



Islamabad POST

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US-led Ukraine peace talks not easy:NATO chief

Detailed News On Page-08

JI announces Gaza March in Islamabad

Detailed News On Page-08



Williamson's PSL 10 arrival date unveiled

Detailed News On Page-06



COAS rejects notion of brain drain

Shehbaz announces incentives for overseas Pakistanis

PM announces 15% quota in medical colleges for children of overseas Pakistanis

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced on Tuesday a special package for overseas Pakistanis, including the establishment of special courts for the speedy disposal of their cases in the country. Paying tribute to their services for the nation, the premier made the announcement while addressing the First Annual Overseas Pakistanis' Convention in the federal capital, a day after the country recorded record remittances of \$4.1 billion. "Special courts have been established in Islamabad for speedy disposal of cases related to overseas Pakistanis." He elaborated that such courts would also be set up in all provinces. The premier added that the Pakistani diaspora would be provided the facility to attend hearings via a video link, adding that they would be facilitated with e-filing. "There will be a 5% quota for overseas Pakistanis in federal universities. 3,000 children of overseas Pakistanis will be given admission in the medical colleges," the premier announced. In addition to this, the premier announced a five-year age relaxation in government jobs for overseas Pakistanis. In a bid to facilitate the Pakistani diaspora, the PM said that online sale deed registration has been launched in Punjab, adding that an special office had been designated for them in the province. "An international airport will be established in Mirpur [capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)]," the premier announced, saying that establishing an international airport in the city was a long-standing demand of overseas Pakistanis. Furthermore, the premier announced that every year on August 14, overseas Pakistanis would be awarded civil awards for outstanding performance in their fields. "15 overseas Pakistanis will be given civil awards every year," he added. Chief of the Army Staff Gen Asim Munir, addressing the event, termed the overseas Pakistanis the best example of "brain gain". The army chief said: "Those who create the narrative of brain drain, should know this is not brain drain but brain gain." Lauding the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora to the country, the army chief said: "You are not just ambassadors of Pakistan but the light of Pakistan that shines across globe." Even 10 generations of terrorists cannot harm Balochistan or Pakistan, he said, adding: "Balochistan is the fate of Pakistan and the crown jewel on our forehead." As long as the nation stands with the

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Fitch upgrades Pakistan's credit rating to 'B-'

Stable outlook reflects improved policy credibility, IMF progress, says ratings agency

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Fitch Ratings on Monday upgraded Pakistan's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating to 'B' from 'CCC+', citing improved fiscal consolidation, a stabilising external account, and stronger macroeconomic policy management. The outlook is stable. The rating agency said in a statement on Monday that the move reflected growing confidence in Pakistan's ability to sustain tighter budget controls and implement reforms under its ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. The upgrade comes as Islamabad looks to maintain momentum following its agreement with the IMF in March to review a \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and a new \$1.3 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). "We expect tight economic policies to continue supporting the recovery of international reserves and contain external funding needs," Fitch said while warning that financing requirements remain high and implementation risks persist. Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has expressed satisfaction, Geo reported. "The upgrade is a strong vote of confidence in our economic reforms and policies." Pakistan was previously in the B- category in July 2022, according to brokerage firm Topline Securities.

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

Pak condemns Israeli attack on Baptist Hospital

The attack took place on Palm Sunday, a sacred occasion for Christians

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned the bombing of the Baptist Hospital in Gaza by Israeli occupation forces, calling it a part of a pattern of targeting medical facilities, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, in a statement, said that the attack took place on Palm Sunday, a sacred occasion for Christians, which underscored Israel's blatant disregard for religious sanctity and civilian lives. "Pakistan demands an immediate end to Israel's ongoing atrocities, which have resulted in

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Over 172,000 Pakistanis left for overseas employment in first quarter of 2025

Saudi Arabia emerges as top destination for Pakistani workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A significant number of Pakistanis sought employment opportunities abroad in the first three months of 2025, with the Bureau of Immigration releasing figures indicating that 172,144 individuals ventured overseas for work during this period. Saudi Arabia emerged as the top destination for

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Gohar rules out any deal

Imran Khan open to talks, claims Swati

Azam Swati said Imran was deeply concerned about the country's future and the wellbeing of coming generations

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Azam Khan Swati claimed on Tuesday that party founder Imran Khan has agreed to hold negotiations. Speaking to reporters outside an anti-terrorism court in Lahore, Swati said that Imran Khan is deeply concerned about the future of the country and the wellbeing of future generations. "The entire nation now stands with the PTI founder," he stated. Swati further said that any dialogue that takes place would be productive when it begins. Swati was in court to attend hearings related to multiple arson cases, including the Jinnah House incident. The anti-terrorism court extended his interim bail until May 13. The prosecution informed the court that the case records are currently with the Supreme Court, where bail petitions are under review. The court instructed the prosecution to

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No mention of Imran Khan by US delegation: Speaker

US lawmakers stated that they had nothing to do with Pakistan's internal politics, says AyazSadiq

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker AyazSadiq on Tuesday said that the US congressional delegation visiting Pakistan made no mention of jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in a recent meeting with him. In a statement, the NA speaker said the US lawmakers clearly stated that they had nothing to do with Pakistan's internal politics.

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Briefs

3 security personnel martyred in Mastung

At least 16 policemen also wounded in explosion as vehicle targeted in Shamsabad area

DNA

MASTUNG: At least three Balochistan Constabulary personnel were martyred and over a dozen injured in a blast targeting a police vehicle in Balochistan's Mastung on Tuesday. The vehicle was targeted in the Shamsabad area, leaving as many as 16 security personnel wounded in the incident. Noting that an emergency has been imposed in the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital and the Civil Hospital, the Balochistan government spokesperson said that those injured in the incident are being shifted to Quetta – of which two are in critical condition.

Justice Najafi's notification issued

Najafi's elevation to the apex court was formally confirmed

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Justice Ali BaqarNajafi of the Lahore High Court (LHC) has been appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC). According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Law following approval from the President, Justice Najafi's elevation to the apex court was formally confirmed. The Judicial Commission had earlier approved his nomination for the Supreme Court bench.

Pakistan-Uzbek relations

Uzbekistan Airways to launch direct flights to Islamabad

In the initial phase, flights will operate once a week, every Saturday. Discussions are currently underway with Pakistan's civil aviation authorities to finalize the necessary organizational arrangements

DNA

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan's national airline, Uzbekistan Airways, will launch direct flights between Tashkent and Islamabad starting May 24, 2025, further strengthening air connectivity between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. The new route is being introduced through the joint efforts of Uzbekistan's Embassy in Pakistan and Uzbekistan Airways JSC, aimed at fostering closer bilateral relations and enhancing travel and trade opportunities between the two countries.

In the initial phase, flights will operate once a week, every Saturday. Discussions are currently underway with Pakistan's

civil aviation authorities to finalize the necessary organizational arrangements. Plans are also in place to gradually increase the frequency of flights based on demand and operational feasibility.

In addition to the new Tashkent-Islamabad service, Uzbekistan Airways is also exploring the possibility of launching direct flights to Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic hub. Currently, the airline operates regular flights on the Tashkent-Lahore route twice a week – on Wednesdays and Fridays. The introduction of these new routes is expected to provide greater convenience for travelers, strengthen tourism, and boost economic and cultural ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Four Pakistanis among Eleven dead as migrant vessel sinks off

Pakistan embassy team's visit to Sirte City has confirmed recovery of 11 bodies of migrants, FO says

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A vessel carrying foreign nationals sank near the Harawa coast of Sirte in eastern Libya, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Monday, confirming that four Pakistani nationals were among the 11 bodies recovered. "Our mission in Tripoli has reported that a vessel carrying foreign nationals has sunk near the Harawa coast, Sirte city (Eastern Libya)," the FO said in a statement. "A Pakistan embassy team's visit to Sirte has confirmed the recovery of 11 bodies of migrants. Of these, four have been identified as Pakistani nationals based on their national documents. Two bodies remain unidentified." The identified Pakistani victims include ZahidMehmood from Gujranwala and Sameer Ali, Syed Ali Hussain, and Asif Ali – all from MandiBahauddin. "The Embassy in Tripoli is actively working to gather more information about the affected Pakistani nationals and is in contact with the local authorities," the statement added. "The Crisis Management Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been activated to monitor the situation." On February 11, at least 16 Pakistanis were confirmed dead, and 10 others remained missing after a boat carrying illegal

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Shutter-down strike in Parachinar

SHAMIM SHAHID

KURRAM: Traders of Parachinar city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district observed a shutter-down strike on Tuesday against the months-long closure of the Parachinar-Thall Road amid a volatile security situation. The Thall-Parachinar Road – the only thoroughfare leading to the city – has been closed since the Nov 21, 2024 attack on a convoy in the Bagan area that left more than 50 dead. Ensuing clashes stemming from decades-old land disputes claimed at least 130 more lives. A ceasefire agreement was reached following months of conflict on January 1. However, the truce failed to result in peace and suffered setbacks after attacks continued on aid convoys, security personnel and government officials. Haji Imdad Hussain, president of Parachinar Traders Union told Dawn.com that

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Punjab collects Rs754b taxes through 'e-Pay Punjab'

LAHORE: The Punjab government has collected a record tax revenue of over rs754 billion through 'e-Pay Punjab', a digital tax payment system — developed by Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) in collaboration with the Punjab Finance Department. The system has also surpassed 83 million digital transactions. This was revealed during a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf here on Tuesday. The participants were apprised that citizens can conveniently pay 87 types of taxes and levies of 18 different departments from the comforts of their homes using the e-Pay Punjab platform. The growing trust and convenience offered by the system is evident from the fact that over 5.6 million users have downloaded the e-Pay Punjab mobile application to date. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Faisal Yousaf stated, "e-Pay Punjab has emerged as an effective and citizen-centric solution, not only by increasing transparency and revenue collection but also by sparing the public from unnecessary visits to government offices and protecting them from middlemen. We are continuously working to expand the platform's services to make government payments even more accessible and efficient.—APP

PU takes action against 39 more students for violating discipline

LAHORE: The Punjab University administration has taken action against another 39 students for violating discipline as well as law and handed down various punishments. According to the PU spokesperson, the administration has expelled 10 students, including Mujtaba Hussain, Muhammad Anees, Zain Shaukat from the Institute of Education and Research, Muneeb-ur-Rehman, Muhammad Arif from the Department of Gender Studies, Shamraiz Mumtaz from the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, Arsalan Aslam, Muhammad Ammar Khan from the Law College, Muhammad Israr from the Department of Philosophy and Muhammad Ahmed Akhtar from the Department of Political Science. He said that Shahzeb Khan Barki, Wajid Noor Khan, Muhammad Kashif Nawaz from the Department of Gender Studies, Atif Nawaz from the Law College, Muhammad Salar Ahmed Gondal from the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies and Muhammad Sami Ullah from the Department of Social Work were rusticated for one academic year and fined. He said that the administration also sentenced 19 students from different departments of the university to a probationary period of three months, while four students were fined Rs 20,000 to Rs50,000. He said that the disciplinary committee acquitted six students as the allegations were not proven against them.—APP

Ahsan calls for highlighting role of supportive ecosystem for national uplift

Under the current government, he said, URAAN Pakistan was launched as a comprehensive national vision to drive economic, social and digital transformation. "It is more than a metaphor for flight — it is a declaration that Pakistan is ready to take off into a new era of opportunity and innovation."

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday urged leading economists to identify the factors that have repeatedly derailed Pakistan from its development trajectory, highlighting the crucial role of a supportive ecosystem in achieving sustainable national growth.

