



Islamabad POST

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Scholz slams Musk for using social media to support far-right

Detailed News On Page-08

Only arms embargo will stop Israel

Detailed News On Page-08

Sinner beats Shelton to set up Zverev final

Detailed News On Page-06

3 human traffickers arrested

PM-led task force resolves to curb human trafficking

"We will bring the perpetrators involved in human trafficking to justice," vows PM Shehbaz

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In order to eliminate the menace of human trafficking from the country, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday formed a special task force, led by himself. "We will bring the perpetrators involved in human trafficking to justice," the prime minister resolved while chairing a review meeting regarding steps to curb human trafficking in Pakistan. The development came days after the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) kicked off a probe against its 20 officials over their alleged involvement in human smuggling. Moreover, the federal government had launched a high-level probe into the tragic boat incidents in Morocco wherein at least 44 Pakistanis drowned while attempting to reach Spain from West Africa earlier this month. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested three suspects, including an alleged human trafficker implicated in the recent Morocco boat tragedy, in a crackdown on human smuggling operations. The accused, identified as Waqas Ashraf, Rana Muhammad Farhan, and Muhammad Adil, were taken into custody by the FIA's Gujranwala chapter. Waqas Ashraf, in particular, has been linked to the Morocco boat accident and was arrested in Sambrial. During the meeting today, the premier was briefed on the groups involved in the deaths of Pakistanis in the illegal immigrant boat incidents, arrests made by various institutions in Pakistan, FIRs filed, and the future course of action. The prime minister stressed to speed up the pace of arrests of those involved in human trafficking and directed all the relevant departments including the foreign ministry to play their active role in identifying the human smugglers. He said that the entire nation was deeply saddened by the heartbreaking incident of the deaths of Pakistanis in the boat of illegal immigrants. The meeting was informed that six organised human trafficking groups had been identified,

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Chinese investors move SHC against 'police harassment'

"We have been deprived of right to free movement and holding business meetings," says Chinese investors

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Amid worsening law and order situation in Karachi, six Chinese investors on Friday filed a petition in the Sindh High Court seeking protection against extortion and alleged harassment by police officials in the metropolis. In their petition, the Chinese investors, while expressing their disappointment over the "culture of bribe" in the local police, have said that they would be left with no other option but to leave for Lahore or return to their homeland. "Police [officers] demand bribes from the airport to our residences. We are made to wait for hours at the airport in the name of [arranging] bulletproof vehicles," read the petition. The Chinese businessmen alleged that police officials, after receiving bribes, took them to their residences in their vehicles. In addition to this, the Chinese investors said that they had been deprived of the right to free movement and holding business meetings.

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Briefs

Junaid Akbar elected PAC chairman

Opposition Leader in National Assembly Omar Ayub recommends Akbar's name

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTI Member of National Assembly (MNA) Junaid Akbar was elected chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Friday, the post was lying vacant since the government came into power following the February 2024 elections. The PAC is considered one of the most powerful parliamentary bodies, with the authority to summon any individual or record from government departments in financial matters. As per parliamentary norms established following the 2008 general elections, the chair of the PAC is traditionally allotted to the opposition, a practice which continues till today.

Asad Qaiser contacts Fazl

PTI leaders are expected to meet Fazlur Rehman on Monday or Tuesday

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Asad Qaiser held a telephonic call with JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to discuss the country's political situation. Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser reached out to Maulana Fazlur Rehman. During the conversation, they exchanged views on the current political scenario and deliberated on their upcoming meeting.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Rules out joining govt

Only parliament has authority to roll back 26th amendment: Bilawal

Attempts to undo constitutional amendment will not be accepted, says PPP chairman

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari emphasised on Friday that the 26th Constitutional Amendment can only be repealed by parliament, saying that if any institution attempts to annul it, such a move will not be accepted by anyone. Speaking to journalists in Islamabad, he urged the Supreme Court judges to facilitate each other's work rather than create obstacles. He reiterated that the authority to roll back the 26th Amendment lies solely with parliament. The 26th Constitutional Amendment— which changed the procedure for the appointment of the chief justice, fixed the post's tenure and formed constitutional benches — was widely criticised by the opposition and the legal fraternity, with many of them challenging the controversial amendment in the apex court. Earlier, Sindh Bar Council's vice chairman challenged

Continued on Page 06

FIA begins Toshakhana inquiry against Zardari, Nawaz

After obtaining the NAB records, the JIT will record statements from all the accused individuals

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has initiated an inquiry into the Toshakhana case against President Asif Ali Zardari, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, and former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani. As per details, the joint investigation team (JIT) has requested the National Accountability

Continued on Page 06

ARMED FORCES DAY OF BANGLADESH



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Lt. General Inayat Hussain Shah, Chief of Logistic Staff Pakistan Army, Defence Adviser of Bangladesh Brig. General Abu Babel Md Shahabuddin and others cutting cake to mark the 53rd Armed Forces Day of Bangladesh. - DNA

Former BLA commander renounces violence

Exposes foreign support for Baloch insurgency

NEWS DESK

QUETTA: Former Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) commander Najibullah, along with other militants, denounced violence and alleged foreign agencies' involvement in supporting Baloch separatists. Speaking alongside Balochistan ministers and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) officials, Najibullah admitted spending 19 years in militancy, motivated by hatred instilled by a neighbor. He described the insurgency as "gang warfare," highlighting the suffering of fighters while leaders' families live abroad. He urged militants to abandon violence

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Hamas names 4 hostages set to be released

They will be freed in exchange for 180 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel

AGENCIES

GAZA: Hamas has named four hostages to be released on Saturday under the Gaza ceasefire deal. It says they are soldiers Karina Arieve, Daniella Gilboa, Naama Levy and Liri Albag. They will be freed in exchange for 180 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. It will be the second such exchange since the ceasefire came into effect last Sunday. Three hostages and 90

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Slams Peca amendment PTI to boycott 4th round of talks with govt: Gohar

NA speaker, who has been facilitating government-PTI negotiation, summons session on January 28 at 11:45pm

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PTI has decided to boycott the fourth round of talks with the government, a day after it announced that party founder Imran Khan issued directions to call off negotiations due to a delay over the formation of judicial commissions. The PTI and the government had been engaged in talks to bring down political temperatures. After two rounds of meetings, the third round was held seven days ago (Jan 16) in which the PTI formally presented its demands in writing. Despite weeks of negotiations, the dialogue process has hardly moved forward on major issues — the formation of judicial commissions and the release of PTI prisoners. On Monday, the government assured the PTI of a response to the opposition's

Continued on Page 06

No one will evade mega graft of 190m pounds: Kh. Asif

PTI should explain how public money ended up in their accounts, asks minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Friday the 190 million pounds case was a major financial scam and no one would be able to evade accountability. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the minister said "people often change for wealth and riches", describing the 190 million pounds case as stealing.

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Pakistan, Azerbaijan vow to cement bilateral ties

Agreed to implement the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed in July 2024, as well as explore joint ventures

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Vugar Mustafayev, Minister of Defence Industry of Republic of Azerbaijan called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on 24 January, 2025. During the meeting, both sides expressed their shared commitment to strengthen and diversify relations between Pakistan and Azer-

baijan. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction at the current trajectory of their bilateral cooperation, in all areas of mutual interest, particularly in trade, energy, investment and defense sectors. Minister of Defence Industry of Azerbaijan thanked the Prime Minister for the warm hospitality extended by Pakistan to him and his delegation. Minister Vugar Mustafayev is visiting Pakistan to Co-Chair the 8th Session of

Joint Ministerial Commission between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, The 8th session of the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Joint Commission concluded successfully in Islamabad on Friday, reaffirming bilateral commitments across key sectors and paving the way for enhanced cooperation in areas including energy, trade, defense, agriculture and education. The session was co-chaired by Federal Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan, Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Azerbaijan's Minister for Defence Industry, Vugar Valehloglu Mustafayev. On the occasion, both sides agreed to implement the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed in July 2024, as well as explore joint ventures and investments between businesses from both countries.

