sixth-placed Colombia after the sides drew 2-2 in Barranquilla. Luis Diaz and Jhon Duran put Colombia 2-0 up inside 13 minutes. Junior Alonso pulled one back just before the break, before Julio Enciso levelled in the second half.

Djokovic trounces Musetti to reach Miami quarters

The Serb to face USA's Korda in the quarter-final on Thursday

MIAMI: Novak Djokovic won 12 of the last 14 games of his match against Lorenzo Musetti to crush the Italian 6-2 6-2 and move into the quarter-finals of the Miami Open in his best performance since the Australian Open. The momentum in the rain-delayed match seemed to swing in Djokovic's favour when he complained to the chair umpire in the opening set over a serve clock warning. That frustration seemed to spark the Serbian, who broke the next game for a 4-2 lead and never looked back in the presence of an adoring crowd that included tennis greats Serena Williams and Juan Martin del Potro. "I was star-struck. It was amazing to see first DelPo, obviously a long-time friend and a rival, so happy to have him around and get his support from the box," Djokovic said. "It was amazing, it was (the) first time to have DelPo in the box, so I want to thank him really for coming. And Serena, that was a surprise." Six-times Miami champion Djokovic crushed an exquisite backhand winner for a 5-2 second-set lead and sealed the win when Musetti double-faulted on match point. "Actually, when I had that

down-the-line passing shot, I pointed to her and asked her whether it was okay," he added. "She said, 'yeah, it was fine'. If Serena says it was fine, then it was amazing by everyone else's standards." Next up for fourth-seeded Novak Djokovic

is American Sebastian Korda, who prevailed 6-4 2-6 6-4 over veteran Frenchman Gael Monfils earlier in the day. Korda lost a thrilling three-setter to 24-times Grand Slam champion Djokovic in their only previous meeting in the Adelaide final in 2023.



Argentine Francisco Cerundolo upset three-times major finalist Casper Ruud 6-4 6-2 to reach the quarter-final of the tournament for the third time in four years. Cerundolo never faced a break as he pummeled the fifth-seeded Norwegian with six aces and 21 winners, setting up a meeting with 14th seed Grigor Dimitrov, who defeated home hope Brandon Nakashima 6-4 7-5. On the women's side, Italian sixth-seed Jasmine Paolini saved seven of the eight break points she faced to defeat Magda Linette and reach the Miami Open semi-finals. Paolini will next face world number one and first-time Miami semi-finalist Aryna Sabalenka, who beat China's Zheng Qinwen 6-2 7-5 in a rematch of their 2024 Australian Open final. "Always tough battles against her," Sabalenka said after extending her head-to-head record against Zheng to 6-0. "Today I had to work really hard, especially in that second set. I'm really proud of the way I handled my emotions. "Even when something didn't work well, I was there and I was fighting for every point." - Agencies

Sana asks
PTI to use
parliamentary
forum

FROM PAGE 01
about founder of PTI's participation for discussing national challenges including terrorism, he said that members of PTI could make request with speaker NA regarding the matter. About recalling national security meeting, he said national security session could be summoned again if PTI wants to give input with serious attitude in rooting out terrorism from this country. Commenting on Nawaz Sharif's role for Balochistan, he said Nawaz Sharif is ready to play vital role for peace and prosperity of Balochistan region. To a question, he said the government is ready to sit with those people of Balochistan who like peace and development for provincial areas.

Govt takes
notice of Pak
journalists'...

FROM PAGE 01
The spokesperson emphasized that Pakistani passports clearly state they are not valid for travel to Israel. Therefore, such visits are not legally possible, and Pakistan's stance on Israel remains unchanged. He reiterated that Pakistan does not recognize Israel and fully supports the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital.

ECP
disqualifies
24 former...

FROM PAGE 01
The ECP stated in its ruling that these former members will not be able to participate in general, by-elections, or Senate elections until they submit required details. The former MNAs who were declared ineligible include Khurram Dastgir Khan, Mohsin Nawaz Rana, Muhammad Adil, Rana Ishaq Khan, Kamaluddin, and Ismatullah. Four women - Samina Matloob, Nasiba, Shameem Ara Panhwar and Rubina Irfan - have also been disqualified. The ECP declared former members of the Sindh Assembly, including Adil Ahmed, Hizbullah Bhayro, Arsalan Taj Hussain, Arif Mustafa Jatoi, Imran Ali Shah, Ali Ghulam and Tahira as disqualified.

UK yet to
decide on
lifting...