"The seed of development cannot flourish without an enabling environment — one rooted in peace and harmony, long-term political stability, policy consistency and continuous reform. These are the pillars that successful nations have embraced to reach developed status," he said. The minister was addressing the inaugural session of the three-day annual conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE), organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), under the theme: "URAAN Pakistan: Growth Through Digital



Transformation." He said the conference reflected a shared national vision to embrace innovation, technology, and strategic planning as tools for inclusive and sustainable progress. "URAAN Pakistan is not just a slogan. It is our commitment to break the cycle of low growth, low productivity, and low ambition." Under the current government, he said,

URAAN Pakistan was launched as a comprehensive national vision to drive economic, social and digital transformation. "It is more than a metaphor for flight — it is a declaration that Pakistan is ready to take off into a new era of opportunity and innovation." Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan was not underdeveloped but "undermanaged," and the time

had come to put the country on the course its people rightly deserved. He highlighted the critical role of economists in shaping development strategies, describing economics as "the queen of the social sciences" that enabled societies to make informed decisions about the use and allocation of scarce resources. Highlighting the export-driven

orientation of URAAN Pakistan, the minister said the initiative opened new avenues for policy-backed trade facilitation, industrial accreditation and regional connectivity. "No country can grow sustainably without increasing its foreign exchange earnings," he noted. Through sectoral export strategies, enhanced participation in global

trade fairs, and support for manufacturers accessing international markets, the government aims to raise exports to over \$60 billion by 2029 — a goal Ahsan Iqbal called achievable and essential for sustained growth. "Pakistan has long relied on consumption and imports. Now is the time to shift towards growth driven by exports," he stressed. He stressed that growth must be inclusive, ensuring equity and poverty alleviation through job creation and youth development. URAAN Pakistan, he said, prioritizes skills training and workforce development to meet the demands of an evolving industrial landscape. "Nations that embrace technology leapfrog stages of development. Those that resist are left behind. Digitalization is not just about apps and portals — it's about dismantling red tape and building responsive, intelligent systems," he remarked. Ahsan Iqbal described the emergence of "e-Pakistan" as a new pillar of the country's transformation strategy, focused on reimagining the national economic model through digital ecosystems in fintech, agritech, and greentech — all designed to generate jobs and attract investment.

CPEC is game changer for Pakistan's future: Kundi

The Governor praised the organizers, particularly Amjad Aziz Malik, for arranging the seminar and reiterated that the doors of the Governor House are always open for events that contribute to the province's progress. The event concluded with Governor Kundi distributing shields to the seminar's speakers

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a transformative project that holds the key to Pakistan's economic growth, regional stability, and public prosperity. Speaking at the International CPEC Seminar held at the Governor House Peshawar, the Governor emphasized that CPEC is vital for reshaping Pakistan's destiny and fostering national development. The event was

organized by Pak-China Window and attended by a distinguished group including Iranian Consul General in Peshawar Ali Banafsha Khwa, former ambassadors Naghmana Hashmi and Sohail Mahmood, CPNE provincial president Tahir Farooq, educationist Dr. Khalid Khan, business leaders, investors, media representatives, and students. Various speakers including Tahir Farooq, Zahid Latif, Dr. Khalid Khan, and others shed light on the importance of CPEC and expectations tied to its second phase. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed also addressed the seminar

via a video message, reiterating CPEC's strategic significance for Pakistan, especially for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Kundi pointed out that while the Havelian-Dera Ismail Khan road is the only completed project in KP under CPEC so far, progress on connecting Balochistan to DI. Khan in the second phase remains sluggish. "Like other provinces, KP should ensure its representatives are part of official visits to China to secure long-term projects for the province," he added. The Governor also lauded former President Asif Ali Zardari's pivotal

role in initiating CPEC through his diplomatic outreach to China. He welcomed the Rashakai Economic Zone but voiced concerns about the feasibility of the Daraban Economic Zone, saying that attracting investment to that area may be challenging. The Governor praised the organizers, particularly Amjad Aziz Malik, for arranging the seminar and reiterated that the doors of the Governor House are always open for events that contribute to the province's progress. The event concluded with Governor Kundi distributing shields to the seminar's speakers.

Call for empowering women through health education

MANDI BAHAUDDIN: In connection with World Health Day, PODA organized an awareness-raising session to educate nearly 60 women on issues related to their reproductive health needs and rights, with a primary focus on the health implications of underage marriage — a contributing factor to maternal and child mortality rates in the country. The session emphasized the importance of access to dignified and quality healthcare services as a fundamental right for maintaining reproductive health, in line with Pakistan's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, as affirmed through a unanimous resolution passed by the National Assembly in 2016.

The awareness session was held at Government Girls High School, Kathiala Syedan, located in Union Council Kathiala Syedan, District Mandi Bahauddin. This activity is part of the three-year project titled "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality", supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad. The World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948 with the goal of pro-

moting health, keeping the world safe, and serving the vulnerable. The First World Health Assembly, held that same year, designated April 7 as World Health Day to be celebrated annually starting from 1950. According to WHO the right to health features in approximately three-quarters of the constitutions of the 194 WHO Member States (at least 140). Renowned social and human rights activist Dr. Nagina Sadaf supported the activity by mobilizing the community and delivering a powerful talk during the session. She urged women to pay timely attention to their reproductive health issues to prevent serious health complications in the future. She also highlighted the symptoms, causes, and solutions for addressing anemia, emphasizing its devastating impact on women's health—particularly its serious effects on pregnant women and their babies. She urged them to keep their bodies hydrated, especially during menstruation, and to pay attention to eating vegetables and a balanced diet, which is essential during that time.—DNA

KP releases white paper on proposed mines, minerals bill

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Tuesday released a white paper on the proposed Mines and Minerals Bill 2025, outlining a comprehensive framework to align mineral laws with those of other provinces and the federal government. According to the document, the new legislation aims to attract large-scale domestic and international investment. A key feature of the proposed bill is the establishment of a Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority to streamline investment processes. The white paper highlights the introduction of a Digital Mining System to ensure transparency and accessibility in the licensing process. To facilitate easier lease acquisition, the license duration has been reduced to three years. The government also plans to crack down on illegal mining through stricter penalties and confiscation of machinery. However, it was clarified that existing leases and applications will remain valid under the new law. The document further mandates the creation of a comprehensive geological database to support exploration and investment decisions.—APP

Education key to ending child marriage

Multan: At a seminar held to mark World Health Day, organized by PODA in collaboration with the Women University, Multan, speakers emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive program to address women's reproductive health needs in Pakistan. They highlighted that this is essential, given the numerous challenges women face in accessing and exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights. The seminar was organized as part of PODA's three-year project titled "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality," running from December 2022 to November 2025, with support from the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad. The speakers expressed that child marriage and early childbirth severely impact the physical and mental well-being of young girls, with long-lasting consequences throughout their lives. They emphasized that promoting education is the most effective way to address this issue. Focusing on the current theme of World Health Day, Ms. Sumera Sattar PODA Coordinator for South Punjab said "recognizing health as a constitutional right is key to quality healthcare for every mother and newborn. Advocacy, policy reforms, and investment in healthcare infrastructure can make this right a reality." There is no specific article directly related to right to health in the Constitution of Pakistan, she added. Advocate Muazmah Hasnain stressed to incorporate a legal amendment to raise minimum age of marriage of girls to 18 years in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2015-Punjab to fulfill country commitment under SDGs, CEDAW and Convention on Child Rights. Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Paracha, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Women University, noted that the theme "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures" brings attention to the critical need for ensuring a healthy start in life. She stated that combating child marriage and expanding access to quality healthcare are key to creating a more equitable and promising future, especially for women and adolescents in Pakistan. Dr. Khizr Hayat, District Population Welfare Officer highlighted that Pakistan's population is growing at a rate of 2 percent, and by 2050, it is projected to become the third most populous country in the world. He noted that the five most populous nations—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, and Pakistan—together account for a combined population of 3.6 billion. Citing a United Nations forecast, he warned that the global population is expected to exceed 10 billion by the year 2100. "In this alarming context," he added, "child marriage—particularly for girls—poses a significant challenge. The abrupt shift in roles, responsibilities, and environment places intense psychological stress on young girls. Their physical and emotional immaturity makes them more vulnerable to serious health conditions such as depression, sepsis, abuse, complications during childbirth, and increased risk of HIV due less say in such matters". The effects of early marriages extend to future generations. A child born to an educated mother is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five and is twice as likely to attend school, he added.—APP

Railways to modernize healthcare: Abbasi

LAHORE: Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi has said the Pakistan Railways (PR) is fully committed to modernize its medical facilities through a transparent and sustainable public-private partnership model. Addressing the roadshow ceremony of Pakistan Railways Healthcare Transformation initiative held at the Royal Palm Club here on Tuesday, the minister announced that seven Pakistan Railways hospitals were being outsourced under the public-private partnership model. He emphasized that the department was seeking private partnerships to upgrade and manage its healthcare institutions, the PR remains a strategic national asset and will not be handed over to the private sector under any circumstances. The minister said the Pakistan Railways was adopting a sustainable model to outsource several departments, including the seven hospitals, to ensure improved service delivery. "Our priority is to provide world-class medical care to railway employees, their families, and the general public. This initiative is designed to achieve the goal efficiently," he added. He stressed that the transformation required a practical, long-term model and highlighted that public-private collaborations were crucial to elevate public service standards without compromising transparency or public interest. Highlighting the strategic value of land occupied by PR hospitals, Hanif Abbasi asserted that these prime assets must be utilized transparently and effectively for public benefit. "We are looking for private partners who not only possess professional expertise but also share a sincere commitment to public service," he emphasized.—DNA

PNCA's NPAG shines in Dhaka

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PNCA is proud to share that the National Performing Arts Group (NPAG) had the distinct honor of performing at the Evening of Unity, Diplomacy, and Cultural Exchange held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, as part of the

celebrations marking the 85th National Day of Pakistan. The group's dynamic and soulful performances beautifully represented Pakistan's cultural richness and diversity, earning heartfelt appreciation from a distinguished audience. Group Leader Inayat Ur Rahman was honored with a shield in recognition of his leadership and

the team's outstanding contribution. This proud moment reflects the hard work, dedication, and artistic excellence of the entire NPAG team. We extend our sincere thanks to the High Commission for Pakistan in Dhaka for the invitation and gracious hospitality. PNCA remains committed to promoting Pakistan's cultural identity on global platforms.



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- April 07/W. H. O. World Health Day
- April 12/Somalia Armed Forces Day
- April 15/DPR Korea The Day of the Sun
- April 16/Denmark National Day
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- April 18/Zimbabwe Independence Day
- April 24/Holy See Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
- April 25/DPR Korea Armed Forces Day
- April 26/Tanzania National Day
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Highlights strong ties with Pakistan

DPRK embassy marks 113th birth anniversary of Kim Il Sung

Choe Chang Man, Ambassador of the DPRK, led the proceedings and delivered a keynote address, in which he paid tribute to the legacy and enduring vision of Kim Il Sung

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Islamabad commemorated the 113th birth anniversary of the Great Leader His Excellency Kim Il Sung with a formal ceremony marked by speeches, and reaffirmations of solidarity between North Korea and Pakistan. Choe Chang Man, Ambassador of the DPRK, led the proceedings and delivered a keynote address, in which he paid tribute to the legacy and enduring vision of Kim Il Sung. The ambassador lauded the Great Leader's contributions to the foundation and development of the DPRK and underscored his philosophy of self-reliance and international cooperation. Ambassador Choe also spoke at length about the longstanding and friendly relations between North Korea and Pakistan, emphasizing mutual respect and shared values. He expressed confidence that bilateral relations would continue to grow stronger in the years to come, with increased cooperation across multiple sectors. "The deep-rooted friendship between our two nations is built on principles of sovereignty, independence, and mutual support," he said. "We look forward to further enhancing these ties through continued dialogue and collaboration." Prominent Pakistani lawmakers, including Senator Abdul Qayyum Soomro and Senator Buledi, also addressed the gathering. In their remarks, they acknowledged the historical and diplomatic significance of DPRK-Pakistan relations and praised the people of North Korea for their resilience and national unity. The event was attended by diplomats, government officials, journalists, and friends of the Korean people.

The 113th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth also known as the Day of the Sun is one of the most important national holidays in the DPRK and is observed worldwide by North Korean missions and supporters.

Kistafin, Aurangzeb Khichi for enhancing cultural exchange

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin on Tuesday called on Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi and Minister of State/ Special Assistant to Prime Minister for National Heritage and Culture Huzaifa Rehman here at National Heritage and Culture Division. Secretary National Heritage and Culture Asad Ur Rehman Gilani was also present on the occasion. During the meeting, the discussion was held on several areas of cooperation, with a particular emphasis on enhancing cultural exchange and people-to-people contact between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, especially in the fields of art, culture, heritage, film, cinema to cultivate deeper and better understanding between the people of both countries. The Federal Minister said that Pakistan attaches great significance to its relations with Kazakhstan which share mutual vision of regional cooperation. He said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan were enjoying friendly and brotherly relationship and a lot of potential existed to further enhance it between the two countries. Minister of State/SPM Huzaifa Rehman said that this region is very rich in cultural heritage and beautiful terrains, adding that there was tremendous scope for the uplifting cultural cooperation between both countries. While appreciating the Federal Minister and SPM for warm reception, the Ambassador lauded friendly ties between the two brotherly countries and assured of future collaboration in diverse sectors including cultural exchanges, art, cultural heritage, museum and film. He emphasized the importance of relations in the field of art, culture and possible collaboration between the two countries.