Continued on Page 06



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KP includes Life Insurance Scheme in Health Card Program

CM Ali Amin Gandapur stated that KP has become the first province in the country to introduce an insurance scheme of this kind. He emphasized that this initiative is a source of pride and happiness for the provincial government and its people

PESHAWAR:The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government on Friday decided to incorporate the life insurance scheme into the Health Card Program. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed for the implementation of the life insurance scheme at a ceremony held at the Chief Minister's House. The event was attended by officials from the Health Card program and State Life Insurance Corporation, with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur as the chief guest. Addressing the ceremony, CM Ali Amin Gandapur stated that KP has become the first province in the coun-

try to introduce an insurance scheme of this kind. He emphasized that this initiative is a source of pride and happiness for the provincial government and its people. He said under the scheme, financial support will be provided to the families of deceased breadwinners who were beneficiaries of the Sehat Card Plus program. Families will receive compensation of Rs one million if the head of the household, aged up to 60 years, passes away. For those above 60 years, families will receive Rs 500,000. The Chief Minister highlighted that over 10.4 million families will benefit from this life insurance scheme, which will

cost Rs 4.5 billion annually, entirely funded by the provincial government. He added that this initiative, following the Sehat Card Plus, is the KP government's second major program for social security. With nearly 49% of the province's population living below the poverty line, the government is determined to ensure their social protection. He CM concluded that the life insurance scheme will provide much-needed relief to families who lose their primary earners. Furthermore, under the Health Card program, 100% of the province's population is already receiving free and quality healthcare services.—DNA

Randhawa inspects ongoing construction activities

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, visited the Serena Interchange project, accompanied by Member Engineering. The visit commenced at the Serena Interchange project, where the Chairman CDA inspected ongoing construction activities. The relevant officers briefed Chairman CDA on the progress, highlighting that finishing work on both underpasses of the Srinagar Highway is in full swing and will be completed within this month. Chairman CDA directed that the underpasses should be opened to traffic by the end of the month. It was further briefed that beautification work around the Serena Interchange underpasses is progressing rapidly. He instructed that aesthetically pleasing lights be installed permanently to enhance the project's visual appeal. Additionally, Chairman CDA emphasized the importance of expediting plantation and horticulture activities around the project area. Later, Chairman CDA, along with Member Engineering, also visited the F-8 Jinnah Avenue Interchange project. During the briefing, officers briefed that the girder launching for the flyover has been completed. Similarly, five deck slabs of the bridge have been constructed, with the remaining three slabs nearing completion.—DNA

FJWU-BIC startups shine at Centaurus Mall

RAWALPINDI:The Fatima Jinnah Women University Business Incubation Center (FJWU-BIC) successfully organized a start-ups product display at Centaurus Mall, Islamabad, providing a platform for young women entrepreneurs to showcase their innovative products, connect with industry professionals, and explore business expansion opportunities. The event attracted a large audience, including business leaders, investors, academia, and the general public, creating an engaging and dynamic environment for the participating startups. The exhibition was graced by Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof. Dr. Bushra Mirza (Pride of Performance, T.I.), who applauded the creativity, dedication, and entrepreneurial mindset of the participants. She highlighted the significant role of women entrepreneurs in driving economic development and fostering a culture of innovation. In her address, she encouraged young women to embrace entrepreneurship as a path to self-reliance and leadership, emphasizing the importance of mentorship, strategic planning, and perseverance in business success. The start-up product display featured a diverse range of businesses, reflecting the versatility and ingenuity of young female entrepreneurs. Handmade crafts and artistic creations, showcasing traditional and modern designs were displayed with eco-friendly products, promoting sustainability, tech-based solutions, including innovative mobile applications, smart gadgets, digital tools, fashion.—APP

Seminar calls for collective commitment on solid waste management

SWAT:A seminar on Solid Waste Management (SWM), has called for a collective commitment to implement innovative practices in SWM and explore new future strategies. The seminar was organized under the Oxford Policy Management's Sub-National Governance (SNG) Programme, which brought together stakeholders to discuss innovative practices and explore future strategies. The event, attended by Muzammil Aslam, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance, and other notable speakers, highlighted the success of pilot projects in Babuzai and Bahrain Tehsils. Muzammil Aslam, in his address as Chief Guest, praised the SWM pilot projects as exemplary models for other districts. He emphasized the importance of integrating

Carbon Credits and Carbon Markets into development initiatives, underscoring their role in promoting sustainability. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to scaling these models across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while incorporating climate resilience into governance frameworks and exploring recycling-based industries to enhance Own Source Revenue (OSR). Commissioner Malakand Division, Muhammad Abid Khan, lauded the technical support provided by the SNG Programme and commended TMA Bahrain for its efforts. He expressed enthusiasm for expanding the initiative to other parts of the Malakand Division, starting with Lower Dir and Malakand districts. Dr Vaqar Ahmad, Senior Governance Advisor for the SNG Programme, highlighted the

scalability of the pilot projects and stressed the importance of cost recovery mechanisms. He also mentioned the provincial government's plans to allocate funds for similar SWM initiatives in Haripur and Mansehra districts. Jo Moir, Development Director at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), applauded the SNG Programme's iterative approach, which has improved service delivery, cost recovery, and citizen satisfaction. She emphasized the importance of institutionalizing these practices to ensure their long-term sustainability. Dr Raheel A. Siddiqui, Provincial Team Lead for the SNG Programme, highlighted the role of evidence-based policymaking and strategic collaboration in driving sustainable reforms.—APP

Rs10m aid distribution ceremony for Kurram victims held

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday chaired a ceremony held at the Governor House on Friday to provide aid to the victims of Kurram district. The event was attended by Syed Kmail Haider Shah, Chairman of the District Council Sukkur and President of the Local Council Association, along with his delegation from Sindh province. On the instructions of Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Syed Kumail Haider Shah presented a check worth 10 million rupees to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, for the victims of Kurram district. Pakistani cuisine recipes Kumail Haider Shah also announced that the Local Council Association would provide additional aid worth Rs20 million for the victims and mentioned that another 10 million rupees would soon be handed over to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the Red Crescent Society, which would further distribute the assistance in Kurram. Kumail Haider Shah emphasized that the aid was a moral duty, in line with the instructions of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and assured that the assistance would be channeled through the Red Crescent Society to directly benefit the affected people of Kurram. The ceremony was also attended by key figures including Malak Habib Orakzai, Chairman of the Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Vice Chairman Farzand Wazir, Chairman of the Red Crescent Society for merged districts Imran Wazir Advocate, and other relevant officials. During the event, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi thanked Syed Nasir Hussain Shah the founder of the Association, Syed Kumail Haider Shah, and the Local Council Association for their generous contribution, describing the humanitarian aid as a prime example of brotherhood and solidarity. He also expressed gratitude to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his special instructions to provide assistance to the victims. Governor Kundi further acknowledged the support from the provincial governments of Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab, who stood with the people of Kurram during difficult times. He said that peace was being restored in Kurram and stressed the provincial government's commitment to ensuring complete peace and order in the region. The Governor shared that efforts had been made to organize a Jirga in Kohat and an All Parties Conference at the Governor House to restore peace across the province. He emphasized that all political parties, including the provincial government, should work together for the restoration of peace in Kurram and other parts of the province. Looking ahead, Governor Kundi announced that a convention for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's district councils and local representatives would be held at the Governor House in Peshawar in the second week of February.—DNA

Experts discuss social media and its psychological impacts on youth mental health

DNA

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a roundtable discussion titled "Digital Minds: Navigating Social Media and Mental Health" on 23 January 2025. The roundtable brought together prominent social media and psychology experts to deliberate on the complex relationship between social media usage and mental health, with a particular focus on its effects on younger generations. Setting the tone for the session, Ms Nidaa Shahid, Associate Director CASS Lahore, discussed how social media has emerged as a game-changer in the 21st century, offering immense

connectivity, while simultaneously posing serious mental health challenges. The first discussant, Mr Fahd Husain, President Aik News Network, probed the complexities of social media stating that it has

blurred the lines between truth and false. He further said that social media rewards emotional content over logical arguments. Additionally, the algorithms ensure that people are only exposed to the content

they agree with, thus reinforcing biases and creating echo chambers. Ms Fatima Aslam, a clinical psychologist, provided insights into the psychological impact of social media on adolescents. She said that since

the advent of social media, the psychological issues being presented in youth have changed, with tech addiction becoming a leading cause of psychological stress. Social media platforms are designed to increase this addictiveness in order to create more revenues. Prof Dr Rafia Rafique, Director Institute of Applied Psychology Punjab University highlighted the four most common stressors of social media which includes comparison with people's online personas, usage of likes and comments as social currency, fear of missing out and online harassment. The youth of today have become addicted to the quick dopamine rush despite facing these challenges.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring the Sitara-i-Imtiaz award on Asif Bashir.