FROM PAGE 01
A delegation of the UK's DfT had visited Pakistan to evaluate aviation safety standards in February as well. "No announcement has been made by the UK DfT nor has any letter been received," the statement by the spokesperson said today. "All institutions related to aviation in Pakistan are in constant contact with them and are carrying out their work in a coordinated manner."

US adds
80 firms...

FROM PAGE 01
the export control list on Tuesday. Over 50 are based in China. Others are in Taiwan, Iran, Pakistan, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. The listings are intended to restrict China's ability to develop high-performance computing capabilities, quantum technologies and advanced AI, and impede China's development of its hypersonic weapons program.

Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF
SHAMA YASEEN
JUDGE FAMILY COURT
RAWALPINDI
Suit for recovery Gold Ornaments Muhammad Azhar Versus Mst. Maria Khanum Notice to, Mst. Maria Khanum D/o Aftab Hussain R/o Dhoke Ali Akbar, House No. kh-272, Mohallah Muslim Town, Sadiqabad, Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 27.03.2025 at 9 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Briefs

Rupee gains 16 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday gained 16 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.26 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.42. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.50 and Rs282, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 17 paise to close at Rs 302.39 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.56, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.86, whereas a decline of 23 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs361.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 362.05. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 paise and 05 paise to close at Rs 76.30 and Rs 74.70, respectively. —APP

Gold price remains unchanged at Rs317,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed no change on Wednesday and was traded at existing rate of Rs.317,800, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 grams of 22 karat gold were also traded at the same prices of Rs 272,462 and Rs.249,765 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,475 and Rs.2,979 respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$3,021 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$33.10, the Association reported.—APP

PSX stays bullish, gains 1,139.14 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 1,139.14 points, a positive change of 0.98 percent, closing at 117,772.31 points as compared to 116,633.17 points on the last trading day. A total of 356,729,109 shares were traded during the day as compared to 268,098,907 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs37,498 billion against Rs19,455 billion on the last trading day. As many as 438 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 206 of them recorded gains and 167 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 65 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Pak Elektron with 29,179,304 shares at Rs47.48 per share, PSO with 26,879,128 shares at Rs419.93 per share and Cnergyco PK with 26,879,128 shares at Rs8.00 per share.—APP

Sahiwal Plant sets up training facility local youths

ISLAMABAD: The 1320 MW Sahiwal coal power plant has set up a state-of-the-art training facility for local youth as part of its commitment to sustainable growth and community support. This initiative reflects the plant's long-term vision of promoting skill development, fostering local talent, and ensuring that the surrounding community benefits from the economic activities generated by the power station. The modern facility includes 14 classrooms equipped with projectors, digital whiteboards, and multimedia resources, enhancing the learning experience. It also features 15 practical training rooms with industry-standard tools and equipment, allowing students to gain hands-on skills in fields like welding, electrical work, and thermal power plant systems. Said a press release.—APP

Turkiye, US want to lift defense industry restrictions after talks

Ties between the US and Turkiye have drifted away from a strategic partnership in recent years as disagreements between the two long-standing treaty allies have widened

ANKARA/WASHINGTON: Turkiye and the United States want to remove obstacles to defense industry cooperation, a Turkish Foreign Ministry source said on Wednesday, after talks between the NATO allies' top diplomats in Washington. On Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan kicked off a two-day visit to Washington, where he was expected to ask Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other US officials to remove US sanctions on Turkiye and allow it back into a crucial fighter jet program. The visit comes as Ankara seeks warmer ties with Washington under the administration of President Donald Trump and just days after a phone call between Trump and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan that a top Trump aide described as "transformational." The top Turkish diplomat's visit also comes at a critical time for Erdogan, after his main political rival and Istanbul's mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu, was jailed pending trial on Sunday, prompting the largest

anti-government protests in over a decade. Ties between the US and Turkiye have drifted away from a strategic partnership in recent years as disagreements between the two long-standing treaty allies have widened. The administration of former President Joe Biden kept Turkiye at arm's length over what it saw as the fellow NATO member's close ties with Russia. Under Trump, who views Moscow much more favorably, Ankara is hoping for a warmer relationship with Washington. It also plans to capitalize on the personal ties between the two leaders. During the meeting with Fidan and Rubio on Tuesday, both sides "clearly put forth their political will to lift obstacles to cooperation in the defense industry field," the source said, adding they also followed up on matters discussed between Trump and Erdogan. "Technical talks will be held for the resolution of existing problems," the person added, without elaborating. During his first term, Trump initially

