



# Islamabad POST

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**Djokovic sets up blockbuster match with Alcaraz at AO**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Zia's era was most dreadful: Justice Minallah**

Detailed News On Page-08



**CM orders completion of roads by June**

Detailed News On Page-02



**Hamis releases 3 captives**

## Long-awaited ceasefire begins, ending Gaza war

Palestinians in Gaza hail ceasefire as thousands start preparations to return home following 470 days of war

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: Palestinians poured into the streets to celebrate and return to the rubble of their bombed-out homes on Sunday, and Hamas handed over the first three hostages to the Red Cross under a ceasefire deal that halted fighting in Gaza after a delayed start. Live television pictures showed three female hostages exiting a vehicle surrounded by armed Hamas men. The hostages got into vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross as the crowd of fighters chanted the name of the armed wing of Hamas. An Israeli official told Reuters the Red Cross said the women were in good health. Earlier, Hamas had identified the first three Israeli hostages who would go free as Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher and Emily Damari. In the Israeli occupied West Bank, buses were awaiting the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention. Hamas said the first group to be freed in exchange for the hostages includes 69 women and 21 teenage boys. The first phase of the truce in the 15-month-old war between Israel and Hamas took effect following a three-hour delay during which Israeli forces pounded the Gaza Strip, killing 13 people, according to Palestinian health authorities. The truce calls for fighting to stop, aid to be sent in to Gaza and 33 of the 98 Israeli and foreign hostages still held there to go free over the six-week first phase in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. When the shooting stopped, Palestinians burst into the streets, some in celebration, others to visit the graves of relatives. "I feel like at last I found some water to drink after getting lost in the desert for 15 months. I feel alive again," Aya, a displaced

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## Committed to Gaza ceasefire deal: Hamas

Says, ceasefire is "the fruit of the steadfastness and patience of our great people"

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: Hamas has pledged its commitment to the ceasefire agreement, which officially began on Sunday, to see the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners who have arbitrarily been detained in the Israeli regime's prisons. The long-awaited ceasefire agreement, which was first announced on Wednesday, went into effect on Sunday after a nearly three-hour delay during which Israel's military forces killed at least 19 Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. The first phase of the ceasefire calls for Hamas to release 33 captives over six weeks. It has released the names of three female Israeli captives set to be released today. In a Sunday statement, the resistance group reaffirmed its "commitment

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GAZA CITY: Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas hands over captives to members of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza City as part of the ceasefire deal. - DNA

## PM approves appointments of new envoys

Pakistan to appoint 19 ambassadors and consuls general for different states

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the appointments of 19 ambassadors and consuls general of Pakistan for different countries. Citing sources a private news channel reported that the Foreign Office has forwarded a summary to the premier for the appointment of new ambassadors. Rahim Hayat Qureshi, currently serving as Secretary Board

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## FO: Afghans victim of world apathy

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan has thanked NRC, Ege-land for drawing attention to the humanitarian predicament of Afghanistan. It however said that it would have been more appropriate had the world not abandoned the Afghan people after the war and if conducive socioeconomic conditions had been created inside the country for the Afghan people to prosper. For forty years, Pakistan has generously hosted over four million Afghan refugees. Those sent back were residing illegally without any documentation or proof of residence. Progress on the cases of thousands of Afghan nationals who were promised resettlement in western

Continued on Page 06

**Stresses need for unity**

## Nawaz asks Shehbaz to focus on national interest in PTI talks

Both the leaders discussed country's political situation and other issues

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held an important meeting with PML-N President Nawaz Sharif in Lahore on Sunday. During the meeting held at Jati Umra, the two leaders discussed the country's political situation and key matters, including negotiations with the PTI. Nawaz Sharif stressed the need for unity, stating that everyone must work together for the country. He instructed the prime minister to prioritise national interests during negotiations. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif briefed Nawaz Sharif on the progress of the ongoing talks and provided updates on the country's economic situation, stating that conditions have improved and are moving in a positive direction. Earlier, senior PML-N leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui

Continued on Page 06

## Fazl sees little progress in talks

However, the JUI-F chief expressed hope about the talks

SHAHMIM SHAHID

MARDAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has expressed his discontent on the ongoing talks between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the federal government. He made these remarks while addressing a press conference in the city. He said despite no success so far, he was still hopeful that the talks would bring

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Arrest warrants issued for PTI's MNA

The arrest warrants were issued the by ATC judge Amjad Ali

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi on Saturday issued arrest warrants for Member of National Assembly (MNA) Junaid Akbar Khan in a case registered in Hazro Police Station. The arrest warrants were issued the by Anti-Terrorism Court judge Amjad Ali Shah. The judge has directed the authorities to arrest the MNA and present him in the court on January 20. A case was registered against the MNA with Hazro Police Station under various sections of anti-terrorism law on November 25, 2024.

### Pak urges diaspora unity

Amid grooming gang scandal in UK

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani community in the UK, making up only 2% of the population, is unfairly targeted in discussions about grooming gangs, causing a damaging narrative that fuels Islamophobia and racial bias. This persistent focus on the Pakistani diaspora ignores factual evidence and instead fuels the flames of anti-Pakistani sentiment, ultimately benefiting far-right groups and foreign interests. The narrative surrounding grooming gangs exploits vulnerabilities within the Pakistani community, potentially aligning with broader geopolitical strategies. Despite recognizing that some individuals within the diaspora may have acted against Pakistan's interests,

£190m pound case

## PTI was not part of 'two-sided' settlement

No one could establish fund transfer caused loss to exchequer, says PTI secretary general

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Salman Akram Raja claimed on Sunday that the former government was not involved in a 'bilateral' settlement deal between the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and a private party. Raja's statement comes days after PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sentenced to 14 and seven years, respectively, in the £190 million case. "[In its verdict] the British court said that it was a two-sided agreement in which the [then] Pakistani government had no part," said Raja in a press conference. Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana had handed down a 14-year sentence to the PTI founder and a seven-year sentence to his wife, while also slapping heavy fines on them during a proceeding held inside a makeshift court at Adiala jail. The PTI founder will have to pay Rs1 million and his wife Rs0.5 million in fines. In case

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## World has seen corrupt face of PTI, says Tarar

Asserted that PML-N is a people-centric party

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Attaullah Tarar has said that the entire world has seen the corrupt face of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He remarked that the judicial verdict has confirmed allegations of corruption against the PTI founder, claiming it as the largest financial scandal in Pakistan's history involving £190 million. Speaking at

Continued on Page 06

## Kurram clashes: KP government announces 'indiscriminate action'

Barrister Saif says action against miscreants, involved in attacks on relief convoys, "indispensable"

SHAHMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: In efforts to secure the roads and establish lasting peace in the restive Kurram district, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to take "indiscriminate and stringent action" against miscreants involved in attacks on relief convoys and deputy commissioner. The decision was taken in a high-level meeting, which was attended by provincial chief secretary, Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Akhtar Hayat Khan and civil and police officers, KP government spokesperson Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said in a statement. "Action against such miscreants in affected areas is indispensable," he said, vowing to ensure the implementation of a peace agreement within the two warring tribes as per the law. Kurram has been wracked by violence for decades, but around 150 people have been killed in a fresh round of fighting which started in November last year when two separate convoys travelling under police escort were ambushed, leaving 40 people dead. Despite the peace agreement reached on January 1, there have been repeated attacks on convoys and vehicles in the Bagan area and its surroundings, including a targeted attack on

Continued on Page 06

## 5 terrorists killed as security forces foil infiltration bid

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Five terrorists were killed as security forces thwarted an infiltration attempt along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Balochistan's Zhob district, the military's media wing said on Sunday. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that they noticed the movement of a group of militants, who were trying to infiltrate through the Pak-Afghanistan border in the general area of Sambaza, Zhob district on the night between January 18-19. "Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. Resultantly, five Khwarij were sent to hell." Pakistan has consistently been asking the interim

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## TIKA provides vocational training support for children with autism

KARACHI: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (T KA) has established pre-vocational training areas at the Sindh Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation to ease the integration of children with autism into life and provide them with preparatory opportunities for advanced vocational training. The pre-vocational training areas, which were renovated and equipped with furniture and electronic equipment, were inaugurated by Dursun Ali Yaşacan, Head of T KA's East and South Asia, Pacific, and Latin America (DOGAL) Department, and Cemal Sangu, Turkish Consul General in Karachi.

In his remarks following the inauguration, Dursun Ali Yaşacan emphasized that T KA develops and supports projects worldwide to ease the lives of disadvantaged groups. He expressed his satisfaction in contributing to such a successful institution. Consul General Sangu added that after touring all units, he witnessed firsthand the beneficial and successful services provided by the Institute. He expressed his gratitude to T KA for choosing the right institution for the project and thanked the Institute's officials for their dedicated services to Pakistan.

Dr. Irum Rizwan, Head of the Institute, highlighted the rapid increase in the number of individuals with autism worldwide. Noting that one out of every 100 children in Pakistan is autistic. She expressed her gratitude to T KA for their support in helping these special children adapt to normal life.

A beneficiary mother, who has received rehabilitation services for her child for years, expressed her profound gratitude to T KA and the Turkish people. She mentioned how the Institute's vocational training helped her son develop skills and eventually find employment.—APP

## Call for acknowledging intrinsic value of animal right

LAHORE: Supreme Court Judge Justice Athar Minallah underscored the importance of recognizing animal rights as an acknowledgment of their intrinsic value. Speaking at the Pakistan's first International Animal and Environmental Rights Conference (PIAERC) 2025, held at a local hotel, here on Sunday, he explained that rights were fundamentally tied to the protection of inherent value, which applies not only to humans but also to animals, plants, and all forms of life. Reflecting on his experiences as a student and a jurist, Justice Athar Minallah shared how his education and early life encounters shaped his perspective on justice and equity. He recounted childhood memories of learning about lions in the wild while hearing their roars from cages at the London Zoo, highlighting the contradictions between the natural world and human-imposed captivity. He recounted his academic journey, including studying Islamic jurisprudence, which emphasized the preservation of all forms of life as a fundamental principle. Justice Athar Minallah explained that this philosophy was central not only in Islam but also in other major religions.—APP

# OGRA meeting with LPG Bowzers and storage tanks manufacturers

During the meeting, the authorized manufacturers of LPG bowzers were directed to ensure compliance with critical safety standards, emphasizing that no LPG bowzer should be manufactured with a capacity exceeding 30 metric tons, exclusive of the 15% allowance. Manufacturers were further instructed to adhere strictly to established safety regulations to mitigate risks and ensure the safe handling and transportation of LPG

## DNA

LAHORE: A high-level meeting with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) bowzers, storage tanks, and bullet manufacturers was convened today at the Regional Office of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) in Lahore. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Zain Ul Abideen, Member Oil, OGRA, and attended by senior directors and officers from the LPG and Enforcement departments. During the meeting, the authorized manufacturers of LPG bowzers were directed to ensure compliance with critical safety standards, emphasizing that no LPG bowzer should be manufactured with a capacity exceeding 30 metric tons, exclusive of the 15% allowance. Manufacturers were further instructed to adhere strictly to established safety regulations to mitigate risks and ensure the safe handling and transportation of LPG. OGRA officials disclosed that the requisite data provided by manufacturers is currently under examination and analysis to verify



compliance with manufacturing standards. In addition, the Authority's Enforcement teams are planning inspections of all manufacturing units to ensure adherence

to safety protocols. The Authority reiterated its commitment to cracking down on unauthorized and illegal manufacturers, in collaboration with local administrations, to eliminate

unsafe practices in the industry. Mr. Zain Ul Abideen emphasized that regular monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to ensure sustained progress and the highest safety stand-

ards across the LPG manufacturing sector. These efforts reflect OGRA's unwavering dedication to safeguarding public safety and maintaining regulatory compliance within the industry.

## CM orders completion of roads, health centers by June 30

### DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities to complete the construction and rehabilitation of roads and health centers across Punjab by June 30, 2025. Presiding over a special review meeting on the ongoing development projects of roads and health centers across Punjab, here on Sunday, she emphasized the significance of timely project completion, saying, "Millions of citizens will benefit from the rehabilitation, construction, and repair of roads across Punjab." The CM stressed the importance of Phase-I of health center construction and rehabilitation, stating, "I will personally inspect and inaugurate the newly constructed Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) in the Province." She instructed the Planning and Development Department to devise measures for generating additional resources to support these initiatives. During the meeting, Provincial Secretary Communications & Works Sohail Ashraf presented a detailed briefing on the progress of ongoing projects.

