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Pakistan and China vow to enhance strategic partnership

Detailed News On Page-08

Afghan Taliban leader dismisses foreign 'threats'

Detailed News On Page-08



Santos set to sign Neymar after Al-Hilal

Detailed News On Page-06



Under Army Act

SC: No trial of civilians before framing of charges

Defence lawyer Khawaja Haris explains procedure related to Army Act regarding how police and FIA frame charges

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has said that a person could not be tried under the Army Act until the charges against them have been framed. The remarks came during a hearing on intra-court appeals against the trial of civilians in military courts, by an apex court constitutional bench on Tuesday. The seven-member bench was headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan and comprised Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarrat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal. Defence lawyer Khawaja Haris presented his arguments, explaining the process related to the Army Act and how charges are framed by the police and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Haris explained that the commanding officer conducts the inquiry after the charge is framed while responding to Justice Rizvi's query. At this, Justice Hilali asked about the procedure of inquiry and registration of the first information report (FIR) after the framing of charges. To this, Haris said that the word "charge" represents the allegations against any suspect, and these allegations are the basis of the investigation. At this, Justice Mandokhail remarked that a suspect cannot be tried under the Army Act until the charge is framed. "The framing of charges is necessary," he added. Justice Hilali then asked if the charges could be framed during the trial. To this, Haris replied that charges as in allegations against the suspect are another thing, while framing of charges or chargesheet during trial is another. The discussion then shifted to military court judges, with the judge asking if military court jurists wore uniforms.

Continued on Page 06

Govt to challenge Justice Shah's order forming full bench

Constitutional bench orders linking record of Additional Registrar Nazir Abbas contempt case with regulatory duty case

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to challenge the Supreme Court's order for forming a full-court bench to deliberate on the powers of committees assigning cases to benches, the Attorney General (AG) Usman Awan informed the apex court's constitutional bench on Tuesday. The AG argued that Justice Mansoor Ali Shah exceeded his authority by taking suo motu notice, stating that he was not authorised to do so. "The federal government will challenge yesterday's unconstitutional order," the AG informed the Supreme Court's constitutional bench during the hearing of a case concerning Customs regulatory duty. A two-member bench, comprising Justice Shah and Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, withdrew the contempt notice against Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazir Abbas and forwarded the file to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi for the constitution of a full court. During today's hearing by a five-member bench - Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presents climate champions awards to youth who have positively contributed towards the preservation of climate, at the CAYA conference. - DNA

Prime Minister calls for youth empowerment

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlighted that over 60% of the Commonwealth population comprises young people

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to empowering its youth through transformative initiatives, emphasising their role as the nation's future. Addressing the inaugural session of the Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance (CAYA) Summit in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said, "The government is fully committed to empowering youth through initiatives like our flagship 'Youth Programme,' which has benefited millions across Pakistan." The PM highlighted that over 60% of the Commonwealth population comprises young people.

Continued on Page 06

No dialogue without commissions

Gohar rules out talks with any other 'quarter'

"It's unfortunate that talks could not proceed further," says PTI chairman

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Regretting the government's failure to constitute judicial commissions within the seven-day deadline, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Gohar Ali Khan clarified on Tuesday that his party was not holding dialogue with any other quarter. "It's unfortunate that talks could not proceed further. We sat with the government with an open heart. Our demand was that the judicial commission should be announced within seven days," Gohar said talking to media outside the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi. He said the negotiations would have moved forward, had judicial commissions been formed. The PTI and the ruling coalition have been engaged in talks aimed at defusing political tensions in the country for nearly a month. Both sides have held three rounds of talks so far. However, the dialogue process hit a snag as

Continued on Page 06

Govt still hopes for resumption of talks: Speaker

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq says govt's negotiation team will remain intact and not be dissolved

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government and National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Monday expressed hope that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) would return to talks after the fourth round of negotiations ended without any progress due to the latter's decision not to attend." Speaking to the media after an

Continued on Page 06

2 soldiers martyred, 5 terrorists killed

Terrorists attempted to breach the perimeter using an explosive-laden vehicle after their initial assault was repelled

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Two soldiers were martyred and five terrorists were killed in a foiled attack on a security checkpoint in Balochistan's Qila Abdullah district, the military's media affairs wing said on Tuesday. A statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said terrorists attempted to attack a checkpoint of the security forces in the district's general area of Gulistan on

Continued on Page 06

Ambassador Khorev says Russia keen to boost defence ties with Pak

Says leading Russian companies are ready to offer modern models of agricultural machinery to their Pakistani partners

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Russian Federation Albert P. Khorev has said relations between Russia and Pakistan are based on long-standing friendship and trust. He further said, "our ties were further strengthened by a series of visits of senior Russian officials to Islamabad, including Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk and Chairperson of the Federation Council (Senate) Valentina Matvienko. At the same time, Speaker of the National Assembly Sar-

dar Ayaz Sadiq, Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister of Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik and Minister of Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari visited Moscow last year". The Russian ambassador expressed these views in an article written recently. The ambassador further said, economic relations between Russia and Pakistan have

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

After NA, Peca tweaks sail through Senate

ANP's Aimal Wali walks out in protest, saying Peca bill is draconian law as it imposes restrictions on freedom of speech

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Tuesday approved the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) (Amendment) Bill 2025 and the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill 2024, aimed at creating a digital society, economy and governance, amid commotion by the opposition benches. The Peca bill was floated by Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain in the Upper House of Parliament. Hussain said the Peca bill was aimed at dealing with the issues on social media. He assured it was not directed against the journalists of television and newspapers. The minister said the opposition was also engaged on the bill through the platforms of standing committees of both the National Assembly and the Senate.

Bilawal tells traders 'Approach me, don't complain elsewhere'

Bilawal asks traders to "own PPP" and show same affection as they did to PTI, MQM

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In an apparent expression of displeasure over remarks suggesting a swap between Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah with his Punjab counterpart Maryam Nawaz, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari asked the business community to approach him directly for addressal of their grievances rather than "complaining elsewhere".

Bad news for economy United States halts aid to Pakistan for 90 days

Earlier, the US, the world's biggest donor, froze virtually all foreign aid, making exceptions only for emergency food, and military funding for Israel and Egypt

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States has confirmed halting aid to Pakistan, leaving several projects related to development, health and others in limbo. A US official said the aid will remain suspended for Pakistan until a review is conducted. The move has caused suspension of work on five projects related to energy sector. It has also affected four economic development programmes and five agriculture-re-

lated projects besides suspending aid for human rights and governance temporarily. The foreign aid has initially been suspended for 90 days and it would be resumed after a review by the US authorities. Earlier, the US, the world's biggest donor, froze virtually all foreign aid, making exceptions only for emergency food, and military funding for Israel and Egypt. Secretary of State Marco Rubio sent an internal memo days after President Donald Trump took office vowing an "America First" policy of tightly restricting assistance overseas.

Taliban dismiss academicians on religious, ethnic grounds

In a recent development, at least 30 senior, highly qualified academicians have been dismissed from two prominent universities in Afghanistan. These include 16 professors from Syed Jamal Ud Din Afghani University in Asadabad, Kunar Province, and 14 from Sheikh Zahid University in Khost Province. Notably, both Kunar and Khost border Pakistan

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Taliban, currently governing Afghanistan in their second term, have initiated the removal of university academicians based on religious affiliations, replacing them with less qualified individuals across the country. In a recent development, at least 30 senior, highly qualified academicians have been dismissed from two prominent universities in Afghanistan. These include 16 professors from Syed Jamal Ud Din Afghani University in Asadabad, Kunar Province, and 14 from Sheikh Zahid University in Khost Province. Notably, both Kunar and Khost border Pakistan. Since assuming control of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, the Taliban have systematically targeted various sectors of government for political victimization. In addition to security personnel, police, and intelligence officers, academicians have become a primary target. While some academicians managed to flee the country before

the Taliban solidified their power, many were not as fortunate. Numerous professors, including women, were detained, faced forced disappearances, or became victims of targeted killings. Consequently, the majority of academicians abandoned their posts, paving the way for the Taliban to appoint their own affiliates. Sources inside Afghanistan revealed that a religious group played a significant role in supporting the Taliban's takeover of Kabul. In return, individuals from the that school of thought were initially rewarded with key positions in government institutions, including universities. However, over time, the Taliban have begun removing these individuals as well, citing various reasons. The sources further highlighted that the vacancies left by the dismissal of highly educated academicians are being filled by individuals loyal to the Taliban, many of whom lack proper qualifications. The Taliban justify these actions as being in accordance with Islamic Sharia, a claim they frequently use to defend their policies.

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Court sentences accused for illegal deforestation

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Afforestation Division Sukkur has welcomed the swift judicial verdict issued by the Civil Court/Judicial Magistrate-II, Rohri, in Criminal Case No. 21/2025 against Ghulam Rasool Khorkhani. The case highlights the Forest Department's relentless efforts to combat illegal deforestation and safeguard government-owned forest resources. The accused was apprehended for illegally transporting wood cut from government land, violating the Forest Act and the Pakistan Penal Code. After comprehensive legal proceedings, the court sentenced the

offender to one year of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs. 1,000 under Section 243 of the Cr.P.C. Taking into account the accused's first-time offense, financial constraints, and willingness to make amends, the court granted probation for one year under the supervision of a Probation Officer. Hosh Muhammad Shar, the Divisional Forest Officer, reaffirmed the department's zero-tolerance policy toward environmental violations. He emphasized that such activities not only harm ecosystems but also contribute to climate change and undermine sustainable development. This verdict underscores the Forest Department's commitment to preserving forest ecosystems and enforcing environmental laws against

offenders. The department appreciates the cooperation of law enforcement and judicial authorities in addressing environmental crimes. The judgment has been widely lauded by public and social circles as a strong message against illegal deforestation. The DFO reiterated that protecting natural resources is essential for the well-being of current and future generations. He assured that the Forest Department remains vigilant in its mission to conserve forests and combat activities that threaten the environment. This decision serves as a testament to the rule of law and reflects the Forest Department's unwavering dedication to safeguarding Pakistan's natural heritage.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving Ambassador of Japan Mr. Akamatsu Suichi at Parliament House.

RCCI delegation meets Chief Commissioner RTO

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) delegation, led by President Usman Shaikat and Group Leader Sohail Altaf, had a meeting with Chief Commissioner (RTO) Tehmina Aamer at the RTO Office Rawalpindi. The delegation included SVP Khalid Farooq Qazi and VP Fahad Barlas. Prominent officials present were Wilayat Khan (Commissioner City Zone), Haroon Masood (Commissioner Cantt Zone), and Mr. Riaz Khan (Additional Commissioner Headquarters). The delegation appreciated the RTO office for adding 500,000 new taxpayers through extensive awareness drives in collaboration with RCCI. Suggestions were made to simplify the sales tax registration form, ease taxation policies, and broaden the tax net. RCCI also offered its support in widening the tax base. Chief Commissioner Tehmina Aamer assured full cooperation in creating a business-friendly environment. She welcomed RCCI's suggestions for broadening the tax net and requested a sample income tax form for incorporating proposed changes into policy reforms.

CM announces Rs 2m assistance for blast victims

MULTAN: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced Rs 2 million financial assistance for legal heirs of each of the victims who died in gas tanker blast last Monday and Rs 500,000 for each of the injured person, Punjab health minister Khawaja Salman Rafiq said on Tuesday. Talking to newsmen during visit to Pak-Italian Burn Center accompanying provincial health secretary Azmat Mahmood, the minister said, he was visiting Multan on the orders of the Chief Minister to meet with the families of those who lost their loved ones in the blast and to inquire about the status of recovery of those under treatment

after having been injured in the mishap. The minister said CM Maryam Nawaz was deeply saddened by the loss of lives in the tragic incident. The minister also met with the relatives of the injured at the burn center and consoled them. He embraced the grief-stricken relatives and conveyed to them the message from the Chief Minister that the Punjab government was standing by them in this hour of grief and would do whatever required for their rehabilitation and lessen their grief. Khawaja Salman Rafiq acknowledged that no monetary value can compensate for the loss of life but underscored that the assistance was a small yet

meaningful effort toward the victims' recovery. He said, the Chief Minister expressed deep sorrows over the incident and reaffirmed Punjab government's solidarity with the affected. An official inquiry into the explosion has been launched under CM Punjab's orders, with a firm commitment to holding those involved in illegal LPG refilling accountable. The tragic incident resulted in six fatalities and injuries to over 30 individuals. Khawaja Salman Rafique assured that exemplary medical care is being provided to patients under treatment at the Burn Unit. Immediate rehabilitation measures for the victims have been ordered.—APP