Punjab to provide Ramadan package to millions of families

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has decided in-principle to provide Nighaban Ramadan package to millions of families in the province. While chairing a special meeting on the subject on Friday, she asked citizens to complete registration for Nighaban Ramadan package by February 15, and directed the authorities concerned to take necessary measures to ensure transparency. Chief Minister said, "Nighaban Ramadan package is a right of the poor, and a duty of the government." She added, "People should get their right with respect and dignity." Maryam reviewed various suggestions and recommendations regarding the package in the meeting. She was briefed by the relevant authorities about Registration in PSER Punjab Socio-Economic Registry that is a pre-requisite to register for the package and people can apply from home through the online portal psereg.punjab.gov.pk." The CM was also apprised that registration can be done in the Union Councils and Municipality offices. A dedicated helpline 080002345 has also been established for the purpose.

President confers Sitara-i-Imtiaz award on Asif Bashir

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday conferred the Sitara-i-Imtiaz award on Asif Bashir in recognition of his outstanding services in the field of public services. The award was conferred at a special investiture ceremony held at the Awan-e-Sadr and attended by parliamentarians. As per the citation read out at the ceremony, Asif Bashir, who is currently posted as Deputy Commissioner in Peshawar, was selected by the federal ministry of religious affairs as a Moavin-i-Hajj (Hajj Assistant) for the previous year's Hajj operation.

During the Hajj operation, the temperature soared to 51.8 degree due to which several pilgrims had to face extreme difficulties. During such situation, the Hajj Moavineen perform extraordinary and appreciable services which often remain unacknowledged. The Moavineen basically are responsible for providing facilities to the Pakistani Hujjaj (pilgrims), however they also provide possible facilities to the pilgrims belonging to other countries as well. Asif Bashir during Hajj days was serving as a Moavin in Mina where tents of the pil-

grims belonging to different countries including India were present. On 9th Zil Hajj, several Pakistani, Indian and British elderly Hujjaj got fainted due to extreme hot weather. Tragically, 1300 people also lost their lives on that day. In the midst of the crisis, Asif Bashir and his five-member team rushed to the scene, providing first aid to the affected pilgrims, many of whom were Indian citizens. Despite the dire circumstances, Asif Bashir physically carried 26 pilgrims, including 17 Indians, on his shoulders to the hospital.—APP

TAS organized alumni convention at Cadet College Sanghar

SANGHAR: The first-ever CCS Alumni Convention was successfully held at Cadet College Sanghar (CCS) from January 18 to 19, 2025, collaboratively organized "The Association of Sanghrites" (TAS) and Cadet College Sanghar management the event aimed to reunite Sanghrites from across the globe on a shared platform, fostering unity and strengthening bonds with their alma mater. The convention witnessed an overwhelming response, with over 400 ex-cadets from 26 graduating batches (1994-2019) participating. Many alumni traveled from abroad, including the United States, the Middle East, and China, to be part of this momentous occasion. Commodore Zeeshan Ali, SI(M), Commandant/Principal of

CCS, warmly welcomed the esteemed alumni and ex-faculty members, setting the tone for the two-day event filled with nostalgia, camaraderie, and memorable activities. The first day of the convention featured a variety of engaging activities, including sports events, a sumptuous dinner, and a lively bonfire and musical night program. Alumni relived their cherished memories while connecting with fellow Sanghrites in a joyous atmosphere. Day two commenced with morning PT followed by breakfast, after which the Alumni conference took place at the prestigious Iqbal Auditorium. The conference was attended by ex-cadets, former faculty members, and the current teaching and administrative staff.

During the session, TAS President Mr. Shahjahan Ahmed Sheikh gave a welcome address and thanked college administration, current faculty, former faculty and ex-cadets for participating with their great batch strengths and CEO TAS Major Qayyum Mahar briefed the attendees on the association's bylaws and structure. Commandant/Principal Commodore Zeeshan Ali SI (M) addressed the alumni, highlighting the significance of the convention and the need for a well-structured alumni association. He also shared insights into the remarkable progress made by Cadet College Sanghar in recent years, underscoring the institution's commitment to excellence.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

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

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Hutchison expresses investment \$1b in Pak's port infrastructure

The proposed investment focuses on upgrading Karachi International Container Terminal (KICT) and South Asia Pakistan Terminals Limited (SAPT) with advanced automation technologies, enhancing operational efficiency, and adopting eco-friendly solutions. The plan includes the introduction of electrified and remote-control equipment to reduce carbon emissions, reflecting the government's commitment to sustainable development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from Hutchison Ports, led by Andy Tsoi, Managing Director for the Middle East & Africa Division, met with Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh and secretary Syed Zafar Ali Shah to share a proposed US\$1 billion investment plan. Accompanying Andy Tsoi were Capt Rashid Jamil, Country Advisor for Hutchison Ports Pakistan, and Leonard Fung, Business Director for the Middle East & Africa Division at Hutchison Ports. Pakistani cuisine recipes This groundbreaking proposal, which includes an upfront US\$200 million Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), aims to modernize Pakistan's port infrastructure and elevate its role in global trade, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The proposed investment focuses on upgrading Karachi International Container Terminal (KICT) and South Asia Pakistan Terminals Limited (SAPT) with advanced automation technologies, enhancing operational efficiency, and adopting eco-friendly solutions. The plan includes the introduction of electrified and remote-control equipment to reduce carbon emissions, reflecting the government's commitment to sustainable development. Additionally, Hutchison Ports' proposal includes the establishment



of a state-of-the-art warehousing depot to address the growing demands of Pakistan's trade sector. Significant funding is also proposed for improving road infrastructure around the south wharf to ensure smooth container traffic flow and boost supply chain efficiency. The minister welcomed the proposal, stating: "This partnership represents a significant

milestone in Pakistan's journey to becoming a global trade leader. Hutchison Ports' confidence in our economic potential highlights the transformative opportunities in our maritime sector."

Andy Tsoi, Managing Director of Hutchison Ports, expressed his views: "We are proud to partner with the Government of Pakistan to modernize and innovate

its maritime infrastructure. This proposed investment reflects our long-term commitment to enhancing trade and logistics in the region." Pakistani cuisine recipes Other delegates also shared their optimism about the project's potential to significantly boost Pakistan's trade and logistics capabilities, further strengthening Hutchison Ports' long-standing

partnership with the country. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs remains focused on fostering partnerships that drive economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen Pakistan's global trade networks. This landmark proposed investment underscores Pakistan's potential to become a key player in the global maritime industry.

PEC chairman, Balochistan chief secretary pledge reforms for engineers and projects

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Engineer Waseem Nazir met with Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir during his visit to Quetta to deliberate on the pressing challenges faced by the engineering sector in the province.

The meeting emphasized fostering collaboration to address key issues impacting engineering professionals and projects in Balochistan.

Waseem Nazir highlighted the urgent need to fill vacant positions in government and development departments with young, qualified engineers.