# EO-1 satellite launch, a new milestone in Sino-Pak space cooperation

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: EO-1 satellite launch, a new milestone in Sino-Pak space cooperation, officials said here on Sunday. On January 17 in a significant collaboration between the China National Space Administration (CNSA) and Pakistan's Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), the indigenous EO-1 satellite was successfully launched. This launch took place at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in China, utilizing the Long March 2D (LM-2D) rocket. The EO-1 satellite, a product of Pakistan's own technological prowess, is set to enhance the nation's capabilities in earth observation

and resource management. Saturday, the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan extended its heartfelt congratulations in an official statement, underscoring the success as a testament to the robust and growing partnership between the two nations. The statement highlighted the deepened cooperation and mutual achievements in the realms of space exploration and technological advancement. The EO-1 satellite employs electro-optical sensors to collect data and images of the Earth's surface by detecting and measuring reflected sunlight or emitted radiation, Gwadar Pro reported. According to SUPARCO, the satellite will enhance Pakistan's ability to monitor and manage natural resources, respond to disasters, and improve ur-

ban planning and agricultural development. "This remarkable milestone marks a giant leap forward in Pakistan's journey towards self-reliance and technological excellence in space exploration," SUPARCO stated. The agency highlighted that the satellite provides invaluable insights across various sectors. It supports precision farming, irrigation management, and crop yield prediction, significantly enhancing agricultural efficiency. Additionally, the satellite aids in monitoring infrastructure growth and managing urban sprawl, ensuring well-planned urban development. It also plays a crucial role in tracking deforestation, glacier recession, and water resources, contributing to environmental conservation efforts. Moreover, the

satellite delivers timely updates on natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes, enabling effective and swift response measures to mitigate their impact. Furthermore, the satellite will assist in monitoring and conserving natural resources, including minerals, oil, and gas reserves. These capabilities make the satellite a vital tool for sustainable development and informed decision-making. The successful launch represents a crucial step in Pakistan's journey towards space technology. In addition to the PRSC-EO1, China's Long March-2D carrier rocket also launched two other satellites, Tianlu-1 and Blue Carbon 1, into orbit, as stated by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.

# 200 orphaned and poor girls married

## MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD :Chaudhry Naem ud din Warraich, a prominent political figure from Bahawalpur, Pakistan, is known for his dedication to public service and social welfare. As a political leader he has consistently demonstrated a commitment to the betterment of society. One of his most remarkable contributions is his continuation of a philanthropic initiative started by his late elder brother, Chaudhry Waseem ud din Warraich. This initiative, which focuses on arranging mass marriages for poor and orphaned girls, has not only touched countless lives but also set an inspiring example of selflessness and community support. Before delving into Chaudhry Naem ud din Warraich's efforts, it is essential to understand the foundation laid by his late elder brother, Chaudhry Waseem ud din Warraich. A visionary and compassionate individual, Chaudhry Waseem ud din Warraich dedicated a significant portion of his life and personal resources to addressing the societal challenges faced by underprivileged girls. Over the course of a decade, he organized and funded the weddings

of countless poor and orphaned girls. His efforts were rooted in the belief that everyone deserves the dignity and joy of starting a family, regardless of their financial circumstances. The untimely passing of Chaudhry Waseem ud din Warraich left a void in the lives of those who had benefited from his generosity. However, his mission did not end with his demise. Chaudhry Naem ud din Warraich, inspired by his elder brother's legacy, stepped forward to continue this noble tradition. Recognizing the significance of this initiative, he committed himself to ensuring its sustainability and expansion. In one of his most notable acts, Chaudhry Naem ud din Warraich organized a mass marriage ceremony at the Warraich Farm House in Goth Shah Muhammad. This event saw the union of 200 poor girls, whose weddings were entirely funded by him. By taking on the financial burden, he provided relief to families who otherwise might not have been able to afford the associated expenses. This grand gesture not only alleviated economic hardships but also restored hope and dignity to those involve

# Gas explosion badly injures family in Nowshera

PESHAWAR: An explosion caused by accumulated gas inside a house in Nowshera district on Sunday resulted in severe injuries to the parents and children. According to rescue sources, the incident occurred in the Badarshi Isa Khel area of Nowshera, where a gas leak inside the house led to a massive explosion. As a result, the parents and children suffered severe burns. The explosion caused a fire that engulfed the entire room. Upon receiving the information, rescue teams quickly arrived at the scene and shifted the injured to the hospital.—APP

# IWMB unveils vision for modern wildlife sanctuary

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) is poised to take a significant leap forward in its mission to conserve and protect endangered species with the establishment of a state-of-the-art sanctuary at the Margalla Wildlife Rescue & Rehab Centre. This visionary project, championed by IWMB Chairperson Rina Saeed Khan, aims to provide a safe haven for wildlife and ensure their protection in their natural habitats, particularly the Margalla Hills National Park, by focusing on both rehabilitation and preservation while maintaining the highest standards of care for critically endangered species. Spokesman Omar Bilal talking to APP on Sunday credited Chairperson Rina Saeed Khan for driving this transformative initiative, highlighting her deep commitment to the cause. "Her relentless dedication has been the cornerstone of this effort, ensuring that endangered species receive the attention and care they deserve," Bilal remarked. Under her leadership, the IWMB has taken decisive steps, including the development of cutting-edge medical facilities and partnerships with international experts, to enhance the care provided to the animals at the Margalla Centre. Bilal also emphasized the board's forward-thinking approach in setting up a dedicated team of international veterinarians who provide critical consultations and training. "With the guidance of these specialists, we have equipped our teams with the knowledge to address the unique medical challenges faced by endangered species," he added. Wildlife sanctuaries worldwide, like the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), play a vital role in conservation, supported by public involvement and strict legal frameworks. In countries like the United States, facilities such as the San Juan Islands Whale Watch operate under laws like the Endangered Species Act, offering rescue, rehabilitation, and long-term care to endangered species. Public donations, volunteering, and educational outreach are key components of these efforts. In Europe, sanctuaries like the Veszprém Zoo in Hungary and Loro Parque in Spain benefit from regulations such as the EU's Habitats and Birds Directives. These sanctuaries, supported by both public contributions and government funding, blend modern facilities with international collaborations to ensure species preservation. Global conservation success relies on the combination of legal protection, scientific research, and community involvement to safeguard endangered species in their natural habitats. As the IWMB continues to make strides in animal rescue and rehabilitation, its work to combat wildlife abuse and trafficking has been pivotal. Bilal shared that over 500 animals have been rescued and rehabilitated since the center's inception, with more than 100 species currently undergoing treatment and recovery. Despite the challenges posed by limited resources and professional expertise in the country, the IWMB remains steadfast in its commitment to providing exceptional care to the animals in its charge. The IWMB urges the public to play an active role in protecting wildlife by reporting instances of animal cruelty. As Bilal aptly put it, "The health of our ecosystem depends on the welfare of our animals, and together, we can foster a more compassionate world for all living beings.—DNA

# Consul General of Iran hosts lunch in honour of Speaker Sindh Assembly

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: His Excellency Hassan Nourian, Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Dean of the Karachi Consular Corps, hosted a luncheon in honour of Syed Awais Qadir Shah, Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, here at the Consulate General of Iran in Karachi. On the occasion graced by a four-member delegation from the Iranian Parliament's Cultural Commission, who are on an official visit to Karachi. Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah was accompanied by Deputy Speaker Anthony Naveed, Member National Assembly, Mirza Ikhtiyar Baig and General Secre-



tary PPP, Waqar Mehdi. During the gathering, discussions centered on the mutual cooperation and strengthening of relations between Iran and Pakistan. Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah emphasized the enduring friendship

shared by the two neighboring nations. "Iran and Pakistan share a strong and friendly relationship as neighbors. It is essential for both countries to maintain and enhance these ties for mutual progress, peace, security, and

stability." Syed Awais Qadir Shah The discourse also focused into the challenges facing the global Muslim fraternity and the shared responsibilities of both nations in working towards sustainable solutions for unity and security. Speak-

er Syed Awais Qadir Shah extended his gratitude to Consul General Hassan Nourian for the gracious invitation and the warm hospitality. Consul General thanked the Speaker Provincial Assembly of Sindh, Syed Awais Qadir Shah and the delegation for their time and also presented a shield to the Speaker in his honour. The Speaker also invited His Excellency and the Iranian delegation to visit the historic Sindh Assembly and attend a session of the provincial legislature, further strengthening bilateral ties and cultural understanding. This meeting marked a reaffirmation of the enduring partnership between Iran and Pakistan, reflecting a shared commitment to regional cooperation and unity.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	National Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133  
Marriott.....051-2826211  
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



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RGH.....9290301-7  
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PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
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Met Office.....9250360-6  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Ahsan stresses for collective efforts to promote local industry

Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the importance of the Chakwal Industrial Estate project, stating that it would give a new direction to the economy of not just Chakwal but the entire region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member of the Central Core Committee of United Business Group (FPCCI), Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, emphasized the need for collective efforts to stabilize Pakistan's economy and promote local industries. He stated that the establishment of an industrial estate in Chakwal would be a game-changer for the region. To complete this project promptly, Islamabad, Chakwal, Talagang, and other regional chambers must adopt a joint strategy. He expressed these views during his visit to the Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where he congratulated the newly elected President of the Chakwal Chamber, Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, and other office bearers. On this occasion, former President of the Chakwal Chamber and Chief Coordinator Khawaja Arif hosted a luncheon at his residence in honor of the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari, along with UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of Chakwal Chamber Waqar Bakhtawari, and President of Talagang Chamber Malik Shabbir Awan, presented bouquets and congratulated Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, Senior Vice President Sheikh Riaz Ahmed Farooqi, Vice President Khalid Mirza, and other office bearers of the Chakwal Chamber. The newly elected President, Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, stated that establishing the industrial estate is



one of his top priorities, and he would utilize all resources to make it a reality. He appreciated the support of other chambers and the business community in this regard. In his speech, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the importance of the Chakwal Industrial Estate project, stating that it would give a new direction to the economy of not just Chakwal but the entire region. Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari noted that Chakwal has always been a hub of business activities, and the establishment of the industrial estate

will provide employment opportunities to locals and open new avenues for the business community. President of the Talagang Chamber of Commerce, Malik Shabbir Awan, assured his full support for the completion of the project and stressed that the government and local chambers must ensure the provision of funds and resources for its successful implementation. Group Leader of Chakwal Chamber, Qazi Muhammad Akbar, emphasized that the industrial estate would

bring an industrial revolution to the region. He pledged to expedite efforts for the construction of the Chakwal Chamber building and to work with all relevant institutions to complete the project. All speakers unanimously agreed on the need for regional chambers to collaborate to make the industrial estate project a success. At the conclusion of the meeting, the local business community also pledged their full support for the success of this initiative.