ignored advice from his aides to impose sanctions on Turkiye under its Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) over Ankara's acquisition of Russian S-400 air defense missile systems in 2019. He then took the step in 2020. That acquisition also led to Turkiye's removal from the F-35 jet program, where it was a manufacturer and buyer. Ankara says its removal is unjust and illegal, and has demanded to rejoin or be reimbursed for its investment in the program. Conversations between the allies on how to resolve the S-400 deadlock were ongoing under Biden. Turkiye had pledged to keep the systems non-operational, a source familiar with the discussions said, but a breakthrough never came. A Turkish official, requesting anonymity, told Reuters ahead of Fidan's visit that Ankara was aiming to agree with Washington that keeping the S-400s non-operational can be enough to resolve the matter. During the Biden era, the allies had settled

into a new phase of relations, with a more transactional focus rather than based on shared values, as differences over policies on Syria, the war in Gaza, and judicial matters persisted. Since coming back into office on January 20, Trump upended Biden's policy to isolate Moscow and provide unwavering support to Kyiv and instead focused on ending Russia's war in Ukraine. His shift spooked European leaders, who feared Washington could be turning its back to Europe and bolstered Ankara's role as a potential partner in reshaping European security. The Turkish official said discussions between Washington and Ankara had "taken a new dimension" after Trump's shift in approach to Moscow. "If US sanctions on Russia are to be lifted, it becomes illogical for CAATSA to be implemented on third countries. As much as this issue is about Turkiye-USA ties, it is also about Turkiye-Russia ties," the official added. Sources familiar with the matter said

the phone call between Erdogan and Trump may bring positive momentum to conversations in coming days, though no promises were made. "The president had a great conversation with Erdogan a couple of days ago. Really transformational, I would describe it," Trump's special envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff said in an interview with right-wing podcaster Tucker Carlson. Exclusion from the F-35 program pushed Turkiye to purchase 40 Lockheed Martin Block-70 F-16 fighter jets. However, despite agreeing on the procurement, there has been little progress on the acquisition for months. The Turkish source said Fidan and Rubio also discussed head of state-level visits to be held in the coming period, without elaborating. The two also emphasized the importance of stability in Syria and in the Balkans, while discussing efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war, and the need for a ceasefire in Gaza, the source added.—Agencies

IRSA releases 55,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD:Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 55,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 55,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, River Indus stood at dead level of 1402 feet at Tarbela Dam. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,100 cusecs and 16,600 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1070.00 feet, which was 20.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 18,400 cusecs each. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 23,700, 21,300, 18,600 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

100,000 Palestinians perform prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque

LONDON: Around 100,000 Palestinians performed the evening and Taraweeh prayers on the 25th day of the holy month of Ramadan at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on Tuesday, despite Israeli restrictions. Ramadan, a month of fasting and worship for Muslims from sunrise to sunset, is set to conclude at the weekend. The last 10 days of the holy month are a time when some Muslims dedicate themselves to worship. The Jerusalem Waqf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department, which is responsible for administering the site, said that most of the 100,000 worshippers were residents of Jerusalem and Palestinian citizens of Israel. However, thousands of Palestinians from various cities and towns in the occupied West Bank were prevented from entering Jerusalem due to Israeli military checkpoints. Restrictive measures have been implemented by Israel since the start of Ramadan and age and security screenings have played a part in determining whether access to the city is allowed. Upon the conclusion of Ramadan on Saturday or Sunday, majority-Muslim countries celebrate the holiday of Eid al-Fitr over three days, marking the festivities of breaking the fast with family visits and trips.—APP

Turkiye protesters fill streets, defying crackdown

ISTANBUL: Thousands of protesters returned to the streets of Istanbul on Tuesday after a week of the biggest protests to hit Turkiye in over a decade, defying a crackdown that has seen almost 1,500 arrested. The demonstrations erupted after the arrest of the mayor of Istanbul Ekrem Imamoglu, the main political rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a move opposition supporters see as a blatant violation of the rule of law. The authorities have hit back with a crackdown that has alarmed rights groups, with seven journalists who covered the protests remanded in custody by an Istanbul court on Tuesday. Among them was AFP photographer Yasin Akgul, drawing a sharp rebuke from the Paris-based news agency. "His imprisonment is unacceptable. This is why I am asking you to intervene as quickly as possible to obtain the rapid release of our journalist," the agency's CEO and chairman Fabrice Fries said in a letter to the Turkish presidency. The court charged Akgul, 35, and the others with "taking part in illegal rallies and marches," though Fries said Akgul was "not part of the protest" but only covering it as a journalist. Media freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) denounced the decision as "scandalous," with its Turkiye representative Erol Onderoglu saying it "reflects a very serious situation in Turkiye."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Girls buying bangles for Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