He urged the Chief Secretary to ensure that these vacancies are identified and filled to provide career opportunities for fresh engineering graduates. "Recruiting young engineers into government projects will not only offer employment but also enhance the efficiency and sustainability of national development initiatives," he said.

A significant concern raised during the meeting, was the absence of technical allowances for engineers, as well as the appointment of non-engineers to critical engineering roles, such as Project Directors. Stressing the importance of merit-based processes, the PEC Chairman stated, "Entrusting projects to qualified professionals ensures the success and quality of our engineering ventures.—APP

Ensuring fundamental right for women collective responsibility: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has allowed female staff members of the National Assembly Secretariat to leave for home before sunset during sessions of the National Assembly. Ayaz Sadiq said that protecting women's rights is collective responsibility. He also stressed on the need to take all necessary steps to provide balance between professional and domestic responsibilities for women. Dr. Shahida Rahman, Secretary General of the Women Parliamentary Caucus, extends appreciation to the Speaker's initiative, stating that the Parliament is committed to protect women's rights. She added that this decision will facilitate women in balancing work and family life. MNA Nikhat Shakeel, Convener of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights, said that this step will have a positive impact on child upbringing and is an important step towards improving women's lives. Shaista Pervez Malik, Country Ambassador/MNA for Women Political Leaders, said that this initiative is also worth emulating for other institutions, and its implementation is necessary in government and private institutions for women. Female members of the National Assembly and employee appreciated the Speaker's initiative and urged all government and private institutions to follow such initiatives. Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has underscored the importance of education as the cornerstone of societal development. He has said that no nation can achieve progress and development without promoting education. Speaking on the occasion of International Day of Education, observed globally on January 24 under the United Nations, the Speaker highlighted that quality education is the key to securing a prosperous future for Pakistan. "Improving literacy and providing quality education will pave the way for national development and economic growth," the Speaker said. He added that education goes beyond obtaining degrees and plays a pivotal role in imparting values and societal traditions. The Speaker reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to enacting effective legislation aimed at enhancing the education system and improving literacy rates.—DNA

Climate Ministry, ICESCO to host girls' green education conference soon



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) have announced their collaboration to hold a conference focusing on climate education with an emphasis on green skills for girls in Pakistan. The decision was made during a meeting between the Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, and Dr. Haddy Jatou Sey, the head of ICESCO, who met her on Friday to discuss key actions for the event. During the meeting, Romina Khurshid Alam underscored the significance of empowering girls through education that integrates green skills, highlighting that Islam advocates for the right of women to access education and inheritance. She expressed that

the upcoming conference will be held under the theme "National Climate Education Framework for Girls in the Islamic World," and will bring together federal and provincial government representatives, as well as stakeholders, to participate in the event. "The primary aim of climate education is to prepare citizens for the future and actively involve them in building a climate-resilient nation with a special focus on strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of women, especially young girls," Romina said. The Prime Minister's aide revealed that she is working on the Africa House initiative in collaboration with Rwanda, which will serve as a gateway for Pakistan to connect with African countries. This partnership will focus on shared efforts to tackle climate change, resilience, and adaptation, she added. Romina also highlighted the successful implementa-

tion of the She Power project, which has been funded by China and benefitted over 20,000 girls in Balochistan during its first phase. The second phase of the project is set to extend its support to 50,000 girls, with the distribution of hygiene kits among them. The meeting emphasized the vital role of education, science, and culture in addressing climate change. Romina reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its climate change obligations and emphasized the country's ongoing efforts to adapt to the changing climate, including collaboration with global organizations such as ICESCO. Dr. Haddy Jatou Sey reiterated ICESCO's dedication to supporting climate education, noting the importance of cooperation between international organizations, governments, and local communities to foster a global response to climate change.

Universities unite at NUST to celebrate Int'l Day of Education

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's public and private sector universities here on Friday organized an event at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) to mark the International Day of Education 2025. The event also marked the culmination of NUST's ConnectEd training, titled "Online Education Excellence Program (Batch 3)," which drew participants nationwide. More than a celebration, the gathering was a testament to the unifying power of education in addressing contemporary challenges. Among the notable institutions represented were the recently upgraded Institute of Southern Punjab to the status of university, the National Skills University Islamabad, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University Islamabad, and NUST's own College of Aeronautical Engineering and College of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. This year's International Day of Education theme, "Artificial Intelligence and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation," resonated deeply with the attendees learning from the NUST ConnectEd training. Participants of the Online Education Excellence Program pledged to uphold the principles of human agency, ensuring that individuals retain their autonomy, creativity, and agency.

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Briefs

ANF recovers
71 kg drugs,
arrests 9
accused

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 5 operations across the country managed to recover over 71 kg drugs worth over Rs 11.4 million and arrested 9 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that in an operation, 71 kg hashish was recovered from a car intercepted near a restaurant in Pishin, Balochistan and 2 suspects were arrested. In 2nd operation, 22.8 kg hashish and 8.4 kg opium hidden in a car near a park in Peshawar were recovered and 4 suspects were rounded up. 38.4 kg hashish was recovered from secret cavities of a truck intercepted near M-1 Motorway, Islamabad and 2 suspects were arrested. In 4th operation, 3.4 kg hashish was recovered from a village in Kamari, Karachi. 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a suspect netted in F-10 Center, Islamabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

Govt resolved
to equip
youth with
skills

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the incumbent government was resolved to equip the country's youth with modern skills to cope with the global market's demand. The prime minister, in a meeting with Vice Chancellor of University of London Wendy Thomson, who called on him here, said that Pakistan's youth were capable of proving their mettle in all fields of life and bringing laurels to the country. He told the visiting dignitary that the Pakistani nationals were serving the international market having graduated from the University of London and other globally renowned institutions. The prime minister said that the government had introduced various programs including merit-based foreign scholarships and employment, and was also formulating new strategies in this regard.—APP

Cutlery
exports in-
crease 9.43%
to \$30.901

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cutlery witnessed an increase of 9.43 percent during the first half of fiscal year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year. The cutlery exports from the country were recorded at US \$30.901 million during July-December (2024-25) against the exports of US \$28.239 million during July-December (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cutlery exports witnessed a nominal decline of 1.82 percent during the month of December 2024 as compared to the same month of last year. The exports of cutlery from the country during December 2024 were recorded at US \$4.756 million against the exports of US \$4.844 million in December 2023.—APP

Ahsan vows to elevate
Pakistan's satellite technology

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday expressed strong conviction of the government to enhance the country's satellite technology, aligning it with international standards. Addressing the national space symposium "Sitaroun Se Agay Jahan Aur Bhi Hain" (Beyond the Stars, There are More Worlds), he announced the government's plan to launch 15 space shuttles over the next five years as part of its broader efforts to boost Pakistan's capabilities in space research. The event, held in collaboration with SUPARCO, Pakistan's National Space Agency, and the Institute of Space Technology (IST), Islamabad, was themed "Harnessing Space Sciences and Technology for Socio-Economic Transformation in Pakistan." It brought together leading experts, policymakers, and academics to explore the transformative po-

tential of space technology for Pakistan's development. The minister stressed the need for increased collaborative research with international space agencies and the establishment of a platform for university students and young scientists to explore space and showcase their capabilities. Ahsan Iqbal also proposed launching the Annual Space Innovation Challenge program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, the URAAN PAKISTAN initiative, and SUPARCO, for university students across the country. This initiative would allow them to showcase their projects and research in space technology. He advocated for developing a pool of at least 50,000 youth experts over the next five years to capture both local and international markets in space, satellite, science and technology. "Today, space technology is being utilized commercially across various sectors, and for Pakistan to achieve economic growth, we must embrace technological innovation," he remarked. The minister

also mentioned the government's intention to introduce space and satellite education at the school level to inspire students' interest in astronomy and broaden their horizons. He called for a revival of the past glory of Muslim scientists whose groundbreaking research on the nature of light, models of planetary motion and technology in astronomy predated Western scientific advancements. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the importance of leveraging space sciences for socio-economic transformation and commended SUPARCO's contributions, reiterating the government's commitment to integrating space technologies into national strategies to achieve the "Digital Pakistan" goals. The minister emphasized the importance of knowledge, science and technology in ensuring sustainable development across the country, underscoring that research and innovation are critical to driving national progress.



