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Operations intensified

Security forces kill 9 terrorists in Balochistan, KP

The ISPR said that security personnel "effectively engaged the khawarij location" during the operation, and after an intense exchange of fire, four terrorists were killed

CENTRELINE REPORT

PESHAWAR: Security forces killed nine terrorists, including a suicide bomber, during intelligence-based operations (IBO) in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to statements issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Monday. According to the military's media affairs wing, an IBO in KP's Dera Ismail Khan was conducted on Monday, on the "reported presence of khawarij belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna-al-Khawarij". Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term that the state has designated for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban. The ISPR said that security personnel "effectively engaged the khawarij location" during the operation, and after an intense exchange of fire, four terrorists were killed. It added that weapons and ammunition were recovered from "Indian-sponsored killed khawarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area". Earlier in the day, ISPR shared the details of the IBO in Balochistan's Pishin in a separate statement. It said security forces had killed five terrorists, including a suicide bomber, during that IBO on Sunday. The military's media wing said the terrorist tashkeel (formation) was engaged with multiple weapons. "After an intense fire exchange, suicide bomber kharij cowardly blew himself up and four other Indian sponsored khawarij were hunted down and sent to hell." Weapons, ammunition, and explosives were recovered from the killed terrorists during the Pishin IBO as well, said the ISPR, and added that the militants were "actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area". Both statements by ISPR stated: "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored terrorists found in the area. Relentless counter-terrorism campaign under vision 'Azmi-i-Istehkam'

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Three FC Cops martyred

Terrorists attack ambulance carrying personnel wounded in earlier quadcopter strike on FC post, says DPO

DNA

KARAK: At least three Federal Constabulary (FC) men were martyred when an ambulance carrying injured personnel came under a terrorist attack in the Badrakhail area of Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police said on Monday. The personnel were injured in a quadcopter attack on an FC post in the Dargah Shaheedan area this morning and were being transported to a hospital for treatment when the attack took place, the district police officer (DPO) told. At least five FC men were injured in the quadcopter attack, while two rescue personnel were also wounded in the ambulance attack, he added. Following the attack, police launched a search and clearance operation in the area to apprehend the assailants. Investigations into the incident are under way. Pakistan, since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in 2021, has witnessed an increase in cross-border terrorist activity, particularly in the provinces of KP and Balochistan, which share a border with Afghanistan.

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RUSSIAN DEFENDER OF FATHERLAND DAY



ISLAMABAD: Air Marshal Shakil Ghazanfar Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, Ambassador of the Russian Federation Albert P Khorev, Ambassadors of Iran, Uzbekistan, Defence Attache Col. Vadim N. Fenchenko and others cutting cake to celebrate the Defender of the Fatherland Day. - DNA

Shehbaz arrives in Qatar

DNA

DOHA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan arrived in Doha on Monday evening for a two-day official visit at the invitation of Qatar's Amir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Upon arrival at Hamad International Airport, the Prime Minister was warmly received by H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Pakistan's Ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamir, and members of the diplomatic staff. Accompanying Prime Minister Sharif are Deputy

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Armed men gun down female doctor

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: In a gruesome incident, a female doctor was shot dead by unidentified armed men while returning home after completing her duty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kohat, triggering protests by the Young Doctors Association and the closure of hospitals. The incident took place on a double road outside a hospital in Kohat Development Authority (KDA), where unknown assailants opened indiscriminate fire at her. As a result of the firing, Dr Mehwish died on the spot, while the attackers managed to flee after the incident. Police said an investigation has been launched into the matter, and evidence is being collected.

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Olive Branch

Opposition won't let govt collapse if it improves ties with jailed Imran: Abbas

Senate opposition leader calls for formation of joint parliamentary committee to arrange meeting with PTI founder

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Senate Opposition Leader Alama Raja Nasir Abbas has demanded the formation of joint parliamentary committee to address the matter of meeting jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in Adiala jail. Speaking on the floor of the Upper House on Monday, PTI-backed Allama Nasir urged the government to improve its relationship with the jailed former premier. "I promise that we [opposition] would not let your government fall," he pledged. The Senate opposition leader said they had staged a protest sit-in at Parliament House,

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Sanaullah urges opposition to join political process

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Advisor on Political and Public Affairs, Rana Sana Ullah Khan has urged the opposition to be part of the political process to sort out issues and strengthen democracy in the country.

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Briefs

Pakistan-Iran relations strong basis for trade

DNA

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Monday said that Pakistan is a strong basis of trade in bilateral relations. He said that Pakistan is connected to Iran through the way of Balochistan. In view of the economic and trade changes taking place in the region, this land route is a game-changer that provides a unique opportunity to increase the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran from \$3 billion to \$10 billion. He expressed these views while talking to Iranian Consul General in Pakistan, Mohammad Karimi Todishki. Iranian Consul General Muhammad Karimi Todeshki presented his diplomatic credentials, on which the Governor of Balochistan expressed.

Fin. Ministry clarifies Pak debt position

FIJAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance has clarified certain assertions made in a recent press commentary regarding the country's external debt position and associated interest payments. In a statement, the Ministry said the figures presented in the commentary require contextual explanation to ensure an accurate and comprehensive understanding of Pakistan's external debt profile. It said Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities currently stand at one hundred and thirty-eight billion dollars. This figure, however, encompasses a broad range of obligations. It is therefore important to distinguish this aggregate figure from External Public (Government) Debt, which amounts to approximately ninety-two billion dollars.

Regional tensions

Afghanistan turns into hub of terror

Militant networks operating from Afghan territory are not only destabilizing neighboring countries but are also posing security concerns for nations beyond the region, including the United States, Canada and Australia

APP

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan has emerged as a major center of terrorism, narcotics trade and human trafficking since the return of the Taliban to power, according to international observers and policy analysts. Militant networks operating from Afghan territory are not only destabilizing neighboring countries but are also posing security concerns for nations beyond the region, including the United States, Canada and Australia. An analysis published by renowned international magazine 'The Diplomat' highlights that the Taliban authorities are allegedly offering sanctuary to various extremist groups seeking to expand their activities regionally and globally. The publication stresses that continued tolerance of such groups could have serious international security implications.

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Israeli settlers torch West Bank mosque

NEWS DESK

TELL: Israeli settlers vandalized a mosque in the Israeli-occupied West Bank early Monday, spray-painting offensive phrases and setting a fire, according to the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Religious Affairs Ministry. Worshipers coming for the first prayers of the day found the damage and a still smoldering fire, which spewed black smoke across the entrance of the Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq Mosque in the town of Tell, near Nablus, and stained the ornate doorway.

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'Putin has started WW3 and must be stopped'

Zelensky told media, the Russian president has already started World War Three, and the only answer was intense military and economic pressure to force him to step back

NEWS DESK / DNA

KYIV: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky continues to send out a firm message of defiance. He said Ukraine would end the war victorious. He was firmly against paying the price for a ceasefire deal demanded by President Vladimir Putin, which is withdrawing from strategic ground that Russia has failed to capture despite sacrificing tens of thousands of soldiers. Putin, Zelensky told media, the Russian president has already started World War Three, and the only answer was intense military and economic pressure to force him to step back. "I believe that Putin has already started it. The question is how much territory he will be able to seize and how to stop him... Russia wants to impose on the world a different way of life and change the lives people have chosen for themselves." What about Russia's demand for Ukraine to hand over the 20% of the eastern region of



Donetsk that it still holds - a line of towns Ukraine calls "fortress cities" - as well as more land in the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia? Isn't that, I asked, a reasonable request if it produces a ceasefire? "I see this differently. I don't look at it simply as land. I see it as abandonment - weakening our positions, abandoning hundreds of thousands of our people who live there. That is how I see it. And I am sure that this 'withdrawal' would divide our society." But isn't it a good price to pay if that satisfies Putin? Do you think it would satisfy him? "It would probably satisfy him for a while... he needs a pause... but once he recovers, our European partners say it could take three to five years. In my opinion, he could recover in no more than a couple of years. Where would he go next? We do not know, but that he would want to continue [the war] is a fact." A map showing Russian military control in Ukraine as of 2100GMT on 18 February 2026.

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Free ambulance for transporting bodies in Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the launch of a free ambulance service for transporting deceased persons from public hospitals to their homes, marking the first such initiative in the province.

The decision was taken during a special meeting chaired by the chief minister to review arrangements for providing dignified and cost-free transportation facilities to bereaved families, here on Monday. She directed the authorities to present a comprehensive plan for deploying dedicated government vehicles at major public hospitals and ensuring availability of the service in every tehsil across Punjab.

During the meeting, it was agreed in principle to regulate private ambulance services as well. Proposals to introduce standardized rates for private operators were also reviewed to prevent overcharging and exploitation of grieving families.

Secretary Emergency Services Dr Rizwan Naseer briefed the participants that at least one vehicle would be stationed in each tehsil to facilitate the transfer of deceased persons from hospitals to their residences. Families will be able to avail the free service either by calling the emergency helpline 1122 or by submitting a request at hospital help counters. The briefing further highlighted that the service would be monitored through a smart management system to ensure transparency and efficiency. In addition to intra-city transfers, the facility will also provide free transportation of deceased persons to other cities when required. The initiative aims to ease the financial burden on families and ensure respectful handling of the deceased through an organized and state-supported system.—APP

Over 1m families to get Ramadan support in KP

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information Shafi Jan on Monday said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has approved a Ramadan Support Package worth Rs 12 billion to provide relief to more than one million poor families during the holy month of Ramadan.

In a statement, he said that under the package, each deserving family will receive Rs 12,500 through direct digital payment to the head of the household, ensuring transparency and timely disbursement of funds. Shafi Jan said that special priority will be given to the most vulnerable segments of society, including destitute families, widows, orphans, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, and people affected by natural disasters. He added that the Ramadan Support Package reflects the provincial government's commitment to supporting underprivileged citizens during the holy month and easing their financial burden amid rising living costs. He added that the Ramadan Support Package reflects the provincial government's commitment to supporting underprivileged citizens during the holy month and easing their financial burden amid rising living costs.—APP

Federal Secretary commends Daanish School timely completion

Nadeem Mahbub stated that regular academic activities at Daanish School would formally commence within the next few days, while the process of appointing teaching and administrative staff is also progressing swiftly

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Nadeem Mahbub, paid a detailed visit to Daanish School, Kuri Road, Islamabad, and reviewed the timely completion of construction work. Senior officials of the Ministry of Education and the administration of Daanish School accompanied him during the visit. The Federal Secretary inspected the school building, classrooms, administrative block, and other facilities. Expressing satisfaction over the timely completion of the construction work, he appreciated the efforts of the concerned officials and management. On the occasion, Nadeem Mahbub stated that regular academic activities at Daanish School would formally commence within the next few days, while the process of appointing teaching and administrative staff is also progressing swiftly. He said the institution will provide quality and modern educational facilities to the citizens of Islamabad and that the project has been completed under the special interest and directives of Shehbaz Sharif. He further remarked that Daanish School is an important educational gift from the Prime Minister to the citizens of Islamabad, where a modern curriculum, quality teaching, and a conducive academic environment will be ensured.



CBD Punjab accelerates urban transformation

LAHORE: Punjab's push toward internationally aligned urban development gathered fresh momentum as CEO CBD Punjab, Imran Amin, conducted comprehensive on-ground reviews of two flagship projects, NSIT City and CBD Walk, reaffirming a zero-compromise stance on quality, sustainability, and global compliance. During detailed site inspections, the CEO delivered a clear directive: no aspect of development — from structural integrity to public realm design — will fall short of international benchmarks. The reviews underscored CBD Punjab's commitment to building resilient, future-ready urban infrastructure that balances economic growth with environmental responsibility.