Pakistan's sesame seed exports to China surge by 180%

BEIJING: Pakistan's sesame seed exports to China saw a significant 179.88% increase in the first two months of 2025, reflecting growing demand and deepening agricultural trade ties between the two countries, said Ghulam Qadir Trade and Investment Counsellor at Pakistan's Embassy in Beijing. Ghulam Qadir, Trade and Investment Counsellor, said that according to data from China's General Administration of Customs, Pakistan exported 22740.445 metric tons, worth \$28.27 million of sesame seeds to China during January and February 2025, compared to 5997.744 metric tons worth \$10.10 million in the same period last year. This sharp rise highlights Pakistan's strengthening position in China's sesame market, driven by improved quality, streamlined trade processes, and increasing consumer demand. "Pakistan is among the top exporters of sesame seeds to China, benefiting from China's expanding food industry and the country's preference for high-quality agricultural products. Industry experts attribute the growth to Pakistan's favorable climatic conditions for sesame cultivation, enhanced farming techniques, and strengthened bilateral trade facilitation under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," he added. Rakesh Pal, a major exporter of sesame seeds from Pakistan to China, told China Economic Net that the export surge follows Pakistan's efforts to improve its agricultural exports by meeting international quality standards.—APP

Bangladesh's Yunus heads to China for first state visit

DHAKA: The head of Bangladesh's interim government, Muhammad Yunus, departed on Wednesday for China, where he will meet President Xi Jinping and also mark his first bilateral state visit since assuming the role of chief adviser, his office said. Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and economics professor, will address the Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan, southern China — an annual conference focusing on the changing role of Asia — from where he will travel to Beijing. His bilateral with Xi is scheduled for Friday, marking their first meeting since Yunus assumed office in August 2024. "The main focus of this visit is to boost economic cooperation... We are expecting that a number of (memoranda of understanding) will be inked during this visit. The MoUs will cover mostly the areas of economic cooperation," Azad Majumder, Yunus' deputy press secretary, told Arab News. "One of the main focuses of discussion will be bringing more investments from China in our dedicated Chinese Economic Zone." Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Dhaka's former envoy to Beijing, said it was significant that Yunus was choosing China for his first state visit, especially as relations with another regional superpower, India, have soured since the change in government. India was a close ally of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government. She has also sought refuge in New Delhi after deadly protests that unseated her last year. Until now, India has not responded to Bangladesh's request to send her home for trial. The situation opens the door for China — India's key rival — to expand its footprint. "For our interim government, this China visit is very significant. It's the first bilateral visit to any country by Prof. Yunus as the chief adviser," Ahmad said. "It's an opportunity for Bangladesh to boost the relationship with China and explore new areas of cooperation.... It's an issue of mutual benefit for Bangladesh and China." Yunus' office said he will also seek Chinese investment in healthcare and the establishment of a large hospital in Bangladesh to reduce the trend of medical tourism abroad.—DNA

Tesla to launch in Saudi Arabia next month

The upcoming launch of Tesla also aligns with Saudi Arabia's broader strategy to reduce its dependence on crude revenues.