ISLAMABAD: MNA Isphanyar Bandhara, Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gillani and other MPs posing for a picture during the joint sitting of the parliament on Friday.—DNA

PM reaffirms resolve for
education system to balance AI

President Asif Ali Zardari calls for the responsible use of artificial intelligence to revolutionize the education system, said that in the AI world, human will, creativity, critical thinking and decision-making should be prioritized

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: As the world observes International Day of Education on Friday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the government's resolve to advance an education system that embraced the promise of artificial intelligence while safeguarding the essence of human creativity, compassion, and purpose.

The prime minister, in his message to the nation on Education Day annually observed on January 24, acknowledged the educators, advocates, and partners working tirelessly to illuminate lives with the light of knowledge.

"On this International Day of Education, we reflect on the profound role education plays in empowering individuals and communities to navigate the

rapid advancements of technology... Together, let us continue to champion this noble cause and ensure that education remains a beacon of hope for generations to come," he remarked.

He said that this year's theme, "AI and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation," was a reminder of the need to ensure that progress in artificial intelligence complements our shared humanity. The prime minister said that as AI-driven systems are increasingly integrated into our lives, the boundaries between human intervention and machine-driven actions continue to blur. This presents both opportunities and challenges, raising the critical question of how we can uphold and enhance human agency amidst the growing tide of automation, he added. "In Pakistan, we recognize the

transformative power of education in preparing our youth to thrive in the evolving technological landscape. By fostering critical thinking, innovation, and ethical responsibility, we aim to equip our citizens with the tools not only to adapt to technological changes but to shape them in ways that uphold our values, protect our freedoms, and advance our society," the prime minister remarked. He highlighted that the government had taken significant steps to prepare the country's educational institutions to embrace technological advancements. These initiatives include the establishment of High-Impact IT Labs in ICT degree colleges, Digital Hubs in rural ICT schools, the Google Center of Excellence, SMART Classrooms, and the E-Taleem Portal for blended learning. Additionally, he said the government had also intro-

duced E-Rozgar Centers, Software Technology Parks, Robotics and Mind Games programs, and STEAM Labs to foster innovation. It is imperative that our schools are equipped with the latest technologies to equip our children with the requisite skills, he added. Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday calling for the responsible use of artificial intelligence to revolutionize the education system, said that in the AI world, human will, creativity, critical thinking and decision-making should be prioritized. The president, in his message on the International Day of Education being observed on the day, said that AI-based tools could help tailor the learning process to individual needs. Highlighting this year's theme, "AI and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation," he called for utilizing

education to achieve a prosperous, inclusive and progressive Pakistan.

The president said that AI-based tools could help bring data-driven reforms in the education system and called for prioritizing investment in educational infrastructure and addressing the persistent challenges in the education system. "Let's pledge to invest in our children and equip them with the necessary skills," the president said and urged educators, policymakers and parents to embrace AI and adopt innovative ways of teaching. He said that AI could help solve problems besides boosting creativity, basic skills of mathematics, science, language, history and critical thinking. It can also equip students with essential skills like communication, teamwork and digital literacy, he added.

Joint sitting
of Parliament
passes four
bills, defers
four

ISLAMABAD: The Joint Sitting of the Parliament here on Friday passed four bills including [The Trade Organizations (Amendment) Bill, 2021] with majority votes. The other bills included, the Bill further to amend the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950 [The Imports and Exports (Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2023], the Bill to provide for the establishment of the National Institute of Technology [The National Institute of Technology Bill, 2024] and the Bill to provide for the establishment of National Excellence Institute [The National Excellence Institute Bill, 2024]. The bills in the house were tabled by Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, MNA Zehra Wadood Fatmi and Senator Manzoor Ahmed. The Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that unfortunately no body opposed from the opposition of these bills.—APP

Fate of
USC to be
decided in
next meeting:
Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday said that the final decision regarding closure or restructuring of Utility Store Corporation (USC) will be taken in the next meeting. "Emphasized that all decisions regarding the corporation will be made transparently, prioritizing the public's interest," the minister said while chairing a high level meeting regarding USC, said a news release. Federal Minister for Information Technology, Ms. Shiza Fatima, also attended the meeting and presented significant recommendations. The meeting discussed the implementation of the Prime Minister's directives concerning Utility Stores and deliberated on the future course of action. Measures to expedite the closure process of Utility Stores were also reviewed. To enhance the productivity of USC employees and outlets, a special committee has been formed. It was highlighted during the meeting that several private companies have expressed interest in the restructuring of the USC.

Pakistan's economic
model is highly flawed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Friday said that Pakistan's economic model is highly flawed. He said our flawed economic model cannot achieve any goal except elitism and increasing poverty in the country. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that due to this economic model, the gap between the rich and the poor is continuously widening. Due to increasing poverty, it is becoming difficult for people to access health, education, and food, and social problems are growing. Sha-

hid Rashid Butt said that as long as the life of people with low incomes continues to be made complex, it is impossible to increase investment and productivity, and the economy will have to run on loans. He said that most of the country's policies in its history have been made for the benefit of the influential classes, which has tormented the people. These policies have hindered public development instead of helping people out of poverty. Pakistan has borrowed from the IMF twenty-four times, and many from other institutions, but the economy has deteriorated instead of improving. The social and economic deterioration shows that international institutions are

not interested in improving the Pakistani economy or implementing essential conditions. If the IMF and the World Bank wanted, Pakistan's economy would be in a much better condition at the moment, but he observed they aim to achieve political interests, for which Pakistan must be burdened with debt. The business leader noted that Pakistan's economy has faced persistent challenges, hindering its growth despite having significant potential. One of the primary reasons is political instability. Frequent changes in government and inconsistent policies disrupt long-term economic planning and discourage local and foreign investment.



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Briefs

UAE minister meets Syria's FM in Davos

DUBAI: The UAE's Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Gergawi had a meeting this week with Asaad Al-Shibani, Syria's foreign affairs minister in the transitional government, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, state news agency WAM reported on Friday. During the meeting, Al-Gergawi reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to supporting Syria's independence and sovereignty. He emphasized the UAE's support for all efforts to achieve peace, stability, and a dignified future for the nation's people.—APP

Rupee sheds 03 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday depreciated by 03 paisa against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs278.75 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.72. Pakistani cuisine recipesHowever, 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 Rs1.90 to close at Rs291.61 against the last day's closing of Rs289.71, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paisa and closed at Rs1.79, whereas an increase of Rs 2.52 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs345.29 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs342.77. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 75.89 and Rs74.31 respectively.—APP

Gold prices up by Rs 2,900 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 2,900 and was sold at Rs 289,600 on Friday against its sale at Rs 286,700 on a previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 2,486 to Rs 248,285 from Rs 247,799 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs 227,603 from Rs 225,323. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.31 to Rs.3,432 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.27 to Rs 2,942 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$29 to \$2,772 from \$2,743, the Association reported.—APP

Iraqi president calls for more global action on desertification

DAVOS: Iraq's President Abdul Latif Rashid has called for more action on desertification, amid global concerns of land degradation that has affected agricultural productivity, caused pollution in waterways and resulted in increased frequency of droughts. "We attend many conferences, joined many groups for solving desertification but unfortunately the actual achievement has been very little to show for. I appeal to you, once we make decisions for decreasing desertification, let us act on it," Rashid said on Friday. Speaking during a World Economic Forum panel "On Firmer Ground with Land Restoration," the Iraqi leader told participants that land restoration was not just an environmental imperative but also a moral duty. "In Iraq, we face the consequences of environmental challenges. Nearly 40 percent of our land is affected by desertification, and our water resources essential for agriculture and livelihood are under severe strain. These problems are made worse by climate change, rising temperatures, reduced river flows from our neighboring countries," the president, a British-educated engineer, said.—APP

Pak Pavilion celebrates Silk Road E-commerce Carnival

It features a variety of jewelry, handicrafts, and food items from Pakistan, highlighting the country's cultural heritage and resources for Chinese consumers

DNA

SHANGHAI: As the Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, approaches, the Pakistan National Pavilion at the Shanghai Waigaoqiao Free Trade Zone is hosting activities to mark the occasion and introduce Pakistani culture to a global audience. From January 22 to January 24, the Pavilion is participating in the Silk Road E-commerce Carnival for Spring Festival through platforms such as Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok) and others, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Fri-

day. The carnival integrates Chinese New Year celebrations with an exhibition of Pakistani culture and products. It features a variety of jewelry, handicrafts, and food items from Pakistan, highlighting the country's cultural heritage and resources for Chinese consumers.