At NSIT City, development efforts are entering a transformative phase. Hardscaping and landscaping works are actively reshaping the project's public realm, with expanded green spaces designed to promote livability while accommodating high-density growth. Officials briefed the CEO on ongoing asphalt works, pedestrian-friendly pathways, and an integrated internal transportation system aimed at reducing carbon emissions and enhancing accessibility. Imran Amin emphasized that NSIT City is more than a conventional infrastructure initiative. "Every design choice must serve people, productivity, and the future," he stated during the inspection. The project is envisioned as a

world-class technology ecosystem, strategically positioned to support Punjab's knowledge economy while adhering to climate-resilient and smart mobility standards. The focus on high-quality public spaces, sustainable landscaping, and intelligent transport integration reflects CBD Punjab's broader ambition to align urban development with international sustainability frameworks. Meanwhile, CBD Walk — a flagship mixed-use development — has reached a critical construction milestone. Excavation and foundation works have been completed, with raft foundations successfully laid for 32 units. Construction teams have now advanced to retaining wall shuttering.—DNA

Democracy strengthens thru dialogue, not deadlock: Sanaullah

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan on Monday said that democracy is strengthened through dialogue rather than confrontation and deadlock. Responding to various points raised by Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Raja Nasir Abbas, he urged the opposition to actively participate in the political process to help resolve national issues and reinforce democratic institutions. He said the incumbent government had consistently invited the opposition to come forward and settle matters through dialogue. The government wants the opposition to play an effective role in the democratic process, he added.—APP

Ahsan for connecting to Quran, Sunnah to achieve success

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that the Holy Quran and Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) are true sources of strength and guidance, emphasizing the urgent need for the nation to reconnect with these foundations to achieve genuine success. He was addressing the Prime Minister's Laptop Distribution Ceremony among high-achieving students at the University of Engineering and Technology on Monday. He said that remarkable achievements can be realized through the transformative power of education. Highlighting the significance of the initiative, he said the laptop distribution program reflects the government's commitment to the digital empowerment of the country's youth. He noted, "Humanity has progressed through various economic eras from the agricultural economy to the

industrial revolution and today we are living in the age of the knowledge revolution, supported by the digital revolution." "In today's world, the creative power of the human mind determines the success or failure of both individuals and nations," he observed. He recalled that the laptop scheme was first launched in 2010 under the leadership of then Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif, with the vision of equipping young people with digital tools to compete globally. He further noted that in 2013, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) government introduced Vision 2025, which focused on excellence in science, technology, and IT while empowering youth to meet future challenges. Recognizing emerging global trends, he said that in 2017 the government established several advanced research centers, including the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence, National Centre for Cyber Security, National Centre for Big Data and Cloud Computing, National Centre for Automation and Robotics, Centre for Satellite Technology and GIS, and the National Centre for Applied Mathematics. He further said, "Whenever Pakistan embarks on a path of development, it faces disruptions." Citing examples of countries such as Malaysia, Japan, Vietnam, China, Singapore, South Korea, Bangladesh, and Turkey, he said their transformation is made possible by 15 years of consistent and uninterrupted policies. Ahsan Iqbal stated that continuity of policies is essential for sustainable national development. He maintained that Pakistan's development trajectory was disrupted in 2018, adding that had the process continued uninterrupted, the country would have achieved many of its development targets.—DNA

India can't unilaterally suspend IWT: IRSA

KARACH: Member Sindh of the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) and Member (Water), Planning and Development Department, Government of Sindh, Mohammad Ehsan ul Haq, on Monday said that India has no legal authority to unilaterally place the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance, terming the move a violation of treaty principles and international norms. In an interview with APP on Monday, he said the Indus Waters Treaty was a bilateral agreement between two states and could neither be terminated nor modified at the will of a single party. He noted that despite this legal position, India announced in April 2025 that it was placing the treaty in abeyance, a step he described as technically invalid as no such power exists under the agreement. Referring to subsequent regional developments, he said India had realized during the events of May 2025 that unilateral actions regarding the treaty were not feasible. Explaining the treaty framework, he said under the IWT, the eastern rivers: Ravi, Beas and Sutlej were allocated to India, while the western rivers: Indus, Jhelum and Chenab were reserved for Pakistan. He emphasized that water flows could not practically be stopped, citing the floods of 2025 as an example, when heavy flooding first affected Indian-administered Kashmir and adjoining regions before causing severe floods in Pakistan as well. He termed India's decision to hold the treaty in abeyance as contrary to established treaty obligations, stating that Pakistan had demonstrated diplomatically, technically and environmentally that the Indian move was unjustified. "India still claims the treaty is in abeyance, but it does not possess the authority to suspend it unilaterally," he said. Ehsan ul Haq further pointed out that under the treaty, flood-related information was required to be shared commissioner-to-commissioner; however, India shared such information through its foreign ministry instead, which he said deviated from agreed mechanisms. He also alleged that India attempted to manipulate flows of the Chenab River a river allocated entirely to Pakistan under the treaty causing irregular water availability in parts of Punjab province. However, he added that Pakistan managed the situation through a permanent strategic mechanism, preventing any major damage, while the Government of Pakistan continued to monitor the issue. He said it was also time to raise concerns regarding major drainage channels originating from Indian Punjab and falling into the Ravi River, carrying polluted water that was affecting groundwater quality in Lahore and adjoining areas. He stressed that meaningful dialogue on such issues could only take place once India acknowledged its actions at the international level.—APP

OGDC posts Rs 73b profit in half year

ISLAMABAD: Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) posted net sales revenue of Rs 192.830 billion and profit after tax of Rs 73.019 billion, translating into earnings per share (EPS) of Rs 16.98, for the half year ended December 31, 2025. The Board of Directors of OGDC, in its meeting held on Monday, announced the results for the period and declared a second interim cash dividend of Rs 4.25 per share (42.50%), marking the highest-ever second quarterly dividend in the company's history. This brings the cumulative interim dividend for the half year to Rs 7.75

per share, representing the highest-ever half-year payout by the company. The half-year results reflected the impact of forced production curtailments by SNGPL and UPL due to system load constraints, along with a lower average crude oil basket price. However, the impact was partly offset by higher realised gas prices and favourable exchange rate movements. During the period, the company contributed Rs 120 billion to the national exchequer through corporate tax, dividends, royalties, and other government levies. Its oil and gas production also generated estimated

foreign exchange savings of US\$ 1.4 billion through import substitution. Average daily net saleable production during the half year stood at 31,848 barrels of crude oil, 626 million cubic feet (MMcf) of natural gas, and 636 tons of LPG, compared with 31,477 barrels, 672 MMcf, and 629 tons, respectively, in the corresponding period last year. Production curtailments during the period adversely affected daily net output by 3,384 barrels of oil, 152 MMcf of gas, and 51 tons of LPG. Operationally, OGDC spudded five wells during the period, while sustained exploration efforts resulted

in four oil and gas discoveries, further strengthening the company's resource base. The company also secured petroleum exploration rights over eight offshore blocks in the October 2025 bidding round. On the development front, the Jhal Magsi Project was successfully commissioned and is currently producing around 14 MMcf of gas along with condensate, while the Dakhni Compression Project was completed ahead of schedule. Other key compression projects are progressing as planned. The impact on sales revenue, amounting to Rs 36.468 billion—primarily due to lower

production volumes and reduced realised crude oil and LPG prices—was partially offset by higher realised gas prices and exchange rate movements. Collections improved significantly, with gas receivables collection reaching 156% and overall receivables collection standing at 125%, reversing the previous buildup trend. As part of its sustainability agenda, OGDC continues to strengthen its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy by advancing climate-related disclosures and integrating ESG considerations across its operations and value chain.—DNA

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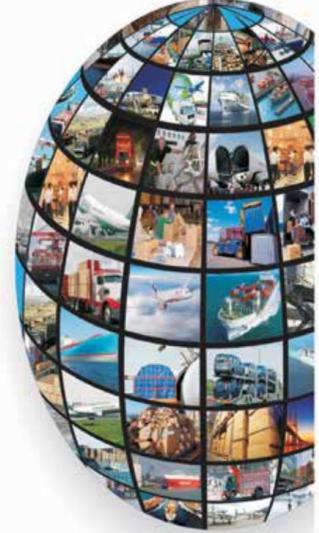






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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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



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



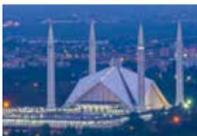
Hospitals

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



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CDA.....9221334-43
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

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Azerbaijan language and culture center set up at NUML

The Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center is expected to serve as a dynamic platform for academic exchange, cultural engagement, and future collaborative initiatives, further strengthening the enduring partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML), in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, inaugurated the newly Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center here on Monday. The inauguration ceremony was graced by His Excellency Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, as the Chief Guest. The Rector of NUML warmly welcomed the distinguished guests and underscored the significance of strengthening academic and cultural ties between Pakistan and Azerbaijan through sustained institutional collaboration. The Rector expressed confidence that the newly inaugurated Center would provide students with valuable opportunities to learn the Azerbaijani language, explore Azerbaijani culture, and engage in joint academic and research activities. He emphasized that Pakistan and Azerbaijan share strong historical, cultural, and brotherly relations, and such initiatives further reinforce people-to-people connectivity and mutual understanding between the two nations. The establishment of the Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center marks a significant milestone in promoting linguistic diversity, cultural understanding, and educational cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The Center will facilitate the teaching of the Azerbaijani language and serve as a hub for academic and cultural activities aimed at fostering mutual understanding and people-to-people connections. In his address, Ambassador Khazar Farhadov appreciated NUML's role in advancing cultural diplomacy and highlighted the longstanding friendship between Azerbaijan and Pakistan-rooted in shared values and consistent support at bilateral and international forums. A video message from



Kamal Abdullah, Rector of the Azerbaijan University of Languages, was also presented during the ceremony. He expressed gratitude to the leadership of NUML and the Embassy of Azerbaijan for their support

in establishing the Center and reaffirmed his institution's commitment to expanding academic collaboration between the two universities. The Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center is expected to serve as a

dynamic platform for academic exchange, cultural engagement, and future collaborative initiatives, further strengthening the enduring partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Huawei keen to launch 'smart village' programme

ISLAMABAD: Huawei has shown interest in replicating its "smart village" programme in Gilgit-Baltistan, aiming to improve digital connectivity and promote technology-driven development in the remote mountainous region. The proposal was discussed during a meeting between Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Information GB Ghulam Abbas and Ahmed Bilal Masud, Chief Executive Officer for AI and Cloud Business at Huawei Pakistan, held in Islamabad. As per details, the minister highlighted longstanding internet connectivity issues in GB, particularly in far-flung districts where limited bandwidth and infrastructure gaps have constrained educational, commercial and freelance opportunities. He invited Huawei to collaborate with the regional government to strengthen broadband infrastructure and introduce modern IT solutions

tailored to the area's geographical challenges. Mr Masud assured the minister of Huawei's support in various sectors, including mining, business development and digital transformation initiatives. He proposed a formal partnership with the GB government to equip young people with training in advanced IT solutions, with a special focus on artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing and emerging digital technologies. As part of the proposal, Huawei suggested establishing an IT park in smaller districts of GB to nurture startups, freelancers and small technology firms. For this purpose, Mr Masud requested the allocation of a suitable building — preferably government-owned — to serve as a technology incubation and training centre. Referring to Huawei's "smart village" initiative implemented in different parts of the country, including the federal capital

Islamabad, Mr Masud said the model could be adapted to GB's unique terrain. The programme envisages provision of high-speed internet at selected schools, community centres and public facilities, enabling students and local entrepreneurs to access digital platforms, online education and e-commerce services. He, however, cautioned against offering professional services entirely free of cost. "Experience suggests that free services may reduce the incentive to build sustainable businesses. Instead, the government may consider subsidising costs to facilitate deserving individuals while maintaining a market-driven approach," he observed. During the meeting, the minister was informed that IT professionals from GB constitute the largest single group employed at Huawei's Oman branch — a development seen as indicative of the region's growing human resource potential in the technology sector. APP

ICCI seeks chambers' more inclusion in eco policymaking

ISLAMABAD: President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has called for greater and institutionalized inclusion of chambers of commerce in national economic policymaking to ensure business-friendly reforms and sustainable growth. In an interview he stated that chambers represent the collective voice of the business community and possess firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by trade and industry. Their meaningful participation in policy formulation, he said, would lead to practical, implementable, and growth-oriented economic decisions. The ICCI President emphasized that policies framed without adequate consultation with stakeholders often create uncertainty and increase the cost of doing business. He urged the government to establish a structured consultative mechanism at federal and provincial levels, enabling chambers to contribute to budget proposals, taxation reforms, export strategies, and industrial policies. —APP

