



# Islamabad POST

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**Zelensky urges 'united' European defense policy**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Canada will respond if US imposes tariffs**

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**Badosa stuns Gauff to reach first major semis**

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## Killers are enemies of Pak

# Pakistan to play role in Gaza reconstruction

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says we should value this Chinese gift to Pakistan," says premier while terming it milestone for Pakistan

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed the launch of Gwadar International Airport's operations, saying that the newly inaugurated facility would benefit not only the economy of Balochistan but the entire country. "Gwadar Airport could bring about immense benefits to the people of Balochistan as well as the whole country, if run on commercial lines," the premier said in his televised opening remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet. Gwadar International Airport, a key project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), became operational a day earlier with the landing of the first PIA flight from Karachi carrying 46 passengers. Spread across 4,300 acres, the airport is Pakistan's largest in terms of area. Located 26 kilometres from Gwadar city in the Gurandani area, the airport features a single runway measuring 3,658 metres in length and 75 metres in width. The runway is capable of accommodating large aircraft such as the Airbus A380 and Boeing 747. During today's meeting, the premier informed the cabinet that the airport, completed with \$230 million in funding from China, started operations as the country's largest airport a day earlier. "But those who are poised to hurt Pakistan and continue to kill people, are not just going against the people of Balochistan but also showing their animosity against the entire Pakistan... We should value this Chinese gift to Pakistan. Gwadar Airport will prove to be a milestone for Pakistan's development," he remarked. Referring to the 10-Year Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan announced by the World Bank, he said Pakistan would get \$20 billion in

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## Pak agrees \$1bn loan with two ME banks: Aurangzeb

"With two institutions we have now gone forward in signing up the term sheet," says finance minister

DNA

DAVOS: Pakistan has agreed terms for a \$1 billion loan with two Middle Eastern banks at a 6%-7% interest rate, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told a foreign media outlet on Tuesday, as the country looks for more financing. "With two institutions we have now gone forward in signing up the term sheet - one bilateral and one for trade [finance]," Aurangzeb said during an interview on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. The loans were short-term - or up to one year, Aurangzeb added. The finance minister is in Davos to attend the WEF Annual Meeting between January 20 and 25. Global leaders will address key global and regional challenges at the Annual Meeting 2025. The meeting will focus responding to geopolitical shocks,

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attends National Assembly Session. - DNA

## Donald Trump withdraws US from WHO

US exit from WHO could see fifth of budget disappear

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to begin the process of withdrawing the US from the World Health Organization (WHO). "Oooh, that's a big one," the newly inaugurated US president said as he approved the document after arriving back at the White House. It was one of dozens of executive actions he put his signature to on day one in office. This marks the second time Trump has ordered the US be pulled out of the WHO.

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## Amid looming deadline Sub-committee formed to tackle PTI demands

"We will give the government's response to the opposition in the next meeting," says Sanaullah

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Amid a seven-day ultimatum given by incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan to continue talks with the government, Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah said on Tuesday that a sub-committee was formed by the government's negotiation committee to respond to the opposition party's charter of demands. Sanaullah made the statement after attending a session of the government's negotiation committee held under the chair of National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq at his office earlier today. "We will give the government's response to the opposition in the next meeting," the PM's aide told reporters at the lower house, adding that the sub-committee was reviewing the former ruling party's demands. When questioned about ex-premier Khan's seven-day

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## Mustafa Nawaz blames govt on worsening crisis

Asad Qaiser said country could progress under rule of law only

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Senior politician Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar said that the government played a role in worsening the political crisis in the country. Speaking to the media alongside senior PTI leader and former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, Omar Ayub, and Raja Nasir Abbas, Khokhar emphasized the urgent need to steer the nation away from further political unrest. Assuring his commitment to working with PTI,

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Rubio becomes Secy of State

Priority of the United States Department of State will be the US," Rubio, a China hawk said

### FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US Senator Marco Rubio from Florida became the first of President Donald Trump's cabinet nominees to be sworn into office on Tuesday, where he emphasized that US foreign policy under Trump will put American needs first. The US Senate unanimously confirmed Rubio, a China hawk and staunch backer of Israel, just hours after Trump took office on Monday. "His (Trump's) primary promise when it comes to foreign policy is that the priority of the United States Department of State will be the United States, it will be furthering the national interest of this country," Rubio said after he was sworn into office by US Vice President JD Vance.

### Imran Khan, Bushra get new legal team

The newly appointed team includes prominent names such as Barrister Salman Akram Raja and Barrister Salman Safdar

### FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A new legal team has been formed for former PM Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, however, key party-affiliated lawyers have not been included. Notably, several key lawyers associated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were excluded from the revamped lineup, Express News reported on Tuesday. The newly appointed team includes prominent names such as Barrister Salman Akram Raja, Barrister Salman Safdar, and Usman Riaz Gul.

## SC removes addl registrar

# 'Independence at risk from case withdrawals'

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah says, once a case is with a judicial bench, the committee's involvement ends, says SC senior judge; Registrar delists contempt case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Mansoor Ali Shah has raised concerns over the implications of withdrawing cases from judicial benches, suggesting it will undermine judicial independence. Referring to recent developments, he questioned whether committees can withdraw cases if it appears that a decision might go against the government. Justice Shah made these remarks during a contempt of court hearing led by a two-member bench he headed on Tuesday. The case arose after the Registrar of the Supreme Court failed to schedule a hearing for a matter related to bench powers despite a judicial order. At the start of the hearing, the judges questioned the registrar on why the case was not scheduled as directed. The registrar explained that the matter, initially meant for a constitutional bench, had been mistakenly assigned to a regular bench. Justice Aqeel Abbasi expressed scepticism, asking

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## IHC raises concerns over ECP's power to replace tribunal

Court also extended stay order, restraining newly-appointed retired judge until February 6

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday raised concerns over the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) power to replace a tribunal judge. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case challenging the ECP's decision to reconstitute election tribunals for three constituencies in Islamabad. Faisal Chaudhry and Shoaib Shaheen represented the petitioners. The court extended its stay order,

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## Afghan national involved in terrorism killed

His body was handed over to Afghan government officials yesterday

DNA

QUETTA: An Afghan national involved in terrorism inside Pakistan was killed in the Sambaza area of Zhob district, Balochistan, on January 11, according to the ISPR. The military's media wing identified the individual as Muhammad Khan Ahmedkhal, son of Haji Qasim Dawran Khan, a resident of Village Bilorai, District Wazekhwa, Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Following necessary procedural formalities, his body was handed over to Afghan government officials yesterday.

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# Taliban govt announces prisoner swap with US

Two other Americans remain in detention in Afghanistan, former airline mechanic George Glezmann and naturalised American Mahmood Habibi



NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Taliban government said on Tuesday it had released two American citizens from prison in return for an Afghan fighter held in the United States, in a deal brokered by Qatar. Discussions about the prisoner exchange were confirmed last year, but the swap was announced after outgoing US president Joe Biden handed over to Donald Trump, who was inaugurated on Monday. "An Afghan fighter Khan Mohammed imprisoned in America has been released in exchange for American citizens and returned to the country," the Afghan foreign ministry said in a statement.

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## UAE's MBZ receives Afghanistan's Haqqani

Sirajuddin Haqqani commends UAE's humanitarian assistance to Afghan people

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: President of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan received Afghanistan's Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani on Tuesday at Qasr Al-Shati in Abu Dhabi. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister, made an unannounced visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he held talks with Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the president of the U.A.E., according to Taliban spokesman. Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesperson, said on X that Haqqani was accompanied by Abdul Haq Wasiq, the head of the Taliban intelligence agency. The meeting reportedly focused on "mutual interests,

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# Senator demands immediate CCI session to tackle water crisis

Shibli Faraz, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, reaffirmed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s support for the rights of lower riparian areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, PPP's Parliamentary Leader in the Senate, on Tuesday called for a Council of Common Interest (CCI) meeting to clarify the government's position on commercial farming in desert areas and building canals on the Indus River, highlighting the need for water conservation and a peaceful solution. Speaking on an adjournment mo-

tion in the Senate, Rehman noted that the Council of Common Interest (CCI) had not met in the past 11 months and called for urgent action to address water distribution issues. She warned that the government's plans could significantly disrupt water distribution in Sindh, worsening water scarcity and causing environmental damage. She pointed out that Sindh, heavily dependent on the Indus water system, is facing significant water di-

version, further escalating the region's water shortage. She called for urgent government action to address the inequitable water distribution and prevent unrest among agricultural communities. Shibli Faraz, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, reaffirmed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s support for the rights of lower riparian areas. He also emphasized the necessity of convening a CCI meeting to resolve the pressing water scarcity issues.

## ATR flights between Multan-Islamabad suspend due to low passenger

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar has said that the suspension of ATR flights on the Multan-Islamabad route was due to low passenger load and the unsuitability of smaller aircraft for commercial viability. Replying to Calling Attention Notice in the Senate Session on Tuesday, he emphasized that, similar to the Lahore-Islamabad route, the ATR aircraft were not efficient enough to handle the demand, leading to their suspension. Senator Azam informed the upper house that the aviation sector was undergoing significant reforms, with the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) being a key aspect of the process. "The privatization of PIA is moving forward, and we expect positive developments in the coming months. The new business model will include both domestic and international operations, which will bring much-needed improvements," he assured. Speaking about the importance of budget airlines and smaller aircraft for routes with lower passenger traffic, he noted that proposals were being prepared for the introduction of such airlines on routes with lower demand but profitable potential. He acknowledged the significant contributions of the diasporas from southern Punjab to the economy and reassured that no one region would be left behind. "Southern Punjab is vital to Pakistan's economy, and the government recognizes its importance. There will be no sense of deprivation, as we aim to connect all regions effectively," he stated. On the matter of Lahore-Islamabad connectivity, he mentioned that despite criticisms, Lahore remained a key part of the country's transportation network, with flights continuing to serve the city. He also pointed out the improvements made during the tenure of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, where the Islamabad-Multan motorway connection made travel easier and more comfortable. "The motorway has reduced travel time significantly, and we are working on restoring flight operations between Lahore and Islamabad, as well as Lahore and Multan," he added. The Minister also acknowledged the proposals submitted regarding new routes, such as the Najaf sector and others, assuring that the Ministry of Aviation would consider these suggestions. "I will forward these proposals to the aviation department and the relevant ministers for further review. We are committed to improving connectivity and service in the aviation sector, and I am confident that you will see positive changes in the coming months," Senator Tarar concluded.—APP

## Pakistani journalist to premiere documentary in US

ISLAMABAD: A new short documentary titled "In Shackles" is set to premiere at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, United States on Friday, at Hamilton Library. The film will also be released globally on YouTube the same day. Set in Islamabad, Pakistan, In Shackles tells the story of Shamim, a 34-year-old woman grappling with sexual violence and forced marriage—issues that reflect broader societal challenges in Pakistan. The documentary is the brainchild of journalist and talk show host Haider Rifaat, best known for creating and hosting Pakistan's first web talk show, The Haider Rifaat Show. Haider not only serves as the producer, director, and narrator of the film but is also a PhD student in political science at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is a student affiliate with the East-West Center, a prestigious education and research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii. The 29-year-old journalist produced the film under his independent production label, Haider Rifaat (HR) Films. "The title In Shackles is a metaphor that reflects the helplessness of a woman navigating personal and professional struggles that are deeply rooted in complex societal issues in Pakistan," said Haider Rifaat. While advocating for women's rights, the film delves into the sociopolitical and legal barriers that hinder their progress.—APP

## AIOU holds 71 meeting of its Board of Advanced Studies & Research

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 71st meeting of the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) at Allama Iqbal Open University was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood. The proceedings were coordinated and facilitated by the BASR Director, Professor Dr. Irshad Ahmed Arshad, who presented the implementation report of the decisions made in the previous meeting and the agenda for the current session. The meet-

ing was attended by university Deans, Scholars, Subject Specialists, and Supervisors. PhD students from Library and Information Sciences, History, Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education, Science Education, and English presented their research proposals. Subject specialists meticulously reviewed the students' research topics and provided guidance on necessary amendments. Vice Chancellor Dr. Nasir Mahmood instructed faculty members to ensure that the selection of research topics aligns with contemporary

needs so that research does not remain merely an academic exercise but contributes to the socio-economic development of the country. He also directed students to incorporate the suggestions provided by subject specialists into their theses and resubmit them. The Vice Chancellor emphasized that the experience and guidance of experts play a vital role in improving the research process for students. He encouraged students to use simple and clear language in their proposals and select topics that align with societal needs.