ICCI stresses urgent need for int'l level skill centers

He assured that the ICCI stands ready to collaborate with all relevant government entities to establish a network of world-class skill development centers in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, has emphasized the critical need to impart market-driven training to youth and equip them with industry-relevant skills to effectively tackle unemployment and poverty across the country. In a statement issued on Tuesday, he pointed out that Pakistan lacks international-standard skill development centers, while countries like India have over 280 and Bangladesh boasts around a dozen such institutions. These centers not only provide technical training but also educate skilled workers about the cultural, linguistic, and professional expectations of their destination countries. Qureshi underlined the importance of industry-integrated training programs, advocating for practical, hands-on learning directly within industrial environments. "Rather than relying solely on theoretical learning, we must expose students to real-time tools, equipment, and working conditions," he said. He further stressed that, along with conventional and industrial skills, IT and digital training must be prioritized to keep pace with global demand. Key sectors identified for targeted skills development include healthcare, agriculture, banking and finance, construction, driving, hospitality, language training, tourism, IT, manufacturing, textiles, and mining. The ICCI President particularly highlighted the importance of International Certification, stating, "Without recognized certification, our workforce cannot effectively compete in the global job market." Recognizing the role of women in economic development, Qureshi also called for focused initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs and support them in establishing their own startups within their communities. He assured that the ICCI stands ready to collaborate with all relevant government entities to establish a network of world-class skill development centers in Pakistan.—DNA

German diplomat highlights governance and educational prospects

ISLAMABAD: A distinguished session at COM-SATS University Islamabad (CUI) featured Mr. Jan Gerald Krausser, Head of Communications, Culture, and Protocol at the German Embassy, who engaged students from diverse academic backgrounds in an insightful dialogue on governance and higher education opportunities in Germany. Addressing students from departments including International Relations, Economics, Media and Communications, Management Sciences, and Meteorology, Mr. Krausser offered a comparative analysis of governance systems, emphasizing the significance of blue- and white-collar workers in Germany's economic landscape. He also highlighted Germany's commitment to vocational and technical education. Encouraging students to explore academic opportunities in Germany, he stressed the importance of utilizing the resources of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which has a dedicated office in Islamabad. Mr. Krausser also shared information about potential scholarships and funding opportunities available through German political foundations and universities.—DNA

CDA committed to transforming Islamabad into model city: Randhawa

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was held on Tuesday at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by CDA members for Environment, Planning, and Engineering along with other senior officers. Detailed discussions were held on making Islamabad more beautiful, planting eco-friendly trees and plants, in line with the tree plantation campaign which will be helpful in promote tourism and environment friendly atmosphere. During the briefing, the meeting was informed that five major highways of the city have been initially selected for beautification, including the Expressway, Margalla Road, Club Road, Park Road, and Faisal Avenue and the others roads will gradually be included. Special focus is being given to lane markings, footpath repairs, median strips, green belts, and beautifying the right-of-way along these roads. It was further said that priority has been given to the renovation of all major roundabouts, improvements to mega parks, restoration of 23 water fountains and urban forest projects to reduce air and water pollution. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa was briefed that under the beautification and highway improvement plan, horticulture and landscaping work will be carried out on model highways with seasonal flowers planted at appropriate locations. Beautiful planters and wooden signboards are already being used on these roads, which have received great appreciation from citizens. Similarly, natural boulders will be placed along the highways for aesthetic appeal. Additionally, modern lighting arrangements are being ensured on these roads. The meeting was further informed that, on the direction of the Chairman CDA, parks in every sector will undergo complete upgrades, including walking tracks, swings, modern lighting, and horticultural enhancements. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that all 23 water fountains under the CDA's jurisdiction be made operational at the earliest, with decorative lighting installed around them. He also instructed that permanent, aesthetically pleasing lighting be installed on all major highways, including Club Road, Faisal Avenue, Jinnah Avenue, Margalla Road, and the Expressway. He further directed that the sprinkler system for plant maintenance be made more efficient to prevent damage to plants due to water shortages and to ensure their healthy growth within the designated time. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa announced that a mobile app will be launched to provide citizens with easy access to beautiful plants and seeds from the CDA nursery at highly affordable rates, ensuring convenient and cost-effective delivery to their homes. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that the goal of these initiatives is not only to enhance the city's beauty but also to ensure environmental sustainability.—DNA

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Briefs

NDMA warns of severe heatwave from Mid-April to June

ISLAMABAD: GM Technical at National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Syed Muhammad Tayyab Shah, on Tuesday said NDMA is collaborating with PDMAs to alert health departments about the heatwave expected from mid-April to June. Shah, in an Interview with a Private news channel, warned that this year's heatwave from mid-April to June is expected to be more severe than previous years, with temperatures likely to soar across the country. He said that dryness and below-average rainfall are the main causes of heatwaves in the country, prompting NDMA and PDMAs to jointly issue advisories. He stressed that teachers and school staff should be equipped to handle heat-related emergencies, providing immediate care when needed, as heatstroke can be life-threatening if not promptly treated. He also advised establishing heatstroke units in hospitals to provide specialized care for heat-related emergencies. NDMA has advised the public to take precautions against heatstroke, particularly during peak heat hours. To mitigate risks, the NDMA recommends staying hydrated, avoiding outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day, and wearing light, loose-fitting clothing. By taking these precautions and staying informed, the public can reduce their risk of heat-related illnesses, he added.—APP

Two killed, six hurt as bus driver falls asleep while driving

ISLAMABAD: Two people lost their lives and six others were injured when a passenger bus went off the road near Shah Maqsood Interchange in Haripur on Tuesday. According to motorway police spokesperson, a bus carrying 40 passengers was on its way to Rawalpindi from Gilgit when it suddenly veered off the road. As a result, two passengers died while the six others were injured. "The accident occurred after the bus driver fell asleep while driving", he said. Police and rescue teams reached the site shortly after the incident and moved the injured to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. The National Highways and Motorway Police urged the drivers to take adequate rest before setting out on long-distance journeys.

Nigar appointed as brand ambassador for women empowerment

DNA
RAWALPINDI: In a historic move for gender equality and women's leadership, the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has appointed Lt Gen (Retd) Nigar Johar Khan as its official 'Brand Ambassador for Women Empowerment and Women's Initiatives'. The announcement was made during an event, "SHE Leads - A Tribute to Women," which was held at the Chamber House the previous day. The ceremony celebrated the resilience, strength, and remarkable contributions of women across Pakistan, with Lt Gen (Retd) Nigar Johar Khan, the first and only female three-star general in Pakistan as the chief guest. RCCI President Usman Shahkat, in his welcome address termed her professional rendering as one of courage, dedication, and breaking barriers. "She has redefined what is possible for women in Pakistan and stands as a beacon of hope and aspiration", he added.—DNA

German Embassy donates Rs. 3.2m generated from Christmas Market 2024

With the participation of around 700 guests from approximately 50 countries, the market provided an opportunity for visitors to purchase gifts from diverse German and Pakistani stalls while enjoying authentic German food and hospitality

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The German Embassy in Islamabad proudly handed over the proceeds from last year's highly successful Charity Christmas Market. The surplus from 2023 could even be surpassed and amounted to an impressive sum of 3.2 million PKR. His Excellency Alfred Grannas, along with Embassy representatives, met with esteemed organizations including the Aaghosh Mera Ghar, Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, and Al Firdous Welfare Association to formally present the charitable donations. During the meetings, the recipient organizations showcased their plans for utilizing the funds for various charitable causes and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the German Ambassador for his generous contribution. Impressed by the impactful work carried out by these organizations, Ambassador Grannas stated, "I am delighted to learn that our proceeds are being directed towards exceptional projects that are creating a positive difference in society." In December of the previous year, the German Embassy hosted for the third time the German Christmas Charity



Market, an extraordinary event held at the Serena Hotel. With the participation of around 700 guests from approximately 50 countries, the market provided purchase gifts from diverse German and Pakistani stalls while enjoying authentic German food and hospitality.

Pak ranks third in number of int' students studying in China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Contrary to the US, Pakistan ranks third in the number of international students currently studying in China with more than 28,023 students. A total of 492,185 international students from 196 countries studied in China, last year, up 0.62 per cent from the previous year. The official data shows that China has become the top education destination for Pakistani students as out of all of them enrolled in Chinese universities, around 7,034 are studying on scholarships, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday. The number of Pakistani students has risen in China mainly because of a series of preferential policies offered by the Chinese government after the launch of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a pilot project of Belt and Road Initiative. Currently, 6,156 Pakistani students are studying in Phd, 3,600 in Masters, 11,100 in Bachelors and 3,000 in Short Term Exchange Programs across China. Pakistani students are also studying Chinese language, engineering, medical, computer science

and various other fields. Various scholarships are provided by the Chinese government to lure international students over - most notably, students from the Belt and Road Initiative participating countries and regions have been facilitated to obtain scholarships under the Chinese Government Scholarship - Silk Road Program. China has also launched a scholarship program for Pakistani students, including those from Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), for the academic year 2025-26. The scholarships offer opportunities to pursue undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs, as well as conduct research at Chinese universities. The report stated, amid the US's erratic mania that has left high and dry hundreds of Pakistani students enrolled in American universities by evoking their valid educational visas on the pretext of national security, China stands firm to be exclusively wide open for Pakistani as well as international students offering them stable, smooth and world-class quality knowledge at par excellence. Trump administration is always notorious for its topsy-turvy and per-

ilous steps irrespective of friends or foes around the globe. Now rot has set in on educational spectrum for international students. More than 500 international students including Pakistan students have had their US visas revoked in recent weeks as the administration of President Donald Trump intensifies enforcement on student visa holders. The United States Education Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) has officially announced the cessation of the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (Global UGRAD) for Pakistani students last Tuesday. The decision, communicated by the U.S. Department of State, marked the end of the program after 15 years of fostering educational and cultural exchange between the two nations. The Global UGRAD Program was a significant platform for Pakistani students to gain academic exposure, leadership skills, and cultural experiences in the United States. Speaking at weekly media briefing in Islamabad, Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said student exchange programs were vital for strengthening bilateral relations, fostering

educational and technological collaboration, and deepening people-to-people ties. Meanwhile The US Departments of State and Homeland Security have reportedly initiated parallel actions-visa revocations by the State Department and "status termination" by Homeland Security. In both cases, affected Pakistani students must exit the US and reapply for their visas. According to Nafsa, a network supporting international education and exchanges, the process to challenge or appeal such actions remains unclear. Universities across the country are finding it difficult to track such developments as they are not formally notified when their students are affected. Some institutions have cautioned their students and faculty against travelling abroad, fearing potential detentions or questioning on re-entry. Students from top-tier universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and Columbia were initially affected, but the trend has now expanded to a broader group of colleges. The reasons for the revocations vary widely, including even minor infractions such as traffic violations.

MNA welcomes PM's Belarus visit

ISLAMABAD: MNA Tuesday hailed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's successful visit to Belarus, saying it has opened new avenues of bilateral cooperation and provided employment opportunities for 150,000 Pakistani youngsters. Sheikh Aftab Ahmad speaking to PTV news channel highlighted that the visit has paved the way for enhanced bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus, with potential opportunities in various sectors. The agreements signed during the visit aim to boost trade, economic collaboration, and cultural exchanges between the two countries, he mentioned. Sheikh Aftab Ahmad said the MOUs signed during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Belarus will be highly beneficial for Pakistan, opening new avenues for economic cooperation and providing employment opportunities for 150,000 Pakistani youngsters. MNA Asia Naz Tanoli also lauded and emphasized that this development will not only boost Pakistan's economy but also enhance the country's diplomatic relations with Belarus. Tanoli emphasized that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Belarus will provide the best opportunities for Pakistani youngsters. She highlighted the potential for cooperation in various sectors, including education and training programs, which can benefit the youth. Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti, MNA, also welcomed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's successful visit to Belarus, describing it as fruitful. He emphasized that the agreements signed during the visit will open new avenues for economic cooperation and provide employment opportunities for 150,000 Pakistani youngsters. The agreements will further cement existing cooperation and diversify bilateral ties, with a focus on enhancing agricultural cooperation to boost crop yields, promoting industrial partnerships, and driving economic development through seminars and scientific collaboration, he mentioned. "I wholeheartedly welcome Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's successful visit to Belarus, which has paved the way for enhanced bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus. The agreements signed during the visit will unlock new opportunities for economic growth, trade and cultural exchange, ultimately benefiting our nation", Said Anjum Aqeel MNA I commend the Prime Minister's efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties and explore new avenues for mutual benefit, he added.—DNA

