



Islamabad POST

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Investigation into King's brother Andrew goes on

Detailed News On Page-08

Jordan envoy greets BD leadership

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Ahsan Iqbal claims poverty reduced in Pak

Detailed News On Page-07

US President in trouble

US apex court rejects Trump's global tariffs

Ruling says president overstepped his authority by imposing duties without explicit approval from Congress

NEWS DESK / DNA

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court struck down on Friday President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs that he pursued under a law meant for use in national emergencies, rejecting one of his most contentious assertions of his authority in a ruling with major implications for the global economy. The justices, in a 6-3 ruling authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, upheld a lower court's decision that the Republican president's use of this 1977 law exceeded his authority. The court ruled that the Trump administration's interpretation that the law at issue — the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA — grants Trump the power he claims to impose tariffs would intrude on the powers of Congress and violate a legal principle called the "major questions" doctrine. The doctrine, embraced by the conservative justices, requires actions by the government's executive branch of "vast economic and political significance" to be clearly authorised by Congress. The court used the doctrine to stymie some of Democratic former President Joe Biden's key executive actions. Roberts, citing a prior Supreme Court ruling, wrote that "the president must 'point to clear congressional authorisation' to justify his extraordinary assertion of the power to impose tariffs," adding: "He cannot."

Trump has leveraged tariffs — taxes on imported goods — as a key economic and foreign policy tool. They have been central to a global trade war that Trump initiated after he began his second term as president, one that has alienated trading partners, affected financial markets and caused global economic uncertainty. The Supreme Court reached its conclusion in a legal challenge by businesses affected by

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American lawmakers call for 'justice'

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Members of Congress have urged the US government to take action against associates of Jeffrey Epstein, following the arrest in the UK of Andrew Mounbatten-Windsor on suspicion of misconduct in public office. "Prince Andrew was just arrested," Thomas Massie, a Republican congressman who co-sponsored the law that compelled the justice department to release the Epstein files, wrote on X. "Now we need JUSTICE in the United States." The King's brother, who was stripped of his titles last year due to his ties with Epstein, has consistently and strenuously denied any wrongdoing. "There's a lot more we want from Andrew Mounbatten-Windsor at this point and so our door is open and we will talk to him on his terms," Subramanyam said. "I will fly out to the UK if I have to. Whatever he wants to do." Calling the arrest a "huge breakthrough," Subramanyam said Mounbatten-Windsor could not be legally compelled to come to the US to testify.

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Rana rules out any deal with Khan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaulah Khan has categorically ruled out any deal between the government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, stating that no deal has been struck nor will one be forthcoming. The senior government official's statement comes hours after Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar dismissed media reports suggesting any "deal" between the government and the jailed PTI founder. Speaking in the Geo News current affairs programme 'Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Saath' on Thursday, the veteran politician insisted that

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Pak received cordial welcome



DNA

WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said that Pakistan had received an extraordinary welcome during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace, held in Washington earlier in the day. Talking to the media, the minister said US President Donald Trump specifically praised the leadership of Pakistan, including Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, acknowledging Pakistan's

Continued on Page 06



WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. — DNA

Over \$ 7 bn pledged

US thanks Pakistan for backing Gaza Trump peace plan

US State Secretary Rubio, PM Shehbaz, DPM Dar discuss importance of strategic ties on critical minerals development

CENTERLINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: The United States has thanked Pakistan for supporting President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan and for joining the Board of Peace. In a post on X, US State Secretary Marco Rubio shared an image with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Rubio mentioned in the post that he met PM Shehbaz to appreciate "Pakistan's ongoing support of POTUS's Peace Plan for Gaza and for joining the Board of Peace."

"In our meeting, we discussed the importance of our strategic relationship on critical minerals development and counterterrorism," the state secretary added. Responding to Rubio's tweet, DPM Dar thanked the US secretary of State for what he described as productive discussions on key areas of mutual interest. In a post on X, Dar said Pakistan values its longstanding relationship with the United States and appreciates the meaningful talks held on advancing peace, enhancing

Continued on Page 06

PM invites DFC to enhance financing

APP

WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday highlighting Pakistan's fast-improving macroeconomic fundamentals, government's commitment to deepening structural reforms, and attractive investment climate, invited the United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to enhance its financing for projects in the energy, mines and minerals, agriculture and IT sectors. The prime minister, in a meeting with CEO of International Development Finance Corporation Benjamin Black here on the sidelines of the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace,

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

US in talks with India on Venezuelan oil

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The United States is in "active negotiation" over the sale of Venezuelan oil to India, to help India diversify its sources of crude oil, US Envoy Sergio Gor said on Friday. The US has made diversification away from Russian crude a condition for cutting tariffs on goods imported from India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer. "The Department of Energy is speaking to the Ministry of Energy here, and so we're hoping to have some news of that very soon," Gor told reporters on the sidelines of an event in New Delhi where India joined the US-led Pax Silica initiative aimed at building a silicon supply chain for high-tech products. US President Donald Trump this month agreed to cut tariffs on Indian goods to 18% under an interim trade deal.

Earthquake jolts parts of Pakistan

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: A 5.6-magnitude earthquake struck parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab on Friday, with tremors felt in several cities, including Peshawar and Islamabad. The quake's epicentre was located in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region at a depth of 73 kilometres, the seismological centre said. No immediate reports of casualties or damage have been received so far. In KP, tremors were also felt in Malakand and Lower Dir, while residents in Hangu, Kohat, Bajaur and Swat also experienced quake. Tremors were also felt in Buner, Shangla and North Waziristan, Swabi and Upper Dir.

Middle East tensions

US weighing strike on Iran as Tehran says draft deal coming soon

Iran's FM says draft proposal for agreement with Washington will be ready in a matter of days

DNA

PARIS: US President Donald Trump said he was considering a limited strike on Iran after ordering a major naval buildup in the Middle East aimed at heaping pressure on Tehran to cut a deal to curb its nuclear programme. The latest threat came after Iran's foreign minister said a draft proposal for an agreement with Washington would be ready in a matter of days following negotiations between the two sides in Geneva earlier this week. Trump had suggesting on Thursday that "bad things" would happen if Tehran did not strike a deal within 10 days, which he subsequently extended to 15. Asked by a reporter on Friday whether he was contemplating a limited military strike, Trump answered: "The most I can say — I am considering it." After the talks in Geneva, Tehran said the two sides had agreed to submit drafts of a potential agreement,

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HAMAS to choose new leader

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Hamas is holding an election for a new interim leader, a senior Palestinian official familiar with the armed group's affairs has told the BBC. Voting is taking place across Gaza, the occupied West Bank and among Hamas's members elsewhere. The outcome may signal which direction the movement intends to take — particularly as the US and other mediators discuss post-war governance of Gaza, reconstruction efforts and the future status of armed groups there. The elections come after most of Hamas's senior leadership were killed in Israeli strikes following

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SC stays trial of PM Rs10bn defamation suit against Imran

FIJAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) stayed on Friday a trial by the court of an additional district judge in Lahore in a RS10 billion defamation suit filed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif against PTI founder Imran Khan. In his suit filed in 2017, PM Shehbaz said Imran levelled baseless allegations against him. He sought a decree for the recovery of Rs10bn as compensation from the defendant for

Continued on Page 06

Hails Pakistan economic reforms Int'l Monetary Fund confirms review mission from Feb 25

Washington-based lender says reforms stabilised economy, curbed inflation and restored investor confidence

DNA

NEW YORK: The International Monetary Fund on Friday welcomed reform progress by Pakistan, saying its policy efforts under the IMF-supported programme have helped stabilise the economy and rebuild market confidence. According to IMF spokesperson and Director of Communications Julie Kozack, Pakistan is currently implementing an Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement and an IMF staff team is expected to visit the country starting February 25 for discussions on the third review under the EFF and the second review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Kozack said Pakistan's policy efforts under the EFF have contributed to macroeconomic stabilisation and a gradual restoration of confidence. She added that fiscal performance has remained strong, with Pakistan posting a primary fiscal surplus of 1.3% of gross domestic product in fiscal year 2025, in line with programme targets. Headline inflation, she also said, has remained relatively contained, while Pakistan recorded its first current account surplus in 14 years during fiscal year 2025. The official of the Washington-based lender further said

that the Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Report has recently been published, outlining a range of reform proposals, including simplifying tax policy design, levelling the playing field in public procurement, and improving transparency in asset declarations. Last year in December, the IMF Executive Board approved a \$1.2 billion loan for Pakistan after completing the second review of the country's economic reform programme under EFF. Ahead of the upcoming mission, Pakistan has drawn up a 15-point action plan in response to the Governance and Diagnostic Assessment Report (GCD), including a move to identify the top 10 high-risk federal agencies with corruption vulnerabilities and macro-critical exposures. The News reported. The plan also sets out steps to reduce the backlog of economic disputes, including developing and publishing a methodology to assess the performance of courts and judges in Year 1, and issuing the first performance report covering all administrative tribunals and special courts dealing with economic and commercial matters in Year 2. A detailed action plan comprising 240 pages prepared by the Government of Pakistan for placing an action plan to combat

Continued on Page 06



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Punjab govt airline to start operations in April

LAHORE: The airline of the Punjab government will start operations in April. Initially, seven passenger planes are being purchased for Punjab Airlines Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's government is working at lightning speed to run the province's own airline. Punjab government official sources revealed that the Punjab Airlines will operate only domestically for two years in the first phase. The airline will also start international flights two years after the start of operations. Government sources said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's existing helicopter will also be included in Punjab Airlines, rather it will be the first asset of the Punjab Airlines. After the establishment of the provincial government's airline, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif herself will use Punjab Airlines aircraft, no separate special aircraft will be purchased for her. All ministers and officials of the Punjab government will also travel on this airline. Sources said that a strategy is being devised to not put additional burden on the provincial treasury to establish Punjab Airlines. The existing and new aircraft will be used entirely for profit. The new aircraft will be used by the Chief Minister along with passengers, when the Chief Minister uses the Punjab Airlines aircraft, the full fare will be paid.—APP

Govt plans advanced dates processing plant in Khairpur

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Industries and Production (MoI&P) has planned the establishment of a state-of-the-art dates processing, storage, and packaging facility in Khairpur district of Sindh. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project is estimated to cost a total of Rs 998.97 million. The proposed allocation for the financial year 2026-27 is Rs250 million. The project will be executed soon after approval from the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives. The Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC) of the MoI&P will supervise the project. Under the project, advanced technologies will be introduced for cleaning, grading, pitting, processing, packaging, and cold storage of the fruit, thus significantly reducing the post-harvest losses, ensuring fruit quality, creating new job opportunities for local growers, and enabling the fruit to compete in the high-end international markets. The project is likely to encourage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to process date by-products such as paste, syrup, and confectionery items. In addition, capacity building and technical training for local farmers and workers will enhance productivity and quality standards. Speaking to Wealth Pakistan, Mahreen Razaq Bhutto, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Khairpur, said the proposed project will play a significant role in adding value to the date industry, particularly in Sindh, where Khairpur is a major hub for date production. "By establishing modern processing, storage, and packing facilities, the post-harvest losses will be reduced, and date quality will improve in line with international standards," she said.—APP

Rs 3b sets-aside for free stroke treatment in Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that under the Chief Minister's Stroke Program, free treatment facilities worth more than Rs 3 billion will be provided to stroke patients every year. Presiding over the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Chief Minister's Stroke Program on Thursday, he said that important steps are underway to implement revolutionary and historic initiatives in the health sector of the Punjab government, adding that significant progress has already been made in the program's implementation. Secretary Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Azmat Mahmud and Professor Qasim Bashir attended the meeting. Professor Qasim Bashir gave a detailed briefing to the committee about the program, which was appreciated by members who also offered valuable suggestions. The minister said the initiative aims to save thousands of lives. He added that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the establish-

ment of a stroke management center in every district. An in-principle decision to appoint a neurologist and pediatric neurologist in every District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital is also being implemented. Khawaja Salman Rafique said a mechanism is being devised to provide immediate stroke management training to doctors and nurses in all districts. Steps are also underway to launch a telemedicine project through which district hospital doctors will be able to consult specialists for the prompt treatment of stroke patients. He further said that a public awareness campaign will be launched, emphasizing the critical importance of the "golden hours" in stroke treatment. Plans have also been finalized to establish stroke management centers in all children's hospitals across Punjab. "We want no patient to be forced to travel to major cities for stroke treatment," he said. During the briefing, Professor Qasim Bashir stated that one in four people over the age of 25 is at risk of stroke. Commit-

tee members stressed that awareness and training are essential at pre-hospital, hospital, and post-hospital stages of care. Secretary Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Azmat Mahmud said a training workshop on stroke management will soon be held in Lahore and that all necessary resources will be provided to ensure effective treatment. He added that existing resources are also being integrated into the system to strengthen the program, emphasizing that every stroke patient is important. The meeting was attended by Secretary Emergency Services Department Dr. Rizwan Naseer, MD Children's Hospital Lahore Prof. Dr. Tipu Sultan, Additional Secretary Procurement Ameer Baidar, Additional Secretary Technical Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Waseem, Executive Director Punjab Institute of Neurosciences Prof. Dr. Asif Bashir, CEO Punjab Health Initiative Management Company Dr. Ali Razaq, and other senior doctors and officials.—DNA

