



Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 07, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Indonesia may withdraw from Board of Peace

Detailed News On Page-08

CJP stresses for fair investigation

Detailed News On Page-03

ECC okays relief for the education sector

Detailed News On Page-07

Nakhchivan Drone Attacks

PM Sharif tells Aliyev Pak stands with Azerbaijan

The Prime Minister also briefed President Aliyev on Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts amid the broader regional crisis stemming from the ongoing US-Israeli conflict with Iran

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation today with President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, strongly condemning the drone attacks on Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic that occurred yesterday. The strikes, which Azerbaijan attributes to Iran, targeted civilian infrastructure including the terminal building at Nakhchivan International Airport and an area near a school in the village of Shakarabad.

Reports indicate that two to four civilians were injured in the incidents, with visible damage to the airport and surrounding areas. Azerbaijan has described the attacks as "cowardly," "terrorist," and a violation of international law, vowing retaliatory measures and closing southern airspace temporarily. Iran has denied any involvement in the drone strikes. In the call, PM Sharif expressed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with Azerbaijan and its people during this challenging period.

He assured President Aliyev that Pakistan stands firmly with the brotherly nation, its government, and armed forces. The Prime Minister also briefed President Aliyev on Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts amid the broader regional crisis stemming from the ongoing US-Israeli conflict with Iran, now in its second week, which has seen spillover effects including strikes on Gulf states and heightened tensions across the Middle East and beyond. President Aliyev thanked PM Sharif for the outreach and appreciated Pakistan's supportive stance. Both leaders emphasized the urgent need for

Continued on Page 06

PM orders action against petrol pumps hoarding fuel

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the provincial governments to immediately seal, cancel the license and initiate legal proceedings against any petrol pump involved in creating artificial shortages of petroleum products in the country. According to sources Pakistan will get 4 ships of crude oil two from US and one each from Saudi Arabia and UAE. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting on the availability of petroleum products, instructed the provincial governments to take strict legal action against hoarders of petroleum products. During the briefing by Ministry of Petroleum on the availability of petroleum products amid the changing regional situation, it was said that adequate stocks of petroleum products were available in the country to meet national requirements. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the Minister for Petroleum to visit the provinces and, in collaboration with the provincial governments, prepare

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding petroleum products. Islamabad, 6 March 2026. - DNA

After 8 years Pak hockey team qualifies for World Cup

DNA

LAHORE: In a spectacular display of skill and determination, the Pakistan Hockey team has officially qualified for the Hockey World Cup 2026. Pakistan travel guides The Green Shirts earned their place in the prestigious tournament after overcoming Japan in a high-voltage semi-final of the World Cup Qualifier. In a match that kept fans on the edge of their seats until the final whistle, Pakistan clinched a 4-3 victory, thereby advancing to the final of the qualifier tournament. The goal-scoring duties for Pakistan were shared among four players: Muhammad Umar, Abu Bakr Mehmood,

Continued on Page 06

Middle East crisis

Tehran claims targeting key Israeli locations

"Trump directly calls on Iranian forces—including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), military personnel, and security forces—to surrender immediately, offering "total immunity" in exchange for laying down arms and cooperating

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump declared major victories in the ongoing US-Israeli war against Iran on Friday, claiming that American and allied forces have destroyed 24 Iranian navy ships in just three days, wiped out the country's anti-aircraft systems, and effectively eliminated its air force and naval capabilities. In a series of statements during interviews and public remarks, Trump asserted that Iran's military infrastructure has been devastated "ahead of schedule" and at unprecedented levels. "Their navy is gone. Twenty-four ships in three days—that's a lot of ships," he said, adding that anti-aircraft weapons have been

Continued on Page 06

Qatar may halt energy supplies

NEWS DESK

DOHAN: Qatar expects all Gulf energy producers to shut down exports within weeks if the Iran conflict continues and drives oil to \$150 a barrel, the country's Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi told the Financial Times in an interview published on Friday. Qatar halted its production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) on Monday, as Iran continued to strike Gulf countries in retaliation for

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Punjab education minister says 'no closure'

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat on Friday said the provincial government is not considering closing schools or shifting classes online. The clarification came amid speculation that authorities may introduce energy-saving measures following concerns over rising oil prices after the US-Israeli attack on Iran. In a post on X, the minister said schools across Punjab would remain open according to schedule and that there was no proposal to suspend in-person classes or introduce online learning. Speaking to the media, Hayat noted that educational institutions were currently conducting assessments for students from Grade VIII to XII, emphasising that the government was not planning to impose such restrictions.

ECP rejects KP govt plea

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday rejected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's plea to postpone the delimitation exercise in 24 districts of the province for the upcoming local government elections. According to informed sources, the KP government had sought a delay of 180 days in conducting the delimitation exercise in 24 districts. Meanwhile, the province's chief secretary had also written to the electoral watchdog, seeking a delay in local body polls due to the provincial government's plan to amend the Local Government Act, 2013. In his letter, the chief secretary had also written that the ECP had not consulted the provincial government before initiating the delimitation process.

Operation to continue

Security forces kill 527 Afghan Taliban fighters, says Tarar

Forces target several Afghan Taliban positions in Kurram sector: sources

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's armed forces are continuing ground and air operations against Afghan Taliban fighters and the militant group referred to as "Fitna al-Khawarij", security sources said. According to the sources, security forces carried out a successful operation against Afghan Taliban positions in the Kurram sector along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, destroying several posts. The army reportedly targeted the positions of Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khawarij using heavy artillery fire, the sources added. Security officials said the operation, named "Ghazab li-Haq", remains ongoing and will continue until its objectives are achieved. Meanwhile, Afghanistan has effectively become a "master proxy" in the ongoing regional

Continued on Page 06

One dead in Bannu

NEWS DESK

MIRANSHAH: At least one person was killed and 19 others, including two security personnel, were injured in a blast near the Chashma Sarbandki checkpoint on the Bannu-Miranshah main road in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district on Friday, police and hospital officials said. Police sources told Dawn that initial information showed that the blast was caused by the detonation of explosives in a vehicle near the checkpoint.

Continued on Page 06

US approval of Russian oil sparks outrage in India

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The Indian National Congress on Friday assailed the Narendra Modi-led BJP government after the US temporarily allowed Russian oil stranded at sea to be sold to India, saying the move called into question the country's autonomy in matters of national interest. The waiver, which the US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said was issued to "enable oil to keep flowing into the global market," comes under heightened tensions in the Middle East following the US-Israeli attack on Iran, sparking uncertainty around oil.

Continued on Page 06

Investigation points to likely US responsibility in Iran school strike

Officials do not rule out possibility that new evidence could emerge that absolves US of responsibility

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US military investigators believe it is likely that US forces were responsible for an apparent strike on an Iranian girls' school that killed scores of children on Saturday but have not yet reached a final conclusion or completed their investigation, two US officials told media agency. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had acknowledged the US military was investigating the incident. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters, did not rule out the possibility that new evidence could emerge that absolves the US of responsibility and points to another responsible party in the incident. Reuters could not determine how much longer the investigation would last or what evidence US investigators are seeking before the assessment can be completed. The White House did not directly comment on the investigation, but press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement to Reuters, "While the Department of War is currently investigating this matter, the Iranian regime targets civilians and children, not the United States of America." Asked about the incident during a news briefing on Wednesday, Hegseth said: "We're investigating that. We, of course, never target civilian targets. But we're taking a

look and investigating that." US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters on Monday that the United States would not deliberately target a school. "The Department of War would be investigating that if that was our strike, and I would refer your question to them," Rubio said. Israeli and US forces have until now divided their attacks in Iran both geographically and by target type, a senior Israeli official and a source with direct knowledge of the joint planning said. While Israel was striking missile launch sites in western Iran, the United States was attacking such targets, as well as naval ones, in the south. The UN human rights office, without saying who it believed was responsible for the strike on the school, called on Tuesday for an investigation. "The onus is on the forces that carried out the attack to investigate it," UN human rights office spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told a press briefing in Geneva. Images of the girls' funeral on Tuesday were shown on Iranian state television. Their small coffins were draped with Iranian flags and passed from a truck across a large crowd towards the grave site. Deliberately attacking a school, hospital, or any other civilian structure would likely be a war crime under international humanitarian law. If a US role were to be confirmed, the strike would rank among the worst cases of civilian casualties in decades of U.S. conflicts in the Middle East.

MONAL

NOW SERVING ON MURREE EXPRESSWAY

30 KM on Islamabad - Murree Expressway
Park Ridge Apartment, Lower Topa

+92 325 0000661-62

monalmurree

Baloch culture guardian of our identity: CM Bugti

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister (CM) Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that Baloch culture is the guardian of our identity, traditions and great historical heritage, in his message issued here on the occasion of Baloch Culture Day.

The CM said that the culture of every province of Pakistan is worthy of respect and Baloch culture is the bright color of this national bouquet.

He said that Baloch traditions reflect the high values of love, bravery and hospitality, saying that cultural days are an effective means of renewing the commitment to our values and connecting the new generation with our heritage.

"It is the need of the hour to enlighten the younger generation about our historical and cultural heritage", he said. He said that the Baloch nation should not become a part of any futile war; national development, peace and stability are our path. The CM mentioned that Baloch youth should make science and research their motto and make education their top priority. He said that Baloch youth should achieve a prominent position with their talents in the modern global race based on artificial intelligence. Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that the Balochistan government has opened the doors of 200 international universities in the world, including Oxford and Harvard, for Baloch youth.—APP

Wahab greets Baloch community on Baloch Cultural Day

KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Monday, extended heartfelt congratulations to the Baloch community on the occasion of Baloch Cultural Day and stated that Baloch civilization reflects our national history, bravery, and traditional dignity in his message, he said that the land of Sindh has for centuries been a custodian of Baloch cultural heritage and traditions, where different communities live together with mutual respect and harmony. The Mayor of Karachi said that Baloch youth are keeping their culture alive and connecting the new generation with their historical roots, which is a commendable effort. He added that the true beauty of Pakistan lies in its cultural diversity and vibrant colors, and it is this diversity that strengthens national unity.—APP

ICCI submits budget proposals for business growth

Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that a stable and business-friendly taxation framework is essential for strengthening economic activity, promoting documentation of the economy and supporting productive sectors. He said that the Chamber had prepared its recommendations after consultation with various segments of the business community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its President Sardar Tahir Mehmood held a meeting with Dr. Najeeb Ahmed Memon, Director General Tax Policy at the Ministry of Finance, and submitted the Chamber's budget proposals for the fiscal year 2026-27 aimed at facilitating businesses and promoting economic growth. Dr. Najeeb Ahmed Memon said that the budget-making process is being carried out in close consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the tax regime does not place an undue burden on taxpayers. He assured the delegation that the proposals submitted by the Islamabad Chamber would be carefully reviewed and considered for incorporation in the upcoming budget proposals. Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that a stable and business-friendly taxation framework is essential for strengthening economic activity, promoting documentation of the economy and supporting productive sectors. He said that the Chamber had prepared its recommendations after consultation with various segments of the business community. He added that the proposals have been formulated by keeping in mind the facilitation for the business community, especially the small traders all over the country. ICCI recommended that digital payments made by Tier-1 retailers should be exempted or granted relief from additional taxes in order to encourage the use of POS systems, banking channels and digital wallets, while discouraging excessive reliance on cash transactions. It proposed facilitation for the handicrafts and carpet sector through relaxation in input invoice requirements and the introduction of a fixed GST rate of up to 3 percent, stating that the sector largely consists of small traditional businesses and simplified taxation would help promote exports and preserve traditional crafts. For the jewellery sector, the ICCI



suggested that gold stock of jewellers should be assessed in weight (grams/tolas) instead of monetary value. The delegation explained that fluctuations in international gold prices artificially increase the value of stock without reflecting actual income, as jewellers often work on gold provided by customers for making or redesigning jewellery. ICCI further proposed exemption of GST on optical frames, glasses and

lenses at both import and retail levels, highlighting that optical products are essential medical devices used for vision correction and should be treated as healthcare necessities rather than luxury retail items. The delegation included ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, former Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Finance Secretary of Islamabad Jewelers Association Ibrar Ahmed.