Police dismiss 15 officers for misconduct

ISLAMABAD: Fifteen personnel of Islamabad Capital Police, including five Head Constables and seven Constables, have been dismissed from service over negligence in duty and misuse of authority. An official told APP on Tuesday that departmental inquiries were conducted under the supervision of a Superintendent of Police (SP), which found the personnel guilty of misconduct and failure to perform their duties effectively. He said the dismissed officers include Sub-Inspector Qasim Zia, Sub-Inspector Talat Mehmood, and Assistant Sub-Inspector Zaeher Ahmed. He said Head Constables Almas Haider, Muhammad Ishaq, Waqas Idrees, Naveed Butter, and Sajid Mehmood are also among those dismissed. He added that Constables Muhammad Nadeem, Muhammad Imran, Nazim Abbas, Zahid Khan, Ahsan Farooq, Imran Ahmed, and Qazi Azhar have also been removed from service following the inquiry. He said the officials were penalized for exceeding their authority, failing to serve the public, and not taking effective action against criminal elements. He said there is no place in the police force for those who fail to uphold the principles of public service, misuse their powers, or neglect their duties.—APP

Pakistani jewelry, handicrafts shine at China expo

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Exquisite Pakistani bridal jewelry and intricately carved handicrafts are capturing attention at the 5th China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE), where over 4,100 brands from 70 countries and regions are showcasing their finest offerings from April 13-18. Pakistani jewelry brand WINZA returned for its third consecutive

appearance, this time highlighting its signature bridal collections. "The CICPE's global prestige perfectly matches our ambition to introduce authentic Pakistani craftsmanship to sophisticated buyers, especially in China's booming luxury market," said Aqeel Chaudhry, owner of this brand. He highlighted the fusion of traditional Pakistani craftsmanship with contemporary designs that appeal to Chinese consumers. The expo's unique position as a govern-

ment-backed platform for bridging Asian consumers with global brands makes it particularly valuable for heritage artisans. Habib of Pak Persian Carpets, displaying beautifully crafted onyx decor items, explained their strategic shift: "Last year, 80% of our designs followed traditional Pakistani styles. This year, we've innovated - many pieces now incorporate Chinese cultural elements like peonies, traditional architecture, and auspicious animals to

resonate more with local tastes." "The CICPE offers something trade fairs can't - direct access to China's affluent consumers and provincial purchasing groups," Chaudhry noted, adding that Pakistani exhibitors are benefiting from China's progressive market opening and growing appetite for culturally rich products. China's resilient consumption market, despite global economic volatility, presents strategic opportunities for heritage brands.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Türkiye Irfan Neziroglu called on the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi. Deepening bilateral cooperation in the judicial field, including ongoing and future exchange programs, extending such initiatives to the district judiciary, enabling judicial officers to benefit from Türkiye's experience in court management, digitization, and the use of AI technologies in the justice system were on the agenda.—DNA

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Stop the Genocide

ON Sunday evening, a global joint media campaign titled “Stop the Genocide” is scheduled to be launched, with the participation of hundreds of media and human rights organizations around the world, in addition to activists across social media platforms. The campaign aims to shed light on the grave violations committed against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, which have been documented by international organizations as a systematic genocide perpetrated by Israel since the beginning of its war on October 7, 2023. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, approximately 51,000 people have been killed and over 116,000 others injured—including more than 17,000 children—with over 6,500 cases of amputation, in what is considered an unprecedented assault in terms of intensity and scale, targeting civilians, hospitals, schools, displacement camps, and places of worship. Numerous UN reports, including those from the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry, have indicated that Israel’s actions in the Gaza Strip may constitute genocide under international law, in addition to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Children are at the forefront of the victims—not only in the staggering death toll, but also through horrifying scenes and images of children who have lost limbs, suffered permanent disfigurement, or survived under rubble only to find themselves orphaned and homeless. Reports from organizations like “Save the Children” confirm that children in the Gaza Strip are facing severe psychological and behavioral crises, along with intense physical suffering from critical injuries left untreated due to the collapse of the healthcare system. Israel has imposed a suffocating blockade on the Gaza Strip for years and, since the war began, has shut down all vital crossings and prevented the entry of food and medical aid. This has led to a near-famine situation, especially after the collapse of the ceasefire agreement in early March, posing a direct threat to the lives of hundreds of thousands. Israeli forces deliberately deprive residents in the Gaza Strip of the minimum amount of water needed to survive by systematically targeting water infrastructure, halting supply lines, destroying water plants and wells, and cutting off electricity and fuel needed to operate water and sanitation facilities. The disruption of the two Mekorot water lines serving eastern Gaza City and the central governorate—which supplied over 35,000 cubic meters of water daily to more than 700,000 Palestinians—was one of the most significant Israeli steps aimed at pushing residents toward forced displacement. Previous reports from the Government Media Office (GMO) stated that since October 7, 2023, Israel has destroyed more than 90% of the water and sanitation infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, prevented technical teams from conducting repairs, and targeted workers performing their humanitarian duties. It has also blocked fuel needed to operate wells and desalination plants, amid a complete electricity blackout since the start of the genocide. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UNICEF have warned that the Gaza Strip is experiencing “the worst levels of food insecurity in the world,” as Israel continues to intentionally prevent the entry of aid. Thirty-six hospitals have gone out of service—either from direct bombing, arson, destruction of equipment, or the prevention of fuel entry. Patients and the wounded suffer from severe shortages of essential medications, ventilators, and operating rooms, while relief teams are prevented from reaching disaster-stricken areas.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Making fossil fuels great again

THE era of hydrocarbons is accelerating under the second Trump administration, posing a direct threat to global climate goals and putting years of clean energy progress at risk. On his first day in office, US President Donald Trump declared a national energy emergency and signed an executive order establishing the National Energy Dominance Council. Headed by Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, its mandate revolves around fast-tracking oil, gas and coal development. This aggressive stance was reinforced by a series of executive orders focused on reviving the coal industry, which Trump described as “beautiful” and “clean”. Surrounded by coal miners at the White House, he pledged to accelerate leases for coal mining on federal land and eliminate permitting delays that have long hindered coal expansion. The administration has not limited its efforts to the federal level. It has also taken aim at state-driven climate initiatives, seeking to override local authority and weaken environmental protections. Moves to block California’s cap-and-trade policies, halt enforcement of penalties against fossil fuel firms in New York and Vermont and shut down climate lawsuits targeting oil companies all reflect a broader strategy to consolidate fossil fuel influence across every level of government. The recent approval of liquid natural gas exports from Commonwealth LNG in Louisiana marks the first authorisation since president Joe Biden’s moratorium five years ago. These initiatives signal a shift in US strategy towards treating energy infrastructure not merely as economic development but as instruments of geopolitical influence. Trump’s declaration that US oil reserves are “liquid gold” highlights his administration’s commitment to fossil fuel dominance. By positioning the US as a global energy powerhouse, Trump aims to challenge the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries’ influence and assert US control over fast-growing energy markets in Asia. In further moves to increase US energy influence, the Trump administration has imposed new sanctions targeting Iran’s oil industry and a surprise 25 per cent tariff on countries importing Venezuelan crude oil and gas. This has disrupted supply chains across Asia and pushed up oil prices amid increased geopolitical risk. Trump has spared Russia from being part of the “reciprocal” tariffs, but the trade war he has sparked could bring about falling oil prices which in turn would destabilise the Russian economy. Meanwhile, Trump has moved to reverse Biden’s offshore drilling ban, which had removed more than 252.9 million hectares (625 million acres) from future leasing, framing it as an attack on America’s energy wealth. He also vowed to revive the cancelled Constitution Pipeline project meant to take natural gas from Pennsylvania to New York and New England, with his claim that the deal could reduce energy costs in the Northeast by up to 70 per cent aimed at voters in economically challenged regions. In a nutshell, Trump’s strategy uses the supposed self-actualisation of the United States as a conduit for challenging Opec’s dominance. Given that US crude oil output has surpassed 13 million barrels per day, American producers could be positioned to supply regions traditionally dependent on Opec.

Islam from graphic novels to media (Part-1)

Qamar Bashir



Understanding this distinction is key. Oppressive edicts like forbidding girls’ education or forcing women behind veils often stem from patriarchy or local culture, not the core tenets of Islam. By disentangling faith from custom, we see that what’s often attributed to “Islam” – such as the extreme imposition of the burqa by the Taliban – actually reflects a society’s socio-political climate more than the religion itself. Islam as practiced by hundreds of millions of ordinary believers is diverse and flexible, ranging from women in Jakarta wearing...

TAHAR Ben Jelloun, the acclaimed Moroccan-French author, has long been a voice against racism and ignorance. His seminal book *Le Racisme expliqué à ma fille* (Racism Explained to My Daughter) has just been released in a new graphic novel adaptation, over 25 years after its original publication . The timing could not be more apt. In an era when being visibly Muslim often means facing suspicion or hostility, Ben Jelloun’s message to younger generations about understanding and tolerance resonates deeply. He has remarked on the unique difficulty of being a Muslim today – caught between the criminal acts of extremists and the prejudices of a fearful public. As Ben Jelloun laments, Islam is too often “manipulated by ignorant... sinister people” whose fanaticism “poses a danger to the entire world” – and who “kill many more Muslims” than anyone else . These words ring true as daily headlines and online debates reveal the intense scrutiny on ordinary Muslims for the actions of a distorted few. To gauge the world’s pulse on Islam and Muslims, one need only scroll through social media. It’s a cacophony of voices – some empathetic, many hostile. In the wake of terrorist attacks, Islamophobic rhetoric often spikes dramatically. After the 2016 Nice truck attack in France, for example, anti-Muslim tweets surged to nearly 22,000 in a single day . Researchers found an average of about 5,000 derogatory tweets about Islam per day in the months after, much of it from Europe . The sentiments behind these numbers are often raw. Some netizens bluntly declare “Islam has no place in our country,” echoing a fear that Muslim immigrants cannot integrate. In France’s heated “burkini” debate over Islamic swimwear, one French politician even described modest beach attire as an “Islamist provocation” . Such statements imply that no matter how peacefully Muslims live, they are viewed with suspicion. As French legal scholar Rim-Sarah Alouane observed during that controversy, policies targeting Muslim dress send a painful message to French citizens of that faith: “no matter what you do... we don’t want you here.” Yet social media has also given a platform to those defending Muslims and pushing back against bigotry. When the xenophobic hashtag #StopIslam trended after terror attacks in

2016, it was rapidly flooded by counter-messages from Muslims and allies condemning its premise . Many users spoke up to remind the world that “terrorists don’t represent us.” French Muslim voices have been especially active online. “L’intolérance ne doit pas changer de camp” – “Intolerance must not change sides,” tweeted French senator Samia Ghali, herself Muslim, urging France not to betray its values by mistreating an entire community . Alongside her, countless everyday people – Muslim and non-Muslim – use Facebook, X (Twitter), and other platforms to insist that one cannot blame an entire faith for the crimes of individuals. A scroll through global feeds reveals supportive comments like “My Muslim friends are some of the kindest people – don’t paint them all with the same brush,” juxtaposed with vitriolic slurs. This stark divide in online commentary shows how contested the public image of Islam is today. Amid the noise, a crucial nuance is often lost: the difference between Islam as a faith and the cultural practices of some Muslim-majority societies. Critics frequently point to images of women in full burqas or other rigid customs and claim they represent Islam’s essence. In reality, many such practices are rooted in pre-Islamic or local traditions. Veiling of women, for instance, long predates Islam – it was present in ancient Byzantine, Persian, and Arabian cultures . Islam’s holy text, the Quran, calls for modesty but does not mandate the burqa or niqab; most Islamic scholars throughout history do not consider covering the face a religious requirement . In fact, the ubiquity of face veils in some regions owes more to cultural norms or recent political movements than to scripture. As one historical review notes, “scarves and veils of different colors and shapes were customary in countless cultures long before Islam” . Understanding this distinction is key. Oppressive edicts like forbidding girls’ education or forcing women behind veils often stem from patriarchy or local culture, not the core tenets of Islam. By disentangling faith from custom, we see that what’s often attributed to “Islam” – such as the extreme imposition of the burqa by the Taliban – actually reflects a society’s socio-political climate more than the religion itself. Islam as practiced by hundreds of millions of ordinary believers is diverse

and flexible, ranging from women in Jakarta wearing colorful headscarves to businesswomen in Dubai pairing designer suits with hijabs. Reducing this rich tapestry to a single caricature does a disservice to the truth. There is a persistent narrative in some media that Muslims exist only as victims – discriminated against, voiceless, needing saving. While anti-Muslim prejudice is very real, it is only half the story. Muslims worldwide are increasingly taking agency, asserting their rights and identity within secular societies rather than passively accepting marginalization. In November 2019, thousands of people – Muslim families, women in hijabs, men in prayer caps, and non-Muslim supporters – marched in Paris to protest Islamophobia. They carried placards with messages like “#SignalerLeRacisme, ToléranceZéro” (“Report racism, zero tolerance”) and “Nous tous ensemble” (“All of us together”), emphasizing unity in diversity. Banners declared “Stop all racism” and “Islamophobia is not an opinion but a crime” , as the crowd demanded equal treatment under the motto of the French Republic: liberty, equality, fraternity. “We want to be heard... not pushed to the edge of society,” one veiled Frenchwoman at the rally told reporters . Such public demonstrations – organized by Muslim civic groups and joined by supporters from across the spectrum – highlight that Muslims are not merely begging for acceptance; they are actively participating in democratic life. They vote, they run for office, they form organizations to protect civil liberties. From the Muslim mayors in Western capitals to youth-led initiatives combating hate crimes, Muslims are asserting that they are integral citizens of their countries. The narrative of helpless victimhood is giving way to one of empowerment. Yes, discrimination and hate crimes persist – over 40% of French Muslims say they have felt religious bias against them – but the response is not silence or resignation. It is organization, protest, dialogue, and legal action. Muslim communities are increasingly standing up to say: we are here, we contribute, and we will not be demonized for who we are. Continued...
– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Detroit, Michigan