The hybrid event, which includes both online and offline elements, provides insights into Pakistan's landscapes, traditions, and craftsmanship. To engage consumers, the carnival includes interactive features such as live-streaming sessions with Pakistani artisans and entrepreneurs, who share

their stories, demonstrate their skills, and present their products. Additionally, visual materials are screened, and attendees have the opportunity to sample Pakistani snacks, offering a multi-sensory experience. Promotions and discounts are also a key component of the event, aimed at increasing accessibility and affordability of Pakistani goods. Limited-time offers, flash sales, and special discounts on selected products are available during the carnival. Taking place during the peak shopping season for Chinese New Year, the event is part of a broader trend in global e-commerce.

More than 400 specialty products from over 90 brands across 17 Belt and Road Initiative countries have seen an increase in online sales. Participating countries include Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan, among others. Beyond commerce, the carnival serves as a platform for cultural exchange. By incorporating elements of Chinese New Year alongside Pakistani traditions, the event fosters mutual understanding. Traditional Chinese decorations are displayed, folk dances are performed, and stories and customs

associated with the Spring Festival are shared. On December 4, 2024, the Chinese Spring Festival was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This designation highlights the festival's cultural significance, as it embodies values such as peace, harmony, and goodwill. "We are delighted to be part of this event," said Aqeel Chaudhry, head of the Pakistan National Pavilion. "It is a valuable opportunity to introduce Pakistani crafts and products to a broader audience, especially during such an important festive period in China."

Musadik, Martin commit for continued engagement in projects



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Water Resources met on Friday with Martin Raiser, World Bank's Vice President for South Asia, to engage in comprehensive discussions aimed at deepening cooperation and advancing development ini-

tiatives. The meeting, held in Islamabad, underscored the mutual commitment to fostering strong economic relationships and addressing shared challenges such as energy security. Both leaders emphasized the significance of collaborative efforts in driving transformative projects. Dr. Malik expressed ap-

preciation for the World Bank's continued support in critical development projects in energy, infrastructure, social sectors, highlighting the importance of partnerships in achieving strategic economic and development goals. "A robust collaboration with international partners such as the

World Bank is pivotal in elevating our sustainable development ambitions, enhancing economic resilience, and uplifting communities," Minister Dr Musadik Malik noted. Martin Raiser reaffirmed the World Bank's dedication to supporting transformative initiatives in the region. Topics of discus-

sion included progress review of ongoing projects in water sector including Dasu Hydropower project, Tarbela extension project, strategies for improving infrastructure, enhancing energy efficiency, and facilitating technological innovation to bridge developmental gaps. Both parties acknowledged the critical role of tailored policy measures and investments in achieving a balanced and sustainable trajectory of projects. Dr Musadik remarked that a capital investment management framework may be utilized for improving efficiency together with discipline of planning. Mr Raiser opined that it could be an excellent initiative for mutual benefit. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continue dialogue and collaboration. Participants included Secretary Water Resources and officials of ministry. Kishan Abeygunawardana: Special Assistant to Vice President, Mohammad Anis: Senior Energy Specialist, Program Leader, Eva Liselotte Lescauwet: Senior Operations Officer.

Iranian vice president visits Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque

DUBAI: Iran's Vice President Shina Ansari, along with Reza Ameri, Iranian ambassador to the UAE, visited the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, state news agency WAM reported on Friday. Ansari was accompanied by Yousef Al-Obaidli, director-general of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center, during the tour. The delegation was introduced to the mosque's history, architecture, distinctive Islamic art, and collection of items representing Islamic civilization. They also learned about the significant role of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center in promoting Islamic culture, cross-cultural dialogue, and the values of coexistence and tolerance, inspired by the legacy of Sheikh Zayed. At the end of the visit, Ansari was presented with a piece of art featuring a verse from the Qur'an in Kufic script, one of the Islamic art styles used in decorating the mosque's domes, along with a copy of the book "Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque: Lights of Peace," the latest publication from the center.—APP

IPO-Pakistan, NCA collaborate for Intellectual Property Rights awareness

LAHORE: The Intellectual Property Organisation Pakistan (IPOP) and National College of Arts (NCA) will collaborate to promote Intellectual Property Rights awareness. Pakistani cuisine recipesIn this connection, IPO-Pakistan Chairperson Farukh Amil met NCA Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Murtaza Jafri and senior faculty to discuss strategies for enhancing understanding and implementation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) among students and faculty at NCA, a premier institution renowned for its contributions to art and design in Pakistan. The meeting highlighted the importance of IPRs in protecting the rights of artists, designers, and creators, enabling them to safeguard their innovative work and foster a culture of creativity. With the creative sector rapidly evolving, the need for robust knowledge of intellectual property has never been more critical. The Chairperson of IPO-Pakistan emphasized the importance of IPRs in promoting innovation, creativity, and economic growth, and the need for awareness and education among students and faculty. The VC Prof. Dr. Murtaza Jafri expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, noting that educating students about IPRs is essential for the advancement of Pakistan's cultural and creative industries. The VC invited the Chairperson of IPO-Pakistan to hold interactive sessions with the students to promote IPR awareness, and discussed the possibility of collaboration between the two institutions to enable Pakistan to secure its rightful claim in mapping a culture of creative art community. The Chairperson observed the relevance of the World IPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge and NCA's Triennale 2025.—DNA

'Nerve-racking' Inside the aerial battle to tame Los Angeles fires

CAMARILLO, UNITED STATES: Helicopter pilot Tim Thomas has fought dozens of wildfires all over the world, but nothing prepared him for the scale and the challenge of the devastating blazes that ripped through Los Angeles. "I've never seen anything the scale that we saw the first night," he told AFP. Fires erupted almost simultaneously in two separate neighborhoods during a furious windstorm on January 7. Whole streets were engulfed as hurricane-force gusts flung fireballs from house to house. Forecasters had been warning of extreme fire risk for days because of punishing dryness and winds up to 100 miles (160 kilometers) an hour, saying any small fire would quickly spread. Extra resources were positioned all over the at-risk region, which extended for miles around the sprawling metropolis. But the fires, when they came, were overwhelming, defeating the hundreds of firefighters on the ground. Only an air assault would stop them. A terrifying 24 hours after the first smoke blackened the air, winds dropped just enough for helicopters to take to the skies. "It was some of the most turbulent wind I've seen," said helicopter coordinator John Williamson. Under the careful eye of experienced operators like Williamson, each pilot took turns in an elaborate airborne ballet. The life-saving airshow they put on for nearly two weeks became a defining feature of the fires, watched with awe and gratitude by a terrified region. Television viewers were transfixed by the incredible skills of helicopter pilots loading up hundreds of gallons (liters) of water into the bellies of their aircraft while hovering over a reservoir, then dumping it with pinpoint accuracy on a wall of flames. The sight of huge jet planes swooping over a fire line and unleashing a trail of bright red retardant thrilled and relieved those whose homes were threatened. But while they might have made it look easy, the pilots say the reality was far from it, with strong winds and unfamiliar terrain a constant challenge. "There were definitely some uneasy moments going over the mountains where the crew was looking for me to see if I'm comfortable," said Thomas. "There's definitely some times where the aircraft's 23,000 pound (11.5 tons), and you're getting rocked around, thrown around in the air." Paul Karpus, who has overseen operations at an airbase in Camarillo, 45 miles (70 kilometers) west of Los Angeles, said the opening days of the firefight were like nothing he has experienced in 23 years. "Every season, you say, I've seen it all... And then you're surprised," he told AFP. "Seeing the amount of devastation for the first time, when the sun was coming up, and the amount of structures lost, it takes your breath away." Aerial teams operated 24 hours, pulling long shifts that left them exhausted and fraught. "On a scale of one to 10, this one was a 10, stress-wise," said Karpus.—APP