Petroleum supply adequate

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan on Friday stated that there is no shortage of petroleum in the country; however, global crises could affect prices, adding that a committee constituted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif under the Petroleum Minister is closely monitoring and reviewing the situation on a daily basis and that any measures will be finalized after developing consensus. While speaking to a local news channel, Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan said the government is keeping a close watch on the country's petroleum supply situation to ensure stability in the market. He said there is currently no shortage of petroleum products and authorities are continuously assessing developments that could affect supply or prices. He added that the government was also in contact with Saudi Arabia and other friendly countries to ensure smooth and uninterrupted supply of petroleum products. According to him, relevant institutions were closely monitoring international developments and domestic supply levels on a daily basis. Rana Ihsaan Afzal added that a committee constituted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was reviewing the overall situation and keeping the supply chain under close observation. He noted that after examining the complete scenario, any necessary measures would be finalized through consensus among the committee members. He said the committee has also been tasked with conducting a detailed analysis of the potential fiscal impact in case of a prolonged conflict, adding, this includes closely examining how extended geopolitical tensions could affect the country's financial stability and resources. Rana Ihsaan Afzal added that the committee was reviewing the broader effects of the situation on Pakistan's economy, ensuring that any recommendations take into account both immediate and long-term economic implications. Responding to a query regarding hoarding, he urged the public to remain calm, stating that any temporary increase in prices will stabilize once the supply situation is effectively managed.—APP

SECP registers 3,444 new companies in Feb, total reaches to 287,049

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) registered 3,444 new companies in February, bringing the total number of registered companies in the country to 287,049, reflecting continued growth in Pakistan's corporate sector. Private limited companies accounted for 59 percent of the new registrations, followed by single-member companies at 38 percent. The remaining 3 percent comprised public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, limited liability partnerships, and foreign companies. Foreign investment remained robust, with 82 newly incorporated companies receiving international shareholding, SECP said in a press statement issued here on Friday. China emerged as the leading source of investment with participation in 44 companies, followed by the United States with investments in seven companies. Investors from Palau and Germany participated in three companies each, while Egypt, the United Kingdom, Australia, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Indonesia invested in two companies each. Additional investment originated from Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Jordan, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, the Philippines, Turkey, Portugal, Belgium, and other countries. The primary destinations for foreign investment were the mining and quarrying, trading, and information technology sectors, indicating sustained international interest in Pakistan's natural resources, commercial markets, and expanding digital economy. From a regional perspective, Punjab led with 1,696 new companies, followed by the Islamabad Capital Territory with 656, Sindh with 555, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 317, Gilgit-Baltistan with 174, and Balochistan with 46, demonstrating broad-based geographic expansion of corporate activity. Sector-wise, the information technology and e-commerce sectors remained the leading drivers of growth with 723 new incorporations, followed by the trading sector with 531 registrations, services with 434, and real estate development and construction with 323 new companies. Further diversification was observed across multiple sectors, including tourism and transport (194), food and beverages (165), education (107), mining and quarrying (79), textile (69), marketing and advertisement (64), chemicals (58), pharmaceuticals (58), corporate agricultural farming (57), healthcare (56), engineering (52), cosmetics (50), communications (44), fuel and energy (42), lodging (37), and auto-allied industries (35). In addition, 266 companies were incorporated across various other sectors, including cables and electric goods, sports, and paper and board, reflecting the continued broadening of Pakistan's industrial and business base.—APP

DC launches spring tree plantation drive

BAJAUR: Deputy Commissioner Bajaur Shahid Ali Khan on Friday planted a sapling at the Governor Cottage here to mark the ongoing spring tree plantation campaign in the district, setting a target of planting 400,000 saplings during the current season. Under the Spring 2026 plantation drive, the district administration has set

a target of planting a total of 400,000 saplings across Bajaur with the aim of reducing environmental pollution and promoting a greener environment. Speaking on the occasion, the deputy commissioner directed the District Forest Officer and other administrative officials to ensure effective implementation of the plantation campaign across the district.

He also instructed the authorities concerned to take strict measures to prevent illegal cutting of forests and ensure legal action against those found involved in violations. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief) Ashrafuddin, District Forest Officer Bajaur Muhammad Rashid and officials of the Forest Department were also present on the occasion.—APP

Dry, warm weather expected in KP

PESHAWAR: Most plain and southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are likely to experience dry and relatively warm weather over the next few days, according to the latest weather outlook. Districts including Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan are expected to remain mostly dry, with daytime temperatures likely to stay slightly above normal, said the Met Office here on Friday. In contrast, the upper parts of the province are forecast to witness partly cloudy conditions. Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan and Bajaur may receive light rain at isolated places accompanied by gusty winds and thunder. The Met Office has also predicted light snowfall over the highest mountain peaks in these areas, which is likely to keep temperatures low. Meanwhile, districts of Hazara Division, including Mansehra and Abbottabad, may experience cloudy weather with chances of light drizzle at a few locations. Meanwhile provincial disaster management authority (PDMA) have advised tourists and residents in upper areas to remain cautious and take necessary precautions in view of the changing weather conditions and possible temperature fluctuations.—APP

Pathosight launches AI ecosystem at RMU

DNA

RAWALPINDI: In a landmark development for medical education in Pakistan, Pathosight has become the first health technology company in the country to deploy a fully integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem designed specifically for competency-based medical education, structured teaching, and objective assessment.

The initiative has been launched in collaboration with Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU), which has become the first medical university in Pakistan to pilot this AI-powered educational framework. The partnership marks a significant step toward modernizing medical training through advanced digital technologies.

The initiative is powered by MedEx AI, Pathosight's comprehensive AI-driven medical education platform that integrates simulation, case-based teaching, and structured assessment into a unified learning environment. The system is designed to enhance both teaching and evaluation processes in medical institutions.

The MedEx AI ecosystem includes three key components: SimuCare AI — AI-simulated standardized patients for realistic clinical training, AI Teacher — An AI-assisted system that facilitates Case-Based Learning (CBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL), AI Examiner — An AI-driven platform for structured assessment, performance analytics, and



competency evaluation. Speaking on the development, Prof. Dr. Joharia Azhar highlighted the transformative role of artificial intelligence in education.

"Artificial Intelligence is not here to replace educators or clinicians — it is here to enhance them. With MedEx AI, we are building a scalable framework for competency-based medical education in Pakistan," she said.

Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Umar emphasized the importance of innovation in training future healthcare professionals. "Innovation in medical education is essential for preparing future clinicians.

This collaboration represents a forward-thinking integration of technology into structured training," he stated.

Experts believe the introduction of this AI ecosystem could significantly improve clinical training standards, offering students simulated patient interactions, structured learning pathways, and data-driven performance assessments.

With this milestone, Pakistan is positioning itself at the forefront of AI-enabled medical education innovation in the region, potentially setting a model for other universities to adopt similar technology-driven approaches in healthcare training.

The Smooth Moving Connection

freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING







Our Services

- Packing
- Shipping
- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage

Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Branch Offices

Karachi Floor No. 14, 15, 3rd Floor, Khatir-e-Mil, Main Tariq Road, 172-Block-2, P.E.C.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3453688, 3453949. Fax: (+92 21) 3453740. E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com	Lahore P.O. Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3575881, 3571188. Fax: (+92 42) 3571428. E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com	Peshawar Office No. C-6, 3rd Floor, Zohar Plaza, Laff Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2902778. Fax: (+92 91) 2902888. E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com	Rawalpindi House #4, Street #4, Charsa Anar Road, Dhaire-e-Nas, Rawalpindi. Tel: (+92 35) 77958 858, 91 77948 218. E-mail: rawalpindi@freelinemovers.com
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12/Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway 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



Departments

- 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

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Waqas Ahmed of Waqas Travels hosted iftar dinner for the friends from the Aviation Industry. CEOs and representatives of various airlines attended the iftar, which was hosted at the Sizzling Wok restaurant. DNA

CJP stresses police for ensuring fair investigation

The chief justice expressed confidence that the exposure provided at the Federal Judicial Academy would enhance the officers' understanding of courtroom standards, evidentiary requirements and fair trial principles, thereby strengthening institutional coordination within the justice system

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi on Thursday emphasized that effective justice delivery in the country depends on fair, objective and professional investigation by the police. He expressed these views while interacting with a delegation of 42 probationary officers of the Police Service of Pakistan belonging to the 52nd Common Training Programme at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The officers, who are currently attending a Professional Exchange Programme at the Federal Judicial Academy, visited the

apex court as part of their institutional engagement with key justice sector institutions. The delegation was jointly led by the Director General of the Federal Judicial Academy and the Deputy Commandant of the National Police Academy. During the interactive session, the chief justice highlighted key features of Pakistan's criminal justice system and underscored the central role of the police in ensuring professional investigation, adherence to lawful procedures and protection of citizens' rights. He observed that the police and the courts are inte-

gral components of the criminal justice system, each entrusted with distinct yet complementary responsibilities in the administration of justice. He said while the police are responsible for impartial and lawful investigation, the courts decide cases on the basis of evidence presented before them.

The chief justice expressed confidence that the exposure provided at the Federal Judicial Academy would enhance the officers' understanding of courtroom standards, evidentiary requirements and fair trial principles, thereby strengthen-

ing institutional coordination within the justice system.

He advised the probationary officers to uphold integrity, fairness and fidelity to the rule of law throughout their careers. He further stressed that as public servants they must remain accessible, courteous and responsive to citizens, noting that responsive governance begins with respect for the law and the people it is meant to protect.

At the end of the visit, souvenirs were exchanged between the participants as a gesture of institutional goodwill.—APP

8,343 baloch, Ex-FATA students avail HEC scholarships

ISLAMABAD: In line with the mandate to expand access to quality higher education, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan is awarding a large number of scholarships to Balochistan and erstwhile FATA students under the project entitled, Provision of Higher Education Opportunities for Students of Balochistan and FATA, through a rigorously meritorious process. To date, HEC has awarded 8,343 scholarships to the talented students of underprivileged areas of Balochistan and erstwhile FATA, according to a press release on Friday. As many as 4,583 students from Balochistan and erstwhile FATA have completed their studies and are now contributing to the socio-economic development of Pakistan. The remaining are scholars and are currently on board and soon will complete their studies and play an active role in the socio-economic development of the country. The selection of 1000 undergraduate scholarships for the session 2025-26 is in the final stage and will be finalised soon. Moreover, for the

academic session 2026-27, another 1,000 undergraduate scholarships will be awarded. The project "Provision of Higher Education Opportunities for Students of Balochistan & FATA (President Directives)", approved in October 2007, was launched to provide 2,000 scholarships to talented and deserving students from Balochistan and FATA. Of these scholarships, 1,300 were allocated for undergraduate (BS four/five years) programmes and 700 for postgraduate (MSc two years) studies. The project was successfully completed, and PC-IV has been duly submitted. The initiative played a significant role in expanding access to higher education for the youth of these underserved regions, contributing to human resource development and socio-economic uplift of Balochistan and erstwhile FATA. The project phase-II, approved by CDWP in October 2015, aimed to award 3,500 (2500 Undergraduate and 1000 Postgraduate) scholarships. Since 3,341 (2517 undergraduate and 824 postgraduate) energetic and deserving

scholars have benefited from this phase, 2,581 (1957 undergraduate and 624 postgraduate) have successfully completed their studies and are contributing to the overall economic and social growth of the country. Besides, 760 (570 undergraduate and 190 postgraduate) scholars are currently enrolled and are expected to graduate by June 2027. The project Phase-III, approved in January 2023, aims to award 5,000 undergraduate scholarships to talented and motivated youth from these underserved regions. To date, 3,000 scholarships have been awarded, with 2,531 energetic scholars currently pursuing their studies. The award of 1,000 additional scholarships (Batch-IV) is in process. Moreover, additional 1,000 scholarships will be advertised for the Academic Session 2026-27. The initiative reaffirms the Government of Pakistan's commitment through HEC to empowering meritorious and underprivileged youth of Balochistan and erstwhile FATA.—APP

Seed kits for eight vegetables distributed

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab government is encouraging kitchen gardening by providing certified vegetable seeds to the citizens at affordable rates. These seeds can be cultivated in pots, plastic bags, crates, boxes, open spaces, or on rooftops. Currently, the government is distributing seed kits for eight summer vegetables through the Agriculture Extension Department's network across various districts of the province. "Summer vegetable seed kits are available for sale throughout the province. These vegetables can be grown successfully to obtain inexpensive and pesticide-free produce," Shahid Ashraf, In-Charge of the Kitchen Gardening Scheme at the Punjab Agriculture Department, told Wealth Pakistan. The initiative aims to promote self-sufficiency, improve household nutrition, and encourage sustainable food practices by making fresh, homegrown produce accessible to both urban and rural families. Each kitchen gardening kit contains seeds for at least eight seasonal vegetables. The summer packs currently include okra, bitter melon, sponge gourd, cucumber, tomato, tinda, and chilies. Shahid Ashraf said the public response to kitchen gardening has been very encouraging, with many households successfully growing vegetables at home.—APP

SSP reviews security for Friday prayers

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza visited various duty points across the federal capital to review security arrangements for Friday prayers, including deployments at Masajid, Imambargahs and other sensitive locations. An official told APP on Friday that the SSP inspected security duties and check posts established to ensure peace and law and order during the congregational prayers. He said SSP Qazi met police.—APP

DIG Security reviews Red Zone, Diplomatic enclave security

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Security Islamabad Muhammad Atiq Tahir visited the Red Zone and Diplomatic Enclave to review security arrangements and check the deployment of police officers. An official told APP on Friday that the DIG Atiq inspected various security points and met officers and personnel performing duties at sensitive locations. DIG Atiq Tahir briefed the deployed officers regarding their responsibilities and directed them to remain vigilant.—APP

Robber Injured, arrested in police encounter

WAH CANTT, Mar 6 (APP): A suspected robber was injured and arrested in a police encounter within the jurisdiction of Saddar Wah Police Station on Friday, while his accomplices managed to escape from the scene, the police said. According to police sources, the incident occurred in Sadat Colony near Wah General Hospital when a police team on routine patrol signaled two men riding a motorcycle to stop. Instead of ...—APP

WASA restores tanker water supply

RAWALPINDI: The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi has restored normal water supply through tankers in Adiala Road and adjoining areas, following a temporary disruption caused by ongoing remodelling work at Kachehri Chowk. WASA Rawalpindi Managing Director, Azizullah Khan, said Thursday that providing clean water to city residents remained the Agency's top priority. He added that tanker services were now operating normally across areas previously affected by the project. He said that on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema, WASA teams remained active in the field to improve the water distribution system and ensure uninterrupted supply to residential localities.

