



# Islamabad POST

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**VP Vance scolds Denmark during Greenland trip**

Detailed News On Page-08

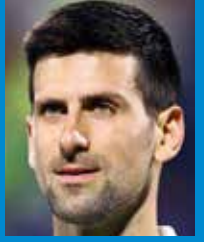
**Chairman ZLK unveils Pak first Shariah brokerage**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Djokovic to close on 100th title**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Budget for special envoy on Islamophobia

Consensus reached through key negotiations led by Pakistan

NEW YORK: Pakistan has secured consensus in the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly on a resolution to finance the newly established Office of the Special Envoy on Combating Islamophobia, officials confirmed on Saturday. The resolution on revised budget estimates was adopted without a vote during the closing session of the first part of the 79th UNGA. Pakistan's First Secretary at the UN Mission, Jibril Khan Durani, delivered the national statement, expressing gratitude to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the G77 and China, and other international partners for their support. He noted that the outcome reflected the success of collective diplomacy and inclusivity. Pakistan played a lead role as one of the principal negotiators during the committee's discussions. The resolution ensures that the Office of the Special Envoy on Combating Islamophobia will be operational from the 1st of next month. — Agencies

## VOA journalists scramble for options

DNA

WASHINGTON: For decades, journalists working for Voice of America (VOA) and its affiliated media outlets considered their jobs among the most secure and well-paid in the industry. That changed this month, when President Donald Trump ordered the dismantling of the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), effectively shutting down VOA, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), and Radio Free Asia (RFA). Buoyed by a court order that prompted Kari Lake, the newly installed senior adviser for the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), to rescind the order to cancel funding for RFE/RL, those unceremoniously laid-off are still considering their options.

## Visa holders feel unsafe in the US

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: It was an otherwise ordinary evening in Somerville, Massachusetts — a suburb of Boston. The last week of March had finally begun and the weather was warming up, heralding the arrival of spring. Thirty-year-old Rumeysa Ozturk was going to join some friends for iftar. Ozturk, who has a Master's degree from Columbia University in New York, was a doctoral student at Tufts University. Quiet and soft-spoken, Ozturk, a Turkish national, had a valid student visa and was a Fulbright scholar. Video footage shows that six men approached Ozturk while she was on her way. All but one were masked. They were not in uniform and Ozturk's terror is palpable in the video. The man whose camera captured the footage asked if this was a kidnapping. The men said they were from the police. In an instant, they had handcuffed Ozturk and spirited her away.

## Combating terrorism

# Civil, military leaders on same page

The meeting also agreed to make explosive materials a federal subject to ensure effective monitoring. Furthermore, it was decided to effectively raise the issue of terrorism with the Afghan government through the Foreign Ministry

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

Islamabad: The second meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee was held under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Federal Secretary for Interior, DG FIA, DG Passport, National Coordinator NACTA, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Coordinator National Action Plan, and representatives of security agencies. Law Minister Punjab Malik Sohaib Ahmed, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor for Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Sindh Interior Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, Interior Ministers of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan also participated in the meeting. The Home Secretaries and Inspectors General (IGs) of all provinces, including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, attended via Zoom. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, while addressing the meeting, stated that the Prime Minister, Army Chief, and all stakeholders are on the same page in combating terrorism.

Continued on Page 06

## Kurram warring sides reach 8-month peace agreement

Jirga member Haji Asghar says plan being formulated to reopen roads

SHAMIM SHAHID

PARACHINAR: Amid the government's efforts to ease tensions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram District, an eight-month peace agreement was reached between two warring tribes of the region on Saturday. Jirga member Haji Kamal confirmed the development, saying that the agreement was finalised in the presence of Kurram Deputy Commissioner Ashfaq Ahmed along with other officials.

Continued on Page 06

## PTI Chairman clarifies

# No deal, only reconnected ties with establishment

PTI chairman says final negotiations with establishment had not even begun, and that talk of a deal was baseless

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has dismissed speculations about a deal with the establishment, clarifying that the party had simply reestablished contacts. Speaking to a private news channel, he said, "Only contacts were restored with the establishment; no negotiations took place; only contacts were restored before November 24." He said final negotiations with the establishment had not even begun, and that the talk of a deal was baseless having no connection with ground reality. Gohar explained that it was on record that the Taliban resettlement decisions were made after July 2022 when (minister) Talal Chaudhry made an irresponsible statement that terrorists did not target the PTI. He said Talal's statement about the return of the Taliban was contrary to facts. "Pakistan is in the grip of terrorism; this is not the time to make allegations. Instead of such statements, the government should focus on stopping terrorism," Gohar said.

Continued on Page 06

## FBR launches new directorate to combat tax evasion

Notification issued in this regard

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has fulfilled another condition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and approved the establishment of offices for the Director General of Special Measures and two Directors at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Headquarters for coordination with field formations to address tax evasion. A formal notification has been issued in this regard. According to the FBR notification, the new directorate has been established to identify flaws in the country's tax system, prevent

Continued on Page 06

## Pak trashes Indian FM's remarks on minority rights

"India's record marred by egregious, systemic violations of minority rights," says Shafqat Ali Khan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday strongly rebuked India's allegation regarding minorities' rights in the country saying that New Delhi itself was a "serial violator" of those very rights. "India is in no position to champion minority rights, as it remains a serial violator of those very rights," read a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in response to the remarks made by Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a Lok Sabha session. The Indian official, on Friday, had spoken about "crimes and atrocities against minorities" in Pakistan, reported Hindustan Times. However, rebutting Jaishankar's remarks, FO Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan highlighted that state institutions were actively working to safeguard minorities as a matter of policy in Pakistan. In stark contrast, the statement added,

Continued on Page 06

## Civil society pens open letter to PM

Seeks release of Mahrang, Sammi, other BYC leaders

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Over 100 prominent academics and civil society leaders have written an open letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif seeking the release of incarcerated Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders Dr Mahrang Baloch, Sammi Deen Baloch and others. Last Friday, the police used tear gas and water cannons and fired blank shots to disperse BYC protesters, who had staged a sit-in on the Sariab Road near the University of Balochistan, against alleged enforced disappearances, including its leader Bebarag Baloch. The provincial government and the BYC had reported casualties on their respective sides as a result of each other's actions. The situation further escalated when BYC chief organiser Mahrang was arrested in the early hours of Saturday and was booked under terror charges along with 150 others.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan, States and Frontier Regions Engineer Ameer Maqam calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

## Extends eid greetings to leaders

# PM vows to further strengthen relations with Qatar, Oman

Pakistan and Qatar share a strong historical relationship, with cooperation spanning various sectors, including energy, trade, and cultural exchanges. Qatar has been a key partner in supporting Pakistan's economic development

DNA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held telephonic conversations with the Amir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Haitham bin Tarik, to convey his warm Eid-ul-Fitr greetings and best wishes to the leadership and people of both brotherly nations. During his call with the Amir of Qatar, the Prime Minister fondly recalled his visit to Doha last October and expressed his appreciation for Qatar's cultural initiatives, particularly the Manzar cultural exhibition hosted by Her Excellency Sheikhha Al Mayassa. He proposed a similar exhibition in Lahore, which the Amir graciously accepted. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties, particularly in trade and investment. To advance discussions on investment, it was agreed that a high-level Qatari delegation would visit Pakistan immediately after Eid. The Prime Minister also lauded Qatar's diplomatic efforts in regional peace,

Continued on Page 06

## Pak expresses solidarity with Myanmar

The Myanmar junta reported on Saturday that the death toll had surged to nearly 1,200

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari have expressed deep grief and solidarity with the people of Thailand and Myanmar in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck the region on Friday. The powerful 7.7-magnitude quake hit northwest of Sagaing in central Myanmar, causing widespread destruction. The Myanmar junta reported on Saturday that the death toll had surged to nearly 1,200, with around

Continued on Page 06

# Mengal, party workers unhurt in Mustang blast

In a statement, Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said the same: "According to reports, there has been no loss of life. Sardar Akhtar Mengal and the entire BNP-M leadership is safe."

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: Sardar Akhtar Mengal and other workers of his faction of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) remained unhurt on Saturday after a suicide bomber blew himself up near the party's rally at Mastung. Mengal had announced a "long march" from Wadh to Quetta to protest the arrests of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch and other leaders as well as police crackdowns on a sit-in. However, the Quetta administration has denied the BNP-M permission to go ahead with its rally. Marchers and motorists from different political parties had started their journey to Quetta from Mengal's native town of Wadh at around 9am on Friday. Earlier today, the BNP-M claimed that over 250 of its activists were detained as its march was met with police action near Mastung. As reports of a blast near the BNP-M's rally emerged at around 1pm, Mengal said on X that he was "safe with all party workers". In a statement, Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said the same: "According to reports, there has been no loss of life.

Continued on Page 06

## Punjab police thwart terrorist attack from KP

DNA

DG KHAN: The Punjab Police have successfully thwarted a terrorist attack on the Lakhani checkpoint, located near the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa border in Dera Ghazi Khan. A spokesperson said 20 to 25 terrorists launched an attack on the checkpoint from all directions. The attackers used mortars, rocket launchers, sniper rifles, and other heavy weapons. However, the police, Elite Force, and Special Operation Unit (SOU) displayed great courage and bravery, defending the checkpoint and forcing the terrorists to retreat. During the police's counteraction, one terrorist was killed, and several others were reported injured. The spokesperson stated that all police personnel remained

Continued on Page 06

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# Commissioner for action against illegal extraction of gold

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud said the policy of KP government of prohibiting illegal extraction of placer gold from river bed and shifting of mineral resources to other districts would be implement in letter and spirit

**DNA**  
PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud has decided to take strict action against illegal extraction of placer gold from river bed at Nizampur area in Nowshera district. The decision has been taken by Commissioner Peshawar while chairing a high level meeting wherein it was also decided that persons involved in illegal shifting of mineral resources in the area would face strict legal action.

The operation against gold extrac-

tion would be jointly carried out by district administration, Police, Mining and Environment departments. During the meeting, Commissioner Riaz Mehsud also constituted a committee under his own supervision to ensure implementation of the decision. He also issued directives for submission of progress report over the decision to him on weekly basis. The meeting decided in principle that lease holder gold extractors would be provided full legal cover while those who are indulged in the practice illegally would be dealt with

iron hands. It was also decided to set up temporary check posts till April 15 at three different locations near Indus river in Nowshera. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud said the policy of KP government of prohibiting illegal extraction of placer gold from river bed and shifting of mineral resources to other districts would be implement in letter and spirit. He also directed Deputy Commissioner Nowshera to issue arms licences to lease holding gold miners for safety purpose.



**RAWALPINDI:** Chairman Tehreek Jawanan Pakistan (TJP) Muhammad Abdullah Gul, Sher Afzal Marwat, Sikandar Khan Jadoon, Dawood Khan and other senior leadership presenting shield to senior member TJP Khan Muhammad Khan. – DNA

## KPC CM grants Eid remission for hundreds of prisoners

PESHAWAR: Hundreds of prisoners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) will be able to celebrate Eid with their families after Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Saturday announced a two-month remission in sentences. Following the chief minister's orders, jail authorities have reduced the sentences of inmates across various prisons in the province. As a result, 214 prisoners, convicted for minor offenses and nearing the completion of their terms, have been released after completing the necessary legal procedures. The sentence remission does not apply to those convicted of serious crimes such as terrorism, murder, and kidnapping. The decision has been met with joy among the released prisoners and their families, who will now be able to celebrate Eid together. —APP

## 3500 cops to ensure Peshawar security

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud said the policy of KP government of prohibiting illegal extraction of placer gold from river bed and shifting of mineral resources to other districts would be implement in letter and spirit

PESHAWAR: The Capital City Police Peshawar has finalized a special security plan to maintain law and order during Eid-ul-Fitr. Under this plan, 3,500 police officers and personnel will be deployed across the city to ensure public safety. All police leaves have been canceled, and patrolling by rider squads and mobile units has been increased, said an official release issued here on Saturday. Security at all entry and exit points of the city has been tightened, with additional personnel stationed in key markets and on major roads. To monitor suspicious individuals, plainclothes officers have also been deployed. Sensitive locations and government buildings are receiving heightened security, including the deployment of female police officers and mounted police in busy market areas. According to the security plan, security has been placed on high alert at Eid prayer grounds, sensitive mosques, major markets, and entry points of the city. Enhanced patrolling by ar-

mored police vehicles, the Special Combat Unit, the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU), and sniffer dog teams will also be in place. BDU teams will conduct sweeps at key Eid prayer sites before prayers commence. CCPO Peshawar Qasim Ali Khan and SSP Operations Masood Ahmed have instructed divisional SPs to take strict action against aerial firing on Chand Raat, emphasizing cooperation with local religious scholars and community leaders to raise awareness against the practice.