Photojournalists vanguard of journalist community: Tanveer

RAWALPINDI: Former Senator and PMLN central leader Chaudhry Tanveer Khan said that photojournalists are the vanguard of the journalist community who highlight the problems of the society by performing their duties day and night. He expressed these views while addressing a dinner hosted by PFUJ Dastur President Haji Nawaz Raza and PMLN leader Malik Irfan Afsar at Rawalpindi Press Club in honor of the newly elected office bearers of Rawalpindi Islamabad photojournalist Association. He announced a grant of Rs. 500,000 on his behalf and said that he will raise the voice of photojournalists at the government level and get their long-standing problems resolved. President Ripja Sajjad Haider said in his welcome address that the photojournalists of the twin cities have elected him for the twentieth time. He will never disappoint them and will take all actions along with him. "As always, this year too, he will organize a photo exhibition, sports festival, training workshop" He added On this occasion, Pmln leader Sajjad Khan Shoaib Butt, Pir Mujtaba Farooq Badshah, DSP Azhar Shah, NPC Finance Secretary Waqar Abbasi, RIUJ President Rana Kausar, Secretary Raheel Swati, Photo Journalists Association Secretary General Sohail Shahzad, Senior Vice President Jahangir Chaudhry, Finance Secretary Muhammad Asim, Vice President Mudassar Raja, Joint Secretary Faisal Khan, Information Secretary Syed Mehdi, members of the governing body Rizwan Khan, Raja Zafar, Hanif Khattak, Abid Zia, Tahir Kazmi, Senior Photojournalist Agha Mehroz & Zulfiqar Khan, Opposition Leader Faheem Malik and others were present. —DNA

PNS Yamama visits Jeddah, participates in bilateral exercise

ISLAMABAD: The newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship YAMAMA visited Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, during its maiden voyage from Romania to Pakistan and participated in a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF). Upon arrival at Jeddah port, the ship was warmly welcomed by senior officials of RSNF and representatives from Pakistan Embassy. During its stay, the ship's crew engaged in professional activities, including cross-ship visits, table-top discussions on maritime issues, and meetings with the RSNF leadership. Following the port visit, PNS YAMAMA conducted a PASSEX with HMS Makkah. The exercise was designed to strengthen naval cooperation and enhance interoperability between the two navies. Both forces reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring maritime security and promoting regional stability. The visit of PNS YAMAMA to Saudi Arabia and its participation in the bilateral exercise further reinforced the strong brotherly relations and defence collaboration between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. PNS YAMAMA is the fourth Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) built for Pakistan Navy by DAMEN Shipyards, Galati, Romania. These versatile and state-of-the-art platforms are equipped with advanced technologies and designed to operate in contested maritime environments. They aim to maintain peace in the prevailing challenging times and project deterrence across all domains of warfare.—APP

PTI leaders join Alikozai family in demanding release of 4 brothers

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Peshawar, Ms. Shandana Gulzar, has urged the government to release four brothers from the prominent Alikozai family who have been in the custody of law enforcement agencies since February 2024. Addressing a press conference alongside PTI Lawyers' Wing representative Muzam Butt, Ms. Shandana revealed that the four brothers—Muhammad Nasar, Usman Khan, Abdul Waris, and Muhammad Zahir—were taken from their home in Hayatabad, Peshawar, on February 28, 2024. Despite the presence of the Station House Officer (SHO) of Ta-

tara Police Station during the incident, no First Information Report (FIR) was registered when approached by the family, including the wives of the detained men. A significant number of young professionals associated with the Alikozai family's various businesses attended the press conference. They held posters and banners pleading for the brothers' immediate release. Muzam Butt highlighted that after failing to get assistance from the police, the family filed a writ petition in the Peshawar High Court. While law enforcement agencies assured the court in July 2024 that the brothers would be released, no action has been taken to date. "The affected family has been knocking on every door for justice," Butt stated. He further noted that the Alikozai family, originally

from Afghanistan, is under immense pressure due to their significant investments of over two billion rupees in Pakistan. Despite security threats, the family continues to operate several businesses, contributing to the local economy. Ms. Shandana Gulzar warned that the arbitrary detention of the four brothers could discourage both local and foreign investors, adding, "Such actions intimidate those who wish to invest and contribute to Pakistan's prosperity." So far, there has been no official response from authorities regarding the demands made by Ms. Shandana or the PTI leaders supporting the Alikozai family. The plight of the Alikozai family echoes similar grievances expressed by Afghan traders and businessmen residing in Peshawar.

Religious tourism vital revenue stream for Pak's economy

PESHAWAR: Being a home to some of the world's most ancient and significant civilizations, Pakistan is increasingly being recognized for its wealth of religious, archeological and historical sites that draw millions of tourists and pilgrims every year. From the Indus Valley Civilization to the Gandhara Buddhist heritage, the country offers a rich tapestry of religio-cultural landmarks, mosques, forts, and sacred sites that continue to captivate visitors from around the globe. As a cradle of ancient civilizations like Mohenjo Daro (circa 2500 BC) of the Indus Valley and the Buddhist ruins of Takht Bhai (1st century CE), Pakistan is a unique blend of archaean-religious heritage that plays an important role in global religious tourism. Historical sites such as mosques, mausoleums, forts, and religious sanctuaries for Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists attract millions of international and domestic tourists every year. Bakhtzada Khan, Assistant Director, Museums and Archeology said that Pakistan is home to six UNESCO World Heritage sites, including Mohenjo Daro in Sindh, Takht Bhai in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Taxila in Punjab. These sites, steeped in history, continue to draw large numbers of historians, archaeologists, pilgrims, and tourists from countries like Sri Lanka, Malaysia, China, Thailand, and Japan, who come for both spiritual fulfillment and academic interest. Khan said the inclusion of these sites on the UNESCO list ensured that they continue to receive global recognition, further boosting tourism and heritage preservation efforts. He said among Pakistan's most treasured historical sites is the ancient region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which boasts approximately 2,000 religious heritage sites and 30,000 relics from the Gandhara Civilisation. The UNESCO World Heritage site of Takht Bhai in Mardan stands out, attracting scholars and pilgrims alike. The monastic complexes of Takht Bhai, perched atop hilltops, offer a fascinating glimpse into the Buddhist era. These structures, built using local materials in the distinct Gandhara style, served as places of worship and learning until the 7th century CE. Not far from Takht Bhai is Sahr-i-Bahlol, an ancient fortified town dating back to the Kushan period. Its defensive walls and well-preserved structures make it a valuable site for archaeologists and history enthusiasts. He said both Takht Bhai and Sahr-i-Bahlol in Mardan district are protected under Pakistan's Antiquity Act (1975) and are part of the larger effort to preserve the region's cultural legacy. The provincial government has taken steps to safeguard these sites by declaring the surrounding areas as Archaeological Reserves, ensuring that urban development does not encroach on these important historical landmarks.—DNA

Romina lauds youth role in shaping climate action narratives

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has lauded the instrumental role of youth in shaping both global and national climate action narratives. Speaking at the National Youth Climate Summit here on Tuesday, Romina highlighted the significant contributions of young leaders who are not only raising awareness but also proposing actionable solutions to combat climate change. "It is both inspiring and encouraging to see the commitment of our young leaders, who are raising awareness to protect our planet from climate change impacts," said Romina. She emphasized the crucial need to bridge the communication gap among

provinces and stakeholders in addressing the urgent issue of climate change and highlighted the significant role of the media in raising awareness, stressing that all segments of society must be engaged in promoting climate change solutions. She called for a collaborative approach, encouraging learning from best practices across different regions and sectors. She proposed the establishment of green clubs and green societies as part of the broader effort to foster sustainable solutions. Romina also advocated for the inclusion of climate change education within school curricula, emphasizing the vital role academia plays in shaping future leaders who are equipped to tackle envi-

ronmental challenges. She emphasized that Pakistan stands at the forefront of the global climate crisis, being one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change, including unprecedented flooding, heatwaves, and water scarcity. These challenges, she said, require urgent and collective action. Pakistani cuisine recipes Underlining the government's commitment, she noted, "The Ministry of Climate Change, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, is focused on prioritizing sustainable policies, frameworks, and programs that directly address these challenges." She further added that Pakistan is working on strengthening climate adaptation frameworks, en-

hancing climate financing mechanisms, and promoting sustainable solutions in agriculture, energy, and urban planning. "Our government firmly believes that climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is a developmental challenge that affects every aspect of our society, economy, and well-being," Romina emphasized. Romina acknowledged the remarkable contributions of youth in driving climate action, whether through grassroots initiatives, digital campaigns, or climate entrepreneurship. "The youth have consistently demonstrated a remarkable ability to innovate, advocate, and lead. Their efforts are shaping the global and national narratives surrounding climate action,"

she remarked. The Ministry of Climate Change is committed to amplifying youth voices in policy dialogues, providing capacity-building initiatives, and collaborating with educational institutions to promote climate literacy and research, said Ms. Romina. "This summit is a unique opportunity for young people to not only learn but also lead," she said, urging participants to network and collaborate with like-minded individuals passionate about climate action. Romina called for collective responsibility in combating climate change, stating, "Let us remember that combating climate change is not the responsibility of a single entity but a shared obligation.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

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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 |

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Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051-2862121
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

Dismantling of Zionist project only solution to Palestine issue

Dr Sami Arian argued that Zionism seeks to be in control and rule and not allow any state to do anything that might be conceived as a threat to them. He said that dismantling Zionism does not equate to opposing Jews based on their faith; instead, it is about resisting aggressors and oppressive systems, ensuring that the struggle remains focused on justice

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The outcome of the Israel-Palestine conflict has reframed the Palestinian issue as an existential question for Israel itself, exposing its strategic failures and weaknesses while intensifying global scrutiny of its settler-colonial Zionist ideology. Since this ideology is rooted in racial supremacy and exclusivism, the two-state solution is unviable. The only resolution lies in dismantling the Zionist project to establish justice and the rightful sovereignty of the Palestinian people. This was noted by Prof Dr Sami Al-Arian, director, Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, during a policy dialogue on "Path to Peace: Unpacking the Palestine Question," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was also addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS. Dr Sami Arian argued that Zionism seeks to be in control and rule and not allow any state to do anything that might be conceived as a threat to them. He said that dismantling Zionism



does not equate to opposing Jews based on their faith; instead, it is about resisting aggressors and oppressive systems, ensuring that the struggle remains focused on justice. In this perspective, he addressed the events of October 7, 2023, noting that they must be understood as a consequence of long-standing aggressive policies

that have subjected Gaza to an unprecedented 16-year siege and occupied territories to escalating control measures and human rights abuses. He noted that the Israeli government has openly pursued policies aimed at subjugating Palestinians, forcing them to either accept occupation, leave, or face death. Furthermore, the

Israeli state supported settler violence by arming extremist factions and implementing measures to promote Jewish claims over the Palestinian territories. Dr Al-Arian said that it had become a matter of their self-determination and independence for Palestinians. However, the sustained endurance of Palestinian resistance has

challenged Israel's long-standing unilateral dominance. This was particularly evident with Israel's military superiority failing to secure military and political objectives in Gaza and Zionism, as a settler-colonial ideology, facing mounting challenges to its legitimacy and aggressive manifestations. Moreover, he said, recent developments have increasingly exposed Israel's vulnerabilities in its defense strategies, including intelligence failures, deterrence failures, security breaches, and an inability to achieve a swift resolution. In concluding remarks, Khalid Rahman noted that the outcome of the conflict has also challenged traditional power dynamics, exposing the inherent flaws in global institutions like the UN Security Council, whose veto power raises doubts about the post-1945 international order's sustainability. He further highlighted that the Palestinian struggle now extends beyond the battlefield to narratives. A distinct element was that this conflict, more than any before, was extensively discussed and participated in through digital platforms, amplifying its impact and shaping global narratives in real-time.

Nepalese envoy keen to expand ties with Pakistan

Madam Rita Dital mentioned that she is a career diplomat and considers Pakistan a very important country for Nepal

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Nepal's Ambassador to Pakistan, Madam Rita Dital, has expressed a desire to establish the Pakistan-Nepal Business Forum to explore trade opportunities between the two countries, which could significantly increase trade volume. She highlighted Nepal as a prime tourist destination and encouraged Pakistanis to visit, adding that direct air connectivity would promote tourism. She also suggested including Nepali

players in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Additionally, she mentioned that artificial limbs are being imported from Nepal to Pakistan, while eye lenses are being exported from Pakistan to Nepal. She shared these views during a meeting with Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum, Zafar Bakhtawari, at the Nepalese Embassy yesterday. Executive Member FPCCI, Waqar Bakhtawari, also accompanied him. The meeting included detailed discussions on enhancing trade and cultural relations between the two countries. Madam Rita Dital men-

tioned that she is a career diplomat and considers Pakistan a very important country for Nepal. She reiterated Nepal's commitment to further strengthening and improving its relations with Pakistan. Recognizing Pakistan's cricket team as one of the world's leading teams, she expressed Nepal's interest in utilizing Pakistani cricket experts to train its own team. Speaking on trade, Madam Dital highlighted that tea and cardamom could be imported from Nepal to Pakistan, while medicines could be exported from Pakistan to Nepal. Zafar Bakhtawari

appreciated the Nepalese Ambassador's suggestions, emphasizing that there are immense opportunities to enhance trade relations between Pakistan and Nepal, which both nations should capitalize on through mutual cooperation. He suggested combining Nepal's natural resources with Pakistan's industrial and trade expertise to launch joint ventures that could benefit both economies. He assured that the Pakistan Cultural Forum would provide all possible support in strengthening cultural relations between the two nations.