Weekly inflation rises by 0.37pc

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), recorded an increase of 0.37 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended March 5, 2026, as compared to the corresponding week of last year. The SPI for the week under review increased to 335.09 points from 333.86 points recorded in the previous week, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. On a year-on-year basis, however, the SPI registered an increase of 4.70 percent. The SPI, with base year 2015-16 = 100, monitors price movements of 51 essential items across 17 urban centres, covering all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) remained unchanged at 323.48 points. However, the SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 increased by 0.09 percent, 0.16 percent, 0.26 percent and 0.53 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 monitored items, prices of 13 items (25.49

percent) increased, 11 items (21.57 percent) decreased, while 27 items (52.94 percent) remained stable. Major commodities registering week-on-week increases included chicken (10.46%), LPG (5.61%), bananas (3.85%), petrol (3.06%), diesel (1.84%), garlic (1.23%), beef (0.66%), mutton (0.65%), pulse mash (0.51%), lawn printed (0.43%), gur (0.30%) and mustard oil (0.24%). On the other hand, the commodities that witnessed decline in prices included tomatoes (10.04%), eggs (8.13%), onions (6.08%), potatoes (5.09%), wheat flour (2.40%), pulse gram (0.50%), pulse moong (0.43%) and cooking oil 5 litre (0.37%). On a year-on-year basis, notable increases were observed in gas charges for Q1 (29.85%), wheat flour (26.13%), electricity charges for Q1 (17.33%), LPG (16.89%), chilies powder (15.20%), beef (12.36%), firewood (11.40%), powdered milk (10.16%), mutton (9.32%), tomatoes (9.02%), gur (8.51%) and rice basmati broken (6.18%). However, significant annual declines were recorded in potatoes (53.76%), onions (26.10%), eggs (24.93%), garlic (22.25%), chicken (21.70%), pulse gram (21.37%), salt powder (12.52%) and pulse masoor (10.71%).

اٹل اینڈ گیس
ریگولٹری اتھارٹی
حکومت پاکستان

**Oil & Gas
Regulatory Authority**
Government of Pakistan

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

RE-SCHEDULING OF PUBLIC HEARING

This is in continuation of OGRA's earlier Public Hearing Notices published in the national press on 21-02-2026 and postponement of the same on 27-02-2026.

In this regard, the Authority is pleased to reschedule the Public Hearing for **March 11, 2026 (Wednesday)**. Time and venue shall remain the same.

(Ms Raheela Mustafa)
Senior Registrar
Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
OGRA Office 37- Mauve Area, Service Road South, Sector G-10/4, Islamabad.
Phone: 051-9108889, 051-9108890-98 (Ext-123), Fax: 051-9108810
Email: registrar@ogra.org.pk

PID(I)7284/25

Public Service Message:
گیس کیج جان لیوا حادثات کا سبب بن سکتی ہے، احتیاطی تدابیر یقینی بنائیں اور حادثات سے بچیں۔

Briefs

Social justice impossible without women's dignity

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Punjab Women Protection Authority, Hina Parvez Butt, on Friday said ensuring equal opportunities and protection for women remains a top priority of the government, stressing that outdated stereotypes must be dismantled and, in that respect, equal rights and safety for women are not favors but fundamental responsibilities of society.

Hina Parvez Butt emphasized in an interview with a local news channel that dignity and equal opportunities for women are non-negotiable, and protecting women's rights is a core responsibility of the state and society. She highlighted that the Punjab Women Protection Authority is actively working to provide support and protection to women across the province. The Authority's helpline remains available 24/7 to assist women facing harassment, violence, or discrimination, ensuring immediate guidance and intervention when needed. Hina Butt identified major barriers to women's progress, including deeply ingrained stereotypes, restrictive traditions, and gender-based discrimination. She noted that these social obstacles often limit women's access to education, employment, and leadership roles, holding back both individual potential and societal progress. She further explained that breaking these barriers requires more laws and the public awareness campaigns, community engagement and active participation from families and institutions are essential to change mindsets and create an environment where women can fully exercise their rights. Concluding her remarks, Hina Parvez Butt stressed that empowering women is central to building a fair and just society, adding, communities to challenge outdated norms, support women's advancement and recognize that respect, equal rights and protection for women are fundamental responsibilities, not favors.—APP

SAPM reviews Pakistan-Uzbekistan trade coop

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Friday chaired a meeting of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Joint Working Group and reviewed progress on bilateral economic cooperation and explore new avenues for expanding trade between the two countries. The meeting marked the second session of the joint working group on trade, aimed at strengthening economic engagement and enhancing bilateral trade, said a news release. Secretary Commerce Javad Paul, along with representatives from various ministries and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), attended the meeting. During the session, participants reviewed progress on previously agreed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and discussed measures to promote trade, improve trade routes, and expand cooperation in multiple sectors. Speaking on the occasion, Haroon said that under the prime minister's vision, a Five-Year Roadmap (2026-2030) would be presented to significantly increase trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, said adding that the implementation of agreed protocols would also be carried out through the strategic roadmap. Haroon said both countries were entering a new phase of economic partnership that would create fresh opportunities for bilateral trade and investment. To prepare sector-specific strategies, eight working groups have been established, each tasked with developing detailed roadmaps for their respective sectors, which were presented during the meeting. Haroon also highlighted that an alternative trade route through China for Uzbekistan could prove shorter and more efficient, and a comprehensive plan is currently under development. Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in key sectors including energy, transport, agriculture, and industry.—APP

Motorway police cops get awards for honesty

DSP Khurram Shehzad, Inspector Rai Imtiaz and Constable Zeeshan recovered a stolen vehicle

DNA

ISLAMABAD - Additional Inspector General of Police, National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Muhammad Wisal Fakhra Sultan Thursday awarded Commendation Certificates and cash awards to NHMP officers in recognition of their exceptional performance and dedication towards official duties.

According to details, DSP Khurram Shehzad, Inspector Rai Imtiaz and Constable Zeeshan Irfan recovered a snatched vehicle from their area of responsibility. Motorway Police received information regarding a stolen Alto car from Sialkot. Upon receiving the information, displaying intense efforts and professional skills, the Motorway police officers were able to re-



cover the vehicle from Muridke. In recognition of their efforts, the Additional Inspector General Muhammad Wisal Fakhra Sultan awarded the officers with commendation certificates and suitable cash rewards. Meanwhile, Inspector Bilal and Inspector Saeed Nadir had recovered a bag worth Rs 5.3 Million from Kallar Kahar rest area, and returned it to owner

safely. Inspector Mushahid, Inspector Zaki Hassan, Inspector Ehtisham and Inspector Allah Ditta were awarded the same on their exceptional duty during road safety awareness sessions, which helped spread the awareness messages of NHMP more effectively. Furthermore, Inspector Nadeem, Sub Inspector Shabana and Photographer Wajid Hussain were

also awarded certificates and cash prize in acknowledgment of their versatile approach in conducting briefing sessions at toll plazas. Also, Sub Inspector Taj Nabi was awarded the commendation certificate and cash prize on actively responding to road closures and subsequently working to navigate commuters safely. The officers were awarded with

certificates during a ceremony by Additional Inspector General (North Region), Muhammad Wisal Fakhra Sultan.

On the occasion, the Additional Inspector General of Police, Muhammad Wisal Fakhra Sultan commended the officers on their exceptional performance. He further hoped that the officers will further contribute in keeping the bar high.

OECD highlights CCP's use of AI tools

DNA

ISLAMABAD, 06 MARCH 2026: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has detected more than 200 potential competition law violations and merger cases during the past two years using artificial intelligence and automated digital tools developed by its Market Intelligence Unit (MIU). A paper titled "Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Detecting Anti-Competitive Activities: Pakistan's Journey toward Modernized Competition Enforcement," published in the Asia-Pacific Competition Update of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), outlines CCP's initiatives to strengthen and modernise its enforcement functions through the use of advanced technologies and AI-driven monitoring tools. Pakistan's rapidly digitizing markets and the surge in unstructured data from procurement, advertising, and financial disclosures prompted the CCP

to establish the Market Intelligence Unit in October 2023, shifting from complaint-based enforcement to proactive, AI-driven market monitoring. The paper stated that the CCP's AI-driven monitoring systems identified 212 potential cases across multiple categories. These included 124 deceptive marketing cases, 58 merger and acquisition detections, 25 cartel and trade abuse cases, and 5 exemption-related matters. The cases were flagged through automated market monitoring, data analytics, and digital surveillance tools aimed at strengthening enforcement of the Competition Act. One of CCP's key initiatives is an AI-driven public procurement monitoring system that analyses thousands of tender documents to detect suspicious bidding patterns and possible collusion. This system can process tens of thousands of records in hours instead of months of manual review. CCP has also introduced an Automated Digital Market Intelligence System that continuously monitors online ad-

vertisements, social media content, and digital platforms to detect deceptive marketing practices. The system generates real-time alerts and helps quickly identify misleading claims and potentially harmful advertising practices affecting consumers. In addition, CCP has developed an automated merger detection framework that monitors stock exchange announcements, media reports, and company disclosures to identify transactions that may require regulatory approval under Pakistan's merger control regime. Another innovation is the Price Monitoring Dashboard, which analyses commodity price data across multiple regions to detect unusual or parallel price movements that may signal anti-competitive behaviour. By integrating artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automated monitoring tools, CCP has significantly enhanced its ability to detect competition violations early, generate actionable intelligence, and strengthen enforcement.

SBP should stop buying dollars from market

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Shahid Rasheed Butt, has urged the central bank to stop purchasing dollars in the domestic market, warning that this practice is contributing to economic distortions and inflationary pressures. In a statement issued here, he said foreign exchange reserves should be strengthened primarily through exports, remittances, and foreign investment, which are sustainable sources of external stability. Shahid Rasheed Butt said the State Bank of Pakistan has purchased around \$24 billion from the local market over the past three years, a trend he described as worrying for the economy. He noted that in most countries, foreign exchange reserves grow through export earnings, overseas investment inflows, and remittances sent by expatriates. However, the repeated need for the central bank to purchase dollars from the domestic market indicates that Pakistan still needs to significantly strengthen its export base and attract higher levels of foreign investment.

The business leader said the central bank's purchases reduce the availability of dollars in the market, increasing pressure on the Pakistani rupee and creating difficulties for importers. As the supply of foreign currency tightens, import costs rise, eventually translating into higher prices for goods and services. He warned that the resulting increase in import costs contributes directly to inflation, placing additional financial strain on households and businesses already coping with high energy prices and rising living expenses. Butt added that if the central bank must continuously buy dollars in the local market to maintain foreign exchange reserves, this suggests the country's external earnings have not yet reached the required level to ensure stability. He emphasized that economic policymaking should not remain limited to short-term financial balancing measures but should instead focus on long-term structural reforms. Pakistan, he said, needs to adopt an export-oriented growth strategy by promoting value-added industries and ensuring exporters have access to reliable and affordable energy supplies. Simplifying the tax system and improving the overall business environment would also help boost competitiveness.

Evolving situation in Iran and Pak response

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Roundtable Discussion on "Evolving Situation in Iran and Pakistan's Policy Response" on March 06, 2026. Former diplomats, leading academics and prominent practitioners joined the discussion, which focused on the evolving situation in Iran, its regional implications, and Pakistan's current and future policy outlook. Participants noted that the situation in Iran remains highly tense following the recent United States and Israeli strikes and Iran's subsequent retaliatory actions. These developments have heightened tensions across the Middle East and raised concerns about regional stability and security. The importance of dialogue and diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation was also underlined, while safeguarding regional stability and Pakistan's security and foreign policy interests. Pakistan's role as a potential mediator in promoting diplomatic engagement and regional stability amid growing uncertainties in the Middle East was also highlighted. The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule.