Dumping biomass in the ocean is not a climate solution

James Kerry and Lisa Levin

The seabed disturbance, together with the erosion of the chemocline, could cause these gases, in addition to carbon dioxide, to penetrate the oxygen-rich areas of the Black Sea, which support a diverse array of marine life, including dolphins, porpoises and many species of fish, some of which can be found nowhere else. Any expansion of the anoxic zone or intrusion of toxic gases into this habitat could severely harm its ecosystem, which is already under intensifying pressure from overfishing, pollution (including chemical, plastic and noise pollution), habitat destruction and rising temperatures

PURO.EARTH, a self-appointed “carbon removal certifier,” is seeking to establish a new accredited means of carbon sequestration: dumping bunched biomass (wood or crop waste) into the ocean. At least two companies are already selling carbon credits based on plans to dump biomass in the Black Sea. But “ocean storage of biomass,” known as OSB, lacks scientific verification and highlights the risks of commercializing unproven climate interventions. The idea is that “degradation-resistant biomass” would be dumped into the Black Sea basin, where anoxic (oxygen-free) conditions would further slow, or even halt, degradation. As a result, the approach’s proponents claim, the carbon would effectively be removed from the biological cycle for more than 1,000 years, with minimal environmental impact. But there is no scientific evidence that this is true. While anoxic zones might appear barren, they are by no means devoid of life. And the tiny organisms found there – such as the *Synechococcus* bacteria, which was recently discovered in the Black Sea’s anoxic basin – break down organic matter and release trapped carbon. They simply use chemosynthesis, rather than photosynthesis, to do it. Since carbon can migrate across the “chemocline” (chemical transition zone) that separates anoxic zones from oxygen-rich waters, whatever is released within the Black Sea’s anoxic basin can return to the ocean’s carbon cycle and, ultimately, the atmosphere. Two more processes could accelerate the release of carbon: dumping large quantities of baled biomass could – and likely would – induce turbulent chemical mixing in the chemocline, while the heat generated by decomposing biomass could further weaken the Black Sea’s stratification. Moreover, as the ballast makes contact with the seafloor, it will likely resuspend sediment that currently acts as a reservoir not only of carbon, but also hydrogen sulfide (which is toxic) and methane (a highly potent greenhouse gas). The seabed disturbance, together with the erosion of the chemocline, could cause these gases, in addition to carbon dioxide, to penetrate the oxygen-rich areas

of the Black Sea, which support a diverse array of marine life, including dolphins, porpoises and many species of fish, some of which can be found nowhere else. Any expansion of the anoxic zone or intrusion of toxic gases into this habitat could severely harm its ecosystem, which is already under intensifying pressure from overfishing, pollution (including chemical, plastic and noise pollution), habitat destruction and rising temperatures. But that is not all. The gases released as a result of OSB could ultimately make their way into the atmosphere, with potentially catastrophic consequences. This is not without precedent. When the stratification of Lake Nyos in Cameroon collapsed in 1986, large clouds of carbon dioxide gas were released, killing an estimated 1,700 people. Puro.earth insists that OSB is safe. But these claims are based on modeling and short-term laboratory experiments, which cannot possibly replicate the unique and complex conditions of the Black Sea’s anoxic basin. For one thing, these experiments tend to underestimate rates of organic degradation by failing to account for the possibility that they will increase over time – for example, as microbial communities adapt or due to a breakdown in the structural integrity of the biomass. Moreover, while Puro.earth promises strict requirements for monitoring and environmental and social safeguards, it plans to observe the effects of its activities for only 15 years after the last biomass bundle is dumped – a far cry from the 1,000 years of carbon sequestration being claimed. Without long-term observational data, it cannot credibly claim that OSB is a legitimate – let alone benign – means of carbon removal, especially because the carbon permanency and ecological consequences of such activities are difficult to predict and even harder to monitor in such remote and poorly studied environments. Land considerations further challenge the logic of OSB. Terrestrial biomass has value in itself, both in terms of the nutrients it contains and because there may be better uses for it, such as in the synthesis of biofuels. A complete life-cycle analysis of the OSB pro-

cess suggests it involves significant energy consumption in the harvesting, processing, transportation and monitoring of the biomass. Puro.earth rightly asserts that any biomass used in the process “must be free from harmful impurities and compounds,” such as toxins and pesticides. Yet that requirement would necessitate chemical testing of entire batches, which would likely impose significant costs. Even if OSB were safe and efficient, with dumped biomass remaining durably sequestered in anoxic waters, its promise as a climate intervention would be dubious. The problem is one of scale. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we should be removing 6 to 10 gigatons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year until 2050. Even assuming that only crop waste was used, locking up just one gigaton of carbon dioxide would require about 500 million tonnes of dry biomass, an amount comparable to the entire annual US corn harvest. This is not the only significant constraint on the proposed method; another is the paucity of anoxic zones on our planet to dispose of the biomass. Companies that stand to gain financially from such projects should not be the arbiters of carbon-crediting mechanisms, nor are they qualified to make objective judgments about environmental safety. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the standard has been, and always should be, one of precaution. A genuinely careful and conservative approach would be to conduct smaller-scale, multiyear controlled experiments before any large-scale, commercialized deployment were even to be considered. The fact that OSB represents a low-tech approach to neutralizing carbon dioxide emissions does not exempt it from the precautionary principle and dumping regulations under the London Convention and London Protocol. The burden of proof is on the proponents of the intervention to demonstrate that their actions would not violate these standards. This should be reflected in any permitting decisions about OSB that countries bordering the Black Sea, such as Georgia and Türkiye, might have to make in the coming years.

Briefs

Shehbaz
announces
incentives...

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armed forces, no one could harm Pakistan, he asserted. The army chief said: "Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with immense resources for which we should always be thankful [to God]." "Today we are giving a clear message that whoever comes in the way of Pakistan's progress, we will remove the obstacle together." Speaking on the occasion, Gen Munir lauded the sacrifices of martyrs who laid down their lives in lives in the line of duty and in war against terrorism. "We want to take Pakistan to the place that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah dreamed of," he stated. "Pakistan's journey of development is ongoing," he said, adding that the question is not when Pakistan will develop – the question is how fast it will develop.

Fitch
upgrades
Pakistan's...

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The finance minister says that this move "will further strengthen the government's economic agenda". "Following this development, the country is expected to see increased investment, trade, employment opportunities, industrial growth and access to additional financial resources," he said. "Going forward, global rating agencies, investors and financial institutions will have greater trust and confidence in Pakistan," he concluded. Pakistan's fiscal outlook has improved, with the budget deficit projected to narrow to 6% of the GDP in FY25 from nearly 7% a year earlier, driven by spending cuts and provincial surpluses. The primary surplus is expected to more than double, exceeding 2% of the GDP. Fitch noted that public debt levels declined to 67% of GDP in FY24 from 75% in the previous year, with a gradual downward trend expected to continue. However, interest costs remain burdensome, with a forecast interest-to-revenue ratio of 59% in FY25, far above the B median of 13%.

Shutter-
down strike
in Parachinar

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they observed the shutter-down strike to press their demand to reopen the road and make it safe for travel and trade. "Those falling ill have to wait for death, as they neither have medicines nor can they travel to Peshawar for treatment," he said, noting that Parachinar and its outskirts were facing shortages of food and medicines. Traders also addressed a press conference in the city, which was attended by Indad, Haji Asghar Hussain, Yousuf Hussain, Liaquat Kaka, Jaffar Hussain, and others. They lamented that the roads to Parachinar had still not opened despite the peace agreement earlier this year. The traders alleged that large sums of money were demanded from them to have their trucks included in the aid convoys.

Four
Pakistanis
among...

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migrants met with a deadly accident in the same waters off the Libyan coast. In the wake of the incident, the FO stated that the Pakistani embassy team went to Zawiya city and confirmed the figures after meeting local officials and hospital authorities. The latest incident adds to the list of migrant boat tragedies resulting in the loss of precious lives, with dozens of Pakistanis drowning in multiple incidents in recent months. In January, more than 40 Pakistanis were killed after a boat carrying irregular migrants from the African nation of Mauritania to Spain capsized. The ill-fated boat departed from Mauritania on January 2 with 86 migrants on board. Moroccan authorities reported that 66 of the passengers were Pakistani nationals and noted that it had rescued 36 people after the accident.

Alvarez double seals Atletico
win against Real Valladolid

Real Valladolid 4-2 in a rain-soaked Metropolitano on Monday

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez scored two crucial penalties as they came from behind to defeat bottom club Real Valladolid 4-2 in a rain-soaked Metropolitano on Monday, keeping their title hopes alive.

Third-placed Atletico now have 63 points, three behind Real Madrid and seven adrift of Barcelona. Valladolid, who suffered their fifth consecutive loss, remain on 16 points, 14 points shy of safety with seven matches remaining. "These are three important points," Atletico striker Alvarez told DAZN. "We have to keep going. Think about (Saturday's game at) Las Palmas, rest and focus. That's all. "I had the chance to get a hat-trick elsewhere, but the big thing is that we won. It got



complicated at one point, but we managed it." Valladolid took a surprising lead in the 21st minute when Mamadou Sylla

calmly converted a penalty, awarded after a VAR check for a handball by Clement Lenglet. The lead was short-lived as

Alvarez equalized from the spot just four minutes later, following another VAR intervention for a foul by Javi Sanchez on Giuliano

Simeone. Simeone then scored himself to give Atletico the lead in the 27th minute. However, the visitors shocked Atletico again by

equalizing in the 56th minute when Sanchez's free-kick deflected off Conor Gallagher in the wall and past goalkeeper Jan Oblak. Atletico regained the lead in the 71st minute with another well-taken Alvarez penalty after Henrique fouled Marcos Llorente. The Argentine forward almost completed his hat-trick eight minutes later, but goalkeeper Andre Ferreira was quick to block his low shot. Nevertheless, substitute Alexander Sorloth capitalized on the rebound to seal the win with a close-range finish. "We competed well. We knew we were going to suffer. It's a pity they came back," Valladolid's Sanchez said. "We have to keep going and continue in this vein. Leave the crest where it deserves to be. We have to take it one game at a time. Fight until the end ..."

Three players withdraw from
Barcelona Open ahead of start
Monte Carlo Masters finalist among players to pull out

WEB DESK

BARCELONA: The 2025 Barcelona Open kicked off on Monday, drawing significant attention as one of the ATP 500 season's most anticipated events. Featuring major names like Carlos Alcaraz, a four-time Grand Slam champion, and Ste-

fanos Tsitsipas, the 2024 Australian Open runner-up, the tournament promised exciting matchups. However, just after the draw, three players pulled out of the event, making way for lucky losers. The biggest name to withdraw was Lorenzo Musetti, who pulled out due to a thigh injury sustained during the Monte Carlo

Masters final against Carlos Alcaraz. Musetti had played a superb match and was one set away from claiming the title before the injury interrupted his progress. The second player to opt out was Tomas Machac. Although the reason for his withdrawal has not been disclosed, it's worth noting that Machac had previously

decided not to compete in his doubles match at the Monte Carlo Masters following his loss to Alex de Minaur in the Round of 32. Jordan Thompson, the third player to withdraw, announced his exit from the Barcelona Open on Monday as the tournament commenced. Thompson had missed two months due to injury but made his comeback at the BNP Paribas Open. The reason for his withdrawal remains unclear. Replacements for the Missed Players: Arthur Rinderknech replaced Musetti in the main draw. The Frenchman, who had lost to Jesper de Jong in the final round of qualifying, will now face Laslo Djere in his opening match. Damiir Dzumhur took Tomas Machac's spot. Dzumhur had been defeated by Cameron Norrie in the final round of qualifying. Jacob Fearnley stepped in for Jordan Thompson after falling to Daniel Elahi Galan in the qualifying rounds.