## CDA chief for better management of various uplift projects

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and CEO Public Private Partnership (P3A) Malik Ahmed chaired a meeting for better management of various projects in CDA headquarters in Islamabad on Tuesday. The meeting focused on improving the management of various projects. The meeting discussed options to make several projects financially self-sustaining. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the goal is to make projects financially stable and self-sufficient while providing all necessary facilities. He mentioned that the overwhelming interest shown by people in Sector C-14 reflects trust in CDA's policies. The meeting also discussed the Slaughterhouse project. During the briefing, it was informed that the process of hiring a transaction advisor for the Slaughterhouse has been completed. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that all queries from Nespak, the transaction advisor, should be addressed promptly. He instructed the Engineering Wing to appoint a focal person to collaborate with the transaction advisor and Nespak for better coordination. The meeting also discussed the establishment of Padel Tennis Courts in Islamabad. It was briefed that the RFPs for the Padel Tennis Court project have already been published. Additionally, the meeting reviewed hotel projects under the Public-Private Partnership model. The briefing indicated that transaction advisors have been engaged for the hotel projects and the pre-feasibility for hotel construction in Islamabad has been completed. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that both CDA and the transaction advisor teams should collaborate and present their recommendations for the project, ensuring that the best options are selected. Furthermore, the meeting included a detailed discussion on the Jinnah Medical Complex and Solid Waste Management projects. Meanwhile, Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, along with Member Engineering and relevant officials, visited the Serena Interchange project site to review the ongoing construction activities. During the visit, Chairman CDA received a detailed briefing on the progress of the project from the concerned officers. The officers briefed Chairman CDA that the structural work on both underpasses on Srinagar Highway has been completed, while asphalt work on the underpasses is progressing swiftly. It was highlighted that construction work on both underpasses is being carried out simultaneously in multiple segments, operating 24/7 to ensure timely completion. Chairman CDA was further briefed that after opening the Serena Interchange underpass for traffic, beautification efforts around the project area are also in full swing.

## PM's Climate aide briefs South Sudan parliamentary delegation on SDGs

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change and former convener of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Task Force, Romina Khurshid Alam briefed a high-level parliamentary delegation from South Sudan on the SDGs. The delegation, led by Deputy Speaker Nathaniel Oyete Pierino, visited the SDGs Secretariat on Tuesday. The meeting was part of an ongoing exchange aimed at fostering greater international cooperation on sustainable development. The SDGs, a set of 17 global objectives established by the United Nations in 2015, are designed to tackle pressing global challenges and promote a more sustainable, equitable, and peaceful world by 2030. The goals cover various critical areas, including poverty eradication, quality education, gender equality, climate action, and sustainable economic growth.

Romina emphasized the importance of these goals in addressing the interconnected challenges facing countries worldwide. She highlighted that the SDGs are not only about achieving sustainable development but also about ensuring that all nations—regardless of their size or economic status—have the opportunity to thrive while protecting the environment for future generations. Romina said both Pakistan and South Sudan are highly vulnerable to climate change, facing similar challenges such as water scarcity, extreme weather events, agricultural vulnerability, and the loss of biodiversity. She called for collaborative efforts to enhance climate adaptation strategies, focusing on building resilience within vulnerable communities. Commenting on climate action, one of the key SDGs goals, the Prime Minister's aide underscored that

while many countries have taken initial steps to address climate change, there is a need for significantly scaled-up global efforts. Romina Alam pointed to the critical importance of the Paris Agreement, an international treaty aimed at limiting global warming to well below 2°C, ideally to 1.5°C. She emphasized that achieving this ambitious target requires urgent action to reduce carbon emissions, transition to renewable energy sources, and promote sustainable practices across industries globally. She explained that despite the growing global commitment to climate action, many developing nations still face significant challenges including the lack of financial resources and technological support necessary to effectively combat climate change and adapt to its inevitable impacts. "International community must work together to bridge

these gaps, ensuring that vulnerable countries have the tools and resources needed to mitigate climate risks and build climate resilience", she stated. Deputy Speaker Nathaniel Oyete Pierino expressed great interest in the SDGs and conveyed South Sudan's commitment to achieving sustainable development. He noted that South Sudan, as one of the world's youngest nations, is keen to learn from the experiences of other nations in implementing the SDGs, particularly in areas like climate action and environmental sustainable infrastructure. The meeting also highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation and the sharing of best practices, especially in the context of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Romina Khurshid Alam assured the delegation that Pakistan remains committed to supporting its partners in Africa and beyond.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain in a meeting with Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Akamatsu Shuichi.

## Minister chairs meeting of Ring Road council

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Communication and Works (C&W) Sohaib Ahmad Bharth chaired an important meeting of the Punjab Ring Road Council at the C&W Department here on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by Secretary C&W Sohail Ashraf, Chairman Ring Road Authority Sohail Shahzad, Member Planning and Development Abid Bolla, and officers from the Finance Department. Chairman Ring Road Authority Sohail Shahzad provided a detailed briefing on seven agenda items. The council members recommended that the authority's budget for 2024/25 and the financial records of the last five years be reviewed by the Finance Department and a chartered accountancy firm. Additionally, the recruitment methods and rules were advised to be vetted by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) and the Regulation Wing. The council approved regulations regarding axle load, road control, and traffic control, contingent upon the Law Department's input. For the authority's financial powers, it was suggested that these be vetted by the Finance Department before presenting them in the council meeting. The members also recommended initiating a summary for establishing the Sialkot Ring Road project office and recruiting staff. Approval was granted for the post-upgradation of junior report officers, their performance allowances.—APP

## Salik, Shuichi for strengthening Pak-Japan ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, convened an important meeting with Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi here on Tuesday, marking a significant milestone in the quest to fortify bilateral ties and unlock new avenues for economic cooperation. As the two dignitaries engaged in a comprehensive dialogue, they underscored the vast potential for mutual growth and development, said a press release. Pakistan and Japan have been economic partners for a long time, and now is the perfect opportunity to renew their relationship in economic terms, according to Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain. The Minister emphasized the need for cooperation in technical assistance and proposed starting a joint technical college in Pakistan to equip the young generation with skills tailored to the Japanese market. Chaudhry

Salik Hussain welcomed Japanese companies to Pakistan to train locals according to Japanese market demands. He also highlighted the importance of technical assistance and training programs, such as the Technical Intern Training Program and the Specified Skilled Workers Program. The Minister noted that Japan is known for its strict adherence to rules and regulations, and therefore, Pakistan wants Japanese expertise to train its human resources and establish testing facilities in Pakistan. He also mentioned that Pakistan is working with South Korea on similar grounds and has seen significant success, with the number of Pakistanis going to South Korea increasing from 1,500 to around 5,000, and for the first time, around 20 to 30 workers from Balochistan will also go to South Korea. Almost 700,000 people are going abroad for jobs, and out of these, only a few are going to Japan. This number can be increased by establishing testing centers in Pakistan. Mr. Muhammad Tayyab, DG BE&OE, said that if they get the testing

facility, the OEPs (Overseas Employment Promoters) are set to give the training, which will increase the number of Pakistanis going to Japan. Last year, around 1,500 Pakistanis went to Japan, and around 1,100 went in 2023, and around 900 in 2022. Mr. Naseer Khan Kashani, Managing Director, OEC, told that they have also sent Assistant Language Teachers to Japan, and some are completing the process to go to Japan, with their number being around 67. The Japanese Ambassador, in his remarks, lauded Pakistan's resilience and determination, acknowledging the country's immense potential for growth and development. He reiterated Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan's economic trajectory, underscoring the importance of human resource development, education, and vocational training in driving sustainable growth. The Ambassador also expressed Pakistan's interest in collaborating with Japan to establish vocational training institutes, designed to equip Pakistanis.

## Health advisor calls for accountability, improved performance

PESHAWAR: Advisor on Health, Intesham Ali, while addressing the third District Health Officers (DHO) Conference, emphasized the need for improved performance, warning underperforming DHOs to reform their approach or face consequences. He stated that DHOs who delay releasing funds to public-private partnership hospitals would be held accountable and removed

from their positions if necessary. The advisor announced a strict ban on cross-cadre postings to ensure that relevant positions are filled by professionals from the appropriate cadre. Acknowledging exemplary performance, he awarded appreciation certificates to the DHOs of Malakand, Kohat, and Khyber for their outstanding contributions. Additionally, he urged the immediate utilization of

funds lying idle in Primary Care Management Committees (PCMCs) to provide relief to the public. The conference was attended by Secretary Health Adeel Shah, Special Secretary Health Habibullah, Director General Health Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Chief of the Health Sector Reforms Unit (HSRU), Regional Directors, Program Directors, and all DHOs.—APP

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Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
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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

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# Business community inclusion in decision-making to boost eco growth

Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, appreciated the Director's advisory approach and reaffirmed the business community's unwavering loyalty to the country

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zafar Mehmood, the Director of Disaster Management at the Capital Development Authority (CDA), emphasized the vital role the business community plays in the development of the country. He also highlighted the community's consistent cooperation in observing building safety rules and regulations. Mehmood made these remarks during a meeting with Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), on Tuesday. Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Executive Members Malik Mohsin Khalid, Mohammad Waseem Chaudhry, Special Advisor to ICCI President Naem Siddiqui, former Senior Vice President Khalid



Chaudhry, and other ICCI members were also present. During the meeting, Zafar Mehmood informed the attendees that his department is well-equipped and prepared to address any emergency. He stressed the importance of the business community keep-

ing fire extinguishing equipment up to date and adhering strictly to building by-laws to ensure both building and human safety. Mehmood emphasized his commitment to fostering greater coordination and collaboration with the business community, noting that

his approach focuses on advisory meetings rather than imposing penalties or sealing business entities. He also highlighted that the observance of the 2016 building code is mandatory for newly constructed commercial buildings while existing buildings can meet safety

standards by installing portable fire safety equipment. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, appreciated the Director's advisory approach and reaffirmed the business community's unwavering loyalty to the country. He noted that the business community continues to serve the nation by overcoming various challenges. While expressing support for full cooperation with government departments, Qureshi stressed the need for and more effective outcomes. He also discussed ICCI's efforts to enhance services for the business community, including the adoption of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. This system aims to reduce human interference in procedural processes, and several other initiatives are in the pipeline to transform ICCI into a model chamber for the country.

# Karim for unlocking \$100b investment potential in housing sector

To fully unlock the potential of the housing sector, Malik proposed that the government reduce the withholding tax on property transactions to 1%, along with exempting the tax on the first property purchase to promote homeownership

ISLAMABAD: Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman of Capital Office Islamabad, has outlined crucial measures for reviving Pakistan's housing sector to prevent capital flight and unlock an investment potential worth \$100 billion. He emphasized that a prompt response from the government could significantly contribute to the nation's economic recovery and growth. Malik stressed that the construction and housing sector serves as the backbone of Pakistan's economy, with 72 industrial sectors directly connected to it. This sector generates substantial employment opportunities and plays a pivotal role in driving economic progress. To fully unlock the potential of the housing sector, Malik proposed that the government reduce the withholding tax on property transactions to 1%, along with exempting the tax on the first property purchase to promote homeownership. He also recommended the removal of the 3% Federal Excise Duty (FED), which is unenforceable in provinces and places an undue burden on the sector. Furthermore, Malik emphasized that the concept of "deemed income" has been a significant barrier to the sector's growth and should be abolished. He called for the introduction of a 10-year fixed-rate mortgage product tied to the 10-year Pakistan Investment Bond (PIB) yield to make homeownership more accessible. Lastly, he urged the government to encourage banks to prioritize construction as a key sector, which would stimulate broader economic development across the country. —DNA

# Chairperson BISP chairs consultative meeting on Nashonuma Program

ISLAMABAD: A consultative meeting on the Benazir Nashonuma Program (BNP) was held on Tuesday at the BISP Headquarters, chaired by Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson BISP. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, including Secretary Health KP, Mr. Adeel Shah, accompanied by his core team on BNP, and the Country Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Ms. Coco Ushiyama, along with her team, to discuss ongoing program activities and strategies for enhanced collaboration. During the meeting, DG CCT/NSER Dr. Asim Ijaz provided an update on the ongoing activities

of the Benazir Nashonuma Program in KPK. The Benazir Nashonuma Program is the flagship initiative of BISP which is being implemented in 147 districts across the country. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), BISP has partnered with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Department of Health (DoH) to execute the program through 148 established Facilitation Centers. To date, the program has enrolled 2.78 million beneficiaries nationwide, out of which 824,891 are enrolled in KP. These beneficiaries receive healthcare services, Special Nutritious Food alongwith Iron & Folic Acid

supplements. KP ranks second in the country in terms of the number of enrolled beneficiaries. Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid directed the steering committee to convene weekly meetings and emphasized the importance of transparency and efficient resolution of complaints through the Grievance Redressal Committee. Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, encouraged all stakeholders to adopt a more proactive approach in addressing any concerns raised on various forums. It was reaffirmed that BISP is committed to continuing the Benazir Nashonuma Program in

the province. —APP

Chairperson BISP also rejected recent false media reports regarding BNP in KP, expressing BISP's full confidence in the Department of Health (DoH) KP and highlighting its critical role in supporting the program. Secretary Health KP, Mr. Adeel Shah, appreciated WFP's contributions in KP, particularly in supporting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), education, and other projects. Senator Rubina Khalid commended Department of Health, KP for facilitating and extending its structure and services to support the Benazir Nashonuma Program in the province. —APP

# Siddiqui urges provinces to resolve water share issue with consultation

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan-ul Haq Siddiqui, Parliamentary Leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), on Tuesday urged the all provinces to resolve the issue of water share with mutual consultation.