ITP announces diversions on key roads

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Friday issued a traffic advisory announcing limited access to the Red Zone and diversions on several key roads of the federal capital to regulate traffic flow. An ITP official told APP that Margalla Road and the route via the Marriott Hotel will remain open for entry into the Red Zone, while all other entry points leading towards the area will remain closed. ... He said Kulsum Plaza on Fazl-e-Haq Road towards China Chowk will remain closed for traffic, and commuters are advised to use Jinnah Avenue as an alternate route. Similarly, traffic coming from Poly-clinic towards Lal Quarter Chowk via Luqman Hakim Road will be diverted, and citizens have been advised to use Sadr Road as an alternative route. The official said commuters travelling from G-6 to F-6 should use China Chowk Underpass or Seventh Avenue via Jinnah Avenue.—APP

World orphan day observed

DNA

RAWALPINDI: To commemorate World Orphan Day, observed across the Islamic world on the 15th of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, an impressive and well attended ceremony followed by a grand Iftar Dinner for 350 inmates of Apna Ghar of AFI hosted by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) was held at the Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam (AFI) Faizabad Markaz, Murree Road, Rawalpindi here on the other day. The Chairperson of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Mrs. Farzana Naik was present on the occasion as the Chief Guest, while the Guest of Honor was TRCS Head of Delegation, Ms. Beyza Taner. Other distinguished participants included AFI President Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmed, Vice President Lt. Col. (R) Mian Jamil Athar, General Secretary Group Captain (R) Pervez Akhtar, and senior officials from both Red Crescent societies coupled with 350 orphans residing in APNA GHAR of AFI. Addressing the gathering, Mrs. Farzana Naik highlighted the profound Islamic teachings regarding the care and upbringing of orphans. She lauded the exemplary services of Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam, stating that protecting children from a sense of deprivation and feeding them with honor is a fundamental religious duty. In an inspiring gesture, she invited

the children to join the PRCS after completing their education to serve the nation as professional humanitarians. She specifically praised the Turkish Red Crescent Society for their

ten times, describing the Pak-Turk relationship as "time-tested" and anchored in mutual respect. He noted that the Turkish Red Crescent Society traditionally hosts this Iftar dinner



practical and heartwarming gesture of hosting this dinner, noting it as a beautiful way to observe the orphan day and strengthen the brotherly ties between Pakistan and Türkiye. In his briefing on the institution's historic legacy, AFI President Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmed revealed that Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam was founded in 1943, four years before the creation of Pakistan at the personal behest of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Reflecting on the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye, Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmed shared that he has visited Türkiye

every 15th of Ramadan for the orphans of AFI, symbolizing the enduring brotherhood between the two nations. TRCS Head of Delegation Ms. Beyza Taner expressed her deep admiration for AFI's mission. In a moving gesture of solidarity, she visited the children at their dining tables to encourage them, telling them they are the future of Pakistan and should never feel alone. The event concluded with AFI Vice President Mian Jamil Athar thanking the Turkish Red Crescent members for their unwavering support, followed by a special prayer led by Qari Ghulam Farooq for the collective welfare of the Muslim Ummah.

Mishal Pakistan to conduct survey in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mishal Pakistan, the Country Partner Institute of the World Economic Forum (WEF), has announced the launch of the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) 2026 in Pakistan. The survey will be conducted from March to May 2026 and will gather perception-based insights from Pakistan's business leaders regarding the country's economic environment, governance, competitiveness, and institutional performance. The survey is being implemented in Pakistan by Mishal Pakistan in its capacity as the official Coun-

try Partner Institute of the World Economic Forum, responsible for coordinating the survey process, outreach to the business community, and ensuring the quality and integrity of the national dataset. First launched by the World Economic Forum in 1979, the Executive Opinion Survey is conducted annually in more than 150 economies and collects responses from approximately 15,000 senior business executives worldwide each year. It is widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive global perception surveys on the business environment, capturing insights that often cannot be measured through traditional

statistical indicators. The survey includes over 80 questions covering key pillars of national competitiveness, including institutional quality, corruption, judicial independence, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, innovation capability, labor markets, financial systems, gender equality, and business dynamism. Executives assess these areas based on their real-world experience of operating in their respective economies. Commenting on the launch of the survey, Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer of Mishal Pakistan, said "This year's Executive Opinion Survey is particularly significant for Pakistan. The country is undergoing a period

of economic recalibration, institutional reforms, and policy adjustments aimed at strengthening competitiveness and governance. Capturing the perceptions of business leaders during this phase is essential. These insights help global institutions understand the realities of Pakistan's business environment and ensure that the country's reform trajectory and economic potential are accurately reflected in international datasets." Data from the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) feeds into several major global reports and analytical publications produced by the World Economic Forum and other international institutions.

MOST EXPERIENCED
MANUFACTURERS &
EXPORTERS OF
MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS
IN
PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JUTSU
TAEKWONDO
UNIFORMS AND
COLOURED BELTS

Ashraf

ASHRAF INDUSTRIES (PVT) LTD
127 C, Industrial Estate
Sialkot-51340, Pakistan
Phones: +92-52-5256000 / 3255788
E-mail: info@ashraf.net.pk

Japan and Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

THE Indo-Pacific has emerged as the defining geopolitical theatre of the 21st century. Stretching from the eastern shores of Africa to the western Pacific, it is home to vital sea lanes, rising economies and a delicate balance of power. As rivalries intensify and economic interdependence deepens, middle and major powers alike are recalibrating their strategies. In this evolving landscape, Japan and Indonesia two maritime democracies with distinct histories but converging interests are steadily shaping the region's future. For Japan, the Indo-Pacific is not merely a geographic expression but a strategic vision. Tokyo was among the first to articulate the idea of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", underscoring respect for international law, freedom of navigation and rules-based connectivity. As a trading nation dependent on sea routes for energy and commerce, Japan's security and prosperity are closely tied to the stability of the South China Sea and the broader Pacific. In recent years, Japan has moved beyond its traditionally cautious post-war posture. It has expanded defence cooperation with regional partners, enhanced maritime capacity-building assistance, and deepened its alliance with the United States while also diversifying partnerships across Southeast Asia. This shift does not signal a departure from its pacifist principles but reflects a pragmatic reading of strategic realities. The war in Ukraine and rising tensions in East Asia have reinforced Tokyo's belief that deterrence and diplomacy must go hand in hand. Indonesia's position is equally pivotal, though its approach differs in tone and emphasis. As the world's largest archipelagic state and Southeast Asia's biggest economy, Indonesia sits astride some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Its strategic geography makes it both a beneficiary of and a guardian over Indo-Pacific stability. Yet Jakarta has consistently avoided formal alignments, preferring instead a doctrine of "free and active" foreign policy. Indonesia's leadership within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) amplifies its influence. ASEAN centrality remains a cornerstone of Jakarta's diplomacy, even as external powers compete for leverage in the region. By advocating dialogue, inclusive cooperation and adherence to international law, Indonesia seeks to prevent the Indo-Pacific from hardening into rival blocs. Its stewardship during regional summits has often reflected a careful balancing act – engaging major powers without becoming entangled in their disputes. The convergence between Japan and Indonesia lies in their shared commitment to maritime security and economic resilience. Japan is one of Indonesia's largest investors and development partners, financing infrastructure, transport networks

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily
 Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
 Deputy Editor: Abid Raza
 Member APNS / ABC Certified
 Vol: 06 Issue:
 Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
 Phone: 051-8488394
 Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



and energy projects. These initiatives are not merely commercial ventures; they serve as strategic anchors that bind the two countries together in a web of mutual interest. Infrastructure development, particularly in ports and connectivity, strengthens Indonesia's maritime ambitions while offering Japan reliable economic footholds. Security cooperation has also gathered momentum. Joint naval exercises, coast guard collaboration and defence dialogues signal a maturing partnership. For Indonesia, Japanese assistance in maritime domain awareness and capacity building enhances its ability to patrol its vast waters, including areas around the Natuna Islands where tensions occasionally flare. For Japan, closer ties with Indonesia reinforce a networked approach to regional security – one that complements but does not replicate its alliance system. Economically, both countries are navigating a world of supply chain disruptions and protectionist impulses. Japan's push to diversify manufacturing bases has dovetailed with Indonesia's ambition to move up the value chain, particularly in sectors such as electric vehicles and critical minerals. Indonesia's vast nickel reserves have drawn Japanese investment, reflecting the intersection of resource security and green transition strategies. In this sphere, cooperation offers a template for how middle and major economies can align development goals with strategic considerations. Yet challenges persist. The South China Sea remains a flashpoint, with competing territorial claims and frequent maritime incidents. While Japan is not a claimant, it has consistently voiced concern over unilateral actions that alter the status quo. Indonesia, though not formally party to the main disputes, has faced encroachments in its exclusive economic zone. Both countries thus share an interest in upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and resisting coercive behaviour. At the same time, neither Tokyo nor Jakarta seeks confrontation. Their policies reflect an understanding that China is both a strategic competitor and an indispensable economic partner. Managing this duality requires diplomatic dexterity. Japan has maintained high-level engagement with Beijing even as it strengthens deterrence. Indonesia, for its part, has welcomed Chinese investment while insisting on sovereignty and non-interference. This calibrated approach underscores a broader regional preference for stability over zero-sum rivalry. Climate change and disaster resilience offer another arena for collaboration. The Indo-Pacific is acutely vulnerable to rising sea levels, extreme weather and environmental degradation. Japan's technological expertise and Indonesia's ecological stewardship can converge in projects that address sustainability. From renewable energy to coastal protection, such cooperation carries both humanitarian and strategic dividends, reinforcing resilience in a volatile region. Importantly, the partnership between Japan and Indonesia reflects a broader shift in regional order. The Indo-Pacific is no longer shaped solely by great-power competition. Middle powers are asserting agency, crafting flexible coalitions and championing multilateral norms. Japan's outreach to Southeast Asia and Indonesia's insistence on ASEAN centrality exemplify this trend. Together, they illustrate how strategic autonomy and principled engagement can coexist. For Pakistan and other South Asian states observing these dynamics, the lesson is instructive. The Indo-Pacific's future will not be determined by rivalry alone but by the capacity of regional actors to uphold inclusive frameworks. Economic connectivity, maritime cooperation and adherence to international law remain essential pillars of stability. Japan and Indonesia, in their respective ways, are investing in these pillars. Looking ahead, the durability of their roles will depend on domestic resilience as much as external alignment.

UK and France Join US–Israel War Against Iran

Qamar Bashir



The statement highlighted a grim reality of modern geopolitical struggles. Individuals cultivated as future allies or political alternatives can quickly become expendable once military escalation takes precedence over diplomacy.

The very people once viewed as assets capable of shaping a post-conflict political landscape can disappear in the fog of war.

Beyond the immediate battlefield, the strategic stakes extend even further.

The Strait of Hormuz – through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes – remains one of the most important chokepoints in global trade

WHEN the first strikes were launched against Iran, the British government attempted to create distance from the unfolding conflict. Prime Minister Keir Starmer initially told the public that the United Kingdom was not involved in the attacks and would not participate in offensive military operations against Iran. The message was clear: Britain would support stability, protect its citizens, and avoid becoming another direct participant in a Middle Eastern war. Yet within days that narrative began to unravel. Standing before reporters at Downing Street, Starmer revealed that Britain had in fact been preparing for the crisis long before the war formally began. Throughout January and February, the United Kingdom had already moved fighter jets, air-defense systems, radar installations, and other military assets to bases in Cyprus and Qatar, placing the country in what he described as a "heightened state of readiness." Shortly after the strikes began, British aircraft reportedly intercepted drones approaching a base housing British personnel. Additional deployments followed quickly: four more fighter jets were dispatched to Qatar, helicopters equipped with anti-drone capabilities were sent to Cyprus, and the Royal Navy destroyer HMS Dragon was ordered into the eastern Mediterranean. These developments revealed a deeper reality. Once aircraft, warships, missile defenses, and surveillance systems are placed inside a conflict zone, a country cannot convincingly claim to be merely watching events unfold. Whether described as defensive or not, those assets become part of the military architecture of war. That reality became evident almost immediately. A drone strike targeted the British air base at Akrotiri in Cyprus, prompting criticism from Cypriot officials who said they had not been adequately informed of the risks surrounding British military activity on the island. The attack demonstrated how quickly military installations become targets in an expanding conflict. Even if Britain insists it is not directly participating in offensive strikes, its bases, personnel, and equipment are already inside the operational theatre. Meanwhile the war has also strained relations between London and Washington. President Donald Trump publicly criticized Starmer for hesitating to provide full support for American operations, particularly after the British government initially resisted allowing the United States to use the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean for strikes against Iran. Although Britain later permitted certain defensive uses of British facilities, the episode exposed unusual tension in what both governments continue to call the "special relationship." Starmer now finds himself walking a political tightrope. On one side lies Britain's long-standing strategic alliance with the United States. On the other lies deep domestic skepticism about another Western intervention in the Middle East. Memories of Iraq remain powerful in British politics, and public opinion reflects that caution. Recent polling suggests that nearly half of British voters oppose the U.S. strikes on Iran, while only a minority

support them. Yet while Western leaders frame the war as necessary for stability and security, critics point to the familiar language that has accompanied earlier interventions. Iraq was presented as a mission of liberation. Libya was described as a humanitarian necessity. Afghanistan was framed as a campaign to rebuild a nation. In each case the promises of stability and prosperity ultimately gave way to fractured societies, weakened economies, and prolonged instability. Now Iran faces a similar concentration of Western military power. The combined strength of the United States, Britain, and France vastly exceeds Iran's conventional capabilities. France has already moved the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and accompanying naval forces toward the Mediterranean, while Britain has reinforced its regional presence through aircraft, missile defenses, and naval deployments. The imbalance of power is obvious. Iran has lived for decades under sanctions that have restricted access to modern aircraft and advanced military systems. Its air force and defense infrastructure cannot easily match the technological superiority of the Western coalition now gathering around it. In that context, triumphant declarations of military superiority begin to sound less like strategic analysis and more like expressions of overwhelming force against a far weaker adversary. Another striking contradiction lies in the moral justification being offered for the war. Western leaders frequently argue that their actions are intended to protect the Iranian people from repression. Yet the human cost of the conflict already raises uncomfortable questions. Reports emerging from the region indicate that more than a thousand people have been killed since the beginning of the strikes. Many of those casualties are civilians – the same ordinary citizens whose protection is repeatedly cited as one of the war's objectives. Bridges, hospitals, economic facilities, and military installations have all been hit in the course of the expanding campaign, leaving ordinary Iranians to endure the consequences of decisions made far beyond their control. The rhetoric surrounding regime change has also revealed a troubling attitude toward those who were once seen as potential political partners. During a press interaction, President Trump was asked whether any names existed to replace Iran's current leadership. His response was stark. According to his remarks, many of the individuals once considered potential alternatives had already been killed, and others who might replace them could also be eliminated in the course of the conflict. The statement highlighted a grim reality of modern geopolitical struggles. Individuals cultivated as future allies or political alternatives can quickly become expendable once military escalation takes precedence over diplomacy. The very people once viewed as assets capable of shaping a post-conflict