Umar Akmal blasts
PCB over age
discrimination in PSL

Umar Akmal has questioned the credibility of fitness standards in Pakistan cricket

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's Test cricketer Umar Akmal has strongly criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on unfair treatment of players based on age. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Akmal pointed out that players like himself, Ahmed Shehzad and Sohaib Maqsood, all nearing 35 years of age, are being sidelined for being "too old," whereas players, older than them, are playing in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10. "We are Ahmed Shehzad told that we are too old to play or even mentor the team. But players who are 45 years old are still playing. What are we supposed to do? Shoot ourselves?" angry Akmal lambasted. He also made serious claims about fitness standards, stating that many senior players and coaches have never taken proper fitness tests. "Ask me, I've been with them; I've played for Pakistan. They never took fitness tests," said Akmal while also suggesting to bring equality. Akmal, while being indirect, took a dig at veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik, who is currently playing for Quetta Gladiators in PSL 10. "I respect seniors because they gave me chances, but Pakistan should be the priority. If senior players keep playing domestic cricket just to prepare for PSL, where does that leave young talent?" he asked. Akmal called for a major overhaul in the PCB's management, saying the same officials have been making poor decisions for years. "These people just take salaries while players suffer because of their mistakes. This system needs to change," he stressed. He also linked the empty stadiums during PSL 10 matches with the PCB's selection policies.

Dubois in
talks to fight
Usyk in July
at Wembley

WEB DESK

LONDON: Daniel Dubois and Oleksandr Usyk are in talks to fight at Wembley Stadium on 12 July. The rival heavyweight champions hold all four major world titles between them, with Dubois the IBF champion and Usyk the WBA (Super), WBO and WBC belt holder. Usyk, 38, is undefeated in 23 fights and has a win over Dubois, stopping him in August 2023. Their rematch would be for the undisputed heavyweight title as well as offer 27-year-old Dubois the chance of revenge. While talks are ongoing between both camps, no contracts have been signed. Dubois has won three fights since his defeat by Usyk, securing a knockout in each of them. If the Londoner cannot reach terms with Usyk, he will be ordered by the IBF to face 49-fight veteran Derek Chisora who the IBF has as its number one contender.

Kane Williamson's PSL 10
arrival date unveiled

Kane Williamson will miss first five PSL 10 matches

KARACHI: Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, who was drafted by Karachi Kings, is set to make his much-anticipated return to the squad for the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10. Sources within the Kings' management confirm that Williamson is expected to arrive in Pakistan on April 23 or 24. However, the right-handed batter has already missed the team's opening match and will also miss the next four matches of the tournament due to his commitments as a commentator in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). In his absence, Karachi Kings recently announced the signing of Pakistan U19 captain Saad Baig as a partial replacement. Baig joined the squad during the Kings' match against Multan Sultans. In other news, Karachi Kings, led by their newly appointed captain David Warner, secured a thrilling victory in their opening match of the tournament against Multan Sultans at the National Bank Stadium. Chasing a challenging 235-run target, the Kings reached the mark with four wickets to spare, thanks to an explosive partnership between James Vince and Khushdil Shah. Vince was the standout performer, scoring a blistering 101 off just

43 balls, including 14 fours and four sixes. His aggressive knock was complemented by a 142-run partnership with Khushdil Shah, who made a quickfire 60 off 38 balls, featuring five fours and four sixes. The two batters, however, fell in quick succession, leaving the Kings at 226/6 in 18.3 overs. But Muhammad Irfan Khan and Abbas Afridi held their nerve, guiding the Kings over the line with a crucial seventh-wicket stand, securing victory on the second delivery of the final over. Earlier, Multan Sultans had posted a formidable 234/3 in their 20 overs. Mohammad Rizwan was the star of the innings, remaining unbeaten on 105 off 63 balls, which included nine fours and five sixes. – DNA

Imran open
to talks,
claims Swati

FROM PAGE 01
present the records at the next hearing. Earlier, the PTI distanced itself from reports suggesting senior party member Azam Swati is engaged in talks with the military establishment, with party secretary general Salman Akram Raja stating such actions are not sanctioned by the party leadership. "The claims of a deal between Azam Swati and the establishment have no connection with PTI. He is speaking in his personal capacity," said Akram Raja. Responding to questions over why senior leaders had not yet been permitted to meet party founder Imran Khan, Raja suggested the delay was intentional. "It appears efforts are being made to create ambiguity. Once we meet him, it will become clear whether he has authorised any dialogue," he said. Raja stressed that no negotiations or decisions could be confirmed without direct consultation with Imran Khan. Meanwhile, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar has said that party founder Imran Khan has categorically rejected any kind of deal.

No mention
of Imran
Khan by...

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The statement comes in the light of recent allegations by PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan of being not invited to the government officials' meeting with the US delegation in Pakistan. The US officials have been holding meetings with the government officials on the sidelines of the Pakistan's Minerals Forum 2025. However, Sadiq refuted Gohar's claim, saying that the lawyer-turned-politician and PTI Chief Whip Amir Dogar had been invited to a dinner hosted for the US delegation. "It was a chance for PTI leaders to sit and talk with the Americans – the same people they seek help from," he remarked. He said the federal government's ally, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had also expressed interest in discussing canal-related matters during the meeting. "Thirty people raised the issue of canals, but the opposition missed the opportunity to properly address it," Sadiq said.

Over 172,000
Pakistanis
left for...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistani workers, attracting the highest number of job seekers at 121,190. Oman followed in second place as it saw 8,331 Pakistanis seeking employment, while the United Arab Emirates welcomed 6,891. Qatar also proved to be a popular choice, with 12,989 Pakistanis finding work there, and Bahrain saw an influx of 939 Pakistani workers. Other notable destinations included the United Kingdom (1,454), Türkiye (870), Greece (815), Malaysia (775), China (592), Azerbaijan (350), Germany (264), the United States (257), Italy (109), and Japan (108). In a breakdown of the professions of those who secured overseas jobs, 99,139 individuals were categorised as general labourers.

Pakistan
condemns...

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the indiscriminate killing of innocent and unarmed Palestinians, including women and children, and the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure," the spokesperson said. He said that the Israel's relentless assaults had crippled Gaza's healthcare system, depriving critically ill patients of vital medical care. Coupled with the blockade on humanitarian aid, these actions reflect a deliberate strategy to prolong suffering and entrench conflict. The spokesperson called for an immediate halt to the hostilities by Israeli occupying forces and reiterated its support for the two-state solution, with a viable, independent and sovereign State of Palestine on pre-June 1967 borders with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital. He also urged the international community to take decisive action to hold Israel accountable and protect Palestinian civilians from further violence.

Paddy Pimblett cracks Top 10 after UFC 314 win

Paddy overwhelmed Chandler on the main card in Miami this past weekend

LONDON: Paddy Pimblett made a powerful statement at UFC 314 with a dominant victory over Michael Chandler, catapulting himself into the top 10 of the UFC lightweight rankings. The English fighter overwhelmed Chandler on the main card in Miami this past weekend, sealing the win with a third-round technical knockout. Pimblett unleashed a relentless barrage of elbows and punches that forced the referee to step in, securing one of the most emphatic wins of his career. With this victory, Pimblett improves his professional MMA record to 23 wins and 3 losses. The performance not only earned him a Performance of the Night bonus but also elevated him to 8th in the lightweight rankings – a jump of four spots from his previous position at 12th. He now sits just behind Mateusz Gamrot (7th) and ahead of Beneil Dariush (9th). Speaking in the Octagon post-fight, the 30-year-old expressed his readiness to face the elite of the division. "I want that world title. People said I'd never be champ, I'd never get ranked, never be in the top 10. But what now? I won. Dustin, Justin, Charles, or Arman – any of them. I respect Dustin, Justin, and Charles," said Paddy. "Charles is the biggest legend out of them all. He's called the best submission artist the UFC has ever seen. Well, I dispute that. I'm here. So me versus Charles." Pimblett's callout of former champion Charles Oliveira highlighted his

ambition, signaling that he's not merely content with a top-10 spot – he's aiming for UFC gold," he added. On the other hand, Chandler's defeat marked his fifth loss in six MMA appearances. The former Bellator champion dropped out of the lightweight top 10, slipping from 7th to 12th. His performance also drew criticism from fans and even provoked a fiery response from former two-division cham-



pion Conor McGregor. Michael Chandler has shared a heartfelt message on social media following his loss to Paddy Pimblett at UFC 314. The 38-year-old former Bellator champion was defeated in Miami after suffering a brutal knee strike that resulted in a deep cut, forcing the referee to stop the fight. This marked Chandler's third consecutive loss in the UFC, with his last victory coming in 2022 against Tony Ferguson. Despite the setback, Chandler remained optimistic, posting an emotional message on X (formerly Twitter). He shared a poignant photo of himself holding hands with his son, Hap, captioned:

"Never out of the fight. This picture sums it all up. As long as I've got these heartbeats and hands to hold, I've already won," Chandler said. Chandler's wife, Brie, had earlier posted photos showing him wearing sunglasses to conceal his injury, but smiling nonetheless. Chandler retweeted the images, showing a glimpse of his enduring spirit and humor despite the physical toll. The loss has sparked debates about Chandler's future in the sport. UFC legends Michael Bisping and Henry Cejudo weighed in, with Bisping suggesting that age and recent losses might have closed the door on Chandler's title hopes. Cejudo, however, offered support for Chandler to have one final fight before considering retirement. – Agencies

Briefs

PSX
witnesses
bullish trend,
gains 385
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 385.47 points, a positive change of 0.33 percent, closing at 116,775.50 points as compared to 116,390.04 points on the last trading day. A total of 479,465,114 shares were traded during the day as compared to 484,547,019 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs30.449 billion against Rs27.430 billion on the last trading day. As many as 447 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 219 of them recorded gains and 174 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 54 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Nergycico PK with 32,091,019 shares at Rs 8.53 per share, TRG Pak Limited with 21,511,574 shares at Rs 67.90 per share and B O Punjab with 20,785,866 shares at Rs 11.17 per share. —APP

Gold price
increases by Rs
600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.600 and was traded at Rs.339,400 on Tuesday as compared to its sale at Rs338,800 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.514 to Rs 290,980 from Rs.290,466 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up to Rs.266,741 from Rs.266,261, respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,234 and Rs.2,772 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$6 to \$3,224 from \$3,218 whereas that of silver also increased by \$0.05 and at \$31.35, the Association reported. —APP

Rupee gains 04
paise against
US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 04 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.60. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.60 and Rs282.10, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 81 paise to close at Rs318.94 against the last day's closing of Rs319.75, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.95, whereas an increase of Rs1.57 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs371.23 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs369.66. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham decreased by 01 paise to close at Rs 76.38, while the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise and closed at Rs74.77. —APP

ZTBL wins “Financial Literacy
Champion Bank Award”

This latest achievement is yet another testament to the visionary leadership of President/CEO Mr. Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti and the unwavering dedication of the entire ZTBL team

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited (ZTBL) has been honored with the prestigious “Financial Literacy Champion Bank Award” among all mid-size banks in recognition of its outstanding performance in the National Financial Literacy Program (NFLP) 2023-24. The award was presented on April 14, 2025, by the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) at a ceremony held in Karachi. Mr. Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti, President/CEO of ZTBL, received the award on behalf of the Bank. During FY 2023-24, ZTBL exceeded the SBP-assigned target of 310 training sessions by conducting 320 financial literacy sessions, reaching out to 10,414 individuals, including 5,281 women. These efforts significantly contributed to financial inclusion, leading to the opening of 9,351 new bank accounts by previously unbanked individuals. Over the past four years (July 2021 to March 2025), ZTBL has provided financial literacy training to more than 37,000 people across Pakistan, empowering them with essential knowledge to make informed financial decisions. SBP has consistently acknowledged ZTBL's

performance under the NFLP awards, shields, and certificates nancial literacy, a critical driver ship of President/CEO Mr. Tahir



In addition to this year's Mega Performance Award, ZTBL also received the Special Performance Award last year. Since 2018, the Bank has been recognized with 17

from SBP's main office in Karachi as well as regional offices in Lahore, Gujranwala, Islamabad, and Faisalabad. ZTBL remains fully committed to promoting fi-

of poverty reduction, economic development, and long-term financial stability in Pakistan. This latest achievement is yet another testament to the visionary leader-

Yaqoob Bhatti and the unwavering dedication of the entire ZTBL team. These milestones mark an unprecedented chapter in the Bank's 64-year history.