## Shoppers turn to readymade garments as Eid shopping gears up in KP

PESHAWAR: As Eidul Fitr around the corner, shopping activities have picked up momentum across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Peshawar, where there has been a notable surge in shoppers flocking to stores selling readymade garments and local footwear. With only a few days left before Eidul Fitr celebrations, the demand for affordable yet stylish stitched garments including Shalwar Qameez and Kurta items besides cotton and lawn suits has increased due to arrival of summer seasons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the bustling heart of Peshawar City and its Cantonment area, shopping arcades and stores remain crowded well into the night. Historic markets like Qissa Khwani Bazaar, Karimpura, Meena Bazaar, University Road's shopping arcades, and Saddar Road have become the epicenter of Eid shopping, with people, especially women, girls, and children, engaged in the hectic yet joyful task of selecting the perfect readymade garments and matching shoes to look different on Eid. —APP

### Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF DANIAL AMJID GONDAL CIVIL/ FAMILY JUDGE RAWALPINDI  
Suit for recovery of maintenance etc Mst. Aneesa Sagheer etc. Versus Imran Hanif Notice to Imran Hanif S/o Muhammad Hanif R/o near khattak karyana store, Street No. 07/8, Khalid Colony, Phase 2, Chakri Road Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 07-04-2025 at 9 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

## Drive launched to distribute ration to poor families

KARACHI: The "LONGi Solar Pakistan" has launched a special Ramadan drive to support underprivileged communities by distributing essential grocery and ration boxes, ensuring families in need have access to basic necessities during the holy month. Understanding the challenges faced by many households, LONGi Solar Pakistan has expanded its efforts to reach six major cities, Lahore, Sukkur, Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, and Multan. In collaboration with local partners and flagship store owners, the company is facilitating the distribution of carefully assembled ration boxes containing essential food items to help sustain families throughout Ramadan and after. Each grocery box is designed to provide relief by including staple food items that can support a family's

basic nutritional needs. As part of this initiative, a special coupon will also be included in each box, offering families the opportunity to access solar energy solutions ahead of the upcoming hot weather. By making solar more accessible, the initiative aims to support underprivileged communities in improving their living conditions through sustainable energy. These coupons can be redeemed at LONGi Solar's flagship and branding stores while making a purchase of solar panels. Speaking on the initiative, Ali Majid, General Manager of LONGi Pakistan, stated, "Ramzan is a time of giving and reflection, and we believe in extending our support to those who need it the most. Through this initiative, we hope to bring ease to families struggling

with basic necessities while also encouraging sustainable energy solutions that can contribute to their long-term well-being." LONGi Solar Pakistan believes that corporate social responsibility goes beyond providing energy solutions, as it is also about giving back to the community. As the company grows in Pakistan, it remains committed to supporting local communities through initiatives in education, environmental protection, and social welfare. This Ramadan, LONGi Solar Pakistan's community care drive reflects its dedication to making a meaningful impact, bringing warmth and hope to families in need. It also encourages businesses and individuals to come together in building a more compassionate and inclusive society. —DNA

## Moot highlights engineers' pivotal role national uplift

He also called for the integration of modern engineering practices into university curricula, emphasizing PEC's role in fostering educational reforms and industry-academia linkages to enhance the professional competence of graduates

HYDERABAD: The Vice Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and former Vice Chancellor of NED University Karachi, Professor Dr. Soroush Hashmat Lodhi, has emphasized the pivotal role of engineers in national development, stating that PEC is actively working to align Pakistan's engineering sector with global standards. Speaking at an Iftar and dinner reception hosted in honor of PEC's elected representatives by the Vice Chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam, Professor Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal, Dr. Lodhi highlighted that engineers are integral to infrastructure, energy, technological advancements, and modern agricultural practices. He noted that professionals in agricultural, mechanical, and civil engineering must be equipped with cutting-edge technical expertise to enhance water management, smart agriculture, and mechanized farming for improved productivity. Dr. Lodhi further underscored the global impact of engineers in addressing climate change, environmental challenges and ensuring food security, stressing the need for strategic collaboration between academia and professional bodies to meet contemporary challenges. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal welcomed the PEC delegation and highlighted the importance of synergy between engineering and agriculture. He noted that such partnerships could optimize resource utilization, strengthen academic programs, and create employment opportunities for young engineers in both local and international markets. He also called for the integration of modern engineering practices into university curricula, emphasizing PEC's role in fostering educational reforms and industry-academia linkages to enhance the professional competence of graduates. The event was attended by Dr. Aneel Kumar, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro, Professor Dr. Kanji, Dean at Mehran University, Dr. Pradeep Kumar of Quaid-e-Awam University Nawabshah, Dr. Abdul Jabbar Sangi of NED University Karachi, as well as senior academics and professionals, including Makhdoom Khalid, Engineer Saleh Rind, Dr. Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar, Dr. Ali Raza Shah, Dr. Munir Ahmed Mangrio, Dr. Mashooq Talpur, Dr. Irfan Shaikh, Dr. Farman Chandio, Dr. Mahmood Laghari, Registrar Ghulam Mohiuddin Qureshi, Director Finance Syed Fida Hussain Shah, Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Dr. R. B. Vistro, and Gul Sher Lochi.

## RCCI holds condolence reference in honour of Tahir Taj

Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi shared his memories, highlighting that he had known Bhatti since 2008. He described him as a humble, compassionate, and people-oriented personality. RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) organized a condolence reference at the Chamber building in honor of its esteemed Executive Member, Tahir Taj Bhatti. The event was presided over by President Usman Shaukat, with Group Leader Sohail Altaf also in attendance. During the reference, speakers paid rich tribute to Bhatti's contributions to the business community and acknowledged his dedication, integrity, and invaluable services. Speaking on the occasion, President Usman Shaukat expressed deep sorrow over the demise of Bhatti, stating that his passing is an irreplaceable loss for RCCI. "He was not only an active member but also a dear friend and colleague. His absence will always be

felt, and his contributions will never be forgotten," he added. Group Leader Sohail Altaf remarked that the reference coincided with the sacred moments of Jumu'atul-Wida and the blessed days of Ramadan, making it a truly special tribute. He described Bhatti as a man of great character, kindness, and generosity, deeply respected by all. Notably, he emphasized that this was the first-ever condolence reference held for an Executive Member, reflecting the deep admiration and love for Tahir Taj Bhatti. Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi shared his memories, highlighting that he had known Bhatti since 2008. He described him as a humble, compassionate, and people-oriented personality. Sharjeel Mir thanked the Chamber of Commerce, expressing heartfelt appreciation for the unparalleled love and support he received. He remarked that such an example of affection is rare. "The way you nurtured leadership and showered immense love is beyond

imagination. He fulfilled his duty wholeheartedly; he was a part of you, standing alongside Mian Parvez Aslam—a brother, a companion." Representing the Gujjar Khan Traders Association, Raja Jawad described Bhatti as a highly dignified and sincere individual, a true role model for the business community. Former President Amanullah Khan also acknowledged Bhatti's lasting contributions and prayed for his highest ranks in the hereafter. Executive Member Falak Anjum emphasized that Tahir Taj Bhatti was a strong advocate for women's respect and empowerment and led a life of simplicity and humility. On behalf of RCCI and Rawalpindi Gymkhana, Secretary Rizwan Mashhadi also extended heartfelt condolences. Several other former presidents, distinguished business leaders, and Executive Committee members shared their sentiments, remembering Bhatti's kind-hearted nature and service-oriented approach.

## Sindh objects to Motorway construction

The pact requires the devolution of expenditures in sectors such as higher education, health, social protection and regional public infrastructure to provinces

ISLAMABAD: Sindh has raised objections to the federal government's decision to fund a new Rs436 billion Punjab-centric motorway by again ignoring the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway despite declaring it as a top priority. The federal government's decision to fund the Lahore-Sahawal-Bahawalnagar motorway is also in violation of the National Fiscal Pact, signed by the federal and four provincial governments as part of the \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. The pact requires the devolution of expenditures in sectors such as higher education, health, social protection and regional public infrastructure to provinces. Sindh Minister for Local Government, Housing Saeed Ghani raised the objection during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) held in the current week. Ecneec approved the Lahore-Sahawal-Bahawalnagar Motorway at a 65% higher cost of Rs436 billion. National Highway Authority (NHA) Chairman Shehryar Sultan this week told the Senate Standing Committee on Planning that the government was in discussions with various creditors for financing the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway, known as M-6. Saeed Ghani said that when he objected to the funding of Lahore motorway, he was told that the federal government was still trying to find funding sources. However, an Ecneec summary stated that the source of funding was "100% through federal PSDP", he added. Pakistan is facing a serious resource crunch and there is also a bar by the IMF on funding provincial-nature schemes. Provinces get a 57.5% share in taxes collected by the federal government. Contrary to the Lahore motorway, the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway is part of the main South-North road network and is the only missing link. —DNA



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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. Patricks Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
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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

# DRAP intensifies drive against spurious drugs

This resolute campaign underscores DRAP's unwavering commitment to safeguarding public health and ensuring the availability of safe and effective medicines and medical devices

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has significantly intensified its nationwide efforts to combat the illegal sale, manufacturing, and distribution of spurious and falsified therapeutic goods.

This resolute campaign underscores DRAP's unwavering commitment to safeguarding public health and ensuring the availability of safe and effective medicines and medical devices. Over the past 15 days, DRAP, collaborating with provincial health authorities,

executed successful enforcement actions resulting in substantial seizures, facility sealings, and legal proceedings. Notably in Lahore, operation apprehended individuals illegally selling Urografin 76% Injection, leading to confiscations and charges for violations including unlicensed sales and overpricing, with ongoing investigations. DRAP-led team in Lahore intercepted a peddler selling unregistered Lipiodol Ultra Liquid near Hameed Latif Hospital, subsequently raiding M/s Al-Waali Distributors, recovering illicit articles, sealing the premises, and initiating a formal investigation.

DRAP has also taken decisive action against the illegal manufacturing of unregistered medical devices in Islamabad. Drap conducted a surprise inspection at a facility in the Industrial Triangle, Kahuta Road, revealed the unlawful production and storage of plastic urine collection containers without the mandatory Establishment License, a clear violation of the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, and the DRAP Act, 2012.

The illegally manufactured devices were seized, and the facility was sealed. Similarly, an operation at a former pharmaceutical facility, M/s Ambro Pharmaceu-

ticals, in the same area, uncovered the illegal manufacturing and storage of medical devices despite the prior cancellation of its Drug Manufacturing License. The premises were sealed, and the owner has been referred for stringent legal action. In a proactive move to protect the pharmaceutical industry and the public, DRAP has issued an urgent alert regarding the presence of falsified Propylene Glycol (PG) in the market. Testing by the Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL), Lahore, confirmed a dangerously high level of toxic Ethylene Glycol (EG) in batch YF01210911.

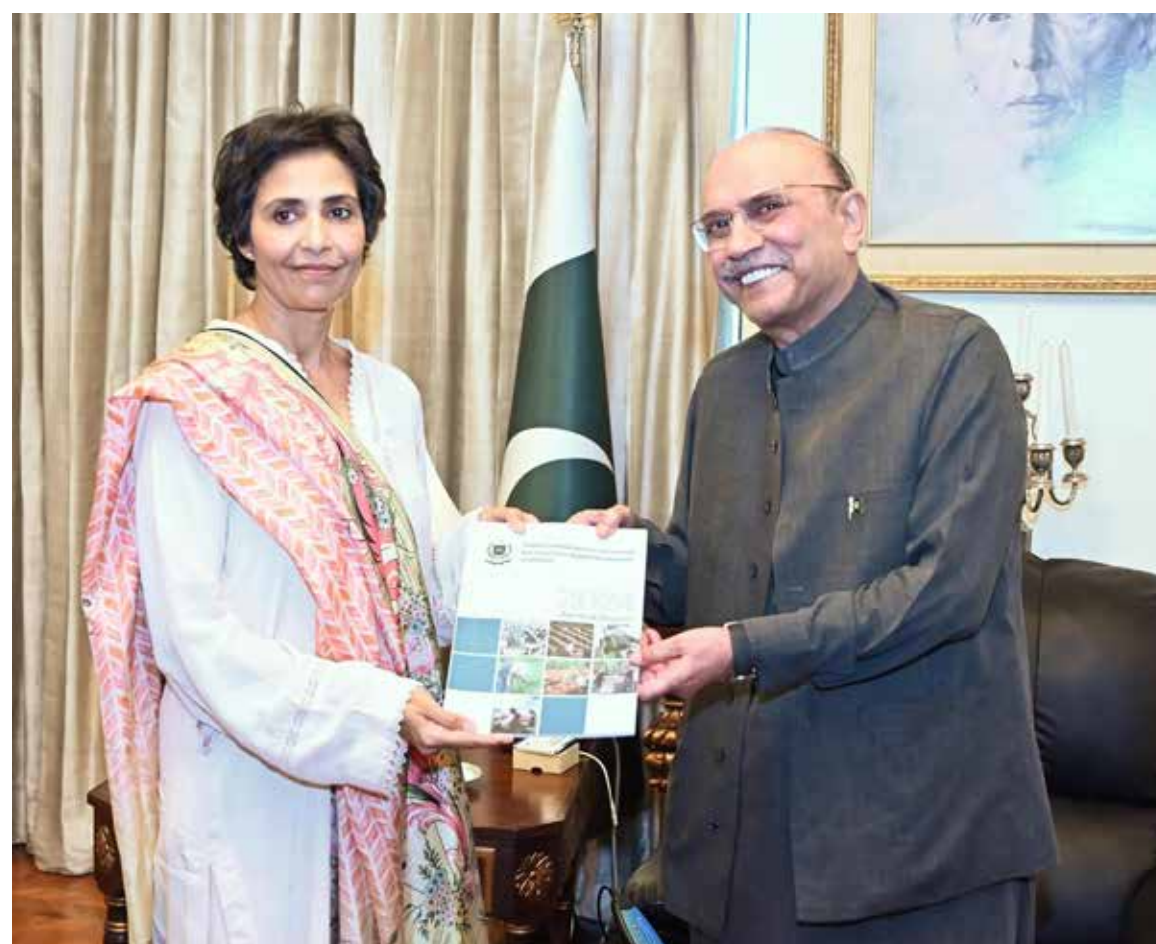
DRAP reiterates its advisory for rigorous raw material screening. DRAP remains resolutely committed to eradicating spurious and falsified therapeutic goods through rigorous surveillance, intelligence-led enforcement, and stringent regulations. Public vigilance is vital and citizens have been strongly urged to report any suspicious activity related to potentially counterfeit or substandard medicines and medical devices via DRAP's official channels. This collaborative approach is crucial for ensuring access to safe, effective, and quality therapeutic goods for all citizens.