political landscape can disappear in the fog of war. Beyond the immediate battlefield, the strategic stakes extend even further. The Strait of Hormuz – through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes – remains one of the most important chokepoints in global trade. Any escalation in the region risks disrupting the flow of energy to markets across Europe and Asia. At the same time, an expanded Western naval presence in the region would effectively place one of the world's most vital maritime corridors under heavy military oversight. Such developments inevitably raise questions about the broader geopolitical objectives of the war. While the official narrative emphasizes security and stability, the strategic implications of controlling key maritime routes and supply chains cannot be ignored. Inside Britain, the government continues to emphasize that its role remains defensive and limited. Yet the pattern is familiar to anyone who has observed the early stages of past conflicts. Wars rarely appear all at once. They arrive gradually: a deployment here, a protective mission there, a logistical necessity followed by a defensive authorization. Each step appears modest when viewed individually. Taken together, they reveal a steady movement toward deeper involvement. History offers many examples of this process. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria all began with limited objectives and carefully framed justifications. Over time those conflicts expanded beyond their original scope, leaving behind societies struggling to rebuild amid political fragmentation and economic devastation. The danger today is not simply that another war is unfolding. The deeper concern is that the lessons of previous interventions seem to fade each time a new crisis emerges. Modern societies possess extraordinary scientific knowledge, technological capability, and access to information. Yet the same nations that lead the world in education and innovation often find themselves repeating patterns that history has already judged harshly. Perhaps the most sobering conclusion is that history itself rarely lacks clear warnings. The tragedies of past wars remain visible for anyone willing to examine them. What often disappears is the willingness to listen. When power becomes intoxicating and strategic dominance appears irresistible, the lessons of history are easily dismissed as relics of another era. And when that happens, humanity does not move forward through wisdom. It moves in circles – rediscovering through destruction what it once knew through memory.

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

Echoes of Deception: From USS Liberty to the Gulf Crisis

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The attack lasted more than an hour. By the time it ended, thirty-four American servicemen had lost their lives and one hundred seventy-one others were wounded. Despite the presence of a clearly visible American flag and repeated signals identifying the ship, the assault continued with remarkable precision. The survival of the vessel owed much to the extraordinary courage of its captain...

THERE is a well-known proverb in Urdu which says that a thief may abandon the act of theft, but he rarely abandons the habit of manipulation and deceit. This old saying appears strikingly relevant in the unfolding drama of contemporary geopolitics. In the Gulf region today, a dangerous confrontation has emerged in which the United States and Israel appear engaged in a direct contest with Iran while simultaneously pursuing indirect pressure across other countries of the region. The declared and undeclared objective of this confrontation seems to have been the weakening or eventual collapse of the Iranian political order. Yet, despite sustained political, military, and psychological pressure, this objective has so far remained beyond reach. Instead of producing internal fragmentation, the crisis has produced a contrary effect. The martyrdom of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has generated an emotional and political wave of unity across Iranian society. According to accounts circulating in the region, he had been advised by his security advisers to relocate to a fortified bunker for safety. He is said to have rejected that suggestion with the words that he could not abandon his people in their hour of trial. Whether interpreted as symbolism or sacrifice, the narrative has strengthened the spirit of national solidarity inside Iran and has complicated the strategic calculations of its adversaries. As the expected political collapse failed to materialize, the theatre of conflict began expanding in other directions. In recent weeks missile and drone strikes have been reported in several countries including Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other states situated around the wider Gulf and Middle Eastern region. The immediate accusations pointed toward Iran as the orchestrator of these attacks, creating an atmosphere of suspicion and alarm among neighbouring states. Such accusations, if accepted without scrutiny, could easily push regional powers into a broader military alignment against Tehran, thereby transforming a limited confrontation into a far wider war. Yet, in the age of digital surveillance, satellite intelligence, and advanced communication technologies, the narrative has begun to unravel. Investigations conducted through various technological means have suggested that Iran may not have been responsible for these attacks at all. Instead,

emerging indications point toward a calculated attempt to fabricate evidence and manipulate regional perceptions. If these findings prove accurate, they would imply that the strikes were not acts of retaliation by Iran but rather components of a strategic deception designed to provoke neighbouring states into entering the conflict. In the shadows of geopolitics, history often repeats itself – not as a farce, but as a chilling reenactment with different actors and familiar motives. A historical episode from nearly six decades ago offers an unsettling parallel. On June 8, 1967, during the Six-Day War between Israel and several Arab nations, the American naval intelligence ship USS Liberty was sailing in international waters near the Sinai Peninsula. The vessel, clearly marked and not configured for combat, suddenly came under a devastating assault by Israeli fighter jets and torpedo boats. The attack lasted more than an hour. By the time it ended, thirty-four American servicemen had lost their lives and one hundred seventy-one others were wounded. Despite the presence of a clearly visible American flag and repeated signals identifying the ship, the assault continued with remarkable precision. The survival of the vessel owed much to the extraordinary courage of its captain, Commander William L. McGonagle. Severely wounded early in the attack, he remained at his command post on the bridge and continued directing the crew while the damaged ship struggled to remain afloat. His leadership ultimately prevented the vessel from sinking. Commander McGonagle was later awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration in the United States. Yet the ceremony was conducted quietly at the Washington Navy Yard rather than at the White House, an unusual decision widely interpreted as an attempt to minimize diplomatic tensions with Israel and avoid public controversy. Survivors of the attack have consistently maintained that the strike was deliberate. Petty Officer Ernie Gallo famously remarked that the ship's identity was unmistakable, while another survivor, Joe Meadors, described the event as cold-blooded murder. For decades these voices have continued to challenge the official narrative that the assault was merely a tragic mistake. The parallels between the USS Liberty episode and the unfolding developments of 2026 are difficult to ignore. In both

situations, an initial act of violence served to shape public perception and justify broader strategic objectives. In 1967 the attack removed a potentially inconvenient witness and risked drawing the United States deeper into the regional conflict. In the present crisis, alleged attacks attributed to Iran appear to be aimed at mobilizing neighbouring countries against Tehran and widening the battlefield. A second similarity lies in the manipulation of information. In the Liberty case, the explanation of mistaken identity persisted despite substantial evidence to the contrary. In the current situation, the narrative attributing the missile and drone strikes to Iran has begun to face serious technological and investigative challenges. When information becomes an instrument of strategy rather than a reflection of truth, the boundaries between defense and deception become dangerously blurred. A third parallel concerns the silence that often follows such controversies. Governments frequently subordinate uncomfortable truths to diplomatic expediency, while media narratives are shaped by strategic alliances and political calculations. In the Liberty incident, the pursuit of justice by survivors faded into the margins of public attention as successive administrations preferred not to reopen the issue. Similarly, today's international institutions appear hesitant to question powerful narratives that could disrupt existing geopolitical partnerships. Yet history also offers warnings. Manufactured crises, however skillfully orchestrated, seldom remain contained. The Liberty incident left a lasting scar on the trust between American servicemen and their political leadership. The present allegations of orchestrated attacks across Turkey, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, and neighbouring states have already rekindled tensions that could destabilize an entire region. When truth becomes the first casualty of strategic deception, the consequences extend far beyond immediate battlefields. Nations of the Middle East – and indeed the wider international community – must therefore approach the present crisis with caution, transparency, and a commitment to independent investigation. Otherwise the world risks witnessing once again the tragic pattern in which suspicion breeds confrontation, confrontation breeds war, and the lessons of history are learned only after irreparable loss.

Briefs

Security forces kill 527 Afghan Taliban...

FROM PAGE 01
security landscape and patronising several terrorist organisations, security sources said on Thursday. Describing the broader regional dynamics, the sources said Afghanistan has historically been viewed as a "graveyard of empires", but in reality has served as a "playing ground" where major powers pursue their strategic interests. However, the sources emphasised that Pakistan has no intention of conquering Afghanistan, reiterating that its sole demand is that Afghan territory should not be used to launch terrorist attacks against Pakistan. They also said Afghan Taliban regime involved in recent incidents in Bajaur, Tarlai Mosque, and Wana, according to the security sources. According to a United Nations report, 22 terrorist organisations are operating in Afghanistan.

One dead in Bannu

FROM PAGE 01
The Bannu-Miranshah road was closed for traffic following the incident. Miranshah district headquarters hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Asif Iqbal told Dawn that the condition of four people among the injured was critical. He said an emergency had been declared at the hospital following the incident. Police officials told Dawn that the area where the incident took place had been cordoned off, further investigation was under way and evidence was being collected. The incident comes roughly three weeks after two people were killed and 17 others injured in a powerful explosion near Mirwan Police Station in KP's Bannu district on February 16. Police said the blast occurred when a time bomb planted in a motorcycle detonated. A child was among those killed in the explosion.

Tehran claims targeting...

FROM PAGE 01
"knocked out" entirely, leaving Iran without air defense, air force, or effective communications. He described the Iranian regime as having "lost everything they can lose," with ongoing strikes demolishing missiles, drones, and launchers "every single hour." "Trump directly called on Iranian forces—including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), military personnel, and security forces—to surrender immediately, offering "total immunity" in exchange for laying down arms and co-operating. "You're going to have a chance after all these years, take back your country, accept immunity," he urged, warning that continued resistance would be futile as the campaign intensifies. He dismissed Iranian claims of readiness for a ground invasion as "wasted comments" and suggested Tehran was already reaching out for negotiations, though he insisted it was "a little bit late" and that the US and Israel intend to fight on. The claims follow a week of relentless airstrikes under Operations Epic Fury (US) and Roaring Lion (Israel), which have targeted regime leadership (including the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei), ballistic missile sites, naval headquarters in Bandar Abbas, and warships across the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and even the Indian Ocean. US Central Command has released footage showing submarine torpedo strikes sinking Iranian vessels—the first such combat use since World War II—including frigates and drone carriers like the IRIS Dena. Pentagon officials have confirmed more than 20-30 ships sunk or heavily damaged, aligning with Trump's updated tally of 24, alongside degradation of roughly 60% of Iran's missiles and launchers. Iran has continued sporadic retaliatory missile and drone barrages, including volleys targeting Tel Aviv and Gulf allies, though intercepts have limited damage.

Army, Navy Dominate Pak-China Friendship Basketball Cup

The exciting matches of the championship, being held to commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, are being organized by the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA) in collaboration with the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB)

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Army Whites, WAPDA Green, Navy and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) secured impressive victories in the departmental category of the Pak-China Friendship Cup All Pakistan 3x3 Basketball Championship at the Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. The exciting matches of the championship, being held to commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, are being organized by the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA) in collabora-



tion with the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB). In the departmental contests, Army Whites defeated WAPDA Red 21-13, while Navy A outclassed the Police team with a convincing 21-5 victory. WAPDA Green edged past Army Green 20-17 in a closely contested match, whereas Pakistan Air Force beat Police Whites 22-6. In the women's category, Army Red defeated Team Alpha 15-2, while WAPDA B overcame Dolphins 19-2. NUST registered a 17-1 win against Islamabad Titans, Islamabad Bulls defeated Alpha-B 14-6, and Lycans beat Wah Spring 11-2. On the opening day of the four-day championship, Deputy Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board Syed Naveed-ur-Rehman, Director National Federations Nasrullah Rana, Secretary General of Islamabad Olympic Association (IOA) Rizwan-ul-Haq Razi, Secretary General of the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA) Ouj Zahoor, Azam Dar and other notable personalities witnessed the matches. Teams from across the country are participating in the four-day championship in three categories: Departmental, Women's and Club category.