Speaking in the Senate session on a Calling Attention Notice raised by Senator Sherry Rehman, Senator Irfan highlighted the importance of the 1991 Water Accord as a cornerstone for equitable water distribution among provinces. He emphasized that the agreement, endorsed by the Council of Common Interests (CCI), ensures fairness and autonomy in managing water resources within constitutional limits. According to Senator Siddiqui, the accord, approved during former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's tenure, outlines each province's water share and provides a framework to prevent conflicts. He stated, "This agreement is pivotal to preserving inter-provincial harmony, ensuring that no province's water rights are infringed upon." He stressed that provinces have complete authority to utilize their allocated share as they see fit, adding that Sindh or Punjab's usage decisions, within their respective quotas, should not be a cause for contention. "If Sindh uses its share for agriculture, drinking, or expansion projects, it is their prerogative. Similarly, Punjab's use of its allocated share for new irrigation projects, as long as it does not exceed the agreed share, should not be objectionable," he added. Senator Siddiqui likened the water distribution framework to household water use, stating, "Each province, like a household, has the right to manage its share without interference unless it breaches its allocated limits." He dismissed claims that Punjab's new projects could disrupt the federation, urging a rational, evidence-based approach to address such concerns. He also called for fostering a spirit of cooperation, encouraging provinces to resolve disputes through dialogue while adhering to the accord's provisions. He emphasized that politicizing water-related matters risks undermining provincial rights and national unity. The senator concluded by reaffirming that as long as all stakeholders remain committed to the 1991 agreement, there is no reason for conflict. The debate highlighted the need for rational discourse and adherence to the agreed-upon water-sharing framework to ensure long-term stability and harmony among the provinces. —DNA

# Women on wheels: Scooty trend sweeps the capital

ISLAMABAD: Scooties have become an increasingly popular mode of transportation among women of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, offering a convenient, affordable, and empowering mode to commute to work. With increasing financial independence, rising living costs and inflation, women were turning to scooties as a reliable mode of transportation.

Today, it is a common sight to see working women and students zipping around on two-wheelers, effortlessly navigating their daily commutes as a cheaper and easier way of transportation.

Sania who confidently rides scooty from her home in Rawalpindi Sadar to workplace Islamabad said "My scooty is perfect for running and commuting to work. It's so convenient and saves me so much time and money!".

She said that my scooty makes me feel empowered and strong. I love the sense of freedom it gives me!". Aneeta a house wife said that "I use my scooty to take my kids to school and pick up groceries.". She added that she cannot afford a car, as she is the breadwinner of family and scooty is a more affordable and accessible option for her. Another commuter Sara Jhangir said that "For me, mornings can be chaotic and relying on public transportation can be a hassle. But with my scooty, I have found a game-changer. It's a huge relief to have a reliable and convenient mode of transportation that gets me where I need to go quickly and stress-free. —APP

# Police arrest kite supplier with over 3000 kites

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest a kite supplier on recovery of over 3000 kites and 20 kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed, that Taxila police arrested a kite supplier namely Abdul Shakoore and recovered 3000 kites and 20 kite flying string rolls. Police also impounded a madda truck being used for supply of kites. A case has been registered against the accused and further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Potohar directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. —APP

# Pak wants to further strengthen bilateral relations with Sweden: Gilani

Chairman also invited Swedish companies to take advantage of Pakistan's business-friendly environment and explore investment opportunities in different sectors

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has reiterated Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its bilateral relationship with Sweden, based on mutual respect, shared values, and common goals. During a meeting with the Ambassador of Sweden Alexandra Cannell Berg von Linde he expressed the commitment to further deepen cooperation across multiple domains, including inter-parliamentary collaboration, trade, and addressing global challenges such as Islamophobia. He extended a warm welcome to the Ambassador and conveyed Pakistan's high regard for its long-standing relations with Sweden, marked by trust, cooperation, and shared values. He also acknowledged the importance of the meeting as Pakistan and Sweden celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, which is a testament to the strength and resilience of this partnership. He called for further augmenting the ties in the areas of political dialogue, trade and investment, education, and people-to-people exchanges.



During the meeting Chairman Senate emphasized the importance of strengthening inter-parliamentary relations between Pakistan and Sweden as a key component of bilateral ties. He observed that parliamentary diplomacy can contribute in building understanding, sharing best practices, and contributing to global peace and security. He underlined the need for exchange of visits between parliamentary delegations from both countries to facilitate collaboration in diverse sectors. He expressed satisfaction with the trajectory

of economic cooperation between the two sides in diverse sectors. Chairman also invited Swedish companies to take advantage of Pakistan's business-friendly environment and explore investment opportunities in different sectors. Gilani acknowledged the growing concern about Islamophobia globally and its impact on peace and interfaith harmony and emphasized Pakistan's commitment to addressing Islamophobia on international platforms. He called for collaborative efforts with Sweden to pro-

mote a more inclusive and tolerant world. He said that people-to-people exchanges play a vital role in enhancing mutual understanding and fostering closer ties between Pakistan and Sweden. He also highlighted Pakistan's desire to expand student exchange programs and scholarships, allowing both countries to benefit from each other's academic strengths. He said that Pakistan is committed to combating climate change and working with Sweden on renewable energy and sustainable development projects.



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## Briefs

## Prevention key to tackling diabetes

ISLAMABAD: Health experts on Tuesday voiced grave concerns over the alarming surge in diabetes cases in country, emphasizing the crucial need for prompt detection and timely intervention to prevent the devastating consequences of this debilitating disease. Assistant Prof Dr B M R Rathor, a leading diabetologist talking to a private news channel, said the skyrocketing number of diabetic patients is a ticking time bomb and immediate action is required to avert a national health crisis. "The rising prevalence of diabetes is attributed to a combination of factors, including sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diets, and genetic predisposition," Dr Rathor added. He stressed the importance of awareness and education in preventing and managing diabetes. "We need to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles," said Dr Rathor. "The government, healthcare providers and civil society must work together to combat this growing health crisis," he added. Expert further revealed that the prevalence of diabetes in Pakistan has been on a relentless upward trajectory over the past 30 years, with the number of patients ballooning at an alarming rate. Consuming high-carbohydrate foods such as wheat flour chapatti and rice can lead to a sudden surge in blood sugar levels, significantly increasing the risk of developing insulin resistance and diabetes, experts warned. To prevent diabetes, the health expert recommended maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet rich in whole foods, incorporating regular physical activity, staying hydrated, limiting sugary drinks and foods, choosing complex carbohydrates, getting enough sleep and managing stress through relaxation techniques like yoga and meditation.—APP

## Over 7,200 Pakistanis imprisoned in Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A total of 7,208 Pakistani prisoners have been incarcerated in Saudi Arabia between 2019 and 2024 with 4,301 falling under the consular jurisdiction of the Pakistan Consulate General in Jeddah and 2,907 under the Pakistan Embassy in Riyadh, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told the Senate. In response to a question from Dr. Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur, the minister provided the following breakdown of Pakistani prisoners incarcerated in Saudi Arabia: 545 in 2019, 892 in 2020, 916 in 2021, 1,331 in 2022, 1,394 in 2023, and 2,130 in 2024. In response to a question about the clemency announced by Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman during his 2019 visit to Pakistan, the minister stated that it is difficult to separate or identify the number of prisoners who have benefited from this clemency due to the continuous inflow and outflow of detainees.

## Friendly countries are not honouring investment promises

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 FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Tuesday that despite promises of billions of dollars of investment by friendly countries, no practical results are visible. He said that the local business community is also giving preference to investing abroad instead of in its own country, the main reasons being electricity and gas prices, high bank mark-ups, a slow judicial system, and a law-and-order situation. Mian Zahid Hussain

## PSX director reveals rising popularity of digital currencies

Countries like the UAE and the US have already started embracing digital currencies and we are seeing a significant surge in popularity among youngsters in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director of the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX) Ahmed Chinoy Tuesday revealed that "Digital Currencies" are gaining traction globally, with Pakistan's younger generation at the forefront of this trend as an acceptable form of payment in many countries, including the UAE and the US. Countries like the UAE and the US have already started embracing digital currencies and we are seeing a significant surge in popularity among youngsters in Pakistan," he said while con-

versation with a private news channel. Chinoy attributed the growing popularity of digital currencies to increasing awareness and education among the younger generation. "Youngsters are more tech-savvy and open to innovation, which makes them more receptive to the idea of digital currencies," he said. When asked about the future of digital currencies in Pakistan, Chinoy said the PSX was exploring ways to provide a platform for digital currency trading. "We want to provide a safe and regulated environment for investors to operate in," he said. The growing in-

terest in digital currencies in Pakistan has also raised concerns about the potential risks involved. However, he said the PSX was working to address these concerns and ensure that investors were protected. "We are working closely with regulators and other stakeholders to develop a framework for digital currency trading in Pakistan," he said. "We want to make sure that investors have a safe and secure environment to invest in digital currencies," he added. The PSX's move to provide a platform for digital currency trading is expected to give a boost to the coun-

try's fintech industry. It is also expected to attract foreign investment and create new opportunities for Pakistani investors. Responding to a query, Ahmed Chinoy revealed that approximately 6.2% of the world's population is currently using digital currencies, with the UAE emerging as a leader in this space, where a significant 24% of the population is utilizing this form of currency. To another question, Ahmed Chinoy clarified that currently, the use of digital currencies is not legally recognized in Pakistan and as per the existing rules and regulations,

their use is not permitted. However, he noted that despite this, many Pakistanis are utilizing digital currencies through unofficial channels, often for overseas transactions, online purchases and investments, highlighting the need for regulatory clarity and framework to govern the use of digital currencies in the country. To another question, Ahmed Chinoy stated that digital currency has emerged as an acceptable form of payment globally, with many countries and businesses now recognizing and accepting it as a legitimate mode of transaction.



ISLAMABAD: January 21-A student works on building robots during a lab session, demonstrating innovative skills at ICG in the federal capital.

## HRW report reveals India's widespread abuses in 2024

ISLAMABAD: A damning report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) exposes the appalling reality of India's blatant disregard for human rights, particularly in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, under PM Narendra Modi's radical Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime, marked by state-sponsored violence, entrenched discrimination and ruthless suppression. According to Kashmir Media Service, the northeast state of Manipur has witnessed severe ethnic violence since May 2023, resulting in over 200 deaths and the displacement of more than 60,000

people. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir, already reeling under heavy militarization, reported 40 violent incidents between May and September 2024. These attacks led to the deaths of 18 civilians, 20 security personnel, and 39 suspected militants. In Jammu, considered relatively peaceful, a sudden surge in violence between May and July claimed the lives of 15 soldiers and nine civilians. Local voters contradicted the Indian government's claims of restoring peace in Kashmir during September's regional elections, held for the first time since

the 2019 revocation of the region's autonomy. India also saw a disturbing rise in religious and caste-based violence in 2024 where a 26-year-old Muslim migrant worker was lynched in Haryana over beef allegations. A 72-year-old Muslim man was beaten on a train in Maharashtra under similar accusations. BJP-led state governments used "bulldozer justice" to demolish Muslim homes and properties, often without legal due process. In Uttar Pradesh, a 15-year-old Dalit boy was forced to drink urine, while a 20-year-old Dalit nurse

was raped by a doctor. In Madhya Pradesh, police officials were accused of physically assaulting Dalit individuals, reflecting the continued plight of marginalized communities. The report further highlights persistent allegations of abuse by security forces where around 121 deaths in police custody, 1,558 deaths in judicial custody and 93 extrajudicial killings in the first nine months of 2024. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), in effect in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and northeastern states of India.—DNA

## Reformed hajj policy to ensure hassle-free experience

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain has announced significant changes to the Hajj policy, aimed at providing a hassle-free experience for pilgrims where revamped policy introduces key reforms to the selection process for Muavineen, who assist pilgrims during their sacred journey. Minister for Religious Affairs stated in an interview with Radio Pakistan's current affairs program that from now on, Muavineen who wish to perform Hajj will be required to finance their journey. Hussain stressed that Muavineen will now be mandated to accompany pilgrims throughout their entire Hajj journey, thereby providing enhanced support and guidance to ensure a smoother and more spiritual experience for all pilgrims. Salik said that a team of top medical professionals will be accompanying pilgrims to provide high-quality healthcare services throughout the Hajj journey, ensuring their health and well-being are prioritized. Regarding accommodations, Hussain explained that pilgrims in Madinah: The traditional woolen caps of Chitral, Swat and Peshawar have become a fashion sensation in various cities across Pakistan where the colorful caps, known for their vibrant hues and intricate designs are in high demand, especially among the younger generation. A report aired by a private news channel revealed that the demand for these traditional caps has increased significantly, with shopkeepers claiming sales have gone up by 30 to 50% in the past few months. Northern Pakistan's wool-made caps have emerged as a surprise fashion sensation, captivating the hearts of many across the country, claimed sellers and people involved in this business. These traditional caps, originating from the picturesque regions of Chitral, Swat, and Peshawar, have long been a staple of the local attire, but their recent adoption by the fashion-conscious crowd has given them a fresh lease on life. "We have over 2025 varieties of caps and they are all selling like hotcakes," said Muhammad Ali, a shopkeeper in Gujranwala. "We have also introduced colorful caps with cartoons for kids, and they are a huge hit among parents," said a seller. Motorcyclists are also preferring to wear these traditional caps not only for their style but also for the warmth and protection they provide during the chilly winter months, said a citizen of Lahore. "I bought a Chitral cap last week and I am loving it," said Amir Khan, a motorcyclist in Gujranwala. "It is not only warm and cozy but also adds a touch of traditional flair to my outfit," he added. Shopkeepers are also introducing new designs and styles to cater to the increasing demand, said a women shopper. "We are getting orders from all over the country and we are working hard to meet the demand," said another shopkeeper in Peshawar.—DNA