## Senator calls Javed's death a blow to responsible journalism

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a central leader of PML-N and parliament party leader in the Senate, described the death of Journalist Javed Shahzad as a significant loss for responsible journalism and praised his commitment to preserving the noble principles of the field. Visiting the residence of the late journalist, Senator Siddiqui extended his condolences to Shahzad's family and offered Fataha. Speaking with the deceased's brother and sons, Siddiqui fondly remembered Javed Shahzad as an exceptionally kind and compassionate individual, with whom he had been in daily contact. "He was an honest and responsible journalist who faithfully performed his professional duties," said Senator Siddiqui. "Javed Shahzad's name will be remembered as a diligent journalist who firmly believed in the noble values of journalism."—APP

## Police khidmat Markaz opened at Soan Garden

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad, Syed Ali Raza, inaugurated on Sunday the Police khidmat Markaz at Soan Garden to provide comprehensive police-related services to residents of suburban areas. A Public Relations Officer (PRO) informed APP that the facility has been constructed in line with international standards, offering a range of services under one roof. DIG Raza emphasized that the center aims to enhance convenience for citizens residing in remote areas. DIG Raza said that trained personnel have been deployed at the center to ensure quality service delivery. "Protecting the lives and property of citizens and providing them with essential facilities remain the top priority of the police," DIG Ali Raza remarked. Raza further stated that the Islamabad Police is committed to assisting citizens with a spirit of public service and ensuring the best possible support. On this occasion, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, SP Soan Zone, a large number of citizens, and media representatives were also present.—APP

# Qureshi urges CDA chief to address business community's grievances

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to resolving the pressing challenges faced by the local business community, aiming to facilitate a conducive environment for doing business and ultimately support the country's economic growth. During a meeting with visiting business leaders on Saturday, Qureshi underscored the urgent need to build stronger, collaborative relationships between the business sector and government departments, emphasizing that such cooperation is essential for the prosperity of both parties. The business leaders raised several critical concerns that are impeding growth, including issues surrounding security, sanitation, and excessive taxation. They pointed out the onerous tax burdens levied by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the local taxes imposed by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which are perceived as discouraging investment and creating significant operational challenges. Addressing these concerns, Qureshi assured the business leaders that the ICCI is actively working to attract foreign investment by improving local industry infrastructure, focusing on promoting value-added products for export and enhancing the overall ease of doing business. He also highlighted the Chamber's ongoing efforts to create a more investor-friendly environment, one that can lead to sustainable economic growth. In particular, Qureshi called for the personal intervention of the Chairman of the CDA, urging him to engage directly with business leaders to address the concerns raised. He expressed hope that the CDA Chairman would be open to collaborating with the business community to find mutually beneficial solutions that would streamline processes, reduce unnecessary burdens, and promote a more favorable climate for investment in the capital. In addition to addressing these operational challenges, Qureshi emphasized the ICCI's initiatives to resolve housing issues faced by businesspeople. He shared details about the Chamber's proposal to secure a dedicated housing society for the business community, which would offer affordable and convenient housing options to entrepreneurs and their families. Furthermore, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui provided an update on the preparations for the upcoming Ramadan Festival, an initiative by the ICCI aimed at benefiting both traders and consumers. The event, to be held in various business hubs across the capital, will provide a platform for local businesses to showcase their products and engage with the community during the festive season. Vice President Nasir Mahmood Chaudhry also emphasized the importance of unity within the business community. He highlighted that a collective, united approach would be crucial in creating a powerful voice capable of addressing and overcoming the challenges currently hindering the sector's growth. He reiterated the ICCI's commitment to working hand-in-hand with all stakeholders to resolve these issues, ensuring that Pakistan's business landscape can flourish and contribute significantly to the nation's economic development.—DNA

# EVs, green mass transit systems crucial for mitigating smog challenges

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has called for enforcement of stringent policy measures to mitigate heat-trapping vehicular emissions to tackle smog, which has become a grave health nuisance. Chairing a recent 10th meeting of National Climate Change Policy Implementation Committee (NC-CPIC) held here, he noted that smog has emerged a serious environmental and public health concern, affecting millions of lives every year in the country, causing billions in the economic losses, disrupting road and air traffic. However, it was imperative

that immediate and impactful actions were taken by all relevant government organisations to reduce the sources of smog and air pollution. During the meeting, Secretary MoCC&EC Aisha Humeria Moriani presented detailed overview of the progress on the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy 2021 and the status/outcomes of federal and provincial climate action plans framed in the light of the climate change policy 2021, which outlines the strategic direction for coping with adverse impacts of climate change across various sectors. "As of 2025, the climate change and environmental coordination ministry

in close partnership with provincial governments and other stakeholders has made notable strides in both policy implementation and practical interventions to combat climate change, in line with the global climate goals set under the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," MoCC&EC Secretary Aisha Humeria Moriani informed the meeting. Spelling out various policy measures, she explained that for renewable energy base expansion in the country efforts have already been ramped up to transition to renewable energy sources, with significant investments in solar, wind, and hydropower projects.

The government's push to achieve a 30 percent share of renewables in the energy mix by 2030 is well on track, with new projects coming online and policy frameworks encouraging public-private partnership for implementation of various green initiatives, she added. The MoCC&EC secretary also briefed the meeting chair about the status of National Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy-2019. She highlighted manufacturing and use of EVs, particularly two-wheelers and three-wheelers, in the country was already picking up the pace as government was providing attractive incentives, including tax exemptions.—APP

# FPCCI, Police host health and fitness Gala to honor martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Honorable Chairman FPCCI Standing Committee on Police and Civil Administration Mr. Yaqub Sheikh CEO Shaheen Chemist along with Executive Members Mr. Haroon Naseer CEO Maroof International Hospital and Mr. Abbas Khan CEO Jacked Nutrition organized the first ever full day Health and Fitness Gala to ensure a sense of collaboration between the Police Civil Administration and the business community at large. The event was co-sponsored by Deputy Chairmen of the committee Mr. Shahnawaz Aleem Khan Executive Director MAAKSONS, Mr. Raja Wamik Khan Executive Director Reliance Energy and Power, Committee Coordinators Mr. Zubair Taimoor CEO Ambassador Associates, Mr. Talha Sheikh Director Shaheen

Chemist and Executive Members Mr. Ali Kaifee CEO AK Broadcasts for the event, Mr. Ali Mehdi, Mr. Jahanzaib Amjad CEO Volta Jolt and Mr. Omar Farooq CEO Chezius who in collaboration with Mr. Saad CEO Hanif Rajput caterers were the official catering and food sponsors for the event. Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, Senator Rana Mahmood Ul Hassan, MNA Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner ICT Mr. Ali Randhawa, President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, a large strength of Ambassadors from the diplomatic corps, media personnel, politicians and senior most ranks for the Police forced attended the Health & Fitness Gala organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry

(FPCCI) at ICT Police Lines, Islamabad. The event, which also honored the contributions of the police force, especially the families of martyrs, saw a distinguished gathering of government officials, lawmakers, diplomats, and community leaders. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani expressed his deep appreciation for the FPCCI Standing Committee on Police and Civil Administration's efforts in organizing such a noble initiative, emphasizing that the event serves as a tribute to the dedication and sacrifices of the police force. "We owe our police force a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid. Every day, they put their lives on the line to ensure our safety and security," said Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani. Addressing the families of the martyrs, Chairman FPCCI said that the whole nation, the parliament and the government stand with you.

# Gandhara Citrus Festival to be held in Taxila

ISLAMABAD: The Gandhara Resource Centre Pakistan (GRCP) has announced the third annual Gandhara Citrus Festival, scheduled to take place on January 26 at the Taxila Garden. This festival promises to be a unique celebration of the region's agricultural prosperity, cultural heritage, and the ancient Gandhara civilisation, the organisers told. Following the success of previous events, this year's festival aims to promote agri-tourism, showcase the renowned Khanpur oranges in their many varieties, and highlight the exquisite stonework of the Gandhara civilisation on an international stage. One of the festival's key objectives is to foster appreciation for the cultural heritage and tourism potential of Gandhara. By highlighting the historical significance and grandeur of Gandhara's ancient sites, the event seeks to strengthen local tourism while raising global awareness about the importance of preserving this region's rich legacy. According to organisers, the festival will feature an array of engaging activities, including food stalls, orange stalls, tours of citrus orchards, live painting sessions, exhibitions of stone carvings, book stalls, and displays of traditional clothing and textiles. A particular focus will be placed on showcasing the diverse varieties of Khanpur oranges to strengthen connections between local farmers and exporters, ultimately boosting the recognition of these citrus fruits on national and international levels. The event will also serve as a platform for Gandhara's stone carvers, connecting them with global buyers and introducing their unique craftsmanship to the world. Visitors will have the opportunity to purchase locally grown oranges, handicrafts, and other agricultural products. Meanwhile, artists participating in live painting sessions will creatively interpret themes inspired by Gandhara's cultural and citrus heritage. The exhibition of stone carvings will highlight the extraordinary talent of local artisans.

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## Briefs

APBF draws  
govt attention  
as FDI  
declines 30%  
in Dec

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has urged the government to promote foreign direct investment (FDI), as Pakistan experienced a 32% decline in Dec 2024, with inflows falling to \$170 million compared to \$252 million in Dec 2023. Quoting the latest data of the State Bank of Pakistan APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood has said that drastic steps can revive the economy, which needs to grow significantly and constantly. He advocated the need for raising the country's tax base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from the current 11%. However, it is also the fact that despite the December setback, FDI surged by 20% in the first half of FY25, with total inflows reaching \$1.33 billion between July and December, up from \$1.11 billion during the same period last year. The \$221 million increase highlights improved investor confidence, even as portfolio investments faced significant challenges. During the first half of FY25, total FDI inflows amounted to \$1.88 billion, with outflows recorded at \$554 million. However, portfolio investments saw an outflow of \$222 million during the same period, reflecting ongoing challenges in equity markets. The SBP also reported that overall foreign investment, which includes FDI, portfolio investment, and foreign public investment, recorded a modest 5.8% increase, reaching \$1.247 billion in the first half of FY25 compared to \$1.18 billion in the corresponding period of FY24.—APP

Dr Muzamil  
call to action  
for collective  
responsibility

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muzamil Ayub Thakur a young influential voice for the Kashmir cause who recently made a powerful statement at Oxford University, boldly exposed India's actions in the region, highlighting the need for Muslim countries to unite and take collective responsibility for representing Kashmir and upholding Pakistan's dignity. In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, Dr. Muzamil Ayub Thakur revealed that India has been propagating against him and misleading the youth. However, his powerful statement at Oxford University has exposed India's actions in the region, leaving them speechless, he added. Dr. Thakur emphasized that the Kashmir issue is essentially a matter of Muslim identity and stressed the importance of communicating the movement's message effectively to the international community. Dr. Muzamil stressed the need for unity among Muslim countries' leadership to support the Kashmir cause, stressing that the Kashmiri people will continue to uphold their ideology. He believes that a collective effort from Muslim countries is crucial in advocating for Kashmir's rights and freedom.—APP



Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa presenting the shield to Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani at the occasion of Health & Fitness Gala in the presence of Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, Governor Punjab.

PIDE's discourse unveils urgent  
reforms for Pakistan's future

These issues are compounded by a lack of investment in research and development (R&D), outdated technologies, and the impacts of climate change. However, the publication outlines a roadmap to overcome these challenges by adopting global best practices, such as precision farming, deregulation of agricultural markets, geospatial monitoring, and leveraging advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and drones

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) is proud to announce the release of its much-awaited edition of Discourse, titled Modernizing Pakistan's Agricultural Economy. This special issue is a call to action for addressing the critical challenges facing the country's agricultural sector through innovative solutions and global best practices. In his opening remarks, Dr. Arshad H. Hashmi, Acting Vice Chancellor of PIDE, stated, "This special issue of Discourse aims to inspire a transformational shift in Pakistan's agricultural landscape, fostering informed discussions and actionable strategies to address the challenges of today and tomorrow." The issue was skillfully curated by editorial team, including Dr. Arshad H. Hashmi; Dr. Shujaat Farooq; Dr. Abedullah Anjum; and Dr. Muhammad Faisal Ali, all from PIDE. Together, they have shaped a comprehensive guide to

reforming and modernizing the agricultural sector. The edition highlights the multifaceted challenges confronting Pakistan's agricultural sector, including low productivity, fragmented landholdings, poor infrastructure, inefficient irrigation practices, and regulatory barriers. These issues are compounded by a lack of investment in research and development (R&D), outdated technologies, and the impacts of climate change. However, the publication outlines a roadmap to overcome these challenges by adopting global best practices, such as precision farming, deregulation of agricultural markets, geospatial monitoring, and leveraging advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and drones. Among the solutions presented, the issue emphasizes the critical need for liberalizing input markets, such as seeds and fertilizers, and reforming land consolidation policies to promote equitable growth. It also advocates for economic water pricing to encourage sustainable use of

resources while suggesting market-driven approaches to enhance efficiency in the sugar and wheat sectors. Additionally, adopting AI and drone technology in supply chains and farming practices is highlighted as a game-changer for improving productivity and reducing waste. The special edition features compelling contributions from leading experts. Muhammad Faisal Ali and Abedullah propose actionable strategies in "Pathways to Prosperity: Strategic Reforms for Pakistan's Agricultural Markets," while Zartasha Inayat and Tuaha Adil explore the potential of deregulating the sugar sector in "Deregulation of the Sugar Sector Critical to Promote Efficiency." Sobia Rose addresses the inequities in land markets in "Reforming Agricultural Land Markets in Pakistan: Overcoming Structural Inequities," and Muhammad Asad ur Rehman Naseer examines pricing inefficiencies in "Decoding the Dynamics of Pricing in the Fruit and Vegetable Market: Highlighting the Government Imperfections." Technolog-

ical innovation also takes center stage, with Ibrar ul Hassan Akhtar detailing geospatial advancements in "SUPARCO Interventions for Geospatial Monitoring of Agricultural Crops." Anjeela Khuram and Muhammad Faisal Ali emphasize energy efficiency in "Valuing Energy Efficiency Potential in the Agriculture Sector," while Rizwan Mir, outlines government-led efforts in "Revolutionizing the Agricultural Sector of Pakistan - SIFC's Top Priority." Ayesha Sultana's "Why Investment in R&D has not Improved Agriculture Productivity?" critiques the barriers to impactful research in the sector. The potential of AI is explored in a series of articles, including "Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Agricultural Advancements" by Shayan Malik and "Harnessing AI for Agricultural Transformation - A Prospect of Pakistan" by Engineer Mahwish Rose. These contributions illustrate how AI can revolutionize supply chains, precision farming, and resource management. Similarly, the role

of drone technology in improving efficiency and overcoming regulatory constraints is examined in articles by Sadaf Safer and Hafsa Sarfraz. The edition also explores the future of Pakistan's agricultural sector, with a focus on the Gene Revolution. Articles such as "Sowing the Seeds of Change: Pakistan's Transition from Green to Gene" by Ayesha Rahman and "Moving from Green to Gene Revolution: Scope and Challenges for Pakistan" by Waqar Younas & Uzma Zia advocate for the adoption of genetically modified crops to enhance productivity and sustainability. The comprehensive analysis and actionable solutions presented in Discourse aim to provide a roadmap for policymakers, stakeholders, and innovators to collaborate on building a resilient agricultural sector. With its focus on adopting global best practices and modern technologies, this special edition offers a vision for transforming Pakistan's agricultural landscape.