## 'State institutions work to protect minorities'

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson on Saturday said that in Pakistan, state institutions actively worked to safeguard minorities as a matter of policy. In stark contrast, incidents targeting minorities in India frequently occurred with the tacit approval or even complicity of elements within the ruling dispensation. Responding to media queries concerning the remarks made by the Indian External Affairs in Lok Sabha and the related discussion on the situation of minorities in Pakistan, the spokesperson, in a statement, said, "India is in no position to champion minority rights, as it remains a serial violator of those very rights." The systematic promotion of hatred, discrimination, and violence against minorities in India was well-documented. "From the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to the bulldozing of homes, from the 2002 Gujarat massacre to the 2020 Delhi pogrom, from the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 to the consecration of a temple on its ruins in 2024, from cow vigilantism and mob lynchings to attacks on mosques and shrines, India's record is marred by egregious and systemic violations of minority rights, particularly those of Muslims," the spokesperson further added. —APP

## Country to sizzle in heat during Eid holidays

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Saturday predicts a dry and hot weather spell across Pakistan during the Eid-ul-Fiter holidays and indicates that the country will experience a continuation of the prevailing dry and hot weather conditions. PMD officials stated that continental air will dominate most regions, leading to dry conditions in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and other parts of the country, private news channels reported. The officials also mentioned that the plains are expected to experience hot weather during the holidays, with no rain-bearing system forecasted to bring relief. Islamabad is likely to remain hot and dry over the next 12 hours. Most districts of Balochistan will experience hot weather, while Punjab is expected to witness strong winds. Sindh will also remain dry, with strong winds in various areas. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment of Women (FOSPAH), Ms. Fauzia Viqar, presenting the Annual Report 2024 of FOSPAH to President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

## Markets, malls overflow with shoppers

ISLAMABAD: As the Islamic holy month draws to a close, the entire nation has turned into a vibrant shopping destination, with individuals thronging markets and malls to buy Eid gifts, clothes, traditional treats and stalls selling colorful bangles and mehndi designs proving to be a major draw for young girls. According to a report aired by PTV News, the shopping frenzy has reached its peak, with markets and malls overflowing with shoppers. The report highlighted the efforts of vendors and shopkeepers to cater to the massive demand for Eid essentials, and the joyous atmosphere that pervades the shopping centers. Citizens are rushing to take advantage of discount Eid offers, with many shops offering huge discounts on clothing, shoes and accessories. The report added that the vendors and shopkeepers are catering massive demand for Eid essentials and the joyous atmosphere that pervades the shopping centers. "I have never seen such a huge rush of shoppers before. It is like the whole city is out shopping for Eid!" said a shopper from Lahore city. "We have been selling Eid clothes and accessories for years, but this year's demand is unprecedented. We are working round the clock to restock our shelves," shopkeeper from Lahore's Liberty Market said. "I came to the market at 8 am and it was already packed. I managed to get some great deals on clothes and shoes, though!" shopper from Karachi. "Our stall has been selling traditional sweets and desserts for years. This year, we have had to increase our production to meet the demand," stall owner from Karachi's Empress Market. "I love the festive atmosphere in the markets during Ramadan. It's a great time to shop for Eid gifts and clothes," shopper from Islamabad. "The markets in Peshawar are always bustling during Ramadan, but this year's shopping frenzy is something else. I'm loving the energy!" shopper from Peshawar added. "Our shop has been selling traditional Pashto clothing and accessories for years. This Eid, we're expecting a huge rush of shoppers," shopkeeper from Peshawar's Chowk Yadgar mentioned. "The mehndi artists are doing an amazing job. I got a beautiful design on my hands and feet," another shopper from Peshawar. "We are selling a wide range of traditional bangles, including some beautiful handmade designs," a stall owner from Peshawar's Khyber Super Market.—DNA

## Matching eid Bangles top women's shopping lists

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: With Ramadan nearing its conclusion, market stalls are abuzz with women seeking matching bangles, an integral part of their Eid finery, where shopkeepers display an enticing palette of colours, designs, accompanied by the melodic clinking of glass, metal. According to a report aired by a private news channel, women flocking to market stalls in pursuit of the ideal matching bangles, a vital accessory for their Eid ensembles, amidst a kaleidoscope of colours, designs, sounds of clinking glass. The tradition of wearing matching bangles on Eid is an age-old custom, deeply rooted in South Asian culture, report added. According to sellers it is believed that the sound of clinking bangles brings good luck and prosperity. Women of all ages

take great pride in selecting the perfect matching bangles that complement their Eid outfits. As the demand for matching bangles surges during Ramadan, vendors and shopkeepers stock up on an array of designs, colours and materials to cater to diverse tastes and preferences, said a shopkeeper in Islamabad. From traditional glass bangles to modern metal and plastic designs, the options are endless, said a women customer in Rawalpindi. "We have been selling bangles for generations and every year we see a surge in demand during Ramadan," said a vendor at a local market. "Women come from all over to find the perfect matching bangles and we take great pride in helping them make their Eid celebrations even more special," said a vendor. The prices of matching bangles vary greatly, depending on the

material, design, and quality. Traditional glass bangles are relatively affordable, starting from as low as Rs. 500 to 1000 while high-end metal and crystal designs can cost upwards of Rs. 5,000. Despite the varying prices, women are willing to splurge on the perfect matching bangles. "For me, Eid is not just about celebrating the end of Ramadan, but also about looking and feeling my best," said a young woman shopping for matching bangles. "I am willing to spend a little extra to find the perfect bangles that will complete my Eid outfit." As the last days of Ramadan tick away, the sale of matching bangles is expected to reach a fever pitch. Vendors and shopkeepers are bracing themselves for the rush, eager to help women find the perfect matching bangles to make their Eid celebrations truly unforgettable.

## 'Abu Jee' by Dr. Talat Shabbir: a tribute to father's love, legacy

The book is a rich collection of memories, reflections, and profound thoughts

RAWALPINDI : The launch event of Abu Jee, a poignant memoir by Dr. Talat Shabbir, was held, bringing together an audience of literary enthusiasts, friends, and family to celebrate the emotional and touching tribute to a father's love and legacy. Held on the other day, at Takal, Kallar Syedan, the event was attended by notables from the literary and civil society communities. The ceremony featured reflections from individuals of diverse backgrounds followed by a reading by Dr. Talat Shabbir, where he shared intimate excerpts from his book, moving the audience with his deep reflections on the bond between a father and son. In Abu Jee, Dr. Shabbir paints a vivid picture of the powerful and unbreakable connection between him and his father, Shabbir Hussain Bhatti. The book is a rich collection of memories, reflections, and profound thoughts. Through the pages of this book, Dr. Shabbir delves into the everyday experiences that shaped his upbringing, the lessons drawn from both struggles and joys, and the ultimate realization of the irreplaceable presence of a father in his life. One of the central themes of Abu Jee is the author's contemplation on the inevitability of separation caused by death. Dr. Shabbir uses his father's passing as a catalyst to explore not just grief, but the beauty in remembering and cherishing those who leave us. Through moving accounts of events, Dr. Shabbir shows that love transcends death, leaving behind memories that continue to stay and inspire. The title of the book, Abu Jee, reflects the affectionate way the author refers to his father carrying profound respect and emotional attachment. The narrative not only captivates the readers but also highlight the universal themes of love and loss. Saqib Imam Rizvi, Ziaullah Shah, Sarfraz Afzal, Ch Shabbir, Tahir Mahmood, Abdul Rauf Kiani, Fouzia Naureen, Naseer Gillani and Brig Azmat Shabbir spoke on the occasion reflecting on the narrative of fond memories of the author. The event was moderated by Muntazir Imam Rizvi.—DNA

## 4 bike-lifters held

RAWALPINDI: The Rawal Division Police on the instructions of City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani on Saturday launched a crackdown against bike-lifters and arrested four accused with nine motorcycles. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the Waris Khan Police recovered five stolen motorcycles from two accused Usman and Aqib.—APP

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## Briefs

## Crack down on overcharging

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has intensified its crackdown on public transport vehicles overcharging passengers on Saturday. An ITP spokesperson told APP that special squads have been deployed at bus terminals across the federal capital, including Faizabad, Mandi Mor, Karachi Company, and 26 number Chungi bus terminals, to monitor compliance with fare regulations. He said traffic police officers inspected fare lists of vehicles and took action against transporters found charging excessive fares. Multiple transporters were issued challan tickets, and passengers were reimbursed for the extra amount collected. He said strict action will continue against those violating fare rules. Citizens are urged to report overcharging or inappropriate behavior by transporters to the ITP helpline at 1915.—APP

## NEOC launches eid mubarak initiative

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) has launched the Eid Mubarak Initiative to control the spread of the wild poliovirus (WPV) across Pakistan. This strategic initiative includes the deployment of polio vaccination teams at key transit points and the establishment of Eid mubarak stalls across the country. To mitigate the risk of poliovirus transmission due to population movement from outbreak-prone districts, NEOC's Eid Mubarak Stalls will be operational from March 25 to April 3, strategically placed in high-footfall areas such as major shopping malls and amusement parks in cities including Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad. These stalls aim to vaccinate children who may have missed recent immunisation campaigns or who are traveling before the next national polio drive in April 2025. The initiative also focuses on raising awareness about polio immunisation through interactive sessions and engagement activities. Parents, students, and community members visiting the stalls will have the opportunity to receive hands-on training in administering the polio vaccine, reinforcing their role in the fight against polio. Additionally, children will receive small gifts and souvenirs to encourage participation. The initiative is further strengthened by the involvement of female influencers, local officials, and key stakeholders who will advocate for polio vaccination and address public concerns. With a total of 145 Eid Mubarak Stalls and 644 vaccination teams deployed nationwide, the campaign underscores Pakistan's commitment to eradicating polio and safeguarding the health of its children. The next nationwide campaign is scheduled from April 21 to 27, aiming to vaccinate 45.4 million children under the age of five across the country.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Acting Ambassador of USA Natalie Beker, Ambassador of Portugal Fredrico Silva, CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani and others posing for a picture on the occasion of iftar dinner hosted by Chairman Monal Group Luqman Ali Afzal. —DNA

## IG Rizvi calls for helping the needy persons

Ahsan Bakhtawari also highlighted that during this Ramadan, security has been tightened in all markets and Ramadan bazaars, while traffic flow has also been maintained efficiently

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Inspector General (IG) Islamabad Police, Ali Nasir Rizvi, stated that having people rely on you for their needs is a special blessing from Allah. By serving the elderly in old age homes, orphaned children, and underprivileged individuals, we can secure our afterlife. If every individual fulfills his role, we can truly establish a welfare society. He expressed these views as the chief guest at an iftar dinner hosted in honor of senior citizens and orphaned children from SOS Village by Chairman of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, at an old age home in Islamabad. The event was attended by

former RCCI President Saqib Rafiq, IAEA President and Executive Member of ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood, F-10 Markaz President Ahmed Khan, Chairman Tahir Abbasi, President of Islamabad Chamber of Small Trade and Small Industry Awais Satti, ICCI Executive Member Imran Minhas, former Executive Members Maqsood Tabish and Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, trade leader Zahir Abbasi, General Secretary of G-9 Markaz Shahid Abbasi, and a large number of business community members. The IG Islamabad declared elderly individuals and orphaned children as the most respectable and deserving segments of society, stating that the civilization and culture of any society can be gauged by how it treats

its elders and underprivileged individuals. He emphasized that elderly people are the custodians of our social values and serve as a beacon of light for us, while orphaned children are like little lamps that need our love and guidance to pave their way toward a bright future. IG Ali Nasir Rizvi appreciated the efforts of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement and stated that Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari's social services are an example for us, as he is actively involved in numerous welfare projects. He assured full cooperation from Islamabad Police in such charitable endeavors, emphasizing that the police will play a vital role not only in ensuring public safety but also in their welfare and well-being. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, while ad-

ressing the occasion, stated that taking care of the elderly and orphaned children is a noble duty, which is not only a social responsibility but also a source of spiritual satisfaction. He emphasized the need to build a society where no one has to beg for their basic needs. He further said that IG Ali Nasir Rizvi is actively working to eliminate crime in the city. Throughout Ramadan, he has been breaking his fast with police personnel at different checkpoints, demonstrating his commitment to making Islamabad a peaceful and crime-free city. Ahsan Bakhtawari also highlighted that during this Ramadan, security has been tightened in all markets and Ramadan bazaars, while traffic flow has also been maintained efficiently.