## ANF seizes over 20 kg drugs in 3 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 3 operations seized over 20 kg drugs worth over Rs 4 million and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 14.4 kg opium and 4.8 kg cannabis were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested at Islamabad motorway toll plaza. 900 grams Ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested from a passenger bus near Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad. In third operation, 700 grams Ice drug was recovered from the bag of the two accused rounded up near Lahore Bund Road bus stand.—APP

## M-6 Motorway construction to begin in 2025

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan Tuesday assured that the construction of M-6 Motorway will begin in 2025 without delay, highlighting its significance as a top priority under the directives of the Prime Minister. The project will now connect Sukkur to Karachi instead of the previously planned Hyderabad-Sukkur route. Speaking in the Senate of Pakistan during question hour session, Aleem Khan emphasized that all interchanges on the country's motorways, including the M-6, will be designed according to the specific needs of the surrounding regions. The concerns with stakeholders' would be addressed through consultations. The minister also reiterated that the M-6 is a critical project and assured its timely completion. Aleem said the Hyderabad-Sukkur section will be tendered under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, while its detailed design and cost estimations has already been finalized. The National Highway Authority (NHA) has submitted the Project Qualification Proposal (PQP) for this section to the Public-Private Partnership Authority (P3A) for approval. Minister further stated that for the Karachi-Hyderabad section, preparations are underway to hire consultants for a feasibility study; however, the approval is also under process from the Departmental Development Working Party (DDWP). —APP

## Food group exports increase by 13.83%

ISLAMABAD: Food group exports from the country witnessed an increase of 13.83 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of various food commodities were recorded at \$3.959 billion during July-December (2024-25) as compared to the exports of \$3.478 billion in July-December (2023-24), according to PBS data. The food commodities that contributed to positive growth in trade included rice, the exports

of which grew by 14.50 percent, from \$1.637 billion to \$1.875 billion. The other food commodities that contributed to positive growth included fish and fish preparations, the exports of which increased by 1.47 percent, from \$199.074 million to \$201.996 million whereas the exports of vegetables rose by 1.71 percent, from \$128.661 million to \$130.859 million. The exports of tobacco increased by 103.65 percent, from \$44.918 million to \$91.478 million; meat and meat preparations by 3.64 percent, from \$240.108 million to \$248.858 mil-

lion and sugar by 1525.93 percent from \$21.069 million to \$342.571 million. The food commodities that contributed to negative growth in trade included fruits, the exports of which decreased by 1.32 percent, from \$171.345 million to \$169.084 million. The exports of spices dipped by 16.14 percent, from \$57.465 million to \$48.191 million; oil seeds, nuts, and kernels by 16.54 percent, from \$364.102 million to \$303.873 million whereas the exports of all other food items decreased by 10.82 percent, from \$614.194 million to \$547.712 million.—APP



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## 44 Years in Israeli Prisons

MAN Nafe's joy at her husband Nael Barghouti's expected release from Israeli prisons—under a ceasefire agreement that came into effect on Sunday—quickly turned to sorrow when she learned that his name was among those slated for exile from Palestinian territories. Barghouti, 68, spent nearly 44 years in Israeli prisons, including 34 consecutive years, after being rearrested in 2014 following his release in the 2011 Wafaa Al-Ahrar (Shalit) prisoner exchange deal. According to the Palestinian Prisoners Society, he holds the record for the longest imprisonment by Israel. "I felt immense happiness when I saw his name on the list published by the Israeli Ministry of Justice, which included hundreds of Palestinian detainees set to be released in the first phase of the agreement in exchange for 33 Israeli captives detained on October 7, 2023," Nafe told AFP. She added, "I spent days eagerly awaiting this announcement. I redecorated the house and hung pictures of him—some from when he was 18, others from his sixties—all taken inside prison. But the excitement evaporated when I realized my husband was among those to be exiled from Palestinian lands, as per the Israeli list." "Of course, I was deeply saddened," she said. "I had been waiting impatiently and never imagined that Nael would face a new punishment of being banished from his homeland. This is, I believe, the harshest punishment in history." Nafe further stated that the exile decision is "unacceptable to us. I'm certain Nael will refuse it and would prefer to remain in prison rather than be forced into exile. Imagine someone who has spent 44 years in prison being subjected to a new punishment of separation from his family, land, and home." The first phase of the ceasefire agreement, set to conclude within 42 days, includes the release of 33 Israeli captives in exchange for 1,900 Palestinian detainees. It coincides with a cessation of hostilities in Gaza. Barghouti is on the release list, although he was sentenced to life in prison for allegedly killing an Israeli officer and carrying out attacks on Israeli targets. Over 230 Palestinians serving life sentences are to be freed under the agreement, but they will be permanently exiled. While the destination remains unspecified, Hamas sources involved in the negotiations mentioned Turkey and Qatar as possibilities. On Sunday, Al-Qassam Brigades released three Israeli women in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners, marking the first day of the ceasefire in Gaza. Barghouti was first arrested in 1978 as a member of the Fatah movement. He was released in the 2011 Wafaa Al-Ahrar deal, which exchanged 1,027 Palestinian prisoners for a captured Israeli soldier held by Al-Qassam Brigades. However, on June 18, 2014, after 32 months of freedom, Israeli forces rearrested 70 freed prisoners from the 2011 deal following the kidnapping of three settlers in al-Khalil. Most of them, including Barghouti, had their original sentences reinstated. Nafe herself was imprisoned in 1987 during the Palestinian Intifada on charges of resisting the occupation, serving 10 years. She recalled how Barghouti saw her on Israeli TV from his prison cell and decided to marry her upon his release. "I didn't even know about it at the time. After I was released in 1997, his family approached me for marriage, but due to circumstances, it didn't happen then. I had never met Nael before. We finally met when he was released in 2011, and a month later, we were married.

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## Hegemony takes on a new form

HISTORY shows that world orders, disorders or new orders often result from the disturbing dynamics unleashed by crises amid the rise of new powers and the resistance of existing powers. Current dynamics can be understood by analysing how the world order is transitioning from a state of hegemony to one of "intertwined hegemony". Hegemony is a concept that was employed by Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci and is applied in international relations to describe the enduring aspects of an existing order maintained by a leading actor through a skillful combination of coercive and non-coercive power. Hegemony is often associated with the United States, which has served as the primary hegemon shaping the post-war order. US hegemony has been exerted through its economic and military power, as well as through international institutions used as tools to uphold global norms, trade and security structures. However, since September 11 and 2008 global financial crisis, the world order has undergone multiple crises and pivotal moments, such as China's rise, the US-China rivalry, the global power rebalance caused by Covid-19, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Russia-Ukraine war, China's increasing role in the Middle East, Israel's latest assault in Palestine and Donald Trump's second term. These crises and pivotal moments have exposed vulnerabilities in the existing world order and challenged the hegemony of Western-led institutions and norms. The existing world order is facing crises across four key domains. Multilateral cooperation is increasingly elusive due to great power rivalries and interstate conflicts, highlighting a crisis of functionality as global institutions struggle to build consensus on critical issues, such as climate change, pandemics and cybersecurity. Developing nations blast US\$300 billion Cop29 climate deal as not enough. The US-led "rules-based" world governance architecture has shown its inability to effectively address worldwide challenges, reflecting a crisis of scope. The failure to deliver a secure and equitable global system underscores a crisis of legitimacy. Finally, shifting power dynamics between emerging and established powers signifies a crisis of authority. In this context, intertwined hegemony is a better way to describe the transition from the current world order to an emerging one. Intertwined hegemony reflects a process defined by mutual challenges, constraints, dependencies and accommodation between existing and emerging powers. Defenders and challengers of the existing order are deeply intertwined, engaging in a continuous process of shaping and reshaping the global order. Firstly, intertwined hegemony indicates that globalisation is steering the world economy towards an era of multiple development models characterised by the coexistence of multiple competing economic systems and modes of governance. Global economic players now include not only private entities but also states, exemplified by Chinese state-owned enterprises. The Chinese development model, often referred to as the Beijing Consensus – understood as regulated state-market-society relations – stands in contrast to the US-led Washington Consensus defined by liberal economic policies.

# Trump's return ushers in an unpredictable era

Qamar Bashir



The President spoke of an ambitious national vision, highlighting America's pioneering spirit in industry, innovation, and space exploration. He envisioned a growing nation, expanding its wealth and influence while venturing beyond Earth, with a specific mission to establish a U.S. astronaut colony on Mars. The President's speech however skipped three most sticking points which he has been announcing during his pre-inauguration period, declaring Canada as 51st State of the United States, taking control of Greenland and banning Tiktok

ON this historic morning, our family in Macomb, Michigan, woke up early to witness one of the most significant ceremonies in American history—the transfer of power from a conventional and predictable leader to a new President who embraces unpredictability as his greatest strength. Ambitious, aggressive, and forceful, he has declared a firm commitment to "Make America Great Again" and has promised the dawn of a new golden era for the United States. During his inauguration as the 47th President, the atmosphere was charged with anticipation as Americans looked toward a future filled with promise and transformation. While the citizens of the United States celebrated a vision of renewed prosperity, strength, and exceptionalism, the world observed with a mix of hope and uncertainty, bracing for an era defined by bold changes and dynamic leadership—a quality the new President proudly proclaimed as his defining asset. In his inaugural speech, the President outlined an ambitious policy roadmap aimed at restoring common sense, revitalizing national security, and reasserting American leadership on the global stage. His vision promised bold reforms across multiple domains, emphasizing national sovereignty, economic revival, military supremacy, and a return to foundational values. The next important executive order he promised was to reclaim the Panama Canal, arguing that it was built by Americans at the cost of 38,000 lives and billions of dollars. He asserted that American ships are unfairly overcharged while passing through the canal. Strengthening his case, he claimed that the U.S. originally handed the canal over to Panama, but it later fell under Chinese influence. However, historical records show that the U.S. transferred control to Panama in 1999 under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. This decision carries profound geopolitical consequences, as reactions from Panama, its people, its diaspora in the U.S., and global stakeholders will shape the future of this potentially volatile and diplomatically sensitive move. In a striking geopolitical move, he proposed renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of Florida, symbolizing America's renewed dominance in its own hemisphere knowing very well that renaming "Gulf of Mexico", "Gulf of America" would be a highly provocative move with serious geopolitical risks. It could strain diplomatic relations

with Mexico and Latin American nations, who may view it as an act of territorial assertiveness or revisionism. The move may fuel anti-American sentiment in the region, strengthening alliances between Latin American countries and U.S. adversaries like China and Russia. Internationally, it would face legal challenges and resistance from global maritime organizations, undermining U.S. diplomatic credibility. At the outset he vowed to pass executive order to declare a national emergency at the southern border. The southern border has become a vital national security concern for the United States as overtime it becomes a major conduit and hotspot for illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and cross-border crime. While declaring national emergency, he emphasized using all national resources to curb unauthorized migration and illicit trade. He said he will sign an executive order to deport millions and millions of illegal immigrants by putting an end to the controversial "Catch and Release" policy, ensuring that those who enter illegally face swift legal consequences. A key policy move includes the designation of cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, signifying a no-tolerance approach to organized crime and cross-border drug trafficking. He vowed that the Alien Act will be enforced fully, ensuring that foreign criminals and gang members are swiftly removed from the country. The President addressed record inflation and rising costs, attributing them to reckless government overspending and poor energy policies. He announced a two-pronged strategy to curb government waste and reduce inflation. As part of this plan, he announced the creation of the Department of Government Efficiency to eliminate bureaucratic waste and ensure taxpayer money is spent wisely. To bring inflation down and make goods and services more affordable, he announced harnessing the nation's abundant oil and gas reserves. Declaring that the U.S. is sitting on "liquid gold," he vowed to launch the largest drilling initiative under the slogan "Drill, Baby, Drill!". Additionally, he pledged to lower taxes on Americans while imposing hefty tariffs on foreign imports, asserting that this approach would generate unprecedented wealth and economic prosperity for the nation. He declared that the Green New Deal would be revoked and the combustion engine revived, ensuring that Americans have the freedom to

purchase cars of their choice without government-imposed restrictions. He promised that the U.S. would produce high-performance cars with unprecedented speed, emphasizing that lower energy and fuel prices, along with an increased supply of domestically manufactured vehicles, would allow Americans to drive locally made cars powered by domestically drilled oil and gas—ultimately leading to a higher standard of living. The President vowed to immediately end all censorship, restoring free speech as a fundamental American right. He declared that state power will never again be weaponized against political opponents, ensuring that the government remains accountable to the people. The President committed to rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces, ensuring they focus solely on their primary mission—defeating America's enemies. He emphasized that military success would no longer be measured by the number of battles won but by the conflicts America successfully avoids. The President spoke of an ambitious national vision, highlighting America's pioneering spirit in industry, innovation, and space exploration. He envisioned a growing nation, expanding its wealth and influence while venturing beyond Earth, with a specific mission to establish a U.S. astronaut colony on Mars. The President's speech however skipped three most sticking points which he has been announcing during his pre-inauguration period, declaring Canada as 51st State of the United States, taking control of Greenland and banning Tiktok. The President has announced sweeping national and international policy decisions on his first day in office—ambitious, bold, and unconventional—directly challenging power centers within the U.S. and increasingly independent international stakeholders. Whether these lofty announcements will materialize depends heavily on the response of the 'deep state'—the entrenched but powerful institutions within the U.S.—as well as global actors who, unlike in the past, have grown more assertive, economically resilient, and politically independent of American influence. Many of these international stakeholders have established their own power structures, which now rival the U.S. in effectiveness and influence, making the path to implementing these policies fraught with significant geopolitical challenges.