IG demoted  
2 officers  
on poor  
performance

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, took action during crime meetings held across all zones of the federal capital on Saturday and ordered to demote two officers for poor performance and rewarded two others for their exemplary work. A public relations officer told APP that the Station House Officer (SHO) of Sihala police station was demoted to Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) due to poor performance. Similarly, the Investigation In-Charge of Koral police station was relieved of his duties and transferred to the police lines. He said the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of the Investigation Unit in Swan Zone has been asked to provide an explanation for weak performance, while the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Koral Zone has also been issued a notice regarding inadequate results. In contrast, the SHO and Investigation In-Charge of Humak police station received commendation certificates and a cash reward of Rs. 100,000 each for their outstanding work in combating crime and maintaining law and order in their jurisdiction.—APP

As cut in  
power tariff  
likely FRIA  
wants major  
reduction

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) is likely to slash power tariff by Rs1.035 per unit as part of monthly fuel price adjustment for December 2024, the Ferozepur Road Industrial Association has said that some major cut should be introduced to provide relief to electricity consumers, who are bearing very high tariffs. FRIA Chairman Shahbaz Aslam said that the Central Power Purchasing Agency-Guarantee has submitted a formal request to Nepra on behalf of power distribution companies (DISCOs), proposing a tariff reduction of Rs1.035 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) compared to the reference fuel cost of Rs10.6364. FRIA asked the government to take prompt measures to bring down the production costs for trade and industries to enable them to compete in the international market.—APP

Human traffickers, facilitators  
should be imprisoned for life

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPC-CI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Saturday that the death of fifty people, including 44 Pakistanis, in the accident of a boat illegally going to Spain via West Africa is regrettable. Earlier, many Pakistanis have

lost their lives while going abroad in search of employment. In contrast, in recent December, forty Pakistani youths who went in search of jobs near Greece died, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that human smuggling should be stopped and strict legal action should be taken against those involved in human trafficking. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said a law should be made to award life imprisonment for such crimes. The business leader said that 63 per cent of the country's population consists of youth, and they should be provided with technical edu-

cation and employment opportunities within the country. Moreover, legal employment opportunities should be found abroad for the youth equipped with technical education so they are not forced to risk their lives in search of employment. He said that human smugglers and their facilitators are busy defrauding the public. Notices were issued to 38 officers of the Federal Investigation Agency in the investigation against human trafficking. At the same time, the Additional Director of Immigration at Sialkot Airport was removed from his post, but this did not make any difference.

NAHE launches faculty  
development program

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), HEC has launched a two-week Faculty Development Program for Associate Professors of Public Sector Universities. The program, launched at HEC Regional Centers in Lahore and Karachi, aims to elevate teaching excellence, research innovation, and professional growth. The opening ceremony featured a virtual address by Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, HEC's Executive Director as Chief Guest, who underscored the program's pivotal role in creating a ripple effect within the academic ecosystem. Dr. Zia said that "NAHE is executing Faculty Development Program in three tiers. Tier-3 (Lecturer & Assistant Professor)

training is already being held successfully in different universities of the country. Now, Tier-2 (Associate Professor) is being launched. This program empowers faculty to become master trainers, ensuring the cascading of knowledge and skills across institutions. Executive Director emphasised the importance of cascading the training by the participants in their respective universities. Through this initiative, HEC is committed to strengthening academic excellence nationwide. Dr. Zia also congratulated NAHE for successful execution of training programs. Dr. Noor Anna Malik, Managing Director NAHE, also addressed the participants virtually, highlighted the program's alignment with HEC's vision to develop faculty as agents of transformation, equipped with innovative tools

and societal needs. The program features eight specialized modules, including Ensuring Excellence in Higher Education Teaching, Effective Academic Planning & Implementation Strategies, Psychological and Educational Strategies for Teacher and Student Development, Effective Organizational Communication, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for Enhancing Andragogical Skills, Research Excellence & Innovation, Assessment & Evaluation (Digital Tools), and Higher Educational Administration and Management. The Modules will be delivered by leading experts in their fields. Utilizing modern pedagogical techniques and digital tools, the sessions foster active participation and collaborative learning. Faculty development is essential for advancing the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in higher education settings. By improving the capabilities and effectiveness of university faculty, institutions can better contribute to multiple SDGs. Faculty development aligns with and supports various SDGs including SDG-4 (Quality Education), SDG-5 (Gender Equality), SDG-8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG-10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG-13 (Climate Action) and SDG-16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). By investing in faculty development, educational institutions can significantly advance the SDGs, ensuring quality education for all and fostering innovation, and promotes sustainable development across various sectors.



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## Turbulence in China-US ties

CHINA and the US have maintained what some call "fragile stability" in their relationship following a top leaders' meeting in San Francisco in late 2023. Despite the continued frictions and conflicts, there has been no major instance of crisis between the world's two largest economies since then. At a time when a new US administration is ready to assume office, bilateral ties are once again coming to a critical juncture. The ball is in the US court in terms of determining the near-future trajectory of this relationship. From China's perspective, the root cause of the strained China-US ties is that Washington finds it difficult to accept the rise of China, and this feeling of unease is further reinforced by the fact that, ideologically, China is not seen by the US as a like-minded country. This mindset is illustrated by outgoing president Joe Biden's recent remark that "China will never surpass us", and it can help explain the logic behind a wide range of hostile moves taken by Washington, including imposing tech restrictions on China, challenging China's red line on the Taiwan question, lashing out at China over human rights, etc. Ultimately, those actions are aimed at strategically weakening China. On the contrary, it is from the Chinese government that we've heard a consistent message that China and the US should be partners, rather than adversaries. If China-US tensions spiraled out of control, there would be costly consequences for both sides. In 2023, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, an American think tank, conducted a modeling study on a hypothetical China-US war over Taiwan, finding that such a military conflict would cost the US dozens of warships, hundreds of aircraft, and tens of thousands of service members. That is by no means the price the US is willing to pay. Think about Afghanistan, where the US spent 20 years and more than \$2 trillion in a failed mission. The reality is that a worst-case scenario like a war over Taiwan would be in no one's interests. This is why the US, on its part, needs to recalibrate its perception of China to avoid strategic miscalculation. In the words of Warren Cohen, a distinguished emeritus professor who has long taught diplomatic studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, China is not looking to take over the world order in the sense that the US dominates it. Robert Daly, director of the Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, says the US needs to understand that "China has a right to feel secure." Such voices ought to be heard and taken more seriously in the decision-making process of Washington's China policy. Judging from his first term of office, US President-elect Donald Trump doesn't seem to be someone obsessed with ideological matters, and he has a perceived dislike of wars. These characteristics of Trump could be helpful to the pursuit of an overall stable China-US relationship during his second term, although some of his other characteristics might bring new uncertainties. In interpersonal relationships, if you don't like certain aspects of a person but find it impossible to sever ties with him, then probably you need to learn to pay more attention to the aspects to your liking in this relationship.



## Saudi Arabia's leadership role

SAUDI Arabia has emerged as a central player in efforts to address some of the most pressing regional issues affecting the Middle East, which signals a profound shift in its foreign policy approach. Under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom is no longer content to operate in the shadows of American diplomacy or maintain a reactive posture. Instead, it is taking proactive steps to redefine its role as a much-needed stabilizing force in the region. This new approach is particularly evident in recent engagements with Lebanon and post-Assad Syria, with Riyadh positioning itself as a key guarantor of peace and normalization, and as a broker for regional stability. One of the clearest examples of an evolving Saudi foreign policy is its leadership in Gulf states' rapprochement with Syria. After more than a decade of civil war, the country remains fractured and unstable. The fall of Bashar Assad's regime has given way to a new government led by Ahmad Al-Sharaa, which is now in full control and playing its cards very carefully. Recognizing the need for pragmatic engagement with the new authorities, Saudi Arabia has spearheaded efforts to bring Syria back into the Arab League fold, a move that reflects a strategic pivot from isolation to integration. This shift is not without controversy. Critics argue that reengagement with Syria risks legitimization of a nation still grappling with the aftermath of conflict and external influence. However, the Saudi calculus is clear: The continued isolation of Syria will do little to alleviate the suffering of its people. By leading the Gulf states in the process of normalizing ties with Damascus, Riyadh aims to bring the reconstruction of Syria under the purview of Arab states rather than of external powers. The Kingdom's leadership role in this underscores its commitment to fostering a new regional order in which Arab states take the lead in efforts to resolve their own crises. In Lebanon, too, Saudi Arabia has reemerged as a significant player in the country's political dynamics. For years, Riyadh distanced itself, frustrated by the outsized influence of Hezbollah. However, Lebanon's deepening political and economic crises — exacerbated by a prolonged presidential vacuum that was finally resolved this month — prompted the Saudis to reengage. This renewed interaction has been instrumental in shaping the political landscape as Lebanon elects a new president and hopes to implement much-needed reforms. The Saudi involvement has been particularly evident in the form of behind-the-scenes diplomacy intended to help build consensus among Lebanon's fractured political factions. Riyadh's influence was also felt through its support for a French initiative to resolve the political deadlock in the country, signaling a willingness to work collaboratively with international partners. While Saudi Arabia's renewed engagement in Lebanon is still unfolding, its proactive role is already helping to reshape the political calculus in Beirut. By reasserting its influence, Riyadh hopes to foster a more balanced political environment that is conducive to stability and economic recovery. The Kingdom's active roles in Syria and Lebanon are emblematic of a broader shift in its regional strategy. Under King Salman and the crown prince, the nation has moved away from its historically cautious and reactive foreign policy to embrace a more assertive and dynamic approach. This shift reflects both recognition of changing geopolitical realities and a desire to position Saudi Arabia as a leader in the Arab world.