Police crack blind murder case, suspect held

ISLAMABAD: Superintendent of Police (SP) Rural Zone Kazim Naqvi on Tuesday announced the swift resolution of a blind murder case, with the arrest of the main suspect and recovery of crucial evidence. The case involved the brutal killing of a young man, whose mutilated body was discovered in a sack near a tunnel in the jurisdiction of Nilore Police Station. Addressing a press conference at the Rescue 15 Field Office, SP Kazim Naqvi revealed details of the investigation. Muhammad Majeed, a resident of Pahont, had reported his son, Faisar Majeed, missing. He informed the police that his son had not returned home, his phone was switched off, and he suspected abduction. Following the report, FIR No. 38 was registered at Nilore Police Station, and a comprehensive investigation was launched. On January 27, 2025, police discovered a sack containing a mutilated body near Assembly Dam Road, close to a tunnel. The body was later identified as Faisar Majeed. A public relation officer told APP that taking immediate notice of the incident, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza directed the police to use all available resources to apprehend the culprits. Under the leadership of SP Rural Zone Kazim Naqvi, teams from the Nilore Police Station and the Homicide Unit conducted an in-depth investigation, employing advanced forensic and technical methods. Their efforts led to the arrest of Tanveer Hussain, and the motorcycle used in the crime was recovered. SP Naqvi disclosed that the murder stemmed from financial disputes. The victim was a landlord, while the suspect was his tenant. Both were involved in business activities in the same marketplace, which escalated their disagreements, ultimately leading to the crime. During the press conference, SP Naqvi commended the police teams for their swift and effective action, emphasizing Islamabad Police's commitment to solving even the most challenging cases. "The swift arrest of the suspect underscores our dedication to ensuring justice and maintaining public safety," he stated. He added that further investigations are underway to identify and apprehend additional accomplices in the case. "Islamabad Police will continue to take strict action against all forms of crime and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice," SP Naqvi assured. The victim's family has expressed gratitude for the police's quick response and commitment to solving the case. Authorities are determined to present solid evidence to ensure the suspect faces the full force of the law.—APP

Shab-e-Miraj celebrated with religious fervor

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The nation observed Shab-e-Miraj-un-Nabi (The Night of Ascension) with great religious zeal and reverence on Monday night. This auspicious occasion, commemorating the miraculous nocturnal journey of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) to the heavens, was marked by special prayers, gatherings and recitations of the Holy Quran in mosques, homes and religious centers across the country, including the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. In Islamabad, major mosques hosted congregations where scholars delivered lectures on the significance of Shab-e-Miraj. They highlighted its message of faith, devotion, and the direct connection between human beings and the Almighty. Worshipers offered special Nawafil (voluntary prayers) and engaged in reciting Durood (praises for the Prophet) throughout the night, seek-

ing forgiveness and blessings. Similarly, in Rawalpindi, prominent mosques were adorned with lights and floral decorations. Special prayer sessions were held where religious scholars elaborated on the spiritual and historical importance of Shab-e-Miraj, urging Muslims to follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and embody his exemplary character in daily life. The twin cities saw a significant turnout of worshippers despite the chilly weather. People of all ages participated in Milad gatherings, where Naat recitations and Islamic sermons reminded attendees of the Prophet's journey to the heavens, as mentioned in the Holy Quran. Women and children also joined in the prayers from their homes, as the event holds a special place in the hearts of Muslims worldwide. Various streets and neighborhoods were lit up with vibrant lights and banners carrying messages of love and reverence for the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Families were seen exchanging traditional sweets and visiting

mosques to participate in the night-long prayers. Across Pakistan, Shab-e-Miraj was observed with similar devotion. Cities such as Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar saw large-scale religious activities, with mosques hosting lectures and Quranic Tafseer (interpretation sessions). Many Islamic organizations and seminaries arranged special events, including Qawwali nights dedicated to the theme of ascension and divine mercy. The occasion was also an opportunity for communities to come together, with charity drives organized to help the underprivileged. Meals were distributed among the poor and homeless, emphasizing the Islamic values of compassion and generosity. In light of the large gatherings, law enforcement agencies in Islamabad and Rawalpindi ensured strict security arrangements to maintain peace and order. Police personnel were deployed around mosques and religious centers, while traffic management plans were implemented to facilitate smooth movement for worshippers.

DG Pak-EPA calls youth for taking collective action at CAYA Summit

ISLAMABAD: Farzana Altaf Shah, Director General of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), has called on the youth to take collective action to protect the environment and mitigate the escalating impacts of climate change. Speaking at the Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance (CAYA) Summit 2025 on Tuesday, she emphasized the critical role of young people in driving sustainable change. "We have high hopes from the younger generation. They show a genuine interest in safeguarding the environment," she said. Highlighting the pressing climate concerns, she revealed that Islamabad has not experienced rainfall in three months, which she attributed to the adverse effects of climate change. Reflecting on Islamabad's changing climate, Shah lamented the loss of the city's natural beauty. "When I first came to Islamabad in 1991, it rained every week, and carrying an umbrella was essential. Today, we face an unprecedented situation where we are compelled to use air conditioners even in January," she said. She expressed concern over the deforestation in the capital, stating, "By cutting down trees, we have turned Islamabad into a concrete jungle." Shah also warned of extreme heatwaves in the coming summer months and urged immediate and collective action to address the looming crisis.—DNA

Pindi's breakfast culture continues to impress foodies far and wide

ISLAMABAD: In the heart of Pakistan's Punjab province lies Rawalpindi, a city renowned for its rich culinary heritage which offers traditional breakfast staple that draws foodies from far and wide. For decades, Rawalpindi's breakfast scene has been dominated by local eateries, dhabas, and street food stalls, each serving up a mouth-watering array of traditional dishes. From fluffy parathas and crispy naan to savory kebabs, Nihari and spicy haleem, the options are endless. Some of the most famous areas for traditional breakfast in Rawalpindi include Sabzi Mandi, Banni, Kartarpura, Saddar, and Lal Kurti. "A visitor Salman Raza enthusiastically remarked, 'Rawalpindi's traditional breakfast is an absolute delight adding that the city's culinary landscape is a treasure trove of flavors, and its breakfast offerings are truly exceptional.' —APP

Police arrest 7 renting rules violators

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police here on Tuesday carried out search operations in the jurisdiction of City, Gungmandi, Rattaamral, Pirwadhai, Cantt, Naseerabad and Airport police stations and arrested 7 renting rules violators. According to a police spokesman, the search operations were conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed, senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operations. Police checked 143 houses, 145 shops, 26 tenants and over 400 individuals during the search operations. Seven renting rules violators namely Qamar Zaman, Shakeel, Afzal, Rasheed, Muhammad Nasir, Ayub and Numan were rounded up during search operations. The spokesman said that police were fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public and coming and search operations were being done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani said that police were more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.—APP



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Briefs

PM directs developing Islamabad as model for healthcare facilities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday instructed the Ministry of National Health Services to modernize the healthcare institutions under the federal government's purview and make Islamabad a model for healthcare facilities for the entire country. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the matters about the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, said that the government was prioritizing to ensure access to healthcare facilities across the country, a PM Office press release said. He asked the health ministry to expedite the work on Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Center and start the pre-qualification process for timely procuring the facility's medical and surgical machinery and equipment. He said that the pre-qualification process should be completed under the supervision of an expert consultant, besides conducting a third-party audit of the construction work and the procurement of machinery and equipment. Prime Minister Shehbaz also directed to initiation the process of approving the charter for the university associated with Jinnah Medical Complex.—APP

Int'l moot on Psychology

ISLAMABAD: An International Conference titled "Reviving Transpersonal Psychology through the Decolonial Lens of Islamic Psychology" (IPCON 2025) is set to hold on Wednesday (tomorrow). The conference will bring together some of the world's leading experts from countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, the USA, Russia, Sweden, and Canada, who will look at into the integration of Islamic principles with contemporary psychological practices. It is being hosted by Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University's Department of Clinical Psychology in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the International Students of Islamic Psychology (ISIP). IPCON 2025 is more than just an academic gathering.—APP

Partnerships, skill development vital to empower youth: Shehbaz

The prime minister welcomed the participating delegates from several nations and said that as a founding member, Pakistan attached great importance to the Commonwealth and its institutions which served as an important platform for consensus-building and fostering partnerships

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reiterating his government's strong commitment to youth empowerment, called for fostering partnership, supporting entrepreneurship and prioritizing education and skill development to pave the way to a resilient Commonwealth and a prosperous future. "By ensuring that youth remain central to governance and decision-making processes, we can lead the way in fostering partnerships, supporting entrepreneurship, and prioritizing education and skills development. This will ensure that our future

is in the hands of an empowered young generation," the prime minister said addressing the inaugural session of the Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance summit here. The prime minister welcomed the participating delegates from several nations and said that as a founding member, Pakistan attached great importance to the Commonwealth and its institutions which served as an important platform for consensus-building and fostering partnerships. "With over 60% of the Commonwealth population under the age of 30, the future rests in the hands of the youth. These hands must be empowered and equipped through vigorous training and access to

modern technology. This will enable them to carve out a peaceful, progressive, and prosperous future." He said Pakistan with a youth bulge of around 70% of the population under the age of 30, fully understood the potential as the challenge could easily be transformed into great opportunities. Emphasising the undeniable role of youth in development, he told the international gathering that he always prioritized the productive employment of youth as a key focus area and devoted significant efforts to this goal. He said that the government was committed to empowering youth through transformative initiatives such as the Youth Program empow-

ering millions of boys and girls across Pakistan. Referring to his term as Punjab chief minister, Shehbaz Sharif mentioned the launch of the Punjab Education Endowment Fund to provide stipends to high achievers for education, the establishment of Daanish Schools which were now being expanded to Islamabad, Azad Kashmir (AJK), and remote areas of Balochistan. Moreover, around 600,000 laptops were distributed to high achievers which during the COVID time proved to be valuable sources for distance learning as well as earning. A fresh program had been launched for laptop distribution to high achievers from Balochistan, Gilgit-Bal-

tistan (GB), and AJK, coming from humble financial backgrounds, he added. Urging the youth for dedicated efforts and contribution to nation-building, he advised, "Dream boldly, act courageously, work tirelessly, and have faith and spirit of conviction. Remember, it is our sons and daughters—who are the pioneers of our future. Through your knowledge and experience, you will unlock untapped potential, ensuring Pakistan's well-being, progress, and prosperity." Earlier, the prime minister also administered the oath to the members of the newly formed National Youth Council and gave away awards to the high achievers.

ANF recovers over 19 kg drugs in 4 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in a crackdown on drug smugglers in different cities of the country managed to recover 19.659 kg drugs worth over Rs 3.2 million and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 18 grams cocaine, 10 grams ice drug and 8 grams weed were recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at a courier office in Rawalpindi. The accused was arrested on the spot during the operation. 4.6 kg ice was recovered from a parcel containing punching bags sent to Australia through a cargo office in Karachi. 15 kg hashish was recovered from an uninhabited area of Panjgur in Balochistan and in 4th operation, 23 grams heroin was recovered from an accused arrested from a passenger bus near M-1 Motorway, Islamabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

AIOU creates enabling environment for int'l students: VC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Vice-Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has reiterated that we are committed to create an enabling environment for enrollment of international students. He noted that by expanding its educational outreach, Allama Iqbal Open University is bringing honor to Pakistan on a global scale. To date, 1,007 students from 37 countries have enrolled, and the aim is to increase this number to 5,000 in the next five years. To facilitate international students, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has empowered and activated the International Collaboration and Exchange Office, which remains in contact with international students and provides comprehensive guidance to them. AIOU has introduced over 80 educational programs for overseas Pakistanis and international students worldwide for the Spring 2025 semester. The last date for admission to these programs is February 10. These programs include Matriculation, FA, I.Com, Associate Degrees in Arts, Commerce, and Education, BS Programs, 1.5-year, 2.5-year, and 4-year B.Ed. programs, as well as diploma programs in 12 disciplines.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students and faculty members from Abasyn University Peshawar visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House.