## The transition of US Presidential powers

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



This pattern illustrates that the leadership of a transitional president is not about absolute agency but about responding to existing pressures and reconfiguring the nation to meet emerging challenges. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 provides a contemporary example of this dynamic. Trump's campaign and subsequent presidency were shaped...

THE role of a U.S. president, while central to the nation's governance, is often misconceived as that of an unrestrained and autonomous actor capable of single-handedly shaping the course of history. This perception, although common even in democracies, is far removed from the reality of institutional, structural, historical constraints that define presidential leadership. Historically, U.S. political cycles reveal a predictable pattern where periods of significant national transformation are preceded by presidencies marked by crisis and perceived ineffectiveness. These cyclical shifts occur roughly every 50 years and are characterized by the election of a president who presides over a tumultuous period of social and economic disorder, ultimately paving the way for a successor who reconstructs and redirects the nation. To understand this cyclical phenomenon, one must examine the historical precedents of such transitions. Following George Washington's Jackson became the second significant transformational president, framing his leadership around the extensive settler movement and its accompanying financial developments that were already reshaping the United States. Similarly, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office during the Great Depression, an era of unparalleled economic despair. He not only redefined the nation's

economic structure but also prepared it for the impending global conflict of World War II. Decades later, Ronald Reagan inherited a nation grappling with severe economic stagnation, a lack of capital and demand, military setbacks in regions like the Middle East. Each of these presidents responded to crises that were not of their own making, yet their leadership set the stage for reconstructing the nation and initiating new trajectories in governance, economy, foreign policy. Before such transformative presidencies, however, there is invariably a period of disarray, marked by presidents who despite their efforts to govern effectively amidst systemic chaos. This pattern illustrates that the leadership of a transitional president is not about absolute agency but about responding to existing pressures and reconfiguring the nation to meet emerging challenges. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 provides a contemporary example of this dynamic. Trump's campaign and subsequent presidency were shaped by societal tensions and a growing disillusionment with the preceding political norms. It is essential to recognize that no president operates in a vacuum, free to implement their agenda without encountering institutional and public resistance. Trump's rise to power was not merely a reflection of economic dissatisfaction, as is often suggested, but rather a response to cultural and ideological

divisions within American society. His rejection of the entrenched "culture war" narratives resonated with a significant segment of the population, positioning him as an alternative to the prevailing political establishment. Trump's electoral success was rooted in his ability to align himself with public sentiment on issues beyond the economy. His emphasis on recalibrating cultural norms, redefining international alliances, addressing perceived imbalances in global economic and military engagements reflected a broader desire for change. While economic policies, such as tax reforms and deregulation, formed part of his platform, they were secondary to his overarching narrative of restoring America's strength and autonomy in an increasingly interconnected and contentious world. A central feature of Trump's presidency was his attempt to redefine the United States' role on the global stage. He advocated for a reconsideration of foreign alliances, seeking to renegotiate trade agreements, military commitments, diplomatic relations to prioritize U.S. interests. This approach did not necessarily signal an embrace of rigid nationalism but rather a pragmatic effort to address what he perceived as unfair burdens borne by the United States in its international engagements. Such a strategy was ambitious, aiming to establish new economic and military models while navigating resistance from domestic and international actors.

## Briefs

## Pakistan to play role...

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loans intended to develop multiple social sectors and infrastructure. He urged the relevant ministries to make swift and collective efforts to achieve the objectives of the Framework and overcome the hiccups in the process. The prime minister expressed his pleasure over the record increase in IT exports to the highest-ever \$348 million in December 2024 and also showed satisfaction over the constant surge in the country's overall exports and improving economic indicators. Lauding the performance of Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja, the relevant federal secretary, and others, he called for further efforts to increase IT exports further.

## Pak agrees \$1bn loan...

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fostering growth to improve living standards, and stewarding a fair and inclusive energy transition. Pakistan aims to boost its finances after securing a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout in September 2024, with the first review set for late February. "We have the first formal review of the EFF coming through towards (the) end of February," Aurangzeb said. "I do think we are in good stead for that review." IMF Extended Fund Facilities (EFFs) provide financial assistance to countries facing serious medium-term balance of payments problems resulting from structural weaknesses that require time to address.

## Taliban govt announces..

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The ministry said Mohamed had been serving a life sentence in California after being arrested "almost two decades ago" in the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar. Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP two US nationals had been released, declining to provide any further details on the exchange. The family of US citizen Ryan Corbett, who was detained by the Taliban in 2022, confirmed he was released and expressed "overwhelming gratitude" that he was coming home. "Today, our hearts are filled with overwhelming gratitude and praise to God for sustaining Ryan's life and bringing him back home after what has been the most challenging and uncertain 894 days of our lives," the family said on their website.

## UAE's MBZ receives...

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bilateral stability, Afghanistan's economic strengthening, and other key issues." According to the U.A.E.'s state news agency, WAM, Sheikh Mohammed and Haqqani met on Tuesday at the Qasr Al Shati Palace in Abu Dhabi. Their talks included discussions on recent developments in Afghanistan, rebuilding efforts, and strategies to promote stability and improve living conditions for Afghans. Haqqani also expressed gratitude for the U.A.E.'s humanitarian support to Afghanistan, WAM reported.

## 'Independence at risk..

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why the error was only realised now and whether his inclusion in the bench was the real issue since he had previously heard the matter in the high court. Justice Shah further inquired about the role of the Practice and Procedure Committee in this matter, asking if it convened independently or acted upon a request. The registrar admitted to sending a note to the committee, prompting Justice Shah to demand a copy of it. Upon review, the note contradicted the registrar's earlier statements. The apex court's senior judge pointed out that the note did not acknowledge any error but instead suggested forming a new bench based on an order issued on January 16, which already specified the bench for the case.

## Djokovic overcomes injury to stun Alcaraz in Melbourne

Alexander Zverev continued his bid for an elusive first Grand Slam title with victory over Tommy Paul to reach the Australian Open semi-finals

## SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic produced yet another scarcely-believable comeback to stun Carlos Alcaraz in a thriller and reach the Australian Open semi-finals. The 37-year-old Serb defied injury, age and ranking to win 4-6 6-4 6-3 6-4 against his 21-year-old opponent in Melbourne. "It was possibly one of the best matches of tournament on the men's side," said Djokovic. "It felt like a final of a Slam and I wish it was. We both gave it our all." Djokovic, going for a record-extending 11th men's singles title, limped around Rod Laver Arena at the end of the first set with a problem in his upper left leg. But, after going off court for treatment, he recovered impressively to continue his bid for a 25th Grand Slam triumph - which would be an all-time record. Djokovic played aggressively until the pain wore off, which then allowed him to move more freely and take control. Spanish third seed Alcaraz became increasingly animated as he struggled to figure out how to turn an engrossing contest back in his favour. When seventh seed Djokovic sealed victory - at 00:57 local time after a battle lasting three hours and 38 minutes - he roared towards coach Andy Murray. Djokovic and Alcaraz shared a warm embrace at the net after a highly-anticipated match which lived up to the expectation. "When Novak plays at this level, it's really difficult. It was a really close match," said Alcaraz. The defeat ends Alcaraz's hopes - for now, at least - of becoming the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam. Instead it is Djokovic who advances to the semi-finals, where he will face German second seed



Alexander Zverev on Friday. For so many years, Djokovic has defied the ageing process with his endurance and dexterity. This was the latest example - at a time when few had predicted it. Time, it seemed, had eventually started to catch up with a player who is aiming to become the oldest Grand Slam men's singles champion in history. Last year was the first since 2017 - and

only the second since 2010 - that he did not win one of the sport's four major prizes. Doubts had already been raised about his ability to outlast the very best of his younger opponents - namely Alcaraz and world number one Jannik Sinner - over five sets. Alexander Zverev continued his bid for an elusive first Grand Slam title with victory over Tommy Paul to reach the Australian Open semi-finals. The German second seed won 7-6 (7-1) 7-6 (7-0) 2-6 6-1 against the American 12th seed on Rod Laver Arena. The victory was 27-year-old Zverev's seventh in a row and continues his unbeaten start to his season. "I should have been down two sets, he played better than me and I was not playing great," Zverev said. "The fourth set was definitely the best I played and I'm happy to be back in the semi-finals." Zverev previously reached the semi-finals at Melbourne Park in 2020 and 2024. He will play either 10-time champion Novak Djokovic or Carlos Alcaraz - who beat Zverev in the French Open final last year - in this year's last four. The match will be Zverev's ninth Grand Slam semi-final - the most among active players who have not won a major. Paul, a semi-finalist Melbourne in 2023, had chances to serve out the first and second set, but was denied by Zverev on both occasions. Zverev won the first set on a tie-break before losing his cool at 4-2 in the second. With Zverev set to make a return, the umpire called "let" as a feather fell near the German. "It's a feather! There are millions of them on the court," an irritated Zverev said as he held up the feather to the umpire. Zverev recovered to break Paul back and win another tie-break, before dropping the third set.

## ICC denies BCCI's removal of 'Pakistan's name' from jerseys

'All teams are obligated to comply with this rule,' claims ICC

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has refuted reports claiming that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) decided to remove the name of the host nation, Pakistan, from their jerseys for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Sources within the ICC clarified that it is a mandatory requirement for all participating teams to display the tournament's official logo on their kits, which includes the name of the host nation. "It is the responsibility of every team to add the tournament logo to their jerseys. All teams are obligated to comply with this rule," an ICC source stated.

The ICC's clarification follows reports from Indian media alleging that the BCCI had resolved to omit Pakistan's name from Team India's jerseys for the upcoming tournament. The cricket council emphasised that any team failing to display the official logo on their jerseys would face strict action. Traditionally, it is standard practice for teams participating in ICC tournaments to feature the

host nation's name as part of the tournament branding, even if some matches are held in different locations. Meanwhile, sources within the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) also dismissed these claims as baseless, confirming that no official from the board has communicated with any Indian news agency regarding this matter. It is pertinent to mention that the eight-team tournament, comprised of 15 matches, will run from February 19 to March 9, across three venues - Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi - in Pakistan and Dubai. Hosts Pakistan will take on New Zealand in the curtain-raiser on February 19 in Karachi, while the blockbuster clash between arch-rivals Pakistan and India is scheduled for February 23 in Dubai. For the unversed, Pakistan remains the only team out of the eight participating nations yet to officially announce its squad for the upcoming tournament.