ICADRP's 40-hour mediation training concludes

In his keynote address, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb congratulated participants on completing the professional training and described mediation as a noble and deeply fulfilling responsibility

DNA

ISLAMABAD: ICADRP's 40-Hour Signature Mediation Training Successfully Concludes in Karachi and Islamabad held across Sindh Judicial Academy, Karachi and Federal Judicial Academy, Islamabad, the program brought together judges and professionals in a shared, practice-focused learning environment, including lawyers, in-house counsel, ADR practitioners, judicial officers, regulators, civil servants, HR professionals, and business leaders across career stages. The training was delivered by a distinguished faculty of international and national experts, including Mr. James Macpherson, Hon. Judge Dr. Sherif Elnegahy, and Dr. Emad Hussein as international faculty, alongside leading national practitioners. Through structured simulations, case-based exercises, and guided learning, participants engaged deeply with mediation theory and practice aligned with judicial expectations and international standards. The Islamabad segment concluded with a dignified closing ceremony reflecting the growing institutional commitment to strengthening mediation as a core pillar of Pakistan's justice



delivery system.

In the Islamabad segment, the closing ceremony was graced by Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan and Advisor to the Board of Governors, Federal Judicial Academy, as Chief Guest, and Justice Arab Muhammad Tahir, Judge, Islamabad High Court, as Guest of Honour.

In his keynote address, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb congratulated participants on completing the professional training and described mediation as a noble and deeply fulfilling responsibility. He emphasized its role in reducing court backlogs, fostering consensual outcomes, and strengthening public confidence in the justice system, commending the joint

training of judicial officers and professionals as a forward-looking reform aligned with global best practices.

Hayat Ali Shah, Director General, Federal Judicial Academy, reaffirmed the Academy's commitment to structured, practice-oriented mediation capacity building, while Dr. Nudrat E. Piracha, CEO, ICADRP, highlighted the importance of

professional standards, ethical practice, and rigorous assessment in developing credible mediators. The program combined intensive theory with practical simulations, advancing a shared goal to promote mediation as an effective, humane, and future-ready dispute resolution method in Pakistan. Completion of the 40-Hour Signature Mediation Training en-

ables participants to apply for empanelment with the Ministry of Law & Justice and pursue further professional mediation recognition, subject to assessment. ICADRP, in collaboration with national judicial institutions, continues to strengthen professional mediation capacity and promote consensual dispute resolution within Pakistan's justice system.

KP achieves 96pc polio vaccination coverage

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah on Friday said that the provincial government is working in a coordinated and effective manner to achieve the complete eradication of polio. He said that during the February 2026 polio campaign, a target of vaccinating 6.5 million children across the province was set, against which a 96 percent vaccination coverage was achieved. While charging a meeting, he added that special efforts were made to reach children who had missed

polio drops in previous campaigns, resulting in a significant reduction in missed children as well as refusal cases. The Chief Secretary noted that the decline in refusal cases reflects increased public awareness and the success of an effective communication strategy adopted by the government and partner organizations. Shahab Ali Shah further informed that in January 2026, a total of 34 environmental samples were collected from 23 districts of the province, out of which only

four samples tested positive for the poliovirus. He said that continuous vaccination campaigns over the past few months have led to a noticeable decline in the positivity rate of environmental samples, indicating a reduction in the spread of the poliovirus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to sustaining high-quality vaccination campaigns and ensuring the safety and protection of polio teams to achieve a polio-free province.—APP

CM Bugti vows to strengthen PWDs

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has unveiled a comprehensive plan to transform the KUMAK Endowment Fund into a robust empowerment model, pledging to move beyond financial assistance and build a framework for long-term inclusion and self-reliance for persons with disabilities. The announcement was made during the second meeting of the Provincial Council of the KUMAK Support Fund, held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Quetta. The session was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Social Welfare Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, senior officials, and representatives of disability advocacy organizations. The council resolved to expand ongoing welfare initiatives across the province with strict monitoring and transparent implementation. Bugti directed authorities to increase monthly financial assistance for registered individuals with disabilities, enabling them to lead dignified lives. The meeting also approved the immediate procurement of assistive devices, including electric wheelchairs and mobility equipment, to ensure timely provision to beneficiaries. Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the program would be rolled out in phases to reach every registered person with disabilities in Balochistan. He underscored that the fund would serve as a foundation for empowerment and self-reliance, not merely a relief initiative. "This program will be transformed into a comprehensive empowerment model," he stated, highlighting the government's vision of inclusion and equality. In a landmark policy announcement, the Chief Minister declared that scholarships and educational assistance would be guaranteed for students with disabilities from matriculation through PhD level. He also directed the promotion of technical and vocational training programs, tailored to enhance employability and skill development. Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed his commitment to economic empowerment by announcing interest-free loans for persons with disabilities to establish small businesses and generate self-employment opportunities. —APP

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ریگولیشن اتھارٹی
حکومت پاکستان

Oil & Gas
Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

PETITION FILED BY FRONTIER OIL COMPANY-II FOR DETERMINATION OF EPC BASED TARIFF OF FAISALABAD -THALLIAN- TARUJABBA WHITE OIL PIPELINE SECTION I, II, III.

Frontier Oil Company-II (FOC-II) (the Petitioner) filed a petition before the Authority on January 12, 2026 under section 7(1) of the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority Ordinance-2002 for the determination of EPC-Based tariff for Faisalabad-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline. Tariff has been calculated based on project cost ascertained through Engineering-Procurement-Construction (EPC) & debt financing as outlined in the instant Tariff Petition.

The overall project details are tabulated below:

Description	Project Details	
Pipeline Length (Kilometer)	Section-I (Faisalabad - Thallian)	20" DIA 256 KM
	Section-II (Thallian - Tarujabba)	12" DIA 172 KM
	Section-III (Thallian Tie in Faqirabad)	08" DIA 9 KM
	Total - (Faisalabad to Tarujabba)	437 KM
Pipeline Capacity	Section-I	7 MTPA (Extendable upto 10 MTPA)
	Section -II	5 MTPA
Project Cost (USD Million)	Section-I (Faisalabad - Thallian)	(USD Million) 319.80
	Section-II (Thallian - Tarujabba)	(USD Million) 94.04
	Section-III (Thallian Tie in Faqirabad)	(USD Million) 17.48
	Section - (Faisalabad to Tarujabba)	(USD Million) 431.31
Project Life	30 Years	

The key issues are as follows:

- Whether throughput volumes projected by FOC-II are fair and justified?
- Whether the (20", 12", 8") diameter pipeline is capable to handle the proposed throughput volumes over the life of the project?
- Whether the proposed storage capacity (60,000 MT each at Faisalabad & Thallian and 50,000 MT at Tarujabba) is appropriate for the through-put of the pipeline?
- Whether the proposed Payback period of four year is justified?
- Whether there is any impact on regional transportation cost as compared to existing road movement?

Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority invites all interested/affected persons / parties and general public to furnish their comments, suggestions and intervention requests. All correspondence in this connection may be addressed to Senior Registrar, OGRA and should contain the names and addresses of applicant.

All interveners must indicate the manner in which they are likely to be affected by the determination of EPC Based tariff. Intervention request should be accompanied by an affidavit verifying the contents of the intervention, intervention fee of Rs.500/- (must be deposited through OGRA Online payment system available on its website) and authority letter, if representing an organization.

For any information required from the petitioner, please contact:

Brigadier Muhammad Zahid Raza Choudhry, (Retd)

Chief Executive Officer,

Frontier Oil Company II(FOC-II)

HQ FWO,509,Kashmir Road, RA Bazar, Rawalpindi,

Tel No : 92-51-9281410, Fax : 92-51-9281411

OGRA has decided to hold Public Hearing in the instant matter according to the date, time and venue mentioned below:

Date : **March 02, 2026 (Monday)**
Time : **10:30 am**
Venue : **OGRA Head Office, Sector G-10/4, Islamabad**

All parties to the proceedings, stakeholders, general public and interested / affected persons are hereby informed of the above proceedings. The interested parties may approach the Office of Senior Registrar through below mentioned E-mail, in order to attend the Hearing proceeding through Zoom Application as well.

(Ms Raheela Mustafa), Senior Registrar

Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority

Plot No 37 & 39, Service Road South, Mauve Area, G-10/4, Islamabad.

Phone: 051-9108889, 051-9108890-98 (Ext-123), Fax: 051-9108810

Email: registrar@ogra.org.pk

PID(1)6837/25

Public Service Message:

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day
Feb 06/Uganda Army Day
Feb 11/Iran Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania National Day
Feb 18/Gambia National Day
Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day
Feb 23/Brunei National Day
Feb 23/Guyana National Day
Feb 23/Russia National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait National Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-29
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-03
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

UAE envoy opens BLS attestation facility in Islamabad

The Ambassador appreciated the cooperation of the relevant authorities and BLS management for their efforts in operationalizing the facility and reaffirmed the Embassy's continued commitment to strengthening people-to-people ties between the two brotherly countries.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Salem Mohammed Al Zaabi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, inaugurated a new document attestation facility operated by BLS International Services Ltd in Islamabad. The newly established center will facilitate the attestation of documents by the UAE Embassy, providing efficient and streamlined services to Pakistani citizens intending to travel to the United Arab Emirates for employment, business, education, and other purposes. Speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador stated that the launch of this facility reflects the strong bilateral relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and underscores the UAE's commitment to enhancing consular services and improving public service delivery for Pakistani nationals. He added that the initiative will significantly reduce processing times, enhance convenience, and ensure greater transparency and efficiency in document attestation procedures, thereby facilitating smoother travel arrangements for Pakistani travelers to the UAE. The Ambassador appreciated the cooperation of the relevant authorities and BLS management for their efforts in operationalizing the facility and



reaffirmed the Embassy's continued commitment to strengthening people-to-people ties between the two brotherly countries.

Traditional Iftar gatherings, sehri meals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The festivity of Ramadan continues to illuminate country, where vibrant Iftar tables with dates, pakoras and fruit chaat, simple Sehri meals, lively bazaars selling prayer items, mosque food distributions and generous acts of charity create a beautiful atmosphere of faith and unity. Traditional Iftar gatherings, Sehri meal, and acts of charity light up cities nationwide, bringing communities alive with spirit as families and neighbors come together in devotion, bustling bazaars, overflowing mosques and generous acts of charity spreading compassion across the country, a vibrant Ramadan scene highlighted in a special report by PTV News. Ramadan brings everyone together," said a homemaker in Lahore, smiling as she prepared chana chaat

for Iftar. Shopkeeper from Karachi added, "People of all ages come to buy prayer items and other traditional food items, the city feels alive." Another young volunteer distributing food at a local mosque, shared, "Seeing everyone share and give makes this month truly special." Families across cities enjoying the flavors of Ramadan with dates, pakoras, fruit chaat, samosa, parathas and other beloved dishes, marking each fast with devotion and joy, said a citizen of Islamabad. Bazaars and streets bustle with people of all ages buying prayer items and fresh iftar food, creating a lively, festive atmosphere in every city, said a man from Lahore. Modern convenience meets tradition as online delivery services provide complete Sehri and Iftar meals directly to homes, a young professional in Islamabad, commented, "With busy work schedules, get-

ting Iftar delivered on time helps me enjoy the festivity without missing a moment." Worshipers gather in overflowing mosques for prayers, while acts of charity and food distributions spread compassion and unity across communities. Volunteer Sara added, "Seeing the combination of tradition and modern support, like online donations, makes Ramadan feel more connected than ever." This vibrant blend of tradition and modernity, showing how Ramadan continues to bring joy, unity and devotion was highlighted in a special report. The festive spirit of Ramadan thrives across Pakistan as bustling bazaars, vibrant Iftar spreads, timely Sehri deliveries, and generous contributions bring neighborhoods together, creating a sense of unity, devotion and joy that resonates in every city, beautifully captured in a report feature.