RIYADH: US-based electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla will begin its operations in Saudi Arabia next month, the company has announced. Scheduled to launch on April 10 at the Bujairi Terrace in Riyadh, the EV maker — led by CEO Elon Musk — has been active in several countries in the Middle East but is yet to establish its presence in the Kingdom, the largest market in the Gulf region. The upcoming launch of Tesla also aligns with Saudi Arabia's broader strategy to reduce its dependence on crude revenues. The move is also expected to contribute to the Kingdom's sustainable journey, with the nation targeting to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060. "You and your family are warmly invited to our launch event at the Bujairi Terrace on April 10. Explore our global bestselling lineup and step into a world powered by solar energy, sustained by batteries, and driven by electric vehicles," the company said on its website. It added: "Experience the future of autonomous driving with Cybercab, and meet Optimus, our humanoid robot, as we showcase what's next in AI (artificial intelligence) and robotics." The company did not disclose when these electric vehicles will be available for purchase in Saudi Arabia. Tesla's entry into the Kingdom comes at a tumultuous time for the company, as it is facing a decline in sales across various markets like Europe and the US. According to data from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association, Tesla has witnessed a 42.6 percent drop in sales on the continent in 2025, even as overall purchases of electric vehicles in the region continue to rise. In the US, widespread protests have been organized against Tesla in recent months, following Musk's appointment as the head of the Department of Government Efficiency under the Donald Trump administration. The Saudi government has actively promoted the EV industry to achieve economic diversification and sustainability. The Kingdom's Public Investment Fund is the majority investor in Lucid Group, a startup competing with Tesla in the global market. In January, Lucid Motors became the first global automotive company to join the Kingdom's "Made in Saudi" program. The milestone grants the firm the right to use the "Saudi Made" label on its products, representing the Kingdom's focus on quality and innovation. In September 2023, Lucid also launched its first manufacturing plant outside the US in the Kingdom, with an initial capacity to produce 5,000 electric cars in a year. Aside from investing in established companies, Saudi Arabia is pushing ahead with its own home-grown electric vehicle brand, Ceer. Announced in November 2022 by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the company is expected to contribute SR30 billion (\$7.9 billion) to the Kingdom's gross domestic product by 2034. In February, during the Private Sector Forum organized by the Public Investment Fund, Ceer signed 11 deals worth SR5.5 billion ahead of its model launch in 2026.—DNA

Decoupling of politics from trade urged to protect Pak-Afghan trade

ISLAMABAD: Politics and trade should be treated separately to ensure that political tensions do not disrupt bilateral economic activities between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Given the significant complexities involved, achieving this would require exceptional diplomacy from both sides. Despite ongoing political challenges, trade and economic cooperation must continue uninterrupted through a structured approach to enhance competitiveness, address transit trade issues, and improve trade facilitation mechanisms. This was conveyed during a session on 'Pakistan-Afghanistan Economic and Trade Ties' held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman IPS and Pakistan's former ambassador to Afghanistan, Ambassador (r) Ayaz Wazir, Pak-Afghan affairs expert, Brigadier (r) Said Nazir, senior analyst, Junaid Ismail Makda, president, Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Com-

merce and Industry, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, patron-in-chief, Khyber Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Fazal Moqeeem Khan, president, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Sheharyar Khan, executive director, National Dialogue Forum, and Tahir Khan, senior journalist and Afghan affairs analyst. The speakers noted that challenges in Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations are long-standing, largely due to political

instability and frequent regime changes, which continue to disrupt economic productivity. The key obstacle remains the repeated closure of trade routes, particularly at the Torkham border, which hampers transit trade and affects access to key international markets, including Europe. In addition, structural issues such as smuggling, limited infrastructure, banking and payment challenges, weak border management, poor implementa-

tion of trade agreements, limited digital trade processing, absence of a transparent digital supervision system, and outdated trade regulations also hinder ease of doing business. These challenges, coupled with an unstable security environment, have led regional players like Central Asian states to explore alternative trade routes. The speakers highlighted that, on the one hand, it might seem to reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan, but, on the other hand, geographical limitations of alternative options like Iran's Chabahar Port would be less feasible, keeping Afghanistan's interest in trading with Pakistan intact. To address these challenges, experts emphasized the need to strengthen the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) by ensuring the rule of law, improving banking facilities, and revising trade regulations to facilitate smoother business operations. It was also suggested that a dedicated trade development policy should be introduced, along with a stakeholder-led management committee, to resolve minor trade issues promptly and

prevent unnecessary disruptions. Moreover, it was observed that the Torkham border, a key trade gateway, must be managed more effectively, with a focus on maintaining uninterrupted trade flows rather than using border closures as a tool. Engaging external partners and implementing cross-border tariff strategies can also enhance economic cooperation. To ensure the stability of long-term trade relations, the discussants suggested a comprehensive economic treaty between both countries is necessary, ensuring mutual benefits that remain unaffected by security concerns. Additionally, integrating local communities into trade discussions, strengthening digital supervision, and fostering collaboration with regional and international organizations can help sustain economic ties. In his concluding remarks, Khalid Rahman pointed out that while Pakistan declared a shift toward a geo-economic strategy in 2018, its implementation has been inconsistent.—Agencies