## Champions Trophy Schedule:

• 19 February, Pakistan v New Zealand, Karachi, Pakistan  
• 20 February, Bangladesh v India, Dubai  
• 21 February, Afghanistan v South Africa, Karachi, Pakistan  
• 22 February, Australia v England, Lahore, Pakistan  
• 23 February, Pakistan v India, Dubai  
• 24 February, Bangladesh v New Zealand, Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
• 25 February, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
• 26 February, Afghanistan v England, Lahore, Pakistan  
• 27 February, Pakistan v Bangladesh, Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
• 28 February, Afghanistan v Australia, Lahore, Pakistan  
• 1 March, South Africa v England, Karachi, Pakistan  
• 2 March, New Zealand v India, Dubai  
• 4 March, Semi-final 1, Dubai  
• 5 March, Semi-final 2, Lahore, Pakistan  
• 9 March, Final, Lahore (unless India qualify, when it will be played in Dubai)  
• 10 March, Reserve day. - Agencies

## 'I couldn't do any worse': Mbappe

MADRID: Real Madrid striker Kylian Mbappe says a "mentality issue" prevented him from finding his best form earlier this season. The France captain, 26, joined Real on a free transfer last June after leaving Paris St-Germain. But he struggled in the early months following his move, at one point scoring just three times in 11 appearances. That run included penalty misses against Liverpool in the Champions League and Athletic Bilbao in La Liga, with Madrid losing both matches. Mbappe says he felt at "rock bottom" after those misses but a shift in his mindset has led to four goals in his past three appearances. "I believe it was a mentality issue and that was a point I realised that I had to work harder," said Mbappe. "I was thinking too much about how to do things. Whether to go into space, whether to go to Vini's [Vinicius Jr's] area of the pitch, to Rodrygo's area. When you overthink, you don't focus on your game. "I was fine physically and with the group but I knew I had to do more, that was the time to change the situation. "I couldn't do any worse, so when you hit rock bottom you can only go up." Since the defeat by Bilbao on 4 December, Mbappe has scored eight goals in 10 appearances in all competitions. Meanwhile, Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti has dismissed speculation that he has decided to leave the club at the end of the season. "I will never decide to leave Real Madrid," said the Italian. "This day will come, but it won't be me the one who decides. It could be tomorrow or in five years. The plan is to be here with Florentino [Perez] for another four years and say goodbye." Real, who are 20th in the 36-team Champions League table, take on Red Bull Salzburg at the Bernabeu on Wednesday (20:00 GMT). - Agencies

## Forest make approach for Brentford's Wissa

Forest are third in the Premier League after Sunday's 3-2 win over Southampton

## WEB DESK

LONDON: Nottingham Forest have made an approach to sign Brentford forward Yoane Wissa. The Bees value Wissa at far beyond the £22m which was reportedly offered by Forest and will not accept bids in that price range despite their striker having just 18 months left to run on his current contract. Neither club have confirmed the value of the bid for the DR Congo international. BBC Sport can confirm the approach as Forest target competition for in-form striker Chris Wood, who has 14 goals in the Premier League this season, as they look to maintain their surprise Champions League challenge. Forest are third in the Premier League after Sunday's 3-2 win over Southampton. Wissa, who has 11 goals in 19 Premier League matches this season, is highly valued in west London and has proven a worthy successor to Ivan Toney. The 28-year-old has been at Brentford since joining from Lorient in 2021 and has scored 41 goals in 133 games.

## Manchester City sign Palmeiras defender Reis from Serie A

Reis joins for a fee British media reports said was 29.6 million pounds (\$36.20 million) from Palmeiras

## WEB DESK

MANCHESTER: Manchester City have signed defender Vitor Reis from Brazilian Serie A side Palmeiras on a four-and-a-half-year contract, the Premier League club said on Tuesday. The 19-year-old joins for a fee British media reports said was 29.6 million pounds (\$36.20 million) from Palmeiras, who were reluctant to part with Reis, as they hoped to have him available for this year's Club World Cup. "Vitor Reis is one of the most promising young defenders in the world and we're delighted to be able to bring him here," City's Director of Football Txiki Begiristain said in a club statement. "In his short time in senior football in Brazil, he has shown he has the ability to go very far in the game and we know that working with Pep and our coaches will help to get the best out of him." A Brazil under-17 international, Reis has made 18 league appearances for Palmeiras and is considered a key component of City manager Pep Guardiola's vision to reshape the squad. Reis will line

up alongside fellow promising youngster Abdou Diallo. Khusanov, 20, who completed a 33.6 million pound move from Lens on Monday as part of the team's transition to a new generation. Reis called the move the biggest challenge of his career but said when the knock on the door came and it was Manchester City, there "wasn't anywhere else to go". "Everyone has seen the amazing achievements in recent seasons, and I want to make my mark as we seek more trophies," Reis said. "Working with Pep Guardiola is something every young player wants to do, and I know he can help me to develop into the best player I can be." Reis said he spoke with fellow Brazilian Savinho before agreeing to the move. "City also have a lot of experience of working with Brazilian footballers and joining the likes of (goalkeeper) Ederson and Savinho in the squad will be a big help to me," he added. Reis, a versatile defender comfortable at centre back and right back, developed through Palmeiras' academy, making his senior debut last June. His talents reportedly attracted interest from numerous elite European clubs, including Real Madrid.

## Badosa stuns Gauff to reach first major semi-final

Aryna Sabalenka said she was "all over the place" as she survived a scare against Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova to reach the Australian Open semi-finals and continue her bid for a third straight Melbourne title

## WEB DESK

MELBOURNE: Paula Badosa stunned Coco Gauff at the Australian Open to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final - just one year after fearing she would have to retire from tennis. The Spaniard, a former world number two, spent almost two years struggling with back problems and fell to 140th in the rankings. But, after a strong end to 2024, Badosa's comeback continued in sensational fashion as she ended American Gauff's 13-match winning streak with a 7-5 6-4 victory. "I'm a bit emotional - as you know, I'm a very emotional person," Badosa said. "I've been through a lot. I was in the past one of the best players in the world but I think now I'm a better player." Badosa was named the WTA's Comeback Player of the Year in 2024 after recovering from a stress fracture in her spine that saw her miss two of the four majors in 2023. The 27-year-old won her first title in over two years at August's Washington Open before reaching the quarter-finals of the US Open a month later. "A year ago I was here with my back and I didn't know if I had to retire from this sport," 11th seed Badosa said. "Now I'm here playing against the best in the world. I won today, I'm in the semi-finals. "I will never think



that a year after I would be here. This is a dream come true." She will face either two-time defending champion and close friend Aryna Sabalenka or Russian 27th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova next. Third seed Gauff arrived in Melbourne as the most in-form player on tour, having won last year's WTA Finals and all five of her singles matches at the season-opening United Cup - including a victory over Iga Swiatek. Before her last-16 win against Belinda Bencic, the 20-year-old had not dropped a set in eight matches this season.

But it was Badosa who struck first on Rod Laver Arena, breaking for a 6-5 lead before holding serve to clinch the opening set. The pair traded breaks in the second set but Gauff's game broke down, with the 20-year-old committing 25 unforced errors and six double faults. Badosa ultimately served out the match at the second time of asking, sinking to her knees in celebration before sharing a hug with Gauff at the net. "Paula was playing great. Maybe some moments in the first set could have gone my way," Gauff, the 2023 US Open cham-

## IHC raises concerns over ECP..

FROM PAGE 01  
restraining the newly-appointed retired judge until February 6. During the hearing, Chief Justice Farooq questioned, "How can the Election Commission replace a tribunal judge?" The ECP's counsel assured the court that the commission would respond to this query. Meanwhile, the ECP and other respondents sought time to submit their replies. Granting the requested time, Chief Justice Farooq noted that two petitions were scheduled for a hearing today, while a third was set for tomorrow. Advocate Shoaib Shaheen informed the court that certain law provisions had also been challenged in the petitions. The chief justice remarked that the court would hear the petition and address the legal provisions collectively on February 6.

## Sub-committee formed...

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deadline for judicial commission, Sanaulah said that they were independent to deliver statements and make their moves, however, the government side would hand over its "written reply". To another question regarding the government's plan to launch a judicial probe into the May 9 and November 26 events, he replied that the PTI would be apprised about the government's response on judicial commission. A day ago, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan had announced that he received directives from the party's founder to halt ongoing dialogue process with the government if it failed to form judicial commission on May 9, 2023, and November 26, 2024, events. Senator Irfan Siddiqui, spokesperson of the government's negotiation committee, said that the participants of today's session have not taken a final decision to constitute a judicial commission on the PTI's demand.

## Mustafa Nawaz blames...

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Khokhar remarked, "In recent years, we have only witnessed political victimisation. The current government has contributed to deepening the crisis". He said that a consultative meeting will be held coming week to set the agenda and reach a decision." PTI leader Asad Qaiser underscored that the country could only progress under the rule of law and the supremacy of the Constitution. "The 1973 Constitution was a huge achievement for Pakistan," he said. The judiciary is being disabled, and he questioned the legal fraternity and its conscience. "We are reaching out to all parties to ensure the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law," he said.

## Donald Trump withdraws...

FROM PAGE 01  
Trump was critical of how the international body handled Covid-19 and began the process of pulling out from the Geneva-based institution during the pandemic. President Joe Biden later reversed that decision. Carrying out this executive action on day one makes it more likely the US will formally leave the global agency. "They wanted us back so badly so we'll see what happens," Trump said in the Oval Office, referring to the WHO, perhaps hinting the US might return eventually.

## Afghan national involved in terrorism...

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Pakistan called on the Afghan government to fulfill its responsibilities and prevent terrorists from using Afghan soil to carry out acts of terrorism against Pakistan. The ISPR stated that such incidents provide irrefutable evidence of Afghan nationals' involvement in terrorist activities within Pakistan.

## Briefs

## PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 802 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 802.56 points, a negative change of 0.69 percent, closing at 115,042.25 points as compared to 115,844.82 points on the last trading day. A total of 767,270,814 shares were traded during the day as compared to 675,046,602 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs31.825 billion against Rs. 37.533 billion on the last trading day. As many as 450 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 135 of them recorded gains and 266 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 49 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Energyco PK with 114,034,653 shares at Rs 7.29 per share, Bank Makramah with 69,476,357 shares at Rs.3.53 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 64,227,770 shares at Rs.1.78 per share. Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs121.84 per share closing at Rs 3,108.52 whereas runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with Rs 94.94 rise in its share price to close at Rs.9,194.94.—APP

## Rupee sheds 16 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 16 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.65. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.80 and Rs 281.30, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.67 to close at Rs289.00 against the last day's closing of Rs287.33, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.78, whereas an increase of Rs 1.50 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs341.53 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs340.03.—APP

## Gold price increases by Rs 300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 300 and was sold at Rs 283,200 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 282,900 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 257 to Rs 242,798 from Rs 242,541 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs 222,565 from Rs 222,337. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 3,372 and Rs 2,890 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,711 from \$2,708, the Association reported.—APP

## Global tourism recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2024: UN

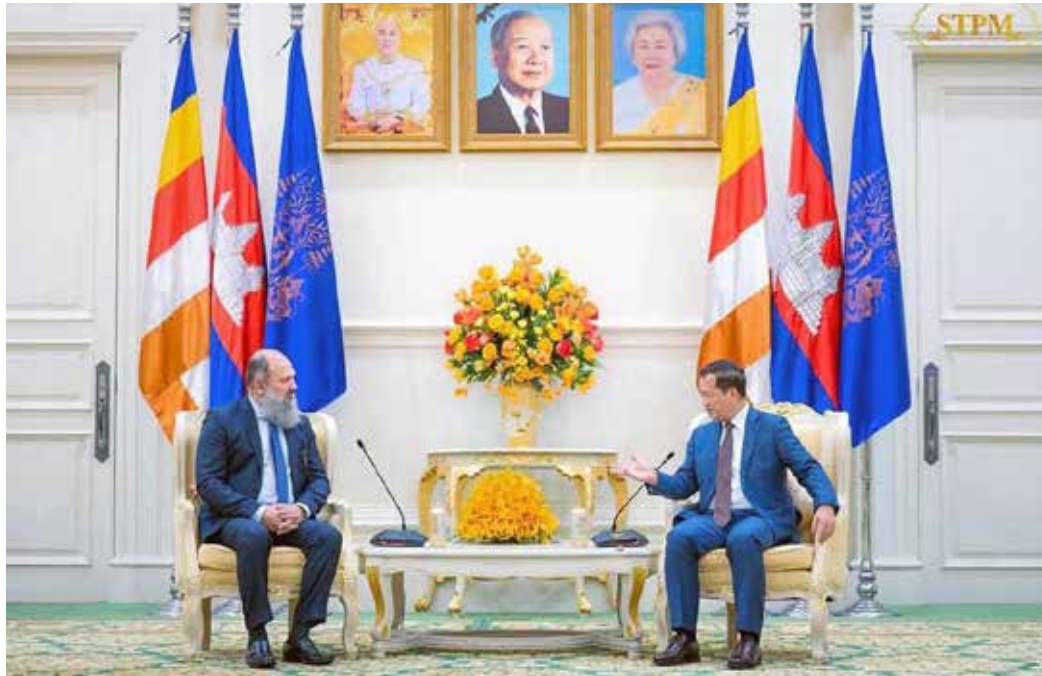
MADRID: Global tourism fully recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic in 2024 with 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals recorded worldwide due to "robust" demand from key markets, UN Tourism said Monday. A majority of destinations welcomed more international tourists in 2024 than they did before the pandemic, while visitor spending also continued to grow strongly, the Madrid-based body said in a statement. The number of international tourist arrivals last year was 11 percent higher than the 1.3 billion recorded in 2023, reaching the level seen in 2019, the year before the pandemic paralysed travel.—APP

## Jam, Samdech discuss strengthening bilateral ties

Prime Minister Samdech Hun Manet welcomed the Minister's visit and expressed appreciation for the successful signing of the agreed minutes of the first Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting between the two nations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, during his visit to Cambodia, extended his heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Manet for the warm hospitality extended to the Pakistani delegation. This visit marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations, focusing on strengthening trade, investment, and diplomatic cooperation, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the immense potential for collaboration between Pakistan and Cambodia, particularly in trade and investment. He stressed the need to enhance business-to-business (B2B) interactions as a foundation for building robust economic ties. Minister also invited Prime Minister Samdech Hun Manet to visit Pakistan at his convenience and underscored the importance of establishing a Cambodian resident mission in Islamabad to



deepen diplomatic and economic relations. Prime Minister Samdech Hun Manet welcomed the Minister's visit and expressed

appreciation for the successful signing of the agreed minutes of the first Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting between the two

nations. He highlighted promising areas for collaboration, including textiles and healthcare, proposing

that these sectors be prioritized in the initial phase of cooperation. The prime minister also acknowledged the global shifts in trade and investment, pointing to opportunities arising from businesses relocating to new regions.