Nominations open for the prestigious HBL PSL 11

The 11th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League will commence on 26 March, with defending champions Lahore Qalandars taking on Hyderabad Kingsmen in the opening match at Gaddafi Stadium

LAHORE: The HBL Pakistan Super League has announced that nominations for the 11th edition of HBL PSL Hamaray Heroes are now open. Fans from across the country can submit their nominations through an online form (available here) until 3pm on Tuesday, 24 March 2026. Hamaray Heroes, an initiative of the HBL PSL, was first introduced in the fifth edition of the HBL PSL in 2020 and has since become a huge success in a short span of time. The initiative will return for the sixth consecutive year, with the 11th edition set to be bigger and better than previous editions as eight teams feature in the league for the first time. The 11th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League will commence on 26 March, with defending champions Lahore Qalan-

dars taking on Hyderabad Kingsmen in the opening match at Gaddafi Stadium. Through the Hamaray Heroes initiative, the Pakistan Cricket Board recognises and celebrates individuals who have made outstanding contributions to society and have played a role in enhancing the positive image of Pakistan. Some of the notable personalities who were recognised during HBL PSL Hamaray Heroes initiative include, Late Ali Sadpara (Record-breaking mountaineer), Arshad Nadeem (Gold medal in Paris Olympics in javelin), Arslan Ash (Professional E-Sports player), Inam Butt (Wrestler and Gold medalist in CW Games), Kiran Khan (Olympic swimmer), Mohammad Wasim (Boxer) and Dr Mariam Sultana (First Pakistani to do PhD in Astrophysics) The final list of nominees

for Hamaray Heroes will be reviewed by a PCB panel tasked with shortlisting candidates who will be recognised during matches of the forthcoming HBL PSL 11. The PCB will present shortlisted candidates with cash awards during HBL PSL matches, while fans will also be able to watch short documentaries highlighting their achievements and inspiring life stories across HBL PSL digital platforms as well as during live match broadcasts. The initiative uses the reach and platform of the HBL PSL to acknowledge and celebrate Pakistanis who are making a meaningful difference in society. **Nomination guidelines:**

- Individuals, groups, organisations and businesses can be nominated in multiple categories, depending on eligibility
- Nominees must be citizens of Pakistan, individuals of Pakistani heritage, residents of Pakistan or organisations registered in Pakistan.
- Nominees must not be employees of the PCB, employees of direct suppliers of commercial products or services to PCB, current employees or members of HBL PSL Hamaray Heroes or employees of presenting partners/sponsors of the initiative.
- All submitted nominations and supporting material will remain the property of the PCB and will not be returned
- The judges' panel decision will be final and no further correspondence will be entertained
- Submission of a nomination does not guarantee a place on the final shortlist or receipt of an award. - APP

Al-Qadsiah's SPL match postponed as Damac clinch victory in relegation six-pointer

Damac beat Al-Riyadh 3-0 as Saudi Pro League continues despite regional tensions and match postponement after Al-Qadsiah flight cancellation ahead of Matchday 25 fixtures across Saudi Arabia

DAMMAM: Much has changed since the conclusion of Matchday 24 in the Saudi Pro League last Saturday. Several nations across the Middle East have postponed their leagues indefinitely, with the war in the region even threatening West Asia's participation across all levels of AFC competitions for the upcoming knockout stages. The Saudi Pro League was one of the few to continue without pause, with Matchday 25 scheduled to kick off on Thursday as Damac welcomed Al-Riyadh and Al-Qadsiah travelled to Qassim to face Al-Kholood. Or, so Saudi Pro League fans thought. Hours before Al-Kholood and Al-Qadsiah were set to kick off, the hosts announced that they had received a notification from the Saudi Pro League confirming their match was postponed Saturday, March 7, due to the cancellation of Al-Qadsiah's flight to Qassim. That meant that Thursday featured the sole encounter between Damac and Al-Riyadh, with Friday and Saturday set to host four matches each. Both Damac and Al-Riyadh have endured difficult seasons. They two sides were level on 16 points prior before the meeting in Abha, and both had suffered similar 1-0 defeats to Al-Ahli in recent weeks - matches in which each felt unlucky not to come away with at least a point. That said, it was Damac who controlled proceedings for most of the evening. Mauricio Dulac set the visitors up in their traditional 5-4-1, with Mamadou Sylla leading the line. Damac, meanwhile, looked to break them down centrally, operating in a 4-3-1-2 that gave Valentin Vada freedom behind Yakou Mèité and Mohammad Al-Salkhadi. They were aided by Jonathan Okita's dangerous runs from deep, which ultimately changed the course of the match. - APP

PM Sharif tells Aliyev Pak...

FROM PAGE 01
de-escalation and the restoration of peace and stability in the region. They agreed to maintain close contact as the situation develops. The conversation underscores the deepening strategic partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, particularly in the face of shared concerns over regional security threats.

PM orders action against...

FROM PAGE 01
an action plan and strategy for conserving petroleum products and ensuring their uninterrupted supply to the public.

US approval of Russian oil sparks...

FROM PAGE 01
It should be noted that India had earlier said it would stop purchasing Russian oil as part of a trade deal with the US. In a post on X, the Congress, citing the development, criticised the Indian government, and stressed that the BJP-led government "has led the country to a situation where the US is now deciding where India can buy oil from and where it cannot." "This decision is not being made by Prime Minister Modi, nor by the Indian government," it said. Congress said the Indian citizens were asking, "Who is the US to 'permit' India to buy oil?" "We are not slaves to any nation; we are a sovereign and independent country. Period," Congress said.

Pak hockey team qualifies...

FROM PAGE 01
Sufyan Khan, and Afraz. For his exceptional contribution on the field, Muhammad Umar was awarded the title of best player of the match. Pakistan has been in formidable form throughout the competition, remaining unbeaten and winning all their matches en route to the final. Following the historic win, the President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), Mohi-ud-Din Wani, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the team. He lauded the players for their composure and excellence, particularly praising their performance in what he described as a "tense and difficult match." The victory has also sparked celebrations among legends of the game. Renowned former Olympians, including Isha-huddin, Hassan Sardar, and Samiullah Khan, expressed their joy and extended their best wishes to the squad for future endeavors. With this emphatic win, Pakistan has not only secured a spot in the final of the qualifiers but has also punched its ticket to the Hockey World Cup 2026, bringing pride and joy to the nation.

Qatar may halt energy supplies

FROM PAGE 01
Israeli and US attacks. The country's LNG production is equivalent to about 20% of global supply and plays a major role in balancing both Asian and European markets' demand for the fuel. "Everybody that has not called for force majeure we expect will do so in the next few days that this continues. All exporters in the Gulf region will have to call force majeure," Kaabi told the FT. "If this war continues for a few weeks, GDP growth around the world will be impacted," he said. "Everybody's energy price is going to go higher. There will be shortages of some products and there will be a chain reaction of factories that cannot supply," Kaabi said. Kaabi said even if the war ended immediately it would take Qatar "weeks to months" to return to a normal cycle of deliveries. Analysts and economists have highlighted the potential impact of the war on economies globally. Kaabi, who is also the CEO of Qatar Energy, one of the world's biggest liquefied natural gas producers, told FT that the company's North Field expansion project would delay first production.

PCB seeks public apology over 'agenda-driven fake news' targeting players

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday sought a public apology over the broadcast of what it described as an "agenda-driven fake news" targeting the character of national cricketers. In a brief statement, the cricket board termed targeting the national cricketers' character "unacceptable" and stressed that the reporter responsible for the aforementioned news must publicly apologise without delay. The PCB further warned of taking "all necessary steps" if the journalist in question fails to comply with the demand. "Agenda-driven fake news targeting the character of our players is unacceptable and will not be tolerated," the PCB's statement read. "The reporter must publicly apologise without delay; failing which, the PCB will take all necessary steps to ensure such malicious conduct is dealt with firmly and nipped in the bud," it added. The controversy erupted earlier today when a local news outlet claimed that the Pakistan cricketer was involved in inappropriate behaviour and that hotel staff had filed a formal complaint with the team management. The report further alleged that the player was involved in inappropriate behaviour, prompting immediate action by the management to assess the matter. Following a review of the details provided by the hotel and a preliminary investigation, the team management concluded that the Pakistan player had violated the code of conduct and imposed a fine on him. The claims made in the report, however, were swiftly dismissed by the PCB and Mirza, who announced to take legal action against a local news outlet. "A absurd News is circulating on media and I strongly condemn this sort of Cheap Journalism. Any Media House can't air any unverified news," said Mirza in a Facebook post. "[Pakistan Cricket Board] has already denied this Baseless & Fake News and I'm going to take Legal Action [...]" - Agencies

Trump went on to reveal the affection his 19-year-old son Barron has for Messi

Trump reveals son Barron is a huge fan of Lionel Messi during White House meeting with Inter Miami after MLS Cup victory celebration

WASHINGTON: "My son said, 'Dad, you know who's going to be there today?' I said, 'No, I got a lot of things going on today,'" Trump said. "He said 'Messi!' He's a big fan of yours. He thinks you're just a great person. And I think you got to meet a little while ago. So he's a big soccer fan, but he's a tremendous fan of yours. And a gentleman named Ronaldo. Cristiano is great. You're great." Cristiano Ronaldo, Messi's long-time rival in European soccer, attended a White House event with Trump last year. Regarding Messi's impact on Inter Miami, Trump said: "This guy won. There was tremendous fanfare, and he won. Leo, you came in and won. It's hard to do. ... You came in and won with all that pressure." Wading into the area of soccer history, Trump said to Messi, "You may be better than Pele," and he asked those in attendance, "Who's better?" Trump said of the Inter Miami squad: "What a group of people. We could have a lot of fun with these guys. You can imagine how they celebrate." The president singled out Rodrigo De Paul, an Argentine midfielder who scored the go-ahead goal in the



Herons' 3-1 win over the Vancouver Whitecaps in the MLS Cup final. "Where the hell is Rodrigo?" Trump asked, causing De Paul to blush. The president added: "Do you have any bad-looking players? I like the bad-looking players much better." Messi gave Trump a pink signed Inter Miami soccer ball, and club co-owner

Jorge Mas and coach Javier Mascherano presented the president with a team jersey and a watch. Mas said: "It's our aspiration to continue breaking barriers and putting no limits, to making sure Major League Soccer and Inter Miami are considered among the elite in global football." - APP

FG Polo Storm into Open Polo Championship Final

Despite the loss, both teams have successfully qualified for the main final scheduled for Sunday, while BN Polo has been eliminated from the title race following two consecutive defeats

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: FG Polo secured a narrow 5-4 victory over Diamond/Master Paints in a gripping final league encounter of the 63rd Allied Bank National Open Polo Championship for the Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2026. Despite the loss, both teams have successfully qualified for the main final scheduled for Sunday, while BN Polo has been eliminated from the title race following two consecutive defeats. FG Polo's victory was powered by a stellar performance from Raja Mikayal Sami, who hammered home four crucial goals. He was supported by team member Amin Rehman, who added one goal to the tally. For Diamond/Master Paints, Sufi Haroon bin Haris led the fight with two goals, while Raja Temur Nadeem and Facundo Retamar chipped in with one goal apiece. The match was a tactical battle of nerves, with momentum swinging between the two sides across five intense chukkas.



Diamond/Master Paints started strong. Raja Temur Nadeem opened the scoring with a field goal, followed quickly by Sufi Haroon, giving DP/MP an early 2-0 lead. Diamond/Master Paints continued their dominance early in the second as Sufi Haroon struck again to make it 3-0. However, FG Polo finally found their rhythm late in the chukka, with Raja Mikayal Sami converting a crucial penalty goal to get his team on the board, making it 3-1. FG Polo mounted a comeback in the third chukka, with Amin Rehman scoring a penalty goal to narrow the gap, followed by another clinical finish from Raja Mikayal Sami, levelling the score at 3-3. The tension peaked in the fourth chukka, where Facundo Retamar regained the lead for Diamond/Master Paints with a field goal, making it 4-3. The fifth and final chukka belonged entirely to Raja Mikayal Sami. Displaying exceptional composure, he scored two consecutive goals to flip the script and clinch a 5-4 victory for FG Polo in the final moments of the league match.

Briefs

Major humanitarian emergency in ME, calls for peace

GENEVA: The United Nations refugee agency on Friday declared the crisis in the Middle East a major humanitarian emergency, and insisted all fleeing civilians should be granted safe passage. UNHCR said the Middle East crisis — which began on Saturday when Israel and the United States launched strikes on Iran and has spread since — had already caused large numbers of people to flee their homes. “UNHCR has declared the escalating crisis in the Middle East as a major humanitarian emergency requiring an immediate response across the region,” Ayaki Ito, the agency’s emergency chief and its cross-regional refugee coordinator, told a press briefing in Geneva. “The recent escalation of hostility and attacks in the Middle East have triggered significant population movements — while clashes along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan have also forced many thousands of families to flee,” he said. The affected regions already host nearly 25 million people as refugees, internally displaced people, or refugees who have recently returned from abroad, said Ito. He said the UNHCR was trying to get life-saving assistance into affected countries across the region. Ito said it was imperative that all civilians who need to move, or cross borders, “find safety and safe passage.” Fresh strikes rocked Iran and Lebanon on Friday, as Israel vowed to escalate to a new phase in the Middle East war that has spiralled rapidly throughout the region and beyond.—APP

Internet blackout leaves anxious Iranians in the dark

PARIS: Iran’s internet is still “around 1 percent of ordinary levels,” monitor Netblocks said on Thursday, leaving most Iranians struggling to access independent news or communicate with the outside world. Iranian authorities shut off internet access on Saturday after Israel and the US began air strikes, plunging the country into an information blackout. “Iran’s internet blackout has now exceeded 120 hours with connectivity still flatlining around 1 percent of ordinary levels,” internet monitor Netblocks said in a message posted on social media platform X on Thursday. Some Iranians are finding brief moments of the day when they are able to connect and send messages, while others have resorted to using illegal Starlink subscriptions.—APP

ECC okays TSGs, education relief, power sector reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Co-ordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet met today at the Finance Division under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The ECC approved a summary submitted by the Petroleum Division seeking a Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs. 13.1 million to meet Pakistan’s annual contribution to the International Energy Forum (IEF). The Committee was informed that continued membership in the IEF remains important for Pakistan’s participation in global energy dialogue and cooperation. The ECC also approved another summary from the Petroleum Division seeking a TSG of Rs. 3 billion for provision of gas supply schemes in villages located within a five-kilometer radius of gas production fields. The schemes are being implemented through Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL).