Islamabad expands electric bus network

ISLAMABAD: Strengthening the capital's transition toward sustainable urban mobility, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday inaugurated a new fleet of electric buses along with a purpose-built depot and charging station marking a significant expansion of Islamabad's eco-friendly public transport network. With the latest induction, the number of electric buses operating across 21 routes has risen to 160. After the launch ceremony, Naqvi inspected the facilities and took a ride on an electric bus with senior officials, receiving a comprehensive briefing on fleet opera-

tions, depot management, and charging infrastructure. Naqvi praised the project team for its timely execution, noting that the service is already being used by 125,000 passengers daily, with plans to increase ridership to 250,000. He added that special focus has been placed on ensuring accessibility for students across major routes. The minister also announced that the electric bus service will be extended to Rawat, further integrating with the existing Metro Bus system to help alleviate traffic congestion in the twin cities. He confirmed that the Rawalpindi-Islamabad local rail

service is being restored, and that HIT Pakistan is preparing to start local manufacturing of electric buses. Officials briefed that the new depot can accommodate 64 charging units, with 50 already installed and 14 more to be added soon. Each charger can power two buses within two hours, and the entire system has been integrated with Google for real-time monitoring and navigation. The ceremony was attended by the Chief Commissioner Islamabad, IG Islamabad Police, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, and other senior officers.—APP

Pak, Netherlands pledge coop on interfaith harmony

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Khail Das Kohistani, held

reaffirmed their commitment to fostering peace, dialogue, and brotherhood in the region, while jointly working against

interfaith gatherings and dialogues nationwide and ensuring that all religious festivals of minority communities are celebrated under official patronage. The minister also noted that under the Minorities Welfare Fund, educational scholarships have been provided to non-Muslim children, while significant efforts have been made for the maintenance and renovation of religious places of worship. Through conferences, dialogues, and religious programmes, representatives of Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Parsi and other communities engage in discussions to promote peace, mutual respect, and collaborative initiatives. Khail Das Kohistani emphasized that the Ministry ensures all citizens, regardless of faith, can live harmoniously with their religious, social, and cultural rights fully protected.—DNA



a meeting with Dutch Ambassador Robertjan Siegart at his office in Islamabad on Wednesday. The two leaders discussed in detail matters of mutual interest, focusing on the promotion of interfaith harmony, protection of minority rights, and regional cooperation. Both officials

reaffirmed their commitment to fostering peace, dialogue, and brotherhood in the region, while jointly working against

Efforts afoot to address issues of bars: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said that in consultation with the provincial government and relevant authorities, practical and sustainable solutions would be pursued to ensure improved facilities and institutional support for the legal fraternity. The law minister held meeting with the newly elected Members of various bar associations from across the Rawalpindi Division.—APP

SECP okays digital shares for unlisted firms

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Friday initiated the second phase of reforms to fully digitize share ownership of unlisted companies by transitioning from physical share certificates to electronic (book-entry) form through the Central Depository System (CDS), operated by the Central Depository Company (CDC). The move will eliminate risks associated with paper certificates, enable faster and more secure share transfers, and improve transparency of ownership records, said a news release. At present, the unlisted companies maintain physical share certificates, are vulnerable to loss, damage, theft, and forgery, resulting in numerous ownership disputes pending before courts. Transitioning to digital shares in book-entry form will make shareholding records secure, transparent, and tamper-proof, significantly reducing the risk of fraudulent transfers and related litigation. Electronic shares will also reduce paperwork and administrative costs while enabling faster transfers, quicker settlement, and accurate real-time records of ownership.—APP

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Briefs

Weekly
inflation rises
by 1.16pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 1.16 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on February 19, 2026, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review was recorded at 335.67 points, up from 331.81 points last week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI registered an increase of 5.19 percent.

The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 1.11 percent to 325.80 points from 322.23 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 rose by 1.50 percent, 1.03 percent, 0.92 percent and 0.78 percent, respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 17 (33.33 percent) items increased, 12 (23.53 percent) items decreased and 22 (43.14 percent) items remained stable. Major commodities registering a week-on-week increase included bananas (16.05%), electricity charges for Q1 (15.41%), garlic (5.86%), chicken (5.49%), onions (3.83%), tomatoes (3.82%), diesel (2.69%), petrol (1.93%), beef (1.03%), LPG (0.75%), mutton (0.69%) and long cloth (0.28%).—APP

Police conduct
grand search
in Tarnol

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police carried out a grand search and combing operation in various areas of Tarnol police station jurisdiction as part of ongoing efforts to curb criminal activities. An official told APP on Friday that the operation was conducted under the supervision of SP Saddar Zone Kazim Naqvi. Lady police officials also participated in the search operation. He said that prior to the operation, senior officers briefed the police teams regarding operational strategy and safety protocols. During the search operation, police teams checked 570 individuals and 165 households. Police also inspected 148 motorcycles and 26 vehicles. He said that 51 individuals, including 16 Afghan nationals, were shifted to the police station for verification and further legal proceedings.

The official said that the operation was aimed at preventing crime and ensuring law and order in the area. Following the directions of IGP Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, ICT Police are continuing grand search operations across the district to eliminate criminal elements.—APP

First Iftar at
Negahban
Dastarkhwan
in hospitals

RAWALPINDI: The district administration on Thursday arranged the first Iftar at the Negahban Dastarkhwan set up at District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital and Holy Family Hospital, where Member National Assembly Tahira Aurangzeb and Deputy Commissioner Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema joined guests to break their fast. Assistant Commissioner (City) Iman Zafar, hospital administrators and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, MNA Tahira Aurangzeb said that, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, providing dignified and quality facilities to deserving and undertreatment patients during the Holy Month of Ramadan remained the government's top priority. She said initiatives like the Negahban Dastarkhwan reflected public welfare and would provide tangible relief to the poor and needy. Deputy Commissioner Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema said the district administration was carrying out special monitoring to ensure proper arrangements at the Negahban Dastarkhwan so that patients, their attendants and deserving individuals received quality and timely Iftar. He directed the relevant officials to ensure cleanliness, discipline and food quality.—APP

Jordan ambassador greets
Bangladesh counterpart

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Jordanian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Maen Khreasat, met with the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, H.E. Md. Iqbal Husain Khan, in Islamabad. During the cordial meeting, Ambassador Khreasat extended warm congratulations to High Commissioner Khan on the successful conduct of Bangladesh's general elections held on February 12, 2026, and the subsequent formation of the new government. The elections marked a significant milestone following the 2024 political transition, with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, securing a landslide victory and a two-thirds majority in parliament. Tarique Rahman has since been sworn in as Prime Minister, heading the new administration. The discussion highlighted the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and opportunities for enhanced cooperation between Jordan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in areas of mutual interest, amid strengthening diplomatic ties in the region. The meeting underscores ongoing diplomatic engagement in Islamabad, where envoys frequently exchange views on regional developments and bilateral matters.

Pak Philippines agree to
boost multi-sector coop

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Philippines, at the second meeting of their Joint Economic Commission held in Manila, agreed to enhance cooperation across multiple sectors and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic engagement through practical and result-oriented initiatives. The Meeting was co-chaired by Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Muhammad Humair Karim Kidwai and Undersecretary for International Trade of the Department of Trade and Industry Philippines, Atty. Allan B. Gepty, according to press release issued by Economic Affairs Ministry here Friday. The meeting was attended by Dr. Asima Rabbani, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Philippines, and Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Philippine Ambassador to Pakistan, along with senior officials of both sides. Both sides exchanged views on the global economic environment and shared updates on their respective economic outlooks and trade policy priorities. The two sides reviewed bilateral trade and investment relations and acknowledged the considerable untapped potential for expansion. Pakistan highlighted export prospects in agricultural goods and halal-certified products, and proposed business exchanges, trade fairs, as well as a dedicated business forum. Both sides underscored the importance of private sector engagement and supported the reactivation of the Pakistan-Philippines Joint Business Council. Pakistan proposed enhanced investment cooperation, including MoU between the respective Boards of Investment and the establishment of a Joint Working Group on Investment. Discussions were also held on market access issues, with Pakistan emphasizing early resolution of its pending requests and both sides agreeing to continue engagement through established channels. The possibility of exploring a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was welcomed, with both sides agreeing that feasibility studies would guide future discussions. The existing JEC framework may be strengthened to incorporate expanded sectoral cooperation. Sectoral discussions covered agriculture, irrigation and water management, halal development, health and pharmaceuticals, banking and taxation, higher education and TVET, energy and minerals, tourism, and visa facilitation. In agriculture, both sides emphasized cooperation in seed development, plant variety protection, quality assurance, and community-based irrigation initiatives. On halal development, the focus was on compliance training, certification exchanges, and strengthening supply chain capabilities. In health and pharmaceuticals, the two sides discussed structured collaboration through a dedicated working group, including regulatory cooperation and facilitation of pharmaceutical and medical device trade. In banking and taxation, discussions highlighted collaboration in digital payments, remittance corridors, financial innovation, supervisory cooperation, and consideration of updating the Double Taxation Agreement in line with modern standards. Both sides also expressed interest in expanding partnerships in higher education and TVET through academic exchanges and skills development initiatives, as well as in energy and minerals through upstream exploration, mining technology exchange, and investment opportunities. Cooperation in tourism promotion and capacity building was encouraged, while the importance of efficient and predictable visa procedures, particularly for business travel, was underscored to facilitate trade and investment flows.—DNA

Bahria University celebrates
75 Years of Pak-China ties

ISLAMABAD: In a ceremony marked by camaraderie and cultural vibrancy, Bahria University celebrated two special occasions, the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of China, along with the Chinese New Year festivities. The event brought together Chinese students, faculty members and university officers who gathered to reflect on 75 years of mutual trust, respect and cooperation between

the two nations. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the ceremony underscored the depth of the longstanding bilateral relationship, widely described as an "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" and the legendary "Iron Brotherhood." Talking to Gwadar Pro, Imran Ul Haque, Director of the Pak-China Study & Research Centre at Bahria University, said the occasion served as a powerful testament to the enduring strength of ties between Islamabad and Beijing.—APP

CPEC
projects staff
celebrates
Spring Festival

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese and Pakistani employees working on projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) came together to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival, highlighting cultural harmony and deepening people-to-people ties. Marking the Chinese New Year 2026, staff members participated in festive activities, including experiencing the traditional art of Chinese calligraphy,

Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. The celebrations reflected unity and friendship, as employees from both countries shared cultural traditions and extended warm New Year greetings. "There is no better way to strengthen our bond than by sharing our cultures," participants noted, adding that the Spring Festival provided an opportunity to foster mutual understanding and teamwork. New Year messages from employees of China Energy Engineering Corporation (CEEC), also poured in on the occasion. Hafiz Naveed Khalid, Business Manager of the Asset and Finance Department at SK Hydro Private Limited, shared his greetings. "In 2025, the SK Hydropower Station celebrated the first anniversary of its commercial operation. In 2026, we will uphold our founding mission, march forward courageously, and strive tirelessly for the high-quality construction of the CPEC. Happy Year of the Horse to all, and may we ride on the momentum to achieve greater success," he said.