He underscored Cambodia's interest in fostering stronger defence cooperation, referencing the recent visit of a high-level Cambodian defence delegation to Pakistan. He further assured the Minister that the process of opening a Cambodian resident mission in Islamabad is underway, which will strengthen bilateral ties and promote people-to-people connections. This landmark interaction reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Cambodia to advancing mutual interests and exploring new avenues for collaboration. Both sides reaffirmed their resolve to deepen partnerships and unlock untapped potential in trade, investment, and other strategic sectors.

## Chinese investment boosts Pakistan's inward FDI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has seen an increase in inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during the first half of FY 2024-25, with inflows reaching \$1,329 million compared to \$1,107 million during the same period in the previous fiscal year, according to the latest data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This represents a 20% year-on-year increase, reflecting growing investor confidence and heightened economic activity in the country. Experts largely attribute this upward trend to Chinese investors, with investments from Chinese mainland totaling \$535.5 million, marking a 48.2% increase from \$361.5 mil-

lion in the first half of FY 2023-24 and accounting for approximately 42.9% of Pakistan's total inward FDI. Professor Dr. Zahid Anwar, an expert on Pakistan-China relations, told Gwadar Pro that China is leading the way in FDI, and its investment has fostered "trust among other international investors, encouraging them to explore opportunities in Pakistan." He highlighted that the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs I & II) between the two countries are playing a key role in expanding trade and investment, with "Chinese investors continuing to support Pakistan's economic growth." Dr. Khalid Me-

hmood Alam, Assistant Professor at the China Study Center at Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit, told Gwadar Pro that Chinese investment is driving infrastructure development, particularly in the roads, railways, and energy sectors, which will significantly enhance Pakistan's connectivity and long-term economic growth. "The industrial revolution through technology transfer, along with increased employment opportunities, is another major contribution of Chinese investment," he noted. Dr. Alam further emphasized that ensuring a "secure and safe environment for Chi-

nese investors" in Pakistan will attract even more investment in the future. Furqan Rao, an expert on China and a Ph.D. graduate from Tsinghua University, told Gwadar Pro that trade activities between China and Pakistan are gaining momentum post-COVID-19, with Phase II of CPEC expected to bring further investment across multiple sectors, including agriculture and food. He also pointed out the growing presence of Chinese businesses in Pakistan, including new restaurants and food centers, which not only introduce Chinese cuisine but also generate employment opportunities for locals.

## New Gwadar Int'l Airport open to public, commercial traffic

ISLAMABAD: The New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) is officially open to the public and all forms of commercial air traffic as the first commercial flight successfully landed at the airport on January 20. PIA flight PK-503, departing from Karachi at 9:50 am, touched down at the state-of-the-art Gwadar facility at 11:15 am, carrying 46 passengers. This marked the official commencement of operations at the newly inaugurated airport. The New Gwadar International Airport is poised to play a pivotal role in connecting Pakistan to global markets, facilitating trade, tourism, and economic development. The successful landing of PIA flight PK-503 is a significant step toward realizing Gwadar's potential as a regional and global hub for commerce and connectivity. In preparation for the operationalization of the airport, a test flight of the Air King B700 Aircraft successfully landed at NGIA on June 4, 2024. On September 20, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) formally handed over the Multilayered Security Management System (MSMS) of the New Gwadar International Airport to the Airport Security Force (ASF), an executive department of the Ministry of Aviation in Pakistan. Spanning an area of 4,300 acres, NGIA features 32 key components, including a state-of-the-art runway, aprons, terminals, and a full suite of civil, technical, electrical, and communication infrastructure, alongside modern allied facilities.—DNA

## Palestinians confront a landscape of destruction in Gaza's ghost towns

RAFAH: Palestinians in Gaza are confronting an apocalyptic landscape of devastation after a ceasefire paused more than 15 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas. Across the tiny coastal enclave, where built-up refugee camps are interspersed between cities, drone footage captured by The Associated Press shows mounds of rubble stretching as far as the eye can see — remnants of the longest and deadliest war between Israel and Hamas in their blood-soaked history. "As you can see, it became a ghost town," said Hussein Barakat, 38, whose home in the southern city of Rafah was flattened. "There is nothing," he said, as he sat drinking coffee on a brown armchair perched on the rubble of his three-story home, in a surreal scene. Critics say Israel has waged a campaign of scorched earth to destroy the fabric of life in Gaza, accusations that are being considered in two global courts, including the crime of genocide. Israel denies those charges and says its military has been fighting a complex battle in dense urban areas and that it tries to avoid causing undue harm to civilians and their infrastructure. Military experts say the reality is complicated. "For a campaign of this duration, which is a year's worth of fighting in a heavily urban environment where you have an adversary that is hiding in among that environment, then you would expect an extremely high level of damage," said Matthew Savill, director of military sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, a British think-tank. Savill said that it was difficult to draw a broad conclusion about the nature of Israel's campaign. To do so, he said, would require each strike and operation to be assessed to determine whether they adhered to the laws of armed conflict and whether all were proportional, but he did not think the scorched earth description was accurate. International rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, view the vast destruction as part of a broader pattern of extermination and genocide directed at Palestinians in Gaza.—APP

## UN chief urges world support for Mideast amid current turbulent period

UNITED NATIONS: With the Middle East undergoing "a period of profound transformation", the international community must support efforts towards more justice, dignity, human rights and peace in the region, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council on Monday. The UN chief addressed the Council's first quarterly debate on the Middle East for the year, held against the backdrop of Sunday's temporary ceasefire in Gaza, the end of hostilities in Lebanon sparked by the war, and the fall of the Assad regime in Syria. "We have a responsibility to help make sure the people of the Middle East come out of this turbulent period with peace, dignity and a horizon of hope grounded in action," he said, speaking fresh from a visit to Lebanon. Guterres said that the Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal offer a ray of hope. The first phase of the agreement went into effect on Sunday, with Hamas releasing three women hostages and Israel releasing 90 Palestinian prisoners. "While many challenges lie ahead, we should appreciate the long-overdue relief this moment provides for Palestinians in Gaza and the hostages reunited with their loved ones," he said. Meanwhile, the UN is doing its part to ensure the rapid scale-up of humanitarian deliveries. More than 630 trucks of aid entered Gaza on Sunday, with at least 300 headed to the north. He said the parties now must make good on their commitments and fully implement the deal and ensure that it leads to the release of all hostages and a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The Secretary-General pledged that the UN "will do all we can to advance these efforts — in particular, to scale up humanitarian aid across Gaza, fully aware of the significant obstacles, challenges and constraints that we still face." The ceasefire "must translate into at least four simultaneous actions on the ground," he said. The first must be that UN entities "including UN Palestine refugee agency, UNRWA, which he called "the backbone of our humanitarian response" — must be able to perform their functions without hindrance. "The UN must have rapid, safe and unimpeded access through all available channels and crossings to deliver food, water, medicine, fuel, shelter, and materials to repair infrastructure across Gaza, including the north," he said. "Other humanitarian organizations, including local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the private sector, must also have unimpeded safe passage." His second point underscored that scaling up the delivery of aid and essential services demands safe conditions and a conducive operating environment. Humanitarians also require the necessary technical, protective and communications equipment. "To do our work, the parties must coordinate with the UN system in a timely and effective manner. "This also includes the restoration of public order and safety to prevent the looting of humanitarian supplies," he said. Guterres stressed that people must be able to access life-saving aid, his third point. This includes medical evacuations for those who need it, and he urged countries to take in these patients. "Sufficient commercial supplies must also be allowed to enter Gaza to meet the overwhelming needs of the population, he added. His final point highlighted that civilians must be protected, and those seeking to return to their communities must have safe passage. "Explosive ordnance must be removed. The recovery of human remains must be conducted with dignity and respect," he said.—DNA

## Farooq urges Business Community to explore opportunities in Saudi market

Ambassador Farooq announced that the long-standing ban on seafood exports to Saudi Arabia has recently been lifted, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Pakistani government

RAWALPINDI: Pakistani Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Farooq, paid an official visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), where he was warmly welcomed by RCCI President Usman Shaikat, group leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former RCCI President Zahid Latif Khan, and other distinguished members of the executive committee. Representatives from various sectors of the business community also attended the event. In his address to the chamber, Ambassador Ahmed Farooq underscored the importance of adapting to the dynamic global business environment



and urged Pakistani businesses to tap into the growing market potential in Saudi Arabia. He noted that over 90 Pakistani IT

companies are already operating successfully in Saudi Arabia and emphasized the high demand for Pakistani products in sectors such

as food, rice, meat, pharmaceuticals, plastic shoes, and seafood. The Ambassador also highlighted the lucrative prospects in Saudi

Arabia's booming hotel and hospitality sector, offering significant job opportunities for skilled professionals from Pakistan. Notably, Ambassador Farooq announced that the long-standing ban on seafood exports to Saudi Arabia has recently been lifted, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Pakistani government. He encouraged Pakistani traders and entrepreneurs to take advantage of this breakthrough, as well as the wider demand for Pakistani products in the Kingdom. He urged businesses to plan and schedule trade exhibitions in Saudi Arabia at least five to six months in advance, assuring them of the embassy's full support in organizing these events.

## Fire destroys over 500 houses in Jakarta

JAKARTA: More than 600 families in the Indonesian city of Jakarta were forced to evacuate after a blaze destroyed over 500 houses in Kemayoran sub-district of Central Jakarta early Tuesday, city officials said. No casualties were reported in the incident. Evacuees are currently taking shelter in nearby worship places, according to the city's disaster mitigation agency spokesperson Mohamad Yohan. "Quite a lot of logistics are needed," Yohan said, adding that the city administration has distributed instant meals, blankets, and bottled water to assist those affected. It took around six hours for approximately 170 firefighters and 34 fire engines to extinguish the fire. Central Jakarta Police Chief Susatyo Purnomo Condro said that officers suspect a short circuit in one of the houses may have caused the fire.—APP

## Facing Trump and Musk, EU lawmakers seek sure footing

STRASBOURG: How to deal with Donald Trump's disruptive return to the White House and the tempestuous forays of his billionaire ally Elon Musk into European affairs? EU lawmakers will launch the search for answers on Tuesday, as the 27-nation bloc walks a fine line between guarding its interests and avoiding the ire of the mercurial US leader. Their debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, a day after Trump was sworn in under the dome of the US Capitol, is set to highlight the difficult dilemmas facing the old continent. Since the Republican's electoral win in November, European Union leaders have sought to project confidence, insisting the bloc had learned how to deal with Trump and was prepared for his comeback. Campaign trail promises to "take other countries' jobs", slap tariffs on US allies and halt aid to Ukraine barely elicited a reaction as Brussels insisted it was ready, come what may. But as Trump's enaces and outbursts, including a threat to annex Greenland, piled on after the vote, some lawmakers have grown impatient with the EU's wait-and-see attitude.

"We share a lot of things with the Americans, but at the same time we must not be naive," warned Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, from the centrist Renew group. "We must not let our actions be dictated to us by Donald Trump or Elon Musk." Lawmakers will debate whether the EU can find a unified voice to confront a cantankerous Washington. But parliament itself is divided on the issue and — unlike many national assemblies — holds little real power, particularly on foreign policy.