Orphan students' achievements at PSW lauded

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan praised the talent and academic accomplishments of orphaned children during the annual Iftar dinner hosted by Pakistan Sweet Home. Addressing the ceremony attended by students, donors and community members, he urged philanthropists to broaden their support for vulnerable youth, highlighting the importance of collective efforts to nurture their future. The governor said he was deeply impressed by the abilities of the children, noting that they had excelled across diverse fields of education. He also paid tribute to the administration and staff working behind the scenes to provide care, education and training to the children. He described Pakistan Sweet Home's educational, training, medical and welfare initiatives as exemplary, urging affluent individuals to actively participate in supporting the organization's programmes to ensure sustainable opportunities for underprivileged children. Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Sweet Home Patron-in-Chief Zamurrad Khan said many of the institution's students are currently enrolled in leading universities as well as medical, IT and engineering colleges across the country. He reaffirmed that supporting orphaned and destitute children remains his life's mission, pledging to continue working for their welfare "until his last breath." He added that the organization's outreach now extends from North Waziristan to Azad Kashmir and Sukkur, reflecting its expanding national footprint. Zamurrad Khan further said that Pakistan Sweet Home is currently running ten mega projects for providing shelter, education, healthcare and character-building opportunities to disadvantaged children. The event also featured an interactive session in which students introduced themselves and shared their aspirations. The audience responded with repeated applause as the children spoke about their educational journeys and ambitions. A large number of donors attended the annual Iftar dinner, reaffirming their commitment to supporting initiatives that provide hope and structured opportunities to some of the country's most vulnerable children. —DNA

Park beautification drive stepped up

RAWALPINDI: The Horticulture Agency Rawalpindi (HAR) has intensified efforts to beautify parks across the city and ensure upkeep of flowers and plants during the holy month of Ramadan. According to the HAR spokesman, measures have been taken to enhance the appearance and maintenance of Dhok Munshi Park in the Potwar sector. Colourful seasonal flowers and well-maintained plants are presenting a vibrant spring-like scene, drawing the attention of visitors, he said. On the directives of the Managing Director, Horticulture Agency Rawalpindi, Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, special teams have been deployed to carry out horticultural and cleanliness activities in various parks, and the staff of the agency is performing horticultural duties with dedication to preserve the park's aesthetic appeal and provide a pleasant environment for citizens. He said all parks in Rawalpindi would be decorated and maintained to offer the best possible recreational facilities to residents during Ramadan. —APP

ANF arrests six suspects, seizes 21 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has arrested six suspects and seized 21 kilograms of narcotics worth more than Rs 2.3 million in five operations conducted across various cities, an ANF spokesperson said on Monday. He said 800 grams of methamphetamine, commonly known as ice, and 600 grams of hashish were recovered from the shoes of a man and a woman at Lahore Airport. Both suspects were taken into custody in a separate operation, 8 kg of hashish were seized from a suspect near the Karachi Bus Terminal. Meanwhile, 5.4 kg of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Chungi No. 26 in Islamabad, leading to the arrest of the accused. In Multan, ANF officials confiscated 5 kg of hashish concealed in a steel cupboard near the Sher Shah Toll Plaza and arrested the suspect involved. —APP

Security measures inspected in Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police SSP Muhammad Sarfraz Virk conducted a visit to the Red Zone and Supreme Court to review security arrangements at various duty points. An official duty APP on Monday that the SSP Virk inspected security deployments, assessed monitoring mechanisms, and issued directions to officers for further improvement of security measures. He said ICT Police remain committed to maintaining high vigilance and ensuring effective protection of key installations in the federal capital. —APP

KSrelief, PBM launch Ramzan food distribution drive

Beneficiaries expressed heartfelt appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and the Saudi leadership for their continued humanitarian support



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to support underprivileged families during the holy month of Ramadan 2026, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), in collaboration with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and Hayat Foundation, has commenced the distribution of specialized food baskets across South Punjab. The inaugural ceremony

was held in Muzaffargarh, where food kits were distributed to 300 deserving families. Each comprehensive package, weighing approximately 97 kilograms, contained essential food items aimed at supporting households throughout Ramadan. The kits included 80 kilograms of flour, 5 kilograms of cooking oil, 5 kilograms of chana dal, 5 kilograms of sugar, and 2 kilograms of dates — staples considered vital for Sehri and Iftar meals.

The distribution process is being overseen by Senator Captain Shaheen Khalid Butt, Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, along with Khalid Rahim, Country Head and Focal Person for Hayat Foundation. Officials noted that the initiative reflects the strong humanitarian partnership between KSrelief and Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, as well as the trust placed in PBM's leadership and operational framework to ensure effective delivery. —APP

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Briefs

President Zardari praises security forces

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday paid tribute to the security forces for carrying out a successful operation against the terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij in Pishin district of Balochistan. The president, in a statement, said that the intelligence-based operation against the Indian-backed Fitna al-Khawarij manifested the nation's collective resolve to wipe out terrorism. He reiterated that the war against terrorism would continue till the elimination of the scourge in toto. According to ISPR, five terrorists, including a suicide bomber, were killed during an intelligence-based operation in the Pishin. After an intense fire exchange, a suicide bomber blew himself up, and four other Indian sponsored Khawarij were killed during the operation.—APP

ITP officers deployed to facilitate shoppers

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) officers have been deployed at Ramazan bazaars across the federal capital to ensure smooth traffic flow and provide facilitation to citizens. An ITP official told APP on Monday that special traffic arrangements have been implemented around Ramazan bazaars to prevent congestion and maintain safe vehicular movement. He said traffic personnel are actively guiding motorists, regulating parking, and assisting shoppers to minimise inconvenience during peak shopping hours. The official said Islamabad Traffic Police remain fully committed to ensuring uninterrupted traffic flow and maximum public facilitation throughout Ramazan.

JPU reviews Taraweeh security arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police continued vigilance during Ramazan as SP Judicial Protection Unit (JPU) Muhammad Iqbal Khan visited various mosques to review security arrangements during Isha and Taraweeh prayers. An official told media on Monday that the SP Iqbal inspected security deployments and monitoring measures, and briefed officers to perform their duties with responsibility and alertness. He said ICT Police remain fully committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens, ensuring effective security at religious places throughout Ramazan.—APP

National security non negotiable

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry reaffirmed Pakistan's uncompromising stance on national security, saying the country would not tolerate cross border militancy or terrorist sanctuaries, as he confirmed targeted action against militants involved in attacks on Pakistani soil and urged the Afghan authorities to prevent the use of their territory against Pakistan. Barrister said the people of Pakistan stood firmly with their armed forces in the fight against terrorism, stressing that Islamabad.—APP

Govt to legalize 3,000 Pakistanis living in Spain

This coordinated approach signals a prioritised effort by the government to resolve longstanding documentation issues facing the Pakistani community in Spain

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has begun steps to streamline the legal documentation process for more than 3,000 Pakistanis living in Spain, aiming to facilitate the issuance of Spanish Resident Cards for members of the Pakistani community. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Salik Hussain jointly chaired a high-level meeting in the federal capital, attended by senior officials, including Minister of State for Interior Tal Chaudhry and the heads of Nadra and the FIA, to finalise a policy framework to support Pakistanis seeking legal status in Spain. In a major procedural change, the

meeting decided to replace multiple local documents with a single, unified national character certificate, which will now be issued exclusively through the National Police Bureau to reduce bureaucratic delays linked to district-level clearances that have long created hurdles for applicants in Spain. Naqvi issued direct instructions to all relevant authorities to simplify and accelerate the verification timeline, emphasising that the Ministry of Interior was committed to providing full facilitation at every stage to ensure that overseas Pakistanis were not subjected to unnecessary difficulties. During the session, Pakistan's Ambassador to Spain Dr Zahoor Ahmed provided a detailed

briefing on the current policy framework. Pakistan travel guides Under these guidelines, eligible applicants will initially be granted a resident card valid for one year, while the completion of seven to eight years of legal residency will pave the way for permanent residency and eventual Spanish citizenship in accordance with local laws. The facilitation policy specifically targets those seeking legal work and residence status and does not apply to individuals seeking political asylum. Furthermore, all applicants are required to submit the newly centralised character certificate along with other mandatory identification documents. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has pledged its full

diplomatic backing to ensure the process remains seamless between Islamabad and Madrid. Salik described the development as a positive and encouraging step, noting that granting legal status to thousands of Pakistanis will significantly improve their quality of life and protect their rights abroad. The meeting was attended virtually by the Consul General in Barcelona and the Community Welfare Attaché, while on-site participants included the interior secretary, secretary for overseas Pakistanis and DG Passports. This coordinated approach signals a prioritised effort by the government to resolve longstanding documentation issues facing the Pakistani community in Spain.

IGP reviews Fajr security, commends officers' vigilance

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Inspector General Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi conducted an early morning visit to review security arrangements at mosques and imambargahs during Fajr prayers in the federal capital. An official told APP on Monday that the IGP Rizvi personally inspected security deployments, monitoring mechanisms, and checking procedures to ensure effective protection of worshippers. IGP Rizvi met police officers performing duty, appreciated their professionalism, and encouraged them to remain vigilant while discharging their responsibilities. During the visit, Rizvi issued directions to senior officers to further strengthen security measures and ensure that duty arrangements remain efficient and responsive. IGP Rizvi emphasised that ensuring the safety and security of worshippers remained the top priority of Islamabad Police, particularly during sensitive prayer timings.—APP

Turkish envoy announces 200 scholarships for AFI students



RAWALPINDI: The Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu has announced 200 higher education scholarships for students of Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam (AFI) during his visit to the institution's Faizabad campus. Expressing affection for the orphaned children residing at AFI, the ambassador described himself as their "uncle" and reaffirmed that Pakistan and Türkiye remain steadfast friends who stand by each other in times of difficulty and natural disasters. The envoy attended an Iftar dinner organized by the Turkish Red Crescent for the children of AFI's "Apna Ghar." The ceremony was attended by AFI President Professor Dr. Riaz Ahmed, General Secretary Group Captain (R) Pervez Akhtar, embassy officials and other office-bearers, along with a large number of resident children. During a briefing session, President Dr. Riaz Ahmed highlighted the historical and humanitarian role of the organization. He said AFI was established in April 1949 on the directives of Muhammad Ali Jinnah to support orphaned children from Bengal who had lost their parents in communal riots. He thanked the ambassador, the Turkish Red Crescent and embassy staff for arranging the Iftar for the children.—DNA

Government empowers ten million women

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson, Benazir Income Support Programme, Senator Rubina Khalid Monday stated that under the firm commitment of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government's huge mega financial support program has transitioned more than 10 million women to digital payments, ensuring transparency, dignity and empowerment, and advising women to safeguard their rights by obtaining their full payments without exploitation. During an exclusive appearance on a morning show with PTV News, Senator Rubina Khalid revealed that the government has enabled over 10 million women to access funds digitally through a landmark financial inclusion initiative under the BISP program. She described it as one of the largest monetary support programs in the world, designed to provide secure, direct, and transparent assistance to women across the country. Senator Khalid further encouraged women to confidently claim their full entitlements, highlighting the opportunity to strengthen their economic independence. She emphasized that this initiative not only ensures timely cash transfers but also empowers women to utilize these resources for their personal and family development, reinforcing dignity and self-reliance. Senator Rubina Khalid praised the visionary foresight of Benazir Bhutto, whose idea of the Benazir Income Support Programme has transformed the lives of millions of women by granting them autonomy, recognition and a tangible identity. She noted that this program has successfully integrated women into mainstream social and economic life, especially in previously unregistered tribal areas, providing them with a distinct identity where none existed. Today, BISP holds one of the largest citizen databases after NADRA, reflecting the scale and impact of this pioneering initiative. Senator Khalid also highlighted the steadfast commitment of Asif Ali Zardari in continuing and expanding this vision, ensuring that the program goes beyond cash transfers.—DNA

Cement export increases 9.91% to \$206m

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 9.91 percent during the first seven months of the fiscal year 2025-26 as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year. The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$206.727 million during July-January (2025-26) against the exports of US \$188.091 million during July-January (2024-25), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the cement export increased by 0.33 percent from 5,273,060 metric tons to 5,290,700 metric tons, the data revealed. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cement exports witnessed an increase of 62.75 percent during the month of January 2026 as compared to the same month of last year.—APP

Poverty rising despite economic stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Shahid Rasheed Butt, has said that poverty has reached an alarming level in Pakistan, even as macroeconomic indicators show relative stability. He said the current account position has improved and overall economic balance appears more stable, but household incomes continue to decline. As a result, poverty and income inequality are rising while unemployment is increasing. A growing segment of the population has lost its purchasing power,

weakening overall economic activity.