## Twin cities' salons buzzing with pre-Eid beauty bookings

ISLAMABAD: As Eid festivities drew near, beauty parlors and mehndi stalls experienced a surge in clientele, casting a vibrant spell of excitement, color, and tradition over the twin cities, setting the tone for joyous Eid celebrations. Beauty salons and mehndi artists across the twin cities were inundated with a frantic influx of clients, as women of all ages flocked to get pampered and adorned for the upcoming Eid celebrations. In a frenzy of pre-Eid pampering, beauty salons were fully booked, offering an array of treatments from rejuvenating facials and elaborate bridal makeovers to intricate mehndi designs, as women gear up to celebrate the festive occasion with glamour and elegance. Salon owners across the twin cities reported a surge in bookings weeks in advance, with savvy customers securing coveted appointments as early as a month prior to Eid in a bid to avoid the inevitable last-minute rush and ensure a stress-free, glamorous celebration. Talking to media Sara Ali, a beautician at a prominent salon in Islamabad, said, "Our schedule is packed, and we are even working extra hours to accommodate the rush." Rozina, another beautician at a nearby beauty parlor in Rawalpindi, said that a lot of female customers were requesting trending makeup and hairstyle bookings before the Eid festival, and the demand for mehndi application had also doubled. Mehndi artists, too, were finding it difficult to keep up with the surge in customers. Many had set up temporary booths in bustling marketplaces like Jinnah Super, Saddar, and Raja Bazaar, where women of all ages queue up to get their hands adorned with traditional henna patterns. Sadaf, a mehndi artist at a prominent market in Islamabad, said that she set up a temporary booth every Eid. This year, all trending options of mehndi designs were available for women clients. "I am happy with the overwhelming response; the crowd is almost double, and the business is a profitable option as Eid is approaching," she shared proudly. Ayesha Khan, a mehndi artist in Rawalpindi, shared that she had been working non-stop for the last few days, as girls and women want the best henna designs for Eid. "Some customers even bring reference pictures from social media, asking for the latest trending designs," she added.—DNA

## Iran's Cultural Attaché lauds Islamic artwork

RAWALPINDI: The exhibition of renowned artist Muhammad Azeem Iqbal's Islamic artworks at PAC has concluded. The Iran's Cultural Attaché, Dr. Mehdi Taheri attended the closing ceremony as Chief Guest at the event. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Dr. Mehdi Taheri said that Muhammad Azeem Iqbal's artworks reflect Islamic civilization and culture. He emphasized that the artist has highlighted the intricacies of Islamic calligraphy with great skill and devotion. He further added that such exhibitions not only promote fine arts but also help introduce the younger generation to Islamic culture and history. Director PAC, Sajjad Husain remarked that encouraging talented artists like Muhammad Azeem Iqbal is their responsibility. He stated that the artist's work deeply represents the essence and significance of Islamic art. The Punjab Arts Council will continue to support such creative and cultural initiatives to promote Islamic heritage. The exhibition featured Muhammad Azeem Iqbal's unique Islamic artworks, showcasing Islamic calligraphy, traditional motifs, and spiritual aesthetics. A large number of art enthusiasts, teachers, students, and the general public visited the exhibition and appreciated the distinctive style of Islamic art on display.—APP

## Robber killed, 2 flee shootout

RAWALPINDI: A robber was killed and two others escaped after a shootout with police during a robbery bid at a house in the limits of Saddar Beruni Police Station on Saturday morning. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, it was informed on the Emergency Helpline 15 that three unknown armed men had barged into the house with the intention of robbery. A Saddar Beruni Police team immediately reached the spot. On seeing the police the robbers started firing and tried to flee. In the crossfire with police, a robber, later identified as Abid - an Afghan national, was killed. His accomplices escaped while firing, and a search was underway in the area to arrest them. Senior officers reached the spot on receiving information about the incident. The body of the dead robber was shifted to the hospital.—APP

## Markets bustling with shoppers ahead of Eid

ISLAMABAD: As the Islamic holy month draws to a close, the entire nation has turned into a vibrant shopping destination, with individuals thronging markets and malls to buy Eid gifts, clothes, traditional treats and stalls selling colorful bangles and mehndi designs proving to be a major draw for young girls. According to a report aired by PTV News, the shopping frenzy has reached its peak, with markets and malls overflowing with shoppers. The report highlighted the efforts of vendors and shopkeepers to cater to the massive demand for Eid essentials, and the joyous atmosphere that pervades the shopping centers. Citizens are rushing to take advantage of discount Eid offers, with many shops offering huge discounts on clothing, shoes and accessories. The report added that the vendors and shopkeepers are catering massive demand for Eid essentials and the joyous atmosphere that pervades the shopping centers. "I have never seen such a huge rush

of shoppers before. It is like the whole city is out shopping for Eid!" said a shopper from Lahore city. "We have been selling Eid clothes and accessories for years, but this year's demand is unprecedented. We are working round the clock to restock our shelves," shopkeeper from Lahore's Liberty Market said. "I came to the market at 8 am and it was already packed. I managed to get some great deals on clothes and shoes, though!" shopper from Karachi. "Our stall has been selling traditional sweets and desserts for years. This year, we have had to increase our production to meet the demand," stall owner from Karachi's Empress Market. "I love the festive atmosphere in the markets during Ramadan. It's a great time to shop for Eid gifts and clothes," shopper from Islamabad. "The markets in Peshawar are always bustling during Ramadan, but this year's shopping frenzy is something else. I'm loving the energy!" shopper from Peshawar added.—APP

## Minister pledges strong action on waste management

"Our goal is a future where waste is drastically reduced, resources are preserved, and our environment is protected," he said, aligning efforts with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11 and 12)

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Musadik Masood Malik, urged nationwide action to tackle waste management challenges as Pakistan observes International Day of Zero Waste. This year's theme, "Towards Zero Waste in Fashion and Textiles," highlights the pressing need to curb pollution from the textile sector, a major con-

tributor to Pakistan's economy but also a significant source of waste. Minister Malik acknowledged the textile industry's role in employment and GDP growth but warned that waste from plastics, electronics, and food remains a critical issue requiring urgent attention. "Pakistan is implementing robust policies to combat waste," he said, citing the National Hazardous Waste

Management Policy (2022) and the Pakistan National Action Roadmap on Plastic Pollution as key steps toward sustainability. The government is pushing for a shift from a linear to a circular economy, where waste is minimized and resources are reused. Initiatives promoting eco-friendly fashion, sustainable packaging, and a forthcoming circular economy policy are part of this

strategy. Malik emphasized the need for private sector involvement in adopting sustainable practices and called on civil society to promote responsible consumption. "Our goal is a future where waste is drastically reduced, resources are preserved, and our environment is protected," he said, aligning efforts with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11 and 12).—DNA

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## Demand for manuscripts

PABLO Picasso once said that “the purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls.” Art collectors around the world partake in this soul-searching endeavor and Islamic art is emerging as a growing asset class. With some pieces more than 1,000 years old and ranging from the Maghreb to Mughal India and beyond, Islamic art has been highly valued for its craftsmanship, intricacy and elegance. Islamic art is by no means monolithic – from architecture to ceramics to Arabesque, the range of its offering is remarkable. Of these, calligraphy has historically been the most appreciated and sought-after form of creative expression, especially due to its association with the Qur’an. Combining the Arabic script with local traditions, Islamic calligraphy beautifully merges spirituality and aesthetics. It almost takes the form of divine expression representing the sacred nature of the written word in Islam. Manuscripts of the Islamic west – the Maghreb – are increasingly sought-after due to their unique calligraphic style and often their origination from Europe. Given the long history of Muslim Spain, Portugal and Sicily, these Arabic works represent Europe’s Islamic past. Maghrebi calligraphy is also known for its distinctive features, including rounded letter forms with pointed tips and the slight rightward tilt of the letters, making it visually different from other Arabic calligraphy traditions. It is most commonly used in religious and legal texts, as well as poetry. In fact, Maghrebi calligraphy is an interesting form of decorative expression that narates interchanges between Andalusia and North Africa, as styles and knowledge transferred in both directions during the medieval period. It evolved from the Kairouani Kufi style and its clarity and elegance made it a popular choice for transcribing the Qur’an under the Almohad dynasty. This style blends rigid, angular strokes inherited from Kufic with fluid, circular movements, creating a distinctive balance between structure and elegance. Combining the Arabic script with local traditions, Islamic calligraphy beautifully merges spirituality and aesthetics. In the golden era of Al-Andalus from the eighth century to the 15th century, Andalusian artists refined the art of manuscript production, introducing sophisticated calligraphy and decorative techniques. This artistic tradition flourished in Morocco due to its deep historical ties with Islamic Spain. The Moors facilitated a dynamic exchange of knowledge, art and architecture between Spain and the Maghreb. With the advent of the Spanish Reconquista, Morocco became a refuge for Andalusian calligraphers who brought with them a rich artistic and intellectual heritage and made Moroccan cities like Fez, Tetouan and Rabat centers of Andalusian culture. Their influence is visible in both Morocco’s architectural marvels and treasured manuscript collections. Auctions provide a crucial platform for the preservation of these cultural treasures, ensuring that they remain in the hands of appreciators and indeed in creating advocacy around the importance of these works. The art market, particularly in London, is witnessing a growing demand for manuscripts of the Islamic west. The success of Christie’s and Sotheby’s, in particular, in bringing art collectors and investors together has played a critical role in keeping conversations on Islamic art alive. The price of rare manuscripts – such as the best calligraphy of the Islamic west – has soared given the paucity of such invaluable artifacts and the ever-growing demand for them.

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## US anti-immigrant frenzy unsustainable

MEXICAN border, the locus of much of the Trump administration’s concerns about uncontrolled access to the US. But none of this materialized at the airport, which was relaxed and welcoming. The staff, including immigration officials, were drawn mostly from America’s minorities, especially Hispanics and Asians, the same groups vilified by far-right opponents of immigration. The lines moved quickly and the passport screening process took about a minute per passenger, many of whom had flown from Mexican airports nearby. Countries are of course entitled to protect their borders. Immigration policies are usually discretionary, according to economic and security prerogatives. The US should be no exception, especially since it has suffered more than its share of illegal immigration: it is estimated that there are more than 11 million people living there without legal status, about 3 percent of the population. Some have committed heinous crimes in the US or were escaping the consequences of crimes they had committed in their home countries. However, the Trump administration has been criticized for how it is enforcing the law and the rhetoric employed to justify it. For example, it has targeted those holding political views at variance with the administration’s, on the war in Gaza for example and the Palestinian issue in general. Many lawful residents have had their status revoked for expressing their views on these matters. Permanent residents, green card holders, were told that they could no longer stay in the US. Valid visas were revoked for students, faculty and researchers, and they were ordered to be deported for expressing their views. There has also been enforcement on ethnically selective grounds, targeting Hispanics, for example. The tactics have been frighteningly reminiscent of those employed by totalitarian or authoritarian regimes that have been roundly panned by the US as violations of the right to free expression and due process. Other states, especially those run by Democrats or with sizable immigrant or foreign-born populations, are also voicing objections to the federal overreach and accompanying xenophobia. The census showed that 50 percent of Texas and 49 percent of New Mexico’s population are minorities, especially Hispanics. The District of Columbia and states such as Maryland also have sizable minority populations. Overall, more than 42 percent of the US population were minorities according to the 2020 census. Hispanics and Asians accounted for 60 percent of the minority population. Targeting students and faculty with opposing views has also been criticized by other states, especially those with large student populations. Massachusetts Rep. Stephen Lynch recently said: “Snatching an international student off our streets who is lawfully in our country and attending one of our universities and then bundling her off to an ICE detention center 1,700 miles away without a hearing is a sickening reminder of the Gestapo-like conduct from another age.” He added that his district had about 80,000 foreign students “precisely because we have a reputation as a center of learning and intellectual, religious, and cultural tolerance. Let’s keep it that way.”

## Tibet Versus Xizang

Qamar Bashir



Since 1959, China has profoundly transformed Tibet (officially known as Xizang Autonomous Region) from an isolated, feudal society into a modern region through systematic and extensive investments in human development, infrastructure, and economic growth. Xizang’s economy, once characterized by widespread serfdom and an extremely low GDP per capita of less than ¥150 (\$22), has impressively risen to ¥230 billion (\$32.5 billion) by 2023, achieving a forty-fold increase in GDP per capita

SPIRITUALITY, whether grounded in any religion or sect, remains an illuminating pathway to connect to God, Allah, Buddha, or Bhagwan. In recent history, spirituality connected to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama prominently captured media attention. However, lately, this revered figure has notably receded from mainstream media coverage. This prompts contemplation about why such a significant personality and the causes he championed since his exile to India in 1959 now receive less attention, appearing diluted or diminished. Curiosity guided me to explore his official website, [dalailama.com](http://dalailama.com), where I was immediately drawn to the introductory statement: “The Dalai Lamas are believed by Tibetan Buddhists to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are realized beings, inspired by the wish to attain complete enlightenment, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help all living beings.” Further exploration into the mystique of the Dalai Lama led me to his last significant public statement from March 10, 2011, which illuminated reasons behind his diminished media presence. Marking the 52nd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, His Holiness acknowledged China’s growth as a global power, particularly noting its impressive economic achievements in Tibet. He praised China’s contributions to global peace and human advancement, simultaneously emphasizing transparency, freedom of expression, and the protection of Tibet’s cultural and linguistic diversity. In his address, the Dalai Lama commended China’s declared efforts to preserve Tibetan language and culture, emphasizing their essential role in safeguarding Buddhist teachings that promote global harmony and happiness. He urged the Chinese leadership to uphold Tibetan cultural heritage and identity, warning that neglecting these could erode humanity’s shared cultural legacy. He reaffirmed his commitment to resolving the Tibetan issue peacefully through the “Middle-Way Approach,” advocating genuine autonomy for Tibet within China’s framework rather than full independence. This pragmatic shift demonstrates his understanding of political complexities and his desire for tangible progress for Tibetans under Chinese governance. Since 1959, China has profoundly transformed Tibet (officially known as Xizang Autonomous Region) from