## Sand Art Festival 2025 held in Gwadar

GWADAR: Sand Art Festival was organized near the sunny, vibrant, and tranquil beaches of Gwadar, as a part of Annual Beach Festival. Led by renowned sand art expert Zubair Mukhtar, several groups showcased their creative skills and professional expertise by transforming sand into artistic forms, such as sand brushing, sculpting, and painting. The Sand Art Festival, held by the Tourism Department of Balochistan and the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), is part of a series of activities organized in connection with the celebrations of the Annual Beach Festival, according to GDA Director General (DG) Shafkat Anwar Shahwani. Speaking to Gwadar Pro, Shahwani emphasized that Gwadar stands out in the region due to its unique natural landscape, rich heritage, vibrant culture, and pristine beaches. At the conclusion of the festival, GDA DG Shafkat Anwar Shahwani presented awards to the winning teams in recognition of their outstanding art and talent.—APP

## Briefs

### Canada will respond if US imposes tariffs

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country would respond if President Donald Trump pressed ahead with his threat to impose tariffs on the US's northern neighbour. "Canada provides many of the necessary inputs that the American economy is going to need," he told reporters on Tuesday morning. Trudeau, flanked by senior ministers at Montebello outside Ottawa, said their focus was upholding the friendship with the US and protecting Canada from tariffs. Trudeau cited energy, critical minerals, fertiliser and uranium as vital commodities Canada sends to underpin the US economy. "We are confident that the facts bear out this is a win-win relationship," he said. Canada is taking Trump's proposals "seriously" but "we will also remain steady and strong in advocating for this incredibly successful trading relationship," Trudeau said. - Agencies

### Israeli army chief Halevi resigns

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israel's army chief Herzi Halevi said on Tuesday he would resign on March 6, taking responsibility for the massive security lapse on Oct. 7, 2023, when Palestinian resistance fighters from Gaza carried out a cross-border defensive operation against Israel. Halevi, who had been widely expected to step down, said he would complete the Israel Defence Forces' inquiries into Oct. 7 and strengthen the IDF's readiness for security challenges. It was not immediately clear who would replace Halevi, who said he would transfer the IDF's command to a yet-to-be-named successor. Despite public anger over Oct. 7, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has resisted calls to open a state inquiry into its own responsibility for the security breach that resulted in 1,200 Israelis killed and about 250 hostages taken. "On the morning of Oct. 7, the IDF failed in its mission to protect the citizens of Israel," Halevi wrote in his resignation letter to Defence Minister Israel Katz. - Agencies

### 900 aid trucks enter Gaza on 2nd day

GAZA CITY: More than 900 trucks carrying humanitarian aid entered Gaza on Monday, the United Nations said, exceeding the daily target outlined in the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. "Humanitarian aid continues to move into the Gaza Strip as part of a prepared surge to increase support to survivors," the UN's humanitarian office (OCHA) said. - Agencies

## Zelensky urges 'united' European defense policy

Zelensky said Europe needed to be ready to stand on its own feet and must work to remain relevant as a 'strong global' player

### FOREIGN DESK

DAVOS: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 21, urging Europe to take charge of its own security amid escalating Russian threats. "Europe must establish itself as a strong global player," Zelensky said, adding that, while the United States remains an indispensable ally, Washington doubts Europe's ability to contribute meaningfully to global security. Zelensky highlighted the imbalance in military capabilities, noting that Russia can deploy 1.5 million troops compared to Ukraine's 800,000 and France's 200,000. He called on European nations to unite against Russian aggression, warning that battles involving North Korean soldiers are now geographically closer to Davos than to Pyongyang. Despite having a smaller economy than Europe, Russia outpaces European nations in ammunition and military equipment production, a disparity Zelensky urged Europe to address collectively. Zelensky also emphasized the growing strategic ties between Russia, Iran, and North Korea, describing them as threats to Europe, the U.S., and global stability. "These are their strategic priorities, and our priorities must meet this challenge - in politics, defense, and economics. We can only counter such threats together," he said. Zelensky also said that Russia is evolving into a "North Korea-like state," where human life holds no value, but nuclear weapons and hostility toward neighbors dominate its agenda. The Davos forum, themed "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age," brings together nearly 3,000 representatives from over 130 countries, including 60 heads of state and government. Discussions on Jan. 21 include European defense strategy, NATO's future, and Ukraine's "Peace through Strength" approach, which advocates using military and political leverage to push Russia toward a just peace. High-profile speakers include Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, and Latvian President Edgars Rinkivics. Topics range from geo-economic uncertainty to the role of artificial intelligence in shaping global collaboration.

## UK PM vows to fight new 'terrorism' threat

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Tuesday pledged to fight the changing face of "terrorism" after a teenager admitted the murder of three young girls in a stabbing spree that triggered riots last year. Starmer said the "barbaric" killings, which were not treated as "terrorism" by the judicial authorities, were "a sign Britain now faces a new threat ... acts of extreme violence perpetrated by loners, misfits, young men in their bedrooms" who were accessing material online. Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice da Silva Aguiar, nine, were killed in the attack in the northwestern seaside town of Southport near Liverpool on July 29, 2024. Axel Rudakubana, 18, who was born in Wales to Rwandan parents, on Monday admitted murder as his trial was due to start, prompting the government to announce a public inquiry into the events leading up to the killings. Starmer said the girls' deaths should mark a "line in the sand" and "a fundamental change in how Britain protects its citizens and its children". Admitting that questions now needed to be answered, the prime minister said failure by the state in the case "frankly leaps off the page". "Obsession with violence" His televised address came as media reported that Rudakubana had been in contact with the police and social services over the years. But despite him being referred three times to the government's anti-extremism scheme, Prevent, over concerns about his obsession with violence, nothing was done to stop him. The scheme aims to "stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism" or help rehabilitate those already involved in terror, according to the interior ministry. The decision that Rudakubana did not meet the threshold for intervention by Prevent was "clearly wrong" and had failed the families of the victims, Starmer said. - Agencies

# NAB cautions against investing in Bahria Town's Dubai project

*'The government of Pakistan is reaching out to the government of UAE for the extradition of Malik Riaz through legal channels'*

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) cautioned the public on Tuesday on investing in Bahria Town's new real estate project in Dubai, adding that the government was reaching out to the United Arab Emirates to seek property tycoon Malik Riaz's extradition through legal avenues. The development comes on the heels of PTI founder Imran Khan and his spouse's conviction in the Al-Qadir Trust case, in which Riaz and his son are also co-accused and proclaimed offenders. As PTI and legal experts pointed to the need for accountability for all those involved, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar had said that consultation was ongoing on how to bring the other absconders back. In a press release issued today carried by state-owned media outlet, NAB said: "Mr

Malik Riaz is residing in Dubai, UAE. He has recently launched a project for the construction of luxury apartments in Dubai, UAE. The general public at large is hereby advised and warned to refrain from investing in the stated project. If the general public at large invests in the stated project, their actions would tantamount to money laundering, for which they may face criminal/legal proceedings. "The government of Pakistan is reaching out to the government of UAE for the extradition of Malik Riaz through legal channels." NAB recounted that he was currently an absconder in the Al-Qadir Trust case and wanted by the court with the watchdog already having frozen innumerable assets of his and Bahria Town. The watchdog said it was conducting inquiries and investigations against the Bahria Town owner and his associates for "fraud, deceptive practices and cheating public at large". It said it had

"cogent and credible information about the fact that Mr Malik Riaz and his accomplices have not only illegally possessed/occupied state-owned land but also land belonging to private persons situated at Karachi, Takht-Pari, Rawalpindi and New Murree. "He is using these lands for developing housing societies without obtaining mandatory/required regulatory permissions/no objection certificates and has committed fraud against the state and general public at large to the tune of billions of rupees." NAB alleged that the property tycoon was developing housing societies under the name of Bahria Town "in a duplicitous manner" in other cities, including Peshawar and Jamshoro, by "illegally possessing/occupying land" and failing to procure the same mandatory regulatory permissions and legal documents. It added that he continued to "defraud the general public at large by selling them plots/files in these illegal

housing societies" despite neither he nor Bahria Town having a "good/clear title" to any of the lands in "these illegal housing societies". Last year in May, the property tycoon had complained in an uncharacteristic cryptic post that he was facing "pressure" to take a political side and was facing financial losses, but vowed not to be used as a "pawn for political motives". The Bahria Town owner is considered well-connected with political parties, media and the country's civil and military establishment. He has many past cases alleging the use of land acquisition tactics for his real estate projects. He and his firm have also been at the centre of multiple court cases; most recently being ordered by the Supreme Court to pay the amount the real estate developer owed to the Sindh government for the acquisition of land for Bahria Town Karachi. The property tycoon has not yet addressed today's statement by NAB.

## Pak condoles with Turkiye over fire incident

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday conveyed deep grief and sorrow over the devastating fire at a hotel in the Kartalkaya ski resort in Bolu, Turkiye that killed 66 people and injured 51 others. "Pakistan extends its heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Turkiye, particularly to the families who have lost their loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families," a Foreign Office press statement said. In this time of grief, Pakistan stood shoulder to shoulder with its Turkish brothers and sisters, reaffirming its steadfast solidarity with the fraternal nation of Turkiye. At least 66 people died and 51 others were injured in a fire that broke out at a hotel in Kartalkaya ski resort in northern Turkiye, Anadolu agency reported citing local authorities on Tuesday.



DAVOS: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb holds an informal tete-a-tete with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Mohamed Ali Nafti. - DNA

## KSA freed 7,208 Pakistanis between 2019-24

RİYADH: Saudi Arabia freed a total of 7,208 Pakistani prisoners between 2019 and 2024, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar informed the Senate on Tuesday. During Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Pakistan in February 2019, then prime minister Imran Khan requested for the release of Pakistani prisoners. Days after the historic visit, the crown prince ordered the release of a large number of Pakistani prisoners. In a written response today, Dar, who also holds the portfolio of deputy prime minister, apprised the upper house of the parliament that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is developing a comprehensive consular policy through stakeholder consultations for Pakistanis imprisoned in foreign jails. He added that while the policy is being formulated, Pakistan continues to protect its citizens abroad through established international frameworks. "Our consular officers visit Pakistani nationals, who are in prison or in detention and arrange legal representation for them," said the foreign minister. - Agencies

## FBR shares plan with IMF to address revenue shortfall

Tax collection from under-taxed sectors and expediting legal cases in courts are also prioritised to meet targets

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has shared its plan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address a significant revenue shortfall, as the country prepares for an upcoming IMF delegation visit. According to a private news channel, the FBR's strategy includes accelerating container clearances at ports, auctioning smuggled goods, and improving enforcement capacity. Tax collection from under-taxed sectors and expediting legal cases in courts are also prioritised to meet revenue targets. For January, the FBR faces an ambitious tax target of Rs960 billion. When adjusted for the existing Rs385 billion shortfall, the overall collection requirement rises to Rs1,340 billion. Officials confirmed

that all necessary measures are being implemented to ensure compliance. The IMF delegation is expected to review the progress on these reforms and other fiscal commitments. Pakistan's economy remains under pressure, with revenue generation being critical to meet IMF loan conditions and stabilise the country's financial outlook. Earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised Pakistan's economic outlook, downgrading its projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2025 to 3%, down from 3.2% forecasted just three months ago. The adjustment comes amid a broader global economic assessment presented in the IMF's "World Economic Outlook Update: Global Growth - Divergent and Uncertain." The IMF's revised projections also indicate that Pakistan's GDP growth will remain at 4% in 2026.

## Yoon denies ordering arrest of lawmakers

WEB DESK

SEOUL: South Korea's suspended president Yoon Suk Yeol has made his first appearance at his impeachment trial, where he denied ordering the arrest of lawmakers during his attempt to impose martial law. Parliament voted to impeach Yoon last month, and last week the Constitutional Court began a trial to decide whether to permanently remove him from office. Yoon is also facing a separate criminal investigation into whether he led an insurrection. He has been detained since last week.

Security was tight on Tuesday as Yoon was transported by van from the detention centre, where he is being held, to the Constitutional Court. Police formed human walls and held up anti-riot barricades to stop hundreds of his supporters who had gathered nearby from getting too close. Last weekend saw violence as dozens of Yoon's supporters clashed with law enforcers and broke into another court house. On Tuesday, Yoon was asked if he had ordered military commanders to "drag out" lawmakers from parliament on the night he declared martial law, in order to prevent them from overturning his order.

## ECP failed to perform its duty: Supreme Court

'ECP conducted itself in a manner that is not in line with its constitutional duty'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has declared that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has failed to perform its constitutional duty to actualise the will of the people and conducted itself in a manner that is not in line with its constitutional duty. "It is unfortunate that despite clear pronouncements by this court, the ECP conducts itself in a manner that is not in line with its constitutional duty. "Rather, [its conduct] aligns with the notion that they have the constitutional power to disregard other constitutional institutions and the basic right of the vote," said a six-page additional note written by Justice Ayesha Malik in MNA Adil Baza's case. Justice Ayesha was part of a three-member bench led by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and comprising Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi that on December 12 unanimously struck down the ECP's decision to disqualify Baza on account of his alleged defection under Article 63A of Constitution. The judge whose opinion was endorsed by other two members of the bench reminded the ECP that elections

are the lifeline to democracy and the ECP is the guarantor of electoral integrity. "The independence of the ECP, therefore, is fundamental to the election process without which the very foundation of democracy is undermined. "This court has also recognised and declared that the ECP should not become subservient to political influences, or political engineering rather remain an impartial custodian of democracy as any leaning of the ECP in favour of the government would compromise the legitimacy of the political system. "At the heart of protecting electoral integrity is the right to vote and the exercise of this right, by the people. The supremacy of the vote underscores the idea that power and legitimacy in a democratic system derives its consent from the governed which is why an independent constitutional body is required to ensure that the will of the people by way of election is actualised." It said the facts of the instant case compelled the bench to once again reiterate that the constitutional duty of the ECP cannot be considered as an overarching constitutional power vis-vis other constitutional provisions and institutions. "The ECP is, as per the constitutional mandate, an independent body, duty bound to conduct free and fair elections and duty bound to ensure that those elected by the people remain in government. "The independence of the ECP is the fundamental safeguard in a democratic system which maintains the integrity of the elections, and ensures that the will of the people translates into their consent to be governed by the elected representatives."

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