Citing official data, he noted that of a population of 240 million, nearly 70 million people live below the poverty line. He described the figure as deeply concerning, warning that declining real incomes and persistent inflation have made it difficult for families to meet basic expenses, including food, education, and healthcare. Shahid Rasheed Butt said climate change, floods, and shifting weather patterns have reduced farm incomes, while other policy and market factors have further complicated the situation. In urban areas, high inflation and a slowdown in industrial activity are intensifying economic stress.

'Centuries-old Golas still announce Sehri, Iftar at Golra Sharif'

ISLAMABAD: As the new generation relies on mobile timers to mark the moments of Sehri and Iftar, the powerful echo of traditional "Golas" fired at Golra Sharif Darbar in Islamabad continues to shake the skies, proving that some Ramazan traditions are too meaningful to fade with time. While alarms and notifications now dictate fasting schedules, historic Golas (cannons) fired from Golra still roar from E-11 to Margalla Hills, signaling Sehri and Iftar and keeping a centuries-old Ramazan tradition alive across Islamabad. Baber Ahmad responsible for firing the Golas while exclusively speaking with local news channel, says, "Every boom connects people to tradition and faith, and no digital alarm can replace the feeling of hearing a Gola echo across the city." His daily duty has become

a symbol of continuity, linking generations through a ritual that transcends time. According to Babar Ahmad, in Golra, the designated individual is responsible for igniting the fuse, allowing enough time for it to reach the mold before the explosion occurs and echoes through the air. Locals and visitors gather along rooftops and streets to witness the thunderous sound, embracing a moment that blends devotion, history and community, proving that even in a digital age, some traditions continue to resonate louder than any alarm or timer. The ritual of firing Golas is not just a call to fasting or breaking it; it is a reminder of Golra Sharif's spiritual heritage, drawing people together in a shared experience of faith. Children watch wide-eyed as the smoke rises.—APP

Govt plans Rs 39.76m project

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development has proposed a Rs 39.76 million capacity-building project to improve occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for workers and employees, particularly in high-risk and export-oriented sectors. According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the project, titled 'Capacity Building of Workers/Employees Regarding Occupational Safety and Health', is scheduled to be implemented over two years from July 2026 to June 2028. The initiative aims to reinforce labour welfare by promoting safer and healthier working environments, particularly in sectors where workers face elevated risks. The

proposed initiative aims to directly train 3,920 workers in occupational safety and health practices and develop six master trainers and instructors to ensure the sustainability of training interventions. In addition, 30 workplace inspections and safety audits are planned to promote compliance with national and international OSH standards. The document identifies several sectoral priority areas, including construction and infrastructure, health services, food, drink and tobacco industries, oil and gas production and refining, basic metal production, brick kilns and other hazardous labour sectors. These sectors have been prioritised due to higher exposure to occupational risks and their significance in export-oriented economic activity.

The project is designed to address key challenges such as workplace accidents, limited safety awareness, and gaps in institutional capacity. By investing in structured training, awareness campaigns, and institutional strengthening, the government seeks to build a strong preventive safety culture across industries. Strategically, the project carries social, economic, and international significance. Improved OSH practices are expected to reduce workplace injuries and occupational diseases, enhance productivity, and lower compensation and insurance costs for employers. The initiative also supports Pakistan's compliance with International Labour Organization

(ILO) Conventions No. 155 and 187 and strengthens alignment with labour-related obligations under the European Union's GSP+ scheme, which supports a substantial share of Pakistan's exports. Under the project, standardized OSH training curricula and materials will be developed. Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions will produce six master trainers, while 3,920 workers and employees in high-risk sectors will receive structured OSH training. The initiative will also conduct 30 workplace inspections and safety audits, organize seminars and workshops, expand digital outreach, and promote emergency preparedness, incident reporting, and mental health awareness.—APP

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Why would US want war with Iran?

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB

UNLIKE the decision to go to war with Iraq in 2003, which was backed by a large majority of Americans as the general public was convinced Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, today's potential war with Iran is not popular. Beyond the fact it would probably have a very negative effect on the current administration's favorability, the important question is: What is this a war for? What would be the outcome and how would it serve US interests? Many regional countries have been lobbying the US administration not to strike Iran, as no one wants to see a regional war. No one except Israel wants to see Iran unravel and break apart. No one wants to handle the spillover of a potential war. They have all lived through the negative consequences of the fall of the regime in Iraq and do not want a sequel to that horror movie. To increase the pressure on the US and distance themselves from any military action, they have announced that they will not allow their territories or airspace to be used to attack Iran. Even the UK has reportedly informed the US that it does not want any part in this sinister ploy. Most importantly, what would the US gain from a war on Iran? To answer that question, we need to examine the scenarios that could arise. The first scenario is that the Tehran regime is weak enough that an attack would make it fall. Despite the fact that no one in the region would shed a tear over the fall of the regime, they definitely do not want this to happen – and for good reason. The regime change that Israel is advocating for will be messy. It would not be like Syria. The context in Syria was different. To start with, there is no alternative to the regime. The US is propping up Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's ousted shah, but he has no connection with the people. He even admitted as much in an interview. How is he supposed to run the country? To add to that, the regime of his father was known to be dictatorial and brutal, so not a real upgrade from what the Iranians currently have. In a nutshell, there is no credible opposition that could take over and control security. The regime change that Israel is advocating for will be messy. It would not be like Syria. The context in Syria was different. When the Russians came to save Bashar Assad in September 2015, they went to all the rebel groups and told them that they must either join or accept Assad and lay down their arms or move to Idlib. They put all rebel groups in Idlib. The idea was to separate the rebels from Assad and to broker a deal that would be beneficial to Russia. This did not

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work because Assad did not want to make any compromises. However, since 2015, there had been an opposition in Idlib under Turkish tutelage. Extremist groups like Hurras Al-Dine and factions of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham were eliminated. Therefore, when Assad fell, there was someone ready and able to take over. There is no similar scenario in Iran. If the regime were to suddenly fall, the state would fall. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps would splinter into various groups and we would have chaos in the region and a rise in terrorist activity. Now, despite the nuisance created by Iran's proxies, there is at least a reference. If the regime fell, there would be no reference. The region would be flooded with violent gangs for hire accountable to no one. Also, the fall of the regime might trigger secessionist movements, particularly among the Kurds in the vicinity of Turkiye and groups in the Sistan and Balochistan province bordering Pakistan. This would be bad news for both Pakistan and Turkiye, two important US allies. A war would lead to chaos, which the US and its allies would have to contain. Iraq showed that this is a messy task. The other option would be a "limited strike," as US President Donald Trump spoke about on Friday, in order to gain leverage in the negotiations. However, Trump should be careful of the change in Iran's behavior. One advantage the US had in the past was the limited aid Iran received from America's foes. Basically, Iran could only count on its proxies. However, as the threat increased and as these proxies became less and less effective, Iran has become more open to cooperating with the US' rivals, namely China and Russia. During the last wave of protests, Iran was reportedly able to block access to the internet due to help from the Chinese. And a Russian Tu-214PU "Doomsday" aircraft landed in Iran last week, marking a new milestone in the Tehran-Moscow partnership. Both Russia and China have an interest in engaging with and protecting Iran. For China, Iran is an important source of energy and a vital corridor to connect with Europe through the Belt and Road Initiative. For Russia, it is a way to flex its muscles in the region and counterbalance the US. A limited strike might put Iran's nuclear program back or limit its ballistic capabilities for a few months, but it would also push Tehran further toward Russia and China, which is definitely not in the interests of the US. Iran's constitution prohibits foreign military bases on its mainland. But this might change if Iran was pressured. Does the US want to see Chinese or Russian airbases in Iran? I highly doubt it. So, what should the US do? It should start by looking after its own interests and not those of Israel. America has no interest in a war with Iran. A war would lead to chaos, which the US and its allies would have to contain. The experience in Iraq showed that this is a pretty messy task. It could also lead to the entrenchment of Russia and China in the region. Both of these developments would be bad for Washington, so it would be better for the US to stick to the negotiations and listen to its allies who do not want a war.

Tucker Carlson's Revolt Against America's Israel Policy

Qamar Bashir



The debate intensified when the ambassador argued that Christians enjoy greater protection in Israel than in many Muslim-majority countries. Carlson challenged that assertion, claiming that there are more Christians in Qatar alone than in Israel. He further argued that Qatar has provided land for churches, schools, and hospitals and that Christians there live openly and peacefully. In contrast, Carlson alleged that Christians in Israel face intimidation and harassment and that their numbers have declined in recent years due to emigration

IF there is one American media figure who has done more than any other to rupture the long-standing conservative consensus on Israel, it is Tucker Carlson. A son of a diplomat and a deeply patriotic American, Carlson has positioned himself as the most relentless critic of Israel's outsized influence over U.S. foreign policy, congressional decision-making, business networks and geopolitical strategy. In his telling, Washington's reflexive alignment with Israel has drawn the United States into wars, drained its treasury and compromised its sovereignty. That argument was on full display in February 2026 at Ben-Gurion Airport, where Carlson conducted a combative, two-and-a-half-hour interview with U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee. Carlson accused American officials of "prioritizing Israel" over their own country, pressing Huckabee over civilian casualties in Gaza, biblical rhetoric invoked by Israeli leaders, extradition disputes and the scale of U.S. military aid. Carlson's contention was blunt: if American taxpayers provide billions in assistance – at least \$16.3 billion in direct military aid since October 2023, with broader estimates exceeding \$21 billion – then American officials have a duty to ask hard questions. He framed the issue as a defense of U.S. sovereignty. Why, he asked, should a prosperous, technologically advanced nation with a strong per-capita income require continuous American subsidy? During the interview, Carlson raised the issue of Christian casualties in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the destruction of churches, hospitals, and schools operated by Christian communities. He questioned the ambassador about reports that Christian civilians had been killed and Christian institutions damaged during military operations. The ambassador acknowledged that such incidents had occurred, describing them as unintended consequences of war and stating that Israel had expressed regret over those events. The debate intensified when the ambassador argued that Christians enjoy greater protection in Israel than in many Muslim-majority countries. Carlson challenged that assertion, claiming that there are more Christians in Qatar alone than in Israel. He further argued that Qatar has provided land for churches, schools, and hospitals and that Christians there live openly and peacefully. In contrast, Carlson alleged that Christians in Israel face intimidation and harassment and that their numbers have declined in recent years due to emigration. While referring to the Epstein files that have been

made public in the United States, Carlson raised the issue of connections between Jeffrey Epstein, the established paedophile and blackmailer and Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, and the present President and former prime ministers of Israel. He said that Israel used Epstein's facility to compromise influential political figures, royalty, senators, and members of Congress through illicit activities involving minors and used their engagement as a blackmailing tool to garner support for Israel in the important decision making in Washington and other influential political capitals. He confronted the Ambassador to hold the Israelis accomplices of Epstein accountable. The Ambassador admitted the connection between Epstein and Mossad but evaded the question by stating the responsibility for prosecuting crimes committed on U.S. soil lies with American authorities, since Epstein operated primarily within the United States. During the interview, Carlson directly confronted a theological claim of Israel for the land promised to them by God "from the Nile to the Euphrates." He pointed out that, if interpreted literally in contemporary geopolitical terms, such a claim would encompass parts of present-day Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and beyond. Carlson pressed the ambassador on whether this scriptural narrative could justify territorial expansion under the banner of a so-called "Greater Israel." In response, the ambassador said that if Israel conquered those territories then why not. The tone and tenor of the Ambassador clearly suggested that he was aligned with the Israeli dream of greater Israel and was playing his part to pursue the elusive Israeli dream. During the exchange, Carlson raised the issue of civilian casualties, specifically asking about how thousands of children had been killed during Israeli military operations. The ambassador acknowledged that large numbers of civilians, including thousands of children, have died in the conflict, but maintained that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) attempt to minimize civilian harm even much better than the US army does. Carlson then pressed further, asking whether the ambassador was implying that the U.S. military operates with lower moral standards than the IDF. In response, the ambassador cited historical examples of American warfare, including the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the flattening of the entire Germany during World War-II during and civilian casualties in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. The Ambassador seemed so bought up by Israel that in defence of the IDF that he blamed the US army as worse than the IDF, clearly reflecting where his loyal-