an isolated, feudal society into a modern region through systematic and extensive investments in human development, infrastructure, and economic growth. Xizang’s economy, once characterized by widespread serfdom and an extremely low GDP per capita of less than ¥150 (\$22), has impressively risen to ¥230 billion (\$32.5 billion) by 2023, achieving a forty-fold increase in GDP per capita. This remarkable economic upliftment, anchored by industries such as tourism, mining, renewable energy, and handicrafts, eradicated poverty entirely by 2020. Infrastructure advancements significantly enhanced Xizang’s connectivity, with the primitive 1,300 kilometers of roads in 1959 expanding dramatically to 120,000 kilometers of modern roadways today. Key projects such as the G318 Highway, the high-altitude Lhasa-Nagqu Expressway, and over 1,400 kilometers of railway networks, including the globally recognized Qinghai-Tibet Railway, have integrated Xizang more firmly into China’s national development narrative. Air travel has also seen exponential growth, now supported by five airports servicing millions of passengers annually, connecting Tibetans to major global cities. Educational progress is equally transformative. From a literacy rate below 5% in 1959, predominantly limited to monks and aristocrats, today’s youth literacy rate exceeds 99%. Thousands of schools, seven universities, and comprehensive bilingual education programs represent a sustained commitment to cultural preservation alongside educational excellence. Such educational initiatives empower individuals by equipping them with the knowledge and skills essential to participate actively and productively in society, creating stakes in the system that encourage stability and cooperation. Healthcare improvements have revolutionized living conditions in Xizang. Historically minimal healthcare infrastructure has expanded significantly, resulting in life expectancy increasing from 35.5 years to 72.19 years today. Infant mortality rates plummeted from 300 per 1,000 births in 1959 to 6.7 per 1,000 births, reflecting internationally recognized standards. Comprehensive rural healthcare coverage, facilitated by programs like “Medical Aid to Tibet,” further underscores the profound human-centric development initiatives implemented in the region. Industrial growth has also reshaped Xizang’s economic landscape, transitioning the population from predominantly agricultural labor to diverse employment opportunities across sectors such as hydropower,

tourism, and mining, the latter being notably significant due to Tibet’s substantial lithium reserves. This economic diversification has created hundreds of thousands of new urban jobs, fundamentally improving living standards. By creating meaningful economic opportunities, China’s human-centric development approach has effectively shifted attitudes from isolation and resistance towards integration and shared prosperity. Cultural preservation has remained a vital component of Tibet’s modernization. Extensive restoration of over 1,800 Tibetan Buddhist temples and active promotion of the Tibetan language in educational and governance institutions reflect deep respect for cultural identity. Recognition by UNESCO of Tibetan opera, medicine, and festivals reinforces this commitment to cultural heritage amidst rapid modernization. Recently, these remarkable human rights advancements in Xizang were comprehensively documented in a white paper titled “Human Rights in Xizang in the New Era,” released by China’s State Council Information Office in Lhasa on March 28, 2025. This document emphasizes China’s commitment to a people-centered approach to human rights, underscoring significant achievements in economic development, ethnic unity, social harmony, environmental preservation, and religious amity within the region. China’s approach illustrates how human empowerment and comprehensive development can soften even the most hardened or violent attitudes by demonstrating tangible benefits and fostering inclusive growth. Globally, Tibet is officially recognized as part of China, with no country acknowledging the legitimacy of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The United Nations also does not list Tibet among territories pending decolonization, reinforcing international alignment with China’s territorial claims. The strategic shift in the Dalai Lama’s advocacy from independence to autonomy reflects recognition of these positive developments. Despite ongoing political disagreements, the evolution of Tibet under China’s governance highlights how comprehensive, humane, and culturally respectful development profoundly influences and transforms political and social aspirations. For Pakistan, aiming to reintegrate disenfranchised Baloch separatists, adopting China’s human-centric, development-oriented approach in Xizang could similarly build trust, create meaningful stakes in the national system, and foster genuine reconciliation and shared progress.

## A new dimension in Turkiye-US relations

Dr. Sinem Cengiz

Despite these challenges, defense cooperation is the cornerstone of Turkish-American relations. Turkiye’s admission to NATO received substantial support from the US, due to Turkiye’s perceived military strength and its strategic position. Especially in the current geopolitical climate, both states are aware that they do not have the luxury of allowing this cooperation to deteriorate. Not surprisingly, Rubio sought Turkiye’s support for peace initiatives in Ukraine. During Fidan’s visit, Erdogan said Turkiye and the US should and would achieve meaningful...

TURKISH Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan’s discussions with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington last week covered a wide range of issues including defense, trade, and regional concerns. Diplomatic corridors in Ankara and Washington are busy preparing for visits by the two presidents, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Donald Trump. Last week they had a phone conversation described by Turkish officials as “highly positive” and by the US as “transformational.” Turkish-American relations are clearly taking a new direction and adopting a new dimension. The relationship between the two NATO allies is often framed around structural issues that include a long list of grievances on both sides. With each change of US administration, these issues have remained unresolved, or in many cases worsened. One is the Syrian Arab Republic. Fidan said Trump should withdraw US troops from Syria, which would be cost-effective for Washington. Turkiye is clearly signaling to the US that regional countries are taking full responsibility for combating Daesh, so there is no longer a need for the US to legitimize its presence in Syria or its support for the PKK under the pretext of fighting the militants. Trump may be convinced, as the dynamics in Syria have dramatically shifted in favor of Turkiye, a country that is now increasingly important for the US to cooperate with. A second point of divergence concerns Russia. Under the Biden administration, Ankara’s close political and economic ties with Moscow were a source of tension. However, Trump views Moscow through a different lens, which Ankara sees as an opportunity. When examining the leadership styles of Russian, Turkish, and American leaders, it becomes clear that there are more commonalities than differences in how they ap-

proach politics. Ankara and Washington seem keen to capitalize on the personal ties between their leaders, as Turkiye and Russia do. A third unresolved issue are the obstacles to defense industry cooperation. Ankara expects the US to lift sanctions and start technical talks on the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act and the F-35 program. During his first term, Trump refrained from imposing sanctions on Turkiye following its acquisition of the Russian S-400 air defense missile system in 2019. However, he eventually imposed sanctions in 2020, when relations reached a low point. Several issues contributed to this deterioration, including US cooperation with the Kurdish militias in Syria that are considered a threat by Ankara, Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, and the Abraham Accords. Ankara’s strong reactions to these developments clearly influenced Trump’s decision to impose sanctions and remove Turkiye from the international F-35 program, in which it was both a manufacturer and a buyer. Despite these challenges, defense cooperation is the cornerstone of Turkish-American relations. Turkiye’s admission to NATO received substantial support from the US, due to Turkiye’s perceived military strength and its strategic position. Especially in the current geopolitical climate, both states are aware that they do not have the luxury of allowing this cooperation to deteriorate. Not surprisingly, Rubio sought Turkiye’s support for peace initiatives in Ukraine. During Fidan’s visit, Erdogan said Turkiye and the US should and would achieve meaningful cooperation for the sake of regional stability “despite all the challenges, and despite the lobbies seeking to poison the cooperation between our two countries.” This highlighted the role of lobbies in shaping Turkish-American relations.

The US political system is structured in a way that allows pressure groups and lobbies to exert considerable influence over the policymaking process. Countries aiming to influence US foreign policy often lobby Congress or the White House. The Armenian, Greek, and Jewish lobbies are particularly significant, especially in shaping Turkish-American relations. The Armenian lobby’s focus is on issues related to Turkiye and Azerbaijan, while the Greek lobby centers on disputes in Turkish-Greek relations, such as the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. The Jewish lobby, which historically supported Turkish-Israeli relations, has shifted its stance because of deteriorating relations, particularly regarding the Gaza war. The central point remains how Turkiye and the US prioritize material interests over politics. Fidan’s visit took place amid the biggest protests in Turkiye in over a decade, sparked by the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and other opposition figures. The US State Department said it would “not comment on the internal decision-making processes of another country.” This was notable, as the US would typically seize any opportunity to comment on Turkish domestic politics. This clearly reflects the Trump administration’s pragmatic approach to foreign policy and its focus on material interests rather than politics. If a new era in Turkish-American relations is to begin, it must be built on a sincere convergence that respects both national and regional interests. Only then can such convergence lead to a meaningful shift in Turkish-American relations and the broader Middle East. However, in Turkish-American relations, every convergence seems to carry a hidden divergence. The devil that lies in the detail is the unpredictability of the Trump administration’s policies and the uncertain evolution of regional dynamics.

## Briefs

## Civil, military leaders on same page

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He emphasized that no decision would be made without consulting the provinces. The meeting reviewed the progress on enhancing the capacity of Counter-Terrorism Departments in provinces. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that it is essential to fully activate the Counter-Terrorism Departments at the provincial level for an effective counter-terrorism response, and in this regard, all possible assistance will be provided to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in view of their challenges. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also emphasized that the Counter-Terrorism Wing of the FIA will be fully activated at the federal level. The meeting also reviewed progress on the establishment of National and Provincial Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centers.

## Kurram warring sides reach...

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Sources told Geo News that elders from both sides, district administration officials, and other key stakeholders participated in the negotiations to reach the settlement. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Ashfaq Ahmed said the truce has brought double joy for the residents ahead of Eid ul Fitr. Meanwhile, jurig member Haji Asghar said that a plan is being formulated to reopen the roads, which have remained blocked due to ongoing tensions. Kurram, a district of more than 600,000 residents near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, has long been a hot-spot for sectarian violence.

## Mengal, party workers...

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Sardar Akhtar Mengal and the entire BNP-M leadership is safe. The spokesperson noted that the BNP-M's sit-in was underway near the site of the "alleged suicide blast" and that the public would soon be informed about the results of an inquiry into the incident. The official assured the party that the safety of the rally's participants, Mengal and other leaders was the provincial government's responsibility. Rind said the Balochistan government was in contact with the party's leadership since last night.

## PM vows to further strengthen...

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especially concerning Gaza, and renewed his invitation for the Amir to visit Pakistan. Pakistan and Qatar share a strong historical relationship, with cooperation spanning various sectors, including energy, trade, and cultural exchanges. Qatar has been a key partner in supporting Pakistan's economic development, and both leaders expressed their determination to further deepen this collaboration. The upcoming visit of a Qatari delegation is expected to focus on enhancing bilateral trade, infrastructure development, and investments in Pakistan's energy sector.

## Civil society pens open...

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Responding to BYC's call, shutter-down strikes were staged over the weekend in various cities of Balochistan – including Quetta, Panjgur, Kalat, Turbat, Mastung, Khan, Chaghi, Dalbandin and Dhadar. Police also detained BYC leader Sammi under MPO ordinance in Karachi on Tuesday, shortly after a judicial magistrate ordered her release, along with four other activists in a case related to the violation of Section 144. "We, the undersigned citizens of Pakistan, urge you to take immediate action to release leader Mehrang Baloch, Sammi Baloch, and other detained leaders of the BYC before Eid so they can spend it with their loved ones," read the letter.

## NZ crush Pakistan by 73 runs in ODI series opener

New Zealand lead the three-match ODI series 1-0

## SPORTS DESK

NAPIER: New Zealand secured a comprehensive 73-run win over Pakistan in the first ODI at McLean Park on Saturday, taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Chasing a formidable target of 345, Pakistan began confidently with debutant Usman Khan and Abdullah Shafique forging an 83-run opening stand. Both batters adopted an aggressive approach, laying a strong foundation. However, the breakthrough came in the 13th over when Nathan Smith dismissed Usman for 39. Skipper Michael Bracewell then removed Abdullah for 36 in the 16th over, leaving Pakistan at 88-2. Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan attempted to stabilize the innings with a 76-run stand, keeping the chase alive. But debutant Muhammad Abbas dismissed Rizwan for 30 in the 29th over, reducing Pakistan to 164-3. Babar, determined to anchor the innings, combined with Salman Ali Agha for another crucial partnership of 89 runs. The former skipper played a fluent knock of 78, reaching his 36th ODI fifty before falling to Will O'Rourke in the 39th over, shifting the momentum back to the hosts. Pakistan's innings unraveled quickly after Babar's dismissal. Tayyab Tahir's run-out in



the 40th over and Irfan Khan Niazi's golden duck left the visitors struggling at 253-6. Smith continued his impact, removing Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf in the 43rd over, while Jacob Duffy dismissed Salman Ali Agha for a well-fought 58. Akif Javed was the last man out as Pakistan folded for 271 in 44.1 overs. Smith starred with the ball, taking 4-60

in 8.1 overs, while Duffy grabbed two wickets. Bracewell, Abbas and O'Rourke chipped in with one each, ensuring New Zealand's dominant win. Earlier, after being put into bat, New Zealand faced early setbacks. Akif Javed made an immediate impact, dismissing Will Young for 1 in the third over. He then removed Nick Kelly for 15 and

Henry Nicholls for 11, leaving the hosts reeling at 50-3 in 12.4 overs. However, Mark Chapman and Daryl Mitchell turned the game around with a crucial 100-run stand. Chapman's aggressive stroke play saw him notch up his third ODI century in the 38th over, smashing 11 fours and four sixes.

Mitchell played the anchor role, scoring a steady 76 before falling to Irfan Niazi. Their record-breaking 199-run partnership propelled New Zealand to a strong position. Chapman eventually departed for a career-best 132, while Haris Rauf and Niazi struck late to dent the lower order. But debutant Muhammad Abbas' blistering 50 off 24 balls lifted New Zealand past 300.

Pakistan's bowling effort was led by Niazi (3-51), with Rauf and Akif picking up two wickets each, while Naseem Shah and Mohammad Ali grabbed one apiece.

Pakistan playing XI: Abdullah Shafique, Usman Khan, Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan (w/c), Salman Agha, Tayyab Tahir, Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Ali, Akif Javed. New Zealand playing XI: Nick Kelly, Will Young, Henry Nicholls, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell, Michael Bracewell (c), Muhammad Abbas, Mitchell Hay (w), Nathan Smith, Jacob Duffy, William O'Rourke.

## Dhoni surpasses Suresh Raina as CSK's top scorer

Dhoni overtook Raina's tally of 4,687 runs from 176 matches between 2008 and 2021

## WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Former Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni has once again etched his name in IPL history, surpassing Suresh Raina to become CSK's all-time leading run-scorer. Despite Dhoni's valiant effort, his unbeaten 30 off 16 balls was not enough to prevent CSK from suffering a crushing defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on March 28 at Chepauk.