Those hindering economic recovery enemies of country

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 those who hinder economic recovery are enemies of the country. He said that harassment of foreign investors is condemnable and affects the country's reputation and investment climate. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the elements discouraging foreign investors deserve severe punishment. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the current government has made great efforts to save the country from bankruptcy, and the country's economy is gradually improving. The political situation is also improving. However, investment and tax issues are not satisfactory. He said that China is investing in Pakistan while other friendly countries are continuously making promises, the implementation of which is being delayed. In these circumstances, harassing Chinese investors, neglecting their security, and demanding bribes is condemnable and sends a very negative message. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the police have harassed Chinese investors to such an extent that they are thinking of leaving the country, which is badly affecting Pakistan's image globally. The business leader said that the allegations of Chinese investors should be investigated at the highest level. He said that investors are kept under surveillance for hours, their important meetings are postponed, and they are not facilitated as they expect. The provincial and federal governments should thoroughly investigate all the matters and punish the people involved so that no one dares to poison the business environment and threaten the country's future. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the country's industrial, agricultural, and commercial development depends on political stability. For economic stability, continuity of systems and policies, improved law and order situation, and cheap oil, electricity, and gas are essential. The past decade's ongoing political confrontation and revenge politics have left the country politically and economically unstable. At the same time, terrorism had a terrible impact on the country's economy, and the investment climate in the country could not be established.—DNA

PTCL introduces new bill payment solution

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the country's largest ICT services provider, has partnered with PayFast, a State Bank of Pakistan-licensed Payment Service Provider (PSP), to launch for the first time an innovative bill payment solution via WhatsApp. This cutting-edge service enables PTCL customers to view and pay their bills directly through WhatsApp, representing a major step forward in digital customer service for Pakistan's telecom industry. The official signing ceremony for the launch was held at PTCL Headquarters in Islamabad, with senior leaders from PTCL, eOcean and PayFast in attendance. This collaboration allows customers to choose from a variety of payment methods, including major banks and popular mobile wallets. The seamless integration of this service is powered by eOcean, a leading cloud communication service provider. To complete a payment, customers have to enter their CNIC and account number, verify the transaction via OTP on their registered mobile numbers, and receive an instant receipt within the chat. In addition to bill payments, the PTCL WhatsApp bot offers features designed to improve the customer experience. PTCL's WhatsApp bot not only facilitates bill payments but also offers a range of customer-centric features designed to enhance convenience. These include real-time troubleshooting for service issues, bill inquiries, tax certificate retrieval, and the ability to subscribe to additional services like Flash Fiber bolt-ons. Syed Atif Raza, Group Chief Commercial Officer, PTCL & Ufone 4G, stated, "The WhatsApp-based bill payment solution aligns with our digital transformation strategy, aimed at enhancing customer convenience and delivering top-notch services. PTCL is proud to pioneer this solution in Pakistan through a partnership with PayFast, setting a new benchmark in the industry for customer experience. We are committed to streamlining interactions for our valued customers and making digital transactions as simple as possible." PayFast's CBO - Mahwish Saad Khan stats, "Our partnership with PTCL is a pivotal milestone in redefining digital payment experiences in Pakistan. By integrating PayFast's reliable and user-friendly payment solutions with PTCL's WhatsApp bot, we are making transactions easier and more secure than ever. Together, we are fostering a culture of digital innovation to empower customers nationwide with accessible payment options." Adding to the conversation, Altaf Siddiqui, Director of Products, eOcean, commented, "WhatsApp chatbots offer transformative potential for telecommunication providers by enabling instant top-ups and personalized customer support at scale. With WhatsApp's unmatched reach and adaptability, it seamlessly aligns with user preferences, making it an ideal platform for PTCL to enhance customer interactions and ensuring swift service delivery.—DNA

CS's administrative skills, good governance, acumen lead province towards improvement

As Balochistan continues on its path toward development, the lessons learned from Shakeel Qadir Khan's leadership can serve as a blueprint for other regions facing similar challenges. By building on this foundation and sustaining the momentum, Balochistan has the potential to emerge as a model of inclusive and sustainable development in Pakistan

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



BALUCHISTAN, the largest province of Pakistan by area, has long grappled with profound developmental and administrative challenges. From governance issues to a stark lack of infrastructure, the province has often been perceived as lagging behind other regions in the country. However, a transformative wave of change has emerged following the appointment of Shakeel Qadir Khan as the Chief Secretary of Balochistan on August 18, 2023. His visionary leadership, tireless efforts, and unwavering commitment to public service have illustrated how effective governance can tackle systemic issues and guide a region toward sustainable development. Historically, Balochistan has faced a wide array of challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to basic services, and inefficiencies in the

public sector. The province's vast geographical expanse and sparse population add further complexity to policy implementation and project execution. Additionally, corruption and a lack of accountability have undermined public trust in government institutions, compounding the sense of marginalization felt by many citizens. Administrative head in such an environment requires not only strong managerial skills but also patience, strategic thinking, and the ability to inspire and mobilize teams. Shakeel Qadir Khan's tenure as Chief Secretary has been marked by a concerted effort to address these deep-rooted challenges and pave the way for a more effective and transparent administration. From his very first day in office, Shakeel Qadir Khan exhibited an unwavering commitment to addressing the needs of the people of Balochistan. Recognizing the importance of government offices as the primary interface between citizens and the state, he prioritized improving their environment and ensuring that public servants treat citizens with respect and dignity.

This shift in attitude has begun to rebuild trust between the government and the people, laying the foundation for more productive interactions. One of the significant misconceptions about Balochistan has been the belief that development projects exist only on paper, with little to no tangible impact on the ground. Projects that did materialize



were often criticized for their substandard quality. Under Shakeel Qadir Khan's leadership, these perceptions have started to change. His administration has focused on ensuring that development projects are not only visible but also meet high-quality standards. One of the most notable achievements of Shakeel Qadir Khan's administration has

been the enhancement of basic public services. Access to clean drinking water, a long-standing issue in Balochistan, has significantly improved. Through strategic planning and collaboration with relevant departments, his administration has ensured the provision of safe and clean water to more communities across the province. Similarly, sani-

tation systems in major cities have seen noticeable upgrades, contributing to improved public health and a cleaner urban environment. The quality of development projects in sectors such as communications, public health, irrigation, and local government has also shown marked improvement. Shakeel Qadir Khan has emphasized the importance of

accountability and transparency in project execution. Engineers, contractors, and officials are now held to higher standards, ensuring that public funds are used effectively and efficiently. This focus on quality has set a new benchmark for future projects and has instilled confidence among citizens in the government's ability to deliver. A key aspect of Shakeel Qadir Khan's governance philosophy is his zero-tolerance approach to inefficiency and corruption. Under his leadership, immediate and effective action is taken against officers, engineers, and other officials who fail to perform their duties or engage in corrupt practices, regardless of their influence or connections. This approach has created a culture of accountability, motivating public servants to perform their roles with diligence and integrity. Shakeel Qadir Khan's success can also be attributed to his ability to build and lead a cohesive team. Secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, and officials from various departments have worked collectively under his guidance to address the province's challenges. This collaborative approach has not only improved inter-departmental coordination but has also enhanced the overall effectiveness of governance in Balochistan. While the progress under Shakeel Qadir Khan's guidance is commendable, it is essential to recognize that Balochistan's challenges are deeply rooted and systemic

in nature. Long-term solutions require sustained efforts and a comprehensive strategy that addresses the underlying causes of underdevelopment. Infrastructure remains a critical area of focus for Balochistan's development. Improved road networks, reliable electricity, and access to education and healthcare facilities are essential for enhancing the quality of life for the province's residents. Shakeel Qadir Khan's administration has made strides in initiating infrastructure projects, but continued investment and oversight are necessary to ensure their successful completion. Shakeel Qadir Khan's tenure as Chief Secretary of Balochistan has been a beacon of hope for a province long plagued by challenges. His leadership has demonstrated that with dedication, strategic planning, and a commitment to accountability, it is possible to address even the most entrenched issues. While much work remains to be done, the progress achieved so far is a testament to the transformative power of effective governance. As Balochistan continues on its path toward development, the lessons learned from Shakeel Qadir Khan's leadership can serve as a blueprint for other regions facing similar challenges. By building on this foundation and sustaining the momentum, Balochistan has the potential to emerge as a model of inclusive and sustainable development in Pakistan.

Resistance can't be defeated

CONTRARY to what has been presented to the Western public, the Israeli military did not fight a war that targeted Hamas, instead they pursued their genocides and employed cowardly tactics that aimed to minimize their soldier casualties. Ever wondered why the Israelis never had any real combat footage that featured their soldiers engaged in battles with Palestinian fighters? One explanation could be that no battles were actually fought in the Gaza Strip, yet that is contradicted by the near daily stream of clips, produced by some dozen Resistance groups, that featured attacks against the invading army. Through analyzing the videos released by the Palestinian armed groups like al-Quds Brigades, al-Qassam Brigades, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the Mujahideen Brigades, the Salah al-Din Brigades, and others, we can deduce that there were three main categories of attacks: Ambushes, Sniper Operations, and mortar/artillery strikes. According to both the communiques and video documentation published by the groups in Gaza, the most frequent style of attacks was mortar/artillery operations; that would occur daily. Over 10,000 rockets were also used, but as the war progressed, most of the rockets fired were short-range munitions. Although this style of attacks used largely inaccurate weapons, it was indeed constant over the course of 15 months. Then we have the steady stream of videos throughout the war, which featured ambushes, which could also be separated into two primary subcategories: Ambushes of convoys and ambushes on stationary Israeli army positions. The first kind, against convoys, included the use of the now famous Yassin-105 Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) against tanks, bulldozers, jeeps, and Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). Guided Anti-Tank systems and drones were occasionally used against military vehicles too, but appeared to be in much lower supply. The spokesperson for the al-Qassam Brigades, Abu Obeida, announced in his ceasefire speech that over 2,000 Israeli tanks were damaged or destroyed by the group's fighters. Despite the Israelis not having admitted to the number of tanks, bulldozers, jeeps, and APCs that were damaged/destroyed, reports published in Israeli media suggested that tanks were in short supply. In fact, several requests were made by senior Israeli military officials to deploy tanks into the West Bank after their assessments concluded the Resistance groups there had acquired heavy explosives, but were rejected due to the need to use those tanks in Gaza or Lebanon. Another tactic that ended up proving more effective at neutralizing Israeli tanks later on in the war were Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) strategically planted in roads where military convoys would pass through. Groups like Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)'s al-Quds Brigades and Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades even repurposed many of the unexploded ordnances, including the infamous 2,000-pound bombs, to use against Israeli military convoys. Then we had the attacks on Israeli forces who were either entering areas to set up positions or who were already utilizing a space as a temporary military base or command node.

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With arrears in UN budget

RECENTLY, Deputy Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General Farhan Haq revealed that the US currently owes a total of \$2.8 billion, of which \$1.5 billion is for the regular budget of the UN. As one of the UN's most important members, the US' nonpayment once again sets a negative example of "international leadership." As the world's largest economy, the US' long-standing failure to pay its UN dues cannot be ignored. For a superpower capable of spending billions of dollars to support wars, the \$2.8 billion owed to the UN seems to be an insignificant figure. The selective attitude reflects the US' stance on international rules: It supports those that serve its own interests while shirking the responsibilities befitting its great power status. "US arrears in the UN regular budget weaken the UN's role," Lü Xiang, an expert on US studies and research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times. The UN's operations heavily rely on dues revenue, and insufficient funding could hinder its ability to effectively advance humanitarian aid, peacekeeping operations, and other global agendas. Timely payment of dues is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of member states within the UN framework. Financial strain has been a persistent issue for the UN. The US only pays its dues when it needs the UN's support, as seen after the September 11 attacks when the US made its payments. However, today, with the UN failing to meet the US' demands on resolutions related to the Ukraine crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict, dues remain unpaid indefinitely. The US views its economic strength and position within the UN as a leverage, using arrears as a "master card" to compel the UN to align more closely with US positions and interests on international issues. The US' expenditures present a stark contrast: generous and swift contributions for war support versus extreme frugality when it comes to international organizations. In late 2024, the US Department of Defense announced a \$988 million security assistance package for Ukraine, bringing its total aid since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict to \$62 billion. "If the US were willing to allocate just a small fraction of the money that ultimately ends up in the pockets of American arms dealers to the UN, it would make a far greater contribution to the world," Lü added. For the US, responsibility can be selectively fulfilled, and obligations can be evaded. This exposes the US' disregard for fulfilling its duties as a major power. The US has always emphasized its "international leadership," which stands in sharp contrast to its actions. This discrepancy not only highlights a loss of US international responsibility but also reinforces the world's growing realization of the US' indifference to multilateralism. It harms the US' reputation, deepens developing countries' mistrust toward the US, and erodes its credibility and moral foundation globally. Amid the growing multipolarity in today's international order and the strengthening of regional cooperation, the UN remains an indispensable platform for global governance. If the US continues to disregard the authority of the UN, its reputation in global governance will only continue to diminish.

Trump's \$8 trillion deportation dilemma

Qamar Bashir



The cost of executing the deportation of over 12 million undocumented immigrants from the United States would be exorbitant, with an estimated price tag of \$3 trillion. This expense includes law enforcement deployment, detention facility expansion, legal processing, transportation via chartered flights and buses, and diplomatic coordination with receiving countries. Given the sheer scale, the operation would require around 12 years to complete, necessitating massive logistical efforts, increased immigration court capacities, and international agreements. Deporting 12 million undocumented immigrants over 12 years would have a devastating...