# The US response to China's rise

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The trade imbalance between the United States and China has long been a contentious issue. For years, the U.S. has imported significantly more goods from China than it has exported, resulting in a persistent trade deficit. This imbalance is not merely a statistical concern; it carries implications for jobs, industrial competitiveness, and national security

THE economic agenda of the incoming administration is firmly anchored in revitalizing the United States' financial strength. One of the most pressing areas demanding attention is the complex trade and investment relationship between the United States and China. Addressing the intricate challenges embedded in this dynamic will play a critical role in achieving the desired economic revival. A significant portion of the discussion in recent months has centered on trade measures, particularly tariffs, as tools to address a range of economic concerns. These measures are proposed to rebalance the trade imbalance, encourage domestic companies to bring their operations back to the United States, and curb the growing global influence of the Chinese financial system. The trade imbalance between the United States and China has long been a contentious issue. For years, the U.S. has imported significantly more goods from China than it has exported, resulting in a persistent trade deficit. This imbalance is not merely a statistical concern; it carries implications for jobs, industrial competitiveness, and national security. The administration has argued that imposing trade measures could compel China to alter its economic practices, thereby addressing these concerns. By applying pressure through economic tools, the goal is to create a more level playing field for American businesses and workers. However, such measures are not without risks. Critics warn that excessive reliance on trade restrictions could provoke retaliatory actions, destabilizing global markets and harming businesses that rely on international supply chains. Furthermore, focusing solely on trade measures may overlook deeper structural issues within the U.S. economy that contribute to its reliance on imported goods. One of the administration's primary goals is to encourage domestic companies to relocate their production facilities back to the United States. Over the past several decades, many firms have moved their operations overseas, particularly to China, to take advantage of lower labor costs and access to the global mar-

ket. While this strategy has brought short-term gains in profitability for these companies, it has also resulted in the erosion of U.S.-based manufacturing industries and a loss of jobs in many sectors. By implementing economic incentives alongside trade restrictions, policymakers aim to reverse this trend. Reshoring production is expected to revitalize local economies, strengthen supply chain resilience, and reduce reliance on external actors for critical goods. However, achieving this objective will require addressing challenges such as high domestic labor costs, regulatory barriers, and the need for infrastructure investment to support modern manufacturing. Furthermore, businesses may be hesitant to abandon established supply chains in favor of new ones, as such transitions involve significant costs and logistical challenges. Therefore, the success of this initiative will depend on a carefully calibrated mix of policies that balance incentives and penalties to achieve the desired outcomes.

The global financial landscape is undergoing significant changes, with some countries exploring alternatives to traditional dollar-based systems. These shifts are driven by efforts to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar, particularly in response to concerns about the volatility and potential risks associated with being tied to a single dominant currency. China has emerged as a key player in this movement, promoting the use of its currency, the yuan, in international trade and investment. Policymakers in the U.S. view these developments as a challenge to their country's economic influence. Addressing these concerns will require a multifaceted approach that goes beyond trade measures. Strengthening the U.S. financial system, maintaining global confidence in the dollar, and fostering international partnerships will be essential to counteract the potential erosion of the U.S.'s financial dominance. While economic tools such as trade restrictions can play a role in addressing these issues, they must be part of a broader strategy. Overreliance on any single policy instru-

ment risks creating unintended consequences, such as disruptions to global markets or the alienation of key allies. Moreover, a nuanced approach that considers the interconnected nature of global trade and finance will be essential to achieving long-term success.

The complexities of the U.S.-China economic relationship require careful navigation. On one hand, the administration is committed to safeguarding domestic economic interests, promoting job creation, and reducing dependence on external actors. On the other hand, the interconnected nature of the global economy means that unilateral actions can have far-reaching consequences, both domestically and internationally. Promoting economic growth while addressing trade imbalances and other challenges will require a balance between assertive measures and cooperative strategies. Engaging with China and other key economic partners through dialogue and negotiation can help address underlying concerns while avoiding the risks associated with confrontation. Building on existing international frameworks and fostering collaboration on issues such as intellectual property protection, market access, and environmental standards will be critical to creating a stable and sustainable global economy. The implementation of these strategies will face numerous challenges. Domestic political divisions, global market uncertainties, and the complexity of international trade dynamics are just a few of the factors that could complicate efforts to achieve the administration's economic objectives. Furthermore, the effectiveness of proposed measures will depend on their ability to address the root causes of economic challenges, rather than merely treating the symptoms. Additionally, the success of these policies will require careful coordination with domestic stakeholders, including businesses, workers, and communities. Addressing the concerns of these groups and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are broadly shared will be essential to building support for the administration's agenda.

# Refugee scapegoating is North Africa's troubling 'new' trend

Hafed Al-Ghwel

The result is a morally corrosive narrative framing these vulnerable individuals not as victims seeking refuge but as convenient scapegoats for internal socioeconomic and political failures. This diversion of blame not only exacerbates human suffering but also obfuscates systemic issues within these North African nations. Investigation of this trend further unearths deeper questions: What compels these governments to channel public frustration toward displaced peoples

WHY has North Africa, with its complex history and fragile political fabric, turned to the scapegoating of refugees and migrants amid its own crises? This trend, far from being an isolated occurrence, is part of a broader, more alarming phenomenon in which the sub-region has been transformed into a veritable crossroads for sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach Europe. Meanwhile, stringent European border externalization policies have pressured countries such as Tunisia to act as immigration "gatekeepers," straining their already limited resources. The result is a morally corrosive narrative framing these vulnerable individuals not as victims seeking refuge but as convenient scapegoats for internal socioeconomic and political failures. This diversion of blame not only exacerbates human suffering but also obfuscates systemic issues within these North African nations. Investigation of this trend further unearths deeper questions: What compels these governments to channel public frustration toward displaced peoples, and how does this shift in policy and perception align with historical patterns of societal manipulation by political elites in crisis? Across North Africa, the erosion of support for refugees is more than just an echo of the anti-immigrant sentiment seen in other parts of the world; it is the result of calculated political maneuvering by regimes grappling with uncontrollable economic and social distress. Attention to systemic failures, from corruption to democratic erosion, is deftly redirected toward refugees as scapegoats. This redirection is epitomized by oppressive policies and hostile politics that exploit public discontent while ignoring the root causes of socioeconomic instability. The economic grievances that fuel this blame game are palpable. The high unemployment rates, deteriorating public services, and rampant corruption that siphons off national wealth are conveniently masked by vilifying the displaced. However, this subterfuge does nothing to address the underlying structural failings. By shifting blame to refugees, regimes sidestep genuine accountability, which stifles any impetus for substantial reforms. Instead, this blame game tends to exacerbate the socioeconomic conditions it claims to alleviate. The

policies engender not only societal divisions but also disregard the inadequacies in social contracts that promise economic stability and progress. Consequently, blaming the desperate and vulnerable is simply a diversion that neither resolves fundamental issues nor inspires long-term solutions but rather perpetuates a cycle of blame and avoidance, devoid of constructive outcomes. The alignment with historical practices of societal manipulation is unmistakable in its strategy and execution. Authorities, faced with erosion of trust in public institutions and mounting discontent, tap into preexisting biases and amplify them through state rhetoric, the censor's pen, policy shifts, and even draconian legislation. In recent years, Europe's strategy of externalizing its border enforcement responsibilities to North African nations reveals more than a mere logistical arrangement; it lays bare a growing dependence on illiberal regimes that foster an environment ripe for scapegoating refugees and migrants. Europe's financial infusions into several North African countries, under the guise of managing migration flows, lack rigorous mechanisms to ensure accountability, inadvertently propping up regimes with questionable human rights records. In Libya, for example, funds intended for migratory control have been siphoned off by a kleptocratic elite, exacerbating local corruption and further destabilizing the region. Such externalization efforts by Europe are motivated by a desire to mitigate domestic political crises caused by irregular migration, a strategy that offers a short-term palliative but fails to address the systemic issues at the heart of these movements. This coupling of financial aid with turning a blind eye to human rights abuses not only sustains existing provincial calamities but also spreads xenophobic rhetoric that inevitably seeps into local politics, as observed in the rising public dissatisfaction with migrants in urban coastal regions of North Africa. Meanwhile, growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe, illustrated by the increased support for political parties with rigid anti-immigration stances, constrains Europe's maneuverability, making long-term solutions seem politically prohibitive. The demand from European leaders for immediate, tangible results forces

Brussels to continually funnel funds to North African governments, ignoring endemic abuses and pervasive corruption, merely to project a facade of interventionism. However, the influx of European funds has emboldened these regimes to pursue "security first" policies, ultimately turning migrants into convenient culprits for domestic woes. Rather than diminishing the migration-related pressures, this practice engenders a vicious cycle: public discontent with the presence of refugees or migrants invokes harsher domestic policies, which in turn trigger even more significant migration and deepen the socioeconomic fractures both within and beyond North Africa.

As a result, the mirage of immediate frontier security diverts attention from the imperative need for comprehensive, inclusive policies that could tackle the foundational socioeconomic disparities that drive irregular migration. As the region's convergent crises deepen, reductionist perspectives that portray refugees as the source of a nation's woes have gained alarming traction, creating a hostile environment that only worsens the human suffering. Unlike typical humanitarian crises driven by conflict or natural disasters, this is an unusual crisis, one that is manufactured through policies that aggravate rather than alleviate hardship. These policies involve the depiction of refugees not as victims of their circumstances but as burdens on the economy, driving up rents, consuming resources, and destabilizing society. Such scapegoating not only ignores the complex reasons why people seek refuge but also entrenches systemic injustices. True security and stability cannot be achieved by ignoring the root causes of migration — wars, persecution, and economic collapse — while implementing draconian measures that strip individuals of what little remains of their dignity. Stability must be built upon policies that address these root causes and uphold human rights, fostering an environment in which citizens and refugees alike can thrive.

The writer is a senior fellow and executive director of the North Africa Initiative at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies



## Briefs

## Long-awaited ceasefire ...

FROM PAGE 01

woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, told Reuters via a chat app. In the north of the territory, where some of the most intense Israeli airstrikes and battles with the militants took place, people picked their way on narrow roads through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal. Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Younis with crowds cheering and chanting. Hamas policemen, dressed in blue police uniform, deployed in some areas after months of trying to keep out of sight to avoid Israeli strikes.

## Committed to Gaza ...

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to implementing the terms of the agreement." It said the ceasefire is "the fruit of the steadfastness and patience of our great people and the legendary steadfastness of our valiant resistance in the face of the Zionist machine of terrorism and killing." "The whole world today must stand in reverence for the legendary steadfastness of our people in Gaza, and in appreciation of their patience and sacrifices over the course of 471 days."

## Nawaz asks Shehbaz ...

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said that backdoor talks and open dialogue can't go side by side. Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the spokesperson for the government's negotiation committee said that he is very well aware of details of meeting between PTI's Barrister Gohar and Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir. He said that both Imran Khan and Aleema Khan have termed the 'backdoor' talks with army chief satisfactory.

## KP govt announces ...

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Deputy Commissioner Javedullah Mehsud. Last week, terrorists ambushed a convoy of 35 vehicles set to resupply local traders in the restive territory with rice, flour, cooking oil and essential medicine, which claimed the lives of at least 8 people, including security personnel, drivers and civilians. Retaliatory action by security forces resulted in the killing of six assailants. In the statement issued today, Barrister Saif regretted that some miscreants have "infiltrated" among the peace-loving people of Kurram. "Best alternative arrangements have been made for the accommodation of the people of the affected areas," he said ahead of the action. The spokesperson said that the provincial government has been trying to restore peace in Kurram for the past three months. "Such miscreants tried to sabotage the peace agreement in the district," he added.

## 5 terrorists killed as ...

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Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border, according to the ISPR. It further said: "Interim Afghan government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarizj for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan." Security forces of Pakistan remain committed to securing its borders and eliminating the menace of terrorism from the country, said ISPR. According to the "CRSS Annual Security Report 2024" published by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, the year 2024 was the deadliest for Pakistan's civil and military security forces in a decade, with at least 685 fatalities and 444 terror attacks. Equally alarming were the cumulative losses of civilians and security personnel, i.e., 1,612 fatalities, accounting for over 63% of the total recorded this year, marking 73% more losses compared to 934 outlaws eliminated, The News reported citing CRSS report.