Pakistan navy ships visit Oman during overseas deployment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ships TABUK and RAH NAWARD visited Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, Oman. Upon arrival at the port, Pakistan Navy ships were warmly received by Omani authorities. During the visit, Mission Commander, along with the Commanding Officers, held meetings with naval leadership of Oman. He called on Director General Ops and Plans Royal Navy of Oman, Commander Maritime Security Centre and Commandant Said Bin Sultan Naval Base. During these interactions, matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed. Ambassadors, diplomats and Military

Attaches of various countries also visited the ships. Pakistan Navy Ships were opened for visitors, where in large number of Pakistani community including students from Pakistan School, Muscat visited on-board PN ships. Following the port call, PNS TABUK conducted a Passage Exercise with a Royal Oman Navy ship AL SHAMIKH. The exercise at sea aimed to enhance interoperability between the two navies and promote shared learning through coordinated activities. Pakistan and Oman are maritime neighbours and frequent visits of dignitaries, port calls by ships, joint exercises and coordinated patrols are regular feature. The visit of PNS TABUK and RAH NAWARD will further strengthen bilateral relations between the two navies.



US arrests, deports hundreds of 'illegal immigrants'

WASHINGTON: US authorities arrested 538 illegal migrants and deported hundreds in a mass operation just days into President Donald Trump's second administration, his press secretary said late Thursday. "The Trump Administration arrested 538 illegal immigrant criminals," Karoline Leavitt said in a post on social platform X, adding "hundreds" were deported by military aircraft. "The largest massive deportation operation in history is well underway. Promises made. Promises kept," she said. Trump promised a crackdown on illegal immigration during the election campaign and began his second term with a flurry of executive actions aimed at overhauling entry to the United States. He has signed orders declaring a "national emergency" at the southern border and announced the deployment of more troops to the area while vowing to deport "criminal aliens." Early on Thursday, Newark city mayor Ras J. Baraka said in a statement that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents "raided a local establishment... detaining undocumented residents as well as citizens, without producing a warrant". Earlier in the week the Republican-led US Congress green-lit a bill to expand pretrial incarceration for foreign criminal suspects.—APP

242m children's schooling disrupted by climate shocks in 2024

UNITED NATIONS, United States: Extreme weather disrupted the schooling of about 242 million children in 85 countries last year – roughly one in seven students, the UN children's agency reported Thursday, deploring what it said was an "overlooked" aspect of the climate crisis. Heat waves had the biggest impact, the report showed, as UNICEF's executive director Catherine Russell warned children are "more vulnerable" to extreme weather. "They heat up faster, they sweat less efficiently, and cool down more slowly than adults," she said in a statement. "Children cannot concentrate in classrooms that offer no respite from sweltering heat, and they cannot get to school if the path is flooded, or if schools are washed away." Human activity, including the unrestricted burning of fossil fuels over decades, has warmed the planet and changed weather patterns. Global average temperatures hit record highs in 2024, and over the past few years they temporarily surpassed a critical 1.5 degrees Celsius warming threshold for the first time. That has left the wet periods wetter and the dry periods drier, intensifying heat and storms and making populations more vulnerable to disasters.—APP

Weekly inflation goes down by 0.77pc, decelerates to 0.52pc on YoY basis

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.77 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 16 and decelerated to 0.52 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 320.21 points as compared to 322.71 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 0.52 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 1.04 per cent and went down to 311.47 points from last week's 314.75 points.—APP

Briefs

Biden turned down Aafia's plea, IHC told

US refusal to release Dr Aafia exposes Pakistan's standing; IHC

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) was informed on Friday that former US President Joe Biden had rejected Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's mercy petition. IHC bench, headed by Justice SardarEjazIshaq Khan, heard the petition regarding Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's release and return to Pakistan. During the proceedings, the petitioner's lawyer, Imran Shafiq, revealed that the United States had also turned down a proposed prisoner swap arrangement with Pakistan. The court was further informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had submitted a report responding to the court's queries, including information about the foreign visits of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

It was noted, however, that the Pakistani ambassador in the US had not attended meetings regarding Dr. Aafia's case. Expressing concern over the lack of progress, Justice SardarEjaz remarked, "The US is showing us our worth." The judge also criticized the US administration, drawing a comparison between Biden's pardoning of his son's sentence and the denial of clemency for Dr. Aafia, a Pakistani citizen. The IHC adjourned the hearing for two weeks, with further deliberations expected.

Addl registrar challenges contempt notice

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Additional Registrar (Judicial) of Supreme Court Nazir Abbas has challenged the contempt of court notice issued to him following the controversy regarding fixing the case. The apex court has formed a six-member bench, headed by Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail. The members of the bench include Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Athar Minalah, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed and Justice Musarrat Hilali.

The bench will take up the plea of additional registrar, who was removed from the post following the controversy, on Jan 27 (Monday). Earlier, the top court following the controversy regarding fixing the case removed Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazir Abbas from his post. A notification issued by Additional Registrar (Administration) stated that Nazir Abbas had been made an officer on special duty (OSD). According to the statement, Abbas was found guilty of a blunder by scheduling a constitutional bench case for hearing before a regular bench. The notification further stated that the additional registrar's action wasted court's and litigants' time and resources.

Urdu translation of Portuguese novel 'Blank Gaze' launched

This translation is adding to other literary works translated from Portuguese into Urdu, including literary masterpieces by Portuguese authors such as José Saramago and Fernando Pessoa



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Academy of Letters hosted the launch of the Urdu translation of Portuguese author José Luís Peixoto's novel *Nenhum Olhar* (*Blank Gaze*), with the participation of Ambassador of Portugal Frederico Silva. The acclaimed novel, now beautifully rendered in Urdu as

Viran Nazar by the renowned Pakistani author Muhammad Atif Alam, is a testament to the power of literature to bridge cultures and foster mutual understanding between nations, bringing the literary treasures of Portugal closer to Urdu-speaking readers. The translation has been done by the initiative of Pakistan Academy of Letters through their distinguished Chairperson, Ms. NajebaArif and the Director General,

Mr. Sultan Nasir. It is a follow up of the 2024 interaction sessions held between the Embassy of Portugal, the author José Luís Peixoto and the Pakistan Academy of Letters in Islamabad. This translation is adding to other literary works translated from Portuguese into Urdu, including literary masterpieces by Portuguese authors such as José Saramago and Fernando Pessoa. José Luís Peixoto is one of Portugal's most

prominent contemporary writers, known for his evocative literary work and profound exploration of human emotions and relationships through novels, poetry, musical lyrics, and short stories. His debut novel, *Nenhum Olhar* (*Blank Gaze*), won the prestigious José Saramago Literary Prize in 2001, earning international acclaim. His works have been translated into more than 30 languages, captivating readers worldwide.