ties are and how, instead of defending the interests of the US in Israel, he was defending Israel which was against the term of employment of an Ambassador. Under the Vienna Convention an ambassador's foremost duty is to represent and protect the interests of the sending state—not to advocate for the host country. In a high-profile interview, the ideal ambassadorial posture would have re-centered the discussion on U.S. interests rather than theological or expansionist narratives. Now the question has been raised as to why Israel has strengthened its regional deterrence capabilities while the United States has borne significant costs—deploying troops, maintaining military bases across the region, committing naval assets to protect sea lanes and allied interests, and providing substantial financial and military assistance. They argue that this burden has placed American personnel and infrastructure at heightened risk while increasing fiscal and geopolitical strain. As a result of Carlson's crusade against Israel's tyranny in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Qatar and Iran and its support based in Congress, Senate and White House, according to Pew Research Center, the public's views of Israel have turned more negative over the past three years. More than half of U.S. adults (53%) now express an unfavorable opinion of Israel, up from 42% in March 2022 – before the Hamas attack of Oct. 7, 2023, and the ensuing Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip. What began as a series of interviews has now evolved into a defining ideological confrontation within American conservatism. Carlson is not merely questioning battlefield tactics or diplomatic language; he is challenging the moral, financial, and strategic foundations of America's unconditional alignment with Israel. By forcing senators and ambassadors to defend casualty figures, regime-change rhetoric, and billions in aid, he has exposed a widening rift between interventionist orthodoxy and nationalist restraint. Whether one views his campaign as courageous accountability or destabilizing provocation, it has undeniably shattered the illusion of consensus. The Republican Party may still stand institutionally with Israel, but the grass-roots conversation has changed – and once a foreign policy doctrine is dragged into open public trial, it rarely returns to unquestioned authority.

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

The Future of the World

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Technology is often presented as a neutral force of progress, but its benefits are unevenly distributed. Advanced economies dominate digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data flows, while many developing countries struggle with basic connectivity. A new growth platform must address the digital divide as a development priority

THE world stands at a difficult crossroads. Economic growth, once taken for granted as a natural outcome of globalisation, is now uneven, fragile and deeply contested. Wars persist, supply chains are fractured, climate pressures are mounting, and trust between states is eroding. Yet history shows that moments of uncertainty often create space for new ideas. The future of the world economy depends not on restoring old models, but on building a new platform for global growth one that is inclusive, balanced and resilient. This proposal is offered as an open dialogue rather than a fixed blueprint. The challenges facing humanity are too complex to be solved by a single ideology or institution. What is required instead is a shared conversation that recognises diversity while seeking common ground. For decades, global growth was driven by liberalisation, free trade and financial integration. While this model lifted millions out of poverty, it also produced sharp inequalities within and between countries. The backlash is now visible in the form of protectionism, economic nationalism and regional blocs. Growth is no longer a purely economic question; it is tied to social stability, political legitimacy and national security. A new platform for global growth must therefore move beyond narrow indicators such as GDP. Economic expansion should be judged by its ability to generate decent employment, reduce inequality, protect the environment and strengthen social cohesion. Growth that benefits only a few is not sustainable; it ultimately undermines the very system that produces it. Global economic governance is struggling to keep pace with contemporary realities. Institutions created after the Second World War no longer reflect the distribution of power in the twenty-first century. Emerging economies demand greater representation, while smaller states seek protection from market shocks they did not create. Rather than abandoning multilateralism, the task should be to reform it. International financial institutions must prioritise development lending over crisis management alone. Debt relief mechanisms should be predictable and fair, especially for countries burdened by climate-related disasters. Trade regimes need flexibility so that developing economies can

protect infant industries while integrating into global markets. A reformed multilateral system would not impose uniform solutions but offer adaptable frameworks that respect national contexts. This balance between global cooperation and domestic autonomy is essential for restoring trust. While global cooperation remains vital, regional platforms can play a decisive role in promoting growth. Economic corridors, cross-border infrastructure and regional value chains reduce dependence on distant markets and lower vulnerability to global disruptions. For South Asia, Central Asia, Africa and parts of the Middle East, regional integration remains underdeveloped despite immense potential. Political disputes, security concerns and weak institutions have limited progress. Yet investment in transport, energy and digital connectivity could transform these regions into engines of growth. Regional cooperation should be framed not as a zero-sum competition but as a shared opportunity. When neighbours trade more, they reduce conflict incentives and create mutual stakes in stability. Technology is often presented as a neutral force of progress, but its benefits are unevenly distributed. Advanced economies dominate digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data flows, while many developing countries struggle with basic connectivity. A new growth platform must address the digital divide as a development priority. Affordable internet access, digital literacy and local innovation ecosystems are essential. Technology should empower small businesses, farmers and service providers, not merely large corporations. Equally important is digital governance. Data protection, fair taxation of digital firms and ethical use of artificial intelligence require global coordination. Without common rules, technology risks becoming another source of inequality rather than a driver of shared prosperity. Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is a daily economic reality. Floods, droughts and heatwaves disrupt production, destroy infrastructure and deepen poverty. For many developing countries, climate vulnerability is the single greatest obstacle to growth. Yet climate action also offers opportunities. Investment in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable urban develop-

ment can generate jobs and reduce long-term costs. The challenge lies in financing this transition. Developed economies, having contributed most to historical emissions, bear a moral and practical responsibility to support climate adaptation and mitigation in poorer states. Climate finance should be predictable, accessible and free from excessive conditions. Growth and sustainability must be treated as complementary goals, not competing ones. No economic model can succeed without investing in people. Education, healthcare and social protection are not welfare expenses; they are productive investments. Societies with skilled, healthy populations are better equipped to adapt to technological change and economic shocks. The future platform for growth should prioritise skills relevant to changing labour markets. Vocational training, lifelong learning and research collaboration deserve greater attention. Migration, often framed as a threat, can be managed as a source of growth if labour mobility is regulated fairly and humanely. Economic growth cannot flourish in the absence of security. Conflicts disrupt trade, deter investment and drain public resources. From Eastern Europe to the Middle East and parts of Africa, prolonged instability continues to impose global economic costs. Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction must therefore be seen as economic imperatives, not merely political goals. International efforts should focus on addressing root causes of conflict, including economic exclusion and governance failures. The future of the world economy cannot be dictated by a single power or ideology. It must emerge from sustained dialogue between states, regions, institutions and societies. Developing countries should not be passive recipients of policies designed elsewhere; they must be equal partners in shaping the rules of growth. This proposed platform for global growth is not a finished product. It is an invitation to rethink assumptions, challenge inequalities and imagine an economic order that serves humanity rather than divides it. The stakes are high, but so is the opportunity. In choosing cooperation over confrontation and inclusion over exclusion, the world can still chart a path towards shared and durable prosperity.

Briefs

Security forces kill 9 terrorists...

FROM PAGE 01
(as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by security forces and law enforcement agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country." Separately, the spokesperson for Balochistan's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) also confirmed the IBO in Pishin and the losses suffered by the terrorists in an earlier statement. He said that the terrorists had "planned to attack the police lines and Cadet College Pishin". President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in their separate statements, commended the security forces for their successful operation against terrorists in Pishin, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The president said the IBO "against the Indian-backed Fitna al Khawarij reflects the nation's resolve in the fight against terrorism".

Three FC Cops martyred

FROM PAGE 01
Amid the rising terror incidents, Pakistan carried out intelligence-based strikes targeting seven terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to Fitna al Khawarij (FAK), its affiliates and the Daesh-Khorasan along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in response to recent suicide attacks. The airstrikes were carried out in Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost provinces of Afghanistan on Sunday morning, the security sources said, adding that more than 80 militants were killed in the airstrikes. The camps targeted included "New Centre No. 1 and New Centre No. 2 in Nangarhar, Khawarij Maulvi Abbas Centre in Khost, Khawarij Islam Centre, Khawarij Ibrahim Centre in Nangarhar, and Khawarij Mullah Rahbar and Khawarij Mukhlis Yar in Paktika."

'Putin has started...

FROM PAGE 01
US President Donald Trump said on the eve of the most recent ceasefire talks in Geneva that "Ukraine better come to the table fast". He continues to default to putting more pressure on Ukraine than on Russia. Western diplomats have indicated since last summer that Trump agrees with Putin that territorial concessions from Ukraine to Russia are the key to the ceasefire Trump wants, ideally before this coming summer.

Opposition won't...

FROM PAGE 01
alleging that its gates were locked and parliamentarians were confined inside. "Is this not an insult to parliament?" he asked, calling for a tradition of "positive protest" to be allowed. The Senate opposition leader was referring to the days-long sit-in staged by lawmakers from PTI and opposition parties at the Parliament House and the KP House in Islamabad earlier this month. The former ruling party staged the protest over concerns about Imran's eye ailment after the jailed former premier claimed he had lost 85% vision in his right eye.

Sanallah urges...

FROM PAGE 01
Responding to points raised by Opposition Leader Raja Nasir Abbas in the Senate, he regretted that the opposition tried to avoid the political process, which always led to a deadlock. Rana Sana Ullah Khan informed the House that all the entitled facilities are being provided to the PTI founder. He said medical aid was provided to the PTI founder as per directions of the apex court. Earlier speaking on the floor of the House, Raja Nasir Abbas demanded the government to transfer the PTI founder from prison to a hospital for medical treatment. He further said that cases against PTI founder should be heard expeditiously.

Rawalpindi reveals team name ahead of PSL 11

Rawalpindi Franchise Rebranded as Pindiz After Walee Technologies Secures Ownership Ahead of Pakistan Super League Season 11 Following High-Profile Auction and Major Expansion of Eight-Team Tournament

KARACHI: The Rawalpindi franchise on Sunday unveiled the team nomenclature ahead of the highly anticipated 11th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), scheduled to be played from March 26 to May 3. The franchise, which was acquired by Walee Technologies for staggering Rs2.45 billion at the historic auction at the Expo Centre in Lahore earlier this month, has now been named 'Pindiz'. The name of the franchise was unveiled via a 25-second-long video, featuring famous landmarks of the city, with upbeat music in the background. "Team Rawalpindi's official franchise name is here. We're bold. We're challenging. We're bringing the vibe. We're changing the game," the franchise captioned the video. The franchise also announced unveiling the logo soon, stating, "Next up: the official team logo." Furthermore, the video also concluded with the text, reading, "To be continued." For the unversed, the franchise, previously named Multan Sultans, went under auction after its previous owner, Ali Tareen, decided against renewing the decade-long ownership contract after the landmark 10th edition of the marquee league last year. Consequently, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) temporarily assumed control of the franchise, and its chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, had announced that the cricket board would oversee the matters of the former champions for the historic 11th edition of the marquee league, which will feature



eight teams. Meanwhile, after the successful auctioning of two new franchises, Hyderabad Houston Kingsmen and Sialkot Stallionz, which were acquired by FKS Group and OZ Developers for staggering Rs 1.75 billion and Rs 1.85 billion, respectively, the PCB reverted its decision and announced to auction the Sultans. Conse-

quently, the PCB formally invited bids for the ownership rights of the franchise by issuing an advertisement to attract interested parties last month and its bid committee, following a "thorough and transparent" process, shortlisted five bidders. Walee Technologies later acquired the ownership rights of the franchise at the glitter-

ing auction following a bidding war, most prominently with CD Venturers, who put forward the second-highest bid but were eventually forced to bow out. Since the winning party was allowed to rebrand the franchise, and their owner, Ahsan Tahir, decided to exercise the right and announced to name the franchise after Rawalpindi.