The 43-year-old wicketkeeper-batter now has 4,699 runs in 236 matches for CSK from 2008 to 2025, overtaking Raina's tally of 4,687 runs from 176 matches between 2008 and 2021. The former Indian skipper and Raina remain far ahead of other CSK stalwarts,



## Law appointed Nepal men's Head Coach

Law brings extensive coaching experience, having recently worked with the USA men's team

KATMANDU: Former Australian batter Stuart Law has been appointed head coach of the Nepal men's cricket team on a two-year contract. He replaces Monty Desai, whose tenure ended in February 2024 after two years in charge. Law brings extensive coaching experience, having recently worked with the USA men's team. He has previously served as head coach for Bangladesh and West Indies, while also taking on interim coaching roles with Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Additionally, he has coached Bangladesh's Under-19 team and led Bangladesh to their first Asia Cup final in 2012. In Australia, Law has held multiple coaching roles, including serving as a batting coach for the national team, working with Cricket Australia's Centre of Excellence, and coaching the Under-19 squad. As a player, he represented Australia in 54 ODIs and one Test match. His stint with the USA ended in October 2024 after a seven-month tenure. Despite guiding the team to a historic T20I series victory against Bangladesh and leading them to the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup for the first time, he was relieved of his duties. Under Desai's leadership, Nepal recently whitewashed the USA 3-0 in a T20I series, just months after their second appearance in the T20 World Cup, where they failed to win a game. Earlier in 2024, Nepal also swept Canada 3-0 in an ODI series at home. In 2023, they made their ODI Asia Cup debut but returned without a victory. Law's first assignment as Nepal's head coach will be a tri-series against Scotland and the Netherlands in June, as part of the ICC World Cup League 2. Nepal currently sits second-last in the tournament standings. – Agencies

## 'We need to improve more,' says Rizwan after defeat

'Having three debutants today was great for their growth,' Rizwan said

## WEB DESK

NAPIER: Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan reflected on his team's disappointing defeat to New Zealand in the first ODI of the three-match series at McLean Park on Saturday. During the post-match conference, Rizwan shared his thoughts on the team's performance: "The way we started the second innings—we played with good intent and executed the essentials needed for a chase. We got close, but as the pressure mounted, the momentum shifted in those critical three to four overs." He praised the bowlers for their early efforts: "Our bowlers were fantastic at the start. They adapted well to New Zealand's conditions and bowled remarkably. The decision to bowl first was the right one. However, Chapman played brilliantly, helping New Zealand post a competitive total. We need to improve more on capitalizing on key chances." Rizwan also highlighted the positives, including the introduction of new players: "Having three debutants today was great for their growth. Playing in New Zealand's challenging conditions is a valuable experience." Despite the loss, he remained optimistic: "The result wasn't what we wanted, but we have two more chances. We'll regroup and come back stronger." Pakistan lost the series opener by 73 runs despite commendable efforts from Babar Azam and Salman Ali Agha. Chasing a formidable 345, Pakistan started strong, with debutant Usman Khan and Abdullah Shafique forging an 83-run opening

stand. Both openers played aggressively, providing early momentum. However, Nathan Smith broke the partnership in the 13th over, dismissing Usman for 39. Michael Bracewell soon sent Abdullah back for 36, reducing Pakistan to 88-2. Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan then stitched together a crucial 76-run stand to keep Pakistan in the chase. However, debutant Muhammad Abbas dismissed Rizwan for 30 in the 29th over, leaving Pakistan at 164-3. Babar, determined to anchor the innings, partnered with Salman Ali Agha for an 89-run stand. The former skipper played fluently, reaching his 36th ODI fifty before falling to Will O'Rourke for 78 in the 39th over, shifting the momentum back to New Zealand. Pakistan's collapse began after Babar's dismissal. Tayyab Tahir's run-out and Irfan Khan Niazi's golden duck left them struggling at 253-6. Smith returned to remove Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf in the 43rd over, while Jacob Duffy dismissed Salman Ali Agha for a fighting 58. Akif Javed was the last man out as Pakistan folded for 271 in 44.1 overs. Smith led the bowling attack with figures of 4-60, while Duffy took two wickets. Bracewell, Abbas, and O'Rourke chipped in with one each. Batting first, the Black-caps struggled at 50-3 after Akif Javed's fiery spell. However, Mark Chapman (132) and Daryl Mitchell (76) turned the game around with a record-breaking 199-run stand. Abbas' quickfire 50 off 24 balls lifted New Zealand past 300. Pakistan's bowlers fought hard, with Niazi (3-51) leading the attack, while Rauf and Akif took two wickets each. Naseem and Mohammad Ali chipped in with one wicket apiece.

## Djokovic reaches Miami final to close on 100th title

MIAMI: Novak Djokovic cruised past Grigor Dimitrov to reach his first Miami Open final since 2016 and move within one win of his 100th career ATP title. He will face unseeded Czech player Jakub Mensik in Sunday's final following his shock 7-6 (7-4) 4-6 7-6 (7-4) victory over American Taylor Fritz in Friday's second semi-final. Bulgaria's Dimitrov broke Djokovic in the opening game, but the Serb, watched by his coach Andy Murray, broke back. World number five Djokovic, 37, reeled off five straight games to win the first set. Dimitrov made a shaky start to the second set and the 24-time Grand Slam champion took advantage to go through 6-2 6-3. "Ever since I won my 99th [title], which was the Olympic Games in Paris, I've been playing with the prospect of winning the special 100 titles," said Djokovic. "I've been trying to find that necessary and much-needed level of tennis that will put me in a position to fight for a trophy, a big trophy. That's what I've been doing this week, to be honest. I've been very happy with the way I prepared for the tournament, the way I've been playing. I haven't dropped a set. It's a great opportunity. Let's see what happens in two days." Things started off well in windy conditions for 14th seed Dimitrov, 33, who won the first game on Djokovic's serve but was unable to capitalise and the classy Serb hit his stride and easily won the first set. After a fan was ejected after saying something to annoy Dimitrov, the Bulgarian made a slow start to the second set. Dimitrov, last year's beaten finalist, won three of his service



games, but Djokovic was just too good. The six-time Miami Open champion only made five unforced errors to his opponent's 32. "There were a couple of tight games in the last part of the match," said Djokovic. "It was 4-2, 30-30 and he missed a couple of forehands, and then I found some really good serves with new balls in the last game. These were tricky conditions. Very swirly. The wind was not consistent, changing a lot. It's not easy to find control of the ball. I tried to make him play in these conditions because he's a clean hitter. I knew he'd struggle if I made him play an extra shot. He struggled with the first serve more than I did." The fourth seed, at 37 years and 10 months old, is the oldest ATP Masters 1000 finalist ever, having also been the oldest semi-finalist. Djokovic will face 19-year-old Mensik at the opposite end of his career arc, with the Czech teenager reaching his first final of a Masters event. The world number 54 lost his only previous final on the ATP Tour in Qatar last year and won through in Miami despite failing to break the serve of third seed Fritz. His victory was sealed in a flurry of aces, sending down 25 compared with Fritz's 14 as he edged to victory by winning tie-breaks in the first and third sets. The rising young star put his unexpected victory down to a chance meeting with Argentina footballing great Lionel Messi after the Inter Miami forward had gone into the locker room at the Hard Rock Stadium to congratulate Djokovic on his win. "Meeting this legend, not even a human, it's not happening every day," said Mensik. – Agencies

## Punjab police thwart...

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safe during the attack, which is a testament to the force's professional expertise and readiness. IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has praised the Dera Ghazi Khan Police for their successful operation against the terrorists and ordered the continuation of such operations in the future. RPO Dera Ghazi Khan, Captain (R) Sajjad Hassan Khan, and DPO Syed Ali led the operation. Security in the border areas has been further tightened, and search operations by police teams are being conducted to prevent any potential threats.

## No deal, only reconnected ties with...

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"We condemn terrorism in Pakistan. We strongly condemn targeting any Pakistani citizen," he emphasised. Meanwhile, PTI Information Secretary Waqas Akram announced that the party would support the long march announced by the Balochistan National Party Mengal (BNP-M) chief Akhtar Mengal against the detention of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders. statement, he said BNP-M supported the demand for the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission to hold those involved in extra-constitutional actions accountable. Acknowledging that the people of Balochistan had been demanding their due human, economic and political rights for decades, he said the PTI condemned enforced disappearances and the torture and killing of unarmed protesters.

## Pakistan expresses...

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1,700 people injured. The hardest-hit areas include the Mandalay region, where 694 deaths have been confirmed so far. With communications still disrupted, authorities fear the toll could rise further. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a message on his official X account, conveyed his heartfelt condolences, stating, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of both countries as they pass through this difficult time." He reaffirmed Pakistan's support and expressed hopes for the swift recovery and safety of the affected communities. President Asif Ali Zardari also expressed profound sorrow over the loss of lives and damages caused by the catastrophe. He extended Pakistan's solidarity with the people of Thailand and Myanmar, emphasizing that Pakistan stands with them in this moment of grief.

## FBR launches...

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mis-declaration and under-invoicing, and develop a more integrated strategy to combat smuggling. The notification further mentioned that these measures will help remove complexities that lead to a decrease in revenues and eliminate unnecessary obstacles in the tax collection process. The Director General of Special Measures will also coordinate with relevant ministries, divisions, and other institutions on customs-related matters. The notification stated that under the new directorate, the Director General and Directors will ensure coordination with field offices and provincial authorities, identify flaws in revenue collection, and offer suggestions for resolving them.

## Pak trashes Indian...

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incidents targeting minorities in India frequently occur with the tacit approval – or even complicity – of elements within the ruling dispensation. Highlighting that systematic promotion of hatred, discrimination, and violence against minorities in India was well-documented, the MoFA recalled various discriminatory and anti-minority events and measures in India including CAA, bulldozing of homes, 2002 Gujarat massacre to the 2020 Delhi pogrom, demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992.

## Briefs

## Rescuers in quake-hit Myanmar city plead for help

MANDALAY: Exhausted, overwhelmed rescuers in Myanmar's second-biggest city pleaded for help Saturday as they struggled to free hundreds of people trapped in buildings destroyed by a devastating earthquake. Friday's shallow 7.7-magnitude quake destroyed dozens of buildings in Mandalay, the country's cultural capital and home to more than 1.7 million people. In one street, a monastery's clock tower lay collapsed on its side, its hands pointing to 12:55 p.m. — just minutes after the time the quake struck. Among the worst-hit buildings in the city is the Sky Villa Condominium development, where more than 90 people are feared to be trapped. The building's 12 stories were reduced to six by the quake, the cracked pastel green walls of the upper floors perched on the crushed remains of the lower levels. A woman's body stuck out of the wreckage, her arm and hair hanging down. Rescuers clambered over the ruins painstakingly removing pieces of rubble and wreckage by hand as they sought to open up passageways to those trapped inside. Scattered around were the remains of people's lives — a child's plastic bunny toy, pieces of furniture and a picture of the New York skyline. APP

## Congo doubles salaries for beleaguered army

KINSHASA: Democratic Republic of Congo doubled salaries for soldiers and police on Friday, the Finance Ministry said, in an apparent bid to boost morale as Rwanda-backed M23 rebels advance in the east. M23 has seized eastern Congo's two largest cities in a swift offensive that has left thousands dead, forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, and piled pressure on President Felix Tshisekedi. The Finance Ministry said that the pay hikes will be "a turning point toward better conditions" for the army. An officer in North Kivu province said on Thursday he had heard about the raises, but said that troops had not received even their basic salaries over the last two months since banks shut following the fall of the city of Goma. "We learned that our pay has been doubled, but we have not yet experienced this increase because our salary has been frozen," the officer said. Congo has roughly 260,000 soldiers and other security forces, according to the 2025 budget law. Government documents show that official monthly salaries since 2022 have averaged between \$100 and \$200 for all ranks. It was not immediately clear what effect the pay raise would have on the budget. A draft law amending the budget for 2025 was due to be sent to lawmakers earlier this month, but that has not emerged. —APP

## Israeli military admits to shooting at ambulances

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories: Israel's military admitted Saturday it had fired on ambulances in the Gaza Strip after identifying them as "suspicious vehicles," with Hamas condemning it as a "war crime" that killed at least one person. The incident took place last Sunday in the Tal Al-Sultan neighborhood in the southern city of Rafah, close to the Egyptian border. Israeli troops launched an offensive there on March 20, two days after the army resumed aerial bombardments of Gaza following an almost two-month-long truce. Israeli troops had "opened fire toward Hamas vehicles and eliminated several Hamas terrorists," the military said in a statement to AFP. "A few minutes afterward, additional vehicles advanced suspiciously toward the troops... The troops responded by firing toward the suspicious vehicles, eliminating a number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists. —APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of the hustle and bustle of passengers at Faizabad bus station as large number of people are going back to their native areas to celebrate upcoming grand event Eid-ul-Fitr with their beloved Ones.