Afghan Taliban reject ICC arrest warrant

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban government said on Friday an arrest warrant sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for its leaders was "politically motivated". It comes a day after the ICC chief prosecutor said he was seeking warrants against senior Taliban leaders in Afghanistan over the persecution of women – a crime against humanity. "Like many other decisions of the (ICC), it is devoid of a fair legal basis, is a matter of double standards and is politically motivated," said a statement from the Afghan Foreign Ministry posted on social media platform X. "It is regrettable that this institution has turned a blind eye to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by foreign forces and their domestic allies during the twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan." It said the court should "not attempt to impose a particular interpretation of human rights on the entire world and ignore the religious and national values of people of the rest of the world". The Taliban swept back to power in 2021 after ousting the American-backed government in a rapid but largely bloodless military takeover, imposing a severe interpretation of Islamic law on the population and heavily restricting all aspects of women's lives. Afghanistan's deputy interior minister Mohammad Nabi Omari, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee, said the ICC "can't scare us". "If these were fair and true courts, they should have brought America to the court, because it is America that has caused wars, the issues of the world are caused by America," he said at an event in eastern Khost city attended by an AFP journalist. – Agencies

Rightsizing efforts aim to improve govt efficiency

Cabinet Committee on rightsizing holds meeting on key presentations

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Rightsizing of the Federal Government was held today, chaired virtually by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, from Davos, Switzerland. The meeting featured detailed presentations from both the Revenue Division and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety regarding their mandates, organizational structures, budget allocations, expenditures, and the impact of their work on public services. The presentation by the Revenue Division highlighted key aspects of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) transformation plan, focusing on initiatives designed to modernize the Customs Department. The transformation plan, approved by the Prime Minister on September 19, 2024, aims to improve operations, including automation and technology integration, such as the Faceless Customs Assessment and Examination. The Rightsizing Committee was briefed on steps taken by the Revenue Division to streamline operations, including the abolition of 158 posts (BS-18 and below) and the designation of 27 posts (BS-16 to 20) as "dying posts" as part of the Cabinet decision on August 27,

2024. In response to challenges faced by the FBR, the Revenue Division proposed a one-time dispensation from the requirement to abolish 60% of vacant posts within its field formations. Senator Aurangzeb acknowledged the challenges the FBR had faced due to under-investment over the years and reiterated the importance of embracing technological advancements, such as the implementation of automation systems, to improve efficiency and service delivery. The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety also presented its work, which spans across multiple departments with overlapping functions. The Minister remarked that while much progress had been made, the fragmented approach to various departmental verticals had hindered scaling up the impact on public policy outcomes and public service delivery. The Chair commended the presentation and emphasized the need for a more integrated approach. The Minister tasked the sub-committee of the Rightsizing Committee with conducting a thorough review of both the Revenue Division and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety to better assess the structure, functions, and efficiencies of these federal government organs. The sub-committee will engage with both entities to identify opportunities for improved public service outcomes in line with the committee's mandate.

Aurangzeb assures 'transparency' in FBR vehicle procurement

"FBR officials cannot just sit in offices and continue their work," says finance minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has assured that "transparency" would be ensured in the procurement of 1,010 vehicles for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) after the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue urged to call off the acquisition. "Procuring vehicles for the FBR officials is an important requirement... They cannot just sit in offices and continue their work," the minister said in response to a letter by Senate Standing Committee Chairman Senator Saleem Mandviwalla. In a letter dated January 22, Senator Mandviwalla highlighted apprehensions regarding the procurement process, emphasising that the timing and scale of

such an acquisition raised "considerable doubts about the transparency and integrity of the process" which needed further review. The tax authority issued a letter of intent on January 13 for the Rs6 billion procurement. The first phase will see 500 vehicles delivered, with an advance payment of Rs3 billion already made. The delivery schedule for the vehicles is planned in phases, beginning with 75 units in January, followed by 200 in February, and 225 in March. The second phase will include 250 vehicles in April and the final 260 in May. Mandviwalla stated in the letter that committee members, during a recent meeting, pointed to the deliberate exclusion of competitors in the bidding process, raising suspicions of mismanagement and mala fide intent. The procurement, estimated to be significant in scope and expense, has been criticised for compromising the principles of transparency and fairness – fundamental tenets of government procurement policies. The letter requested that the purchase order issued to the Accountant General Pakistan Revenues (AGPR) should be cancelled and the payment should be halted

4th aid convoy reaches Kurram

SHAMIM SHAHID

PARACHINAR: A fourth convoy carrying relief goods reached violence-marred Kurram, the district administration confirmed on Friday. The vehicles included in the convoy are laden with medicines, food items, and other daily essentials aimed at addressing acute shortages in the crisis-hit area. The 70-vehicle convoy was also carrying flour, sugar, fruits, vegetables and medicines. The convoy's security, added the sources, was provided by the police and district administration along with the availability of security forces as well. They also said that the distribution of compensation among Kurram victims will also commence today. The development comes as over 100 villages in Upper and Lower Kurram remain under siege for over three and a half months. The region has been facing severe tension, particularly after an attack on a convoy travelling from Peshawar to Parachinar on November 21, 2024, which resulted in the deaths of 50 people, including women and children.

German Chancellor Scholz slams Musk

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sharply criticized businessman Elon Musk, accusing the tech billionaire of using his social media power to interfere in global affairs and support far-right movements. In a wide-ranging interview with Anadolu ahead of Germany's Feb. 23 early elections, Scholz voiced particular concern about Musk's influence on democratic processes in Europe. "I met with Mr. Musk a long time ago. When he inaugurated his factory in Brandenburg, we had a conversation. Later we had another phone conversation, which was also about his business interests," Scholz said. "However he has recently started using his newly acquired media power to interfere all over the world," he lamented, referring to Musk's high-profile political advocacy in the US, Britain, and Germany, among others. The German chancellor, who is running as the Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate for a second term, drew from historical perspectives in addressing Musk's influence. "I'm familiar with interventions from powerful media entrepreneurs – they often don't do it on the side of my party, the Social Democrats. This is something we've been witnessing since the 19th century," Scholz said. – Agencies

Only arms embargo will stop Israel

WASHINGTON: US lawmaker Rashida Tlaib reiterated her call for a full arms embargo on Israel in its ongoing war in the Gaza Strip. "The Israeli apartheid regime is continuing to kill Palestinian children in Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinians have been so dehumanized that it hasn't even made headlines. The ethnic cleansing has not ended. They will never stop until there's an arms embargo," Tlaib said on X. Her remarks came after an Israeli sniper shot and killed a Palestinian child Monday and injured another in central Rafah in southern Gaza despite a ceasefire and prisoner swap deal between Israel and Hamas. The child, Zakaria Hamid Yahya Barbakh, was killed near Al-Awda Square in central Rafah when Israeli forces opened fire. Another child was injured while attempting to retrieve Zakaria's body. The killing marked a significant violation of the truce. No comments have been issued from Gaza authorities, ceasefire mediators in Egypt, Qatar, and the US, or Israeli officials. The ceasefire agreement took effect Sunday, with the first phase set to last 42 days, during which negotiations are to take place on the second and third phases, mediated by Egypt, Qatar, and the US. Under the agreement, Hamas released three Israeli women in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners, most of whom were women and children. – Agencies

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree to advance trade relations

"We have taken a common understanding that if the two countries work together with their population and production potential, we can achieve better mutual results," he remarked



FOREIGN DESK

ADDIS ABABA: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have agreed to work cooperatively for further strengthening the trade and commerce relations between the two countries. A bilateral meeting to this end was held today in Addis Ababa at the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration

of the FDR Ethiopia. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, who is currently in Addis Ababa on a working visit, led the Pakistan side while the Ethiopian side was led by Minister of Trade and Regional Integration, H.E. Kassahun Gofe. Both sides discussed bilateral trade relations between the two countries during the meeting and explored new avenues to forge strong cooperation for enhancing the bilateral trade. On the occasion, the Trade Minister noted the longstanding diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries. "We have taken a common understanding that if the two countries work together with their population and production potential, we can achieve better mutual results," he remarked. The Minister assured the Pakistani side of full cooperation for holding the Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa in May, 2025. On the other hand, H.E. Ambassador Hamid congratulated Ethiopia for the outstanding performance in export trade and agreed to work closely for enhancing the trade relations between the two countries. A day earlier, the two sides also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Addis Ababa for bilateral political consultation.

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165