Nutrition expert
advise strict discipline

ISLAMABAD: Amid growing health concerns during Ramadan, a leading nutritionist Friday issued a strong warning against excessive eating, describing the stomach as "like a balloon" that stretches with overindulgence and urged people especially diabetics to maintain a balanced diet at sehri and iftar to prevent serious health risks and avoid unnecessary weight-loss treatments later. Nutritionist Hafsa Nazir has urged people to adopt healthy eating habits during Ramadan, stressing that balanced meals at sehri and iftar are essential, particularly for individuals living with diabetes. She warned that overeating after long hours of fasting can disturb blood sugar levels, cause digestive problems, and lead to long-term health complications. Hafsa Nazir described the stomach as "like a balloon" that stretches with excessive food intake, saying that many people ignore portion control during iftar and later struggle with weight gain and metabolic issues. She emphasized that maintaining discipline, choosing nutrient-rich foods and avoiding fried and sug-

ary items can help prevent unnecessary health risks. She also raised concerns about the growing trend of using Ozempic injections for rapid weight loss. Originally prescribed for type 2 diabetes management, Ozempic is increasingly being used without proper medical supervision for slimming purposes. Hafsa Nazir cautioned that such practices can have side effects and should only be taken under a qualified doctor's guidance. The nutritionist advised that sustainable lifestyle changes, regular physical activity and mindful eating are safer and more effective solutions than relying on injections or quick-fix treatments. She encouraged people to prioritize long-term health over temporary weight-loss trends. Nutritionist Hafsa Nazir has expressed concern over the rising tendency to overeat during Ramadan, particularly among individuals with diabetes, adding, sudden heavy meals at iftar can cause sharp fluctuations in blood sugar and increase the risk of complications. Referring to the growing popularity of Ozempic injections, she noted that although the medication is designed for type 2 diabetes management.—APP

IGP reviews
IT based
Initiatives

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Inspector General Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi held a meeting with Director IT Atif Abbas and Deputy Director Safe City Abbas Mehdi to review the progress of technology-driven initiatives aimed at improving public facilitation. A police spokesperson told APP on Friday that the meeting focused on evaluating ongoing IT projects and digital services designed to enhance operational efficiency and citizen convenience. The spokesperson said the IGP Rizvi reviewed the progress of various online facilities being provided to citizens and directed officers to further improve, expand, and modernise digital services. Rizvi emphasised the importance of leveraging technology to ensure faster, more transparent, and citizen-friendly policing services. The IGP Rizvi also assigned specific tasks to the concerned officers to accelerate the development and enhancement of online solutions.—APP

Railways
taking
measures to
curb pollution

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is proactively implementing a range of measures to minimize environmental pollution and ensure safe working conditions for its workforce. "So far no Federal or Provincial Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has directed Pakistan Railways to install air quality monitoring devices or adopt additional precautionary measures," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said that no railway facility has been declared a high-risk pollution site by the provincial authorities. The official clarified that the monitoring of the Air Quality Index (AQI) falls under the mandate of the EPAs, which are fully authorized to assess air quality within the premises of Pakistan Railways, including railway stations, engine sheds and workshops. Following the directions of Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, the official said protective masks have been provided to labourers, particularly to safeguard them from welding fumes and carbon emissions. He said that workshops and engine sheds are in the process of procuring and installing industrial exhaust fans to improve ventilation and workplace safety. Highlighting ongoing environmental initiatives, the official said Pakistan Railways has undertaken significant efforts to reduce air pollution.—APP

Air University hosts
workshop to strengthen
ecosystem

ISLAMABAD: Air University on Friday hosted a two-day workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in collaboration with Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) to enhance awareness, capacity building and commercialization of research, aiming to strengthen the country's innovation landscape. The workshop, held at the university's main campus, brought together experts, faculty members, researchers, students and entrepreneurs to discuss the importance of intellectual property protection and its role in fostering a knowledge-based economy, said a press release. On the first day, participants were briefed on the significance of intellectual property as a legal framework for safeguarding scientific inventions, software, artistic works and brand identities. Ms. Humaira Shakeel, Deputy Director, Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC), provided an overview of IPO-Pakistan and explained Pakistan's intellectual property legal system. A hands-on training session on the Patent Registration System, including database search tools and filing procedures, was conducted by Mujtaba Kamal, Deputy Director (Patent) and Assistant Controller of Patent at IPO-Pakistan. A certificate distribution ceremony was also held to recognize students who completed internships at IPO-Pakistan during Summer 2025, highlighting efforts to nurture young professionals in the IP domain. The second day featured technical sessions on trademarks, copyrights and industrial designs, focusing on their registration processes and role in protecting creative and innovative outputs. Experts from IPO-Pakistan, including Saifullah Khan, Director Copyright, and Ms. Shams-un-Nisa, Senior Examiner (Patents & Designs), Ms. Humaira Shakeel provided practical guidance on transforming research and ideas into legally protected intellectual assets contributing to economic growth. Director General IPO-Pakistan Nauman Aslam Sheikh attended the workshop as chief guest and emphasized the need for regular awareness sessions to nurture creativity and research for the development of a knowledge-based economy. "Awareness of IPR empowers students to protect their ideas, secure their innovations, and confidently enter competitive markets," he said, adding that collaboration between academia and IPO-Pakistan would further strengthen the innovation ecosystem, support commercialization efforts and contribute to the sustainable economic growth IPO Pakistan.—DNA

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Europe's defence ambitions

DR. AZEEM IBRAHIM

THE 2026 Munich Security Conference, held last weekend, was marked by a striking shift in tone. European leaders spoke less about partnership and more about responsibility. The message, implicit but unmistakable, was that the era of automatic American primacy in European security is over. As Washington continues to concentrate strategic attention on the Indo-Pacific, Europe is being asked to assume a far greater share of its own defense burden. In response, proposals for a European army have resurfaced with renewed intensity. Advocates argue that a continent with more than 400 million people, a vast industrial base and a combined economy comparable to that of the US should not depend indefinitely on external security guarantees. Strategic autonomy, they contend, requires institutional expression. The aspiration is understandable. The practicality is another matter.

The fundamental obstacle to a supranational European army is not financial capacity. It is political authority. Armed force is the most consequential tool of statecraft. It determines questions of war and peace, life and death. In every democracy, the legitimacy of deploying troops derives from national political accountability. Voters must know who is responsible for sending soldiers into combat and must retain the power to remove those leaders from office. The fundamental obstacle to a supranational European army is not financial capacity. It is political authority. Transferring that authority to a supranational structure fundamentally alters the relationship between citizens and the state. Within the EU, defense policy would inevitably operate under the broader umbrella of the bloc's foreign policy. Yet EU foreign policy remains structurally fragmented. It reflects competing national interests, different historical experiences and divergent strategic priorities. Consensus-driven decision-making often produces lowest common denominator outcomes. If foreign policy lacks cohesion, defense policy cannot be more coherent than the political framework guiding it.

Moreover, the EU was designed primarily as a peace project within Europe. Its institutions emphasize negotiation, compromise and incremental integration. That architecture has proven remarkably effective in preventing conflict among member states and in facilitating economic cooperation. It was not designed for high-intensity warfare or rapid military mobilization. Effective military operations require speed of decision-making, unity of command and clarity of objectives. In the EU context, major foreign and security decisions often require unanimity or near-unanimity. In a fast-moving crisis, delay is not neutral. It is a strategic vulnerability. An army that must wait for prolonged diplomatic consensus before acting cannot function as a credible deterrent.

Democratic accountability presents an even more profound challenge. The ongoing war in Ukraine has provided a stark reminder of what modern industrial warfare entails. Casualty figures on both sides have reached levels that would



have been politically unthinkable in most European capitals only a decade ago. High-intensity conflict generates sustained losses, economic disruption and social strain. European electorates are unlikely to tolerate large-scale casualties without direct and visible political responsibility at the national level. If decisions about deployments are perceived to be taken in distant institutions by officials who are not directly answerable to national voters, public trust will erode rapidly. Democratic consent cannot be assumed in wartime. It must be maintained through clear lines of accountability.

There is also the question of burden-sharing. In any serious conflict, some forces inevitably bear the heaviest fighting and absorb the greatest losses. No government would willingly volunteer its troops for disproportionate front-line exposure. Each capital would seek to justify its own risk calculations to its domestic audience. Assigning combat roles through a supranational command structure would not eliminate national politics, it would intensify them.

Strategic culture further complicates the picture. European states do not share a uniform perception of threat. For some, particularly in Eastern Europe, deterring Russian aggression is the overriding priority. For others, instability in North Africa, migration flows and Mediterranean security dominate the agenda. Some governments remain cautious about military intervention under almost any circumstances, shaped by historical memory and domestic political norms. These differences are not superficial disagreements. They reflect deep-rooted geopolitical realities and political traditions. Creating a unified army requires more than pooled budgets and joint procurement. It requires convergence on when and why force should be used. Europe has not yet reached that degree of strategic alignment. The existence of NATO further shapes the debate. It already provides integrated command structures, intelligence sharing, interoperability standards and critical capabilities such as strategic airlift and missile defense. Many European militaries rely heavily on American enablers within this framework. Replicating those capabilities independently would require sustained investment and long-term political commitment.

An army that must wait for prolonged diplomatic consensus before acting cannot function as a credible deterrent. If a European army were to operate alongside NATO, questions of duplication and coordination would arise immediately. If it were designed to operate independently, the capability gap would be significant for years. In either case, institutional complexity increases rather than decreases. None of this suggests that Europe should remain dependent or passive. On the contrary, the call for greater European responsibility is justified. Defense spending across much of the continent has been insufficient for years. Industrial capacity needs strengthening. Readiness levels must improve. Interoperability should deepen. European states must build the capabilities necessary to defend their own territories and contribute meaningfully to collective deterrence. However, these objectives do not require the creation of a supranational army. They require political will at the national level and closer cooperation within existing alliance structures. Strategic autonomy is not achieved through symbolic institutional innovation. It is achieved through credible capability, disciplined investment and sustained public support. The debate at Munich reflected genuine anxiety about a changing international order. The US is recalibrating its global posture. Russia has demonstrated its willingness to use force. China's rise is reshaping global competition. Europe cannot assume that past security arrangements will automatically endure.

A Changing Global Order

Qamar Bashir



The Ukraine war further deepened these tensions.

While Europe and the United States remain aligned in supporting Kyiv, debates over burden-sharing, diplomatic engagement, and long-term security guarantees exposed differing strategic visions. Europe began discussing the possibility of enhancing its own defense capabilities independent of U.S. leadership, including increased defense spending and greater coordination under EU frameworks. The conversation about "strategic autonomy" gained momentum—not as a rejection of NATO, but as recognition that overreliance on any single power carries risks

FOR decades, the United States has exercised unmatched global influence. From military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria to sanctions regimes and regime-change rhetoric elsewhere, Washington has often justified its actions as necessary to defend democracy, human rights, or international security. Yet power, when exercised without consensus or legitimacy, invites resistance. The recent tensions surrounding Greenland, Europe's diplomatic pushback, and disagreements over Venezuela and Iran reveal a deeper transformation underway in the international system—one where even long-standing allies are increasingly unwilling to accept unilateral dictates. The controversy over Greenland became symbolic of this shift. When suggestions emerged from Washington that the United States had strategic interest in acquiring Greenland—a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark—the reaction from Europe was swift and unified. Denmark rejected the notion outright, and European leaders closed ranks in defense of territorial sovereignty. The message was clear: Europe would not tolerate transactional geopolitics that treated sovereign territories as negotiable assets. What might once have been dismissed as rhetorical bravado instead triggered serious diplomatic backlash, reinforcing Europe's commitment to sovereignty and collective unity.

This episode reflected a broader pattern. European leaders, long accustomed to operating within the transatlantic alliance, have increasingly asserted strategic autonomy. Disagreements over trade tariffs, defense spending, immigration policies, and approaches toward Russia and China have widened the transatlantic gap. When criticism of Europe's social and immigration policies was delivered in blunt terms from Washington, European officials responded not with silence but with institutional confidence, reiterating that domestic policy decisions belong to sovereign governments and the European Union collectively—not external actors.

The Ukraine war further deepened these tensions. While Europe and the United States remain aligned in supporting Kyiv, debates over burden-sharing, diplomatic engagement, and long-term security guarantees exposed differing strategic visions. Europe began discussing the possibility of enhancing its own defense capabilities independent of U.S. leadership, including increased defense spending and greater coordination under EU frameworks. The conversation about "strategic autonomy" gained momentum—not as a rejection of NATO, but as recognition that overreliance on any single power carries risks.

Beyond Europe, the situation in Venezuela has also sparked controversy. The U.S. position toward Venezuela's leadership, including recognition of opposition figures and sanctions targeting state institutions, has

been criticized by some international actors as interference in sovereign affairs. Supporters argue such measures promote democratic accountability; critics contend they undermine international norms. Regardless of perspective, the episode underscores a central question of modern geopolitics: who has the authority to determine legitimacy within another state?

Iran represents perhaps the most volatile example of this dynamic. U.S. naval deployments in the Persian Gulf, sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program, and rhetoric surrounding regime behavior have heightened tensions. European states, while critical of certain Iranian policies, have often favored diplomatic engagement and adherence to negotiated frameworks such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The divergence illustrates a growing reluctance among U.S. allies to endorse military escalation without clear multilateral backing.