Briefs

Journalist Waheed remanded for two days

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A judicial magistrate approved a two-day physical remand for senior journalist Waheed Murad on Wednesday and handed him over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Murad — taken into custody last night from his residence where his mother-in-law was also residing — was presented before Magistrate Abbas Shah's court in Islamabad after being named in an FIA case related to spreading fake news. During the hearing, he took the rostrum, saying: "My mother-in-law is a cancer patient and has come from Canada for treatment." He further claimed, "I was handed over to them [FIA] just 20 minutes ago." His defence counsel, Hadi Ali, requested access to the FIR, arguing that Murad was subjected to unlawful treatment. "Police broke into his house and even assaulted his mother-in-law," he alleged. Another defence lawyer, Imaan Mazari, informed the court that a petition had already been filed against his alleged illegal detention. When questioned by the judge about the time of Murad's arrest, the FIA prosecutor confirmed that he was taken into custody last night. The prosecution argued that Murad had shared a post related to a banned organisation in Balochistan and that further investigation was required regarding his social media accounts. They also requested the recovery of his mobile phone.

BYC's Baloch challenges detention in SHC

DNA

KARACHI: Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leader Sammi Deen Baloch challenged her 30-day detention in the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday, a day after she was apprehended during a protest against the arrest of the movement's leadership in Balochistan. A two-member bench will hear the petition tomorrow, according to the petitioner's counsel. Karachi police, a day earlier, apprehended Sammi and several others for violating Section 144, using force to disperse their demonstration as the BYC pressed on with its protest. However, as soon as a judicial magistrate ordered her release, police attempted to rearrest her, leading to resistance from lawyers present at the court. Shortly after, they detained the Baloch leader from the court premises and shifted her to jail for 30 days under the MPO. According to the Sindh Home Department, the decision was made on the recommendation of Inspector General (IG) Sindh, citing security concerns.

Sanctions must be lifted before ceasefire: Russia

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has said some Western sanctions must be lifted before it begins a maritime ceasefire with Ukraine. Within hours of the US announcing the two sides had agreed to halt strikes in the Black Sea in separate deals, the Kremlin said it would only take place once sanctions on a number of Russian banks were lifted. The demands include revoking sanctions on the state agricultural bank Rosselkhozbank and restoring the firms' access to the Swift international payment system. Overnight, Moscow launched a drone attack on the port city of Mykolaiv, Ukrainian officials said, with President Volodymyr Zelensky saying the strikes were "a clear signal" Russia did not want peace. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU and its allies suspended access to Swift for a number of Russian financial institutions

Aurangzeb calls for inclusive approach to globalization

Aurangzeb warns that if inequalities persist, the gap between rich and poor nations will continue to widen



NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has emphasized the urgent need for an inclusive approach to globalization that benefits all nations, particularly the developing economies. He made this call while attending a high-level session titled 'Inclusive Globalization That Benefits All - Pathways and Actions' at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025 in China. Highlighting the growing inequalities within the global economic system, the Minister said globalization has lifted over one billion people out of poverty but it still remains unequal, disproportionately benefiting developed economies while marginalizing the Global South. He said risks of rising protectionism, unilateralism, and trade wars are exacerbating global divisions, threatening to disrupt supply chains and weaken international cooperation. For globalization to

survive, it must be rebalanced to allow fairer participation for all nations, particularly those currently disadvantaged by restrictive trade rules and limited financial access. Muhammad Aurangzeb underscored that the time for rhetoric has passed and decisive action is needed. He said Pakistan advocates for a more balanced model of globalization that promotes fair trade, sustainable growth, and equitable financial systems. He said this model must be multilateral, innovation-driven, and inclusive to foster development and prosperity across all regions. The Minister noted that the widening wealth and opportunity gap is one of the key challenges for inclusive globalization. He said the developed nations continue to gain from high-tech sectors, digital trade, and broad financial access, while developing nations are held back by high tariffs, restrictive investment policies, and limited infrastructure. Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted that Pakistan has consistently

called for greater regional connectivity, fairer market access, and stronger multilateral cooperation. He said China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Special Investment Facilitation Council are significant steps in the right direction. The Minister also called for a global coalition among developing nations to collectively demand fairer trade rules and greater representation in international financial institutions. He said these alliances are necessary to combat the disproportionate tariffs and trade restrictions that hinder the integration of developing economies into global markets. He pointed out that Pakistan's textile and agricultural sectors face significant challenges due to protectionist policies in developed countries and non-tariff barriers that limit their access to Western markets. Addressing the issue of financial inequality, the Minister stressed the need for debt relief and financial justice through restructuring sovereign debt mechanisms to prevent