Guardiola hails Man City's 'massive' win over Newcastle

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola labelled Manchester City's 2-1 win over Newcastle on Saturday as a "massive" moment in the Premier League title race. Guardiola's second-placed side closed the gap on leaders Arsenal to just two points with their tense victory at the Etihad Stadium. Nico O'Reilly put City ahead in the first half and restored the lead before half-time after Lewis Hall had equalized. City weren't at their best in the second half, but they held on to pile pressure on spluttering Arsenal, who travel to Tottenham for the north London derby on Sunday. Guardiola knew it was essential to make Arsenal sweat. "Massive. Newcastle is an incredible team, awesome in physicality and speed they have up front.

Physicality in the middle. Really tough but the team was unbelievable," he said. "It's coming in best part of the season. Every single game will be similar to today." After finishing without a trophy last season, City are back in the hunt for the seventh English title of Guardiola's reign. They will have a game in hand on Arsenal after this weekend and are guaranteed to win the title if they win their last 11 league matches. Guardiola has embarked on an expensive overhaul of City's squad in the last 12 months, shedding aging stars like Kevin De Bruyne, Ederson and Kyle Walker and bringing in the likes of Marc Guehi, Antoine Semenyo and Rayan Cherki. The Spaniard is well aware that his new generation largely lacks the experience of winning under the pressure of a title race,

which made their gritty success against Newcastle even more meaningful. "70 percent of the players have never been in that situation, and I don't play. So we have to live it, they know that every game will be like this," he said. "Especially at home, with five home games left. Today was the best crowd of the year, it was unbelievable with our people, really proud to be manager of these incredible people and fans. "Of course in terms of points it's important, but we have to improve to have chance to compete until the end. Now we deserve three more days off. Then another battle in Leeds." Guardiola singled out O'Reilly for praise after the young England midfielder's pair of clinical finishes showed he won't be affected by the strain of chasing Arsenal. - APP

Mohsin Naqvi Hails Security Forces

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid tribute to the security forces for successfully eliminating five terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij in an operation in Pishin. Interior Minister commended the security forces for their successful operation against the terrorists and praised their professional capabilities in bringing the five militants to a decisive end. He stated that the nation takes pride in the courage and professionalism of its security forces. Mohsin Naqvi further said that the brave personnel acted in a timely manner and thwarted the nefarious designs of the Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists. The successful operations of the security forces for maintaining peace in Balochistan are commendable. - APP

Lackluster Liverpool FC snatch late win at Forest

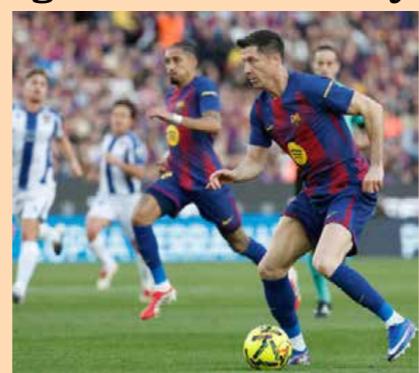
LIVERPOOL: After having an 89th-minute goal disallowed following a VAR check, the Argentina midfielder scored again in the seventh minute of stoppage time - and this time it survived a video review - to earn Liverpool a 1-0 victory at Nottingham Forest in the Premier League on Sunday. The dramatic end at the City Ground centered completely on Mac Allister, who thought he'd scored without knowing anything about it after turning his back on a clearance by Nottingham Forest defender Ola Aina. The ball rebounded off Mac Allister and into the net, but the VAR spotted it had struck his arm and the goal was scrubbed out. However, he was on hand off virtually the last kick of the game when Virgil van Dijk's header was spilled by Forest goalkeeper Stefan Ortega. Barely six meters out, Mac Allister could hardly miss as he sidefooted the ball into the net. There was a VAR check to see if Van Dijk was offside but the goal was given. Liverpool stayed in sixth place but was tied on points with fourth-place Chelsea and fifth-place Manchester United, whose game in hand is at Everton on Monday. Meanwhile, Sunderland lost its home comforts on Sunday. It wasn't long ago that Sunderland were the only Premier League team with an unbeaten home record. Now, the Black Cats have lost two straight at the Stadium of Light. Sunderland was defeated 3-1 by Fulham, which had two goals from Mexico striker Raul Jimenez - one of which was from the penalty spot. - APP

Cristiano Ronaldo hits 500 goals, celebrates in Saudi Bisht

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo, captain of Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr Football Club, has become the first footballer to score 500 goals at club and international level at the age of 41. This historic milestone was achieved during a 4-0 triumph over Al-Hazem Football Club in the Saudi Professional League, where Ronaldo played a decisive role. To celebrate, Ronaldo wore the traditional Saudi "Bisht," a symbol of leadership and prestige, marking Saudi National Day. Historically, the Bisht has been associated with the founding of the first Saudi state, making Ronaldo's celebration a cultural tribute as well as a sporting moment. The celebration drew international media attention, and images of Ronaldo in the Bisht went viral on social media, garnering over 4 million views within 40 minutes. Ronaldo's journey to 500 goals spans decades; by age 30, he had scored approximately 463 goals, and in the following years, he added the remaining goals, demonstrating extraordinary longevity, fitness, and consistency in his career. Following this win, Al-Nassr moved to the top of the Saudi Professional League points table. - Agencies

Barcelona Regains La Liga Lead After Victory

MADRID: Barcelona took advantage of Real Madrid's stumble and regained the Spanish league lead with a comfortable 3-0 win over relegation-threatened Levante on Sunday. Marc Bernal, Frenkie de Jong and Fermin Lopez scored a goal each as Barcelona ended a two-game losing streak to get back in front of rival Madrid, which lost 2-1 at Osasuna on Saturday. Barcelona moved one point ahead of Madrid, which had won eight in a row in the league before losing to Osasuna. Barcelona was coming off a 2-1 loss to Girona in the league and a 4-0 loss to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals. "It was important to win and earn three points again," Barcelona defender Jo o Cancelo said. "Soccer gives you these opportunities to rebound and that's what we did today, playing well again after two bad games." Barcelona had earned a clean sheet only once in its previous six games in all competitions. Bernal scored from close range four minutes into the match at the Camp Nou Stadium. The 18-year-old Bernal had scored his first goal with the first team two rounds ago in a win over Mallorca. "They had an early chance but my goal helped us settle and gain some confidence," Bernal said. De Jong added to the lead from inside the area



in the 32nd and Lopez sealed the victory with a beautiful long-range shot in the 81st, with the ball ricocheting off the post before going into the net. - Agencies

PHF Assures Incentives, Facilities for World Cup Push

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Adhoc President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, Muhyuddin Wani, along with the Federation's Governance and Professional Development Committee, held an important meeting with the national hockey team in Islamabad, giving a major morale boost to the players ahead of the World Cup Qualifying Round. During the session, Wani also met sepa-

rately with the team management to review preparations and strategic planning for the crucial qualifying stage. The overall message from the federation was clear and unified: players should focus entirely on their game, while PHF will handle all administrative and off-field matters. The committee assured the team of the government's full support and reiterated that PHF would take complete responsibility for logistics, coordination, and other operational affairs. "Your

sole focus should be on playing for Pakistan and bringing glory to the country," the officials emphasized. "We will provide you with the necessary incentives and establish a professional system that enables you to succeed." Wani encouraged the players to remain motivated, competitive, and determined to win. He assured them that no unnecessary pressure would be placed on the squad and that they would be provided with every facility required to perform at their best. He

further stated that players are ambassadors of Pakistan on the global stage and must reflect the nation's pride through their performance and discipline. Taking full ownership of leadership responsibilities, Wani declared that he would be accountable for both good and bad decisions, while urging the players to demonstrate unity and discipline. Expressing his best wishes, he said the entire nation stands behind the team and is praying for positive results in the World Cup Qualifiers.



Afghanistan turns into hub of...

FROM PAGE 01

The report argues for stricter enforcement of sanctions on the Taliban administration, alongside support for peaceful and inclusive political forces within Afghanistan, in order to prevent a resurgence of transnational terrorism similar to past global attacks. It further claims that more than 6,000 militants affiliated with Fitna-al-Khawarij are currently present in Afghanistan and may have the capacity to operate across borders if left unchecked. The magazine cautions that recognizing the Taliban government without tangible counterterrorism measures would be a strategic miscalculation. Experts say the international sanctions on Afghanistan should be tightened further until concrete and verifiable steps are taken against terrorism.

Israeli settlers torch West Bank...

FROM PAGE 01

"I was shocked when I opened the door," said Munir Ramdan, who lives near the mosque. "The fire had been burning here in the area, the glass was broken here, and the door was broken." Security camera footage shows two people walking toward the mosque carrying gasoline and a can of spray paint, and running away a few minutes later, Ramdan said. The Religious Affairs Ministry said that settlers vandalized or attacked 45 mosques in the West Bank last year. The incident came as Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan. "The provocation is directed especially at the person who is fasting, because you are fasting and entering a month of mercy and forgiveness from God," said Salem Isshtayeh, a resident of Tell. "So they like to provoke you with words - it's not that they are attacking you personally, they are attacking your religion, the Islamic faith."

Shehbaz arrives in Qatar

FROM PAGE 01

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi, along with other senior officials. During the visit, Prime Minister Sharif will hold bilateral talks with Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The discussions will focus on strengthening economic cooperation, energy partnerships, and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. Both sides are expected to explore ways to further enhance collaboration in key areas, including trade, investment, energy, infrastructure development, and manpower export. This visit underscores the deep-rooted fraternal relations between Pakistan and Qatar and highlights their shared commitment to expanding multifaceted cooperation for mutual benefit.

Armed men gun down female...

FROM PAGE 01

CCTV footage and eyewitness statements are being reviewed to identify and arrest the suspects, who remain unknown, they added. In response to the killing, the Young Doctors Association announced the closure of the Liaquat Memorial Hospital and all other hospitals in Kohat until the arrest of the assailants. The association also raised serious concerns over security, saying that even a female doctor could not remain safe. Young Doctors Association President Dr Ubaid said the protest would continue until those involved in the incident are arrested, and a complete strike would be observed. He said that they would extend the strike all over the province. He called on the government and law enforcement agencies to arrest the killers without delay and ensure they are given due punishment. Announcing the strike, Dr Ubaid said: "Doctors serve the public 24 hours in Ramadan and in every circumstance. Is this treatment for the doctors just?"

Briefs

CCP okays acquisition of FWBL by Abu Dhabi

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) on Monday approved the proposed acquisition of First Women Bank Limited (FWBL) by Abu Dhabi-based Eve Holdings RSC Limited, following a Phase-I competition assessment conducted under the Competition Act, 2010.

The approval comes pursuant to a Share Purchase Agreement executed as part of the federal government's privatization process, a news release said.

Eve Holdings RSC Limited, a special purpose holding company incorporated in Abu Dhabi, would acquire 100 percent shareholding of First Women Bank Limited from the government of Pakistan and existing institutional shareholders. These include Habib Bank Limited, MCB Bank Limited, Allied Bank Limited, National Bank of Pakistan and United Bank Limited.

Upon completion of the transaction, Eve Holdings would assume full ownership and control of First Women Bank Limited.