Meanwhile, global power distribution is shifting. China's Belt and Road Initiative has expanded infrastructure and trade partnerships across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe. More than 140 countries have engaged in some form of cooperation under this framework. For many developing nations, China's model—emphasizing economic investment without overt political conditions—offers an alternative to Western engagement strategies. Whether one views this approach as pragmatic partnership or strategic influence expansion, its appeal signals dissatisfaction with older interventionist models. Canada, too, has demonstrated quiet but meaningful recalibration. In response to trade pressures and tariff disputes, Ottawa diversified its trade relationships, signing agreements beyond the United States and strengthening ties with Asia and Europe. This was not confrontation, but adaptation—evidence that even close allies hedge against unpredictability.

At the heart of these developments lies a philosophical tension about power. The principle that "power corrupts" is often invoked, but power can also isolate when it disregards consensus. In a globalized world, economic interdependence, multilateral institutions, and diplomatic networks limit unilateral action. Aircraft carriers and sanctions regimes remain formidable tools, yet legitimacy increasingly derives from coalition-building rather than coercion.

This brings us to the role of the United Nations. Critics frequently describe the UN as toothless or ineffective. Yet the UN's authority depends entirely on the willingness of its member states—especially permanent Security Council members—to abide by collective decisions. When powerful states exercise vetoes to block resolutions or bypass UN authorization for major actions, institutional credibility erodes. Reform debates persist, but strengthening the UN requires political will from its most influential members.

The larger lesson emerging from Europe's assertiveness and broader global reactions is not the decline of American power, but the recalibration of global expectations. Allies are no longer passive recipients of U.S. leadership; they are stakeholders demanding consultation and respect. Sovereignty, multilateralism, and rule-based order remain guiding principles for much of the international community. When any nation—however powerful—appears to deviate from these norms, resistance grows.

There is also a practical dimension. Military intervention in complex societies has historically produced unintended consequences, including instability and migration flows that affect neighboring regions. European reluctance to engage in new conflicts reflects lived experience from past interventions. Diplomacy, sanctions calibrated within international law, and negotiated agreements may lack dramatic visibility, but they offer more sustainable outcomes than unilateral force.

The evolving geopolitical landscape suggests a transition toward multipolarity. The United States remains a superpower with unmatched military and economic capabilities. Europe is consolidating political cohesion. China continues to expand its economic footprint. Regional actors assert greater independence. In such a system, responsible leadership requires restraint, coalition-building, and respect for sovereignty. Power, in its most constructive form, means capacity to stabilize rather than destabilize; to convene rather than coerce; to strengthen institutions rather than circumvent them. History demonstrates that even dominant powers benefit from alliances grounded in mutual respect. The pushback witnessed from Europe over Greenland and other policy disputes may, in fact, serve as a corrective—reminding all nations that diplomacy anchored in international law carries greater legitimacy than unilateral declarations.

Ultimately, the question is not whether the United States possesses power. It undeniably does. The question is how that power is exercised. In an interconnected world facing shared challenges—from climate change to economic inequality to nuclear proliferation—cooperative frameworks are not signs of weakness but instruments of durability. Strengthening multilateral institutions, respecting sovereignty, and engaging adversaries through dialogue may not yield immediate victories, but they preserve long-term stability. The future international order will not be shaped by dominance alone. It will be shaped by responsibility. And in that responsibility lies the true measure of leadership.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
 Former Press Minister,
 Embassy of Pakistan to France
 Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
 Former MD, SRBC, Macomb, Michigan

When Rules Apply Selectively

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The language of liberalism masked these inconsistencies. Human rights were defended passionately in some regions, ignored in others. Military interventions were justified in the name of international responsibility, while equally severe violations elsewhere were met with silence. Allies were forgiven for breaches that would have triggered outrage had they been...

WHEN Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, his remarks cut through the usual diplomatic pleasantries. He spoke not of optimism or resilience, but of contradiction. For decades, he argued, Western states claimed to uphold a rules-based international order while quietly bending those very rules whenever it suited their interests. Liberal values were celebrated in speeches, free trade was praised in principle, and international law was invoked selectively against rivals, cautiously against allies, and rarely against oneself.

This was not a radical critique voiced from the margins. It came from the heart of the Western establishment, delivered at a forum that has long served as a symbol of elite consensus. That alone gives Carney's words a particular weight. More importantly, they reflect a reality that much of the world has experienced for years, even if it has rarely been acknowledged so openly by those who benefited most from the system. The idea of a rules-based order emerged from the ruins of the Second World War. It promised stability through shared norms, predictability through institutions, and fairness through law rather than force. In theory, it was meant to restrain power and protect the weak. In practice, power has often shaped the rules, decided when they apply, and determined who must obey them.

Western countries prospered immensely under this arrangement. Open markets expanded where it suited them, financial systems were designed around their interests, and global institutions reflected their priorities. Yet when the same rules threatened domestic industries, political stability, or strategic dominance, exceptions were quickly carved out. Trade barriers were reintroduced under new labels, sanctions replaced dialogue, and international law became a tool of pressure rather than a shared constraint. The language of liberalism masked these inconsistencies. Human rights were defended passionately in some regions, ignored in others. Military interventions were justified in the name of international responsibility, while equally severe violations elsewhere were met with silence. Allies were forgiven for breaches that would have triggered outrage had they been committed by adversaries. Over time,

this pattern did not go unnoticed. It bred resentment, scepticism, and a deep sense of double standards across much of the Global South.

Carney's admission that "we participated in the rituals" is telling. The rituals of summits, declarations, and communiqués allowed the appearance of moral authority to be maintained even as the substance eroded. Calling out hypocrisy was avoided, not because it was invisible, but because it was inconvenient. The system worked well enough for those at the centre, and discomfort was an acceptable price for continued advantage. Today, that comfort has disappeared. The international order is under strain not only because of rising powers or regional conflicts, but because its moral foundations have weakened. When rules are applied unevenly, they lose legitimacy. When norms are enforced selectively, they cease to be norms and become instruments of power. The erosion of trust that follows cannot be repaired by rhetoric alone.

This crisis of credibility explains much of the current global disorder. Countries once willing to accept Western leadership now question its sincerity. Calls for restraint are dismissed as self-serving. Appeals to international law are met with reminders of past violations that went unpunished. Even within Western societies, public confidence in globalisation and international institutions has declined, fuelled by the sense that the benefits were unevenly distributed while the costs were socialised. The consequences are visible. Trade is increasingly fragmented, alliances are more transactional, and international institutions struggle to command consensus. Economic nationalism, once criticised as backward, has returned in the language of strategic autonomy and national security. Sanctions, tariffs, and subsidies have become routine policy tools, even as free trade remains a rhetorical ideal.

For developing countries, the implications are particularly severe. They are asked to adhere to fiscal discipline while facing mounting debt, to open markets while confronting protectionism elsewhere, and to commit to climate targets without comparable access to technology or finance. The promise that integration into the global system would lead to shared prosperity has, for many, remained unfulfilled.

This is where Carney's remarks matter beyond Davos. Acknowledging hypocrisy is not the same as correcting it, but it is a necessary first step. The question is whether Western states are prepared to move beyond ritual towards reform. That would require more than adjusting language; it would demand a rebalancing of power within global institutions, a willingness to accept constraints on one's own behaviour, and an honest reckoning with past inconsistencies. A genuinely rules-based order cannot survive if rules are negotiable for some and binding for others. International law cannot command respect if it is treated as optional. Free trade cannot regain credibility if it operates only when politically convenient. And human rights cannot be universal if their defence depends on strategic alignment.

None of this suggests abandoning international cooperation. On the contrary, it underscores the need to rescue it from selective application. A more stable global order would not emerge from dominance disguised as virtue, but from reciprocity grounded in fairness. That means listening to grievances that were previously dismissed, sharing responsibility rather than prescribing discipline, and recognising that legitimacy flows from consistency. The shifting balance of power makes this reckoning unavoidable. As new economic and political centres emerge, the ability of any group of states to define the rules unilaterally is diminishing. Influence now depends less on enforcement and more on credibility. Countries that are seen as fair arbiters, rather than self-interested referees, will shape the future order. For Pakistan and other developing states, this moment presents both risk and opportunity. The weakening of old certainties creates instability, but it also opens space for voices that were previously marginalised. Demands for fairer trade terms, debt relief, and equitable climate arrangements are harder to ignore when the authority of the existing system is under question. Yet this requires strategic clarity. Moral arguments alone will not suffice. Coalitions must be built, institutions engaged, and alternatives proposed that are practical rather than merely critical. The aim should not be to replace one form of imbalance with another, but to contribute to a system that is more even-handed and durable.

Briefs

US apex court rejects Trump's...

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the tariffs and 12 US states, most of them Democratic-governed, against Trump's unprecedented use of this law to unilaterally impose the import taxes. The three dissenting justices were conservatives Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh. Joining Roberts in the majority were conservative Justices Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett, both of whom Trump appointed during his first term in office, along with the three liberal justices. The Supreme Court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, previously had backed Trump in a series of other decisions issued on an emergency basis since he returned to the presidency in January 2025 after his policies were impeded by lower courts. Trump's tariffs were forecast to generate over the next decade trillions of dollars in revenue for the United States, which possesses the world's largest economy.

American lawmakers call for...

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"I think a lot of victims actually liked seeing him lose his title," Subramanyam, a Democrat from Virginia, said. "They knew how involved he was with Epstein and Maxwell and saw that for decades now there has been a lack of accountability for rich and powerful people." Subramanyam said that seeing an arrest result from lawmakers' investigations, along with years of victims speaking out, shows that some accountability is beginning to take hold.

Int'l Monetary Fund...

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corruption and enhancing institutional strengths to combat corruption and improve governance states that based on the diagnostic report findings and reform options presented, comprehensive performance assessment criteria and framework for evaluating court and judicial governance and performance including diversionary/Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms will be devised with analytic and predictive capacities to implement active case management.

US thanks Pakistan for backing...

FROM PAGE 01
cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, and expanding bilateral economic and trade ties. He added that Islamabad looks forward to further strengthening its strategic partnership with Washington across all areas of shared interest. PM Shehbaz and other world leaders attended the inaugural meeting of the Trump-led BoP in Washington on Thursday. Addressing the BoP meeting, PM Shehbaz described his participation as an honour and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to lasting peace in Gaza.

PM invites DFC to enhance...

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appreciated the expanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the United States. Benjamin Black was accompanied by DFC's Head of Investments Conor Coleman and the senior leadership of the agency. The prime minister recognized DFC's crucial role in catalyzing joint ventures between private enterprises of the two countries, essential to job creation and productivity enhancement. He appreciated DFC's portfolio of over \$1 billion and pointed to the synergies between the economic priorities of both countries, which presented mutually-rewarding opportunities for enhanced B2B engagement.

Wani vows to revive hockey after taking charge at PHF

"As the newly appointed ad-hoc President of PHF, I assure stakeholders of our commitment to revive and strengthen hockey in Pakistan," lifts ban on Ammad Butt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) and newly appointed ad-hoc president of the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), has announced the lifting of the ban on national team captain Ammad Shakeel Butt amid controversy surrounding the team's visit to Australia. Wani assumed charge after being appointed as the ad hoc president following the resignation of the sitting President Tariq Bugti. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is also the Patron-in-Chief of the PHF, has approved Bugti's resignation as the President of PHF with immediate effect on Thursday. The prime minister has also taken notice of the mismanagement at the hockey federation.

The development comes after videos circulated on social media showing Pakistan national hockey team players living in sub-standard accommodation during their recent tour of Australia. Team captain Ammad Shakeel Butt also made serious allegations of mismanagement and mental harassment against the team management and the PHF. Bugti - while addressing a press conference a day earlier - announced to step down from the post, accusing the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) of mismanagement and failing to release funds in time for travel and logistical expenses linked to the team's participation in the FIH Pro League. He alleged that payments for hotel bookings in Australia were not made on time, creating major difficulties for players and officials, and claimed he was told at the PSB that the process could take up to two

months. He appealed to the prime minister and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir to form a committee to investigate the matter and determine the facts. Bugti also announced a two-year ban on Pakistan captain Ammad Shakeel Butt, accusing him of threatening fellow players and running a campaign against the federation's management, and said the PHF had decided a day earlier to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Butt over misconduct. Wani said there was very little time left for the World Cup qualifying round and that the camp would begin "today or tomorrow". He said he would meet the players and decide steps to improve hockey, adding that whatever measures he takes now would be on a short-term basis. He said emergency measures for the promotion and revival of hockey had been initiated.