Moot on “National Leader Heydar
Aliyev and Sovereign Azerbaijan”

DNA

KHANKENDI: A conference titled “National Leader Heydar Aliyev and Sovereign Azerbaijan” was held at Garabagh University in Khankendi. The event was co-organized by the Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan, as part of the initiatives marking 2025 as the “Year of Constitution and Sovereignty” in the country. The conference brought together employees of the prosecutor's office, law enforcement and judicial bodies, academic staff, students, media, and public representatives. Prior to the confer-

ence, flowers were laid at the bust of National Leader Heydar Aliyev. The memory of those who were martyred for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity was honored with a moment of silence, followed by the performance of the National Anthem. In his opening remarks, Rector of Garabagh University Shahin Bayramov provided an overview of the university's priorities since its establishment in Khankendi, following the full restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev. He stressed the university's path toward becoming not only a center of higher education but also a regional hub for science and intellectual thought. Rector Bayramov underscored that

promoting Heydar Aliyev's legacy, statehood principles, and sovereign values constitutes a core focus of the university's mission. Minister of Science and Education Emin Amrullayev highlighted Heydar Aliyev's significant role in shaping Azerbaijan's national ideology and statehood values within the education system. He also emphasized that the reconstruction of educational infrastructure and the restoration of quality education in the liberated territories, including Garabagh, remain top priorities of state policy. Prosecutor General Kamran Aliyev, in his remarks, emphasized National Leader Heydar Aliyev's exceptional role in laying the legal foundations of sovereign Azerbaijan. He noted Heydar

Aliyev's principled stance on the Garabagh issue and his enduring commitment to the country's territorial integrity—an approach successfully continued by President Ilham Aliyev. Kamran Aliyev also reflected on the National Leader's unparalleled service to the state, the 44-day Patriotic War in 2020 initiated under the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief, and the local anti-terrorism measures conducted on September 19–20, 2023. Other keynote speakers, including Elchin Yusubov, the President's Special Representative in the city of Khankendi and in Aghdara and Khojaly districts, shared insights into Garabagh's integration into the sovereign Azerbaijan state.

Haroon reviews
appointments of BoDs,
CEOs in key industries

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting to review appointments of the Board of Directors (BoD) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in key institutions under the ministry. During the meeting, Haroon Akhtar highlighted the critical role played by Board members and CEOs in the performance and success of public sector organizations, said a news release. Haroon said that “Board members and CEOs are essential leaders in any institution. Their selection must reflect transparency and merit, in line with the Prime Minister's vision.” Highlighting the significance of effective leadership, he said, “The performance of government institutions is directly linked to the efficiency and capabilities of their Boards and CEOs.” Haroon Akhtar instructed the Ministry to expedite the process of appointing CEOs and called for the immediate submission of proposed names and profiles for Board of Directors positions. In the next meeting, the profiles and names of the BoDs and CEOs will be brought for under consideration. The meeting reinforced the government's commitment to strengthening institutional governance through capable and transparent leadership. —DNA

Azerbaijani
PM meets
with Acting
President of
Romanian
Senate

BAKU: Ali Asadov, Azerbaijan's Prime Minister, met with Mircea Abrudean, Acting President of the Romanian Senate. The meeting hailed the dynamic development of relations between Azerbaijan and Romania based on strategic partnership. During the meeting, the sides hailed the excellent political dialogue between the two countries, emphasizing the importance of reciprocal visits by heads of state and at other levels in terms of enhancing relations. The two stressed the significance of successful collaboration and mutual support between the two countries within international organizations. Regarding the interparliamentary cooperation, they underscored the importance of reciprocal visits at the parliamentary level, as well as the activities of friendship groups in both countries' parliaments. The parties commended the expansion of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Romania in economic and trade, investment, oil and gas, green energy, transport, public service delivery, humanitarian and other domains. The meeting also explored the prospects for cooperation in a number of areas of mutual interest. —APP

Politicising
matters of
national
interest
regrettable

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the opposition's attempts to politicize issues of national importance, calling it a disservice to democratic norms. While replying to a question of media representatives, he said that during the recent visit of a delegation from the United States Congress, the opposition indulged in unnecessary political maneuvering. He said that it is unfortunate that even on matters of foreign engagement and parliamentary diplomacy, political point-scoring takes precedence over national interest. He clarified that members of the opposition, including Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Whip Malik Amir Dogar, were formally invited to participate in meeting with the U.S. delegation. Despite these invitations, the opposition often walked out of the NA session. Furthermore, he also briefed that the visiting U.S. delegation did not comment on Pakistan's internal political dynamics nor mentioned any political leader. He said that US delegation were very clear in stating that the United States does not interfere in Pakistan's domestic political affairs. In response to queries raised by media representatives, Speaker National Assembly said that he has received a special invitation to participate in a high-level conference being convened by the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on the grave situation in Palestine. He added that the plight of the Palestinian people is deeply distressing. The Government and people of Pakistan have always stood in unwavering solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. —APP

Tea Association raises
serious concern over
misuse of import quotas

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) has raised serious concerns over the misuse of import quotas, duty drawbacks, and re-export privileges in the tea trade, resulting in billions of rupees in revenue losses to the national exchequer. Aman Pracha, Vice President of FPCCI, issued a stark warning here in a Press conference on Tuesday. He urged immediate reforms to protect small businesses and ensure fair taxation. Aman Pracha highlighted the misuse of exemptions, former FATA/PATA import quotas and duty concessions meant for regional development

are being exploited, enabling large-scale importers to evade taxes, emphasized, “The misuse of these exemptions has cost the government an estimated Rs. 40 billion in revenue losses this year alone.” He said the unjust tax burden on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are collapsing due to unfair tax practices. While tea is imported at Rs. 800–900 per kg, taxes are levied at Rs. 1,200 per kg. Pracha stated, “This disparity is crushing small traders who cannot compete with illicit tactics used by powerful players.” Sharp decline in Legal Tea Imports have plummeted by 17.5%, as 71,000 tons of tea have already been imported under dubious exemptions. “The government must eliminate

all special quotas and enforce uniform taxation for all,” demanded Pracha. The Rs. 1,200 per kg Minimum Retail Price (MRP) directive has exacerbated the crisis. Pracha urged its withdrawal, arguing, “Taxes should align with actual import values, not arbitrary benchmarks.” Tea is being wrongly classified as a “finished product,” attracting higher duties. Aman Pracha clarified, “Tea is a raw material requiring blending, processing, and packaging. It must be categorized as a food item to reduce the 70% cumulative tax burden on imports.” Pakistan Tea Association leadership has demanded immediate revocation of all special exemptions and quotas. Uniform tax policies for all import-

ers. They also demanded Re-classification of tea as a food item, not a finished product. Withdrawal of the Rs. 1,200/kg MRP policy. Protection for SMEs from predatory practices. Aman Pracha's Warned that “if these reforms are ignored, SMEs will shut down, smuggling will rise, and the government will lose billions more. We cannot let a handful of exploiters jeopardize Pakistan's economy and fair trade.” Association leaders among Talha Saleem, Zeeshan Paracha, M Khalil Paracha and others demanded urgent need for policy reform to safeguard revenue, support SMEs, and ensure a level playing field in Pakistan's tea industry.

Road rehabilitation work continues in Sindh
with financial support of ADP

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



THIS phase also included community-driven initiatives, such as cash-for-work programs, which engaged locals in cleanup and minor

repairs. These programs not only accelerated recovery but also provided economic relief to families who had lost their livelihoods. By involving communities in the process, the Government of Sindh fostered a sense of ownership, ensuring that rehabilitation efforts were aligned with local needs. The impact of these projects extended beyond infrastructure. Restored roads reconnected children to schools, reducing the risk of educational disruptions that could exacerbate Sindh's already alarming illiteracy rates. Healthcare facilities, previously inaccessible to many rural communities, became reachable, enabling timely interventions for conditions like malnutrition and waterborne diseases, which surged in the floods' aftermath. For farmers

and traders, improved transport links meant faster delivery of goods to market, stabilizing incomes and supporting national food security. Community engagement remained a cornerstone of the rehabilitation process. Local leaders, such as EX-PD Ayub Junejo and PD Aziz-ul-Haque Siddiqui, worked closely with engineers and contractors to ensure that projects met high standards of quality and timeliness. In districts like Larkana and Hyderabad, executive engineers like Ashfaq Ahmed Shaikh and Abdullah Shaikh oversaw complex operations, coordinating across multiple sites to deliver results under tight deadlines. The people of Sindh, too, expressed satisfaction with the high-quality roads, which not only eased travel but

also restored a sense of normalcy and hope. Despite these achievements, the rehabilitation process faced significant challenges. Coordinating efforts across 23 flood-affected districts required immense logistical planning, with delays caused by supply chain disruptions and labor shortages. Environmental concerns also emerged, as construction activities risked further degrading fragile ecosystems already strained by the floods. To address these issues, the ADB and the Government of Sindh implemented measures to minimize ecological damage, such as using sustainable materials and limiting construction in sensitive areas. Another challenge was the sheer scale of the reconstruction needed. With thousands of kilometers of roads and dozens of

bridges requiring attention, prioritizing projects was a complex task. Urban centers like Karachi demanded rapid restoration to support economic activity, while rural areas, where poverty amplified vulnerability, required equal focus to prevent further marginalization. Balancing these competing needs tested the capacity of local authorities and their partners. The rehabilitation of Sindh's roads and bridges carries implications far beyond the physical restoration of infrastructure. At its core, this effort is about reconnecting communities, restoring opportunities, and building a foundation for sustainable development. The following sections explore the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of these projects, highlighting their transforma-

tive potential. Sindh's economy, heavily reliant on agriculture and livestock, hinges on efficient transportation networks. The floods disrupted these networks, causing losses estimated at \$3.3 billion for crops alone. Restored roads have revitalized trade, allowing farmers to transport rice, wheat, and cotton to markets and livestock traders to resume operations. This, in turn, has stabilized incomes and supported Pakistan's food security, given Sindh's role as a major producer of staple crops. These efforts also set a precedent for environmental stewardship. By minimizing construction-related ecological damage and adopting sustainable materials, the projects demonstrate that recovery can coexist with conservation. In a region where deforestation

and soil erosion exacerbate flood risks, such measures are critical for long-term resilience. The integration of green infrastructure, such as bio-engineered drainage systems, further enhances the projects' sustainability, offering a model for other flood-prone regions. Beyond their physical impact, these efforts have restored dignity and opportunity to millions, reconnecting families, enabling education, and fostering economic growth. They also underscore the urgent need for climate-resilient infrastructure in a world increasingly defined by environmental uncertainty. As Sindh rebuilds, it does so with an eye toward the future, paving the way for a province—and a nation—that is better equipped to withstand the challenges ahead. In the words of a local farmer in Dadu, whose crops now reach the market thanks to newly paved roads.

Briefs

10 killed in
trailer-van
collision
in KP

DNA

KARAK: At least 10 people lost their lives and several others were injured on Tuesday in a head-on collision between a passenger van and a trailer on the Indus Highway in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's (K-P) Karak district, according to rescue officials. The fatal crash occurred when a passenger coach, traveling from Dera Ismail Khan to Peshawar, collided with a truck near Meetha Khel. Rescue teams, along with local residents, responded promptly to the scene. Several passengers were trapped inside the wreckage, requiring joint efforts to extract the injured and the deceased. The bodies were transported to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Karak, while four of the seriously injured were shifted to Peshawar for advanced medical care. Two of them later died in hospital. According to rescue sources, all of the victims were residents of Miran Shah. Police confirmed that the driver of the trailer, who was also injured in the incident, has been taken into custody. An investigation into the cause of the crash is underway.

Imran's
sisters denied
access again

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The sisters of imprisoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan were once again stopped from meeting him at Adiala Jail on Tuesday, prompting a roadside protest by Aleema Khan outside the facility. On what was scheduled as a visiting day for Imran, family members of his wife Bushra Bibi, as well as several lawyers, arrived at the jail in Rawalpindi. However, when Imran's sisters attempted to pass through the Gorakhpur checkpoint, they were denied entry. In protest, Aleema Khan exited her vehicle and sat on the pavement, refusing to leave. Speaking to reporters, Aleema said police had previously detained and left them in an isolated area after a similar attempt to meet their brother. "If they stop us here again, we will sit right here. They deceived us last time, we won't move today," she stated. When asked about the jail administration's earlier claim that Khan did not wish to meet his family, Aleema laughed off the suggestion. "Is this something anyone would believe? He demanded a meeting and made noise inside the jail for it," she said, citing a family witness.