In its competition assessment, the CCP noted that FWBL maintained a limited footprint within the broader commercial banking market. The acquiring entity currently has no presence in the relevant or related market in Pakistan. As such, the transaction qualifies as a conglomerate merger and does not raise competition concerns. The commission concluded that the proposed acquisition is unlikely to create or strengthen a dominant position, substantially lessen competition, or adversely affect the competitive structure of the market. Accordingly, the transaction has been authorized in accordance with the provisions of the Competition Act, 2010. The acquisition reflected sustained foreign investor interest in Pakistan's financial sector and highlighted the role of transparent privatization and effective competition oversight in attracting foreign direct investment, strengthening financial institutions and supporting long-term economic growth.—APP

Gold price surges by Rs 3,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 3,000 and was sold at Rs 536,562 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs 533,562 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 2,572 to Rs 460,015 from Rs 457,443, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs 2,358 to Rs 421,695 from Rs 419,337. The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 146 to Rs 9,094 from Rs 8,948, while that of 10 grams silver rose by Rs 125 to Rs 7,796 from Rs 7,671. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$30 to \$5,138 from \$5,108, whereas that of silver rose by \$1.46 to \$86.10, the Association reported.—APP

Food commodities worth \$2b exported in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: Food commodities valued at \$2.988 billion were exported during the first seven months of the current financial year, as compared to the exports of \$4.613 billion of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July to January, 2025-26, food exports from the country decreased by 35.21 per cent compared to the exports of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The country earned \$1.305 billion by exporting about 2.439 million metric tons of rice during the period under review, which were recorded at \$2.194 billion and 3.637 million metric tons in the same period of the last year. In the last seven months of the current financial year, about 111,543 metric tons of fish and fish preparations worth of \$253.812 million were exported, as compared to the exports of 110,050 metric tons, \$232.272 million in the same period of the last year. The exports of fish and fish products from the country during the period under review grew by 9.27 percent as compared to the exports of the same period of that last year.—APP

Business community demands President FPCCI tenure extension

Atif Ikram Sheikh has truly represented traders during these challenging times, say Sajjad Sarwar and Qurban Ali

DNA

ISLAMABAD : A high-level delegation, comprising former Vice Presidents of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and prominent business figures, met with President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh. The meeting involved detailed discussions on the country's economic situation, the challenges facing the trading community, and specifically the future of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The delegation included former FPCCI Vice Presidents Sajjad Sarwar, Qurban Ali, and the President of the Gilgit Small Chamber, Arman Shah. During the meeting, the members paid rich tribute to Atif Ikram Sheikh for his courageous advocacy for the rights of the business community and his exemplary services. They noted that even in the most difficult economic circumstances, Atif Ikram Sheikh has served as a true representative for industrialists and traders alike. To ensure the continuity of the ongoing reform agenda within FPCCI and in the broader interest of the business community, the delegation urged the Government of Pakistan to grant a two-year extension to Atif Ikram Sheikh's tenure as President FPCCI, citing his extraordinary performance and immense popularity among traders. During the discussion, Sajjad Sarwar, Qurban Ali, and Arman Shah briefed the President on the severe



issues plaguing SMEs across the country. The delegation expressed deep concern over the negative impact of rising electricity and gas prices, as well as the heavy burden of taxes on small businesses. Representing the Gilgit Small Chamber, Qurban Ali and Arman Shah highlighted the specific

logistical and administrative hurdles faced by traders in remote areas. Responding to the delegation, President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh thanked the members and assured them that he would continue his efforts to bring SME-related grievances to the highest levels of government. He emphasized

that "the wheels of the national economy cannot turn swiftly until relief is provided to small-scale traders." He further added that the Federation is currently working in collaboration with all chambers to develop a comprehensive economic plan for the country.

Syria holds data governance workshop with global bodies

DAMASCUS: Officials from the Syrian government and international organizations attended a high-level technical workshop on data governance and social protection as part of efforts to modernize social safety systems and improve policy coordination in the country. Organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the workshop brought together representatives from the World Bank, World Food Programme, UNICEF and the International Labour Organization. The discussions focused on establishing a unified framework for data governance within social protection programs, including data mapping, protection standards, interoperability and institutional coordination. Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Kabawat stressed the need for a national data governance framework to improve efficiency, fairness and public trust, and said reliable data was essential for sustainable financial planning and targeted social support. She emphasized the importance of state-owned systems that safeguard institutional sovereignty and personal data protection. Finance Minister Yisr Barnieh highlighted the role of accurate data in allocating resources to key service sectors such as health and education, underscoring its importance in poverty reduction efforts and improving the effectiveness of social spending. Officials from the Planning and Statistics Authority and Ministry of Communications and Technology underscored the need for an integrated digital infrastructure and secure electronic linkage between institutions to support evidence-based decision-making and reduce duplication and waste. A World Bank representative reaffirmed the institution's commitment to supporting the Syrian Arab Republic in developing an effective social protection system, stressing that coordinated international engagement and clearly defined responsibilities are critical to strengthening national capacities. The workshop formed part of broader efforts to develop a national social protection strategy capable of responding to growing economic and social challenges facing Syrian families.—DNA

Malaysia mulls law to curb premierships to two terms

Currently, there is no formal constitutional limit on how long a prime minister may serve, provided the individual commands majority support in the Dewan Rakyat, the Malaysian parliament

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia introduced new legislation Monday to restrict the prime minister's tenure to a maximum of two terms, a move aimed at boosting accountability and curbing the overreach of executive powers. The Southeast Asian nation currently places no cap on how many terms a premier can serve. Former leader Mahathir Mohamad held office for 24 years across two stints — from 1981 to 2003 and again between 2018 and 2020. Current Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in January announced a push for a two-term limit amid renewed calls for him to tackle corruption and improve governance.

In its election manifesto in 2022, Anwar's ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition in 2022 pledged a two-term limit on the premiership. But there has been criticism about the slow pace of reform, local media reports said, with the move seen as an attempt to win back urban voters in the run-up to general elections slated for next year. Anwar last week said that if the law is implemented, it would apply to him first. He added that a 10-year period was sufficient for those in office to carry out their responsibilities effectively. "I won't be making laws for other people. The law must be applied to me first," he said. The proposed change requires approval from at least two-thirds of lawmakers, or 148 out of the 222 seats in the lower house, to pass. Currently, there is no formal constitutional limit on how long a prime minister may serve, provided the individual commands majority support in the Dewan Rakyat, the Malaysian parliament.—APP

20 trapped in Tokyo Skytree elevator for 5 hours

TOKYO: Twenty people were trapped inside an elevator at Tokyo Skytree tower from Sunday night for more than five hours, the operator said, adding that the facility, which is Japan's tallest broadcasting tower and a popular tourist spot, will be closed throughout Monday for safety checks. The passengers, including children, were stranded when the elevator came to a sudden stop about 30 meters above street level, according to police. They were all rescued and no one was injured. An emergency call was made at around 8:20 p.m. Sunday reporting the incident at the tower in Tokyo's Sumida Ward. According to Tobu Tower Skytree Co., two elevators stopped at around 8:15 p.m. while running between the entrance on the fourth floor and the 350-meter height observation deck. The elevator carrying 20 passengers was going down, while the other had no visitors inside.—APP

UN chief decries global rise of 'rule of force'

GENEVA: Human rights are under "full-scale attack around the world", United Nations chief Antonio Guterres warned Monday, with the most powerful often leading the charge. "The rule of law is being outmuscled by the rule of force," he told the opening of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. "This assault is not coming from the shadows, or by surprise. It is happening in plain sight — and often led by those who hold the greatest power." The UN secretary-general did not delve into specific situations, although he did voice outrage at Russia's continuing war in Ukraine, where he said more than 15,000 civilians had been killed in four years of violence. "It is more than past time to end the bloodshed," he said. He also highlighted the "blatant violations of human rights, human dignity and international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". He charged that the current trajectory in the conflict-torn territories under Israeli occupation was "stark, clear and purposeful: the two-state solution is being stripped away in broad daylight". "The international community cannot allow it to happen," he insisted. Guterres said the worst conflict-hit areas were not the only places where rights were eroding. "Around the world, human rights are being pushed back deliberately, strategically and sometimes proudly," he said. "We are living in a world where mass suffering is excused away, where humans are used as bargaining chips, where international law is treated as a mere inconvenience." And, he warned, "when human rights fall, everything else tumbles". The crisis of respect for human rights "mirrors and magnifies every other global fracture", he said, pointing for instance to how "humanitarian needs are exploding while funding collapses". At the same time, "inequalities are widening at staggering speed (and) countries are drowning in debt and despair", he said. And he pointed to how "climate chaos is accelerating, and technology, especially artificial intelligence, is increasingly being used in ways that suppress rights, deepen inequality and expose marginalised people to new forms of discrimination both online and offline". "Across every front, those who are already vulnerable are being pushed further to the margins." The UN chief called for urgent action to reverse the trend. "We must defend our shared foundations, without compromise," he said, insisting that "the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the instruments of international human rights law are not a menu".—DNA

Pak CG underlines legal channels for remittances

ISLAMABAD: Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, Hussain Muhammad, on Monday, emphasized the importance of utilizing formal and legal channels for remitting funds to Pakistan. He underlined that sending remittances through proper banking channels not only strengthened Pakistan's economy but also ensured the safety and security of the workers' hard-earned income. He also encouraged community members to continue being exemplary residents of the United Arab Emirates by respecting and upholding local laws and regulations. He was speaking at an Iftar dinner and community engagement event in Al Ghurair Workers Camp in Sonapur, Dubai organized by National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and Al Ansari Exchange, in collaboration with the Consulate General of Pakistan, a press release said. The initiative aimed to raise awareness among community members, acknowledge their contributions to Pakistan's economy, and share Iftar with them during the holy month of Ramadan. The event was attended by Muhammad Saleh, Press Counsellor; Junaid Murtaza and Imran Shahid, Community Welfare Attaches, along with representatives of NBP and Al Ansari Exchange, and a large number of Pakistani workers. While touring the workers' camp, the consul general interacted with residents, inquired about their wellbeing, and conveyed the government of Pakistan's continued commitment to supporting overseas Pakistanis. He extended heartfelt Ramadan greetings and reaffirmed that the consulate remained fully accessible to assist the Pakistani diaspora

in the Northern Emirates. Rashid-ul-Islam, Business Lead, NBP, highlighted the growing significance of overseas remittances to Pakistan's economy. He shared that the UAE currently ranks second globally in remittance inflows to Pakistan. He also elaborated on promotion

initiatives by Al Ansari Exchange and the NBP cash reward scheme for customers remitting funds directly into NBP accounts in Pakistan. During the ceremony, special recognition was accorded to top remitters, who were presented with gifts and prizes in appreciation of their consistent contributions.—DNA



PSX witnesses bearish trend

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Monday, losing 5,478.63 points, a negative change of 3.16 percent, to close at 167,691.08 points compared to 173,169.71 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 461,264,025 shares with a traded value of Rs 24.935 billion, against 537,645,825 shares valuing Rs 23.790 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization decreased to Rs 18.971 trillion from Rs 19.602 trillion a day earlier. Out of 479 active companies in the ready market, 42 advanced, 389 declined, and 48 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 36,062,769 shares, followed by WorldCall Telecom with 33,673,161 shares and Bank of Punjab with 26,673,106 shares. The top gainers included S.S.Oil Mills Limited, which rose by Rs 51.24 to close at Rs 563.62, and Pakistan Engineering Company Limited, which gained Rs 22.10 to settle at Rs 617.45. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 361.50 to close at Rs 16,495.50, while Sapphire Textile Mills Limited fell by Rs 134.19 to close at Rs 1,239.00. In the futures market, turnover stood at 190,560,500 shares with a traded value of Rs 10,422 billion, compared to 166,023,500 shares worth Rs 7.118 billion in the previous session. Out of 336 futures-market companies, 11 recorded gains, 325 declined, while none remained unchanged.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs279.55 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs279.56. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs280.30 and Rs282.25, respectively. The price of the Euro against the Rupee increased by Rs1.72 to close at Rs330.44 from the previous day's close of Rs328.72, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.80, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs1.68 and closed at Rs377.92 compared to the previous day's Rs376.24. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 and 01 paise and closed at Rs 76.10 and Rs74.52, respectively.—APP

Uzbekistan-Malaysia eco coop reaches new level

TASHKENT : Within the framework of the Makkah Halal Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan and the International Chamber of Marketing and Trade of Malaysia. The document aims to strengthen ties between businesspeople from the two countries and expand practical cooperation. The memorandum was signed by Davronbek Kurbanov, First Deputy Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, and Zuber Bakri, President of the International Chamber of Marketing and Trade of Malaysia. The agreement provides for the organization of mutual trade delegations and business missions, the joint implementation of investment projects, the exchange of market information, and active participation in international exhibitions and forums. In addition, it is planned to improve entrepreneurs' skills by launching technical assistance and training programs. The halal industry, agro-industrial sector, food industry, textile industry, and the service sector have been identified as priority areas of cooperation. According to experts, this agreement will facilitate the implementation of joint projects, attract investment, and create new market opportunities for entrepreneurs from both countries.—APP

Briefs

IHC ends contempt proceedings against PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday withdrew contempt of court notices issued to the prime minister and members of the federal cabinet in the Dr Aafia Siddiqui case, setting aside an earlier order issued last year. A four-member larger bench headed by Justice Arbab Tahir issued the written judgment, declaring that the July 21, 2025, order passed by a bench that was not legally constituted. The court ruled that the single-bench decision dated July 21, 2025, stood recalled, noting that the case was heard despite not being included in the cause list and that the judge's name was not part of the duty roster. The order in question was issued by Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, who had issued contempt notices to the prime minister and the federal cabinet during the hearing on the case pertaining to incarcerated Dr Aafia Siddiqui. Dr Aafia, a Pakistani neuroscientist, was indicted by a New York federal district court in 2008 on charges of attempted murder and assault, stemming from an incident during an interview with the US authorities in Ghazni, Afghanistan – charges that she denied.