He said work was underway to restore confidence and reconstitute the team management, while the coaching and training system would be improved and institutional coordination strengthened. He urged players to focus solely on training and matches, stating that the federation would handle administrative matters, and added that all decisions would be made based on transparency and merit. Separately, Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi met the national men's hockey team players in Lahore and promised to address their grievances over alleged mistreatment during the Pro Hockey League, while pledging support ahead of the World Cup Qualifier in Egypt. "We will accommodate hockey players in every possible way. We will extend complete cooperation to streamline hockey affairs," Naqvi said.

PFF President, Saudi Envoy discuss Football Cooperation



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major boost to Pakistan's football ambitions, President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Syed Mohsen Gilani, met with the Ambassador of the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki, to discuss strategic cooperation aimed at revitalizing and elevating football development in the country. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of football and

enhancing collaboration through joint initiatives, exchange programs, and institutional partnerships. PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani expressed his gratitude to the Government of Saudi Arabia for its continued support in promoting sports. He stated that Saudi Arabia has always been a sincere friend of Pakistan and that its cooperation in the sports sector is highly valued. "Pakistan has immense football talent. Our focus is to strengthen grassroots structures, improve coaching standards, upgrade infrastructure, and provide international exposure to young players," Gilani said. He added that the PFF is implementing a comprehensive plan to promote football from the grassroots to the professional level across the country. Gilani further remarked, "We deeply value the support of the Saudi government. Enhanced cooperation, training programs, and friendly matches between the two countries will give new momentum to football in Pakistan. Our goal is to see Pakistan earn a respectable position on the global football stage." Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's full support for the promotion and development of football in Pakistan. He emphasized that sports play a vital role in strengthening the brotherly ties between the two nations and expressed confidence that enhanced collaboration would contribute to the growth of the game. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides reaffirming their commitment to expanding sports cooperation in the future.

Germany's Merz seeks second wind at party congress

A barometer of the party's mood at the national congress in the southern city of Stuttgart will be whether Merz gets re-elected as party chief with the customary result in the 90 percent range, or less

STUTTGART: A year after his election win, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faces a congress of his conservative party Friday, bruised by low popularity ratings, unmet campaign promises and pressure from the far right. Among the high-profile guests at the CDU party congress for the first time in years will be his predecessor and long-time party rival Angela Merkel. Merz, 70, has made it his mission to steer the Christian Democratic Union back to its conservative roots and undo the more liberal legacy of Merkel, especially her welcome to more than a million migrants a decade ago. But the party congress comes as Merz faces pressure over a limping economy, poor personal approval ratings and the sustained threat of the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of several regional elections. A barometer of the party's mood at the national congress in the southern city of Stuttgart will be whether Merz gets re-elected as party chief with the customary result in the 90 percent range, or less. Merz, after his party's February 2025 election win, took office last May at the helm of a coalition with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) of ex-chancellor Olaf Scholz. At the time, Merz boldly vowed to revitalise the stagnating economy, limit irregular migration, rearm Germany to deter Russia, and strengthen Germany's role in the world. On the global stage, Merz has indeed made a splash, taking a lead role on supporting Ukraine, stepping up NATO defence spending and maintaining dialogue with volatile US President Donald Trump. But on the home front, the score card has been more mixed as his plans for boosting Europe's biggest economy were slowed by Trump's tariff blitz and other hurdles. With GDP growth forecast at a meagre one per cent this year, the captains of Germany Inc have harshly attacked leader of Germany's pro-business party. - APP

China's Ning upsets Stolz to win 1,500m speed skating gold

MILAN: China's Ning Zhongyan upset title favorite Jordan Stolz of the United States to win the men's 1,500m speed skating at the Milan-Cortina Olympic Winter Games here on Thursday. Ning, who had already collected two bronzes in the men's 1,000m and team pursuit, clocked an Olympic-record one minute 41.98 seconds to secure China's first Olympic gold in the event and his third medal at these Games. Reflecting on his journey after placing seventh at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, Ning said the breakthrough had long felt out of reach. "After the Beijing Winter Olympics, the level in speed skating just kept getting higher and higher. It felt like there was a mountain in front of me, and no matter what I did, I just could not get past it," he said. "But I never stopped believing in myself. I kept telling myself to stay patient, keep putting in the work and trust that all the effort would add up one day," the Chinese skater added. "Today was that day. Even now, it still feels a little unreal that I was able to do this." Following his victories in the 1,000m and 500m, Stolz finished 0.77 seconds behind Ning to take silver, while defending Olympic champion Kjeld Nuis claimed bronze in 1:42.82. Ning said that belief ultimately proved decisive. "In the end, it all came down to belief. Before the race, I kept reminding myself to trust my abilities, especially on a stage like this. - Agencies

Deadly California avalanche search to go through weekend

LOS ANGELES: The search for a ninth person believed killed in a huge avalanche in California will stretch into the weekend, US officials said Thursday, as atrocious weather continues to hamper operations. The bodies of eight people known to have died when they were engulfed in a wall of snow cannot be moved because of the storm pummeling the Sierra Nevada mountain range - and the risk of yet more avalanches. "Due to hazardous weather conditions, avalanche victims cannot be safely extracted off the mountain today," the Nevada County Sheriff's office said on Facebook. "Recovery efforts are expected to carry into the weekend." Six people survived Tuesday's tragedy, one of the deadliest avalanches in modern US history. The group - four guides and 11 paying clients - was on their third day of a backcountry skiing trip on the 9,109-foot (2,776-meter) Castle Peak in the Lake Tahoe region of northern California, an area popular with mountain enthusiasts. Late Thursday, in a statement reported by US media, families of six of the victims identified them as women who were "mothers, wives and friends, all of whom connected through the love of the outdoors." "They were passionate, skilled skiers who cherished time together in the mountains," the families' statement said, adding "we have many unanswered questions."

The statement also noted the women were "experienced backcountry skiers" who were "fully equipped with avalanche safety equipment." The six who survived - five clients and a guide - managed to call for help shortly after disaster struck, but white-out conditions and the risk of further snow slides meant rescue teams could not reach them for several hours. Two had to be helped down and needed hospitalization. The US Forest Service said Thursday all lands it manages in the area will be shuttered for the next few weeks to help in the recovery operation. "Due to the current instability of the snowpack and need to prioritize first responder access to the area, members of the public are prohibited from entering the closure area during search and rescue operations," a statement said. "In order to continue recovery operations, emergency personnel will need to use snow machines, aircraft, various other heavy equipment and possibly explosives to mitigate further environmental hazards to the safety of first responders conducting recovery efforts." The closure order will remain in effect until March 15. In the aftermath of the accident, questions have been asked about why skiers were out on the mountain in such difficult conditions, with several feet of snow falling in a short period and experts warning of the risk of avalanches. - APP

Cunningham stars as NBA-leading Pistons ease past Knicks

"It's regular season, so we just have to keep on chipping at it, keep on growing, keep on getting better and preparing for the postseason," he said

LOS ANGELES: A dominant Cade Cunningham scored 42 points as the NBA-leading Detroit Pistons swatted aside the New York Knicks 126-111 Thursday on the basketball league's return from its brief All-Star Game break. Billed as a must-watch clash between two Eastern Conference-vying rivals each in red-hot form, the game at Madison Square Garden became an exhibition for Cunningham, who also provided 13 assists and eight rebounds. The 24-year-old burnished his credentials as a Most Valuable Player contender, helping a young, surprise-package Pistons side to improve the best record in the entire NBA this season so far, to 41-13. After the game, Cunningham insisted he and his side had proved "nothing" yet. "It's regular season, so we just have to keep on chipping at it, keep on growing, keep on getting better and preparing for the postseason," he said. "We're off to a great start.

Obviously, we feel great about that. But everything is to come." Despite their blistering form, Detroit - wholly reconstructed after finishing rock-bottom of the Eastern Conference just two years ago - are still few pundits' top pick to win the title. They were also without forward Isaiah Stewart and All-Star center Jalen Duren on Thursday, due to suspensions following a brawl with the Charlotte Hornets during game last week. "Missing Stew, JD, that's a big part of our team. Big part of why we are where we are. So everyone had to step up," said Cunningham. And the Knicks had entered the game third in the Eastern Conference, on a run of 10 wins from 12, comparable to the Pistons' 12 from 15 ahead of Thursday's clash. But Detroit had extra motivation - revenge after the Knicks knocked them out of the playoffs last year in the first round. The win on Thursday completes a three-win regular

season sweep over the Knicks. "If felt great," said Cunningham, who poured in three three-pointers in the first quarter alone. He added two more later in the game, with other highlights including a huge, driving dunk in the third quarter. Elsewhere, Jaylen Brown recorded a triple-double as the in-form Boston Celtics overwhelmed the Golden State Warriors 121-110. Consolidating second spot in the Eastern Conference, the Celtics led by as much as 34 points in the third quarter, before the Warriors reduced the deficit but to no avail. Brown managed 23 points, 13 assists and 15 rebounds, while Payton Pritchard top-scored with 26 from the bench, in the Celtics' seventh win from their past eight games. Thursday's games were the first since the NBA regular season briefly paused for the All-Star Game weekend. "It's early, first game back," said Brown.

"I'm just being aggressive, finding my spots," he added. The Cleveland Cavaliers earned a sixth consecutive win. The Cavs beat the Brooklyn Nets 112-84 to draw level with the Knicks in third place. Jalen Johnson dominated a 117-107 Atlanta Hawks road win over the Philadelphia 76ers, scoring 32 points, with 10 rebounds, five assists and three steals. Kevin Durant managed 35 points in the Houston Rockets' 105-101 victory over the Hornets. In the West, the Sacramento Kings set an unwanted franchise record with a 15-game losing streak, after going down 131-94 to the Orlando Magic. And the second-placed San Antonio Spurs put some pressure on the leaders, Oklahoma City Thunder, with a 121-94 triumph over the Phoenix Suns. The Spurs' seventh consecutive win takes them to 39-16, still trailing the Thunder on 42-14. - APP

US weighing strike on Iran as Tehran...

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which Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told US media would be the "next step". "I believe that in the next two, three days, that would be ready, and after final confirmation by my superiors, that would be handed over to Steve Witkoff," he said, referring to Trump's main Middle East negotiator. Araghchi also said US negotiators had not requested that Tehran end its nuclear enrichment programme, contradicting statements from American officials. "We have not offered any suspension, and the US side has not asked for zero enrichment," he said in an interview released Friday by US TV network MS NOW.

HAMAS to choose new leader

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the group's 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others taken hostage. People in Gaza have already cast their votes in secret, according to the source, but it is unclear whether the process has concluded elsewhere. When announced, the new leader will hold office for a year. Hamas governs the Gaza Strip and in recent years has had growing support in the West Bank, though its activities there are heavily constrained by the Israeli military and Palestinian Authority security forces. A US-backed ceasefire in Gaza came into effect in October, and negotiations continue over the deal's later phases.

Rana rules out any deal with Khan

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the establishment also never offered a deal nor would it do so. He also said that the government's offer to the former ruling party is "clear and open", calling upon them to agree to what he called a "Charter of Stability for Pakistan". "Let's sit down and hold discussion to make Pakistan strong." He highlighted that a "serious engagement" did take place on November 24 with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi among other government officials and PTI's leaders including Asad Qaiser and Amir Dogar on board. However, it failed to yield any result as the PTI founder refused to agree to the terms, Sanaulah criticised Imran's stance, describing it as "sheer stubbornness and obstinacy".

Pak received cordial welcome

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vital role in fostering global peace. "This high-level commendation has significantly enhanced Pakistan's international prestige and serves as a moment of pride for Pakistanis living across the globe," he added. He said this was a clear manifestation of Pakistan's successful foreign policy and the result of dedicated teamwork. Atta Tarar noted that Pakistan is now emerging as an influential and effective player on the world stage, moving away from a past era of diplomatic isolation. He emphasized that such outcomes are inevitable when leadership remains honest and prioritizes national interest.

SC stays trial of PM...

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the publication of defamatory content. The defamation suit said Imran wrongly accused PM Shehbaz of offering Rs10bn to the latter through a common friend in exchange for withdrawing the Panama Papers case. The PTI founder had contended in his reply that he had disclosed the alleged incident for the consumption of the public at large, and an act in the interest of the public good did not constitute any defamation. He maintained that he did not specifically attribute any statement to the PM Shehbaz while narrating the incident.