cyclical debt crises, which are impeding the economic growth of many emerging economies, including Pakistan. He called for reforms in international financial institutions to offer developing economies greater financial flexibility and sustainable debt relief mechanisms. Muhammad Aurangzeb emphasized the transformative potential of technology in bridging global disparities. He called on governments and international bodies to establish global AI and fintech funds to support digital inclusion in developing economies. Talking about the climate change, he said developing nations contribute less than ten percent of global carbon emissions yet suffer disproportionately from the consequences of climate disasters. He said Pakistan, despite contributing less than one percent of global carbon emissions, is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. He said the devastating floods of 2022 inflicted 30 billion dollars in damages and displaced 33 million people. The Minister said Pakistan continues to advocate for urgent climate financing, green technology transfers, and fair global climate policies to support climate resilience in developing economies. He urged developed nations to fulfill their 100 billion dollars annual climate finance commitments and prioritize renewable energy cooperation to help emerging markets transition to low-carbon economies. He said carbon-intensive trade restrictions that penalize export-dependent economies in the Global South must be reduced. He also called for reforms in the global financial architecture, including the enhancement of Special Drawing Rights allocations and the promotion of green bonds and blended finance models to attract private-sector investment in emerging markets. The Minister reiterated that the future of globalization must be one of inclusivity, fairness, and shared prosperity.

FIA seeks access to Armaghan's Bitcoin trading platform

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The FIA has sought the court's approval to access the Bitcoin trading platform used by Armaghan Qureshi, the prime accused in the Mustafa Amir murder case, in a money laundering case registered against him. During the hearing on Wednesday, the FIA requested the court to issue orders for obtaining account details from the platform, citing that the suspect had created accounts under the names of his two employees. The agency also urged the court to direct trading platforms to provide details of Armaghan's accounts, transactions, trading history, and IP addresses. Meanwhile, the court sought information from foreign cryptocurrency trading companies regarding the case. Armaghan was booked in another case earlier; a FIR was filed alleging his involvement in money laundering and fraud. With the FIR registered on behalf of the government in the Anti-Money Laundering Circle, the FIA accused Armaghan of being involved in hawala-hundi, digital currency and other illegal activities.

24 dead in S. Korea's 'worst ever fires'

SEOUL: At least 24 people have been killed as multiple wildfires continue to ravage South Korea's south-east region. More than 23,000 people are in their 60s and 70s, authorities say, adding that some 26 people are injured - with 12 in critical condition. More than 23,000 people have been forced to flee their homes. The "unprecedented" crisis is "rewriting the record books for the worst wildfires in our nation's history", acting president Han Duck-soo has said. The fires gutted a 1,300-year-old temple in Uiseong city, where many cultural relics were removed and transported to safer ground. The fires started in Sancheong county on Friday and later spread to Uiseong county. Fueled by strong and dry winds, they spread to the neighbouring counties of Gyeongbuk, Uiseong, Andong, Cheongsong, Yeongyang and Sancheong. - Agencies

Five sentenced to death for blasphemy by court

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: A Rawalpindi court sentenced five men accused of blasphemy to death, life imprisonment and a total of 100 years in prison, according to the court's orders issued on Tuesday. Per the copy of the first information report (FIR) the case was filed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) under Sections 109 (punishment of abetment if the act abetted is committed in consequence and where no express provision is made for its punishment), 295A (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), 295B (defiling, etc., of [a] copy of Holy Quran) and 295C (use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Section 11 (hate speech) of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). The complainant submitted an application alleging that blasphemous content was being shared

on social media and WhatsApp. "[The suspect] is coming to Rawalpindi and if [a] timely raid is conducted, the alleged person could be caught with the mobile device in which he is using the alleged Facebook account being used in sharing blasphemous content online," the FIR read. The Deputy Director of the Anti-Blasphemy unit authorised a raid near Airport Chowk, where the police team identified one of the suspects and searched him, recovering his phone. A technical analysis of the phone's data confirmed that the alleged Facebook account had been logged into, showing multiple blasphemous images, which, according to the FIR, were a "clear attempt to hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims". Four other suspects were identified through the Facebook account. According to the court order, announced and issued on Tuesday by Rawalpindi Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Tariq Ayub, the five accused were all sentenced to death under Section 295C, awarded life imprisonment under Section 295B, and awarded 10 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs100,000 under Section 295A.