COLOMBIA collapsed under the wrath of the U.S. President after facing intense pressure. Initially refusing to accept deported illegal immigrants, Colombia reversed its stance when President Trump threatened a 25% tariff increase on Colombian exports. Although the Colombian President initially retaliated with threats of similar countermeasures, he ultimately relented, conceding not only to accept deportees but also to shoulder the transportation costs. In a further display of submission, Colombia went beyond mere compliance, sending its presidential plane to fetch its deported citizens, thereby relieving the U.S. of the financial burden of their repatriation. Trump celebrated his first victory following his aggressive posture by issuing an official statement through the President's Press Secretary. The bold and assertive message, reproduced below, underscores the might of the United States and the vulnerability of other nations: "The Government of Colombia has agreed to all of President Trump's terms, including the unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia returned from the United States, including on U.S. military aircraft, without limitation or delay. Based on this agreement, the fully drafted IEEPA tariffs and sanctions will be held in reserve and not signed unless Colombia fails to honor this agreement. Today's events make it clear to the world that America is respected again. President Trump will continue to fiercely protect our nation's sovereignty, and he expects all other nations of the world to fully cooperate in accepting the deportation of their citizens illegally present in the United States." This declaration had a transformative effect, leading all other nations, who had initially reacted fiercely, to eventually comply. Mexico, following Colombia's lead, not only agreed to take back its own citizens but also accepted deportees from other countries. As of January 27, 2025, Mexico has received over 4,000 deportees, primarily Mexican nationals but also some non-Mexican migrants, marking a significant shift in its immigration stance. India fell in line even before Colombia and Mexico. It announced its full agreement with Trump's immigration policy but with a logical condition—it demanded a verified list of illegal immigrants to confirm their citizenship status before repatriation. Brazil, though accepting all 88 deportees who arrived on a U.S. Air Force plane in handcuffs and shackles, strongly objected to the treatment of its citizens. The flight, originally bound for Belo Horizonte, made an unscheduled landing in Manaus due to technical issues. Upon landing, the handcuffs deportees were immediately removed and were transferred to a Brazilian Air Force plane to complete

their journey with dignity and safety. Guatemala has taken a cooperative stance toward U.S. deportation policies, accepting multiple deportation flights, including those on U.S. military aircraft. Recently, a flight carrying 64 deportees landed in Guatemala, marking the third such arrival since these flights began. Encouraged by the success of Trump's fierce, resolute, and decisive actions, law enforcement agencies across the country have intensified operations, expanding raids and increasing deportation efforts, signaling a new era of strict immigration enforcement. On January 23, coordinated operations by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in cities including Boston, Denver, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Seattle, Miami, Washington, D.C., New York City, and Newark resulted in the arrest of 538 undocumented immigrants. On January 27, nearly 1,000 individuals were arrested in a single day across at least 12 cities, including Chicago, Denver, Austin, and Los Angeles. The administration has also rescinded policies that previously limited enforcement actions in sensitive locations like schools and churches, allowing for a broader scope of operations. Despite this development, the scale of deportation remains immense. This monumental operation demands extensive planning, international cooperation, and sustained execution, highlighting the complexity of large-scale immigration enforcement and the enormous challenges that lie ahead. The cost of executing the deportation of over 12 million undocumented immigrants from the United States would be exorbitant, with an estimated price tag of \$3 trillion. This expense includes law enforcement deployment, detention facility expansion, legal processing, transportation via chartered flights and buses, and diplomatic coordination with receiving countries. Given the sheer scale, the operation would require around 12 years to complete, necessitating massive logistical efforts, increased immigration court capacities, and international agreements. Deporting 12 million undocumented immigrants over 12 years would have a devastating economic impact on the United States, costing the economy trillions of dollars in lost productivity, tax revenue, and workforce contributions. According to the Center for Migration Studies, mass deportation could shrink U.S. GDP by 1.4% in the first year alone, resulting in a cumulative loss of \$4.7 trillion over a decade. Undocumented immigrants make up 5% of the U.S. labor force, with critical roles in agriculture, construction, and hospitality; their removal would trigger severe labor shortages, pushing wages higher and raising production

costs, ultimately driving up consumer prices. Additionally, many undocumented workers contribute to Social Security and Medicare without receiving benefits; their deportation would reduce these contributions, further straining these social programs. The housing market would also face instability, as 1.2 million mortgages are held by households with undocumented immigrants, potentially leading to a surge in foreclosures and declining property values. Overall, the cost of deportation extends far beyond the estimated \$3 trillion in direct expenses, as the long-term economic repercussions would disrupt key industries, destabilize financial markets, and hinder overall economic growth. It would be naive to assume that the Trump administration had not carefully considered both the direct costs of mass deportation and its broader economic impact. However, these concerns appeared to be secondary to larger objectives such as enforcing immigration laws, addressing national security risks, and responding to societal anxieties. One key rationale behind the administration's aggressive deportation policy was the belief that certain undocumented populations posed security threats, particularly in light of global extremism. With U.S. foreign policies deeply entangled in regions like the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China, fears arose that individuals from these areas might be susceptible to radicalization. Mass deportation was thus framed as a preventive measure to mitigate potential threats before they materialized. Beyond security concerns, the policy also seemed to target public perceptions of safety in American neighborhoods. Many communities, particularly those with predominantly white populations, expressed unease over demographic shifts and rising crime rates, often linking undocumented immigrants to social instability. This sentiment was echoed by the Vice President in a recent interview, where he highlighted how many Americans felt increasingly unsafe in their own neighborhoods due to unchecked immigration. The reason could be job losses for the USA citizens, wage suppression, and the strain on social services. Ultimately, the Trump administration's approach was likely shaped by a combination of national security concerns, societal anxieties, efforts to preserve American culture and norms, and political strategy, with economic considerations playing a lesser role, making it a deeply complex and multifaceted initiative.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

Pakistan's winter drought: A wake-up call for climate action

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The hadith also addresses the significance of rain and the response to drought. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed the prayer of istisqa during times of drought, supplicating for Allah's mercy and rain. In one narration, he said, "O Allah, give us rain, a beneficial rain, a rain that will bring water, life, and prosperity" (Sunan Abu Dawood)

PAKISTAN is currently grappling with an alarming drought during the winter season, with rainfall significantly lower than in previous years. Traditionally, the regions of Galiyat, Malika-e-Kohsar Murree, and the northern areas are blanketed in snow by this time, but this year, they remain barren. According to the Meteorological Department, rainfall over the past three months has been critically scarce, raising serious concerns about the country's climate patterns and environmental stability. One of the primary reasons for the decrease in rainfall is the global phenomenon of climate change. Rising global temperatures have disrupted traditional weather patterns, leading to unpredictable and extreme weather events worldwide. Pakistan, despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries. The melting of glaciers, erratic monsoons, and now, insufficient winter rainfall highlight the pressing impacts of this crisis. The warming atmosphere retains more moisture, altering the distribution and intensity of precipitation. This could explain why regions that previously experienced heavy snowfall are now witnessing dry spells. Environmental pollution is another critical factor exacerbating the situation. Urbanization, industrial emissions, and vehicular pollution have significantly increased the concentration of pollutants in the atmosphere. These pollutants interfere with cloud formation and precipitation processes, further reducing rainfall. Moreover, Pakistan's air quality has deteriorated to hazardous levels, especially in urban areas like Lahore, which not only impacts human health but also disrupts ecological balance. Deforestation is yet another major contributor to this crisis. The large-scale cutting of trees, whether for urban development, agriculture, or timber, has disrupted the natural water cycle. Forests play a vital role in maintaining humidity levels and attracting rainfall. The loss of tree cover has not only led to soil erosion and desertification but has also reduced the ability of ecosystems to regulate weather patterns. Pakistan's forest cover is already far below the global standard,

and continued deforestation will only worsen the situation. The recent decline in rainfall has also been linked to the growing phenomenon of droughts in Pakistan. The country has faced recurring droughts over the past five years, particularly in regions like Sindh and Balochistan, where water scarcity has become a persistent issue. The agricultural sector, which forms the backbone of Pakistan's economy, is particularly vulnerable. Reduced rainfall impacts crop yields, threatens food security, and increases dependence on groundwater, further depleting already strained water resources. A review of Pakistan's weather patterns over the past five years reveals a worrying trend. Rainfall during both summer and winter seasons has become increasingly erratic, with some years experiencing devastating floods while others suffer from prolonged dry spells. This inconsistency poses a significant challenge to water management and agricultural planning. The unpredictability of monsoons and the lack of winter rains this year are clear indications that Pakistan must prioritize climate resilience and sustainable environmental practices. To address the immediate and long-term implications of this crisis, several emergency measures must be implemented. First, a national reforestation campaign should be launched to increase forest cover, particularly in drought-prone regions. Second, water conservation practices must be promoted at all levels, from individual households to industries. Rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation techniques, and the rehabilitation of water reservoirs can help mitigate the impact of reduced rainfall. Third, stricter regulations are needed to curb environmental pollution, including transitioning to cleaner energy sources, enforcing vehicular emissions standards, and promoting public awareness about the importance of environmental preservation. Additionally, Pakistan must actively participate in global efforts to combat climate change. This includes honoring international commitments, such as the Paris Agreement, and advocating for financial and technical support from developed nations to enhance climate resilience. Collaboration with neighboring countries on shared water

resources and regional climate strategies can also play a crucial role in addressing this crisis. There are Quranic injunctions regarding drought and the hadiths, including the prayer of istisqa, shed light on the occurrence of rain and drought. These spiritual practices emphasize the need to turn to Allah in times of difficulty, seeking His mercy and guidance. The Quran states, "And We send down blessed rain from the sky and bring forth thereby gardens and grain from the harvest" (Surah Qaf 50:9). This verse highlights Allah's mercy in providing rain as a blessing and a source of sustenance. Another verse declares, "He causes it to reach whom He wills of His servants" (Surah Ar-Rum 30:48), emphasizing that rainfall is entirely under Allah's control. The hadith also addresses the significance of rain and the response to drought. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed the prayer of istisqa during times of drought, supplicating for Allah's mercy and rain. In one narration, he said, "O Allah, give us rain, a beneficial rain, a rain that will bring water, life, and prosperity" (Sunan Abu Dawood). These teachings remind us of the spiritual dimension of drought and the importance of collective repentance and prayer. The current drought and its associated challenges may also be seen through a spiritual lens. Many in Pakistan believe that natural disasters and climate anomalies are a reflection of divine displeasure, urging humanity to reflect on its actions. The Quran emphasizes the importance of being custodians of the earth, and neglecting this responsibility can lead to dire consequences. It is, therefore, essential for individuals and communities to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors while seeking forgiveness and guidance from Allah. Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in its history, where environmental challenges threaten not only its economy but also the well-being of its citizens. The ongoing drought serves as a stark reminder of the need for urgent action to address climate change, environmental degradation, and water scarcity. By adopting sustainable practices, strengthening climate resilience, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility, Pakistan can navigate these challenges and ensure a stable and prosperous future for generations to come.

Briefs

Gohar rules out talks with any other 'quarter'

FROM PAGE 01
the Khan-founded party quit negotiations over the government's failure to form the judicial commissions to probe the May 9, 2023 violent protests and a crackdown on party protesters in Islamabad on November 26 last year, within seven days, as per their demands. The PTI chief said his party has been striving for the rule of democracy and Constitution for 27 years. He said they were maintaining contacts with political parties in this regard as they wanted to take all the stakeholders into confidence over the 26th Constitutional Amendment as well as independent judiciary. Gohar said they would make every effort including protest for the formation of judicial commission. On speculations about Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's role in the party after Junaid Akbar replaced him as the party's KP president, the PTI chairman apprised media that the party founder dismissed rumours about Gandapur as false. "The party founder said Ali Amin Gandapur himself came to him and said he was not getting enough sleep due to heavy work load," he said, adding that the post of party's provincial president was changed on the KP chief minister's recommendation. The PTI founding chairman had categorically stated that disinformation was being disseminated against Gandapur, he maintained. Moreover, he said the party had zero tolerance policy on corruption. On the other hand, speaking to media outside the Supreme Court, PTI Senator Hamid Khan said the PTI would hold a series of conventions in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. "We will hold protests and conventions," he said, adding their struggle was constitutional and they had multiple options with them. Struggle for every organisation would not be of low scale, hence the lawyers should mentally be prepared, he said. Hamid said the PTI and the common men would finally have the last laugh in this struggle.

Govt still hopes for resumption..

FROM PAGE 01
inconclusive end to the fourth round of talks skipped by the PTI, Sadiq said that the negotiations could not go forward due to the absence of the former ruling party. "I hope that the talks will resume. [And] the [government's] negotiation committee will remain intact and not dissolve," the NA speaker said, adding, "The negotiations are the only way forward [...] I request the opposition to find a way for the dialogue." Sadiq's remarks come amid the PTI's refusal to attend the fourth round of talks scheduled today citing the government's failure to form the judicial commission to probe the May 9 riots and November 2024 Islamabad protest. The party on January 23 had announced its decision to call off the dialogue only to later backtrack on it saying that they were only put on hold. The ongoing dialogue between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led government and the PTI commenced in late December after months of heightened political tensions. The two sides have held three rounds of talks. Although the PTI has presented its written charter of demands, and weeks of negotiations – with three sessions taking place so far – have made little progress on key matters. Speaking alongside Sadiq, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also expressed hope that the opposition would reach out to the NA speaker for further talks. Lamenting the PTI's decision to avoid today's meeting, Dar said that it would be inappropriate for them to issue a unilateral statement in the former ruling party's absence.