Briefs

Hamas says path for Gaza must begin with end to aggression

GAZA CITY: Discussions on Gaza's future must begin with a total halt to Israeli "aggression," Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas said after US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace met for the first time. "Any political process or any arrangement under discussion concerning the Gaza Strip and the future of our Palestinian people must start with the total halt of aggression, the lifting of the blockade, and the guarantee of our people's legitimate national rights, first and foremost their right to freedom and self-determination," Hamas said in a statement Thursday. Trump's board met for its inaugural session in Washington on Thursday, with a number of countries pledging money and personnel to rebuild the Palestinian territory, more than four months into a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted however that Hamas must disarm before any reconstruction begins. —APP

Holy month shines light on Lebanon's resilience

BEIRUT: The resilience of Lebanese families was brought to the fore as Ramadan and Christian Lent coincided this year amid a deepening economic crisis.

The ability of families to endure and adapt was tested once more, renewing concerns about livelihoods across the country.

Against the backdrop of worsening living conditions, the period has highlighted how the Lebanese people's resilience and adaptability continue to shape their response to hardship.

On Feb. 17, the government approved increases in the price of gasoline tanks, and raised VAT and customs fees. The measures sparked public anger, with many describing the increases as "improvised and ill-considered, at the expense of the poor and middle class," and pledging to protest. The increases are intended to fund pay raises for public sector employees, military personnel and retirees. As a result, Lebanese citizens will pay an additional 300,000 Lebanese pounds (\$3.5) for each tank of gasoline. Additionally, all bills will increase as the VAT rate rises from 11 to 12 percent. Container fees will also rise to \$50 for a 20-foot container and \$80 for a 40-foot container. The 1 percent VAT increase is expected to raise \$259 million for the state treasury, provided there is no tax evasion. The cabinet approved six additional salary increases for public sector employees, raising the total from 13 to 19 times the base salary. However, implementation of the salary increase is delayed until early March, pending parliamentary approval of the VAT increase. The promised increase does not exceed \$100 and will not be added to base pay. According to Finance Minister Yassin Jaber, the raise includes 320,000 public sector and military personnel, and "its cost to the treasury amounts to \$800 million annually." —APP

Oman registers four prominent cultural sites

TASHKENT: The Sultanate of Oman registered four prominent cultural sites—Al Hazm Fort, Jabreen Castle, Harat Al Sibani, and Harat Al Yaman—on the Islamic World Heritage List.

The announcement was made during the 13th session of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) Heritage Committee, currently being held in Tashkent, the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated in the session's proceedings, which saw the registration of 117 sites and cultural elements from 16 Islamic countries. The listed Omani sites reflect significant historical and architectural value; Al Hazm and Jabreen Castle embodied advanced models of defensive and administrative architecture, while Harat Al Sibani and Harat Al Yaman represent a traditional urban fabric that illustrates the evolution of Omani settlement. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Monal Foundation hosted Iftar for the people. EVERY year the Monal foundation makes such arrangements for the entire month of Ramadan.

Macroeconomic growth key to poverty alleviation: Ahsan

Reaffirming the government's commitment to achieving a "Zero Poverty" goal, the minister said targeted development of potential districts through the establishment of small industrial units would remain a key priority in the upcoming years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal on Friday emphasized that macroeconomic growth driven by an export-led economy and performance-based industrial units at provincial and district levels, was the need of the hour to alleviate poverty in the country. Addressing the "Launch of Poverty and Inequality Estimates 2024-25" ceremony held at the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Auditorium, the minister underscored the importance of developing competitive human resource capital across all federating units. He stressed for the promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and cottage industries at district and provincial levels to unlock local potential and eradicate poverty at the grassroots level, while advancing progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "Export-led growth,

along with quality education and competitive human resource development, can play a major role in reducing poverty at both national and provincial levels," he said. The minister noted that due to the global food inflation super cycle during COVID-19, along with environmental catastrophes such as floods and the commodities boom cycle, national poverty, increased from 21.9 percent to 28.9 percent, a rise of seven percent, compared to estimates from 2018-19 to 2024-25. He attributed part of the economic challenges to the policies of the previous government led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating that economic mismanagement and political instability forced the country to enter three programs with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said that strict reform measures, including subsidy reductions under IMF agreements, contributed to rising poverty levels. Ahsan Iqbal further criticized the previous government for promoting excessive imports and consumer-driven growth,

noting that imports surged to \$80 billion, resulting in a \$50 billion trade deficit. Highlighting the role of the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), the minister said it has historically played a critical role in poverty reduction and sustainable development. However, he lamented that PSDP allocations declined from 2.8 percent to 0.9 percent of the total budget in recent years. He pointed out that provinces now hold a larger share of PSDP resources compared to the Federation and called for comprehensive provincial strategies to address poverty. "Provincial-level poverty reduction efforts directly impact national poverty indicators," he said. Comparing rural and urban poverty trends, Ahsan Iqbal stated that urban poverty increased from 21.9 percent to 28.9 percent over the past seven years, while rural poverty rose from 28.2 percent to 36.2 percent during the same period. The minister emphasized that economic stability was essential for achieving sustainable growth and raising Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) to levels where poverty can meaningfully decline. He highlighted the importance of skill development and technological awareness in creating employment opportunities at district and provincial levels, adding that the government is allocating funds to promote such initiatives at the grassroots. Addressing regional disparities, Ahsan Iqbal noted that unequal distribution of resources within provinces contributes significantly to poverty and inequality. He warned that terrorism tends to take root in districts where disparity and deprivation are widespread. "We need comprehensive policies to ensure equitable distribution of resources in underdeveloped districts for inclusive and sustainable economic development," he said. Reaffirming the government's commitment to achieving a "Zero Poverty" goal, the minister said targeted development of potential districts through the establishment of small industrial units would remain a key priority in the upcoming years.

Kim vows to boost living standards

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to lift living standards as he opened a landmark congress, state media said Friday, offering a glimpse of economic strains within the sanctions-hit nation. Supreme Leader Kim took center stage with a speech to start the Workers' Party congress, a gathering that directs state efforts on everything from house building to war planning. Held just once every five years, the days-long congress offers a rare glimpse into the workings of a nation where even mundane details are shrouded in secrecy. "Today, our party is faced with heavy and urgent historic tasks of boosting economic construction and the people's standard of living and transforming all realms of state and social life as early as possible," Kim said in his opening speech. "This requires us to wage a more active and persistent struggle without allowing even a moment's standstill or stagnation." For decades, nuclear weapons and military prowess came before everything else in North Korea, even as food stocks dried up and famine took hold. But since assuming power in 2011, Kim has stressed the need to also fortify the impoverished nation's economy. At the last party congress in 2021, Kim made an extremely rare admission that mistakes had been made in "almost all areas" of economic development. Analysts believe such language is designed to head off public discontent stirred by food shortages, military spending, and North Korea's continued support for Russia's war effort in Ukraine. Kim said North Korea had overcome its "worst difficulties" in the last five years, and was now entering a new stage of "optimism and confidence in the future." North Korea's economy has for years languished under heavy Western sanctions that aim to choke off funding for its nuclear weapons program. But Pyongyang refuses to surrender its atomic arsenal. —APP

China's Spring Festival travel rush features more comfort

BEIJING: At a pet handover room inside Lanzhou West Railway Station in northwest China's Gansu Province, a teddy dog named Maodou waited calmly as staff checked paperwork and prepared drinking water, before guiding it into a high-speed rail transport box fitted with air circulation and real-time monitoring of oxygen, temperature and humidity. For the dog's owner, 58-year-old Dong Wenqi, the process felt smooth and reassuring. With China's Spring Festival travel rush, also known as chunyun, under way since Feb. 2, she was one of many heading to their hometowns for this annual celebration. In Dong's case, this meant a trip of over 600 km to Xi'an, also in northwest China, along with her canine companion traveling on the same route, but in a different compartment. "It makes long-distance trips much easier for both people and pets," she said, describing their journey from Lanzhou to Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, which lasts more than three hours. To make it easier for travelers to take pets along with them during chunyun, China's railway authorities have further expanded a pilot high-speed rail pet consignment service this year. Starting Jan. 28, the number of stations offering this service increased to 110, while eligible trains soared from 54 to 170. This pet-friendly option is among the new holiday travel choices emerging this year, as travelers increasingly seek more convenient, comfortable trips tailored to family needs. For passengers like Wang Jing, who shipped her tabby Siamese cat Xiaoqi on the same Lanzhou-Xi'an route, the appeal lies in speed and ease. She said the service felt considerate and tech-enabled, while the consignment fee was about 360 yuan (roughly 51.87 U.S. dollars). As the travel rush approaches its peak, more travelers are choosing to return home along with their pets via high-speed rail. The pilot service has eased a long-standing source of stress for many pet-owning households, adding both speed and a human touch to holiday journeys and reflecting a growing pet-friendly ethos in Chinese society. A 2026 consumption report on China's pet industry estimates that the number of urban pet dogs and cats in the country had reached 126 million in 2025, with the market value hitting 312.6 billion yuan. The same report projects that this figure is likely to climb to 405 billion yuan by 2028. In addition to pet-friendly high-speed rail travel, reunion journeys are also taking on other forms this year, with more families opting for short-haul getaways and cruise vacations. In east China's Zhejiang Province, water passenger transport exceeded 100,000 trips on Feb. 2, the first day of the travel rush, according to local maritime authorities. Of these passengers, more than 70 percent opted for short-distance family visits and nearby island sightseeing. The pattern was especially clear in the Zhoushan Islands, where most travelers were locals and residents of nearby cities visiting relatives, along with visitors heading to Putuo Mountain for blessings. —DNA

ICCI stands shoulder to shoulder with young entrepreneurs: Tahir

Says empowering startups is no longer a choice, it is a necessity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted the "Connected Pakistan - 30 Under 30" ceremony, celebrating the achievements of young innovators and reaffirming its strong commitment to empowering youth-driven entrepreneurship and advancing Pakistan's digital future. The young honorees were lauded as ambassadors of a progressive, tech-driven, and globally competitive Pakistan. Their achievements were termed not only personal milestones but valuable national assets contributing to economic growth and global recognition. Addressing the closing session, ICCI leadership expressed immense pride and optimism, stating that the event was not merely a celebration of individual excellence but a

celebration of a powerful movement driven by bold ideas, fearless actions, and unwavering belief in Pakistan's limitless potential. The ceremony highlighted exceptional young change-makers who are redefining Pakistan's landscape in technology, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and social enterprise. It was emphasized that these achievers are not waiting for change but actively creating it, proving that youth, when equipped with innovation and vision, is a national strength. Reaffirming the Chamber's commitment to innovation-led growth, Sardar Tahir Mehmood outlined the ongoing initiatives, including strengthening chamber-academia linkages to align universities with industry needs, facilitating incubation and mentorship platforms for startups,

advocating policy reforms to enhance ease of doing business for young entrepreneurs, and building sustainable ecosystems where ideas can transform into thriving enterprises. The ICCI President also commended the key contributors who played a pivotal role in organizing the successful event, including Chaudhry Muhammad Javed Iqbal, Vice Chairman of Computer Hardware Association Pakistan; Abrar ul Haque, Executive Director of Computer Hardware Association of Pakistan; Aizaz Mohammad, Convener ICCI IT, Telecom & Computer Hardware Committee; Dr. Muhammad Usman, Convener ICCI Software Development Committee; and Syed Arslan Ali Shah, CEO and Founder of Connected Pakistan. ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, Executive member Zulqurnain Abbasi and a large number of young entrepreneurs attended the event.

UN urged to confront 'bitter truth' of 'catastrophically failing Sudan'

NEW YORK CITY: Britain's foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, on Thursday called on the UN Security Council to confront "the bitter truth" that the world has been "catastrophically failing the people of Sudan." The UK is chairing the Security Council this month, and Cooper is serving as its president. Setting out the scale of the crisis in Sudan, which has been locked in civil war since April 2023, she cited a report by a fact-finding mission on atrocities in El-Fasher, commissioned by the UK, that was published on Thursday. She highlighted its accounts of "indiscriminate shootings, point-blank executions of civilians in homes, streets, open areas or while attempting to flee the city." In one incident, Cooper said: "A pregnant woman was asked how far she was in her pregnancy. When she responded 'seven months,' he fired seven bullets into her abdomen, killing her."