Trump renews attack on US Supreme Court

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump renewed his condemnation of the Supreme Court on Monday after it ruled against his sweeping tariff programme last week, vowing to turn to other tariff powers and licences but giving no details. "The court has also approved all other Tariffs, of which there are many, and they can all be used in a much more powerful and obnoxious way, with legal certainty, than the Tariffs as initially used," he wrote in a social media post. Trump said on Saturday he would raise a temporary tariff from 10 per cent to 15 pc on US imports from all countries, the maximum level allowed under the law, a day after the court ruled that Trump had exceeded his presidential authority when he imposed an array of higher tariff rates under an economic emergency law. In his post on Monday, Trump also pointed to the potential use of licences to pressure countries, writing that "incomprehensibly, according to the ruling, (I) can't charge them a Licence fee – BUT ALL LICENCES CHARGE FEES, why can't the United States do so? You do a licence to get a fee! The opinion doesn't explain that, but I know the answer!"

Punjab Assembly to take up land grabbing Ord.

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly will take up on Tuesday (February 24) the Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property (Amendment) Ordinance 2026, which is aimed at curbing land grabbing and fast-tracking property disputes. The ordinance was on the agenda for Monday's session but could not be tabled due to a lack of quorum. The amended ordinance, promulgated on Feb 17, introduces jail terms of up to 10 years and fines up to Rs10 million for the illegal possession of immovable property, while mandating that cases be decided within 30 days. It amends the Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Act, 2025 – operation of which was suspended by the Lahore High Court last year – to strengthen protection for lawful owners and streamline adjudication through newly empowered district-level tribunals. – APP

Trump curiosity, Araqchi defiance shape Thursday's US-Iran nuclear talks narrative

President Trump wonders why Iran hasn't capitulated despite pressure; Araqchi replies, "because we are Iranian"

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran and the United States are heading into a third round of nuclear talks in Geneva amid renewed diplomatic signaling, pressure rhetoric and cautious optimism from both sides as negotiations continue over Tehran's nuclear programme. Both sides will hold a third round of nuclear talks on Thursday in Geneva, Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said on Sunday, as concerns persist over the possibility of wider military confrontation between the long-time adversaries. The United States has strengthened its military presence in the Middle East, with President Donald Trump warning that "really bad things will happen" if no agreement is reached to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme. "Pleased to confirm US-Iran negotiations are now set for Geneva this Thursday, with

a positive push to go the extra mile towards finalising the deal," said Oman's foreign minister, who is mediating indirect talks between Washington and Tehran. Reuters reported that Iran was offering fresh concessions on its nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions and recognition of its right to "peaceful nuclear enrichment". Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed cautious optimism in a post on social media, saying recent negotiations had "yielded encouraging signals" while stressing Tehran's readiness for "any potential scenario". Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, who is leading the US negotiating team, said the US president was curious about why Iran had not yet "capitulated" and agreed to curb its nuclear programme. "I don't want to use the word frustrated... but he's curious as to why they haven't capitulated," Witkoff said in a television

interview. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi responded in a post on X, saying: "Curious to know why we do not capitulate? Because we are Iranian." He also told CBS that a diplomatic solution with the United States remained within reach. Indirect talks last year did not bring any agreement, primarily due to friction over a US demand that Iran forgo uranium enrichment on its soil, which Washington views as a pathway to a nuclear bomb. Iran has denied seeking such weapons. The US joined Israel in hitting Iranian nuclear sites in June, effectively curtailing Iran's uranium enrichment, with Trump saying its key nuclear sites were "obliterated". But Iran is still believed to possess stockpiles enriched previously, which Washington wants it to relinquish. "They've been enriching well beyond the number that you need for civil nuclear. It's up to 60% (fissile purity)," Witkoff said.

"They're probably a week away from having industrial, industrial-grade bomb-making material, and that's really dangerous." Fresh concessions being considered by Iran include sending half of its highly enriched uranium abroad while diluting the rest. Another topic of friction is the scope and mechanism of lifting sanctions on Iran. A senior Iranian official told Reuters on Sunday that Iran and the United States still have differing views. Witkoff also said he has met at Trump's direction with Iranian opposition figure Reza Pahlavi, son of the shah ousted in Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. He did not provide further details of the meeting. Pahlavi, who lives in exile, served as a rallying figure for some of Iran's opposition during anti-government demonstrations last month, in which thousands of people are believed to have been killed, the worst domestic unrest since the revolution era.

Canadian national in NCCIA custody

DNA

LAHORE: A Canadian national pursuing doctoral research, who went missing last week, has turned up in the custody of the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA). The agency on Monday produced Hamza Ahmad Khan before a magistrate, who sent him to jail for 14 days on judicial remand. On Sunday, police registered a case on kidnapping charges on the complaint of his friend. According to the first information report, Hamza went missing in the early hours of Feb 19 after leaving his residence in DHA Phase 10, according to the first information report (FIR) registered at the Defence-A police station. On Monday, it emerged that Hamza was in NCCIA custody for allegedly making anti-state posts on social media platforms X and Instagram. In the FIR registered against him by the NCCIA, the cybercrime agency said that during routine cyber patrols, accounts associated with Hamza were actively "disseminating misinformation and disinformation targeting the state institutions".

China supports Zardari stance on air strikes

BEIJING: President Asif Ali Zardari's recent statement underscores the country's unwavering resolve in combating cross-border terrorism. His emphasis on Pakistan's inherent right to self-defense resonates deeply, as the nation has long endured the scourge of terrorist attacks emanating from Afghanistan. These views were expressed by Prof Cheng Xizhong, Senior Research Fellow at the Charhar Institute, a non-governmental Chinese think-tank on diplomacy and international studies based in Beijing. Prof Cheng said that President Zardari's reference to the UN Security Council report is particularly compelling, as it provides international validation for Pakistan's position. The report confirms that numerous terrorist organizations operate freely in Afghanistan, exposing the failure of the Afghan Taliban regime to uphold their commitments under the Doha Accord. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Lebanon to Pakistan, HE Mr Abdulaziz Issa called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters. – DNA

India loses another Tejas jet; fleet grounded for checks

Indian media reports that the accident occurred during landing after a routine training sortie

THE Indian Air Force (IAF) has lost another HAL Tejas light combat aircraft in an accident earlier this month, Indian media reported, with the pilot ejecting safely as the fighter suffered severe damage during landing. Initial reports described a suspected technical glitch involving onboard systems, while other accounts pointed to a possible brake failure after touchdown that led to a runway overrun and major airframe damage. The exact cause remains under investigation. Indian media said the accident occurred during landing after a routine training sortie at an operational or forward air base, and that the aircraft may be written off due to the extent of damage. Following the incident, Indian media reported that the IAF has grounded its fleet of around 30 single-seat Tejas jets to conduct intensive technical checks and a safety probe. This is reported to be the third Tejas aircraft lost since induction. The first crash occurred near Jaisalmer in March 2024 after a firepower demonstration, with the pilot ejecting safely.



New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani orders citywide travel ban

NEW YORK Mayor Zohran Mamdani on Sunday ordered the shutdown of the city's entire traffic network for all but emergency travel ahead of a massive snowstorm expected to hit the northeast United States. Tens of millions of Americans from the US capital, Washington, to the northern state of Maine braced for the storm, with up to two feet (60 centimetres) of snow forecast in some areas. The National Weather Service said blizzard conditions would "quickly materialise" from Maryland up to southeastern New England, making travel "extremely treacherous." Snow could fall at a rate of two to three inches per hour at the peak of the storm, with nearly 54 million people in its path, it said. Power outages are likely due to heavy snow and strong wind gusts, forecasters said. In New York, which has more than eight million people, Mamdani said streets, highways and bridges would be shut down from 9:00 pm Sunday (0200 GMT) until noon Monday. "New York City has not faced a storm of this scale in the last decade," he said, explaining the state of emergency. "We are asking New Yorkers to avoid

all non-essential travel." The ban will not affect essential workers or New Yorkers needing to travel due to emergencies, according to Mamdani. "Worst yet to come" New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill declared a state of emergency beginning midday Sunday, freeing up funds and allowing the swift deployment of resources to address the weather crisis. In Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu closed all public schools and municipal buildings on Monday. "We ask everyone to plan ahead, stay safe and warm, and stay off the roads to help our public works and public safety efforts," Wu said. The National Weather Service said "moderate to major" coastal flooding affecting waterfront roads and properties was possible from Delaware up to Cape Cod in Massachusetts. The storm comes just weeks after the region recovered from another devastating weather system that was linked to more than 100 deaths. "The worst is yet to come," New York Governor Kathy Hochul told a press briefing Sunday. "Whatever you need – any groceries, any medicines you need to be refilled at the pharmacy, any pet food you need to have – do it right now." – Agencies

Mexican military kills cartel boss 'El Mencho' in US-backed raid

Nemesio Oseguera dies in custody after being injured in military operation by Mexican special forces

MEXICO CITY: One of Mexico's most notorious drug lords, Nemesio Oseguera, or "El Mencho," was killed in a military raid on Sunday, sparking widespread retaliatory violence. President Claudia Sheinbaum has been under mounting pressure from Washington to intensify her offensive against drug cartels blamed for producing and smuggling drugs, particularly the synthetic opioid fentanyl, across the border to the US. Oseguera, 60, the mastermind of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) died in custody after being injured in a military operation by Mexican special forces in the town of Tapalpa on Mexico's Pacific coast in Jalisco state, according to Mexico's defence ministry. His corpse arrived in Mexico City on Sunday afternoon in a heavily guarded convoy of National Guard troops. Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as El Mencho, appears in undated photographs in a wanted poster on the US Department of State website with a \$15 million reward offered for information leading to his arrest. Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as El Mencho, appears in undated photographs in a wanted poster on the US Department of State website with a \$15 million reward offered for information leading to his arrest. – Reuters

Reuters had reported on Sunday that a new US-military-led task force played a role in the raid led and carried out by Mexican forces. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later posted on social media that the US provided intelligence support. Leavitt added that the Trump administration "commends and thanks the Mexican military for their cooperation and successful execution of this operation." After reports of El Mencho's death, cartel henchmen blockaded highways with burning cars and torched businesses in more than half a dozen states, paralyzing parts of the country. No civilian deaths have been reported. In Jalisco's popular beach resort of Puerto Vallarta, frightened tourists on social media described a "war zone" as plumes of dark smoke rose into the sky from around the bay. Air Canada, United Airlines, Aeromexico and American Airlines suspended flights in the area. Oseguera, a former police officer, founded and oversaw the rapid rise of the CJNG, named for the western state of Jalisco that is home to one of Mexico's biggest cities, Guadalajara. In recent years, CJNG has expanded into one of Mexico's most powerful cartels, known for violent tactics including forced labour and forced recruitment. Under El Mencho's leadership, CJNG also became a highly diversified criminal enterprise, expanding from drug trafficking to fuel theft, extortion, human smuggling, and complex financial fraud. The cartel pioneered the use of drones in attacks against civilians in remote regions of western Mexico as part of its rapid territorial expansion. – APP

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