ISLAMABAD: Players of Rising Stars Hockey Club in a group picture on the occasion of Inter Club Hockey Tournament. Rising Stars defeated Hadaf Hockey club by 7 goals. Also seen in the picture are Coash of Rising Stars Asif Bhatti, Manager Ansar Bhatti, President Rising Stars Mehmood Ahmed and Secretary Sohail Akram Janjua. DNA

# Pak shatter 34-year-old Test record with WI thrashing

The match concludes in less than three days

DNA

MULTAN: Pakistan men's cricket team on Sunday, broke a long-standing Test record with their 127-run victory over West Indies in the opening fixture of the two-match series here at the Multan Cricket Stadium. The first Test, which unfolded in less than three days despite a weather-hit opening day, is now the shortest international red-ball fixture in Pakistan to have a result in terms of balls bowled. Only 1064 deliveries were bowled across four innings of the aforementioned fixture, 16 fewer than the previous shortest match, which was also played between Pakistan and West Indies in late 1990. Furthermore, West Indies also faced the fewest number of balls in a Test (371), far less than their previous lowest of 450 balls against England in Leeds in 2000. The fixture

also Pakistan's star with the ball, Sajid Khan, amassing a significant milestone. The right-arm spinner claimed his 50th Test wicket in the match, etching his name in the record books. He reached this landmark after dismissing West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite. His 50th wicket places him among the fastest bowlers from Pakistan

to achieve the milestone, doing so in just his 11th Test match. The 31-year-old's feat earned him the distinction of being the third-fastest Pakistani bowler to take 50

Test wickets. The record for the fastest to reach the mark belongs to leg-spinner Yasir Shah, who achieved it in only nine matches. Other notable bowlers on the list include Waqar Younis, Shabbir Ahmed, Mohammad Asif, and Mohammad Abbas, who are tied for second place. On the other hand, Pakistan's wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan completed 100 dismissals in the longest format. Rizwan now boasts 107 dismissals in just 64 innings, placing him among Pakistan's top wicket-keeping greats. The record for the most dismissals by a Pakistani wicketkeeper in Test cricket is held by Wasim Bari, with 228 dismissals in 146 innings. Kamran Akmal follows closely with 206 dismissals in 99 innings, while Sarfaraz Ahmed has 182 dismissals in 104 innings. Moin Khan and Rashid Latif round out the top performers with 147 dismissals in 118 innings and 130 dismissals in 69 innings, respectively



## Islam Makhachev runs win streak to 13 at UFC 311

Makhachev (27-1 MMA) was initially scheduled to fight No. 1 lightweight contender Arman Tsarukyan

WEB DESK

LONDON: Islam Makhachev extended his winning streak to 15 matches with an effortless D'arce submission in the first round (4:05) against Renato Moicano on Saturday night in Inglewood, Calif., to cap UFC 311's main event. Makhachev (27-1 MMA) was initially scheduled to fight No. 1 lightweight contender Arman Tsarukyan, but Tsarukyan suffered "significant back pain," as CEO Dana White disclosed Friday. Moicano (20-6 MMA) was elevated from his scheduled bout with Beneil Dariush to accept the fight. Makhachev was gracious in victory, re-

iterating his desire to fight anyone whomever the UFC designates. "For me, (it doesn't matter)," Makhachev said. "(Whoever) can make 155 (pounds), just step in the cage with me." Moicano was harsher on himself and said Makhachev was the better fighter. He worries, however, that it may have been his one shot at championship glory. "That wasn't a one-day notice," Moicano said after the fight. "That was a life's notice. I'm very sad. I spent my whole life for this moment and tapped in the first round." Makhachev said he does not have a preference for his next opponent. The UFC 311 co-main event saw Merab Dvalishvili make his first title defense against

Umar Nurmagomedov in a high-level fight. Both men traded nearly 20 punches per round in the first three rounds, while Nurmagomedov successfully defended seven of eight takedown attempts. In Round 4, the fight shifted in favor of Dvalishvili, who pushed the action with volume striking and prevented Nurmagomedov from using his wrestling base to control the fight on the mat. The crowd support moved toward Dvalishvili entering Round 5, as a visibly exhausted Nurmagomedov failed to provide any significant offense. Dvalishvili earned a unanimous decision win (48-47, 48-47, 49-46) to hand Nurmagomedov (18-1 MMA) his first professional loss.

## Pak knocked out of PD Champions Trophy

DNA

COLOMBO: Pakistan have been knocked out of the Physically Disabled (PD) Champions Trophy 2025 despite a narrow 10-run victory over England in their last group-stage fixture here at the BOI Cricket Ground on Sunday. The green shirts concluded the group stage with three wins in six matches, finishing third, mainly due to England's astonishing victory over India, who topped the standings with five victories in six games. England, on the other hand, finished second with four triumphs in six matches and thus, qualified for the final, alongside India.

## Gauff joins Sabalenka in quarters

MELBOURNE: Coco Gauff fought from a set down to beat Belinda Bencic and join defending champion Aryna Sabalenka in the Australian Open quarter-finals. The American third seed was not at her best but outlasted Switzerland's Bencic 5-7 6-2 6-1. Earlier, Sabalenka breezed past Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva in a 6-1 6-2 victory. Gauff's victory in 34 degree heat - the hottest day of the tournament so far - extended the 20-year-old's winning run to 11 matches. "Maybe a couple of years ago, if I lost the first set I might lose the match, and I remember my dad said 'we've got to toughen you up'," said Gauff. "I was just trying to put myself in the position where I could leave the court and feel proud of myself." Belarusian top seed Sabalenka, 26, meanwhile, remains on course for a third straight Australian Open title after wrapping up her win over Andreeva in just 62 minutes on Rod Laver Arena. It was the two-time champion's 18th win in a row at Melbourne Park, and sets up a quarter-final against another Russian, Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. Pavlyuchenkova beat Croatia's Donna Vekic 7-6 (7-0) 6-0 in the fourth round earlier on Sunday. Gauff will play 11th seed Paula Badosa in the last eight after the Spaniard defeated Serbia's Olga Danilovic 6-1 7-6 (7-2). Should they both win their quarter-finals, Sabalenka and Gauff will meet in the semi-finals.—Agencies

## PM approves appointments of new ...

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of Investment (BOI), will be appointed as ambassador in Brussels, which is also the seat of EU headquarters. Asima Rabbani will be appointed as ambassador to the Philippines while Abdul Hameed Butt will be designated as ambassador to Japan. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, who also served as Foreign Office spokesperson, will be appointed as ambassador to Indonesia. Najeeb Durrani will be appointed as ambassador to Ghana. Furthermore, sources said, Moazzam Shah will be appointed as ambassador to South Korea, Malik Muhammad Farooq as ambassador to South Africa, Syed Adil Gilani as ambassador to Morocco. At the same time, Tariq Karim and Aqsa Nawaz were designated as ambassadors to African countries. Syed Haider Shah will be appointed as ambassador to the Netherlands, Amir Shaukat as ambassador to Egypt, Shehryar Akbar as ambassador to Czech Republic and Marghoob Saleem Butt as ambassador to Switzerland. Meanwhile, Zaman Mehdi will be designated as consul general in Chicago, Wajid Hashmi as consul general in Melbourne, Tanveer Bhatti as consul general in the Chinese city of Chengdu, and Imtiaz Gondal as consul general in Manchester.

## PTI was not part of ...

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of failure, the ex-PM will serve six and Bushra three months more. "The agreement stated that the money would be disbursed to an account belonging to the Pakistani government," said the PTI secretary general. He detailed that the deal was signed on November 6, 2019, followed by a press conference during which NCA announced the disbursement of the money to a Pakistani government account. "It was said at the time of the agreement that the money would go into a Pakistani government's account, whereas, the NCA asked to keep it secret.

## World has seen corrupt face ...

FORM PAGE 01

the inauguration of developmental projects in Union Council 238, NA-127, Lahore, Tarar said that economic development and public relief remain the government's top priorities. Member of Provincial Assembly Mian Imran Javed, Chairman Ghulam Nabi Toor, Vice Chairman Haji Aslam Bhatti, and other party workers were present. Attaullah Tarar asserted that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is a people-centric party dedicated to resolving public issues. "We are tirelessly working to fulfill our election promises," he said. Highlighting the government's efforts, he noted that inflation, which was at 38 per cent last year, has decreased to 3.9 per cent, and foreign investment is steadily increasing.

## FO: Afghans victim ...

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countries remains painfully slow. UN Humanitarian aid to Afghanistan remains critically underfunded with only 37.5% of the required funds secured last year. Pakistan and Afghanistan are tied together by historical, religious and cultural links that transcend time. Pakistan has been and will continue to support all efforts aimed at addressing the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as well as for lasting peace and stability in the country.

## Fazl sees little ...

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positive outcome. Responding to a question, the JUI-F chief said he never commented on the statement of an individual no matter how controversial. He said there was no rule of law in the province as it appeared the KP government had lost its significance. Instead of giving one-sided views, the powers that be should talk with politicians to find the solutions of longstanding problems.

## Photojournalist Association Election, Sajjad Haider President, Sohail Shahzad General Secretary, Jahangir Ch elected SV President

87 photojournalists including senior photojournalist Javed Nasir, BK Bangash, Mazhar Khan, Latif Adil, Agha Mehroz, Tanveer Shahzad were present in this election

ISLAMABAD: The annual election of Islamabad Photojournalists Association was held at Pindi Press Club, according to Chairman Election Commission Nasir Mir and member Aamir Lodhi, all the candidates of "Apna panel" won the election. The result was; Sajjad Haider President, Sohail Shahzad General Secretary, SVP Jahangir Chaudhry, Ch Javed and Mudassar Raja vice Presidents, M Asim Finance Secretary, Faisal Khan Joint Secretary and Syed Mehdi Information Secretary were elected. While the members of Governing Body Rizwan Khan, Habib Sheikh, Raja Zafar Hanif Khattak, Abid Zia, Sultan Bashir, Tahir Kazmi were also declared successful. 87 photojournalists including senior photojournalist Javed Nasir, BK Bangash, Mazhar Khan, Latif Adil, Agha Mehroz, Tanveer Shahzad were present in this election.—DNA





## Briefs

**Pope Francis calls for Gaza ceasefire to be immediately respected**

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis called Sunday for a ceasefire in Gaza to be "immediately respected," as he thanked mediators and urged a boost in humanitarian aid as well as the return of hostages. "I express gratitude to all the mediators," the Argentine pontiff said shortly after the start of a truce between Israel and Hamas began.

"Thanks to all the parties involved in this important outcome. I hope that, as agreed, it will be immediately respected by the parties and that all the hostages will finally be able to go home to hug their loved ones again," he said.

"I pray so much for them, and their families. I also hope that humanitarian aid will even more quickly reach... the people of Gaza, who have so many urgent needs," Francis said. "Both Israelis and Palestinians need clear signs of hope. I hope that the political authorities of both, with the help of the international community, can reach the right two-state solution. 'May everyone say yes to dialogue, yes to reconciliation, yes to peace,' he added.—APP

**Fuel tanker truck blast kills at least 60 in Nigeria**

MAIDUGURI: At least 60 people were killed and more injured in northern Nigeria on Saturday when a petrol tanker truck overturned, spilling fuel that exploded, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) said. The accident in Niger state follows a similar blast in Jigawa state last October that killed 147 people, one of the worst such tragedies in Africa's most populous nation. Kumar Tsukwam, FRSC sector commander for Niger state, said most of the victims were impoverished local residents who had rushed to scoop up the spilled petrol after the truck overturned. "Large crowd of people gathered to scoop fuel despite concerted efforts to stop them," Tsukwam said in a statement. "Suddenly, the tanker burst into flames, engulfing another tanker. So far 60 corpses (have been) recovered from the scene," Tsukwam said fire-fighters had managed to put out the fire. Such accidents have become common in Africa's largest oil producer, killing dozens of people in the country grappling with its worst cost of living crisis in a generation. The price of petrol in Nigeria has soared more than 400% since President Bola Tinubu scrapped a decades-old subsidy when he came into office in May 2023. Bologi Ibrahim, spokesperson to Niger state governor residents should give priority to their safety when petrol tanker trucks are involved in accidents.—APP

# Pakistan urges Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, Syria

In conclusion, Ambassador Akram hoped that the Gaza ceasefire "is real and it will be the first step towards a comprehensive solution, including two-state solution and establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan called on Israel to withdraw from Lebanese and Syrian territories, including Golan Heights, and allow UN peacekeepers to operate without obstruction to ensure compliance with international agreements for advancing sustainable peace and stability in the Middle East. Speaking in the United Nations Security Council, Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, voiced deep concern over the increasing threats faced by peacekeepers from the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

Pakistani envoy spoke after two senior UN peacekeeping officials

briefed the 15-member Council on recent developments in Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan, and the challenges facing "blue helmets" serving there. UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix was joined by Major General Patrick Gauchat, Head of UNTSO who is temporarily in charge of the UN force in the Golan, UNDOF. Lacroix is currently in Lebanon, where UNIFIL monitors the Blue Line border of separation with Israel. He is there with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and they visited the Mission's area of operations earlier in the day. In his remarks, the Pakistan envoy strongly condemned Israel's ongoing aggression in Syrian territories and the

illegal incursion of Israeli military forces in the separation areas established under the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

That agreement remains binding and must be upheld without exception, Ambassador Akram said, adding no force except UNDOF should have a military presence there. "Any unilateral actions that undermine this agreement are unacceptable." Similarly, he said, Pakistan recognizes the essential role of UNIFIL in maintaining stability in Southern Lebanon under Security Council Resolution 1701. Welcoming the cessation of hostilities arrangement between Lebanon and Israel of November 26, 2024, Ambassador Akram backed the Lebanese leadership in their commitment to fulfill this ar-

range. But he voiced alarm over the continued violations of the arrangement by Israeli forces including airspace violations, air-strikes and restrictions on UNIFIL's freedom of movement.