Hosting ICC Champions Trophy an honor for Pakistan: Tarar

A mega sports event will be played in Pakistan after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit that held last year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that it was an honor for Pakistan that mega event of International Cricket Council's, Champion Trophy was being played in Pakistan. He said that it was good omen that after several years, mega events were being held in Pakistan. A mega sports event will be played in Pakistan after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit that held last year. The minister said that unfortunately in the past, sports fields in Pakistan presented a deserted look. He said that Pakistan Television was a national broadcaster, and ratings of PTV Sports have also increased in the recent past. To a question, he said the PTV made payments on time to acquire ICC telecast rights, all their conditions have been



fulfilled and PTV will telecast all ICC matches. A good cricket experts panel including Shoaib Akhtar, Shoaib Malik and other stars will be brought on the PTV screen. He said that in the past, things were not right in the PTV Sports but now steps were taken to make it an up-to-date sports channel. The minister lamented that in the past, reforms were not carried out within PTV and there was no plan regarding ICC payments. "Our efforts are to re-vice the PTV sports channel under a transparent system", he maintained. He said a good online pension system has been introduced in Radio Pakistan to streamline its affairs. He said that the officers who identified ghost employees deserved appreciation as the public sector money has been saved by expelling ghost employees. He remarked that other institutions should also follow suit and work in an efficient manner. He promised that positive changes would be seen in both PTV and Radio Pakistan in coming days.

Miami Heat suspend Jimmy Butler again, indefinitely

Miami is set to host to the Orlando Magic on Monday

WEB DESK

MIAMI: The Miami Heat suspended disgruntled forward Jimmy Butler indefinitely after he walked out of a team shoot-out Monday. It marks the third time the Heat have suspended Butler this month, starting with a seven-game ban for conduct detrimental to the team and another two-game disciplinary move for missing a team flight to Milwaukee last week.

The latest suspension, which will last a minimum of five games, comes after Butler reportedly was told that he would be playing in a reserve role moving forward. The team is planning to keep Haywood Highsmith in a starting role. Miami is set to host to the Orlando Magic on Monday. Heat head coach Erik Spoelstra addressed the Butler situation before the team faced the Bucks on Thursday. "The point that I made to our team is get used to it,"

Spoelstra said. "Get over it. This is the NBA life; this is the life we chose. If you think it's going to be predictable, you're really mistaken." The reasoning given for Butler's first suspension was that, "through his actions and statements, he has shown he no longer wants to be part of this team." The Heat said at the time they would begin listening to offers for the disgruntled star forward. The National Basketball Players Association said it would appeal Butler's

seven-game ban, though he wound up serving the entire suspension. Butler returned Jan. 17 and played in three Heat home games before missing the flight to Milwaukee. Including time missed for an illness at the end of December, Butler has not played in any of Miami's last 12 road games. "It takes a mental fortitude and commitment in terms of the task at hand," Spoelstra said Thursday. "Nothing changes in terms of the task at hand. ... We have enough continuity, we know what our identity is at this point. You can make any excuse you want to, but we get to do what we love. "We've had this happen all season long, so we know the exercise and what we need to do to make those adjustments." Tyler Herro told reporters last week there was "not much to talk about" with the latest Butler development. "It's probably not the easiest to work with someone who's going to be in and out in any job," Herro said. "We love Jimmy; we'd love for him to be here. I love Jimmy."



Arsenal appeal against Lewis-Skelly red card

LONDON: Arsenal have submitted an appeal to have Myles Lewis-Skelly's controversial red card overturned. The defender was sent off during his side's 1-0 win against Wolves on Saturday. Lewis-Skelly was dismissed for catching Wolves' Matt Doherty above the ankle with a late tackle to break up a counter-attack just outside the Wolves box in the 43rd minute. The decision by referee Michael Oliver was upheld by video assistant referee (VAR) Darren England. Lewis-Skelly is set to miss Arsenal's next three games - a Premier League home match against Manchester City on Sunday, next week's Carabao Cup semi-final second leg at Newcastle and a league match against Leicester on 15 February. The Football Association has been approached for comment. After the match, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told media of Day that he thought the referee had made the wrong decision, saying it was "so obvious that today you don't need my words", before later telling Sky Sports that he was "absolutely fuming". The decision was also criticised by former officials and pundits. Wolves midfielder Joao Gomes was sent off later in the match after receiving a second yellow card, before Arsenal defender Riccardo Calafiori scored the only goal. Referees' body the PGMOL says police are investigating "threats and abuse" directed at referee Oliver following the game at Molineux. - Agencies

Russian keen to boost defence ties with Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01

already made considerable progress in recent years: trade turnover has grown by 50% in the last 5 years. "Our common task is to maintain this positive dynamic. The development of trade relations is facilitated by the opening of the St. Petersburg-Karachi sea route, the First Russia-Pakistan Trade and Investment Forum (October 1-2, 2024) and the 9th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission (December 2-4, 2024)", he added. He said, Russia was also making an important contribution to the food security of Pakistan. We export food and agricultural products, and we expect grain supplies to resume. In addition, we are positive about the growth of exports of Russian mineral fertilizers to Pakistan this year. Leading Russian companies are ready to offer modern models of agricultural machinery to their Pakistani partners, he added. The ambassador said, Russia-Pakistan relations also have great prospects in the energy and pharmaceutical sectors. Russian companies are exploring opportunities to take part in projects for the construction and reconstruction of thermal and hydroelectric power plants in Pakistan. In the field of digital technologies, Russia is ready to share its best practices in information security, smart cities, e-government and the Internet of Things. Leading Russian companies are ready to offer Pakistani citizens more than 80 educa-

tional courses and programs aimed at developing digital and cognitive skills. The training is available in both face-to-face and online formats. We attach equally great importance to developing educational and cultural ties between our two countries. The number of scholarships for Pakistani students was increased by 11% in the last academic year. The most popular fields of study in 2024 were medicine, construction, engineering and economics, he added. He further said, the lack of agreements between our countries on readmission and mutual recognition of higher education diplomas currently hinders the full realization of our cooperation potential. The relevant documents have been under consideration by the Pakistani side for a long time and we hope that a positive decision will be taken in the near future. The ambassador emphasized that this year we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Victory over Nazism in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). This date has a special significance for our country, the successor state of the Soviet Union, whose peoples played a decisive role in achieving this victory. "In this context, we intend to further strengthen defense cooperation between Russia and Pakistan, as evidenced by the regular contacts between the military leadership of the two countries, the Russia-Pakistan "Friendship-2024" exercises and Russia's participation in the upcoming Aman 2025 naval exercise in Karachi in February this year", the ambassador concluded.

National Stadium gets final touches ahead of CT-2025

For the unversed, Karachi's National Stadium is set to host three exciting matches during the Champions Trophy 2025, including the curtain-raiser between Pakistan and New Zealand on February 19

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The ongoing renovation of the National Stadium here took a major stride on Tuesday as the venue has begun to receive final touches ahead of the highly-anticipated ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to commence on February 19. According to Project Head, Bilal Chauhan, the construction work of the venue has been completed, while the finishing process is currently underway. Chauhan further shared that two modern lifts have already been installed at the main building of the venue. Whereas, the new LED lights have received clearance from the port and will begin to be installed soon. Furthermore, one state-of-the-art LED screen has reached Dubai and is likely to be installed in a couple of days. The testing of Air Conditioner (AC) has also been done but will be analysed again after the completion of the glass work of the new building. Chauhan further shared that the debris piled up during the renovation process is expected to be cleared soon with Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's (KMC) assistance. The roof of the stadium will also be cleaned upon the completion of the entire renovation process. For the unversed, Karachi's National Stadium is set to host three exciting matches during

the Champions Trophy 2025, including the curtain-raiser between Pakistan and New Zealand on February 19. 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. The eight teams are divided into two groups. Group A features Pakistan, India, New Zealand and Bangladesh, while Group B is comprised of Afghanistan, South Africa, England and Australia.

ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 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, 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



SC: No trial of civilians before...

FROM PAGE 01

Haris replied in affirmation to the query, which was followed by another about the impartiality of an "officer in uniform". At this, Haris responded by saying that even the judges in this court were wearing a "uniform", which was responded to with echoes of laughter in the court. "Do you want to imply that there is no difference between a black and khaki uniform," Justice Hilali snapped back.

Govt to challenge Justice Shah's order forming...

FROM PAGE 01

Justice Naeem Afghan, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Aminuddin Khan, and Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi —, AG Awan stated that a decision had been made to file review petitions on Justice Shah's January 13 and 16 orders. At this, Justice Mazhar remarked that Justice Shah had directed the Customs regulatory duty case to be fixed before his bench. "Can we proceed [with the review petitions] in the presence of this order?" he asked.

Prime Minister calls for youth...

FROM PAGE 01

"Through vigorous training and equipping these hands with modern technology and techniques, they must become great hands," he stated, stressing the importance of preparing youth to create a peaceful, progressive, and prosperous future. He lauded the Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance as a vital platform for fostering partnerships amid global challenges. "As a founding member, Pakistan attaches great importance to the Commonwealth and its institutions," he noted. PM Shehbaz underlined Pakistan's youth bulge, emphasising the need to provide platforms and opportunities that enable young people to actively contribute to nation-building and policymaking. Highlighting past achievements, the PM cited programmes such as the "Punjab Education Endowment Fund," which provided stipends for high achievers to pursue quality education. He also mentioned the expansion of Danish Schools to Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan, and remote areas of Azad Kashmir. Under the Youth Programme, nearly 600,000 laptops were distributed to high-achieving students.

2 soldiers martyred, 5 terrorists killed

FROM PAGE 01

the night between Monday and Tuesday. "The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted by our troops," the ISPR said, adding that this forced the terrorists to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the post's boundary. It added that five terrorists, including two suicide bombers, were "sent to hell" in the ensuing exchange of fire. "However, during the intense fire exchange two brave sons of soil, Naik Tahir Khan, 39, and Lance Naik Tahir Iqbal, 26, having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced martyrdom," the statement added. The ISPR said that a sanitisation operation was being conducted in the area and the perpetrators of the "heinous act" would be brought to justice. "Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve," the statement concluded. Last week, security forces neutralised six terrorists in Balochistan's Zhob district while they were trying to infiltrate the province through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Briefs

PSX stays bearish, loses 1,489 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 1,489.96 more points, a negative change of 1.31 percent, closing at 112,030.36 points as compared to 113,520.32 points on the last trading day. A total of 517,804,378 shares were traded during the day as compared to 494,003,725 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs29,209 billion against Rs. 25,940 billion on the last trading day. As many as 438 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 95 of them recorded gains and 280 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 63 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 67,917,203 shares at Rs 1.69 per share, Sui South Gas with 29,454,322 shares at Rs.38.14 per share and Energyco PK with 28,426,632 shares at Rs.7.36 per share. Rafhan Maize Products Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs99.99 per share closing at Rs 9,299.99 whereas runner-up was Lucky Core Industries Limited with Rs 29.85 rise in its share price to close at Rs.1,175.22.—APP

Rupee sheds 09 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 09 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.92 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.83. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.50 and Rs 281, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 68 paise to close at Rs291.03 against the last day's closing of Rs291.71, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.79, whereas an increase of 23 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs347.02 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs346.79. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 paise each to close at Rs 75.94 and Rs74.36 respectively.—APP

UN chief expresses concern after US freezes foreign aid

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on the US Government to consider "additional exemptions" to a directive which pauses nearly all foreign aid for 90 days. President Trump's executive order a week ago called for all foreign aid to be re-evaluated to ensure that it complies with his new foreign policy priorities. The immediate scope of the order was not clear but on Friday, according to news reports, the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued an order putting any new funding on hold, pending review. The State Department directive reportedly clarifies that funding for existing programmes is also suspended until it has been reviewed. The only exceptions were reportedly for military assistance to Israel and Egypt and emergency food aid. "The Secretary-General notes with concern the announcement of a pause in US foreign assistance," said the statement issued on behalf of Guterres by his Spokesperson Stephan Dujarric. "The Secretary-General calls for additional exemptions to be considered to ensure the continued delivery of critical development and humanitarian activities for the most vulnerable communities around the world, whose lives and livelihoods depend on this support." The statement added the Guterres was looking forward to engaging with the Trump administration on how "much needed development support" can be provided to citizens in the developing world who face the severest challenges. "The United States is one of the largest aid providers and it is vital that we work constructively to jointly shape a strategic path forward," the statement continued.—APP