The ECC further approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for a TSG of Rs. 200 million during FY 2025–26 to facilitate payment of outstanding dues to teachers of Basic Education Community Schools (BECS). The financial liability arises from court directives regarding payment of salary differentials in accordance with



notified minimum wages for the period from August 2017 to June 2021.

The Committee also considered another summary from the same Ministry seeking exemption from relending terms for an additional USD 4 million allocated to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) under the restructured Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDDP) Project. The ECC was informed that the World Bank reallocated these funds to the Investment Project Financing/Technical Assistance component, thereby increasing HEC’s share beyond the previously exempted USD 77 million.

The ECC further approved a summary submitted by the National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) seeking a TSG of Rs. 3.63 billion for reimbursement of expenditures incurred during Monsoon Response 2025 operations and overseas humanitarian assistance.

The ECC also approved a summary submitted by the Power Division seeking a TSG of Rs. 1.3 billion for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Programme (SAP) schemes during FY 2025–26.

The ECC also considered a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) regarding a comprehensive reform package aimed at reducing electricity generation costs, addressing legacy payment obligations, and easing pressures arising from circular debt in the power sector. The Com-

mittee was informed that the proposed measures are the outcome of negotiations with a number of power producers and are intended to rationalize tariff structures, streamline payment arrangements, and resolve outstanding financial liabilities through mutually agreed settlements. The ECC approved the reform package and related financial measures, noting that the initiative is expected to contribute to improved sustainability of the power sector, reduce tariff pressures on consumers, and support broader sectoral reforms.

In addition to the regular agenda items, the ECC considered a summary submitted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting seeking a TSG of Rs. 2.231 billion to clear outstanding liabilities re-

lated to federal public information and awareness campaigns. The Committee approved the grant to the extent of Rs. 1.47 billion and directed the Ministry to present the remaining requirement in the next quarter.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Petroleum Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for Commerce Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Investment Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh (virtually), Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Mr. Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions and regulatory bodies.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan reach key agreements

DUSHANBE: Tajikistan and Turkmenistan assessed the outcomes of the 14th meeting of their Intergovernmental Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation as constructive, the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan reported to NIAT Khovar.

Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan Sulaimon Ziyozoda and Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan Tangryguly Atakhaliliev, co-chairs of the commission, said the meeting was held in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and cooperation. They noted the agreements reached provide a strong foundation for expanding economic, trade, scientific, and technical ties. After completing all agenda items, the co-chairs signed the protocol of the 14th meeting, outlining main areas of future work. Both sides expressed confidence that implementing the protocol will strengthen economic and social ties, increase bilateral trade, and enhance cooperation between the two countries.—APP

Kazakhstan’s insurance assets hit 4t

ASTANA: As of February 1, 2026, Kazakhstan’s insurance sector comprises 25 organizations, including 10 life insurance companies, Qazinform News Agency reports, citing the Agency for Regulation and Development of the Financial Market. The total assets of Kazakhstan’s insurance and reinsurance organizations increased by 1.4% in January 2026, reaching 4.0 trillion tenge (KZT), primarily driven by a climb in insurance premiums. As of February 1, 2026, the asset structure is dominated by securities at 71.7% (KZT 2.8 trillion), followed by cash and deposits in second-tier banks at 8.1% (KZT 322 billion), and insurance accounts receivable at 4.6% (KZT 182 billion). Liabilities for insurance and reinsurance organizations edged up by 1.6% in January 2026 to KZT 2.8 trillion, largely due to growth in insurance reserves for concluded contracts. The equity of insurance and reinsurance companies slightly rose by 0.8% during January 2026 to KZT 1.1 trillion, bolstered by profits from insurance activities. Net profit across the insurance market for the month totaled KZT 10.1 billion. The number of insurance contracts concluded by individuals and legal entities in January 2026 reached 1.3 million. This represents a 33.1% decrease compared to January 2025, which was driven by an 88.3% plummet in accident insurance contracts. Insurance premiums collected under insurance and reinsurance contracts totaled KZT 155.9 billion in January 2026, a 0.7% uptick year-on-year. The primary driver of this advancement was the voluntary personal insurance segment.—APP

China to continue anchoring global economic growth

BEIJING: “For the foreseeable future, China will continue to be the growth engine of the world,” Erik Solheim, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations told China Economic Net in an interview. According to a government work report submitted Thursday to China’s top legislature for deliberation, the country targets an economic growth of 4.5 percent to 5 percent this year and will strive for better in practice. This figure surpasses the IMF’s growth projections of 3.3% for the global economy and 4.2% for emerging and developing economies in 2026. “Number is one thing, and quality is not to be overlooked. As China transitions toward high-quality development, it implies translating growth into tangible income gains, improved access to public services, and the widespread adoption of advanced technologies,” Tianchen Xu, Senior Economist from the Economist Intelligence Unit told China Economic Net. In 2025, China’s output of industrial robots and integrated circuits rose 28% and 10.9%, respectively, according to the government work report. Data from OpenRouter, the world’s largest API aggregation platform for large models, show that the total token consumption of the top ten models on the platform has exceeded 28.7 trillion as of the end of February. Among them, Chinese models contributed over 14.69 trillion, marking the first time in history that the monthly token call share has exceeded 50%. According to Xu, while AI has been a major consumer of power, China has been rapidly expanding its electricity generation capacity over the past few years, including renewable energy. This expansion will ensure that China’s AI development is supported by an adequate electricity supply. Moreover, it is likely that China will be able to offer AI services to global users at a lower cost. With this advantage, China could potentially secure a dominant or even majority share of the global AI market. “Attracted by Chinese technologies, there has been a fundamental reassessment of Chinese asset over late 2024 and throughout 2025,” Xu observed. The MSCI China Index rose 31.4% in 2025, outperforming global markets. “Much of this rally was driven by innovation-led themes, particularly in technology and artificial intelligence. As China’s innovation ecosystem now extends beyond AI into areas such as robotics, autonomous driving, next-generation mobility, and advanced manufacturing, the momentum would continue,” according to Muhammad Faran Khan, Associate Director of KTrade Securities, Pakistan. The government work report proposes to promote the commercial and large-scale application of AI in key industries and fields and support the construction of open-source AI communities. A new batch of smart factories and intelligent supply chains will also be built. In the next decade or so, China’s middle-income group is likely to exceed 800 million people, representing the best application scenario for the current technological revolution and industrial transformation, according to Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the fourth session of the 14th National People’s Congress at a press conference Wednesday. In 2025, total retail sales of consumer goods in China exceeded 50 trillion yuan for the first time, contributing 52% to economic growth. Lou revealed that the country will formulate laws on social assistance, medical security and childcare services this year, and promote the allocation of more resources to areas related to people’s livelihoods so that people are able, willing and confident to spend. Bernardo Mendia, Board Advisor at Young Entrepreneurs Association of the EU, Secretary General of the Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) highlighted enterprises’ appetite for long-term integration into Chinese value chains. “The engagement of Portuguese businesses with the Chinese market is undergoing a profound maturation. We are moving past the era of simple transactional trade into a phase defined by strategic industrial presence. While the readiness for partnership remains high, it has evolved from a general curiosity into a targeted search for technological and capital synergy. Portuguese companies increasingly recognize that to succeed in China, they must offer something truly worth buying—value that is competitive not just on price, but on specialized quality and innovation,” he said. “Beyond large corporations, the opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are expanding through digital channels. China is the world’s largest e-commerce market, which allows international SMEs to enter the market with lower risk and without the need for physical presence.—DNA

New Pakistan Navy-GPA Hospital opens in Gwadar

The establishment of Shifa Jah Hospital represents another step toward strengthening healthcare access in Gwadar and supporting the well-being of local communities

GWADAR: The Pakistan Navy has inaugurated Shifa Jah Hospital in Gwadar to expand access to basic healthcare services for communities living near the Gwadar Port area. The health facility is a joint venture of the Pakistan Navy and the Gwadar Port Authority and is named Shifa-Jah Pakistan Navy-GPA Hospital. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Commander Coast Vice Admiral Faisal Amin as the chief guest, who formally opened the facility. Gwadar Pro reported on Friday quoting an official statement. Located opposite the main gate of Gwadar Port, the newly established hospital has a capacity of seven beds and will provide medical services along with free medicines to patients. According to officials, the hospital will offer a range of healthcare services including family medicine, a medical outpatient department (OPD), eye OPD, dental OPD, and a minor operation theater. Information displayed at the facility shows that patients will also receive free medical consultations and treatment, free medicines, eye specialist services, maternal care and consultations with a female doctor, pediatric care for children, dental and oral check-ups, general medical checkups, and 24-hour emergency services. The hospital is expected to benefit residents of neighborhoods surrounding Gwadar Port, particularly communities in the southern parts of the city, by providing easier access to quality healthcare. Gwadar’s healthcare sector has seen gradual improvement in recent years. The GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital, operated by the Indus Hospital and Health Network, is already providing modern and free medical treatment to hundreds of patients daily. The establishment of Shifa Jah Hospital represents another step toward strengthening healthcare access in Gwadar and supporting the well-being of local communities.—DNA

Housing in crisis: shifting balance of power in England’s rental market

RAMSHA SHAHID



England’s housing crisis has become one of the most pressing social and legal challenges facing policymakers. Rising rents, a persistent shortage of housing and concerns over poor living conditions have placed mounting pressure on both tenants and landlords. Over the past decade, the private rented sector has expanded significantly and now houses roughly one in five households in England, making it a central pillar of the country’s housing system.

At the same time, the legal framework governing residential tenancies has undergone substantial change. Reforms aimed at improving housing

standards and strengthening tenant protections have reshaped the relationship between landlords and tenants. Measures such as stricter rules on property conditions, new obligations for landlords and the proposed abolition of “no-fault” evictions have altered the balance of power in the rental market. While these reforms seek to improve tenant security and living standards, they also raise questions about the long-term sustainability of the private rental sector.

The roots of England’s housing crisis lie largely in a persistent imbalance between supply and demand. Housing construction has failed to keep pace with population growth, urbanisation and the rising number of households. As a result, demand for rental accommodation has increased steadily, pushing rents higher across the country. Recent figures illustrate the scale of the problem. Average private rents across the United Kingdom reached around £1,368 per month in late 2025, while in England they exceeded £1,400. For many households, these costs consume a large portion of their income. Official data shows that private renters in England spend more than 36 percent of their household income on rent—well above the commonly accepted affordability threshold of 30 percent. In London, the situation is even more severe, with rents in some boroughs absorbing nearly half of average disposable income.

The social consequences of these pressures are increasingly visible. Tens of thousands of families now rely on temporary accommodation as housing costs outpace incomes. Approximately 176,000 children are currently living in temporary housing in England, one of the highest levels ever recorded. Local authorities are also struggling with rising homelessness-related expenses, with projections suggesting that the cost of temporary accommodation could reach billions of pounds annually within the next decade. Beyond affordability, the quality of rental housing has become a major concern. Reports of damp, mould and structural disrepair have drawn widespread attention, particularly when vulnerable tenants are affected. Historically, landlords’ responsibilities for property maintenance were governed mainly by legislation requiring them to repair structural elements and maintain essential services such as heating, water supply and sanitation.

In recent years, however, the law has evolved to address broader issues of habitability. New provisions require rental properties to be fit for human habitation not only at the beginning of a tenancy but throughout its duration. Courts assess factors such as ventilation, structural stability, sanitation, natural lighting and health hazards when determining whether a dwelling meets acceptable living standards.

Public concern about housing conditions intensified following high-profile cases involving severe mould and unsafe living environments. In response, new legislation strengthened oversight of social housing and introduced stricter expectations for landlords to address hazards quickly. These reforms represent an important step toward improving living conditions, but enforcing such rights can still be difficult for tenants. Legal action often requires inspections, expert reports and lengthy court proceedings, which can discourage tenants from pursuing complaints.

The shortage of housing also influences the balance of power between landlords and tenants. In a market where demand far exceeds supply, tenants may hesitate to report poor conditions or assert legal rights for fear of losing their accommodation. This reality limits the effectiveness of legal protections in practice. While tenant protections have expanded, landlords have faced increasing regulatory and financial obligations. Over time, the rules governing rental properties have become more complex. Landlords must comply with various requirements, including deposit protection schemes, safety certifications, energy performance standards and licensing rules imposed by local authorities. Failure to meet these requirements can have serious consequences. For

example, landlords who do not properly protect a tenant’s deposit may lose the ability to seek possession of their property through certain legal procedures. Similarly, missing safety documentation can delay or complicate eviction proceedings. For smaller landlords who manage properties without professional agents, navigating these rules can be challenging.