US-led
Ukraine
peace talks
'not easy'

ODESA: NATO chief Mark Rutte said on Tuesday that US President Donald Trump's push for a ceasefire and lasting peace in Ukraine was "not easy" and condemned Russia's "terrible pattern" of attacks on Ukrainian civilians. "These discussions are not easy, not least in the wake of this horrific violence. But we all support President Trump's push for peace," Rutte said of US-led talks during a surprise visit to the port city of Odesa, where he met with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Rutte's comments contrast with an assessment from Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, who said he sees a peace deal "emerging" after talks with Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Russia. Despite a flurry of diplomacy, there has been little meaningful progress on Trump's main aim of achieving a ceasefire in Ukraine. The Kremlin, which launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, rejected a US and Ukrainian proposal for an unconditional pause in the fighting last month. — Agencies

No one can be arrested
without an FIR, says SC

A seven-member constitutional bench led by Justice Aminuddin Khan heard the appeals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail of Supreme Court has remarked that no one can be arrested without an FIR, nor can anyone be detained without a magistrate's order. He expressed these remarks while hearing intra-court appeals against civilian trials in military courts. A seven-member constitutional bench led by Justice Aminuddin Khan heard the appeals. At the start, Justice Mandokhail asked lawyers to conclude their arguments within 20 minutes. Khawaja Haris, counsel for the Ministry of Defence, said he would try to complete his arguments today. Additional Attorney General Aamir Rehman noted that if Haris concluded today, the Attorney General would present his arguments tomorrow. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the law also provides some basic rights, and Rangers or FC

SC questions distribution of
super tax funds to provinces

A five-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the case

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday raised constitutional concerns over whether the federal government has the authority to allocate funds collected from the super tax to the provinces. A five-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the case challenging the legality of the super tax and its distribution. During the hearing, Justice Jamal Khan

Mandokhail questioned if the federal government was constitutionally permitted to distribute the super tax revenue — whether it amounted to Rs8 or Rs8 trillion — among the provinces. Senior lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan began his arguments, stating that income tax, including the super tax, is collected without any specific allocation and is deposited into the national treasury. He argued that according to the 1973 Constitution, tax proceeds are not meant for provincial distribution unless specified.

personnel dismissed from service appeal through service tribunals. Justice Mandokhail questioned whether in the police, appeals are heard by the IGP or trials conducted by the SP. He added that even in India, independent forums are available and stressed that no arrest or detention is legal without an FIR or magistrate's order. Justice Mazhar stated that those involved in the May 9 incidents were charged under the Official Secrets Act. The army did not directly lodge any FIRs; civilian custody was handed to the military through anti-terrorism courts. Whether such detention was lawful is a separate matter, he added. Justice Mandokhail emphasized that this case will have long-term consequences, just like the FB Ali case, which is still being debated decades later. The Supreme Court adjourned the hearing until tomorrow. Khawaja Haris will continue his rebuttal, and the court has directed him to conclude within 30 minutes.

Senator Shahzad underscores
longstanding Pak-US relations

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Senator Dr Shahzad Waseem Received U.S. Political Counselor Zachary Harkenrider at his residence today. The two exchanged views on matters of mutual interest, including regional dynamics, political developments, and avenues for enhanced economic cooperation.

In reference to the series of recent high-level engagements, including the visit of a parliamentary delegation, the U.S. official remarked that such exchanges underscore the growing strategic relevance of Pakistan in regional and global affairs. Senator DrShahzadWaseem stressed the importance of continued close cooperation between the two countries, highlighting the strength of their longstanding relationship and common strategic and economic interests.

 Hamas sending delegation
to Qatar to continue talksHamas official says group likely
to respond to Israel truce
proposal within 48 hours

NEWS DESK

DEIR AL-BALAH: A senior Hamas official told AFP on Tuesday that the Palestinian Islamist movement will "most likely" respond to an Israeli ceasefire proposal it received through mediators within 48 hours. "Hamas will most likely send its response to the mediators within the next 48 hours, as the movement is still conducting in-depth consultations... within its leadership framework, as well as with resistance factions, in order to formulate a unified position," the official told AFP. A Hamas official said Monday that the group is sending a delegation to Qatar to continue indirect ceasefire talks with Israel over the war in Gaza, as the territory's Health Ministry said that 38 people were confirmed dead over the past day. The Hamas official said teams have been discussing terms for a new ceasefire agreement over recent days in Cairo, including a proposal that Hamas free eight to 10 hostages held in Gaza. But the Hamas official said a major sticking point remained over whether the war would end as part of any new deal. The talks in Qatar are meant

to take place later this week or next, the official said. The Hamas official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive talks with the media. Officials from Israel and Qatar had no immediate comment. Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire in January that lasted eight weeks before Israel resumed the war last month. The initial ceasefire agreement was meant to bring the sides toward negotiating an end to the war, something Israel has resisted doing because it wants to defeat Hamas first. Hundreds have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire collapsed. Since the ceasefire fell apart last month, Israel has blocked aid from entering Gaza and forces have also seized swaths of the coastal enclave in a bid to ratchet up pressure on Hamas to agree to a deal more aligned with Israel's terms. On Monday, the United Nations humanitarian office warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is now likely to be "the worst" since Israel launched its retaliation to Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, pointing to the Israeli ban on all supplies entering the Gaza Strip since March 2. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters: "No fuel has come in, no food has come in, no medicine has come in." The war started when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, during the attack on southern Israel and took 251 people captive. Most have since been freed in ceasefire agreements and other deals. Fifty-nine remain in Gaza, 24 of whom are believed to still be alive.

President Vladimir Putin open
to Ukraine peace deal: US envoyHe also noted a potential to "reshape" the Russian-United States relationship
through "commercial opportunities" that would bring stability to the region

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to a "permanent peace" deal with Ukraine, United States special envoy Steve Witkoff has said. President Donald Trump's envoy made the claim in a TV interview late on Monday, following "compelling" talks with Putin in Saint Petersburg last week. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that agreeing terms on a deal is "not easy", while Ukraine and its European allies have called on Washington not to be deceived by Moscow's delay tactics regarding a ceasefire. "I think we might be on the verge of something that would be very, very important for the world at large," Witkoff told Fox News in an interview following his meeting with the Russian leader on Friday, acknowledging that "it took a while for us to get to this place" but that he saw a deal "emerging" after five hours of talks. He also noted a potential to "reshape" the Russian-United States relationship through "commercial opportunities" that would bring stability to the region. Friday's meeting was the third between Russia and the US since Trump returned to the White House in January, claiming he could solve the conflict within 24 hours. Despite the flurry of diplomacy, there has been little meaningful progress on achieving a ceasefire, despite Ukraine agreeing to US proposals. Russia, however, has offered no key concessions, while continuing to bombard its neighbour. On Sunday, it launched one of the deadliest attacks of the war on the Ukrainian city of Sumy — a move Trump called a "mistake", without elaborating. Both sides have accused each other of

breaching a US-brokered agreement to pause attacks on each other's energy facilities. Despite Witkoff's optimistic report, Lavrov said in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper published on Monday that it is "not easy" to agree on "key components" of a peace deal. He did, however, concede that the Trump administration is trying to understand the "root cause" of the conflict, which he said was triggered by "the actions of Washington and Brussels" in having "brought the current regime to power in Ukraine". Trump, who has alarmed Ukraine by taking on many points of Russia's agenda regarding the war, supported that viewpoint on Monday as he told reporters that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and former US President Joe Biden were responsible for starting the conflict, alongside Putin, whose forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Trump said there were "millions of people dead because of three people". "Let's say Putin number one, but let's say Biden, who had no idea what the hell he was doing, number two, and Zelenskyy," he said, going on to dismiss the Ukrainian leader's attempts to defend his country by obtaining missiles. "When you start a war, you got to know that you can win the war," Trump said. "You don't start a war against somebody that's 20 times your size, and then hope that people give you some missiles." "Mocking your goodwill" Relations between Trump and Zelenskyy have been tense since the US president stunned the world by opening talks with Russia in February — a move critics say gave the Kremlin an edge on terms. Negotiations on a deal that would give the US priority access to lucrative minerals in Ukraine got off to a rocky start after Trump and Zelenskyy had a blazing argument in the Oval Office six weeks ago.

China calls for
new Iran deal
based on JCPOA

"The Chinese side has always supported [the idea] that Iran's nuclear issue must be resolved through political and diplomatic means," he stated. "We request that an agreement should be reached based on the framework of the JCPOA"

BEIJING: China calls on parties to the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers as well as the US that has illegally left the historic agreement to seize the "critical opportunity" to revive diplomacy and reach a new agreement rooted in the previous one, urging Washington to end its pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic. Addressing media outlets, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu said on Tuesday that Beijing had consistently advocated for a political and diplomatic resolution to outstanding issues between Iran and the United States, and stood firmly opposed to coercive measures and unilateralism. "The Chinese side has always supported [the idea] that Iran's nuclear issue must be resolved through political and diplomatic means," he stated. "We request that an agreement should be reached based on the framework of the JCPOA." The envoy was referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name of the nuclear deal, which the US ditched in 2018 before returning the illegal sanctions that it had lifted against Iran as per the accord and even piling up more coercive economic measures on the Islamic Republic. Washington has termed its hostile approach as the "maximum pressure" campaign. He reiterated Beijing's position that any future deal had to be built upon the foundations of the original JCPOA. Describing the current state surrounding the nuclear issue as a "crossroads," Cong said a vital opportunity existed for all sides to engage in constructive dialogue, stressing that contact and cooperation had to be strengthened, not undermined. He sharply criticized Washington's approach, saying the United States bore full responsibility for the current impasse following its unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA. "The United States...must demonstrate political goodwill, participate in these talks (negotiations aimed at relieving the sanctions and resolving the nuclear issue as well as dialogue potentially leading to a new deal), and at the same time, stop using force and 'maximum pressure,'" the ambassador said. Accordingly, he warned that without genuine commitment from Washington, diplomatic efforts would remain fruitless. "Dialogue is always better than confrontation. But is this dialogue meaningful? That must be carefully examined." — Agencies

JI announces
Gaza March
in IslamabadCalls for nationwide
strike on April 22:
Urges united front
against Israel and US

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Chief Hafiz Naeem Rehman announced that a massive Gaza Solidarity March will be held in Islamabad on April 20, while a nationwide strike will be observed on April 22 as part of the Global Call for Gaza. Addressing a press conference at Jamaat-e-Islami's office in Islamabad, Hafiz Naeem said that millions will gather for the historic march in Islamabad to protest Israeli atrocities and US support. "People across the world are expressing hatred for Israel and the US. Israel is murdering innocent children, and once again, the US has proven itself to be a global terrorist," he said, referring to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings as historic examples. He condemned the international community's silence and said that Hamas had won elections democratically but was still not allowed to govern. "They're being told to surrender, but until the streets are flooded with protests, the bloodshed will continue." He urged Arab nations and Pakistan to rethink their strategies, suggesting that military-level planning is needed against Israel's expansionist ambitions.

Two dead in
bus accident

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Two passengers were killed and 16 others, including three foreign nationals, were injured when a Rawalpindi-bound passenger bus veered off the road into a drain on Tuesday, officials said. According to Serai Saleh SHO Raja Mumtaz, the bus veered off the road and fell into a roadside drain near the Shah Maqsood interchange some six kilometres from district headquarters on the Hazara Motorway in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. SHO Mumtaz said the cause of the accident was reckless driving. However, the injured passengers claimed the accident occurred when the driver dozed off. Police quoted the passengers as saying that the Rawalpindi-bound bus left Gilgit in the early hours of Tuesday. When it was near the Shah Maqsood interchange on the Hazara Motorway, the driver lost control and the speeding bus veered into the roadside drain leaving 18 passengers injured.



Dr. Arshad Health Associates

"caring for all health needs"



SHINGLES VACCINE, SHINGRIX

Shingles vaccine, SHINGRIX, is now available at our practices. This is an FDA approved and CDC recommended vaccine designed to help protect patients (above 50 years of age) against the risk of Shingles/ Herpes Zoster.

This vaccine requires two doses for optimal protection.

Most of us had chickenpox in childhood, although we may not remember it. Once you've had chickenpox, the virus remains dormant in the nerves. You may not be aware of it for most of your life, but occasionally the virus can reactivate and cause shingles, which appears as a painful rash on the skin.

The vaccine is recommended for those over 18 with a weakened immune system and for older patients above 50 years of age.

Shingles can be very painful and is more likely to affect older individuals. This is often due to a weakened immune system, which can happen with age, stress, or certain medical conditions and treatments.

For further details please call us on 03008504999/0309778999 or email hlthline@comsats.net.pk