## US working with partners including KSA to end fighting in Sudan

Houston also said that under the leadership of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the State Department continues to work with humanitarian organizations and is calling on donor nations to increase their support

WASHINGTON: The US is fully committed to ending the conflict in Sudan, working closely with regional and international partners — including Saudi Arabia — to bring about a cessation of hostilities and pave the way for a civilian-led government, an official said on Friday. Speaking to Asharq Al-Awsat, Mignon Houston, the deputy spokesperson for the US State Department, said Washington's priority in Sudan was to "stop the fighting." She said that the new administration of President Donald Trump has remained deeply engaged in Sudan and has not taken sides in the conflict, instead focusing on supporting the Sudanese people's aspirations for a democratic and stable future. "We know the situation in Sudan is catastrophic. It's the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. What we're seeing in Sudan is deplorable, and it's important for observers and the world to know that the US remains very engaged in this issue," Houston said. The US is

working through multiple diplomatic channels, engaging with the African Union, the UN, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Saudi Arabia, and other key regional actors, Houston told the newspaper. "Our diplomatic efforts include engaging with these organizations and governments to push for a cessation of hostilities because we know this is the only way to achieve lasting peace in Sudan, create a unified Sudan, and give the Sudanese people the future they deserve," she added. Houston made it clear that Washington expected all foreign parties to play a constructive role in resolving the crisis, warning against engaging in negative interference. "We have been very explicit about the need for the intervention of partners and other countries in the crisis to be constructive and lead to a cessation of hostilities. Otherwise, these countries will be complicit in prolonging the conflict, complicit in creating more suffering for the Sudanese people, and complicit

in creating more instability — this will not lead to peace," she said. The US has also been applying diplomatic pressure through economic measures, with 31 sanctions currently imposed on both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. Houston described these as a crucial tool in pushing both sides toward the negotiating table and an eventual ceasefire. Beyond efforts through diplomatic channels, Houston highlighted the need for much-needed humanitarian assistance, revealing that Washington was actively working with international partners to support Sudanese civilians and refugees in neighboring countries. "The US administration is also working on the humanitarian front, with significant work being done with implementing partners to support the vital needs of people in Sudan, as well as refugees in neighboring countries, and to support their efforts to accept refugees," she said. Houston said that during

the first two weeks of March alone, 1.2 million people facing the risk of famine received life-saving humanitarian aid. However, she added that no meaningful economic recovery or investment into Sudan could take place until the violence was stopped. "At this time, we will focus on the Sudanese people and ending the fighting. Both parties are responsible for the destruction in Sudan and for regional instability. Therefore, our focus remains on bringing the parties to the negotiating table to create the conditions for humanitarian assistance to reach those who need it, above all else." Houston made it clear that Washington held both warring factions accountable for the devastation in Sudan. "We have been very clear in this position that both sides have engaged in harmful actions that have destabilized the country and created a state of general instability," she said. "We have called on both sides to work together to

create a political process that will lead to the establishment of a civilian-led government." She also underscored the role of Washington's regional partners in mediating the crisis, urging them to prioritize the needs of the Sudanese people above political interests. "What is more important than anything else is focusing on the needs of the Sudanese people; their needs right now should come first," she said. Houston also said that under the leadership of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the State Department continues to work with humanitarian organizations and is calling on donor nations to increase their support. "The department also continues to call on regional actors and international governments to do more, and on donor countries to do more, because what we are seeing in Sudan and South Sudan demonstrates the importance of a concerted global effort to resolve the crisis." —Agencies

## Sino-Pak study develops new floral varieties to boost yields

KUNMING: A joint study by Pakistan's Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University (SBBU) and China's Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (YAAS) has tested new techniques that could assist Pakistani farmers in growing roses and marigolds, flowers commonly used in the country for cultural events and celebrations. The one-year project, based in Yunnan, southwest China, examined ways to tackle issues like diseases and pests that impact roses and marigolds. To enhance their resistance to diseases, Pakistani and Chinese researchers have developed a novel approach to cultivate new rose and marigold varieties faster and less costly. They have also birthed a new technique to detect common pathogens affecting these flowers, such as fungi and viruses, and tested methods to manage them. Dr. Niaz Ali, a lecturer from SBBU and the sole Pakistani scientist involved in the project, told Gwadar Pro, "The new varieties could be developed without the need for complex tissue culture processes. And they are more resistant to diseases and better suited to local conditions and harsh climates," two chronic ills for floral farming in Pakistan. He added that these new techniques could reduce virus-induced losses and increase output. They may also be applied to other crops including cotton, wheat and rice, he noted. As a next step, the two institutions aim to jointly cultivate more high-yielding and disease-resistant floral varieties, and roll out best practices and procedures to Pakistan. They will also explore the potential use of these flowers in oils or medicinal products, Dr. Ali revealed according to Gwadar Pro on Saturday. —Agencies

## Turkiye opposition calls mass rally in Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Protesters were to join a mass rally in Istanbul at the call of Turkiye's main opposition CHP over the jailing of the city's mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a top figure in the party whose arrest has sparked 10 days of the country's biggest street demonstrations in a decade. Imamoglu's detention on March 19 has also prompted a repressive government response that has been sharply condemned by rights groups and drawn criticism from abroad. The rally, which begins at 0900 GMT in Maltepe on the Asian side of Istanbul, is the first such CHP-led gathering since Tuesday and comes on the eve of the Eid Al-Fitr celebration marking the end of Ramadan, which starts Sunday. Widely seen as the only Turkish politician capable of challenging President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the ballot box, Imamoglu was elected as the CHP's candidate for the 2028 presidential race on the day he was jailed. "Imamoglu's candidacy for president is the beginning of a journey that will guarantee justice and the nation's sovereignty. Let's go to Maltepe.. and start our march to power together!" CHP leader Ozgur Ozel said on X. The protests over his arrest quickly spread across Turkiye, with vast crowds joining mass nightly rallies outside Istanbul City Hall called by the CHP, that often degenerated into running battles with riot police. Although the last such rally was Tuesday, student groups have kept up their own protests, most of them masked despite a police crackdown that has seen nearly 2,000 people arrested. Among them were 20 minors who were arrested between March 22-25, of whom seven remained in custody, the Istanbul Bar Association said Friday. In Istanbul, at least 511 students were detained, many in pre-dawn raids, of whom 275 were jailed, lawyer Ferhat Guzel told AFP, while admitting that the number was "probably much higher." The authorities have also cracked down on media coverage, arresting 13 Turkish journalists in five days, deporting a BBC correspondent and arresting a Swedish reporter who flew into Istanbul to cover the unrest. Although 11 journalists were freed Thursday, among them AFP photographer Yasin Akgul, two more were detained on Friday as Imamoglu's lawyer Mehmet Pehlivan, who was later granted conditional release. Swedish journalist Joakim Medin, who flew into Turkiye on Thursday to cover the demonstrations, was jailed on Friday, his employer Dagens ETC told AFP, saying it was not immediately clear what the charges were. "Accusations 100 percent false" Unconfirmed reports in the Turkish media said Medin was being held for "insulting the president" and belonging to a "terror organization." "I know that these accusations are false, 100 percent false," Dagens ETC's editor-in-chief Andreas Gustavsson wrote on X account. In a post on social media, Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenegerd said Stockholm was taking his arrest "seriously." Turkish authorities held BBC journalist Mark Lowen for 17 hours on Wednesday before deporting him on the grounds he posed "a threat to public order," the broadcaster said. Turkiye's communications directorate put his deportation down to "a lack of accreditation." Baris Altintas, co-director of MLSA, the legal NGO helping many of the detainees, told AFP the authorities "seem to be very determined on limiting coverage of the protests. As such, we fear that the crackdown on the press will not only continue but also increase. —Agencies

## Scientists explain why Myanmar quake was so deadly

BANGKOK :Experts say that the devastating earthquake in Myanmar on Friday was likely the strongest to hit the country in decades, with disaster modeling suggesting thousands could be dead. Automatic assessments from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the shallow 7.7-magnitude quake northwest of the central Myanmar city of Sagaing triggered a red alert for shaking-related fatalities and economic losses. "High casualties and extensive damage are probable and the disaster is likely widespread," it said, locating the epicentre near the central Myanmar city of Mandalay, home to more than a million people. Myanmar's ruling junta said on Saturday morning that the number killed had passed 1,200, with more than 2,000 injured. However, the USGS analysis said there was a

35 percent chance that possible fatalities could be in the range of 10,000-100,000 people. The USGS offered a similar likelihood that the financial damage could total tens of thousands of millions of dollars, warning that it might exceed the GDP of Myanmar. Weak infrastructure will complicate relief efforts in the isolated, military-ruled state, where rescue services and the healthcare system have already been ravaged by four years of civil war sparked by a military coup in 2021. Bill McGuire, emeritus professor of geophysical and climate hazards at University College London (UCL), said it was "probably the biggest earthquake on the Myanmar mainland in three-quarters of a century". A 6.7-magnitude aftershock struck minutes after the first and McGuire warned that "more can be expected".

Rebecca Bell, a tectonics expert at Imperial College London (ICL), suggested it was a side-to-side "strike-slip" of the Sagaing Fault. This is where the Indian tectonic plate, to the west, meets the Sunda plate that forms much of Southeast Asia — a fault similar in scale and movement to the San Andreas Fault in California. "The Sagaing fault is very long, 1,200 kilometres (745 miles), and very straight," Bell said. "The straight nature means earthquakes can rupture over large areas — and the larger the area of the fault that slips, the larger the earthquake." Earthquakes in such cases can be "particularly destructive", Bell added, explaining that since the quake takes place at a shallow depth, its seismic energy has dissipated little by the time it reaches populated areas above. That causes "a lot of shaking at

the surface", Bell said. Myanmar has been hit by powerful quakes in the past. There have been more than 14 earthquakes with a magnitude of 6 or above in the past century, including a magnitude 6.8 earthquake near Mandalay in 1956, said Brian Baptie, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey. Ian Watkinson, from the department of earth sciences at Royal Holloway University of London, said what had changed in recent decades was the "boom in high-rise buildings constructed from reinforced concrete". Myanmar has been riven by years of conflict and there is a low level of building design enforcement. "Critically, during all previous magnitude 7 or larger earthquakes along the Sagaing Fault, Myanmar was relatively undeveloped, with mostly low-rise timber-framed buildings

and brick-built religious monuments," Watkinson said. "Today's earthquake is the first test of modern Myanmar's infrastructure against a large, shallow-focus earthquake close to its major cities." Baptie said that at least 2.8 million people in Myanmar were in hard-hit areas where most lived in buildings "constructed from timber and unreinforced brick masonry" that are vulnerable to earthquake shaking. "The usual mantra is that 'earthquakes don't kill people; collapsing infrastructure does'," said Ian Kelman, an expert in disaster reduction at UCL. "Governments are responsible for planning regulations and building codes. This disaster exposes what governments of Burma/Myanmar failed to do long before the earthquake, which would have saved lives during the shaking." —DNA

## Fatemi highlights plight of IIOJK, Palestinians

UNITED NATIONS: The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister/Minister of State, Syed Tariq Fatemi, held a meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday during which he underscored the need to resolve the conflicts in Kashmir and Palestine. According to a press release of the Pakistani Mission to the UN, the special assistant briefed the secretary-general about Pakistan's priorities during its Security Council term as a non-permanent member and reaffirmed his country's strong support for the United Nations' central role in addressing global challenges, including peace and security, development and climate change. He underscored Pakistan's longstanding commitment to adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, including UN peacekeeping efforts. Fatemi expressed hope that the Pact for the Future, which the world leaders adopted in September last, will be fully implemented, meeting the financing needs of the developing countries to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate targets. The special assistant also highlighted India's continuing occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and the denial of self-determination to the Kashmiri people. He stressed that the Indian actions are in total disregard for international law and called for a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Fatemi urged the world community to call upon Israel to end its brutal campaign of violence and terror against the hapless Palestinians and stressed the need for strongly opposing proposals for the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland. —APP

## US embassy in Syria warns of increased risk of attacks

DAMASCUS: The US embassy in Syria has warned its citizens of an "increased possibility" of attacks during the holiday marking the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in the coming days. "The US Department of State cautions US citizens of the increased possibility of attacks during Eid Al-Fitr holiday, which could target embassies, international organizations, and Syrian public institutions in Damascus," said a statement posted on the embassy website late Friday. "Methods of attack could include... individual attackers, armed gunmen, or the use of explosive devices," it added. Security in Syria remains tenuous after Islamist-led rebels overthrew longtime ruler Bashar Assad in December following nearly 14 years of war that erupted with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. Washington advises its citizens not to travel to Syria "due to the significant risks of terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, hostage-taking, armed conflict, and unjust detention," according to the statement. The embassy's operations have been suspended since 2012. —APP

## Call for action over 'perfect storm' engulfing South Sudan

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday urged both South Sudan's leadership and the international community to act swiftly to prevent further devastation in the war-torn country, warning that ethnic and political targeting by security forces could spiral into a broader regional conflict. Referring to the escalating violence in South Sudan, including airstrikes on civilians, Guterres said: "All the dark clouds of a perfect storm have descended upon the people of the world's newest country — and one of the poorest." On Wednesday, an armed convoy led by the nation's top security officials, including its defense minister, entered the home of First Vice President Riek Machar in Juba, disarmed his bodyguards and placed him under house arrest. —APP

## Briefs

### Missing Gaza rescue team 'executed' by Israel

GAZA CITY: A week after a group of aid workers disappeared in Gaza's southern town of Rafah, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) says they are believed to have been "executed" by Israeli forces.

A group of 15 paramedics and rescue workers from PRCS and Gaza's Civil Defense "vanished" on March 22 in the Tal Sultan neighborhood in Rafah following an incident in which Israeli forces fired on ambulances and fire trucks. They had arrived in response to an Israeli bombing in Rafah.

In a Saturday statement, PRCS said, "So far, no trace of our team members has been found." "Yesterday (March 28), we discovered the four ambulance vehicles completely destroyed and buried in the sand," PRCS said, adding that they are believed to have been executed. Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Basal said that the body of one emergency worker had been found.

Basal said that when Civil Defense and Red Crescent teams were finally granted access to the area, they found "massive destruction" and widespread bulldozing. "We found our vehicles and the Red Crescent vehicles destroyed," and subsequently, the body of one worker that had been buried by bulldozers was retrieved, he added. - Agencies

### Vance scolds Denmark during Greenland trip

WASHINGTON: US Vice-President JD Vance has accused Denmark of leaving Greenland vulnerable to alleged incursions by China and Russia, as he asked its people to "cut a deal" with the US. Speaking during a visit to the Arctic island, Vance minimised recent threats by US President Donald Trump to take over the island by force.