"Israel must adhere to the 60-day timeline stipulated in the arrangement and complete its withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," he said. Any security concerns should be promptly reported to the appropriate mechanisms, including UNIFIL, instead of resorting to unilateral violations of the arrangement and of Resolution 1701. "The unrestricted freedom of movement of UNIFIL and full deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are crucial to achieving the security and stability". The Pakistani en-

voy urged the Security Council to ensure the full implementation of the mandates of both UNDOF and UNIFIL, saying they must have its sustained backing. UNDOF and UNIFIL, he said, must be equipped with adequate resources and modern technologies to enhance their operational efficiency and to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers, which was paramount.

"Those who attack UN peacekeepers must be held accountable." In conclusion, Ambassador Akram hoped that the Gaza ceasefire "is real and it will be the first step towards a comprehensive solution, including two-state solution and establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state."

## TikTok shuts down US access as Trump seeks app's reinstatement

WASHINGTON: TikTok disconnected access to its users in the United States late Saturday shortly before a national ban on the app was to take effect, with President-elect Donald Trump unable to intervene until he takes office. A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US, said a message to users attempting to use the app. "Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now." "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office," the message added. "Please stay tuned!" After months of legal tussles, the US Supreme Court on Friday upheld a law that would ban the popular video-sharing platform in the name of national security, unless its Chinese owners reach a deal to sell it to non-Chinese buyers by Sunday.

From teenage dancers to grandmothers sharing cooking tips, TikTok has been embraced for its ability to transform ordinary users into global celebrities when a video goes viral. It also has a fan in Trump, who has credited the app with connecting him to younger voters, contributing to his election victory in November. After discussing TikTok with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump told NBC News on Saturday that he could activate a 90-day reprieve after he reclaims the Oval Office. "I think that would be, certainly, an option that we look at. The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate," he said, ahead of Monday's inauguration. "If I decide to do that, I'll probably announce it on Monday." The law allows a 90-day delay if the White

House can show progress toward a viable deal, but TikTok owner ByteDance has flatly refused any sale. The administration of outgoing President Joe Biden has said it will leave the matter to Trump, and White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre qualified TikTok's latest statements as a "stunt." After the court defeat, TikTok CEO Shou Chew appealed to Trump, thanking him for his "commitment to work with us to find a solution." Trump "truly understands our platform," he added. Chew is also set to attend Trump's inauguration on Monday. The law requires Apple and Google to remove TikTok from their app stores, blocking new downloads. The companies could face penalties of up to \$5,000 per user who can access the app. Oracle, which hosts Tik-

Tok's servers, would also be legally obligated to enforce the ban. None of the companies responded to requests for comment on Saturday. Offers for TikTok - A last-minute proposal made Saturday by the highly-valued startup Perplexity AI offered a merger with the US subsidiary of TikTok, a source with knowledge of the deal told AFP. That deal could allow parent company ByteDance a possible solution without selling off the app entirely. The plan, first reported by US broadcaster CNBC, would create a new joint venture combining the assets of US TikTok and Perplexity AI, which has been backed by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. The proposal did not include a price for the transaction, but the source estimated it would be at least \$50 billion.—Agencies

## Gazans cheer as ceasefire between Israel and Hamas takes hold

CAIRO/GAZA: Thousands of Palestinians burst into the streets across Gaza as a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began on Sunday, some in celebration, others to visit the graves of relatives, while many rushed back to see what remained of their homes. "I feel like at last I found some water to drink after getting lost in the desert for 15 months. I feel alive again," Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City, who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, told Reuters via a chat app. In the north of the territory, where some of the most intense Israeli air-strikes and battles with the militants took place, hundreds of people picked their way through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal. Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Younis, with crowds cheering and chanting, despite an almost three-hour delay in the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, which follows 15 months of devastating conflict. Hamas policemen, dressed in blue police uniform, deployed in some areas after months of trying to keep out of sight to avoid Israeli airstrikes. People who had gathered to cheer the fighters chanted "Greetings to Al-Qassam Brigades" - the armed wing of Hamas. "All the resistance factions are staying in spite of (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu," one fighter told Reuters, referring to the armed wing. "This is a ceasefire, a full and comprehensive one God willing, and there will be no return to war in spite of him." The ceasefire deal took effect after a nearly three-hour delay, pausing a war that has brought seismic political change to the Middle East and giving hope to Gaza's 2.3 million people, many of whom have been displaced several times.—APP

**UK family visa applicants from war-torn countries caught in bureaucratic limbo**

LONDON: Refugees trying to escape Gaza, Sudan and Afghanistan and join family members in the UK are in limbo between government bureaucracy and a lack of biometric processing facilities. As part of the family reunification visa application process, applicants must submit biometric information, usually including a fingerprint, at centers in the countries from which they apply. But such centers often either do not exist in war-torn areas or the facilities are not available to gather the information. This means applicants must either complete the biometric processing once in the UK or be excused from the biometric process entirely. Figures published by The Guardian on Saturday, however, show that just a handful of these deferrals or exemptions have been granted by the UK. As of May 2024, 114 people had requested to have their applications "pre-determined" by delaying the submission of biometric data until reaching the UK. Another 84 people had requested to be excused from providing biometric information altogether. By February 2024, just eight predetermined cases and one excusal had been authorized. The highest number of the requests came from Palestinians and those in Afghanistan and Sudan, where visa application centers have been forced to close due to conflict.—APP

**Philippines, US hold joint maritime exercises in South China Sea**

MANILA: The Philippines and the United States carried out joint maritime exercises for a fifth time in the South China Sea, Manila's armed forces said on Sunday, in a move that would likely irk China.

The Philippine military said in a statement it held a "maritime cooperative activity" with the US on Friday and Saturday, its first for the year and fifth overall since launching the joint activities in 2023. Security engagements between the two allies have soared under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who has pivoted closer to Washington, allowing the expansion of military bases that American forces can access, including facilities that face Taiwan. The joint maritime activity included the United States' Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group, two guided missile destroyers, two helicopters and two F-18 Hornet aircraft. The Philippine side deployed its Antonio Luna frigate, Andres Bonifacio patrol ship, two FA-50 fighter jets, and search and rescue assets of the air force. The activities "reinforced bilateral maritime cooperation and interoperability," the Philippine armed forces said. Their joint activity came at a time when the Philippines had called out China over the presence of Chinese coast guard vessels inside its maritime zone, including the 165-meter-long ship that it describes as "the monster" for its size.—APP

## Chinese, Pakistani companies reach \$250m MoUs on medical equipment

BEIJING: MoUs worth around \$250 mln were signed at the China-Pakistan B2B matchmaking conference in the medical equipment and surgical instrument sector held today in Beijing. Silk Road Assistance Industrial Internet Platform, a provider of advisory services for companies to do cross-border businesses, entered into agreements respectively with Pakistan's dental and surgical instrument manufacturer Sawwat, and Chinese pharmaceutical company UPH Biopharma. This collaboration aims to steer more Chinese companies to engage in trade and set up joint ventures in Pakistan in the medical instrument sector. Mr. Sunny Yang, Chief Technology Officer of this platform, told China Economic Net that Pakistan's vast market, tax incentives, and set of standards consistent with Europe give it a competitive edge in capturing international investment. "Its medical industry can be further advanced in collaboration with China. For example, while it excels in equipment and instruments, there is significant room for improvement in areas like image documentation. By joining forces, Chinese technology can help Pakistan build its own brand and climb the global value chain," he remarked. Home to the world's fifth-largest medical manufacturing hub in Sialkot, Pakistan exports over 80% of its domestic production. Its low cost of production and favorable geographic location linking Central Asia and Middle East offer attractive opportunities for international companies. Its inexpensive medical raw materials and primary products are also supplied to other countries for processing and export.—APP

## New year to promise new positive uplifts in Pak-Viet Nam ties: Tuan

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan, Pham Anh Tuan has believed that 2025 will promise new and positive developments in Viet Nam-Pakistan relations. The Viet Nam Embassy in Pakistan will always be a common home and a solid bridge accompanying the community in all activities to together build an increasingly cohesive and developing Vietnamese community in Pakistan, the Ambassador said. Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan, Pham Anh Tuan said this while addressing the celebration of Vietnamese Lunar New Years in the embassy of Vietnam in Islamabad. Spring is coming to our homeland and to the heart of every Vietnamese person, he said. The Ambassador said that despite the many difficulties and challenges, the potential and opportunities for development of our country and of Viet Nam-Pakistan relations are enormous. New year 2025

will promise new positive developments in Pak-Viet Nam ties: Ambassador Tuan He said that looking back 2024, Viet Nam has achieved many outstanding accomplishments across all fields: stable Macro-economy; ensured national defense and security as well as social security and welfare; maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for national development; the

people's lives continue to improve; the country's international stance and prestige has been continuously enhanced. The envoy said that Viet Nam has become a regional and global growth highlight with a 7.09% growth rate, the highest in the past 15 years; Viet Nam continues to be a safe and attractive destination for international investors, ranking among the top 15 coun-

tries attracting the most FDI (foreign direct investment) globally with nearly 40 billion USD; import-export turnover reached nearly 800 billion USD - the highest ever; the number of international tourists to Viet Nam reached nearly 18 million, an increase of 39.5% compared to 2023. Let us all unite to build the community, help each other strive to rise.—DNA



# CM Maryam vision & CS's expertise enhancing public trust in Punjab

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's visionary approach has inspired a culture of innovation & accountability, while Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman's administrative acumen has ensured the efficient realization of these vision

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



**P**UBLIC welfare projects stand as critical pillars of the socio-economic development of any region, significantly influencing the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. The success of these initiatives relies heavily on the dedication, competence, and

synergy between political leadership and the administrative machinery tasked with their implementation. In Punjab, Pakistan, this principle has been vividly demonstrated under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman. Their combined efforts have not only expedited the execution of numerous public welfare projects but have also set a benchmark for governance excellence. Leadership provides the vision and direction for welfare projects, while administration translates this vision into actionable outcomes. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has spearheaded a range of transformative initiatives in Punjab, focusing on improving the lives of citizens through innovative solutions. Her leadership style is characterized by tireless commitment, strategic planning, and an unwavering focus on delivering results. Complementing her efforts is Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, whose exceptional administrative skills ensure that these projects are executed efficiently and effectively. Zahid Akhtar

Zaman's role as the administrative head of Punjab has been pivotal in translating policy decisions into concrete outcomes. His adept management of resources, coordination among departments, and emphasis on maintaining high standards have significantly contributed to the successful implementation of the Chief Minister's welfare initiatives. This harmonious collaboration between political and administrative leadership has become a cornerstone of Punjab's development trajectory. Under the stewardship of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Punjab has witnessed the launch of several flagship welfare projects. These initiatives span diverse sectors, addressing critical needs and fostering socio-economic growth. Key projects include: CM Punjab Asaan Karobar Finance, CM Punjab Free Solar Panel Scheme, CM Internship Program, Assistive Devices and Wheelchair Program, CM Punjab Livestock Card Scheme, Livestock Asset Transfer to Rural Women, Garment City - Plug and Play QABP Sheikhupura, Punjab Dhee Rani

Programme, CM Kissan Card Scheme, Green Punjab, CM Himmat Card Program, Global IT Certifications Initiative, CM Green Tractor Scheme, Children's Heart Surgery Program, Air Ambulance Service, CM School Meal Program, Apni Chhat Apna Ghar Program, Punjab Socio-Economic Registry, Maryam Ke Dastak, Field Hospitals and Clinic on Wheels, CM e-Bikes Scheme, and the Plant for Pakistan Drive. The collaborative efforts of the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary have yielded remarkable achievements across Punjab. Public welfare projects are now being completed with unprecedented speed and quality, meeting the diverse needs of the population. Key areas of visible improvement include infrastructure development, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and economic empowerment programs. These successes have fostered a sense of trust and confidence among the citizens of Punjab. People now witness tangible improvements in their daily lives, whether through better roads, enhanced healthcare access, or increased

educational opportunities. The government's ability to deliver on its promises has strengthened public satisfaction and reinforced the importance of effective governance. The progress achieved in Punjab highlights the critical role of effective leadership and administration in driving development. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's visionary approach has inspired a culture of innovation and accountability, while Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman's administrative acumen has ensured the efficient realization of these visions. Together, they have set a standard for governance that prioritizes the needs of citizens and delivers measurable results. By fostering collaboration, setting clear objectives, and promoting a culture of excellence, Punjab's leadership has created an environment conducive to achieving developmental goals. Their model of governance demonstrates how political vision and administrative expertise can work in tandem to bring about meaningful change. The commendable performance of the Punjab government in

completing public welfare projects is a testament to the synergy between its political and administrative leadership. The unwavering commitment of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman has not only accelerated the pace of development but also ensured that the quality of work meets the highest standards. As a result, public trust and satisfaction continue to grow, reinforcing the significance of competent leadership and efficient administration in fostering progress and prosperity. The achievements in Punjab serve as a compelling case study for other regions seeking to enhance their governance frameworks. By emulating the collaborative approach and strategic planning demonstrated in Punjab, governments worldwide can effectively address public concerns, drive socio-economic growth, and improve the lives of their citizens. The journey of Punjab under the current leadership underscores the transformative power of dedication, vision, and excellence in governance.