Direct Pakistan-Bangladesh flights to begin soon: Iqbal

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi stressed that the business, industry, and trade communities of both countries could achieve significant milestones through economic diplomacy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal Hussain Khan has announced that direct flights between Pakistan and Bangladesh are expected to begin within the next few months. This significant development is set to enhance connectivity and foster stronger economic and cultural ties between the two countries. During a meeting with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi and his team, the High Commissioner also revealed that cargo flights between Dhaka, Karachi, and Lahore would also commence soon, further facilitating trade and business exchanges. The High Commissioner highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening business partnerships with Pakistan, emphasizing the ease of obtaining Bangladeshi visas online for Pakistani citizens. He also encouraged both countries to explore joint ventures and industrial collaborations to maximize bilateral benefits. He pointed out that there are ample opportunities for the businessmen of both countries to ink joint ventures for mutual prosperity, underscoring the vast potential for trade and investment. On trade, the High



Commissioner mentioned the opportunities in various sectors with Pakistan exporting goods such as sugar, steel, surgical instruments cement, dry fruits, pink salt, milk products, marble, and coal to Bangladesh. In turn Pakistan can import items like tea and jute from Bangladesh, creating a complementary trade dynamic between the two countries. On his part, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi stressed that the business, industry, and trade communities of both countries could achieve significant milestones through economic diplomacy. He expressed his intention to visit Bangladesh with a delegation of potential investors at the earliest opportunity, with the goal of inking memoranda of understanding with the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other relevant bodies. President Qureshi also highlighted the facilitation desks at ICCI, which assist the business community in overcoming challenges to ease of doing business. He also made the mention of Chamber's other initiatives to boost economic and commercial activities in the region by holding exhibitions and expos. Former ICCI Presidents Zubair Ahmed Shaikh, Mian

Akram Farid, and Mian Shaukat Masood further emphasized that Bangladesh presents a unique opportunity for quickly enhancing bilateral trade, given the complementary nature of the two countries' economies. They noted that sectors such as industrial collaborations, joint ventures, technology transfers, B2B engagements, and chamber-to-chamber cooperation are key areas for growth. The meeting was attended by several ICCI members, including Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, former Presidents Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi,

Shaikh Aamir Waheed, and executive members Ishaq Sial, Chaudhry Mohammad Irfan, Imran Minhas, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Rohail Anwar Butt, Mohammad Waseem Chaudhry, and Shumila Siddiqui. All participants expressed strong optimism about the future of Pakistan-Bangladesh trade and the significant role direct flights will play in advancing this partnership. This development marks a pivotal step towards enhancing economic relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, with both nations eager to seize the opportunities presented by improved connectivity and closer business ties.

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal Hussain Khan has announced that direct flights between Pakistan and Bangladesh are expected to begin within the next few months. This significant development is set to enhance connectivity and foster stronger economic and cultural ties between the two countries. During a meeting with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi and his team, the High Commissioner also revealed that cargo flights between Dhaka, Karachi, and Lahore would also commence soon, further facilitating trade and business exchanges. The High Commissioner highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening business partnerships with Pakistan, emphasizing the ease of obtaining Bangladeshi visas online for Pakistani citizens. He also encouraged both countries to explore joint ventures and industrial collaborations to maximize bilateral benefits. He pointed out that there are ample opportunities for the businessmen of both countries to ink joint ventures for mutual prosperity, underscoring the vast potential for trade and investment. On trade, the High

OGRA clarifies regarding LPG explosion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The unfortunate LPG fire and explosion incident occurred near Industrial Estate, Multan, resulting in the tragic loss of precious lives and significant property damage. The incident stemmed from the illegal transfer of LPG from an LPG bowser to cylinders and the mixing of CO with LPG at an unauthorized facility. During this illegal and unsafe act, prolonged LPG leakage from the bowser occurred. Given

the nature of LPG, which is heavier than air, it spread and accumulated in the surrounding area. Upon contact with a source of ignition, the accumulated gas ignited, causing the bowser to explode and leading to this devastating incident. It is important to emphasize that OGRA and the Department of Explosives strictly regulate only licensed premises in accordance with their mandates. However, recognizing the dangers posed by illegal facilities, OGRA has taken proactive measures and coordinated

with relevant authorities to combat this menace. Joint actions and legal proceedings have been initiated against unauthorized setups to prevent such tragedies in the future. In response to this specific incident, OGRA has appointed a third-party inspector to collect material evidence from the site and ascertain the exact cause and circumstances leading to the accident. Additionally, OGRA is actively coordinating with the district administration to ensure stringent measures are implemented to jointly

address and curb illegal LPG operations in the region. Upon completion of the inquiry and reports, OGRA will take strict action against any licensed entities found culpable in this incident. Furthermore, OGRA has recently taken significant steps by proposing amendments in Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) with enhanced penalties and stricter legal framework to discourage illegal handling of LPG and other petroleum products. Presently, the said law is in final stages of approval.

HBL Microfinance Bank appoints Maya as Chairperson of Board

ISLAMABAD: HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) proudly announces the appointment of Maya Inayat Ismail as the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, succeeding Raymond H. Kotwal. Maya Inayat Ismail was part of the core strategic team that established HBL MfB's predecessor organisation, FMFB, the first microfinance bank in Pakistan, bringing to life His Highness the Aga Khan's vision of ensuring access to financial services for underbanked communities. She has been a member of the Board of HBL Microfinance Bank since 2016 and Chair of the FISC Committee, reflecting her passion and dedication to financial inclusion. Maya Inayat Ismail brings over 25 years of experience in the financial sector, with a strong focus on financial services institutions, managing strategic partnerships, and strategy formulation to benefit people at the grassroots level. The outgoing Chairman, Raymond H. Kotwal remarked, "It has been an honour to serve as the Chairman of HBL Microfinance Bank. I am proud of what we have achieved together in driving financial inclusion across Pakistan. I am confident that Maya Inayat Ismail's appointment will usher in a new era of innovation for the Bank, and I look forward to seeing the Bank flourish under her guidance.—DNA

ICC prosecutor for urgent action on Darfur

NEW YORK CITY: The International Criminal Court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, on Monday stressed the urgent need for international action to address continuing atrocities in the Darfur region of western Sudan, and pleaded with the UN Security Council for more support to help bridge the "impunity gap." He painted a grim picture of a situation in which violence, famine and gender-based crimes continue to devastate communities, targeting women and children in particular. Khan underscored a severe decline in the situation in the region over the past six months, including growing reports of civilian casualties, the destruction of vital infrastructure, and widespread violations of human rights. "Famine is present in Darfur. Conflict is increasing. Children are targeted. Girls and women are subject to rape," Khan said as he described the environment as one of "destruction" and "criminality." The country descended into civil war in April 2023 amid a conflict between rival military factions the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. It has killed more than 28,000 people, forced millions to flee their homes, and some families have resorted to eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive as famine sweeps parts of the country. In Darfur, ethnic violence has escalated since the war began. The RSF, the origins of which lie in the Arab Janjaweed militia that was responsible for a genocide in the early 2000s that claimed about 300,000 lives, has focused its attacks on the Masalit ethnic group and other non-Arab communities.—APP

Pakistan calls on Sudan's warring parties to re-engage in negotiations

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan had called on Sudan's warring parties to re-engage in negotiations to end a war that has been ongoing for more than 21 months, saying the Sudanese people's suffering must be brought an end. "We call on both sides to implement the commitments made under Jeddah declaration on protection of civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian action to meet the emergency needs of the Sudanese people," Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, said in a speech to the UN Security Council. The warring parties the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) led by Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), controlled by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, known as "Hemedti" — had promised a smooth transition of power to civilians after a military coup ousted the long-serving president, Omar al-Bashir, in April 2019. Five years later, the SAF and RSF failed to fulfill that promise, and their inability to find a compromise on how to rule the country led to the war erupting on April 15, 2023. The Pakistani envoy spoke after the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Khan, briefed the 15-member Council on the deteriorating situation in Sudan's Darfur region on Monday. "The blatant violations of International Humanitarian Law with impunity must stop, and the suffering of the Sudanese people brought to an end," Ambassador Akram said. The conflict in Sudan has caused immense human suffering, he said, noting that close to a quarter of Sudan's population, at least 11 million people have been displaced; 3 million have sought refuge in fragile neighbouring states. Another 25 million face acute hunger and countless innocent lives have been lost. "The Sudanese people have seen unimaginable atrocities during the nearly two years of the recent conflict," Ambassador Akram said, pointing to Rapid Support Forces' recent attack on Saudi Hospital in Al-Fasher in which more than 70 innocent lives were lost. Extending Pakistan's condolences to the victims and their families, he said RSF has consistently displayed "utter disregard" for International Humanitarian Law and committed similar atrocities in Al Geneina, Al-Jazeera, Al-Fasher, Khartoum as well as other places. "Pakistan firmly upholds the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sudan," the Pakistani envoy said. "We call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire," he said, adding, "The parties need to find a sustainable political resolution through peaceful means. The humanitarian crisis in the country needs to be addressed." At the outset, Ambassador Akram said that although Pakistan was not a party to the Rome Treaty establishing the ICC, it was committed to the objective of accountability for international crimes — whether these are committed in Holocaust, in Darfur, or in Gaza, Afghanistan, or elsewhere. "The ICC can gain global credibility if it displays full objectivity and impartiality in the cases and persons it decides to investigate and prosecute," he said.—APP

SBP awards digital Retail Bank License to Easypaisa Bank Limited

Governor SBP stressed upon the importance of addressing challenges associated with rapid technological advancements

DNA

KARACHI: In a landmark ceremony held at the SBP in Karachi, the Governor, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad, awarded the first Digital Retail Bank (DRB) license to Easypaisa Bank Limited (formerly Telenor Microfinance Bank Limited), authorizing it to commence commercial operations. The DRB license to Easypaisa Bank Limited is expected to promote innovation, enhance financial inclusion, and ensure the availability of accessible and affordable digital financial services. The event was attended by CEOs of digital banks, members of the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Banks' Association, the Board of Directors and the senior management

of Easypaisa Bank and senior executives of SBP. Delivering the keynote address, the Governor, SBP underscored SBP's strategic role in establishing the framework for digital banking in

Pakistan and facilitating the development of digital banks through a structured licensing process. He urged Easypaisa Bank Limited to draw inspiration from its sponsor, Ant Group, by prioritizing the dig-

ital transformation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan. The Governor also highlighted the critical importance of achieving licensing milestones and encouraged digital banks to innovate and design customer-centric solutions tailored to the needs of individuals, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and other underserved segments. He emphasized that this focus would be instrumental in fostering financial inclusion and driving economic growth. The Governor stressed upon the importance of addressing challenges associated with rapid technological advancements. He highlighted two critical areas of digital literacy of customers and cyber security measures to protect customer trust and ensure the integrity of the financial

system. He also expressed his confidence that, with the issuance of this license, Easypaisa Bank Limited will prioritize the development of innovative, customer-focused, and affordable digital financial solutions, particularly for underserved and unserved segments of society. He emphasized that such efforts will play a pivotal role in advancing the financial inclusion and digitalization objectives. In January 2023, SBP issued No Objection Certificates (NoCs) to five successful applicants: Hugo Bank Limited, KT Bank Pakistan Limited, Mashreq Bank Pakistan Limited, Raqam Islamic Digital Bank Limited, and Easypaisa Bank Limited. These entities were selected following a rigorous evaluation process that assessed key criteria, including governance and fitness.



Turkiye says it killed 15 Kurdish militants in Syria, Iraq

ISTANBUL: Turkiye said on Wednesday it had killed 13 Kurdish militants in northern Syria and two in Iraq, a sign that Ankara has pressed on with its campaign against fighters, some with possible links to US allies, since Donald Trump took office in the White House last week. The Turkish defense ministry said the Kurdish fighters it had "neutralized" in Syria belonged to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia. Turkiye considers the PKK and YPG to be identical; the United States considers them separate groups, having banned the PKK as terrorists but recruited the YPG as its main allies in Syria in the campaign against Islamic State. Turkiye has long called on Washington to withdraw support for the YPG, and has expressed hope that Trump would revise the policy inherited from the previous administration of President Joe Biden. Tuesday's report of major clashes was the second within days: Turkiye also reported having killed 13 Kurdish militants on Sunday.—APP

Israeli, US strike on Iran nuclear program would be 'crazy': Abbas

LONDON: Israel and the US would be "crazy" to strike Iran's nuclear program, the latter's foreign minister has said. "We've made it clear that any attack to our nuclear facilities would be faced with an immediate and decisive response," Abbas Araghchi told Sky News in his first interview since the inauguration of US President Donald Trump. "I don't think they'll do that crazy thing. This is really crazy. And this would turn the whole region into a very bad disaster." In the interview, Araghchi addressed concerns over his country's nuclear program. Trump's first term as president saw the US pull out of the Iran nuclear deal, which had eased sanctions on Tehran in exchange for limited uranium enrichment. Iran claims that its nuclear program is for civilian purposes, but its return to high levels of enrichment in recent years has alarmed Western governments. Trump has said he prefers a diplomatic solution, and a new deal with Iran would be "nice." But Araghchi said credible US guarantees would need to be provided to Iran for negotiations to begin.—APP

Russian delegation arrives in Syria

DAMASCUS: A Russian government delegation has arrived in Damascus for the first time since Moscow's ally President Bashar al-Assad was toppled, Russia's TASS state news agency reported on Tuesday. The delegation, which is expected to hold talks with Syria's new rulers, includes Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and Alexander Lavrentiev, the Kremlin's special envoy for Syria. Russia was a longtime Assad ally and intervened militarily to help him recapture territory from rebels during the more than decade-long war that erupted in 2011 after his crackdown of protests against his rule. But a lightning rebel offensive late last year pushed Assad to flee Damascus in December — first to the Russian-run Hmeimim Air Base in northern Syria then to Moscow. Days later, Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Bogdanov as saying that Russia's contacts with Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham — the Islamist rebel group that spearheaded the offensive that ousted Assad — were "proceeding in constructive fashion." Bogdanov said Russia hoped to maintain its two bases in Syria — a naval base in Tartous and the Hmeimim base near the port city of Latakia. But this month, Syria's new administration canceled a contract with Russian firm STG Stroytransgaz to manage and operate the Tartous port, according to three Syrian businessmen and media reports.—APP

Briefs

NDMA dispatches aid to Kurram district

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in collaboration with UN agencies dispatched a humanitarian relief consignment to Kurram District here Tuesday. The convoy of 11 trucks with relief items provided by UNICEF, UN-HCR and IOM, departed from Peshawar on Tuesday. The relief consignment included essential items such as health and hygiene kits, dignity kits, emergency kits, Kitchen sets, blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and tarpaulins to support the affected communities. The distribution of relief items will be carried out in coordination with the Pakistan Army, civil administration, representatives from UN agencies and Red Crescent Society to ensure swift delivery to those in need.