Instead, he urged Greenlanders to sever ties with Denmark, which has owned the island for more than 300 years, saying it had not invested enough to protect the semi-autonomous territory. An overwhelming majority of Greenlanders oppose the idea of annexation, a poll indicated in January. Greenland's prime minister has said the US visit showed a "lack of respect". The visit has also prompted sharp criticism from Denmark. Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the Scandinavian nation's foreign minister, said Danes were "open to criticism" but "do not appreciate the tone in which it is being delivered", in a video message addressed to "American friends". He noted the US's military presence in Greenland had shrunk from 17 bases in 1945 to one housing around 200 soldiers, adding: "We can do more, much more, within the framework we have today...Let us do it together." - Agencies

### Court issues notice to FIA

DNA

KARACHI: A district and sessions court in Karachi on Saturday issued a notice to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and sought its response by April 3 after journalist Farhan Mallick filed an appeal against the dismissal of his bail application in a case pertaining to alleged violation of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). The district and sessions judge (East) issued the orders on journalist Mallick's appeal against the verdict of the judicial magistrate (East). At the outset of today's hearing, Mallick's counsel argued that the judicial magistrate dismissed his client's bail plea without conducting an inquiry into the allegation against the journalist. "Rejecting the bail application based only on the thumbnail is not fair," argued his counsel. Meanwhile, the court sought FIA's response in this regard and adjourned the hearing till April 3.



ISLAMABAD: Additional Secretary (Africa) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hamid Asghar Khan hosted an iftar dinner to formally announce the establishment of Pakistan-African Economic Council. Seen in the picture are (sitting) Dean of the African Group Mohammad Karmoune Ambassador of Morocco, Ambassadors of Somalia, Zafar Bakhtawari, Ch. Tanvir (standing) Hamid Asghar Khan and members of the Pak-Africa Economic Council. - DNA

### Sindh objects to motorway construction

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh has raised objections to the federal government's decision to fund a new Rs436 billion Punjab-centric motorway by again ignoring the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway despite declaring it as a top priority. The federal government's decision to fund the Lahore-Sahiwal-Bahawalnagar motorway is also in violation of the National Fiscal Pact, signed by the federal and four provincial governments as part of the \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. The pact requires the devolution of expenditures in sectors such as higher education, health, social protection and regional public infrastructure to provinces. Sindh Minister for Local Government, Housing Saad Ghani raised the objection during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) held in the current week. Ecneec approved the Lahore-Sahiwal-Bahawalnagar Motorway at a 65% higher cost of Rs436 billion. Talking to The Express Tribune, Ghani said that he raised objection to the construction of the new motorway with federal funding as the decision was not justified because work on the 306km Hyderabad-Sukkur motorway could not start because of the lack of funding. Compared to the 295km Lahore-Sahiwal-Bahawalnagar motorway costing Rs436 billion, the cost of 306km Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway is estimated at nearly Rs400 billion. NHA Chairman Sheheryar Sultan this week told the Senate Standing Committee on Planning that the government was in discussions with various creditors for financing the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway, known as M-6. Saad Ghani said that when he objected to the funding of Lahore motorway, he was told that the federal government was still trying to find funding sources.

## World Bank injects \$300m to help smog-challenged Punjab

"Cleaner air will reduce the incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases," says WB country director

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank approved a \$300 million International Development Association (IDA) loan for the Punjab Clean Air Program (PCAP) to strengthen air quality management and combat air pollution. With smog reaching hazardous levels every winter, Lahore, the capital of Punjab, constantly ranked among the most polluted cities in the world in recent months, despite the continuous efforts of the provincial authorities to bring down smog levels. The worsening air quality in the province led to an increase in health-related issues. In a statement, the WB stated that the PCAP would support the Punjab government's Smog Mitigation Action Plan (SMAP) in tackling the pressing issue of smog and air pollution with the launch of several comprehensive initiatives aimed at improving air quality and public health across the province particularly in key sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry, energy, and municipal services.

WB Country Director for Pakistan Najib Benhassine said: "The Punjab Clean Air Program supports the province's Smog Mitigation Action Plan and is a landmark initiative to significantly improve air quality and enhance the health and well-being of millions of residents." He said, "Cleaner air will reduce the incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and contribute to a healthier, more livable environment". Benhassine added that PCAP aligns with the new WB Country Partnership Framework (CPF) and aims to reduce PM2.5 levels by 35% over the next decade, significantly decreasing the incidence of respiratory illnesses and other pollution-related health issues for the 13 million residents of Lahore division. The program focuses on the continuation of strengthening air quality management (AQM) infrastructure, enhancing regulatory and institutional capacity, targeted sectoral abatement measures

and promoting public awareness, he added. Giving details, the WB official said that key interventions include the investment of 5000 super seeders to reduce the main issue of the excessive seasonal fog - crop residue burning, the introduction of 600 electric buses to foster a modal shift to public transport, the expansion of regulatory-grade air quality monitoring stations across Punjab, and the enhancement of fuel quality testing through the establishment of two new fuel testing laboratories. Recognising the importance of public participation in achieving cleaner air, he said the program promotes behavioral change and active citizen engagement, utilising air quality monitoring data and emissions inventories to educate stakeholders about air pollution sources, health impacts, and reduction measures. He further said that special attention would be given to vulnerable populations through targeted messaging and advisories, including schools and hospitals. The PCAP's climate co-benefit

of reducing PM 2.5 includes a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), he added. The estimated reduction in GHGs for the program is 35.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide over the next 12 years, significantly benefiting the environment and contributing to climate change mitigation. The program will also develop an integrated pollutant and GHG emissions inventory system to provide a comprehensive approach to tracking and managing emissions data, Benhassine added. Task Team Leader for the Project Shyam Srinivasan said: "The Punjab Clean Air Program will significantly benefit farmers by improving access to advanced technologies for better crop management, create job opportunities in the e-bus and depot sectors, and support vehicle owners in renewing aging vehicles." "Additionally, it will enhance the skills and knowledge of government officials through training and capacity building, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment," he added.

## Marital status no bar on women's rights: SC

A married woman remains an equal child of her deceased parent as their other children, apex court rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has ruled that a married woman remains an equal child of her deceased parent as their other children, and to deny her entitlement on the basis of her marriage is tantamount to denying her constitutional identity as an equal citizen. Supreme Court Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah said that any presumption that a married woman becomes financially dependent on her husband is not only legally untenable but also religiously unfounded, and contrary to the egalitarian spirit of the Islamic law. A

division bench of the apex court, led by Justice Shah, ruled on the petition of a female schoolteacher, Zahida Parveen. Justice Shah authored a nine-page judgment, which directed the respondent-department to restore her appointment with all back benefits. Petitioner Zahida Parveen was appointed as a primary schoolteacher under the deceased son/daughter quota on March 17, 2023. However, the district education officer (Female), Karak withdrew the appointment order without issuing a show-cause notice. The petitioner's service was terminated because of on a "clarification" which stipulated that the benefit of appointment under the deceased

son/daughter quota was not available to a female, who had contracted marriage. "The exclusion of married daughters from compassionate appointment [ ] is declared to be discriminatory, ultra vires, issued without lawful authority, and incompatible with Pakistan's constitutional guarantees and international legal obligations," the court ruled. "The respondent-department is directed to restore the petitioner's appointment with all back-benefits," it said. "As constitutional subjects, women are entitled to equality not only in result but also in the form, tone, and respect with which the law addresses them." The bench noted that all judicial and administrative authorities bore a constitutional responsibility to adopt gender-sensitive and gender-neutral language. "The judiciary must lead by example, ensuring that the words used to interpret and apply the law do not themselves become instruments of exclusion." The judgment declared: "This is not a mere formality, but reflects a substantive commitment to the values of dignity, equality, and autonomy guaranteed to all citizens under Articles 14, 25, and 27 of the Constitution."

## PPP will act if necessary to halt Cholistan project

We are prepared to go to any lengths to protect rights of Sindh, says Murad

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has asserted that PPP has the strength, capability, and authority to stop the Cholistan project, emphasising that this power will be used if necessary. "We are prepared to go to any lengths to protect the rights of Sindh, which I describe as the rights of the people of Pakistan," the provincial chief executive said while speaking to journalists at the Chief Minister House on Saturday. He added that the voice of the people of Sindh has been heard, and

as a result, the Punjab government has not utilised the allocated Rs45 billion for the construction of the Cholistan Canal. CM Murad stated that the opposition wants the PPP to remove the federal government, but the party will not follow their agenda. He mentioned that, at the request of the Sindh government, work on the Cholistan Canal has not yet begun. Additionally, he noted that a small model has been developed to showcase to potential investors. The chief minister said that canal projects typically begin upstream, but when his team visited the site in February, no work was being carried out.

## Zahid Latif, Chairman ZLK unveils Pakistan's First Shariah Brokerage

INTERVIEW

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zahid Latif Khan, Director, Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), gave an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST. Here are excerpts from his interview. Zahid Latif who is Chairman of the ZLK Group of Companies unveiled Pakistan's first shariah brokerage. Excerpts from his interview are given below. **Can you talk about ZLK Islamic Financial Services, when it was established and what makes it unique in Pakistan's financial landscape?** ZLK Islamic Financial Services was established on the blessed date of 29th Ramadan 1445 Hijri, marking a historic milestone as Pakistan's first and only Shariah-compliant brokerage house approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). What sets us apart is our commitment to merging Islamic ethical principles with modern investment solutions. Unlike conventional brokerages, we operate under the strict supervision of SECP-approved Shariah scholars, ensuring every transaction, from equity trading to portfolio management, adheres to the highest standards of Shariah compliance. Our mission is to empower investors with halal, transparent, and socially responsible financial opportunities while upholding the values of integrity and inclusivity. **What inspired you to launch Pakistan's first Shariah-compliant brokerage?** The inspiration came from observing the unmet needs of ethically conscious investors. Many Muslims in Pakistan hesitated to participate in the stock market due to concerns about riba (interest), gharar (uncertainty), and non-compliant businesses. We wanted to create a trusted platform where investors could trade with confidence, knowing their investments adhere to Shariah principles. Our collaboration with SECP-approved Shariah ad-

visors ensured rigorous compliance, setting a new standard in the industry. **How does ZLK Islamic ensure that the stocks and services offered are fully Shariah-compliant?** We follow a multi-layered screening process. First, we exclude companies involved in prohibited sectors like alcohol, tobacco, or conventional banking. Second, we apply financial ratios mandated by SECP's Shariah Governance Regulations 2023, such as ratio of interest-bearing debt to total assets should be less than 37%, ratio of non-compliant investments to total assets should be less than 33%, non-compliant Income to Total revenue should be less than 5% (this ratio is charity rate or dividend purification rate) ratio of illiquid assets to total assets should be at least 25%. The market price per share should be greater than the net liquid assets per share calculated as: (Total Assets - Illiquid Assets - Total Liabilities) divided by number of shares. Also, our Shariah board conducts regular audits, and we purify any impermissible income by donating it to charity. Additionally, our trading practices avoid margin trading, short-selling, and other non-compliant activities. **What distinguishes ZLK Islamic from conventional brokerage firms?**

Unlike conventional brokerages, we operate entirely within Islamic principles. For example, we don't offer interest-based leverage or speculative trading. Our platform is tailored to filter only Shariah-compliant stocks, and we provide educational resources to help clients understand the ethical dimensions of their investments. Transparency is key, clients receive detailed reports on how their portfolios align with Shariah criteria. **ZLK Islamic Financial Services logo includes the word "Tawakul". What does this represent for your company?** Tawakul reflects our core belief in trusting Allah while taking responsible action. For us, it means two things: First, we trust in Allah's guidance to keep our services truly Shariah-compliant. Second, we want our clients to trust us as their ethical investment partner. The word in our logo is a daily reminder that real success comes from this balance—doing our best while relying on Allah's will. It's the foundation of everything we do at ZLK Islamic. Just as a believer combines effort with faith, we merge rigorous Shariah compliance with professional excellence, ensuring every investment aligns with Islamic values. **Can non-Muslims invest through ZLK Islamic?** Absolutely! Shariah-compliant investing appeals

to anyone seeking ethical, socially responsible opportunities. Our clients include non-Muslims who value transparency, low debt exposure, and investments in socially beneficial sectors like healthcare and technology. **What challenges did you face while establishing a Shariah-compliant brokerage in Pakistan?** The biggest challenge was building awareness. Many investors were unfamiliar with Shariah-compliant equities or assumed they'd sacrifice returns. We addressed this through workshops, partnerships with Islamic banks, and demonstrating that our screened portfolios often outperform conventional ones due to their focus on low-debt, asset-backed companies. Regulatory alignment with SECP was another hurdle, but our proactive engagement ensured smooth approvals. **How does ZLK Islamic support first-time investors?** We prioritize education. Our "Islamic Sahulat Account" allows small investments with minimal paperwork, and guidance on Shariah investing basics. Clients also have access to our research team, which identifies high-growth compliant stocks, and personalized guidance from Shariah advisors. Tell us about your Roshan Digital Account (RDA) services for overseas Pakistanis. The RDA Equity Investment Account enables non-resident Pakistanis to invest in PSX through Shariah-compliant stocks. We simplified the process. Clients can open accounts digitally, and our platform ensures all trades meet Islamic criteria. This initiative aligns with State Bank of Pakistan's vision to channel diaspora investments into Pakistan's economy ethically. **What's your long-term vision for ZLK Islamic?** To become a global leader in Islamic finance, setting benchmarks for innovation and ethical excellence. We envision a future where "halal" and "high-return" are synonymous in the investment world.