One of the most significant proposed reforms in recent housing policy is the abolition of so-called “no-fault” evictions. Under the existing system, landlords have been able to regain possession of a property at the end of a tenancy without proving wrongdoing by the tenant, provided that proper notice was given. Supporters of reform argue that this practice created insecurity for renters, allowing them to be asked to leave their homes without explanation. If these provisions are removed, landlords will need to rely primarily on alternative legal grounds to regain possession. These may include rent arrears, antisocial behaviour or a genuine intention to sell the property. However, such claims often involve detailed evidence and contested hearings, which could increase the number of disputes reaching the courts.

This shift may place additional strain on an already burdened judicial system. Housing cases frequently involve complex issues, including disputes over unpaid rent, allegations of proper-

ty disrepair and counterclaims raised by tenants. As eviction proceedings become more evidence-based, the number of contested cases may rise, leading to longer delays in court. Overall, England’s housing crisis reflects a complicated intersection of economic pressures, legal reforms and social policy challenges. Efforts to strengthen tenant protections and improve housing standards represent important progress. However, legislative changes alone cannot resolve the underlying shortage of homes.

Addressing the crisis will require a balanced approach that combines stronger tenant protections with increased housing supply, improved enforcement of housing standards and adequate resources for courts and local authorities. Without tackling these structural issues, legal reforms may only partially alleviate the pressures facing England’s rental market. In the coming years, housing disputes are likely to become more complex and more frequent as new laws reshape the private rented sector. For tenants, landlords and policymakers alike, the challenge will be to ensure that reforms create a fair and sustainable housing system capable of meeting the needs of a growing population.—

—The writer is a legal practitioner based in London with experience in housing litigation and civil disputes.

Briefs

Petrol supply may tighten within two weeks, dealers warn

"If petrol is not supplied to us, we will be forced to shut down petrol pumps," warns association leader

KARACHI: Petroleum dealers on Thursday expressed serious concern over petrol supplies, warning that the situation could deteriorate significantly in the coming days. The News reported. Speaking at a press conference, Abdul Sami Khan, chairperson of the Petroleum Dealers Association (PDA), said there was a possibility that petrol supplies could run out across the country. He alleged that the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and the Petroleum Division were misrepresenting the actual situation regarding petroleum reserves. According to him, the country currently has petrol reserves for only 10 to 14 days.

Khan warned that disputes could erupt if petrol is not available at filling stations. "If petrol is not supplied to us, we will be forced to shut down petrol pumps," he said. He urged the government to provide relief to people by reducing the petroleum levy and taxes on fuel. Khan also claimed that reports suggest the government is considering introducing a weekly fuel price adjustment mechanism. He appealed to the inspector general of the Sindh police to ensure security at petrol pumps to prevent potential unrest. He said petroleum dealers oppose the quota system being implemented by oil marketing companies (OMCs), adding that dealers are not receiving petrol in line with their average sales. - APP

US approves temporary sale of stranded Russian oil to India

US says transactions, including those from vessels blocked by various sanctions regimes, authorised till April 3

DNA

NEW YORK: The US government on Thursday temporarily eased economic sanctions against Russia to allow Russian oil currently stranded at sea to be sold to India. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control issued a Russia-related licence "Authorizing the Delivery and Sale of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products of Russian Federation Origin Loaded on Vessels as of March 5, 2026 to India," the Treasury said in a statement. It said the transactions, including those from vessels blocked by various sanctions regimes, are authorised through the end of the day on April 3, 2026. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the waiver was issued "to enable oil to keep flowing into the global market."

Japan provides grant assistance to Pakistan Red Crescent Society

Through this grant, PRCS will procure the refurbished second-hand blood donation vehicle from Japan. This vehicle will enable PRCS to conduct blood donation drives at universities, workplaces, public spaces, and mosques in Islamabad and surrounding region



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, has decided to provide grant assistance of USD 65,470 (equivalent to PKR 18 million) to the Pakistan Red Crescent Society

(PRCS) for a project to enhance blood donation services in capital region. The grant contract was signed between His Excellency Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and representatives of PRCS at the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on March 6, 2026. The project, titled "The Project for the Refurbishment of Sec-

ond-hand Blood Donation Vehicle for the Pakistan Red Crescent Society Regional Blood Donation Center," aims to strengthen the capacity of Regional Blood Donation Center to collect and supply safe blood to vulnerable patients and emergency cases. Established in 1947, PRCS is the leading humanitarian organization in Pakistan and operates nationwide in disaster manage-

ment, health, and community services. The PRCS Regional Blood Donation Centre in Islamabad relies exclusively on voluntary non-remunerated blood donors and has steadily increased its annual blood collection over the past decade. However, limited outreach capacity and operational challenges have constrained its ability to meet growing demand. Through this grant, PRCS will procure the refurbished second-hand blood donation vehicle from Japan. This vehicle will enable PRCS to conduct blood donation drives at universities, workplaces, public spaces, and mosques in Islamabad and surrounding region. The project is expected to increase blood collection capacity by around 30 percent and contribute to saving the lives of approximately 12,000 patients suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia, cancer, and for victims of road traffic accidents. It will also improve the preparedness for natural disasters and other emergencies. At the signing ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu emphasized that human security begins with protecting each individual life which is fundamental of Japan's assistance policy. Securing blood stocks is directly linked to saving people's lives and the better access to medical treatment. As an enduring friend of Pakistan, the Government of Japan will continue to support for capable local NGOs through grant assistance to achieve the human security in Pakistan. Ambassador Akamatsu wished this project would reflect the strong and longstanding friendship between Japan and Pakistan.

War: Gulf states may rethink about US investments

MONITORING DESK

NEW YORK: The escalating US-Israeli war against Iran has entered its 8th day on March 7, 2026, with intensified airstrikes targeting Iranian regime infrastructure in Tehran and Hezbollah assets in southern Beirut, while Iran's retaliatory missile and drone attacks have significantly declined.

In the Gulf, three of the region's four major economies—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar (with one unnamed)—have jointly discussed severe budgetary strains from the war. A Gulf official told that this could prompt reviews of overseas investments, including pledges to foreign states or companies, sports sponsorships, business contracts, and potential sales of holdings.

Countries are also examining force majeure clauses in existing deals to alleviate economic pressure, as Iranian drone and missile strikes have hit regional targets, including US bases, Amazon cloud facilities in the UAE and Bahrain, and energy assets, heightening global concerns over oil supply stability.

Two Indian pilots killed after IAF fighter jet crashes in Assam

Indian Air Force says jet crashed in Assam on training mission

DNA

NEW DELHI: Two pilots from the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed after a Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter jet crashed in India's northeastern state of Assam, NDTV reported, citing officials. The Indian Air Force said on Friday that a fighter jet, which was on a training mission, crashed in the northeast Indian state of Assam.

"The Su-30MKI, which was on a training mission, crashed in the area of Karbi Anglong, Assam, approx 60 km from Jorhat," the Indian Air Force said on X. The aircraft had gone missing shortly after taking off from the Jorhat airbase. Communication with the Russian-origin fighter jet was lost at 7:42pm, according to officials. The crash occurred in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, around 60 kilometres from the airbase. The aircraft reportedly went down in a remote hilly area. The IAF identified the deceased pilots as Squadron Leader Anuj and



Flight Lieutenant Purvesh Duragkar. "All personnel of the IAF express sincere condolences, and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this time of grief," the Air Force said in a post on X. Local residents in the area said they heard a loud explosion from a nearby hill and saw a ball of fire shortly afterwards. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he was "deeply saddened" by the loss of the two pilots in the "tragic" crash.

The Sukhoi Su-30MKI is a two-seater, long-range fighter aircraft developed by Russian manufacturer Sukhoi. It is produced under licence in India by state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the IAF. The aircraft was first inducted into the Indian Air Force in 1997, and the service currently operates a fleet of more than 260 Su-30MKI jets. Similar incidents have occurred in recent years. A Sukhoi fighter jet crashed in Nashik, Maharashtra, in June 2024, while another Su-30 aircraft crashed in January 2023 shortly after taking off from the Gwalior airbase in Madhya Pradesh.

Punjab government to establish anti-drone units across province

Units will disable unauthorised drones operated by enemies or miscreants, says home department

LAHORE: The Punjab government has decided to establish anti-drone units in all districts of the province to disable "unauthorised drones operated by enemies of Pakistan or miscreants using advanced jamming technology." In a statement, the provincial Home Department said the units will conduct aerial surveillance using specialised drone fleets to monitor district airspace. The announcement follows the federal government's decision last month to impose a ban on all drone operations across the country after tensions escalated between Pakistan and Afghanistan following border clashes. According to the Punjab Home Department, each anti-drone unit and its associated systems will operate under the leadership of the District Police Officer (DPO) of the respective district. "The systems are designed to disable unauthorised drones operated by miscreants or enemies using advanced jamming technology," a home department spokesperson said. The spokesperson added that Section 144 is currently in force across Punjab, prohibiting the flying of outdoor drones. The Punjab government had imposed the ban on public drone usage due to ongoing security concerns. Following intense border clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, triggered by unprovoked attacks carried out by the Afghan Taliban regime on February 26, the federal government banned all drone operations across the country. - APP

PSX falls as oil prices

"The market remained under pressure amid rising global oil prices and tightening shipping constraints," says analyst

DNA

KARACHI: The bourse fell on Friday as rising global oil prices and tighter shipping conditions in the post-war environment weighed on sentiment, while investors stayed cautious ahead of the State Bank's next monetary policy decision. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 157,496.1 points, down 3,714.57 points, or 2.3%, from the previous close of 161,210.67. The index traded between a high of 161,435.83 (up 225.16 points, or 0.14%) and a low of 157,072.64 (down 4,138.03 points, or 2.57%). "The market remained under pressure amid rising global oil prices and tightening ship-

ping constraints in the post-war environment, which dampened investor sentiment," said Huzaifa Riaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited. "Investors also adopted a wait-and-see approach ahead of the upcoming monetary policy announcement, keeping activity cautious," he added. Adding to the caution, Pakistan's central bank is expected to hold its policy rate steady at 10.5% at a review on Monday, a Reuters poll showed, as higher energy prices and regional tensions cloud the inflation outlook and limit the room for cuts. All 10 analysts surveyed expected no change after policymakers also held rates in January; the central bank has cut the key rate by a cumulative 11.5 percentage points since mid-2024 from a record 22%.

Indonesia says will withdraw from Board of Peace if it does not benefit Palestinians

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto has reassured local Islamic groups that he will withdraw from United States President Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace' if the platform does not benefit Palestinians, a government statement said on Friday. The participation of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, on the board, and its decision to contribute troops for a Gaza stabilisation force, has drawn criticism from experts and Muslim groups at home, who say it compromises its long-standing support for the Palestinian cause. Prabowo gathered the groups' leaders for a meeting on Thursday evening where he reiterated his reasoning behind joining the board, according to a statement put out by the government communication office. Prabowo will withdraw from



the board if it does not benefit Palestinian and Indonesian interests, the statement quoted Hanif Alatas of the Islamic Brotherhood Front as saying. "The president said that if he sees

that there is no longer any benefit for Palestine ... and that it is not in line with Indonesia's national interests, he will withdraw," Hanif said in the statement.

The Indonesian Ulema Council, a leading clerical body, had previously called for Indonesia to exit the board due to the US role in the ongoing Iran war. Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim group, said Indonesia's government could use the board to encourage de-escalation in the Middle East. "Indonesia could declare that the (board's) agenda is on hold until there are talks on de-escalation and peace from the American-Israeli war against Iran," its chief Yahya Cholil Staquf said in a statement issued by Prabowo's office late on Thursday. All Board of Peace discussions have been halted due to the war, Indonesia Foreign Minister Sugiono has previously said.



General Practice HOSPITAL

Your Health. Our Priority - Every Step of the Way!



General Practice Hospital (GPH) is a state-of-the-art healthcare facility in the heart of Islamabad, offering international-standard medical care for individuals and families. From urgent care and specialized consultations to advanced diagnostics, surgery, and executive health packages — all services are available under one roof. Our concierge consultations, personalized care plans, and comprehensive health programs ensure a smooth and stress-free experience.

We understand that seeking medical care can be overwhelming, but you are never alone. With empathy at the heart of everything we do, we listen, guide, and support you every step of the way. In our clean, premium environment, you'll feel safe, valued, and cared for. Book your appointment today and experience healthcare with compassion.

Our Departments

General Physician Services	General Surgery	Dental & Maxillofacial Surgery	Plastic Surgery	Ear, Nose & Throat	Nutrition, Dietetics & Lifestyle
Internal Medicine	Pediatrics & Child Health	Breast Surgery	Anaesthesiology	Pulmonology	Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation
Gynecology & Women's Health	Cardiology	Bariatric Surgery	Gastroenterology & Hepatology	Endocrinology	Psychology & Mental Health
Dermatology & Aesthetics	Urology	Pediatric Surgery	Neurosurgery	Orthopedics & Sports Medicine	Diagnostic Radiology

Our Services



Empathic & Caring for everyone

FOR APPOINTMENT +92 33 22 474 474

or Visit: Pakland Tower 2, New Blue Area, Islamabad

www.generalpractice.com.pk | generalpracticeislamabad | +92 51 6160 474 | +92 51 6161 474