Gaza brought Israeli regime to its knees

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the small territory of Gaza brought the Israeli regime, which is armed to the teeth and fully supported by the US, to its knees. Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the resistance, which began in the Islamic Iran, brought some Muslim nations to the scene, and awakened the consciences of many non-Muslims, and that the kneeling of the Zionist regime in front of Gaza and Lebanon is the result of the same resistance. The Leader made the remarks on Tuesday during a meeting with a group of Iranian officials and ambassadors of Muslim countries to Tehran on the occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath, marking the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) divine appointment as the final messenger of God. Ayatollah Khamenei also said the United States embodies colonialism and arrogance in today's world. - Agencies

Pakistan needs \$50b to tackle climate change

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former finance minister Dr Shamsad Akhtar has said that Pakistan needs \$50 billion to tackle climate change. Addressing the third Pakistan Climate Conference, Dr Shamsad Akhtar said Pakistan ranks as the fifth most vulnerable country to the severe impacts of climate change. She said the country received only 1.8% of its required funding to combat climate challenges. Dr Akhtar urged the government to take steps to secure funding from international organisations to address climate change. She pointed out that climate challenges had reduced Pakistan's GDP by 3%.

Pakistan, China resolve to strengthen bilateral ties

Ambassador Jiang, on behalf of Chinese Foreign Minister H E Wang Yi, extended an invitation to Dar to attend a UN Security Council event 'Practicing Multilateralism, Reforming and Improving Global Governance' being hosted by China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on Tuesday, the Foreign Office said. A day earlier, the FO rejected "baseless and unfounded" allegations targeting Pakistan's commitment to China's policies, stressing that Beijing continued to be Islamabad's "all-weather strategic partner". The development came in response to growing criticism of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's participation in an event sponsored by the New Federal State of China (NFSC), an anti-China group. The FO described the One-China Policy as a consistent cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, emphasising that the country's stance remains the same. Pakistan has held



strong bilateral relations with China which has supported it through many investments and development projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which was termed as a "lifeline" for the country's economy. During meeting, Dar and the Chinese ambassador reaffirmed the partnership, which was termed a "cornerstone of bilateral relations" between the two countries. The progress of CPEC 2.0 was reviewed during the meeting, and both sides also expressed their commitment to further solidify their strategic partnership. Ambassador Jiang, on behalf of Chinese Foreign Minister H E Wang Yi, extended an invitation to Dar to attend a UN Security Council event 'Practicing Multilateralism, Reforming and Improving Global Governance' being hosted by China under its presidency of the UNSC, on February 18 in New York. The deputy prime minister accepted the invitation, "underscoring Pakistan's commitment to multilateral cooperation.

Afghan Taliban leader dismisses foreign 'threats'

Akhundzada did not reference specific countries, bodies or "threats"

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's supreme leader has said the Taliban will not be intimidated by "threats" in a speech given days after the International Criminal Court prosecutor requested a warrant for his arrest over the persecution of women in the country. "Whether Westerners or Easterners, how could we believe them and not almighty God's promises! How can we allow ourselves to be affected by their threats!" Hibatullah Akhundzada said in a recording of a speech shared with journalists on Tuesday. The address was given at a graduation ceremony for religious scholars in southern Kandahar province on Monday, said the governor's spokesman, Mahmood Azzam.

IMF program vital to avoid boom-bust cycles, Aurangzeb

Finance Minister hopes Single B sovereign rating

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Tuesday expressed the hope that the positive development in various economic indicators may lead to a sovereign rating upgrade to single B category for the country. Speaking at "Dialogue on the Economy", organized by the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) here, the federal minister said inflation has receded while State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has further reduced policy rate, resultantly Kibor rates would come down for the benefit for industry. He said, the country's foreign exchange reserves have reached a milestone of \$13 billion, sufficient to cover three months of imports. "This is important milestone that we have and if all goes well, this is a critical figure for the economy and sovereignty related to a single B category," he said adding "there are many other aspects, which of course rating agencies consider, but I think this is one of the critical factors and we are moving in that direction with very strong remittance flows, IT services exports and diversification of exports etc." He said the government was moving on right direction to strengthen remittance inflows and promote export-led growth. He said, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was important part of country's

roadmap to go forward adding that every FDI which comes in has to have the element of exportable surplus to move towards export-led economy. Talking about World Economic Forum (WEF) energumens, he said, lot of constructive discussion and engagement were held with bilateral partners, banks, IMF etc on variety of themes including trade, tariff, Artificial Intelligence, digitalization and new world order. The minister added, in a departure from traditional budget planning, the government has introduced a more inclusive and transparent process. As part of this new approach, the process has been started in January instead of April and all government departments have been asked to present their budgets, while forums like the PBC and various chambers have been invited to provide inputs. He said, the government is committed to its medium-term program with International Monetary Fund (IMF), a three-year plan that outlines key economic objectives. The minister said, the government wanted to make sure to get the economy moving as has been done for stabilization. However, he added that there was not any automatic switch from stabilization to growth. We need to fundamentally change the DNA of our economy to avoid the boom and bust cycle that has inflicted losses in the past, he added. The finance minister said, the IMF programme was actually need of the hour and we need to make conscious decisions about taxation, energy, privatization, and public finance to ensure we don't get into trouble again.

France rejects displacement of Gazans

PARIS: France on Tuesday said any forced displacement of Gazans would be "unacceptable" after US President Donald Trump proposed moving Gaza Palestinians to Egypt and Jordan. "Any forced displacement of the population in Gaza would be unacceptable," a French foreign ministry spokesman said when asked about Trump's comments. "It would not only be a serious violation of international law, but also a major hindrance to the two-state solution," the spokesman said, referring to calls for Israeli and Palestinian states living side-by-side. It would also be a "destabilization factor (for) our close allies Egypt and Jordan." Almost all of the Gaza Strip's 2.4 million inhabitants have been displaced by the war that began with Palestinian militant group Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. But a fragile ceasefire that came into force this month could boost permanent peace efforts. Trump on Monday expressed his desire to move Palestinians from Gaza to "safer" locations such as Egypt or Jordan. - Agencies

CEC unveils digital services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CEC Sikanar Sultan Raja here on Tuesday inaugurated the Election Commission's digital services, aiming to digitize operations and enhance public engagement for greater efficiency and transparency in Pakistan's electoral processes. The focus was on how these facilities will be vital for enhancing daily operations, allowing staff and the public to easily access services. The new digital services encompass various internal modules and two mobile apps designed to cater to the diverse needs of the Election Commission and voters.

Govt vows to address PIA flight suspension, ATR shortage: Asif

Minister said, "PIA has faced significant setbacks, including bans on flights to lucrative routes in the UK and Europe. However, we are optimistic as audit teams are currently evaluating operations

FAISAL SHEIKH



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif assured the Senate on Tuesday that the government is taking concrete measures to address the operational challenges faced by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), including the temporary suspension of flights to destinations like Chitral and Larkana, exacerbated by harsh weather conditions and a shortage of ATR aircraft. Responding to concerns raised by senators, Asif acknowledged the airline's limitations, noting that PIA currently operates only three ATR aircraft, of which one is grounded. "Efforts are underway to bring the grounded aircraft back into service to resume flights to underserved areas," he said, adding that discussions with private airlines are also in progress to ensure connectivity to remote regions.

Highlighting systemic challenges, the minister said, "PIA has faced significant setbacks, including bans on flights to lucrative routes in the UK and Europe. However, we are optimistic as audit teams are currently evaluating operations, and we expect these routes to reopen soon." Asif emphasized the government's commitment to subsidizing flights for residents of remote areas and revamping smaller airports to make them operational. "Private airlines are being encouraged to operate from smaller airports like Chitral and Larkana, ensuring affordable and accessible air travel for the local population," he stated. Addressing broader concerns about the state of PIA, Asif explained that the government is actively working to restructure the airline. "A privatization attempt is being revisited to improve operational efficiency and service delivery," he said, adding that the revival of PIA requires significant resources and time. Senators, including Falak Naz and Saifullah Abro, voiced concerns about the lack of spare parts for ATR aircraft and questioned the timeline for resuming services to remote areas. Senator Shahzad Durani suggested upgrading Chitral Airport to accommodate larger aircraft, a proposal Asif agreed to explore despite the operational challenges posed by the region's terrain. Concluding his remarks, Asif reassured the Senate of the government's resolve to enhance connectivity across Pakistan, stating, "This matter requires a comprehensive evaluation, and I request the opportunity to revisit these issues in the next session with concrete solutions."

CAYA Youth Summit 2025 kicks off

A video message from the Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland was also played, who acknowledged the government of Pakistan's strides in youth development and its significant contributions to the Commonwealth community

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance (CAYA) 2025 Summit kicked off on Tuesday here at the Jinnah Convention Centre, focusing on youth empowerment, education, and skills development. The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was the

chief guest of the inaugural session of the summit. The event commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by the National Anthem of Pakistan. Speaking at the event, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan welcome the distinguished guests from 12 countries and also congratulated the 113 new members of the third batch of the PM NYC.

Journalists, opp. protest against 'controversial' Peca amendments

Opposition parties, media fraternity join hands in protests against Peca tweaks declaring it "controversial"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Nationwide protests by the journalist fraternity and the opposition erupted on Tuesday against the "controversial" Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) (Amendment) Bill 2025. The amendments, which sailed through the National Assembly earlier, were also passed by the Senate today. The tweaks aim to tighten the noose around those involved in misinformation and fake news on social media platforms according to the government. During today's session, the upper house approved the Peca (Amendment) Bill 2025 and the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill 2024, which aim to create a digital society, economy and governance, amid commotion by the opposition benches. The opposition parties and journalists' bodies joined hands in protests across the country against contentious tweaks to the Peca law after declaring it "controversial" over "lack of clarity" in many legal aspects, including the term "fake news". Media workers fear the amended

law will also be used to target them and will impact the freedom of press. Additionally, the media fraternity also expressed anger over the incumbent government for passing the amendments without either consulting them or taking them into confidence. As demonstrations took place across all major cities of the country, a large number of journalists, lawyers, and civil society members participated in the agitation organised by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) outside the National Press Club in Islamabad today. The protesters started marching towards D-Chowk to record their protest, led by the journalist body's President Afzal Butt and NPC President Azhar Jatoti against the Peca amendment bill. The journalists were seen wearing chains as a sign of protest and chanted slogans against the Peca Act in the rally. The protest rally was turned into a sit-in after demonstrators reached D-Chowk. The PFUJ president, addressing the participants, clarified that they were not against regulations, however, no one would be allowed to attack the freedom of expression in the country.

Heavy contingents of police were deployed at D-Chowk, and barbed wire was installed to try to stop the movement of the protesters. Several journalists sustained injuries after trying to remove the barbed wire as they defied barriers installed by the police personnel to continue their rally. Some police personnel also tried to arrest the PFUJ president after stopping him from leading the rally to the restricted Red Zone. Another demonstration was held outside the Lahore Press Club which was addressed by a Pakistan Theerke-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Secretary Information Qaiser Sharif. Bhachar said the opposition urged the treasury benches to contact all stakeholders on the controversial act, including steps to take the journalist bodies in confidence. He claimed that the incumbent government did not have a mandate to take decisions, adding that the Peca Act proved that the current set-up was "not a democratic government". JI leader Sharif announced his support for the journalist community against the controversial law. In Karachi, journalists, lawyers and civil society members organised a joint protest, rejecting the modified law, terming it an attack to silence freedom of expression.

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