## Briefs

### Marriyum Aurangzeb appointed as Minister for Tourism

This move further consolidates her prominent role in the provincial cabinet

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has entrusted senior minister Marriyum Aurangzeb with an additional key portfolio. According to a notification issued by the Punjab government on Sunday, Marriyum Aurangzeb has been appointed as the Minister for Tourism, Archaeology, and Museums. She will manage these responsibilities in addition to her current role until further notice. Marriyum Aurangzeb, a trusted confidant of Maryam Nawaz, already serves as Punjab's senior minister. She has previously held the position of Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting. This move further consolidates her prominent role in the provincial cabinet as a close aide to the chief minister.

### Protesters storm South Korea court

SEOUL: Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's arrested president, Yoon Suk Yeol, stormed a court building early on Sunday after his detention was extended, smashing windows and breaking inside, an attack the country's acting leader called "unimaginable". Yoon on Wednesday became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his stunning, short-lived December 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil. Shortly after the court announced its decision around 3am local time on Sunday, Yoon's supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming riot police trying to keep them at bay. Protesters blasted fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, then flooded inside, destroying office equipment, fittings and furniture, footage showed. Police restored order a few hours later, saying they had arrested 46 protesters and vowed to track down others involved. "The government expresses strong regret over the illegal violence ... which is unimaginable in a democratic society," acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a statement, adding that the authorities would step up safety measures around gatherings. Nine police officers were injured in the chaos, Yonhap news agency reported. - Agencies

# AKF announces Rs15 bn 'Rebuild Gaza' initiative

"Rebuild Gaza" plan includes providing temporary shelters, essential supplies such as food and medicines, mobile health units, ambulances

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani humanitarian organization Al-Khidmet Foundation announced a Rs15 billion "Rebuild Gaza" initiative over the next 15 months. The announcement came a day after an agreement on ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave. The ceasefire, which begins on Sunday, comes after extensive negotiations involving Qatar, Egypt and the United States. It will end the conflict that began in October 2023, killing over 46,000 Palestinians and leaving Gaza's infrastructure in ruins. The Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan, which has previously carried out relief activities worth Rs5.5 billion in Gaza, announced the initiative during a press briefing. The new program will build on previous efforts, raising its total aid commitment to Rs20 billion within a little more than a year. "The people of Pakistan have always stood by their brothers and sisters in Gaza during times of crisis, and we are hopeful they will once again contribute wholeheartedly to this noble cause," the foundation's president, Dr. Hafeez Ur Rehman, said, as per a statement.



The "Rebuild Gaza" plan includes providing temporary shelters, essential supplies such as food and medicines, mobile health units and ambulances. It also aims to reconstruct five damaged schools, rehabilitate one hospital, rebuild 25 mosques and launch over 100 clean water projects. Additionally, a residential tower will be constructed to provide housing, and 3,000 orphaned children will receive long-term sponsorship.

Dr. Rehman said the foundation, in collaboration with its partner organizations, remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering aid and ensuring the rehabilitation of affected communities in Gaza.

Dr. Rehman said the foundation, in collaboration with its partner organizations, remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering aid and ensuring the rehabilitation of affected communities in Gaza.

### Yemen's Houthis warn of 'consequences' for any attack

SANAA: Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed an attack on an American aircraft carrier on Sunday and warned of "consequences" for any retaliation during the coming Gaza ceasefire. "The Yemeni Armed Forces warn the enemy forces in the Red Sea of the consequences of any aggression against our country during the ceasefire period in Gaza," the rebels said in a statement. "They will confront any aggression with specific military operations against those forces without a ceiling or red lines." An initial 42-day truce in the Israel-Hamas war is scheduled to begin at 0630 GMT Sunday. The Houthis, who have attacked shipping in the Red Sea throughout the war in Gaza, said they targeted the USS Harry S. Truman and other "warships" with drones and cruise missiles. "The American aircraft carrier was forced to leave the theater of operations," the rebels' statement said. Part of Iran's "axis of resistance," the Houthis have repeatedly launched missile and drone attacks on Israel since the war in Gaza broke out in October 2023, claiming solidarity with the Palestinians. They have also waged a harassment campaign against shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, severely disrupting trade routes. - Agencies

## Ziaul Haq's era was most dreadful: Justice Minallah

He mentioned the establishment of torture cells in Lahore's Shahi Qila

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Supreme Court Justice Athar Minallah has expressed regret over the judiciary's historical misuse, specifically referencing the case of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Speaking at a conference on animal rights and environmental issues in Lahore, Justice Minallah stated, "It is unfortunate that the judiciary was used for the judicial murder of Bhutto. The era of Zia-ul-Haq was the most dreadful in our history, as the Supreme Court acknowledged that a democratically elected prime minister was removed and executed." He further recalled the oppressive conditions of Zia's regime, mentioning the establishment of torture cells in Lahore's Shahi Qila, where people were detained and tortured for holding differing political views. Justice Minallah also discussed the Islamabad High Court's rulings on enforced disappearances and prisoners' rights, acknowledging the immense suffering faced by families of the disappeared. "As a judge, I can feel the pain of families whose loved ones go missing," he said. Turning his attention to animal rights, he emphasised the need for concrete measures to protect animals in Pakistan. "People argue that when humans aren't safe, why discuss animal rights? However, we must take this issue seriously," he remarked. Justice Minallah also critiqued educational narratives, saying, "Our schools often teach distorted versions of reality. What we learned about lions in our school days was far from the truth of their real lives."

## 21 Pakistanis among survivors in Morocco boat tragedy: FO

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday that 21 Pakistani nationals have been identified among the survivors of the Moroccan boat tragedy. The Atlantic Ocean migrant boat tragedy occurred in the waters between Mauritania and Morocco earlier this month. As per media reports, 44 out of a total of 65 Pakistani immigrants on board the ship either drowned or died after alleged torture, while 10 bodies have been recovered. A high-ranking government team was set to be dispatched to Morocco on Saturday to assess the situation and ascertain the loss of Pakistani lives in the boat tragedy. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar directed the foreign and interior ministries to provide efficient and timely assistance to the Pakistani victims. The survivors and the bodies are currently in Dakhla, a small town near the coast of Morocco. "Based on verified information, 21 Pakistani nationals have been identified among the survivors of a maritime incident near Dakhla, Morocco," the foreign office said in a statement today. "Through our diplomatic mission in Rabat, immediate assistance has been mobilised for the affected nationals," the statement added. The Embassy has arranged essential provisions including food, water, medicine, and clothing, the statement said, adding that "local authorities in Dakhla are providing shelter and medical care in response to our diplomatic outreach." The embassy's consular team is currently present in Dakhla to oversee relief operations and coordinate with local authorities. "[The] government remains in close coordination with relevant authorities in Morocco to ensure comprehensive support for our affected citizens and finalise repatriation procedures. "We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of overseas Pakistanis and will continue to monitor the situation closely," the statement said.

### Israeli hardline minister quits government

WEB DESK

JERUSALEM: Hardline Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and two other ministers from his nationalist-religious party have resigned from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet over the Gaza ceasefire deal, their party said on Sunday. The Otzma Yehudit party is no longer part of the ruling coalition but has said it will not try to bring down Netanyahu's government. In a statement, it called the ceasefire deal a "capitulation to Hamas" and denounced what it called the "release of hundreds of murderers" and the "renouncing of the (Israeli military's) achievements in the war" in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

## BD military delegation meets Pakistan Navy commanders

The meetings were aimed at strengthening professional ties and addressing matters of mutual interest

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Lieutenant General SM Kamrul Hassan, Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division, visited senior officials of the Pakistan Navy on Sunday to discuss regional security and bilateral defence cooperation. General Hassan met with Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib; Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin; and Managing Director of Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW), Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas. The meetings were aimed at strengthening professional ties and addressing matters of mutual interest, according to a statement from the Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy). During his visit, General Hassan also toured Pakistan Navy ships and units. The discussions focused on enhancing regional maritime security and deepening the defence collaboration between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Potential areas of cooperation were explored, including joint military exercises, reciprocal visits, and training exchange programmes. The visit is



seen as a significant step towards fortifying the defence relationship between the two nations. The ongoing engagements are expected to further solidify the bonds between the armed forces of Pakistan and Bangladesh, contributing to stronger defence ties in the region.

## Afghanistan blames US invasion, sanctions for environmental damage

"The adverse effects of the MOAB in Tora Bora district of Nangarhar province included an increase in premature births, skin diseases and neurological problems," Abed said

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: The US invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent sanctions exacerbated the impacts of climate change in the country, the National Environmental Protection Agency said on Sunday, as Kabul called on the international community for support in combating the ecological crisis. Between the 2001 US-led invasion and its chaotic withdrawal in 2021, the US military had dropped tens of thousands of bombs on Afghanistan, many of which are munitions that can leave a toxic footprint on the environment. "The presence of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan for 20 years has had a wide-ranging impact on Afghanistan," Dr. Zainul Abedin Abed, technical and policy deputy director-general at NEPA, told Arab News. "Among the environmental impacts, we can mention cases such as the destruction of agricultural land ... These impacts have put pressure on the Afghan environment and accelerated climate change. The US and NATO have used weapons and chemical substances, which is irreparable." In April 2017, the US military dropped the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb, known as "the mother of all bombs," on Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province. It is the most powerful non-nuclear bomb ever used by Washington in a conflict. "The adverse effects of the MOAB in Tora Bora district of Nangarhar province included an increase in premature births, skin diseases and neurological problems," Abed said, adding that the bomb also destroyed homes and caused damage to the local economy. Afghanistan has suffered through decades of war even before the US-led invasion, including a decade of Soviet invasion that also saw foreign forces deploying chemical weapons, such as napalm, to destroy crops. The country lost around 80 percent of its forests in the conflicts, according to Taliban Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai. "The destructive bombs that the Soviet Union used on our forests have

destroyed a major part of the country's forests. Our country faced another crisis as the US and NATO forces experimented with their weapons in Afghanistan, which couldn't be used anywhere else, without any mercy on the people of Afghanistan," Stanikzai said at the national climate change conference in Kabul on Wednesday. "Now, I call on the world countries, the United Nations, the European Union, America as well as neighboring and regional countries to support Afghanistan in these difficult times. It's their moral responsibility, especially those countries that contributed to climate change." Dr. Abdul Latif Nazari, Afghanistan's deputy minister of economy, said at the conference that it was "important to lift sanctions and remove restrictions so the international organizations can work with our entities," such as NEPA. Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable and least prepared countries to adapt to climate change, ranking seventh on the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, despite being a country with the 11th lowest contributor per capita to global carbon emissions. "Afghanistan's contribution to global climate change has been inconsequential," Kabul-based environmental expert Nooruddin Jalali told Arab News. "However, the impact of international interventions on Afghanistan has been huge. Consecutive drought, deforestation, air pollution and huge damage to the country's ecosystem are some of the major effects that climate change has had on the country's environment." The use of bombs and mines "devastated the country's environment and agriculture" and will take years and billions of dollars to recover, he added. Afghanistan is already suffering from the impacts of climate change. After three consecutive years of drought, Afghanistan experienced severe flooding in 2024 that killed hundreds of people, devastated vast agricultural land in its northern provinces and left millions of people without their primary source of income and food. Since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, Afghanistan has been excluded from representation under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - which leads efforts in global climate cooperation - while major sources of funding for climate adaptation have also been suspended.

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