US body urges sanctions against Pakistan, RAW

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: A US panel on religious freedom has said the treatment of minorities in Pakistan and India is deteriorating, and it recommended sanctions be imposed on the former's officials and government agencies and the latter's external spy agency over its alleged involvement in plots to assassinate Sikh separatists. The commission is a bipartisan US government advisory body that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said, in its annual report, "In 2024, religious freedom conditions in Pakistan continued to deteriorate. Religious minority communities — particularly

Christians, Hindus and Shia [Muslims] and [Ahmadis] — continued to bear the brunt of persecution and prosecutions under Pakistan's strict blasphemy law and to suffer violence from both the police and mobs, while those responsible for such violence rarely faced legal consequences. Such conditions continued to contribute to a worsening religious and political climate of fear, intolerance, and violence." The report released on Tuesday pointed out that accusations of blasphemy and subsequent mob violence continued to severely impact religious minority communities in the country, as it listed several incidents in the last year. It also noted that "violent attacks and systematic harassment" against the Ahmadi community persisted throughout the year, resulting in four deaths in total. Another issue highlighted was the "worsening pattern of forced conversions" among the country's Christian and Hindu women and girls. The commission recommended that the US administration "impose targeted sanctions on Pakistani officials and government agencies responsible for severe violations of religious freedom" by freezing those individuals' assets and/or barring their entry into the US under human rights-related financial and visa authorities, citing specific religious freedom violations.

Returning to war premeditated decision by Netanyahu: Hamas

According to the latest figures from Palestinian authorities, over 61,000 people have been killed or reported missing, including more than 50,000 confirmed deaths in hospitals

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Hamas Movement said that returning to war was a premeditated decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to thwart the agreement in addition to succumbing to his internal security minister Ben-Gvir's blackmail. In a statement issued on Wednesday, Hamas held Netanyahu fully responsible for the failure of the agreement and called on the international community and mediators to pressure him to halt the aggression and return to the negotiating track. It noted that the resistance is doing everything in its power to keep the Israeli captives alive, but the indiscriminate Israeli bombing is putting their lives at risk. The Movement asserted that Netanyahu is lying to the families of the captives when he claims that the military option is capable of bringing them back alive. Hamas, in conclusion, emphasized that every time Israel tries to recover its captives by force, it returns them dead in coffins. The Ministry of Health in Gaza Strip announced on Wednesday that its hospitals received 39 martyrs and 124 wounded citizens over the past 24 hours. The ministry added in its daily statement that one of the martyrs was recovered from under the rubble of destroyed buildings. It pointed out that the casualties of the Israeli renewed aggression since March 18 had reached 830 martyrs and 1,787 injured.

Israeli occupation blocks transfer of NIS 7 billion

RAMALLAH: Government Communication Center - The Palestinian Ministry of Finance has confirmed that the Israeli occupation authorities have blocked the transfer of approximately NIS 7 billion in Palestinian clearance revenues since 2019, deepening the financial crisis facing the Palestinian Government. In a statement issued Tuesday, the Ministry said that the Israeli occupation authorities justify blocking the transfer of these funds to the Palestinian Government under several false pretexts, including: Allocations for Gaza - NIS 2 billion have been withheld under this allegation. Allocations for families of Palestinian martyrs and detainees - NIS 3.7 billion has been deducted under this pretext. Border exit tax - NIS 1.2 billion has been deducted as departure tax paid by travellers at the border crossing with Jordan. Escalation of deductions and delays in transfer since 2023 war: Since the start of Israel's war on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, the Israeli occupation has intensified financial restrictions against the Palestinian Government, including by doubling clearance revenue deductions to 50% of the total monthly amount while deliberately delaying payments in an unprecedented manner. - Agencies

Journalist Farhan Mallick remanded to FIA custody

Court grants FIA custody after journalist linked to call centre fraud case

COURT REPORTER

KARACHI: Journalist Farhan Mallick has been remanded to the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) custody for five days in a fraud case after being presented before Judicial Magistrate Malir-I. The journo was arrested in a new case on Tuesday instead of being sent into judicial remand as per court's orders in the first case registered against him last week. Mallick — who worked for a private news channel as its director news and now owns a YouTube channel — was taken into custody on March 20 for charges of spreading anti-state content. He was due to be remanded to judicial custody after the completion of a 4-day physical remand in the first case, yesterday. As per the latest development, the FIA claimed to have raided a call centre a day earlier, alleging that its employees were involved in stealing data from foreigners and defrauding them. Two suspects were arrested, who reportedly told authorities that the call centre was being operated under Mallick's orders.

MURREE SPARKLING WATER
Pakistan Standards
PS51654-2012
CML/PZ/185/2020/91

REFRESHINGLY ELEGANT
Pakistan's First Glass-Bottled Carbonated Water

Murree Sparkling Water
SPARKLING
Carbonated Bottled Drink