Hospitals, medical personnel and the wounded "were not spared," she added, and survivors reported being raped in front of relatives, including children. The report concluded that the atrocities "bear the hallmarks of genocide," Cooper said. "El-Fasher should have been a turning point. Instead, the violence now is continuing." More than three months after the fall of the city, she said, reports of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses persist. Aid agencies face barriers to access, while schools, hospitals, markets and humanitarian convoys, including those belonging to the World Food Programme, have come under attack. Since the start of the month alone, she said, there have been reports of strikes on aid operations by both of the warring military factions, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. —APP

Syria welcomes Canada's decision to lift sanctions

DAMASCUS: Syria has welcomed Canada's decision to lift sanctions imposed on the country, calling the move a positive step toward improved relations. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said the decision reflects a shift toward dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect. The ministry expressed appreciation to the Canadian government and people for their support for Syrians. It said the removal of sanctions opens the door to a new phase in bilateral ties that serves both countries, and helps advance recovery and reconstruction efforts, improve living conditions, and promote regional stability. —APP

Briefs

Arab Group calls for UN steps to compel Israel to reverse WB annexation

NEW YORK: The Arab Group at the U.N. Security Council renewed its condemnation of Israel's recent measures aimed at asserting control over the West Bank, expanding settlements, enabling settler violence and forcibly displacing Palestinians. The group said these unilateral actions violate the U.N. Charter, international law and relevant U.N. resolutions. During a Security Council session on the Palestinian issue, Syria's Permanent Representative to the U.N. and current chair of the Arab Group, Ibrahim Olabi, said on behalf of the group that Israel's actions amount to an attempt to eliminate the prospect of a Palestinian state and undermine peace efforts. The group welcomed international positions rejecting annexation — including that of U.S. President Donald Trump — and called for concrete measures to compel Israel to reverse policies aimed at annexing Palestinian territory, warning they threaten regional security and stability. The Arab Group urged the Security Council to act under its mandate to maintain international peace and security. It reaffirmed commitments in the New York Declaration and the July 19, 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, stressing the need to uphold Palestinian self-determination and counter settlement expansion and forced displacement. — APP

Jailed PTI leaders call for halting protest

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Five incarcerated senior leaders of the PTI urged the party to halt protest activities during the holy month of Ramazan, according to a joint letter sent to the media on Friday. The letter was written by Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Omar Sarfraz Cheema, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry and Mian Mahmood Rasheed, all incarcerated in Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore. It was sent via their lawyer, Advocate Rana Mudassar Umar. The letter also criticised President Asif Ali Zardari's recent comments on incarcerated PTI founder and ex-premier Imran Khan. Last week, President Zardari had said it was the duty of leaders to fight and go to jail to protect their party and safeguard the people. Without naming Imran, he added that they had already started complaining about conditions in jail after an 18-month detention, while he himself had spent 14 years in prison without losing courage.

Investigation into King's brother Andrew goes on

Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on Thursday, his 66th birthday, on suspicion of misconduct in public office over allegations he sent confidential government documents to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein when he was a trade envoy

DNA

SANDRINGHAM: British police were searching the former mansion of King Charles' younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor on Friday after a photograph of the royal emerging from a police station was splashed on newspapers around the world. Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on Thursday, his 66th birthday, on suspicion of misconduct in public office over allegations he sent confidential government documents to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein when he was a trade envoy. The former prince was released under investigation after being held by police for more than 10 hours. He has not been charged with any offense but looked haunted in a Reuters photograph after his release, slumped in the back of a Range Rover, eyes red and with a look of disbelief on his face. The photograph of a man who was once a dashing naval officer and reputed favorite son of the late Queen Elizabeth was carried on the front page of newspapers in Britain and around the world, accompanied by headlines such as "Downfall." Mountbatten-Windsor has always denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein, a convicted sex offender who took his own life in 2019, and said he regrets their friendship. But the release of millions of documents by the US government showed he had remained friends with Epstein long after the financier was convicted of soliciting prostitution from a minor in 2008.



Those files suggested Mountbatten-Windsor had forwarded to Epstein British government reports about investment opportunities in Afghanistan and assessments of Vietnam, Singapore and other places he had visited as the government's Special Representative for Trade and Investment. The arrest of the senior royal, eighth in line to the throne, is unprecedented in modern times. The last member of the royal family to be arrested in Britain

was Charles I, who was beheaded in 1649 after being found guilty of treason. King Charles, who stripped his brother of his title of prince and forced him out of his Windsor home last year, said on Thursday he had learned about the arrest with "deepest concern." "Let me state clearly: the law must take its course," the king said. "What now follows is the full, fair and proper process by which this issue is investigated in the appropriate manner and by the appropriate authorities." The news broke early on Thursday morning that six unmarked police cars and around eight plain-clothed officers had arrived at Wood Farm on the king's Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, where Mountbatten-Windsor now resides. Thames Valley Police officers also searched the mansion on the king's Windsor estate west of London where Mountbatten-Windsor had lived before being forced out amid anger at the Epstein revelations. Officers said late on Thursday that the royal had been released under investigation. They said the searches at Sandringham had concluded but the searches in Windsor were continuing. While being arrested means that police have reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed and that the royal is suspected of involvement in an offense, it does not imply guilt. A conviction for misconduct in a public office carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and cases must be dealt with in a Crown Court, which handle the most serious criminal offenses.

Palestinian journalists face torture, abuse

DNA

Palestinian journalists have faced torture and systematic abuse in Israeli detention since the start of the Gaza war, including beatings, starvation, sexual violence and medical neglect, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said on Thursday, Anadolu Agency reported. The report said testimonies from 59 journalists who have been released describe systematic abuse in custody, including beatings, starvation and sexual violence, including rape, in Israeli prisons. Freed journalists also reported psychological threats, stress positions causing prolonged pain, and prolonged exposure to high-volume sound, including continuous music. CPJ said it reviewed photographs, medical reports and legal documents provided by the released reporters. "CPJ's reporting shows a clear pattern in how Palestinian journalists were treated in Israeli custody," CPJ CEO Jodie Ginsberg said in a statement. "The scale and consistency of these testimonies point to something far beyond isolated misconduct."

Indonesia's president reaches a trade deal with US

Indonesia to send 8,000 troops for Gaza peace mission

DNA

WASHINGTON: The White House announced a reciprocal trade agreement with Indonesia while President Prabowo Subianto was in Washington to attend the first meeting of President Donald Trump's Board of Peace. Under the agreement, Southeast Asia's largest economy will eliminate tariffs for 99 percent of American goods while the US will maintain tariffs on most Indonesian goods at 19 percent, the White House said. That is the same rate the US has set for Cambodia and Malaysia. Indonesia also agreed to address non-tariff barriers to US goods and to remove restrictions on exports to the US for critical minerals and other industrial commodities, the White House said. Indonesian and US companies also reached 11 deals this week worth \$38.4 billion, including purchases of US soybeans, corn, cotton and wheat, cooperation in critical minerals and oil field recovery, and joint ventures in computer chips. "We have negotiated very intensively over the last few months, and I think we have reached solid understandings on many issues," Prabowo told business executives Wednesday at the US Chamber of Commerce. A White House statement called it a "great deal" and said it "will help both countries to strengthen economic security, promote economic growth, and thereby continuously lead to global prosperity." The agreement was later signed by US Trade Representative Jamieens Greer and his Indonesian counterpart, Airlangga Hartarto. Hartarto told a news conference from Washington that both governments cast the agreement as marking the start of a "new golden age" in bilateral economic ties and Indonesia will introduce measures designed to keep trade flows secure and prevent misuse of sensitive goods. The agreement was announced the same day that Prabowo, leader of the world's most populous Muslim country, reiterated his pledge at the Board of Peace meeting to send 8,000 troops or "more if necessary" for an international stabilization force in Gaza.



WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets President Trump after the conclusion of the Inaugural meeting of Board of Peace. — DNA

PTI slams Punjab govt for 'acquiring Rs11bn jet for CM

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram criticised the Punjab government over reports of acquiring a luxury Gulfstream business jet worth \$38.42 million (around Rs11 billion), alleging it was meant exclusively for the chief minister's personal use. Islamabad coaching programs Reacting to reports about the plane, which have gone viral on social media, Waqas highlighted the "glaring hypocrisy of this lavish expenditure" at a time when the government publicly promotes austerity, while the nation struggles under record unemployment, back-breaking inflation and a collapsing economy. The News reported. He questioned how a government can justify splurging on a high-end VIP jet when 45% of Pakistanis live below the poverty line, lacking even the purchasing power for basic necessities, and

when the country survives on foreign loans and massive borrowing. Sheikh Waqas warned that such reckless spending exposes the government's disconnect from public hardships and reflects a blatant disregard for citizens' suffering. The PTI spokesperson made it clear that the people will not tolerate the squandering of public funds on personal luxury and will hold those responsible fully accountable for misusing the national treasury. Pakistan travel guide Meanwhile, Waqas expressed profound concern over the growing public anxiety regarding the health of former prime minister Imran Khan, demanding that his personal physicians be granted immediate and unrestricted access to conduct all necessary medical examinations without any further delay. In a statement issued by the PTI Central Media Department, he said that the matter concerning the party's founder is not merely political, but a test of national trust, human rights and governmental responsibility. Sheikh Waqas emphasised that any ambiguity surrounding the health of a leader who commands the confidence of millions is unacceptable, adding that the government's silence and lack of clarity have only intensified public unease rather than alleviating it. "Imran Khan is a former prime minister of Pakistan and the voice of millions, not only within the country but across the world, and any uncertainty regarding his health and safety is intolerable," he added. — APP

Gaza deaths in war's first 15 months higher than reported

MONITORING DESK

RAMALLAH: More than 75,000 Palestinians were killed in the first 15 months of Israel's military assault in Gaza, a figure far higher than the 49,000 deaths local health officials announced at the time, says a new study by The Lancet Global Health medical journal. Smoke rises following explosions during the Israeli military offensive in Gaza City, as seen from the central Gaza Strip. — Reuters The peer-reviewed study, published on Wednesday, found that women, children and the elderly comprised some 56.2% of violent deaths in Gaza during that period, a composition that it said roughly aligned with reporting by Gaza's health ministry. The field work was conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, run by Palestinian pollster Khalil Shikaki, who has carried out public opinion polling in the West Bank and Gaza for decades. The lead author is Michael Spagat, a professor at Royal Holloway, University of London. The study is the first independent population survey of mortality in the Gaza Strip, said its authors, whose research involved surveying 2,000 Palestinian households over seven days starting on December 30, 2024. "The combined evidence suggests that, as of Jan 5, 2025, 3-4% of the population of the Gaza Strip had been killed violently and there have been a substantial number of non-violent deaths caused indirectly by the conflict," the authors wrote.

Sudan conflict:

Pakistan urges 'meaningful dialogue'

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: As Sudan marks 1,000 days of a brutal war between its rival military factions, a senior Pakistani diplomat told the UN Security Council that the only viable path forward lies in meaningful dialogue as he backed the efforts and peace plan presented by the transitional Sudanese Government. "We stress that there is no military solution to this conflict," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said in the 15-member Council's debate on the sharply deteriorating situation in Sudan where violence is intensifying, famine conditions looming and civilians remaining trapped between fighting front lines. "The Sudanese people have suffered for far too long. The guns must fall silent, and a credible political horizon restored," he said. Sudan has been engulfed in the conflict since April 2023, when fighting erupted between former allies — SAF and RSF. What began as a power struggle metastasized into deadly conflicts across the country, most devastating in the Darfur region, which also saw longstanding ethnic tensions that prompted allegations of genocide

in the early 2000s to be reignited. In his remarks, Ambassador Jadoon condemned in "the strongest terms" the atrocities committed by RSF in Darfur, including in El Fasher and earlier in El Geneina, as well as the continued violence now unfolding in Kordofan. "We reiterate that deliberate attacks against peacekeepers, United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and facilities are unacceptable and may amount to war crimes," he said while stressing the need for holding those responsible for the atrocities accountable. Pointing out that Pakistan's position on Sudan remains firmly anchored in the principles of the UN Charter, the Pakistani envoy said, "We reaffirm our unwavering support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Sudan. The preservation of a unified Sudan is essential not only for its people but also for the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Red Sea region." In this regard, Ambassador Jadoon urged all parties in Sudan to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and sagacity to reach peaceful and sustainable settlement that preserves the unity of the country and prioritizes the interests and well being of the brotherly people of Sudan.

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